

PROSTHESIS

Burgess Voshell

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Architecture in the Department of Architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island



Burgess Voshell
2013

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They'll be expecting one of us in the

Wreckage Brothers



1. Max Dehne
2. Desmond Delanty
3. Ryan McCaffrey

4. Nicholas Moore
5. Burgess Voshell
6. Kun Wu

A Fronte Praecipitium

A Tergo Lupi

“Add Gas!”

A Fronte Praecipitium

A Tergo Lupi

This work is dedicated to the *wreckage brothers*. A greater group could not have been hoped for. This time spent in the *oasis of criticality* will be sorely missed.

Maxwell Dehne
Desmond DeLanty
Ryan McCaffrey
Nicholas Moore
Kun Wu

Thank you.

Larceny and A's
Year III
Provenance of the Barbaric
There Goes Your Candy Money Baby
Bulkhead #62
Memoirs of Lord Voldebardt
Money Jungle: an Ellington Reference
Gusset Plates
There Is No User Only Used
NeVersailles Stop Dunking
Because Now We Feel Guilty For Not Having Acted In Time
Degen City
Degen's Ball
Formal Degens
Harly Nally: A Criation Story with No "E"
Kahn With The Wind
Hola Macchiafe
BELLYWORK
Center for Critical Discourse
China: Rising
Occupy Doghouse
Your Mom's Favorite Architect
Rockefellers in the Jungle
American Journal of Laser Cutter Monitors
To le Maginot! A Memoir
#Architecture
Chinatown: Global Phenomenon
Closing the Seal: Business as Usual, or The New ABCs
Harpooning for Dummies 101
Nomenclature
Panopticalism
Ten Ways to Surf
Lars Lerup, Intern
Brad Pitt Architect
Metal and its Omnipresence
Decidedly on The Fence (or, Fencing: A New Sport)
Towards a Now England
Myopiasm
Manifest Destiny's Child
The Velocity of Sickness: An Apology
Degens and Dragons
Acts of Wreckage
Forehead Dancing Towards Bethlehem
Top Gun Architects
Plait Tectonics
"Touche' Kwinter:" Rebuttlles
Biography of the Deviant Garde
Re:Modeling Architecture
That's An Awful Short Fuse
The Chinese Equation
Cheesing on Someone
As Much as No One Else Wants

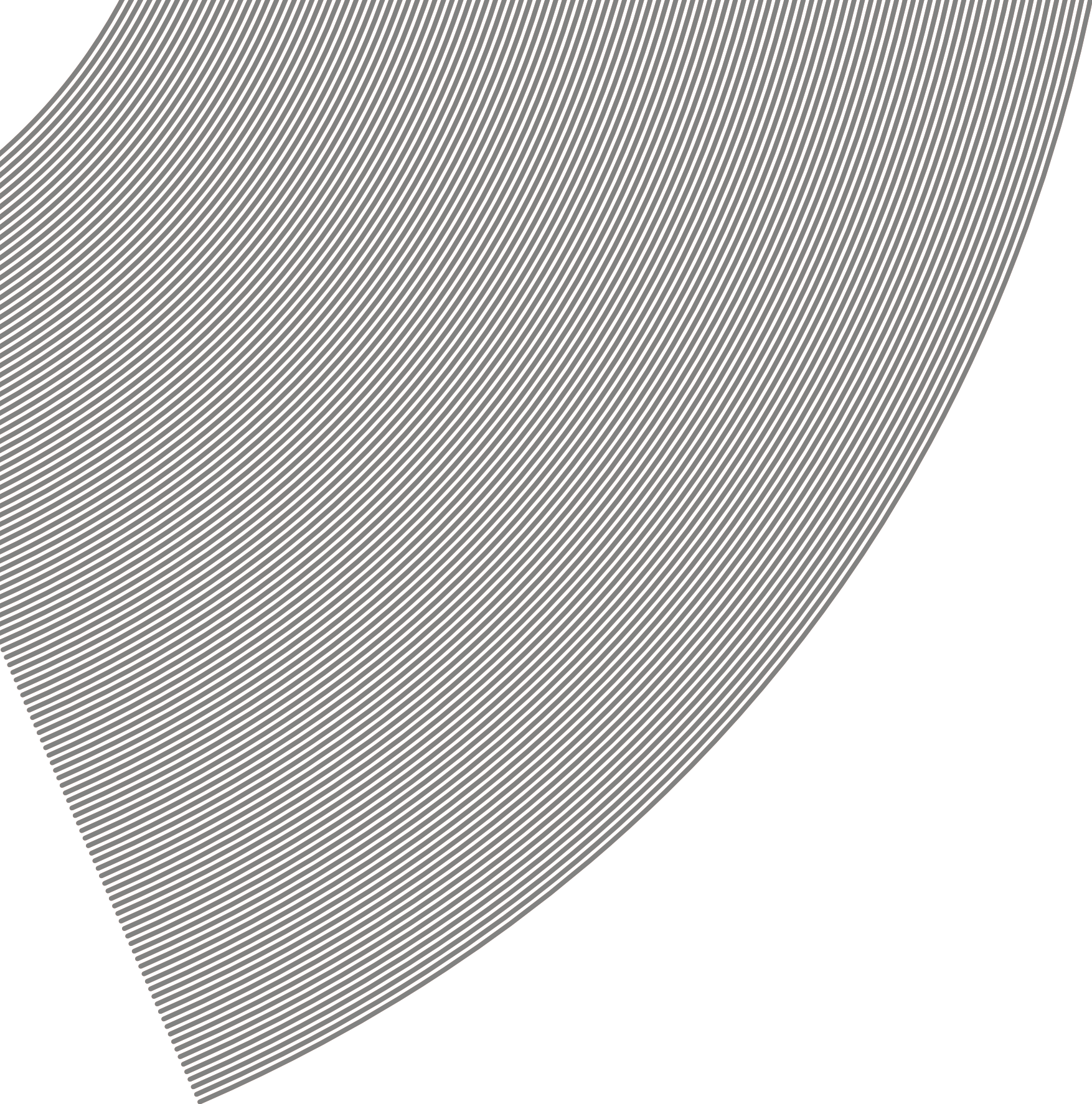
One Device to Rule Them All
Log
Let Them Hate So Long As They Fear
NY Bangs
Hommmage to No Content
Do It So I Can Really Feel The Music
On Neohistoricism
Pinching the Nerve
Not My Job
Gas Attach
No Fucks Were Given
Long Day of Sub Spotting
Dead Cousins and Priests We Don't Like
Redundant (Or) Next Level
Yankees of the Art World
Chemical Agents
Picnoleptics Quarterly
Bed Of Handles
Letting Subversion Happen
Money That I Get
Wood And Its Capabilities
Where Rocks Come From
Babe Wait
A 13 Year Old Poacher
Disputes Settled By Pistol
Haircut Bonanza
People Who Are My Son Now
Critical Bagels
Oasis of Criticality
Satchmo Ruby
Ikea's Last Stand
Cabinet
Adbusters
Short Building Studio
Mayline: Muse or Nemesis?
Born Cheating: The Kun Wu Story
Understanding How to Whittle
Whittling and its Implications
Structural String
Narcitects
Big Salt
Late Nights & Marb Lights
Billionaires With No Ideas
The Last Apprentice
The First Foreign One
Chinos: The Chinese Pants
A Haptic Memory
Nylon Cargo Shorts
Mystic Orange
The Time Is Now
Zoomed Out Mind
Modes Of Failure

To The Vector Go The Spoils
Low Hanging Critical Fruit
What If Carlo Scarpa Went To RISD In The 80s?
Strange Attractor
Center For Fringe Activities
For the Sake of the Dome
Politics of Flat Pack
Opinione'
Well On Desmond
Bridge Arena
Full Scale Partheon
Tight Radii
Liquid Steel!
Ketchup on Architecture
Bat House
Super Tight Envelope
Space and How They're Going There
21st Century Trash
Claptops
The Little Cucumber That Could
Ragging Bitch
Bio of a Think Tank
The Last Mile
Gravity, Fabric of Our Lives
Too Deformed to Fail
Paradigms-Esque
Be Your Own Cross
Wood Coated Glass
Mind Meat
One Word Mutts: Sex Sells
Operation No-Mold
Operation Mylar Slap
Paralyzed From the Brain Up
Rouge Corbusians
Anointing the Uncritical
Inching Towards Criticality
Get Hedonistic
A Walking Zine Title
Xines
Mediocre Composers
Hejduk's Last Stand
Ping Pong Metrics
Orders I Found
Remapping Mom's Basement
Basic Savagery
Skate Away to Squabble Another Day
Born Bad, Raised Worse
Maybe That's What I care About
And Then We Can Work
When Rem Does Mad Stupid Remixes With Unknown DJs
Re:Gurgitating Architecture
ICE-Olation

I Can Only Critic
I Too Have A Squiggle Addiction
Proportional Misadventures
Shanghai Prom
When It's Springtime Here Is It Spring In China?
Carlo Scarpa, AIA
Sons Of Smithtown, Italy
Fat Long Island Modernism
Consider It Twisted
Victorian Birthday Cake Remix
Swimming Buying Fucking
Re:Claimed Bullshit
Belorussian Boy Band
Fool Proof Plans
A Quarter Inch Certain
Paving Plans: Where Do They Come From?
Towards A Good Architecture
Xander Wasn't Lying
Reading In The Wood Shop
Seminar Table Saw
Is Laser A Material?
Tree Rappers
Booty Crumbs
Weak Constitution
From (In) Finititude
Help growing on girlfriend trees, we do not all have.
Donald Juan (Donald Won)
Two Inches Shy
Towards a Donjuanesque Architecture (Guest: J. Harley Nalley)
Architecture Is Not Funny
In A World Filled With Architecture
Drafting Through the Table
Inside Outsiders
Exegetic I-Beams
Reluctant Formalism
Louis Vuitton Dickscape
Tape Logic
Never Too Late For Criticality
The Proverbial Mold-Slapper
Bag Proper
Invoice Studio
Hazards of Consumption
This Old Thesis
A Terrific Undergrad
Poured in Place Banana Hammock
The D Factor
Hegemomics
Insurgent Material Strategies
Gloucester's Pride
Fiat Full of Pigeons
Irrevocably Ronied
Tripping Over Sectional Properties

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Way-finding questionnaire	11
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Just stop

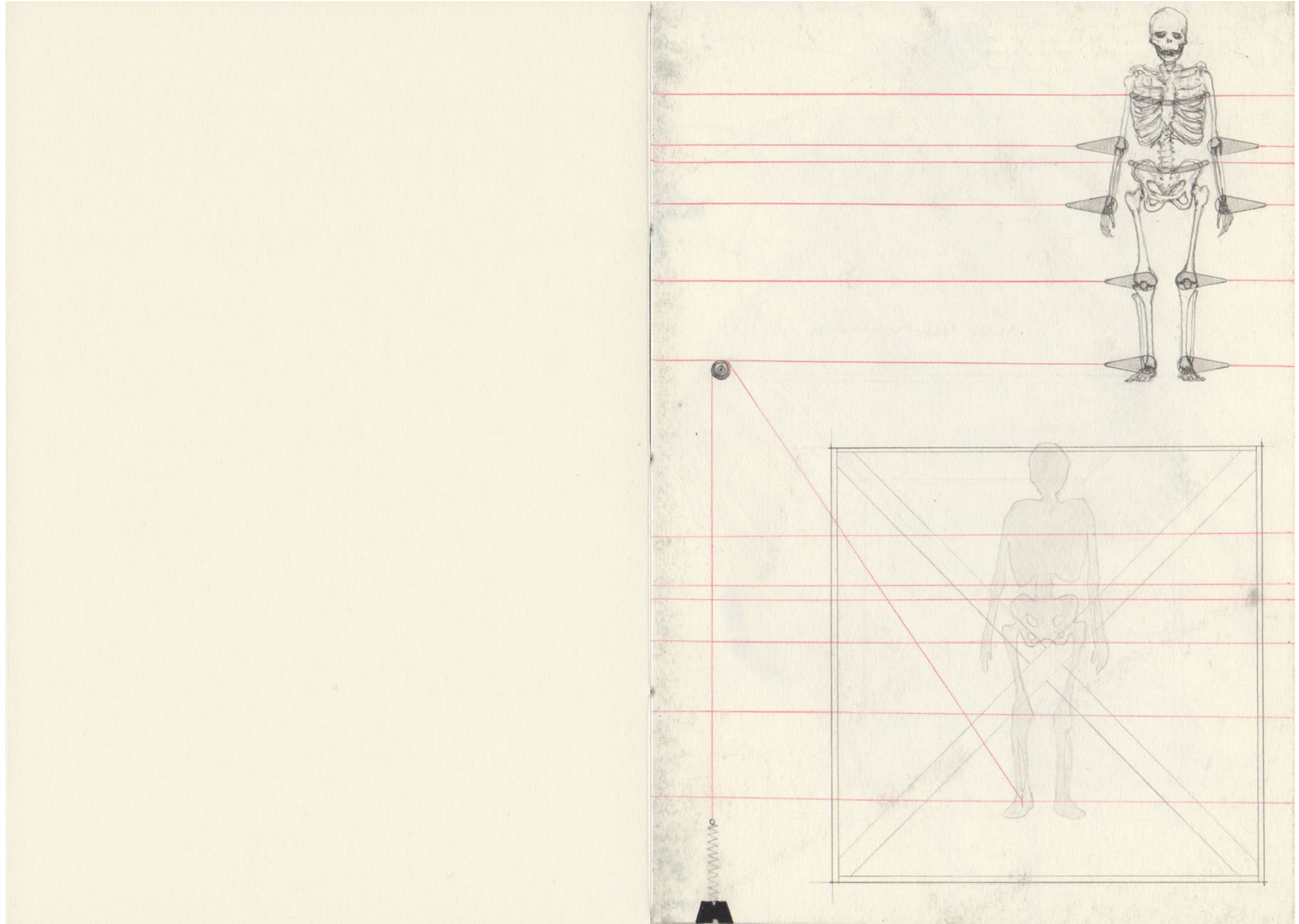
thinking, worrying, looking over your shoulder wondering, doubting, fearing, hurting, hoping for some easy way out, struggling, grasping, confusing, itching, scratching, mumbling, bumbling, grumbling, humbling, stumbling, bumbling, rambling, grumbling, tumbling, stumbling, scrambling, hitching, hatching, bitching, moaning, groaning, honing, boning, horse-shitting, hair-splitting, nit-picking, piss-trickling, nose sticking, ass-gouging, eyeball-poking, finger pointing, alleyway-sneaking, long waiting, small stepping, evil-eyeing, back-scratching, searching, perching, besmirching, grinding, grinding, grinding away at yourself. Stop it and

just DO!

- Sol LeWitt

sketchbook excerpt one
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: bodily connections and suspension
in equilibrium.
two: eye ellipses.
three: drawing mechanism range test.



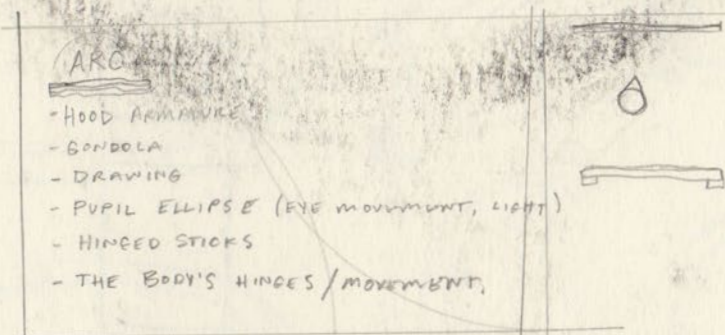
- DISCOVERING HOW TO DRAW - AS MACHINE,
AS PROCESS TO MACHINE.
- THE STILNESS OF THE HEAD IS THE APPARATUS
- THE DRAWING IS THE DRAWING AND THE EXPLANATION
OF THE DRAWING
- DEFINE THE QUALITIES OF CORBUSIER DRAWING -
INJECT THEM INTO THE PROCESS AND STRUCTURE OF
THE REVERSE MARIONETTE.
- BLIND
- REDUCTION TO X -
- DRAWN AS OTHER - OBJECTIVE VIEW VS INTERNAL VIEW.
- ORIENTATION IS KEY THE LEG SUSPENDED NEED
ONLY BE CONCERNED WITH ITS OWN WHIM, NOT ITS
ROUTINE AS SUPPORT.
- FIND A NEW WAY TO REPRESENT.

