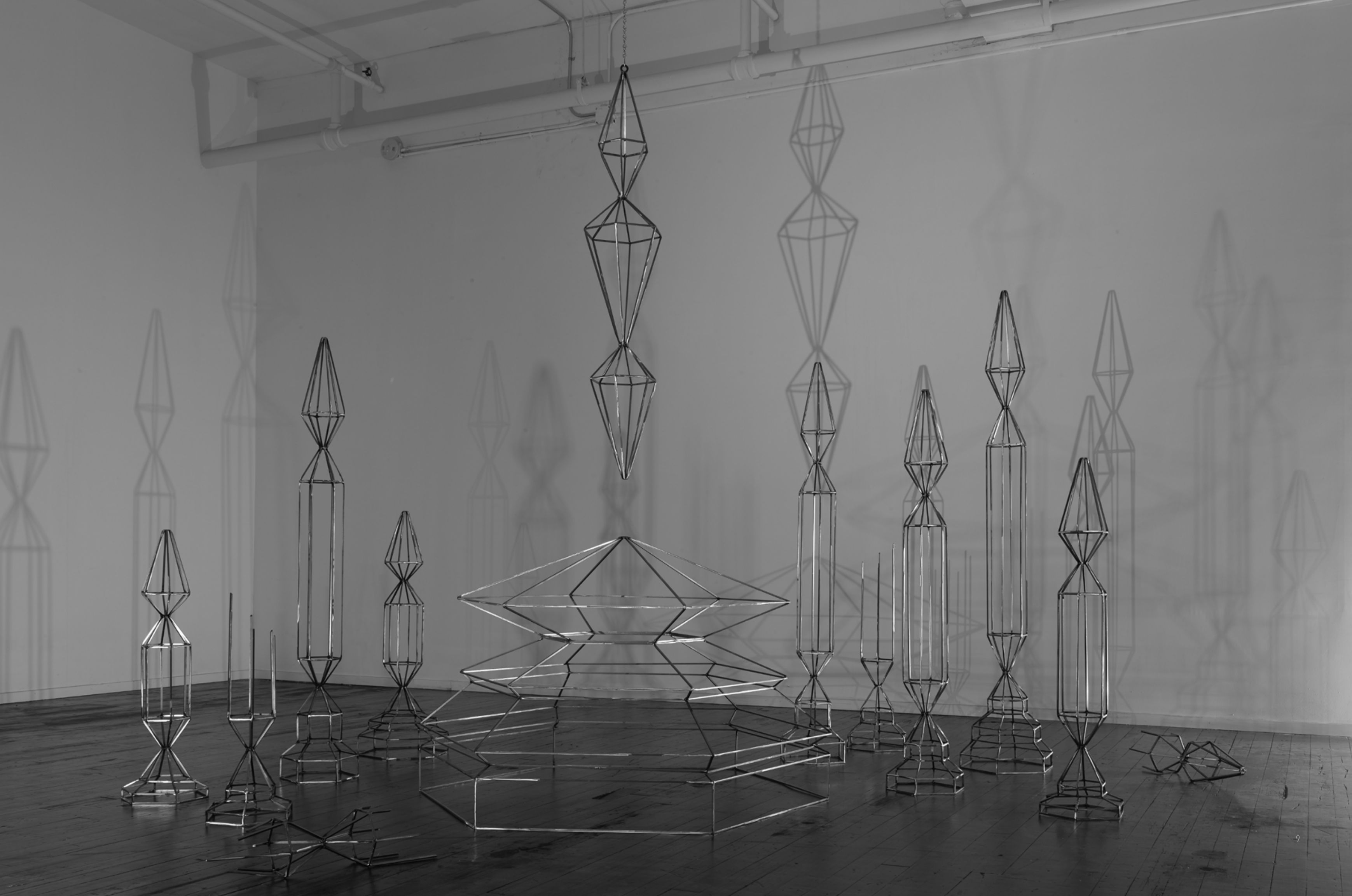


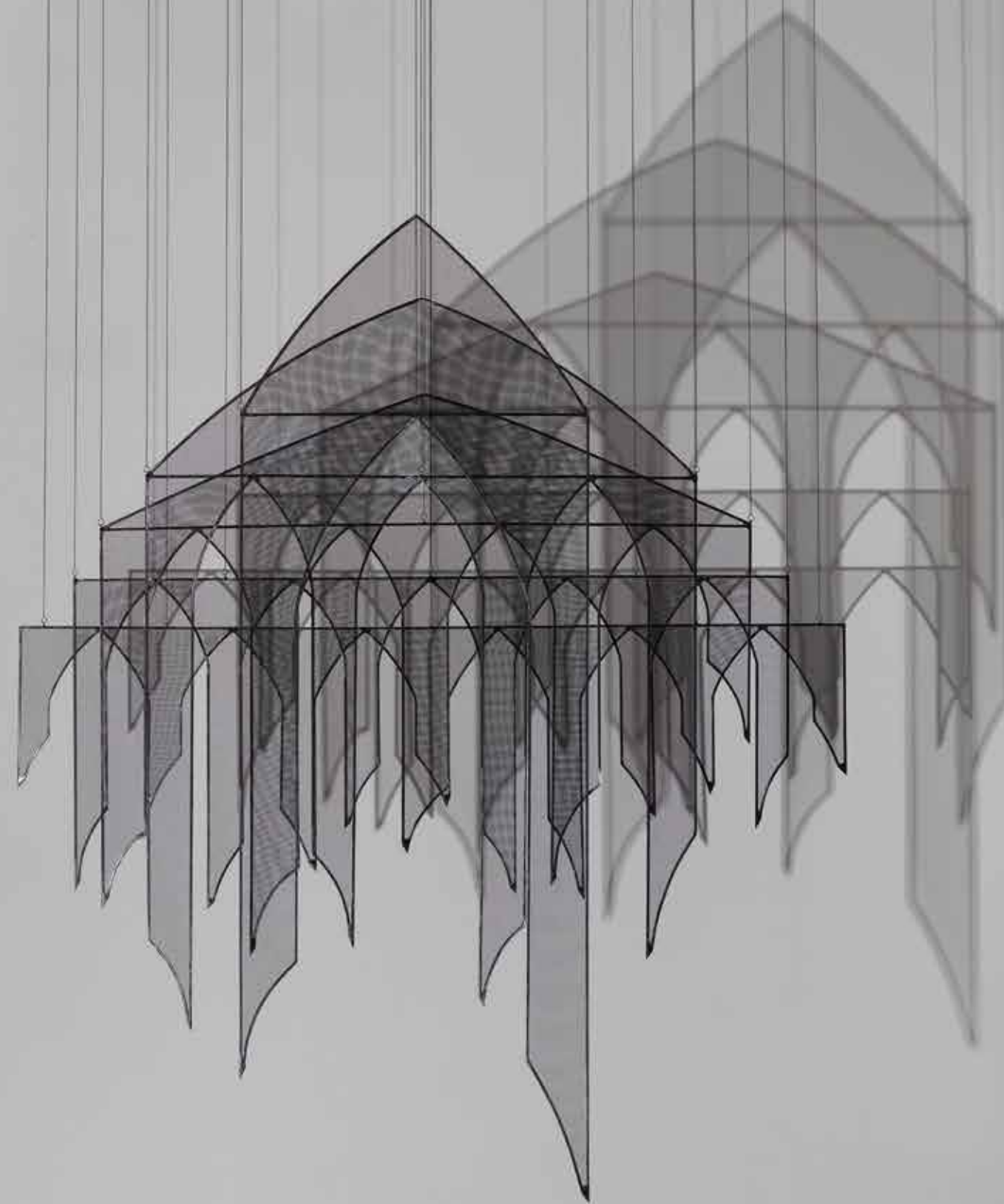
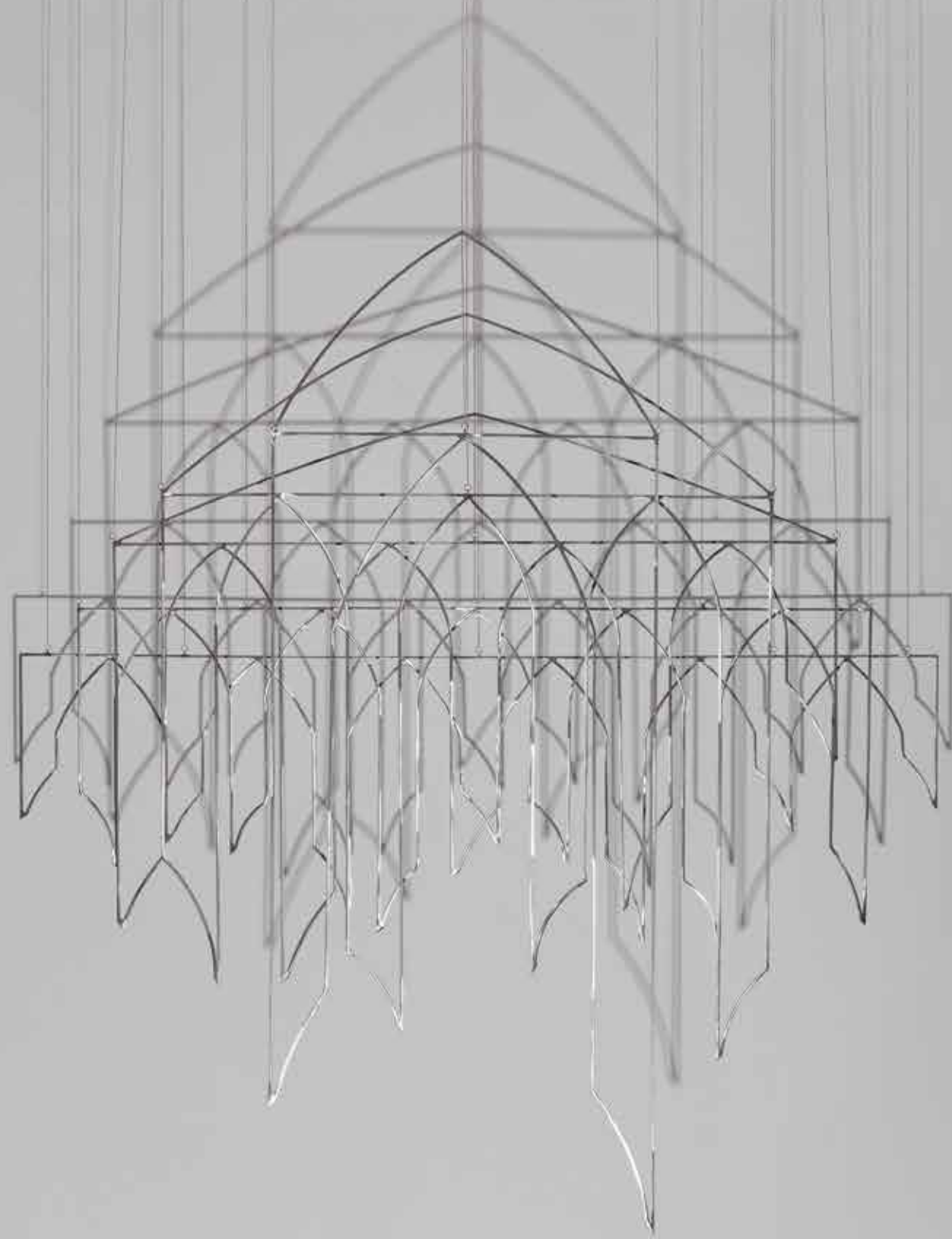