BUILD MY OWN TOOL - PROSTHESIS - TO DRAW BEFORE
I CAN DRAW AND CONSTRUCT

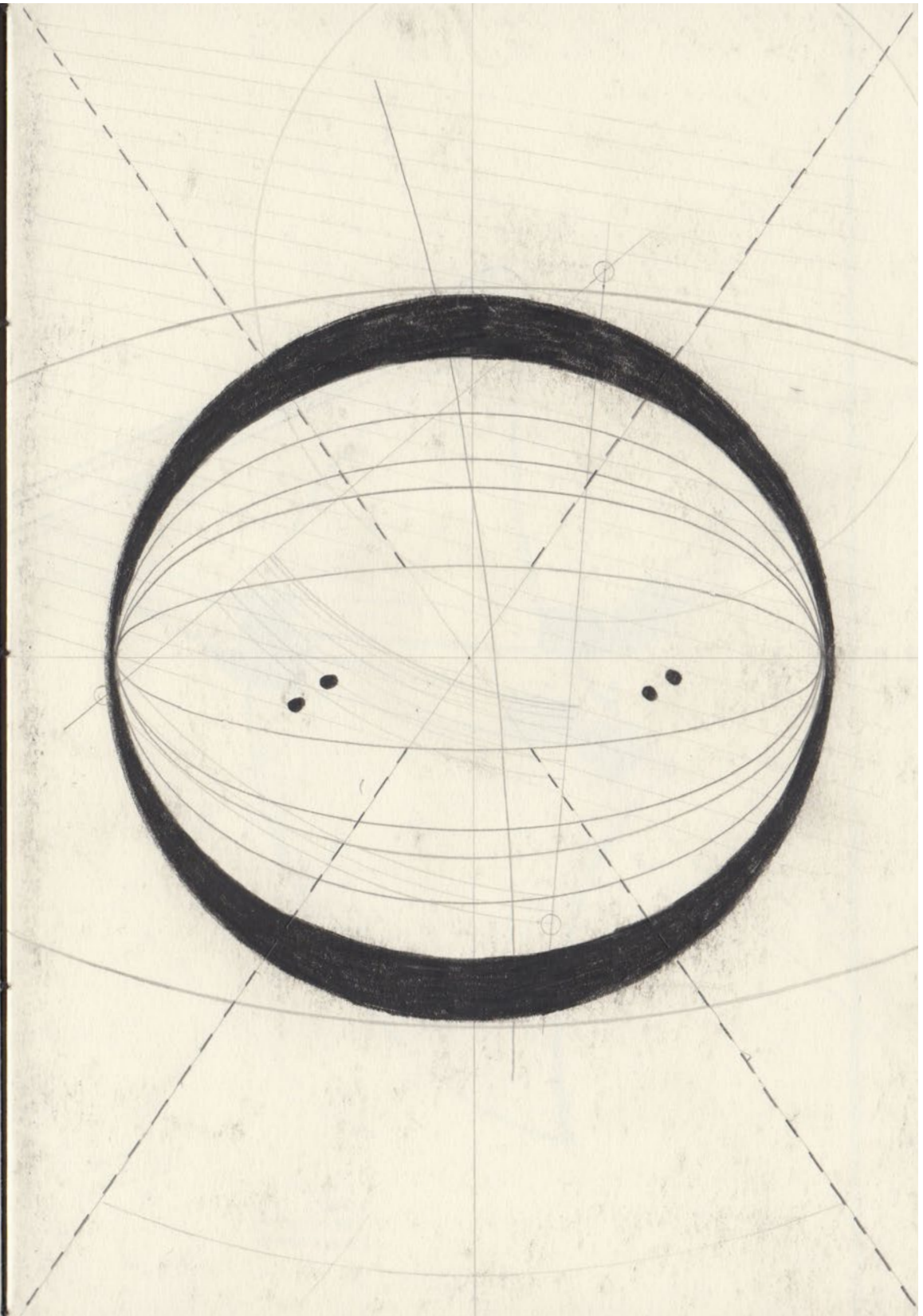
INVESTIGATE SCATBELT MECHANISM

INVENT A
WAY OF
WORKING

- SUSPENSION REQUIRES STRUCTURE
- TO HANG STRUCTURE NEEDS TO BE ABOVE
- TO FACE UP AND AWAY FROM THE DRAWING,
TO CARRY LOAD TO EARTH, STRUCTURE
NEEDS TO BE BELOW.

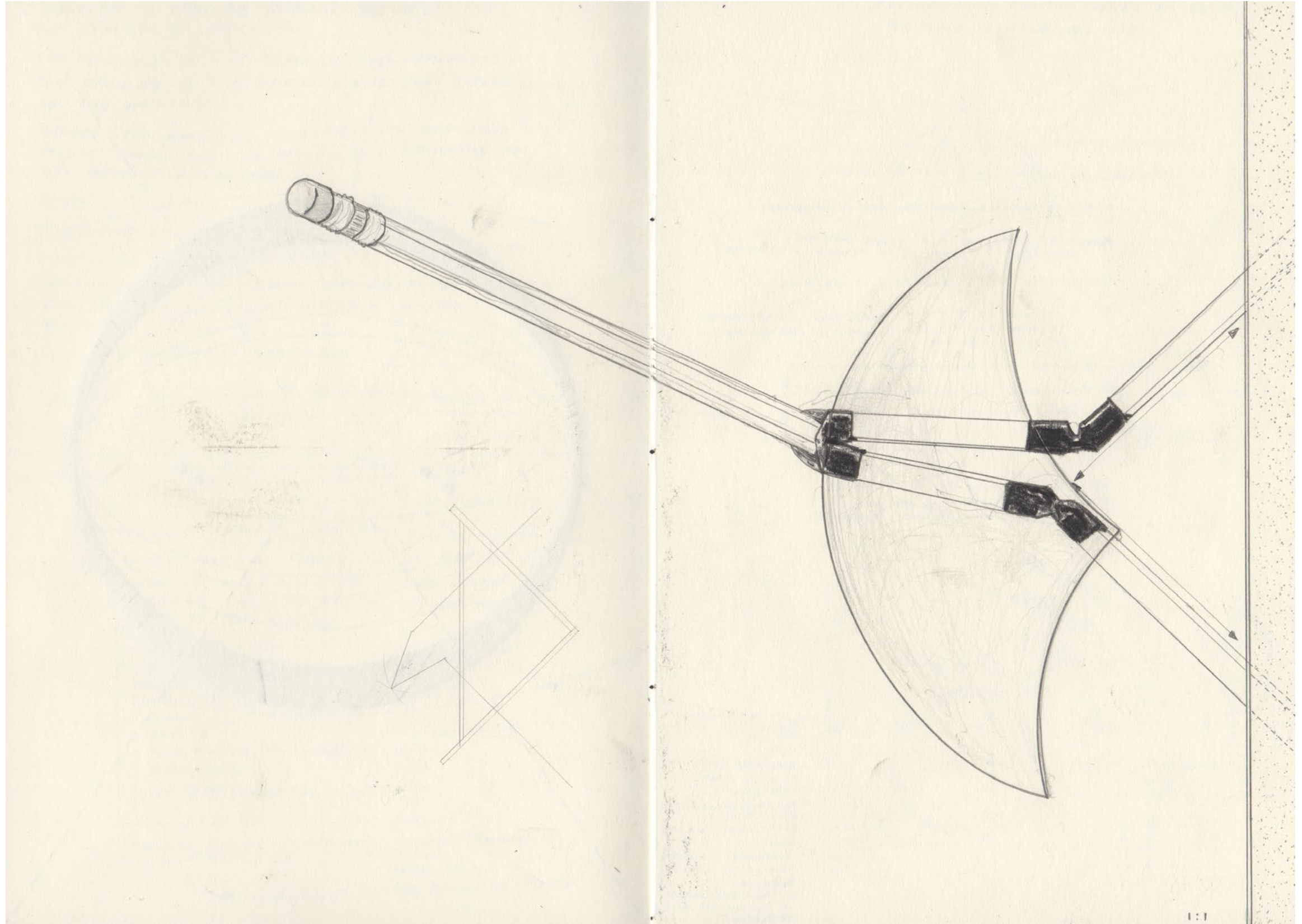


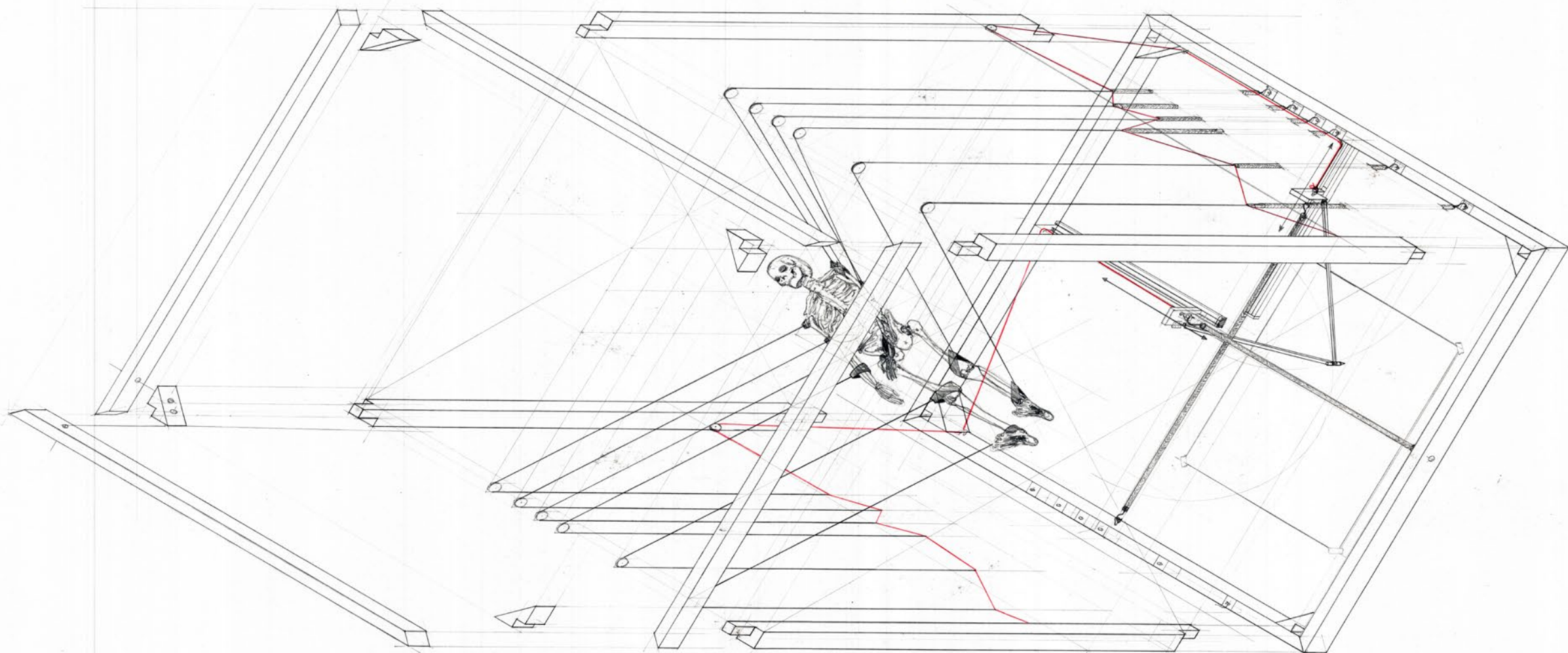
DRAWINGS TO DO TOMORROW! - SKELETON RANGE OF
MOTION
- POLAR GRID
- HOOD RANGE OF MOTION
FAR TOO OPTIMISTIC



sketchbook excerpt one
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: bodily connections and suspension
in equilibrium.
two: eye ellipses.
three: drawing mechanism range test.







OVERCOME INERTIA

previous page:

interment in stasis
drawing machine
graphite on paper
19 X 24 inches

What do you want most out of the thesis experience?

Enrichment. I want to create a body of work and so too ideas, that I feel is compelling, has relevance, and is at least vaguely identified as a discourse of architecture.

What do you want to make?

I want to make emotional responses. I want to make things worthy of enthusiasm. I want to make things with humor and in earnest. I want to make that which incites curiosity and is not passively engaged. It only really must be these things for me alone, usually. For thesis I feel differently about that point. I want to make objects that function for my ends.

Who is this for?

What I make may not be for anyone else. I will not presume that my work has significance for any individual beyond myself. I want to make without consideration for the desires of others. At this task, I am certain to fail. As a thesis it ought to be of some interest, of some use, to a greater discussion. I'll strive for.

When does your work flow best?

Work is a rapid reciprocation between decision and action, but decisions are the thorny brambles that lust to ensnare. They are arguably the most important and most difficult. Decisions of any type require a certain measure of confidence. Swift paralysis is the only end in a complete void of it. To be effectual in self critique and to navigate a course, there is need for some assurance that the reasons for any particular decision are sound. This assumes that the person working has enough ego to be concerned with the judgment of others; I'm not immune.

In this equation of decision and action, the latter is so rarely my ruin. From a sense of expertise or logical sequence, if even especially narrow, confidence and thereby decision break loose a blitzkrieg of action.

Work also flows exceedingly well during the exploration of a new tool or faculty, in the presence of curiosity.

What would it take to design a project to enable that?

Depending on the project, either sufficient education in the histories, precedents, and implications of a topic or a philosophic approach in which the compounding of logic and reasoning builds an argument that is stable in its own right. Of course these are not mutually exclusive. Additionally, it may be important to frame a problem in a way that maximizes freedom and/or seeks some objective results. Somehow utilizing self-made implements as a means to further research and exploration.

Do you generally have too many or too few ideas for a project?

I would say that I generally have a fair number of ideas, but they often get internally dismissed quickly. Sometime though, I find myself in a desert.

Are your project ideas usually more generative of new concepts, patterns, processes or responsive to existing places, institutions, technologies?

Responsive, I think.

Are your project ideas more about what you make or why you make it?

That's a difficult question. I'll dodge it. In honesty, it depends on the project. I've surely been more concerned with either side at varying times. I can say, with a heap of trepidation, that I'm more interested why something is made.

How do you judge your project ideas?

With severity. As they conform to the answers from question two. I pay heed to my visceral responses.

Do you want to design a building, and why or why not?

Not particularly. In its intrinsic pragmatism, a building has certain responsibilities that I'm not as interested in pursuing with this thesis. Some of the critical, but still more routine architectural issues may detract from the types of conversations I strive to engage with.



Do you want your work to become an aesthetic artifact, unified in its own right, (as opposed to just being an intelligible set of documents), and why or why not?

I'm not satisfied with that which is not both beautiful and significant. I desire to make and refine things that have a visual component. Something visual, like something aural, can be immediately impactful, at a glance. Documents trade this immediacy for the potential of more directed substance.

Do you want to make critical observations on society or culture, and why or why not?

I do because I value that. It's both interesting and important.

Do you want to dig into scholarly research, and to continue writing all year, and why or why not?

I find that I'm more successful in creating ideas of substance through writing. It's an integral part of my thought process so I think that some amount of this will be crucial in my development over this year. However, I'm not quite as drawn to that as the place of culmination.

Do you have some other agenda beyond the above four, and if so, what is it?

I'm compelled to build machines.

Now prioritize the above five.

11, 13, 14, 12, 10

Now picture yourself at the end of the process in May. What do you need most to have then to at least connect the top two of the above priorities?

A cohesive relationship between artifact and argument, communications visual and verbal.

What domain best describes those ambitions? (e.g. form-giving, place response, building technology, cognition, sociology, activism, etc.)

Cognition.

What topics within that domain invite more consideration.

The ineffable. Perception. Emotion. Representation.

What is the most interesting claim you can make about any of those topics?

In decay the ineffable is inherent.

What work can you propose to advance that claim?

An object that juxtaposes purity and uniformity with the chaotic result of its decomposition. A piece of steel, easily specified and clearly describable, partially transformed into an entirely unique mess of tone and texture.

IN THE DARK



I'm searching for a more visceral link between myself and our collective prosthesis - the tools that shroud the frail body in unrivaled ability. These augmentations confer a certain power. The capacity to reveal or obscure, to change scales, mediate complexity, or to collapse space. These drawings embody this collective anatomy of machine and bone. They belong equally to the human and the apparatus, but are foreign to both. I'm searching for a way to draw, outward and inward.



PROSTHESIS

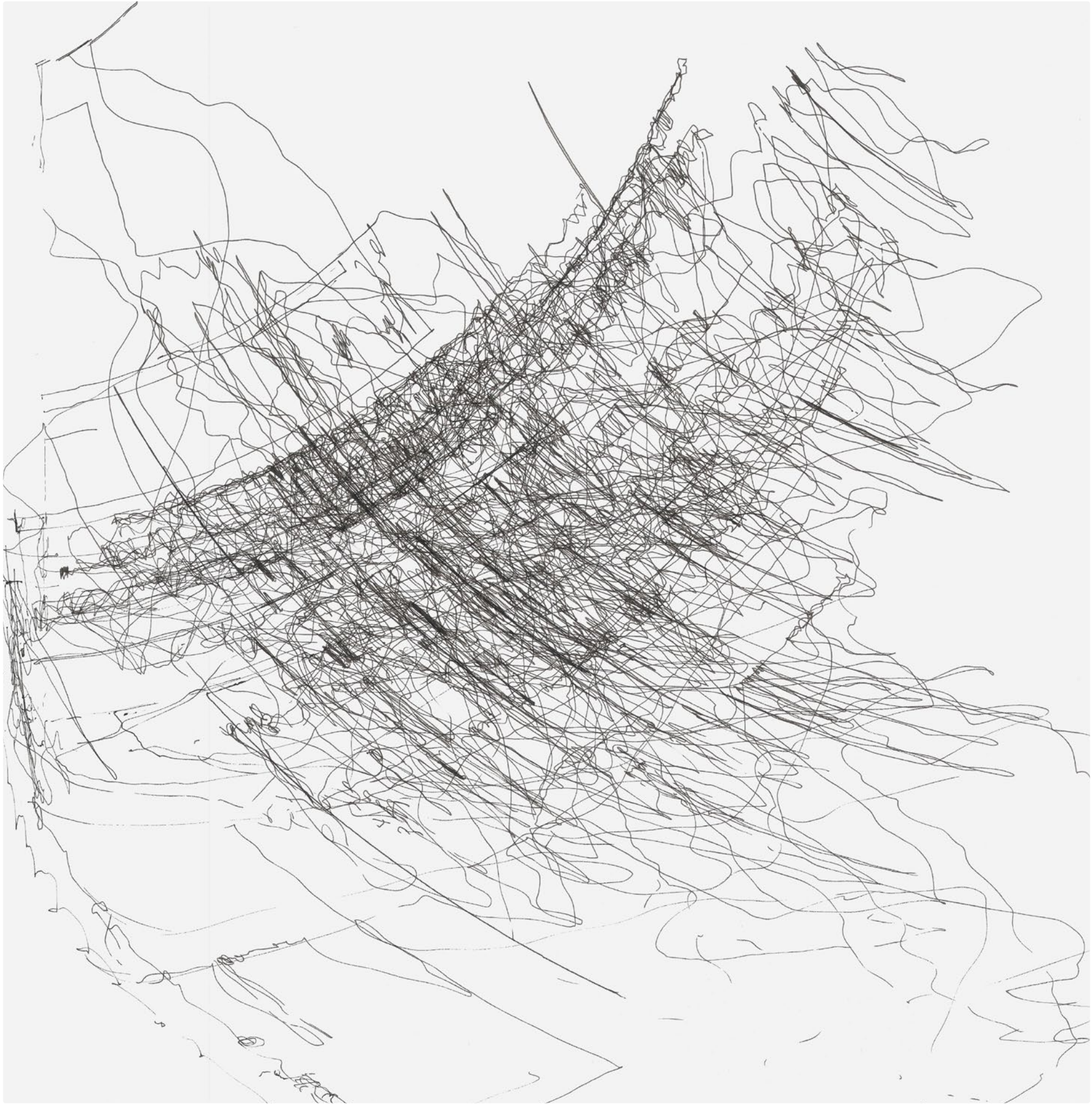
Nº 01

*There is little distinction between
the building and the plow.*

Materials: poplar, birch plywood, nylon
paracord, concrete, plexiglass,
felt, arduino, stepper motor,
paper, ink.

Date: 10.15.12





zero one
ink on paper
14 X 14 inches

Drawing is a prosthesis for memory and understanding. These drawing machines produce a latent memory, belonging equally to the human and the apparatus, but foreign to both.

in operation
video stills superimposed
digital

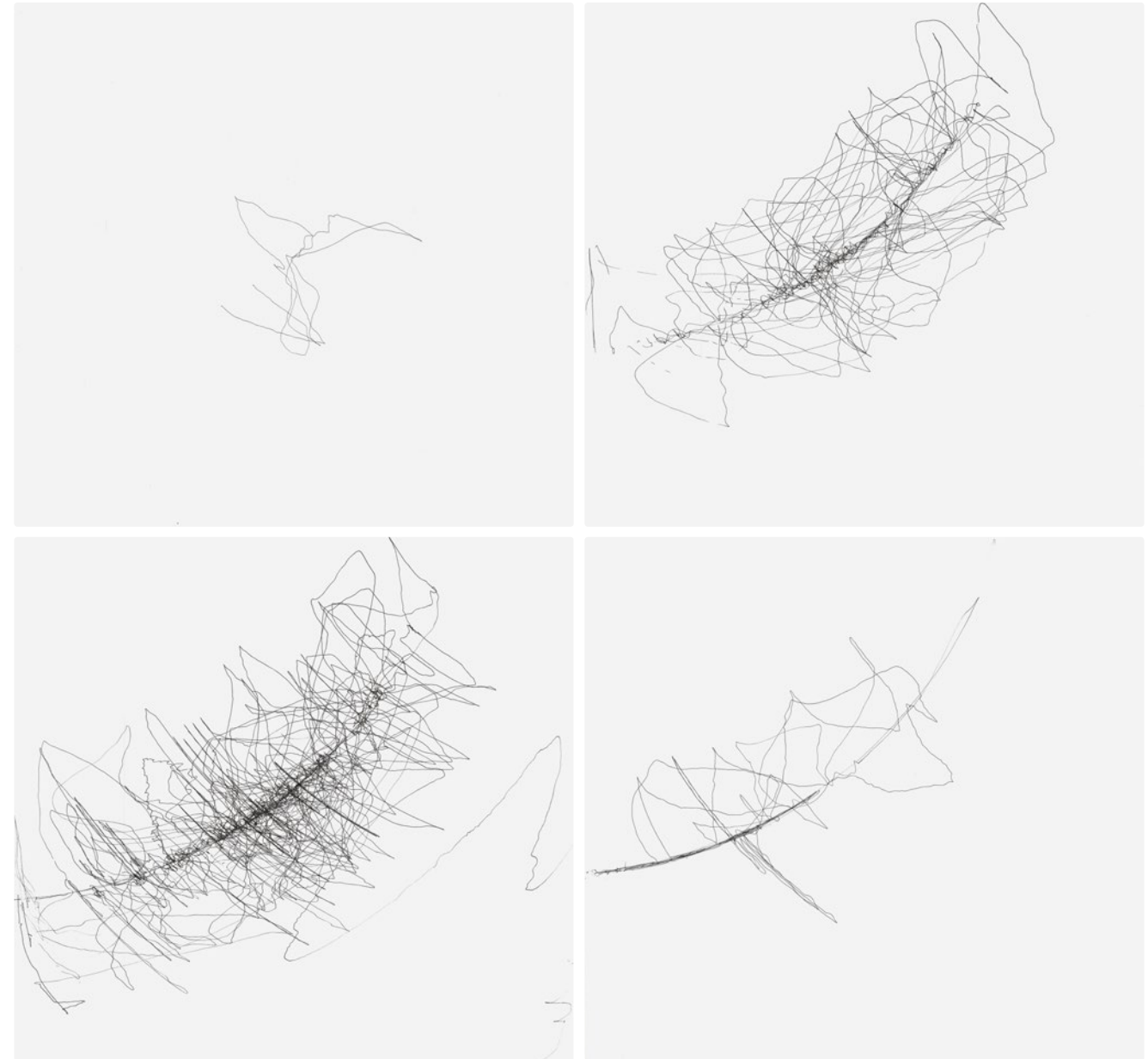
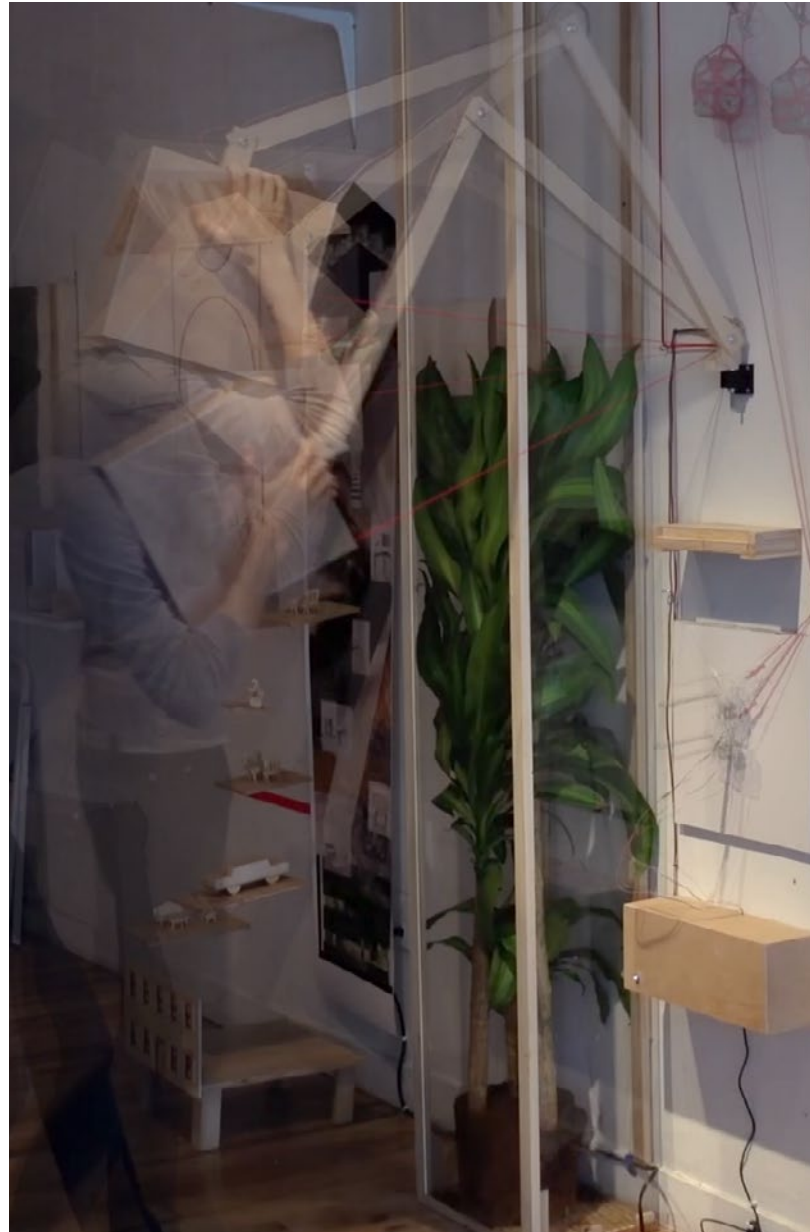
zero four
ink on paper
14 X 14 inches

zero eight
ink on paper
14 X 14 inches

zero three
ink on paper
14 X 14 inches

zero six
ink on paper
14 X 14 inches

A dark wooden hood affixed to the wall by a hinged armature translates the movement of the blind operator inside by two methods. A direct mechanical connection through a series of pulleys moves one side of a pen gondola on the page. Accelerometer data from the hood is programmed to control a servo motor, which moves the other side of the pen.



PROSTHESIS

Nº 02

A stone's repose - equilibrium
conferred.

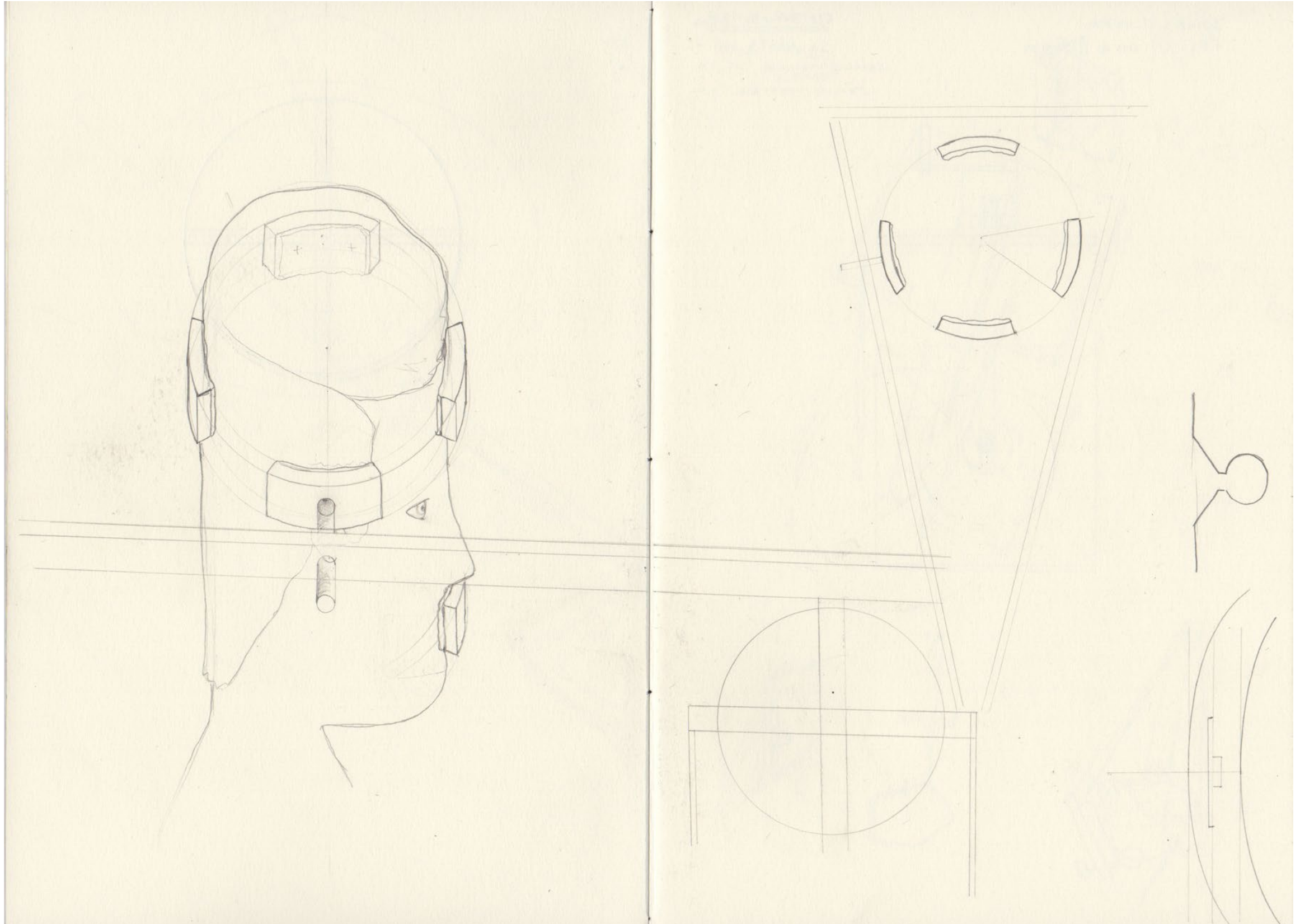
Materials: camera, infrared filter, infrared
LEDs, birch plywood, wool felt,
threaded rod.