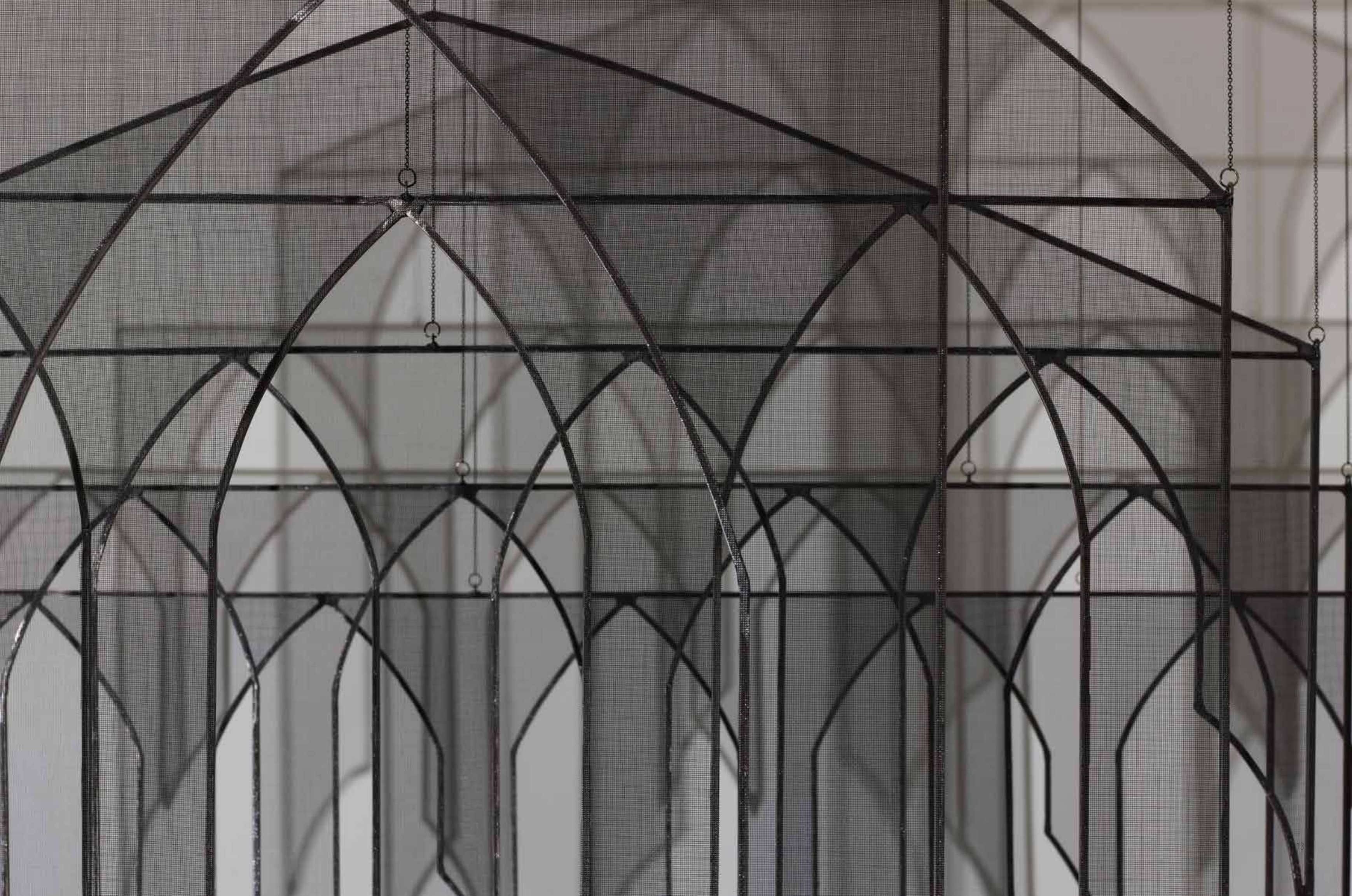
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