Date: 02.10.13



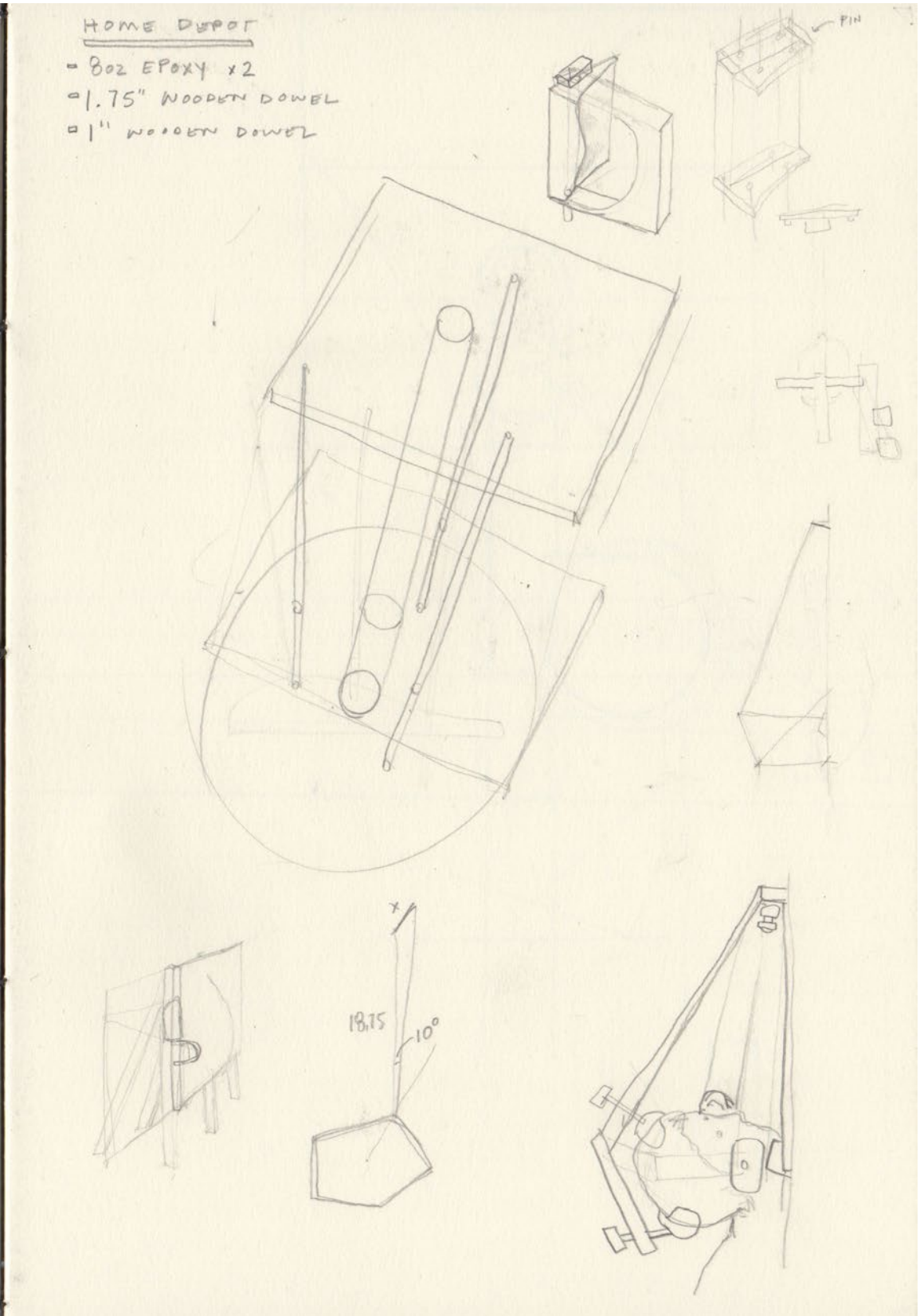
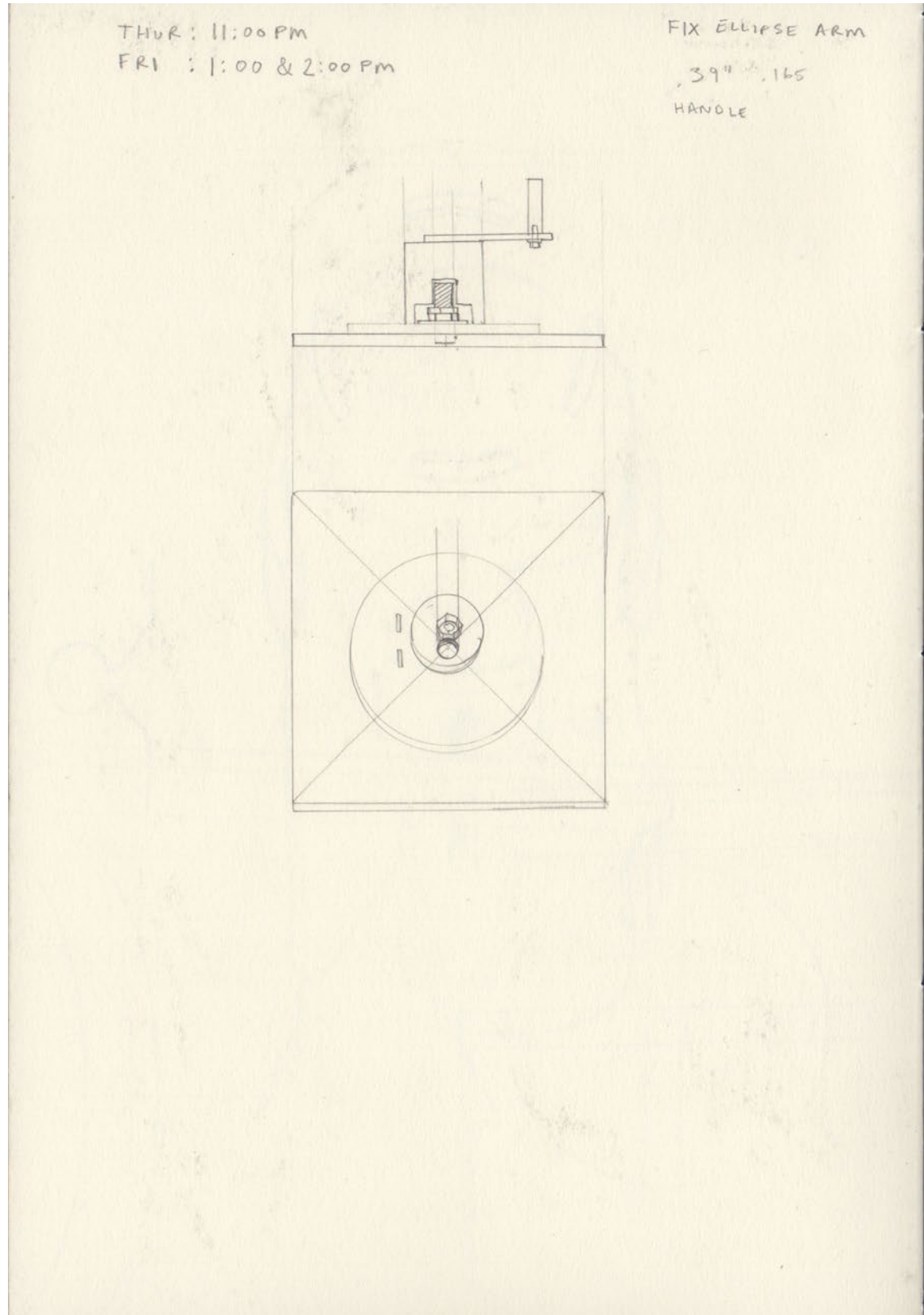
sketchbook excerpt two
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: head clamp concept sketch.
two: shoulder and head clamp with
orientation to the wall.
three: detail of clamp pad with ball joint.



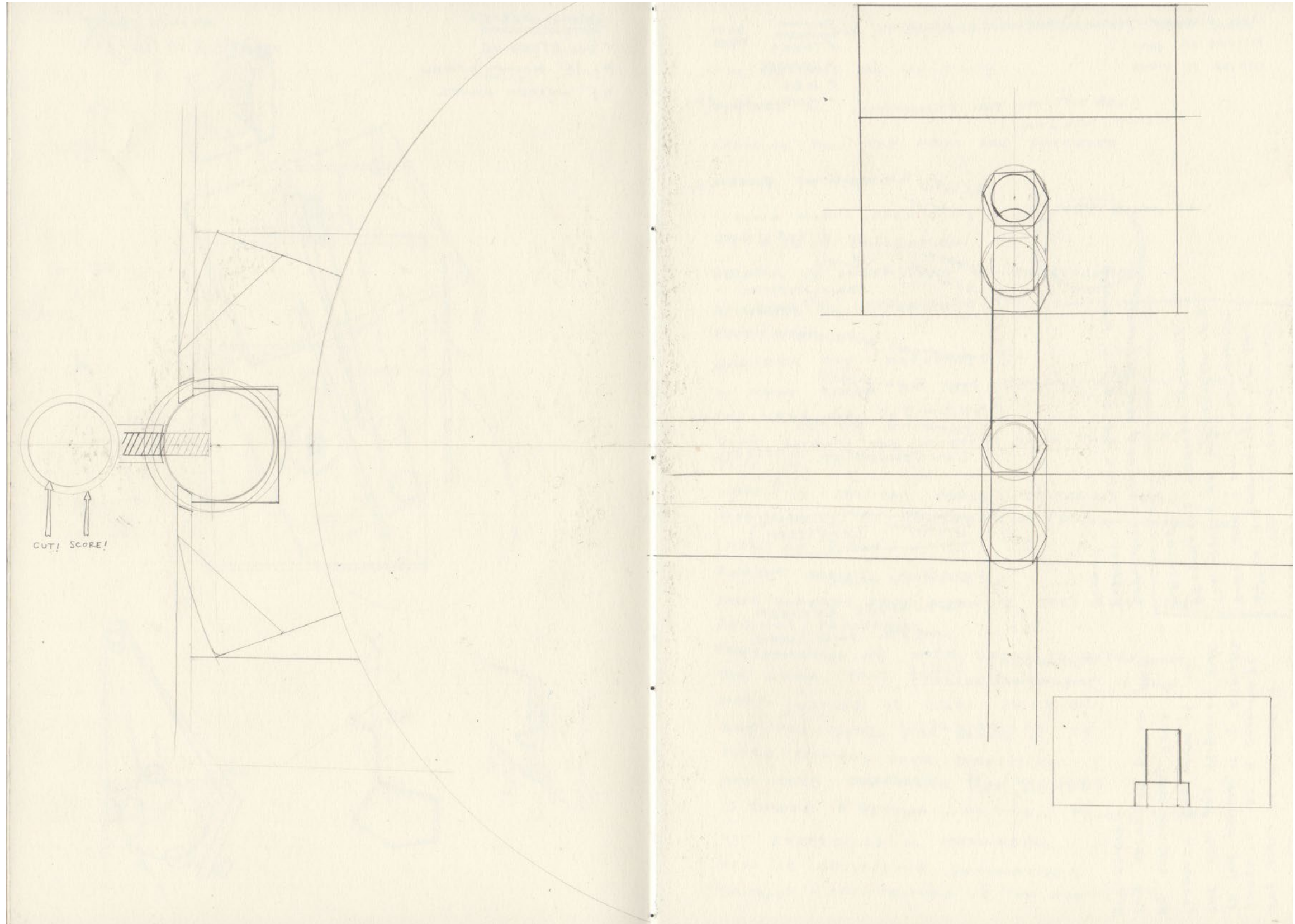
sketchbook excerpt two
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: head clamp concept sketch.
two: shoulder and head clamp with
orientation to the wall.
three: detail of clamp pad with ball joint.



sketchbook excerpt two
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: head clamp concept sketch.
two: shoulder and head clamp with
orientation to the wall.
three: detail of clamp pad with ball joint.

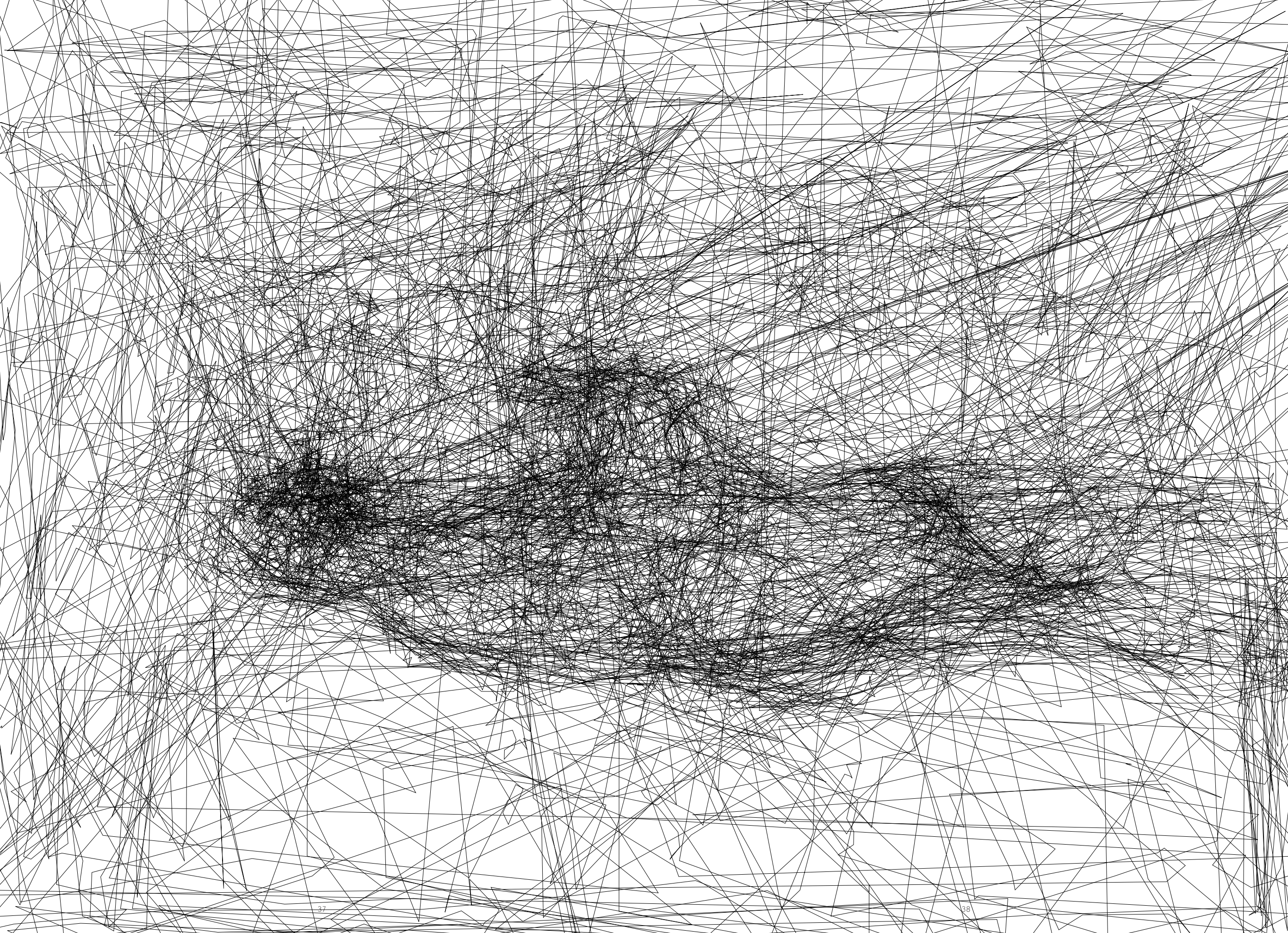


one hour the second
gaze drawing
digital



With vectors merged and movement sporadic,
the mediated output is obscured.

As machines are fundamentally geometric and
predictable, the mediated output is revealed.





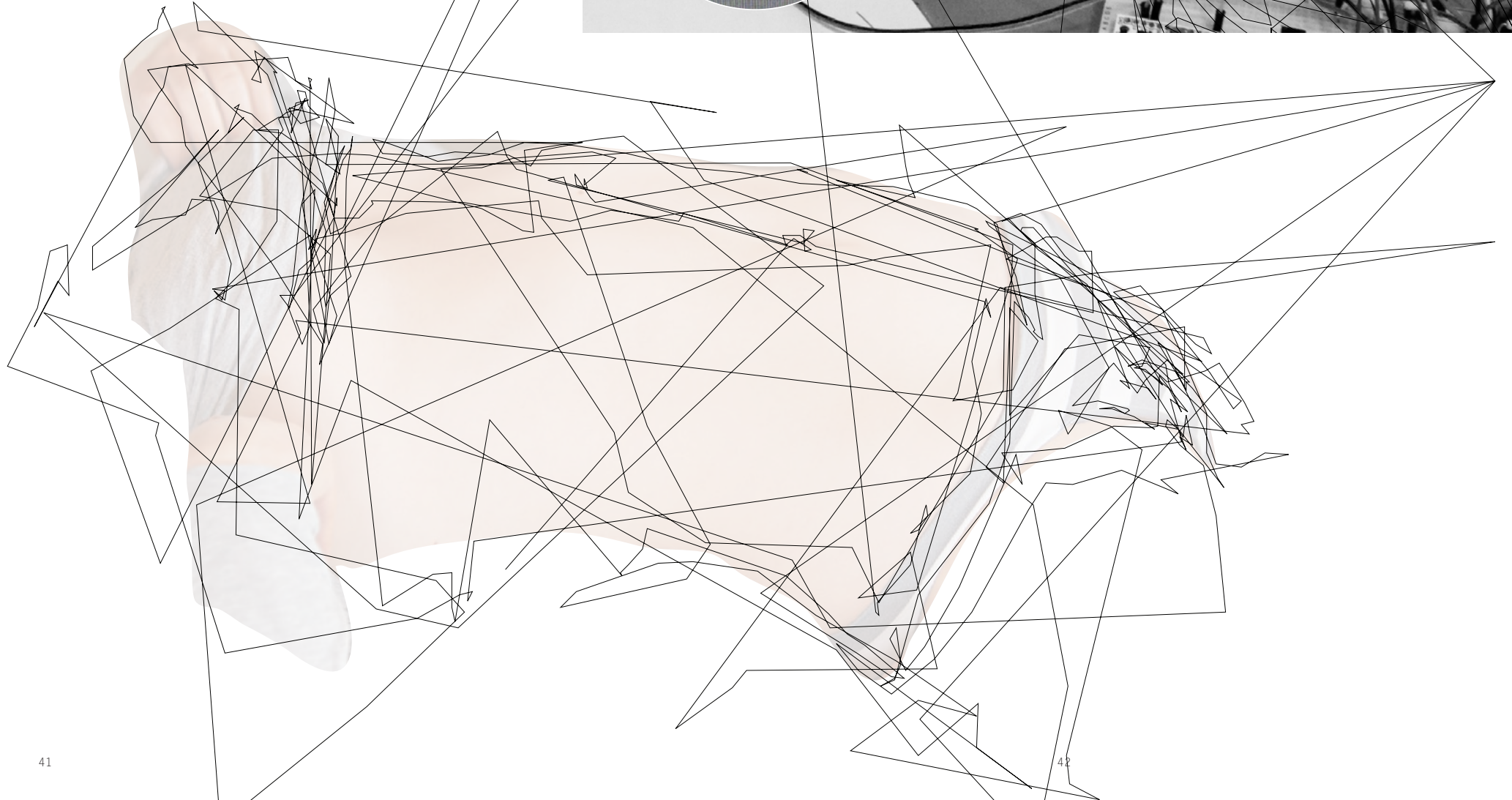
previous two pages:

leering at le corbusier
twelve hours of accumulation
inkjet on paper
24 X 36 inches

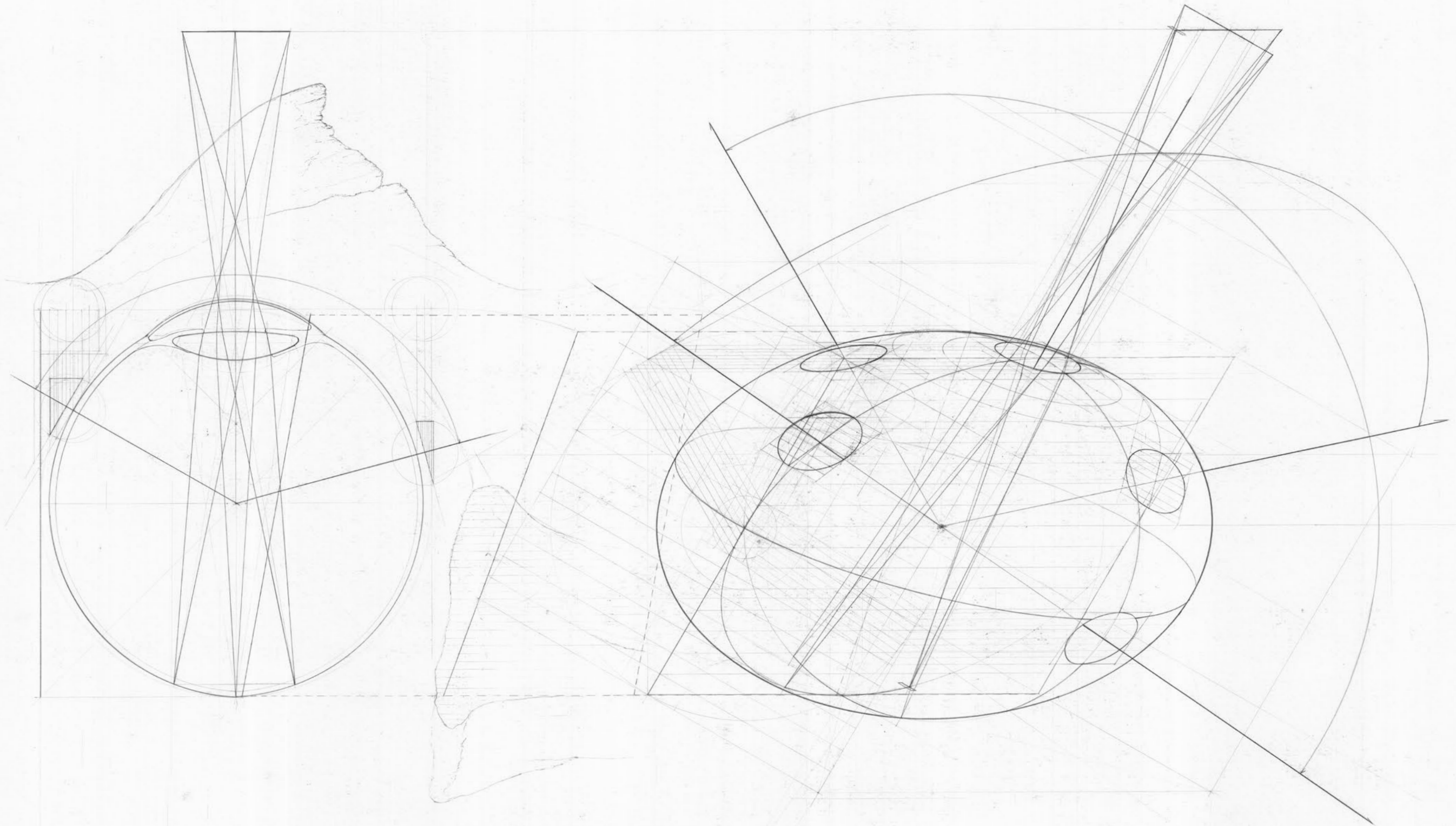
reference image for gaze recording:
le corbusier painting/vandalizing eileen
gray's villa.

next page:

extents of the eye
graphite on paper
19 X 24 inches



The location of my gaze is registered by the vertices of the lines. The points are recorded at frequent and regular intervals. A coherent image emerges from the chaotic accumulation: eyes darting wild and unconsciously back and forth.



PROSTHESIS

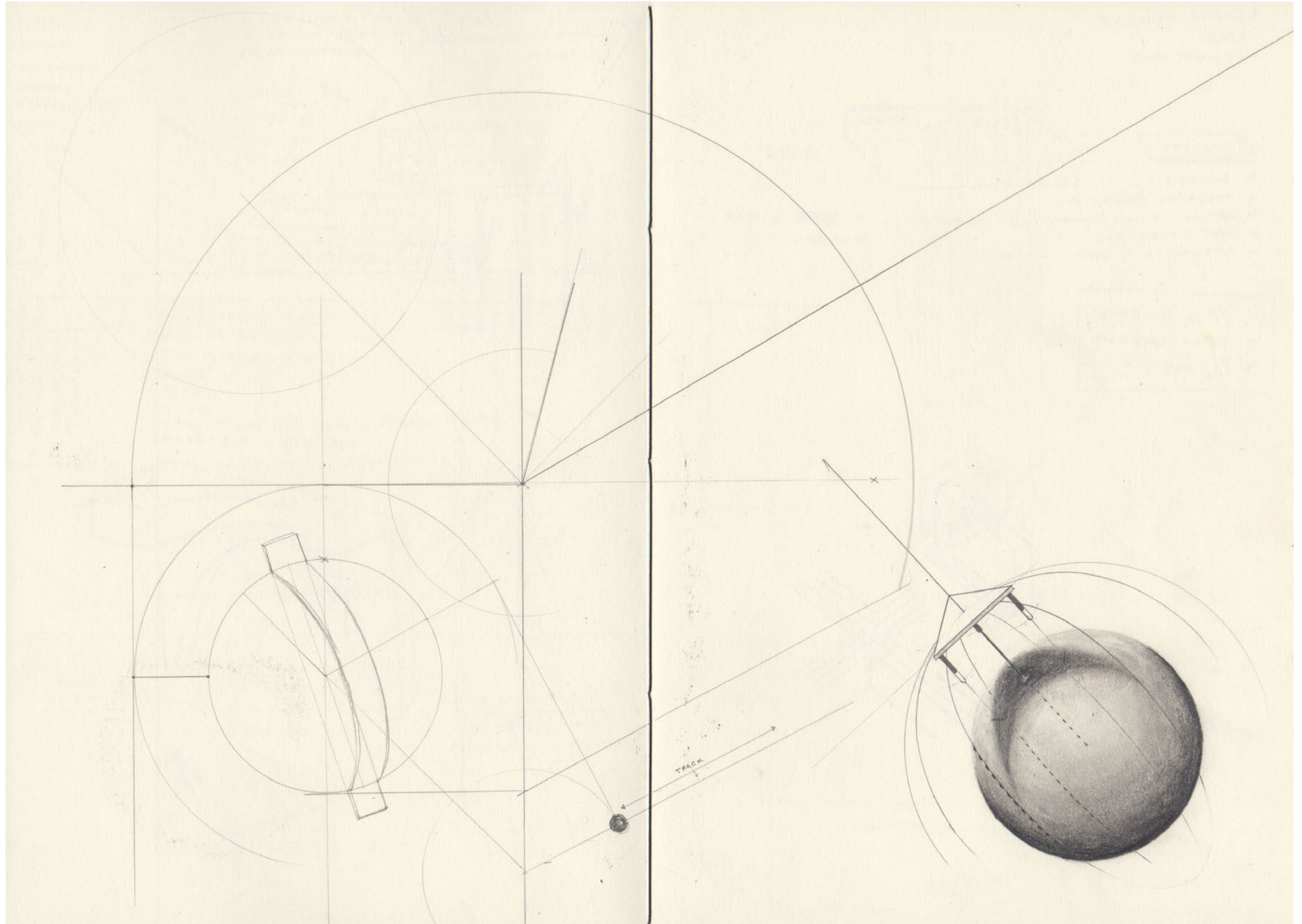
Nº 03

Move, measure, draw, print.

Materials: aluminum, brass, steel, birch plywood, nylon webbing, wool felt, cotton fabric, upholstery foam.

Date: 01.27.13

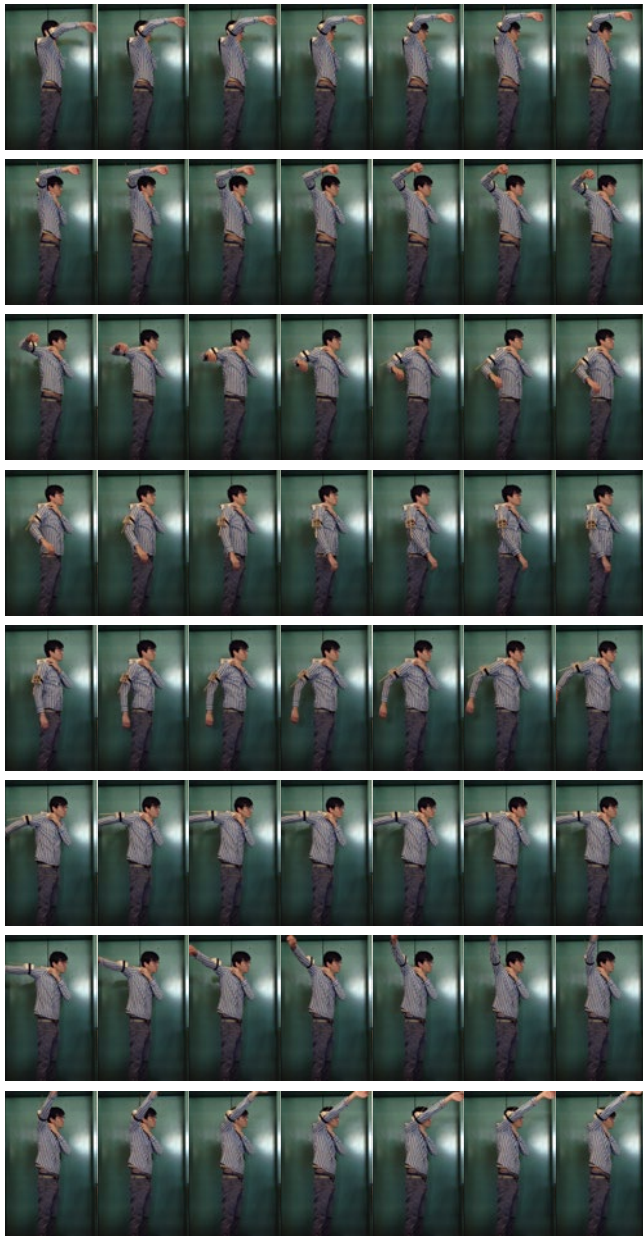






inscribed sphere one
intaglio on rives bfk
2 1/2 X 2 1/2

A sphere's surface and the geometry of lines incised within tolerates no other substrate. The consolidation of volume to plane through projection maintains only a single point of accuracy among an infinite field of perpetual swelling distortion.



movement captured
 video stills. complete shoulder rotation,
 incised into aluminum: abduction, flexion,
 extension, and circumduction.



joint detail
 mechanism for the making of record, line,
 and embedded measurement.



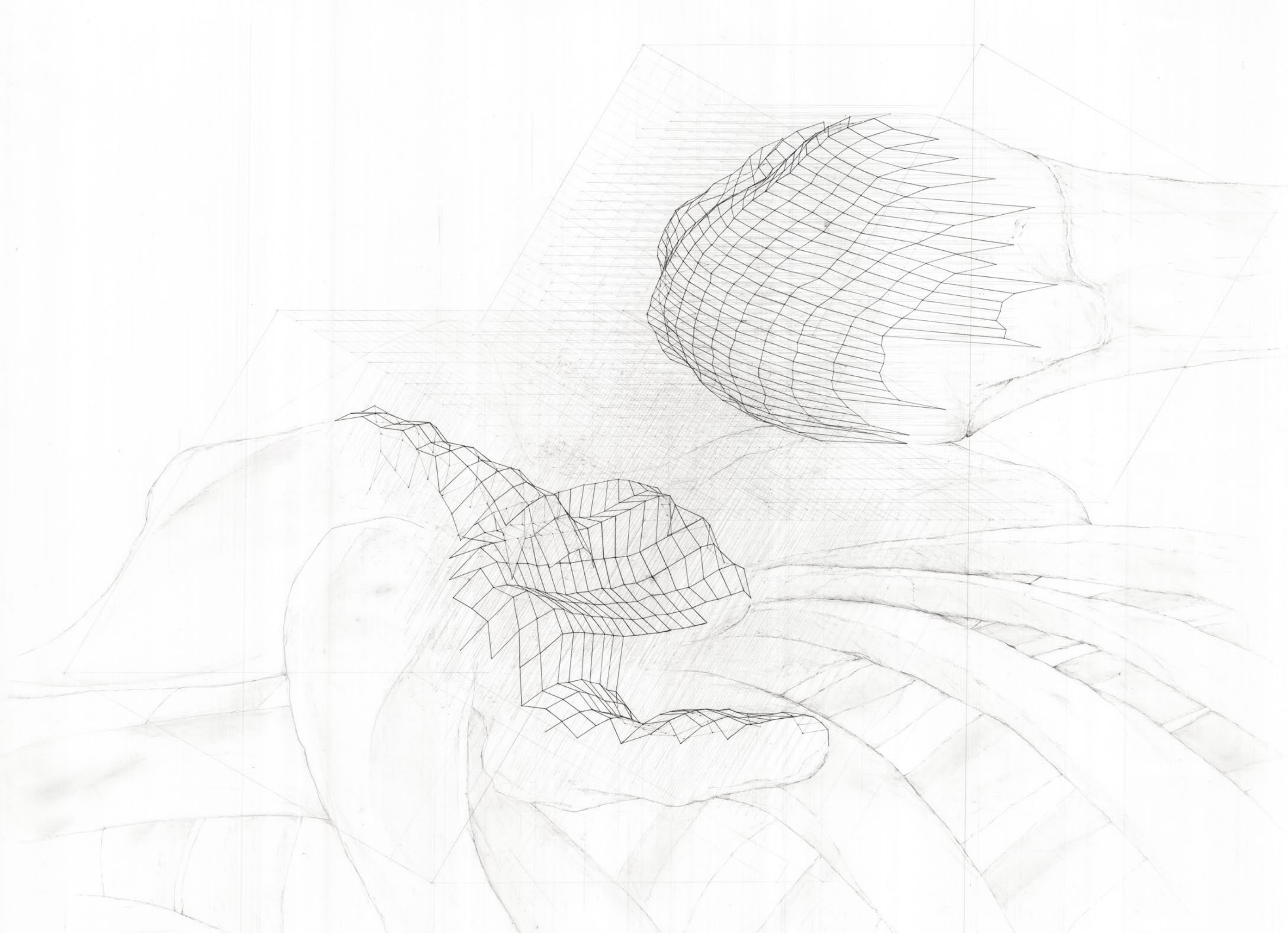
sphere detail
 the tracing yet undistorted.

printing process
 unrolling the line inscribed on the sphere
 to a plane through intaglio. a steady hand
 rolling concentrically

next page:

shoulder geometry
 graphite on paper
 19 X 24 inches

Many sections measured and drafted
 to recreate the surface geometry of the
 humeral head, acromion, and glenoid,
 which determines the shoulder's
 movement and range.



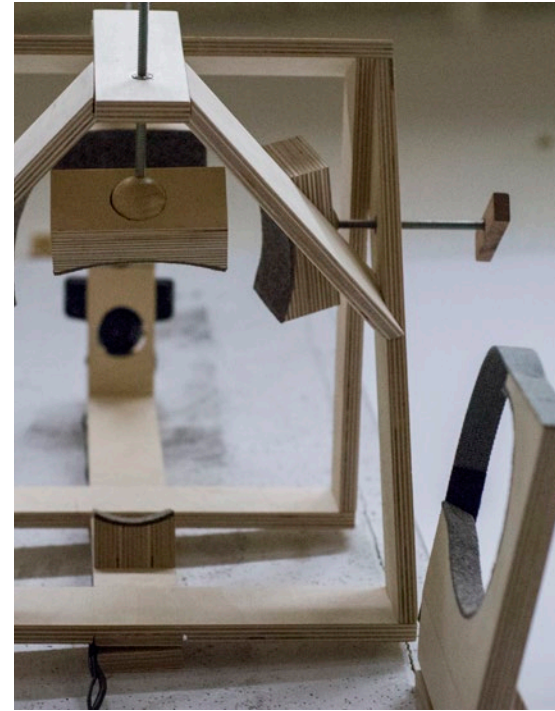
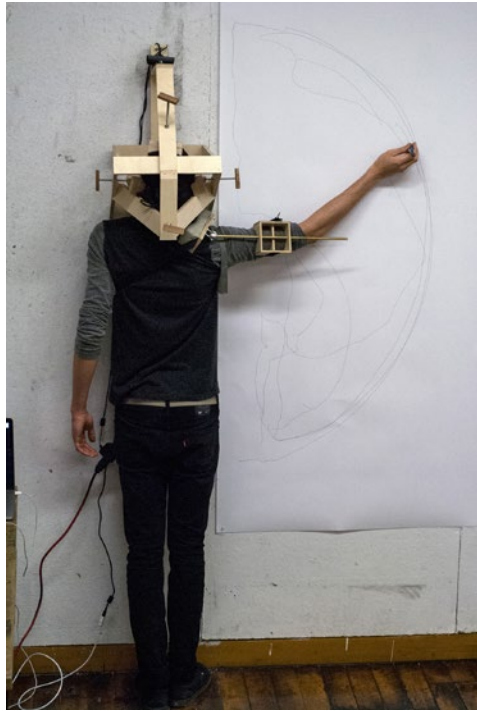


contemporaneous drawing
video still
digital

From precise stillness comes imprecise motion and the record of its progression. The simultaneity of many drawings provides the first point from which to establish further associations between the varied components.

Integrate and compare the processes and results. Simultaneously drawing with many means in one event: gaze, shoulder scribe, restricted full scale arm drawing. The head clamp fixes the eye's position to the camera and the body's position to the wall.

The components collapse. The shifting eyes and line of sight, the ball at the fulcrum of a pivoting bar, and the humerus extending from and revolving about the shoulder joint are all conflated. Their stable structures, the hood, the shoulder pad, and the skeleton provide a reference. They are the datum.