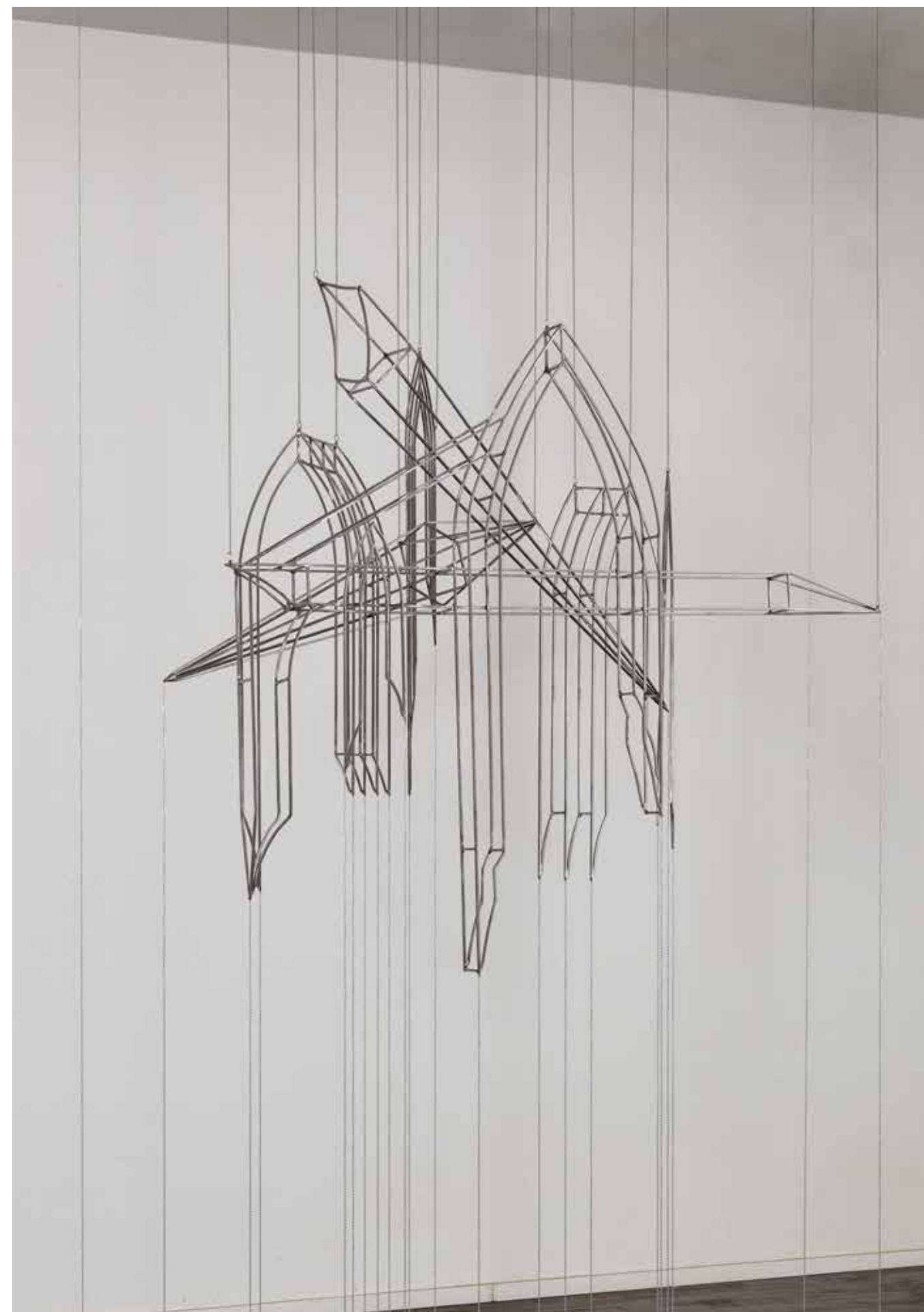