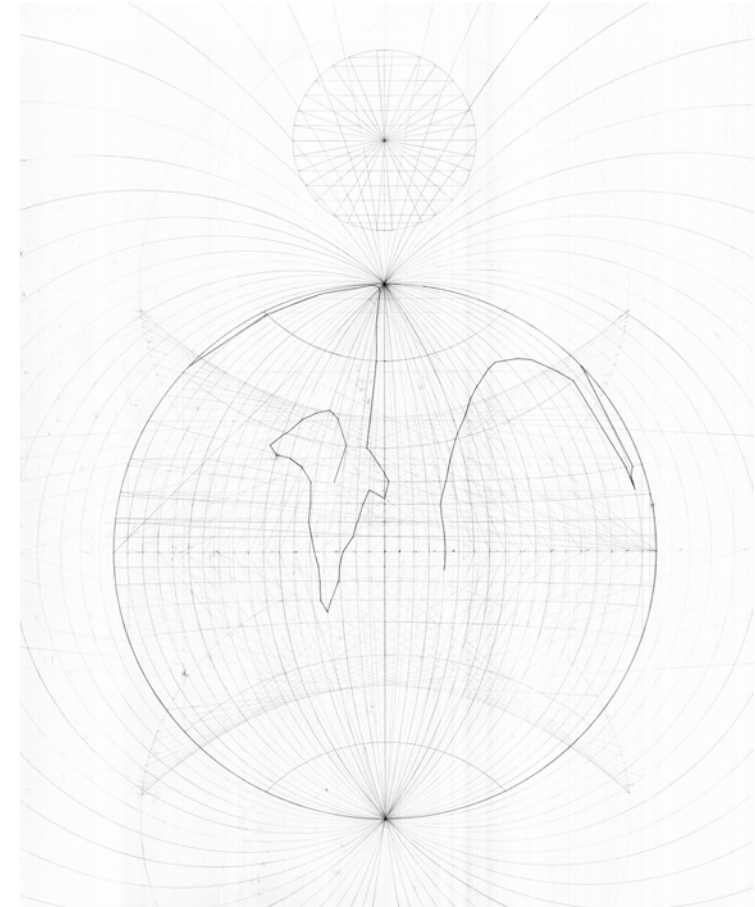
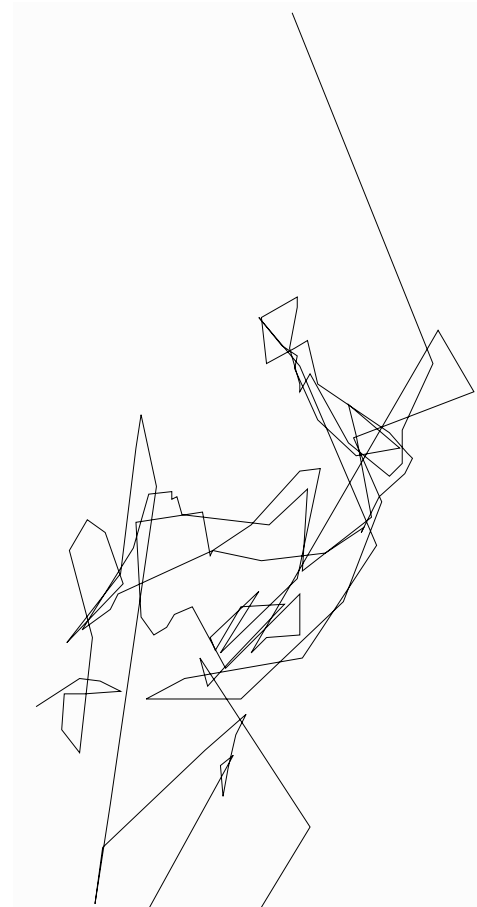
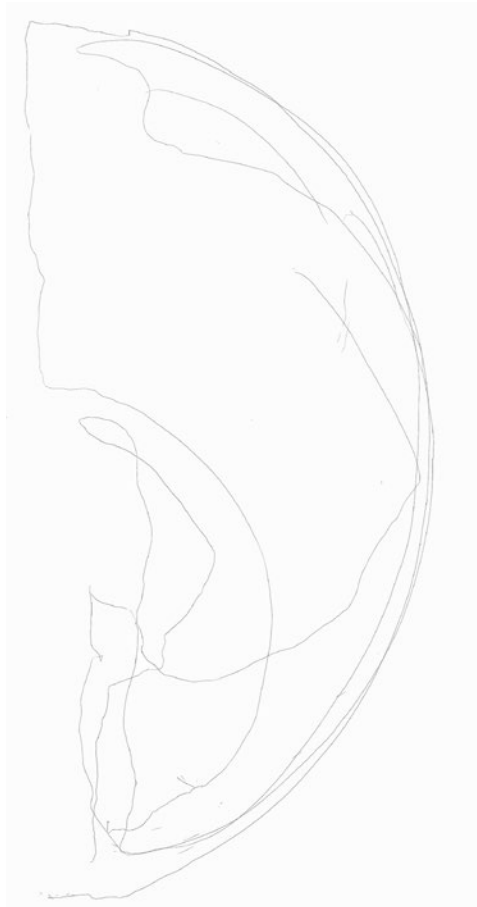
left to right

the arm
pen on paper
36 X 72 inches
outward and inward limits, it's range and extents at full scale.

gaze drawing
digital

shoulder joint print
intaglio on rives bfk
2 1/2 X 2 1/2

spherical projection
graphite on paper
19 X 24 inches
the line on the surface of the shoulder joint drawing mechanism transposed onto a plane.



PROSTHESIS
№ 04
Extend. Tolerance distortion.

Materials: poplar, birch plywood, wool
felt, cotton webbing, stainless
steel.

Date: 03.12.13

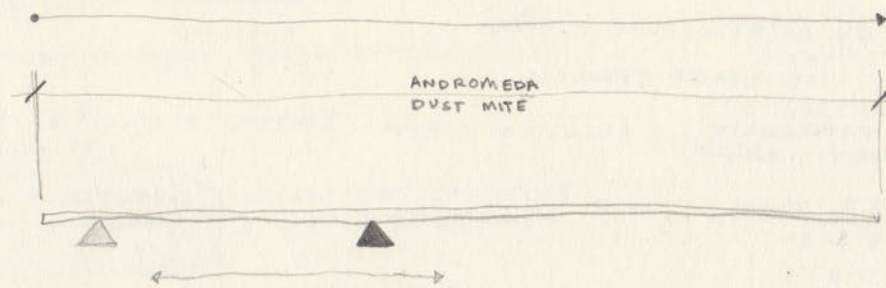


EXTEND DISTANCE AND ANGLE

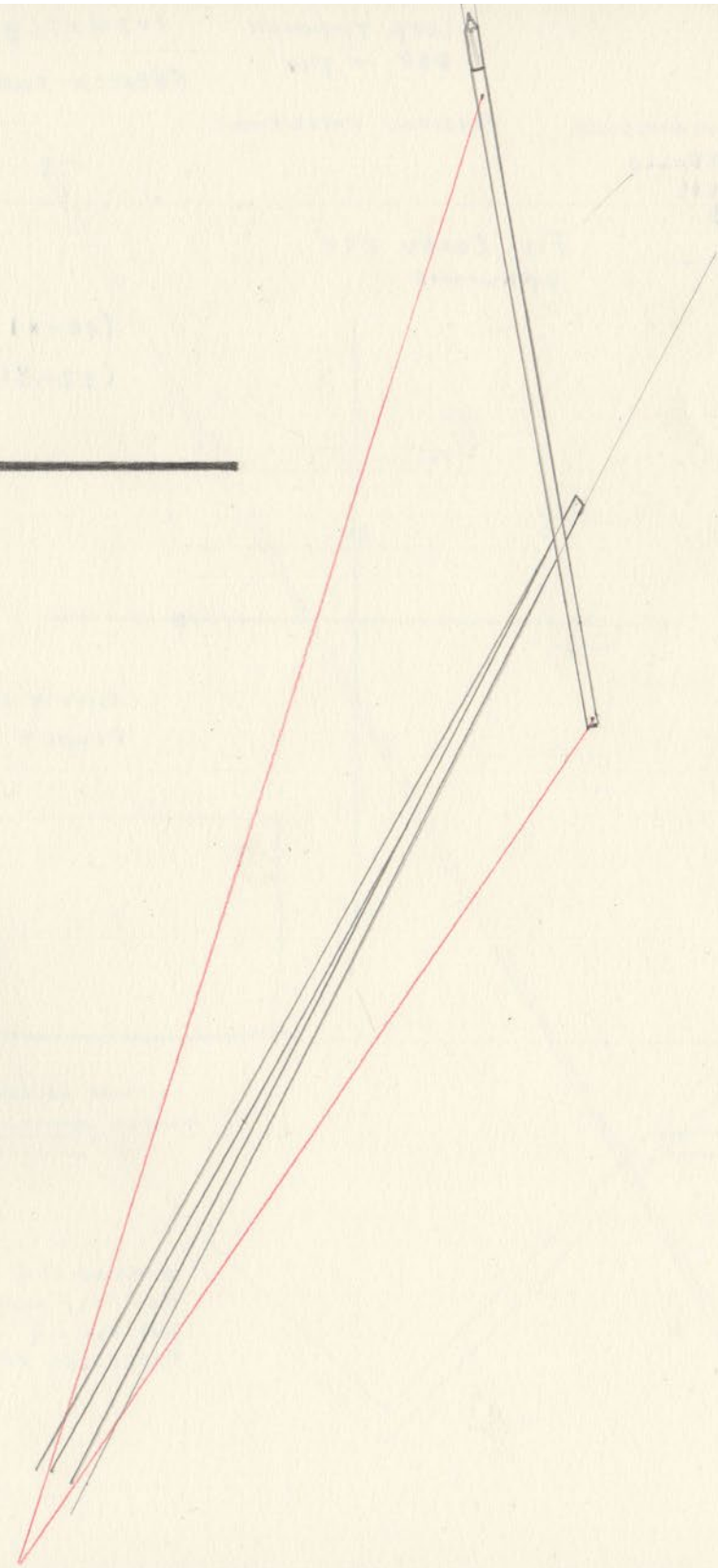
THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

OF WHAT? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

SCALE - EASE - TOLERANCE BETWEEN SCALES
TOLERANCE - EYE
TIME
STRUGGLE - AUTHORSHIP
MY ROLE IN USE
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY / NOT SAYING
FOUND WAY TO MOVE THROUGH SCALES / TURN CORNER,
FATTEN SPINES / PUSH BODY TO PICTURE PLANE
THERE ARE WORDS THAT HAVEN'T BEEN VITIBERD,
THE FRAME

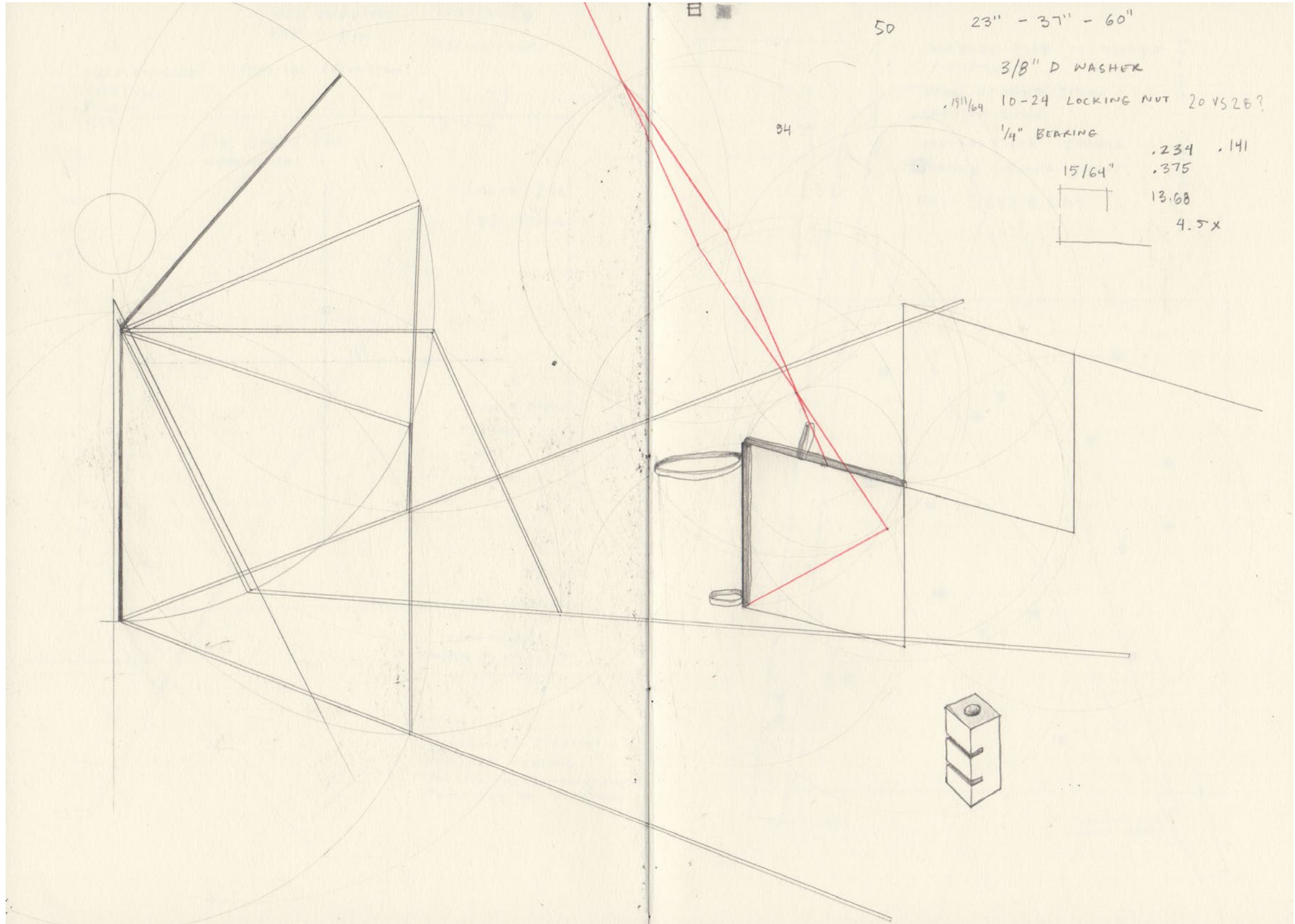


THIS DIAGRAM IS SCALELESS
AS THE FULCRUM MOVES TO ONE EXTREME, THE FORCE
REQUIRED TO ACT ON THE LEVER APPROACHES INFINITY.
FAR BEFORE THAT, THE ULNA BREAKS APART



sketchbook excerpt four
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: concepts initiating the extension arm.
two: testing geometries and function.
three: text of striking coincidence.



For those who have carefully studied living beings and the forms they take, it is rare — and only in the case of the vertebrates — that one notices any truly mechanical attributes, at least in the sense that the term is commonly understood by scientists. In *La Pensée technique*, for example, Julien Pacotte notes that movements of the joints and the eyeball can be paralleled with what mathematicians call a “mechanism.”² A machine can be defined as a man-made, artificial construction, which essentially functions by virtue of mechanical operations. A mechanism is made of a group of mobile solid parts that work together in such a way that their movement does not threaten the integrity of the unit as a whole. A mechanism therefore consists of movable parts that work together and periodically return to a set relation with respect to each other. It consists of interlinking parts, each of which has a determinable degree of freedom of movement: for example, both a pendulum and a cam valve have one degree of freedom of movement, whereas a threaded screw has two. The fact that these varying degrees of freedom of movement can be quantified means that they can serve as tangible guides for measuring, for setting limits on the amount of movement that can be expected between any two interacting solid objects. In every machine, then, movement is a function, first, of the way the parts interact and, second, of the mechanical operations of the overall unit.³

Mechanics is governed by the principle that every movement of a machine is geometric and measurable.



the stage
process image
digital

A mechanism to change scale. Feel the consequences and mark them. Twelve feet high or fifty, coherence dissolves steadily and reliably in the physical transmission.

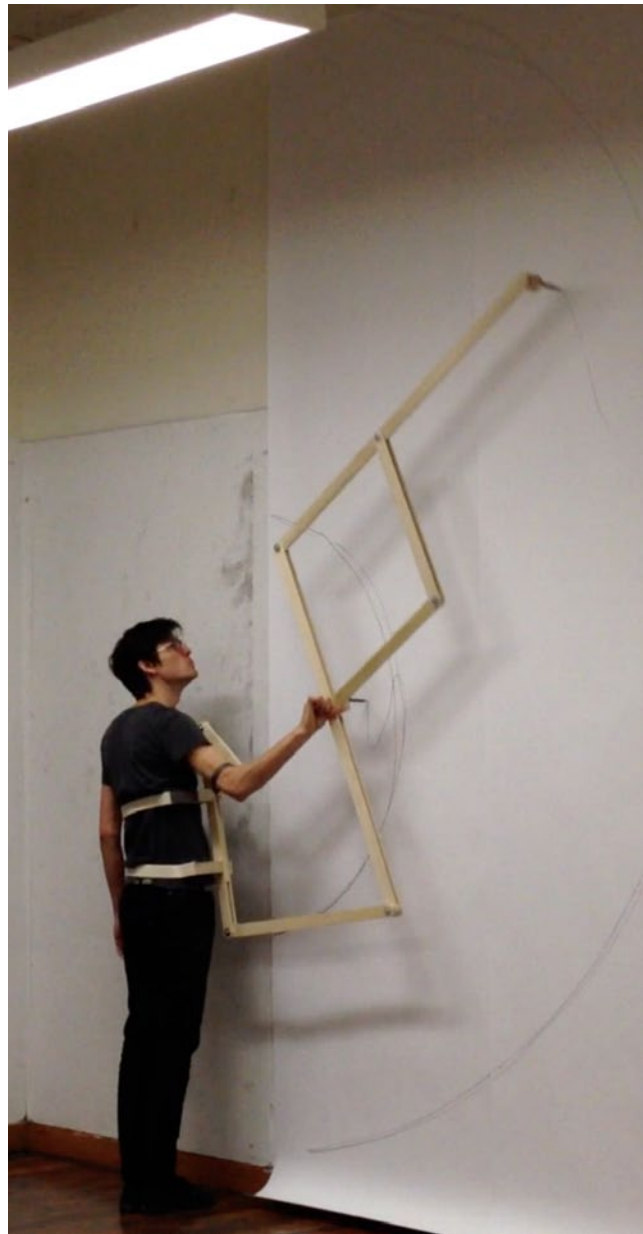
reach
video still depicting the elbow joint.
digital

reach
video still at full extension.
digital

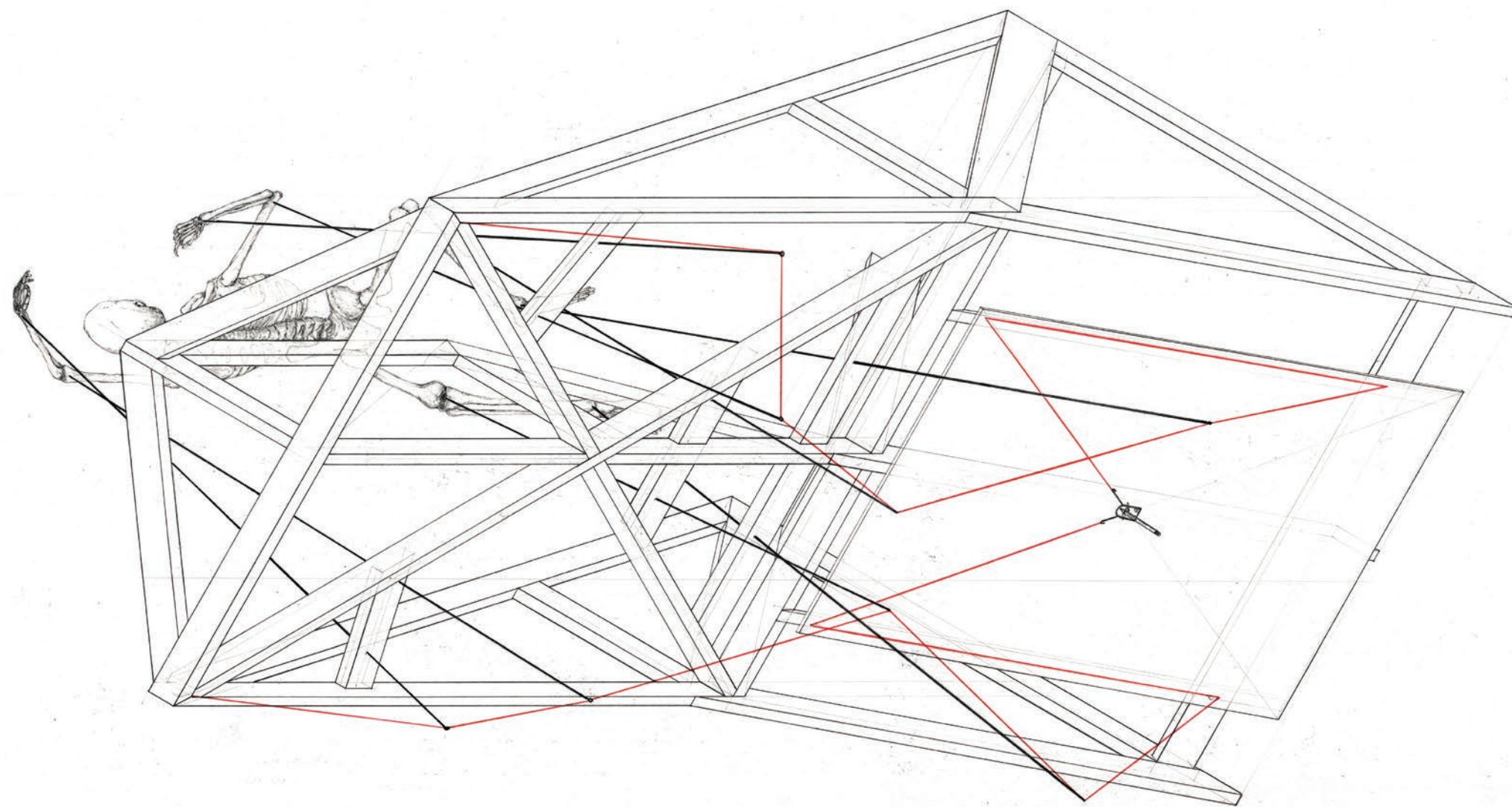
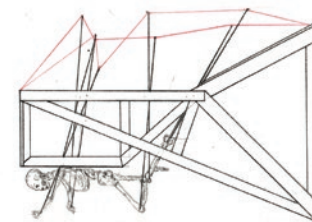
reach
ink on paper
72 X 144 inches

next page:

ascension in stasis
graphite on paper
19 X 24 inches



Arm extension drawing apparatus. Maximum reach of just over twelve feet. Its elbow joint allows for more varied and controlled movement. A pen is placed at the hand and at the outer limit of the structure. The duplication is not exact due to inherent distortion resulting from the device's geometry and the amplification of imprecision at the farthest extent.



PROSTHESIS
№ 05
Writhe.

Materials: lumber, plywood, steel,
monofilament, particle board,
cement, aluminum, wool felt,
cotton webbing

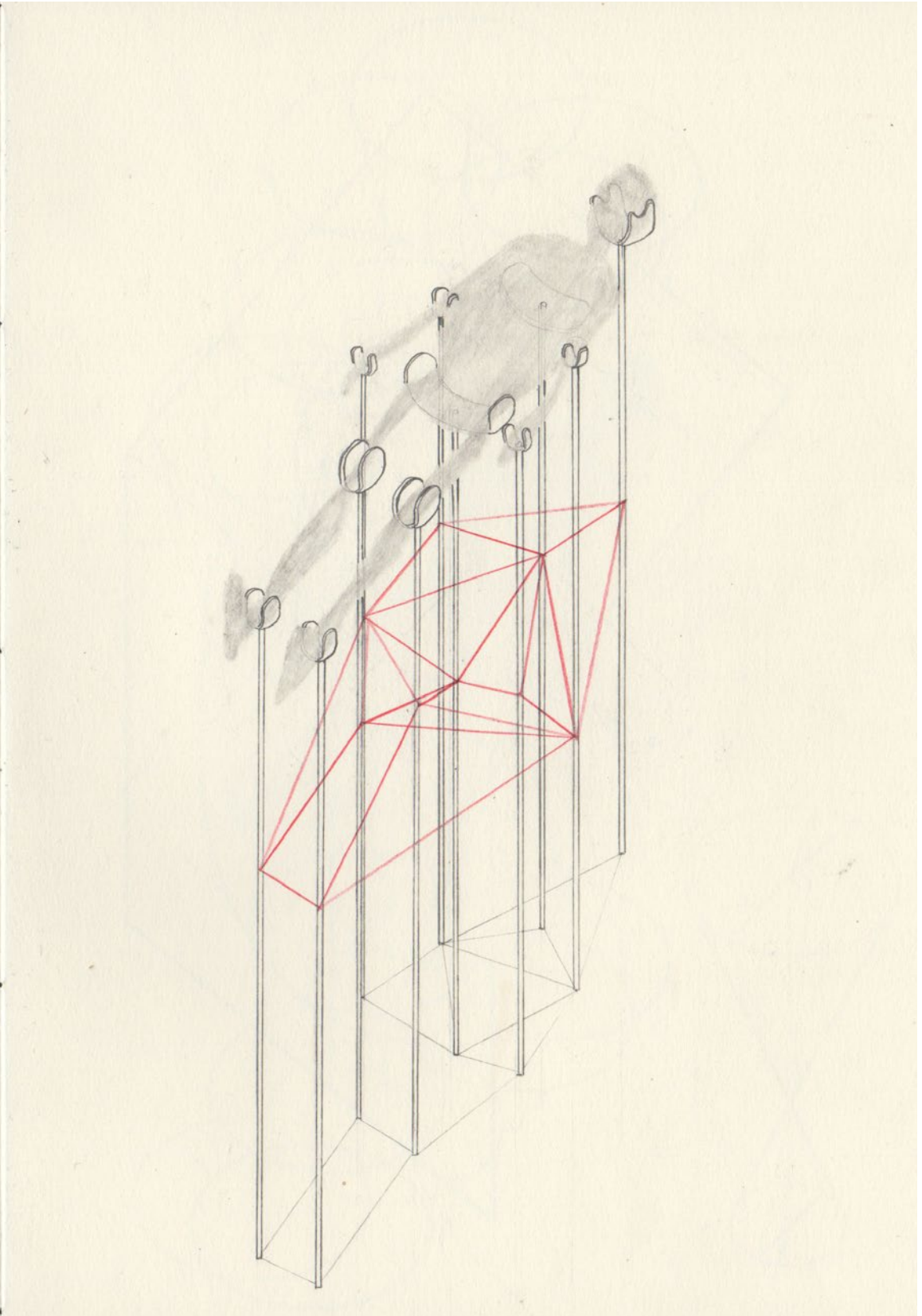
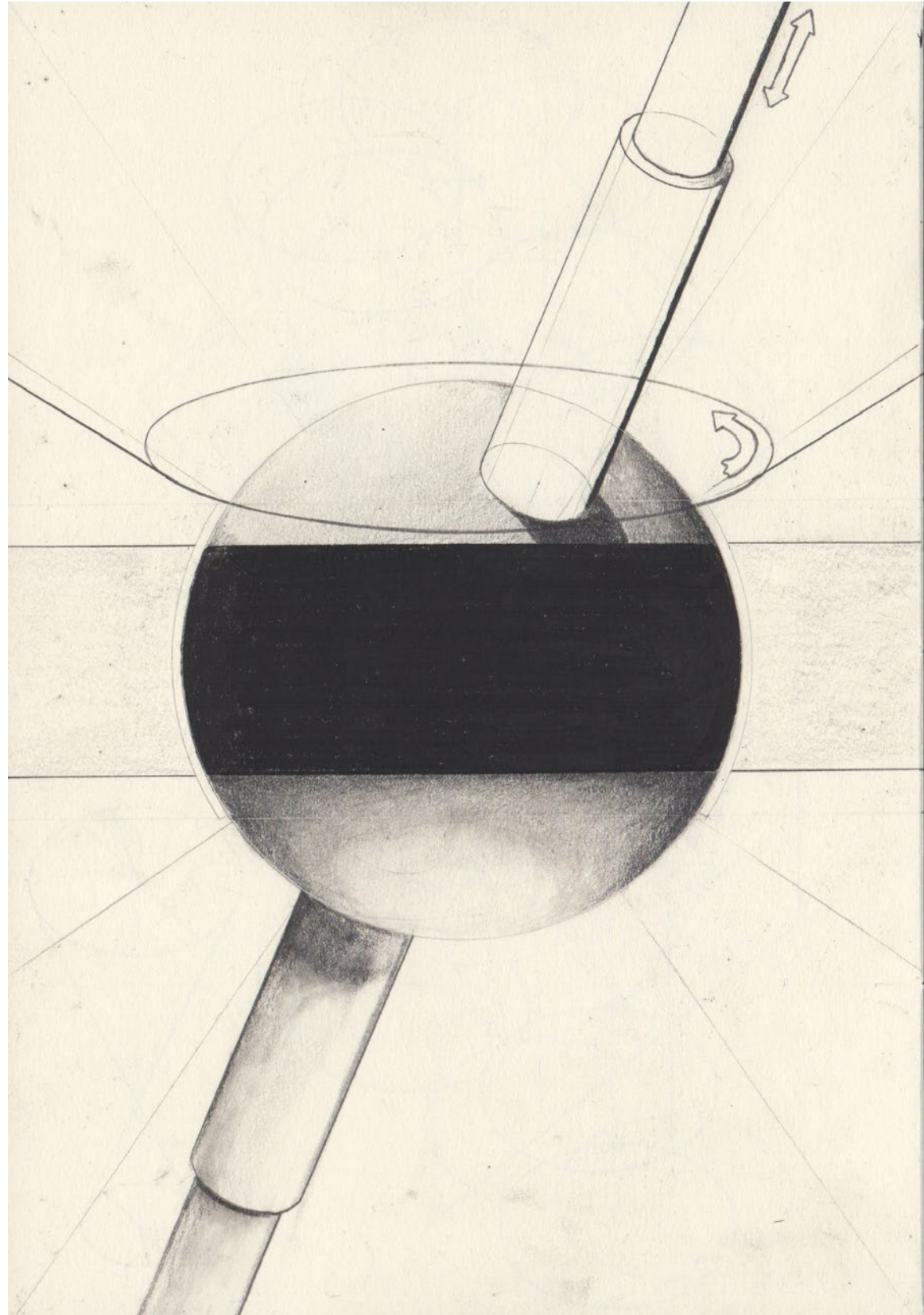
Date: 05.05.13



sketchbook excerpt five
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: joint to register three dimensional
movement. diagram of motion
consolidation through string.
two: fulcrums changing scales of
movement. amplify or dampen.

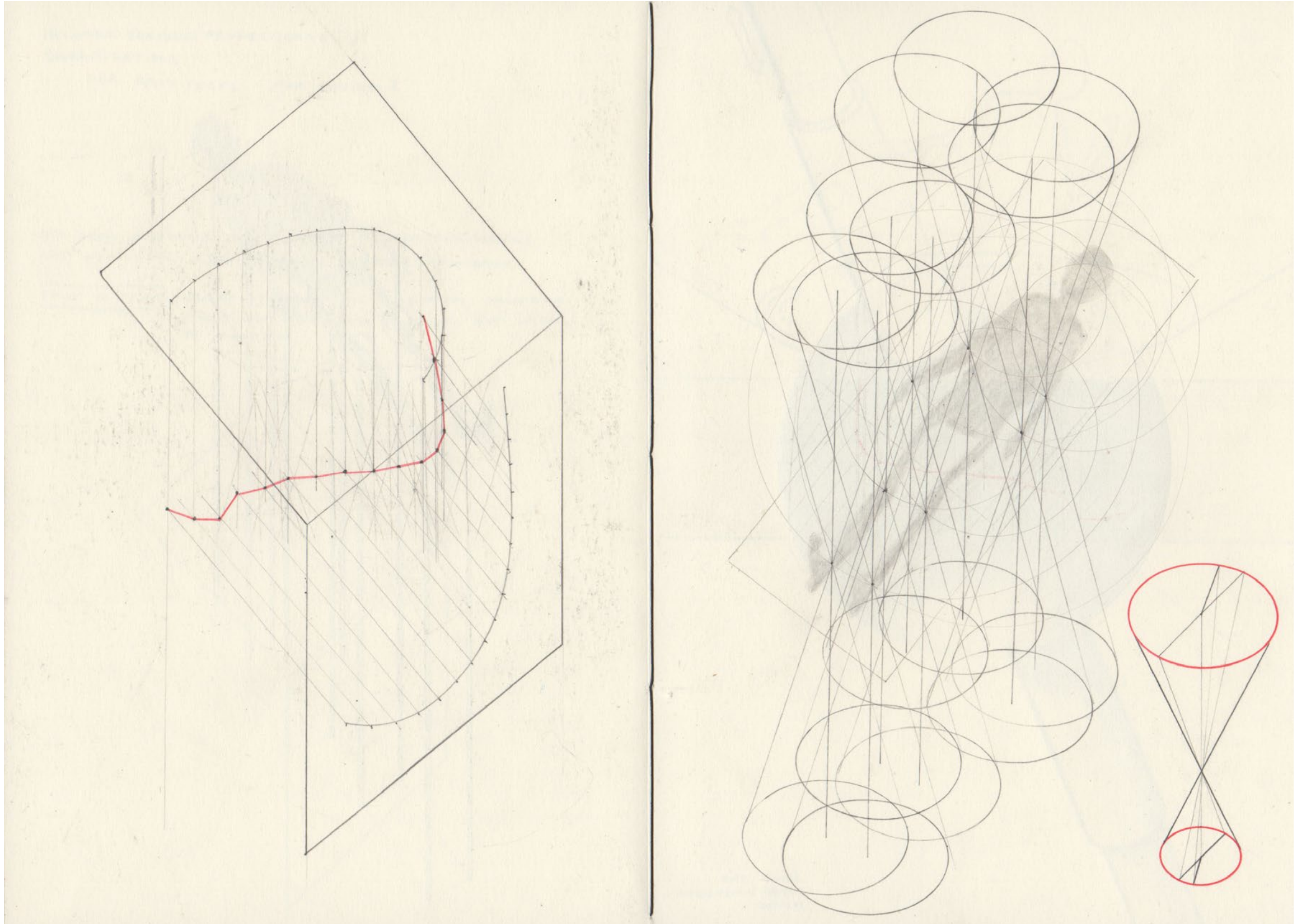
three: associations drawn between the
eye, the joint, and projections beyond.



sketchbook excerpt five
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: joint to register three dimensional
movement. diagram of motion
consolidation through string.
two: fulcrums changing scales of
movement. amplify or dampen.