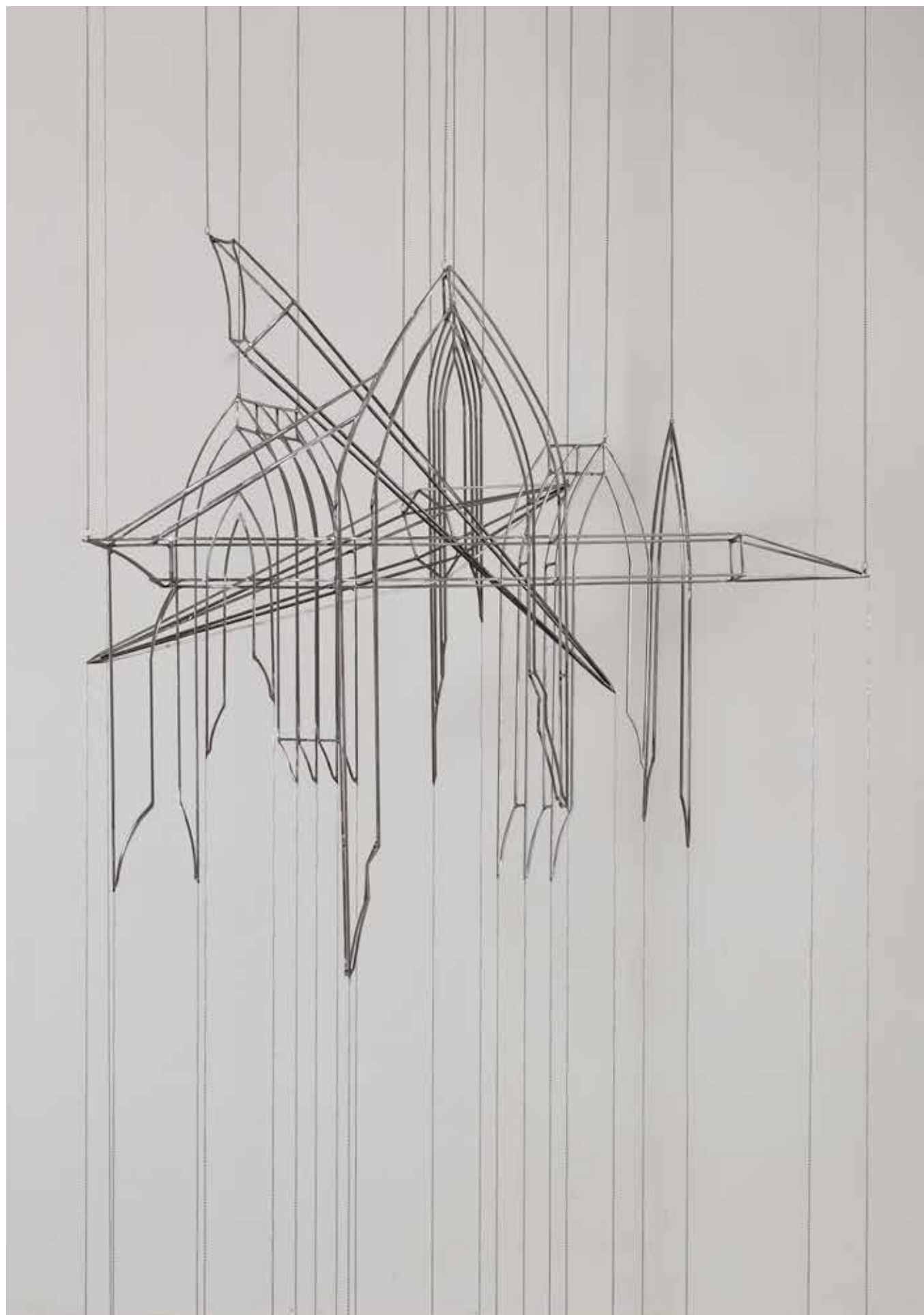
LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

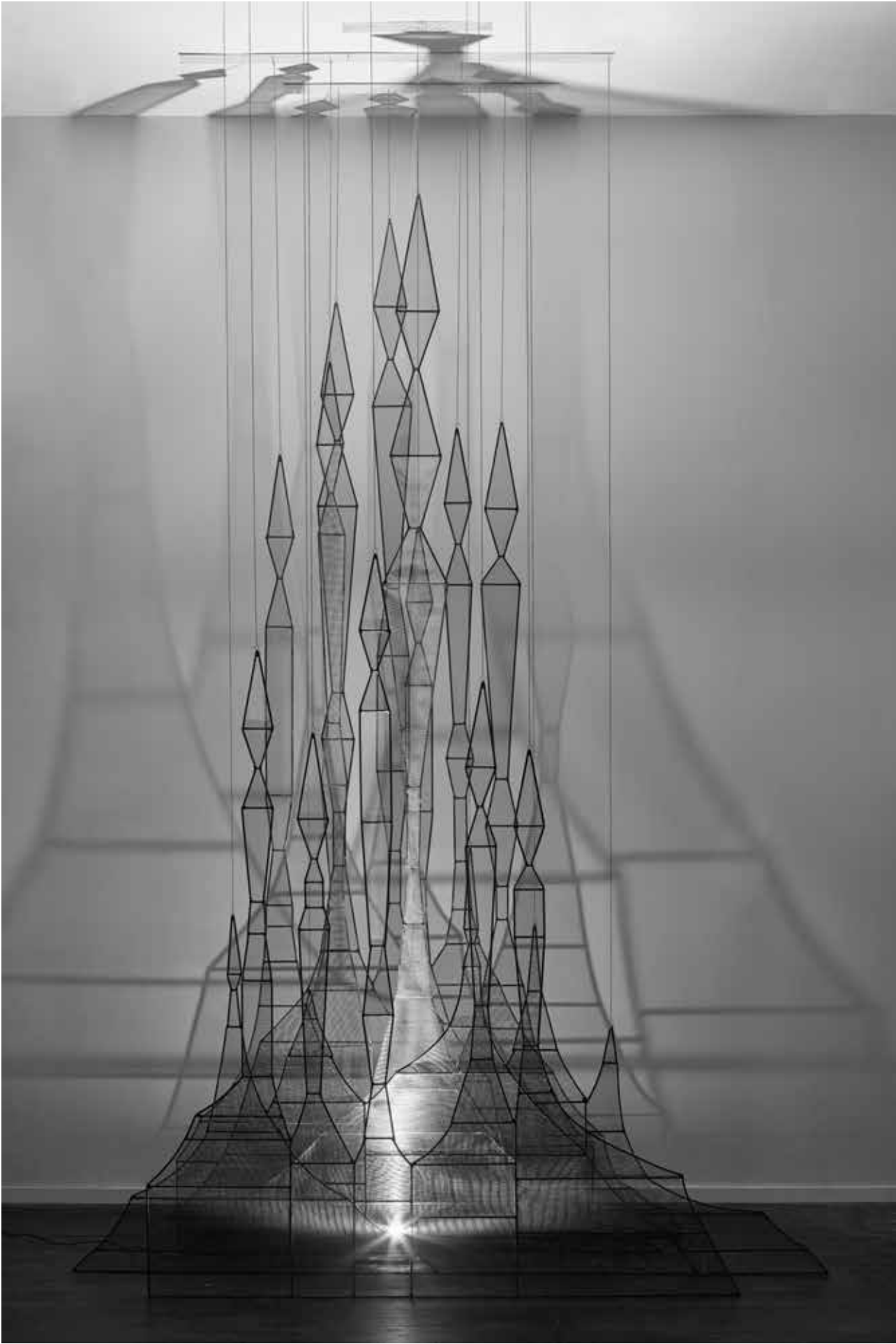