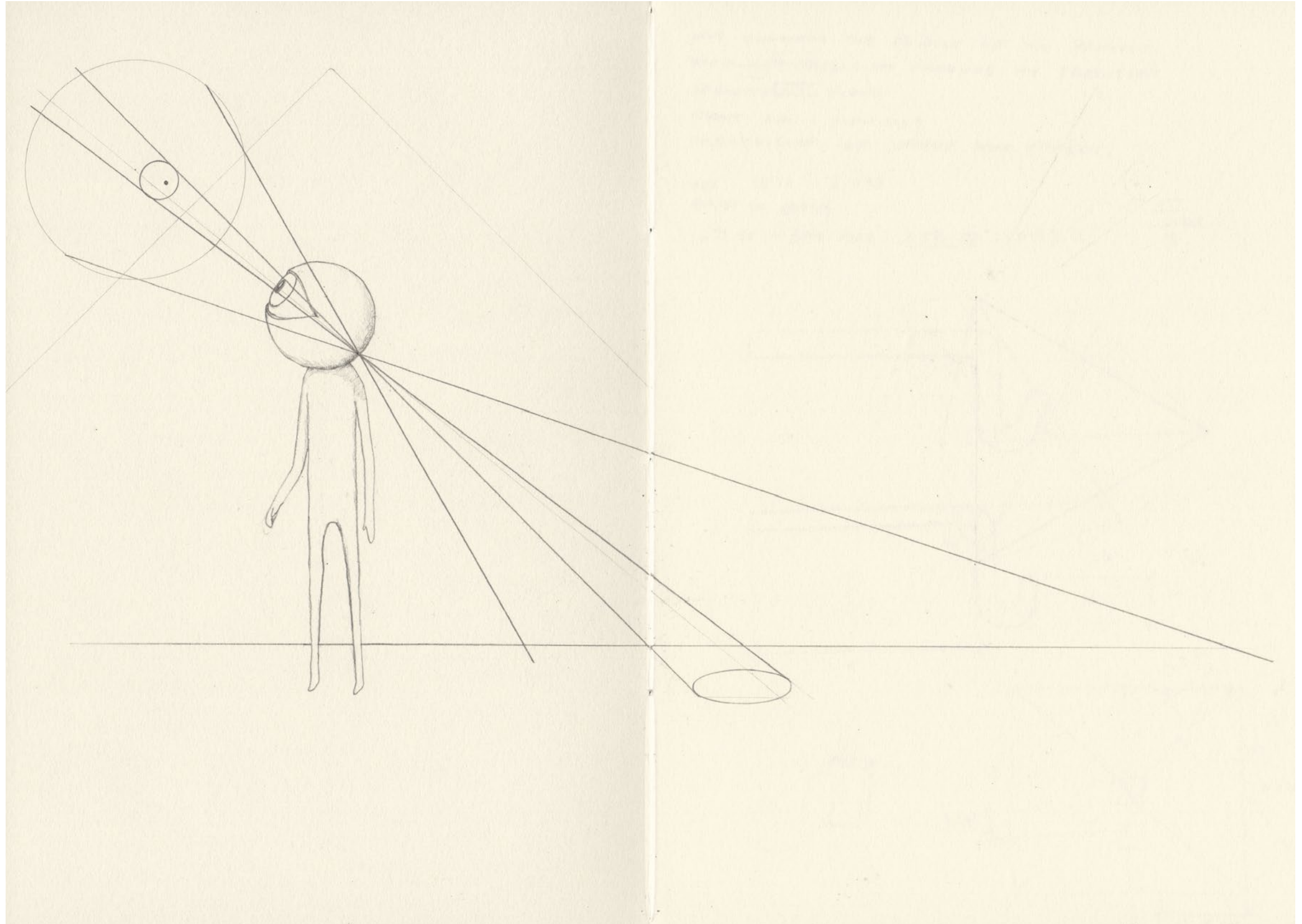
three: associations drawn between the
eye, the joint, and projections beyond.



sketchbook excerpt five
graphite on paper
6 X 8 5/8 inches

one: joint to register three dimensional
movement. diagram of motion
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two: fulcrums changing scales of
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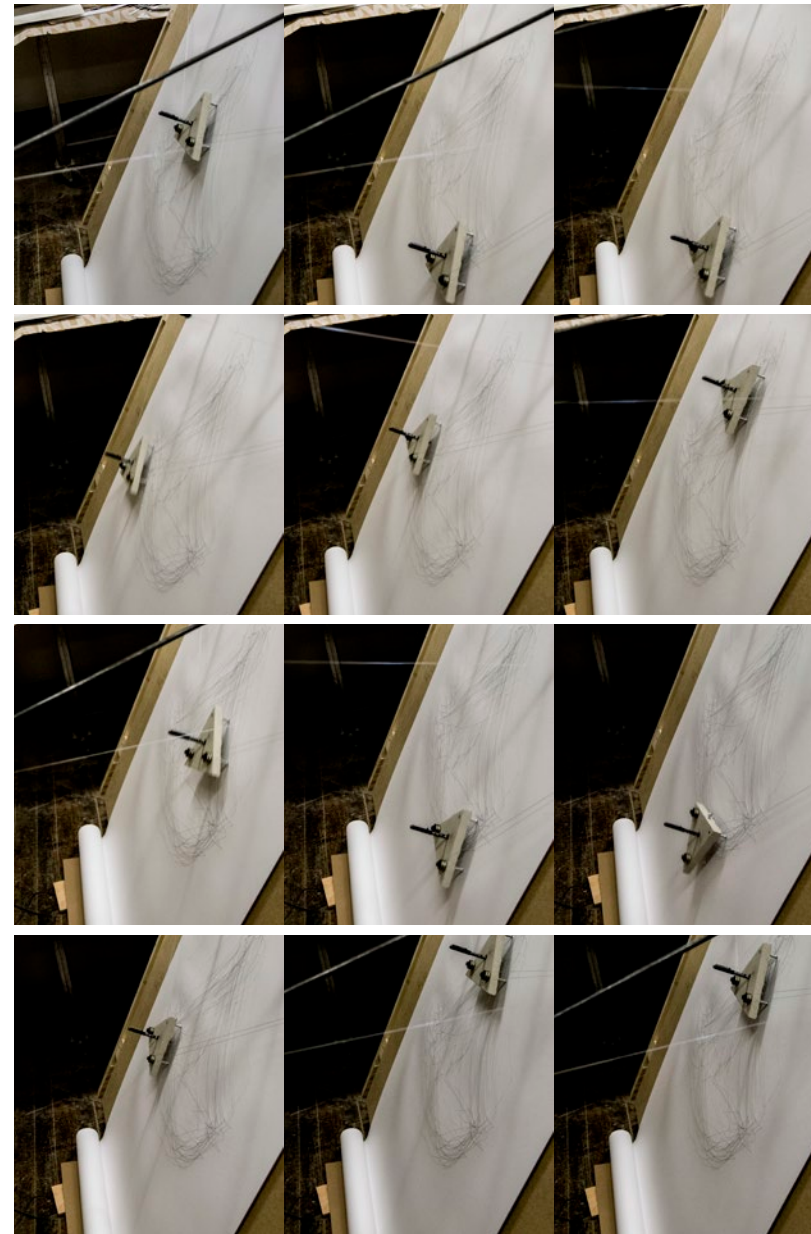
three: associations drawn between the
eye, the joint, and projections beyond.





ascension
process image
digital

Be fastened, be unfettered. Be deliberate;
restraint is shifted, but conserved. Distance from
the ground's stable equilibrium sets the body into
chaos. The more narrowly removed, the more
harm is quickened.



Three dimensional full body movement is condensed into a single line. Eight vectors project and pivot through the plane behind. Their points in space all relative to each other constantly varies with movement. This change is harnessed with a cord which terminates at a pen.

drawing front view
process image
digital

drawing back view
process image
digital

mechanism for drawing
process image
digital

point of convergence
sequential images
digital

next page:
in stasis
process image
digital



datum
ink on paper
42 X 48 inches

dense
ink on paper
42 X 48 inches

triangle
ink on paper
42 X 48 inches

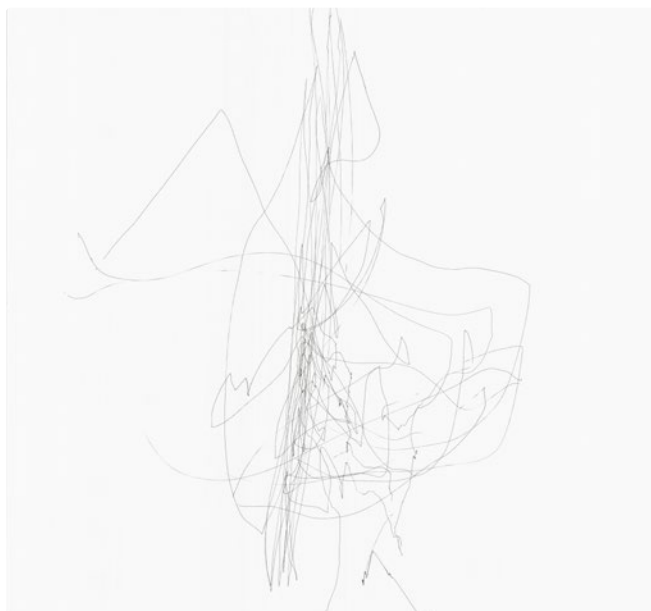
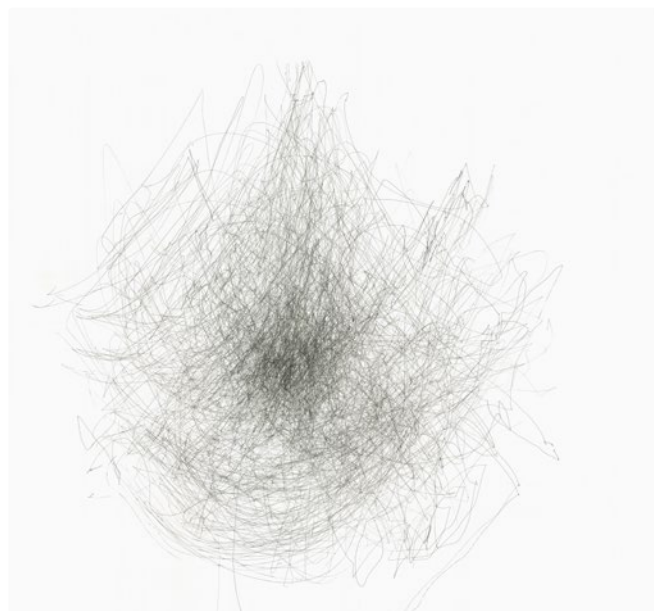
free movement
ink on paper
36 X 48 inches

circle
ink on paper
42 X 48 inches

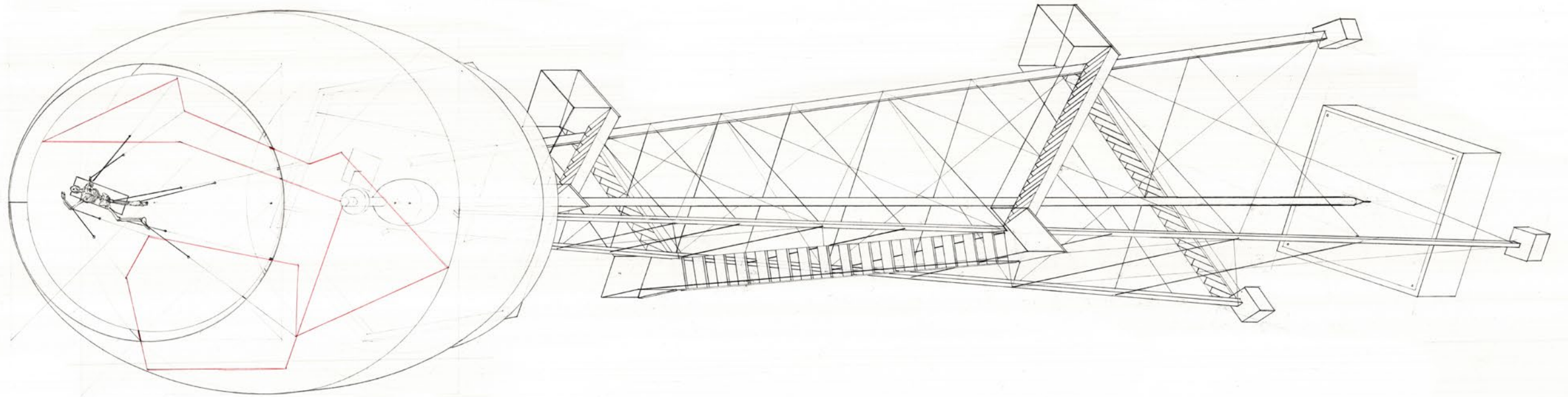
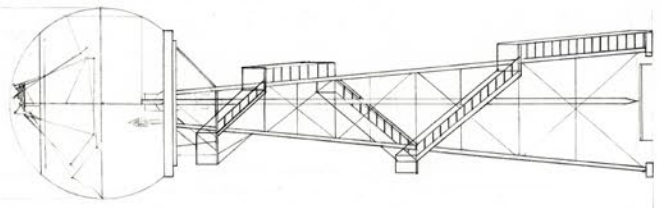
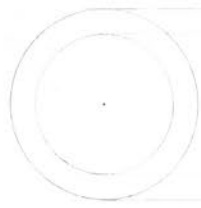
next page:

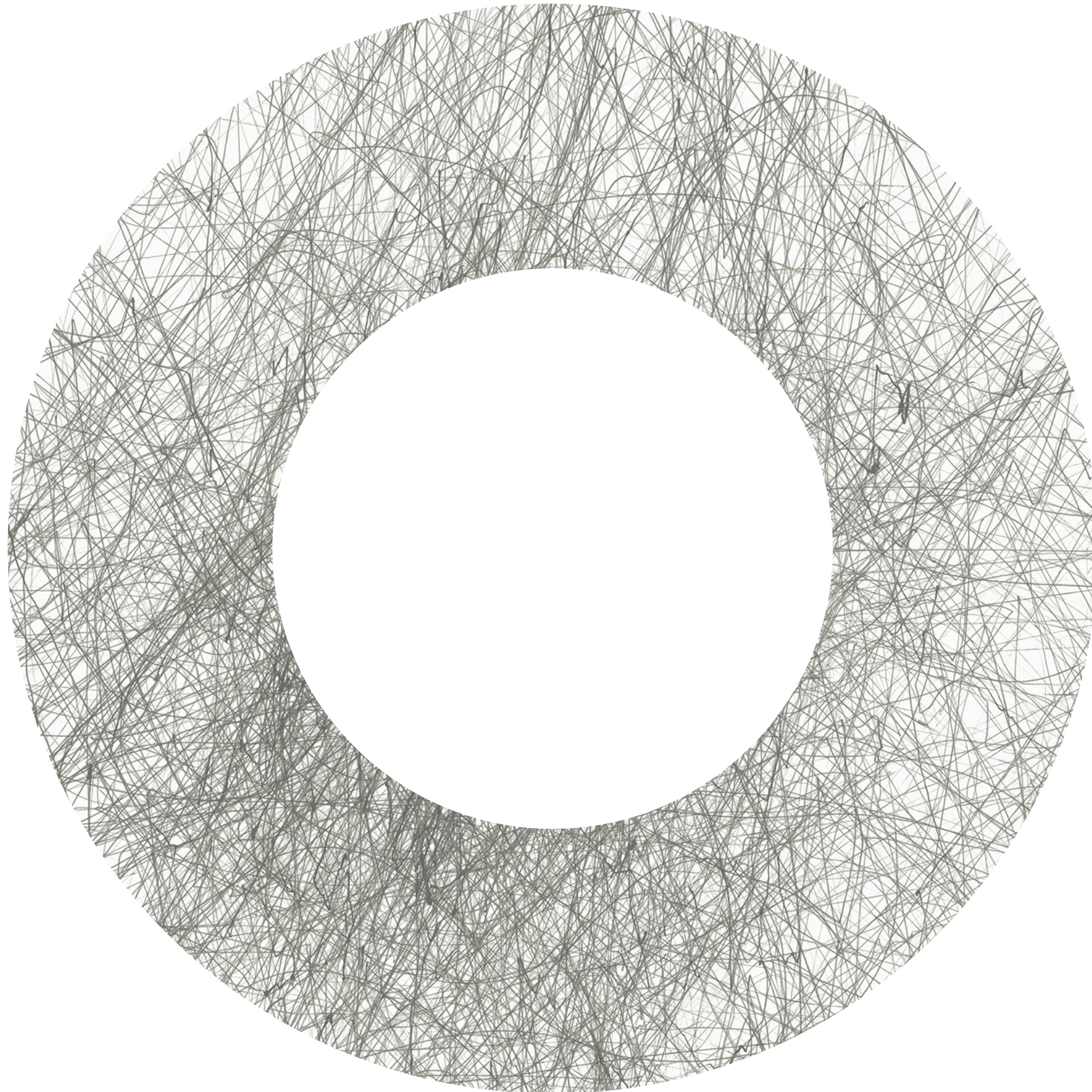
space collapsing
graphite on paper
19 X 24 inches

In a radar tower languishing since World War II, new projections unfold. The body is perched high above, seated in the vacancy of the dome. Arms and legs are connected via cables and pulleys to the top of a 75 foot long steel rod. Its fulcrum sits just below. Two drawings are made, one at the top of the rod and one at the bottom. The top drawing is effectively a point. The bottom is the amplification and distortion revealing the hidden complexity of the point.



With the body and machine, there is omniscience. Collective knowledge, impossibly complete, shapes the wild outcome where great clarity begets incredible obscurity.





Burgess Voshell
2013

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