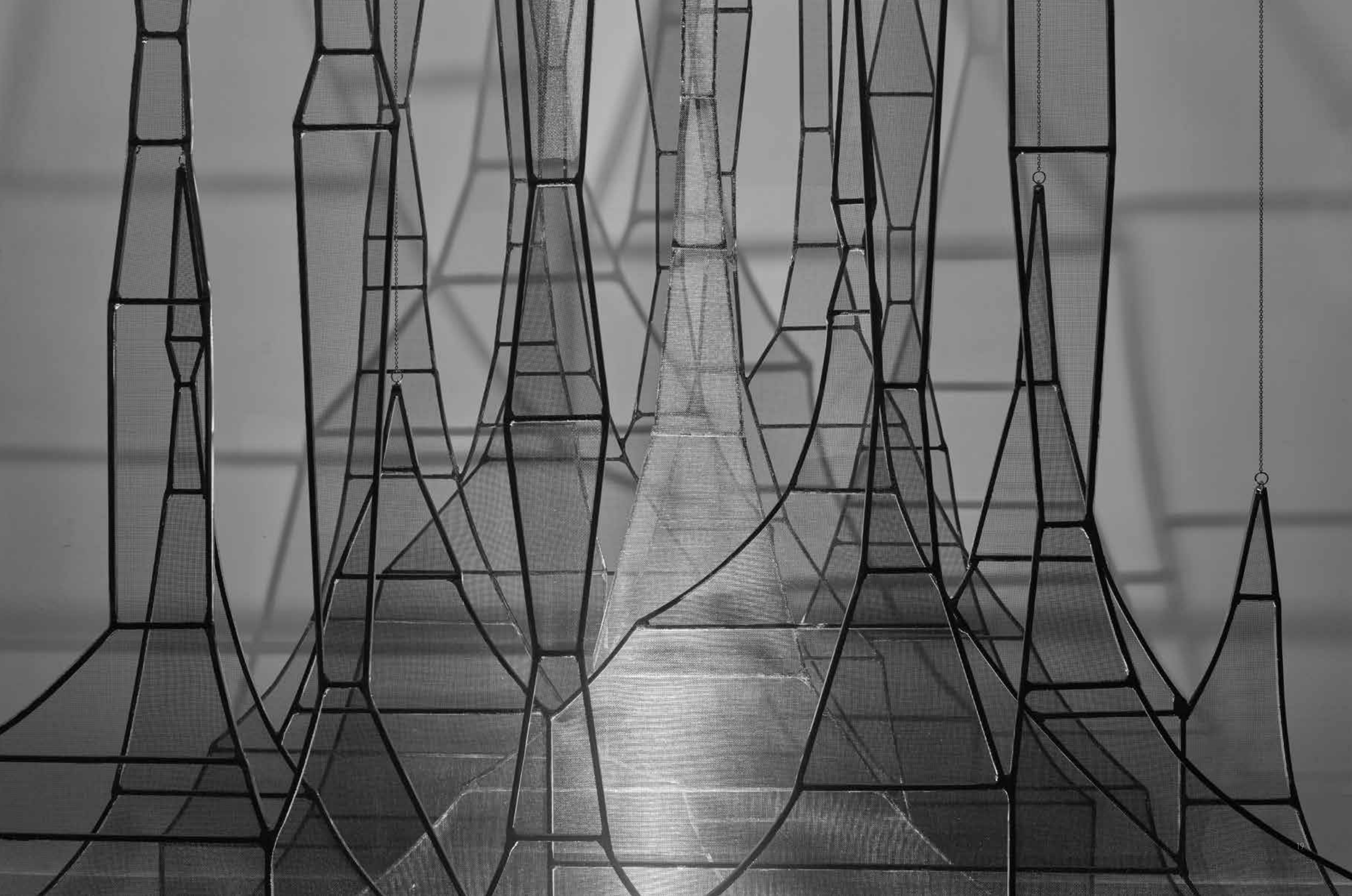






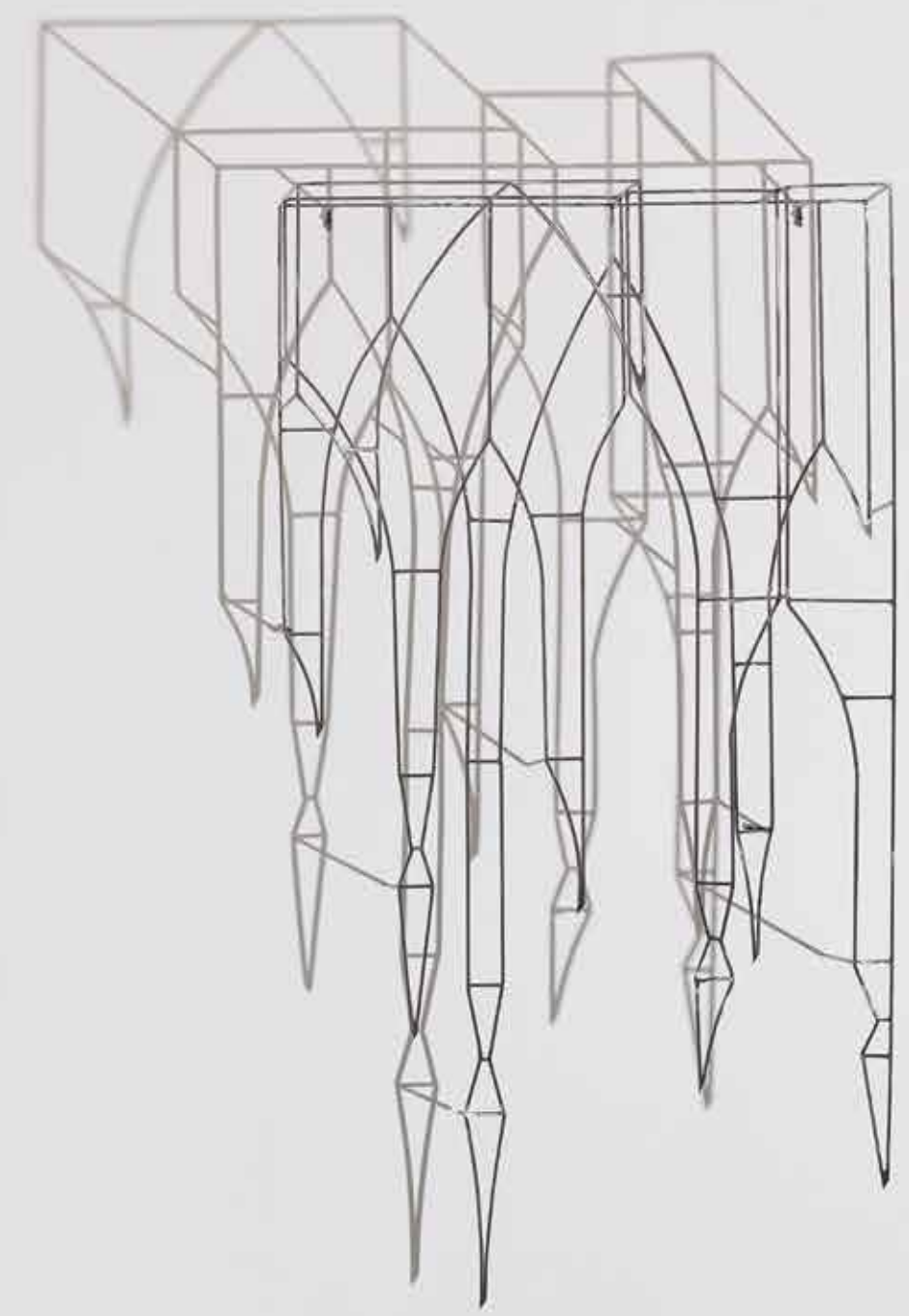
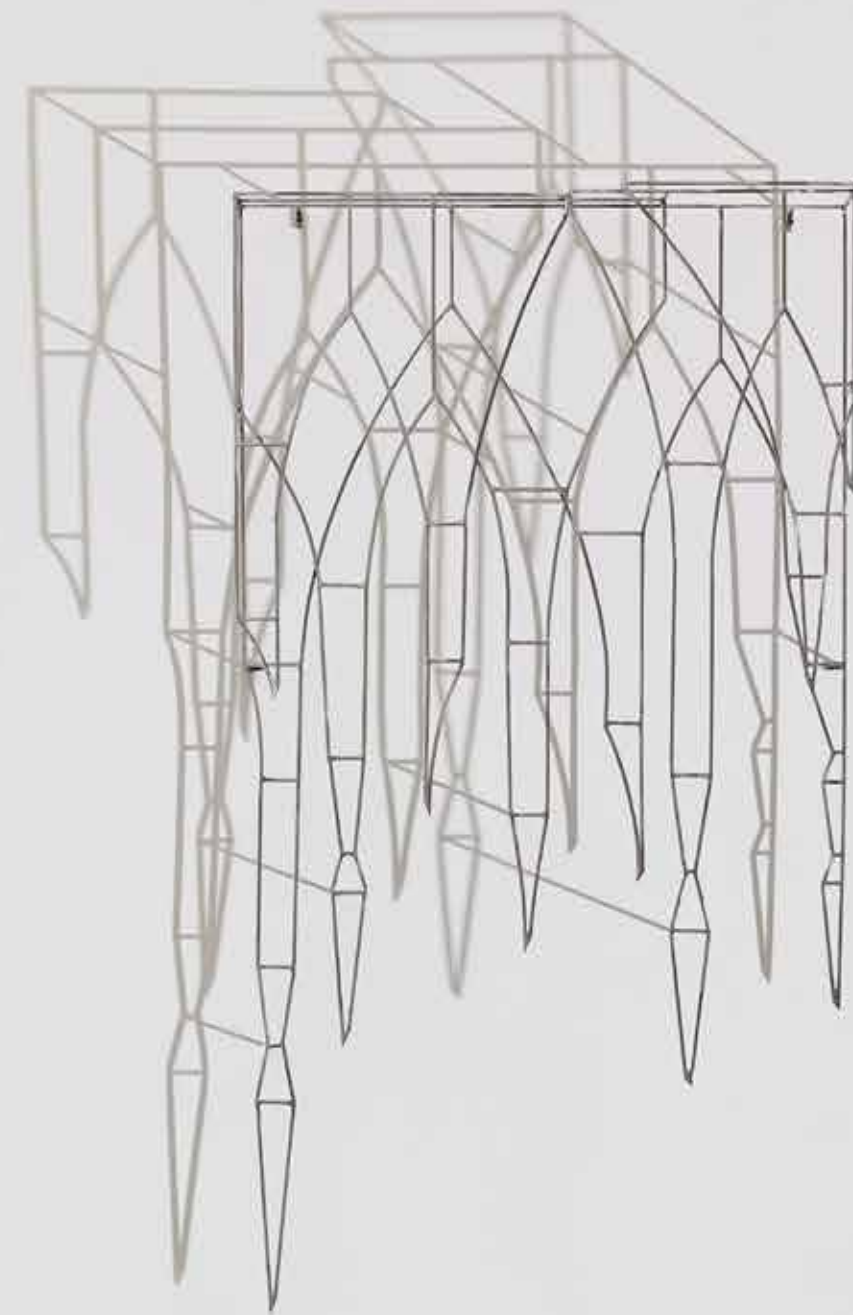


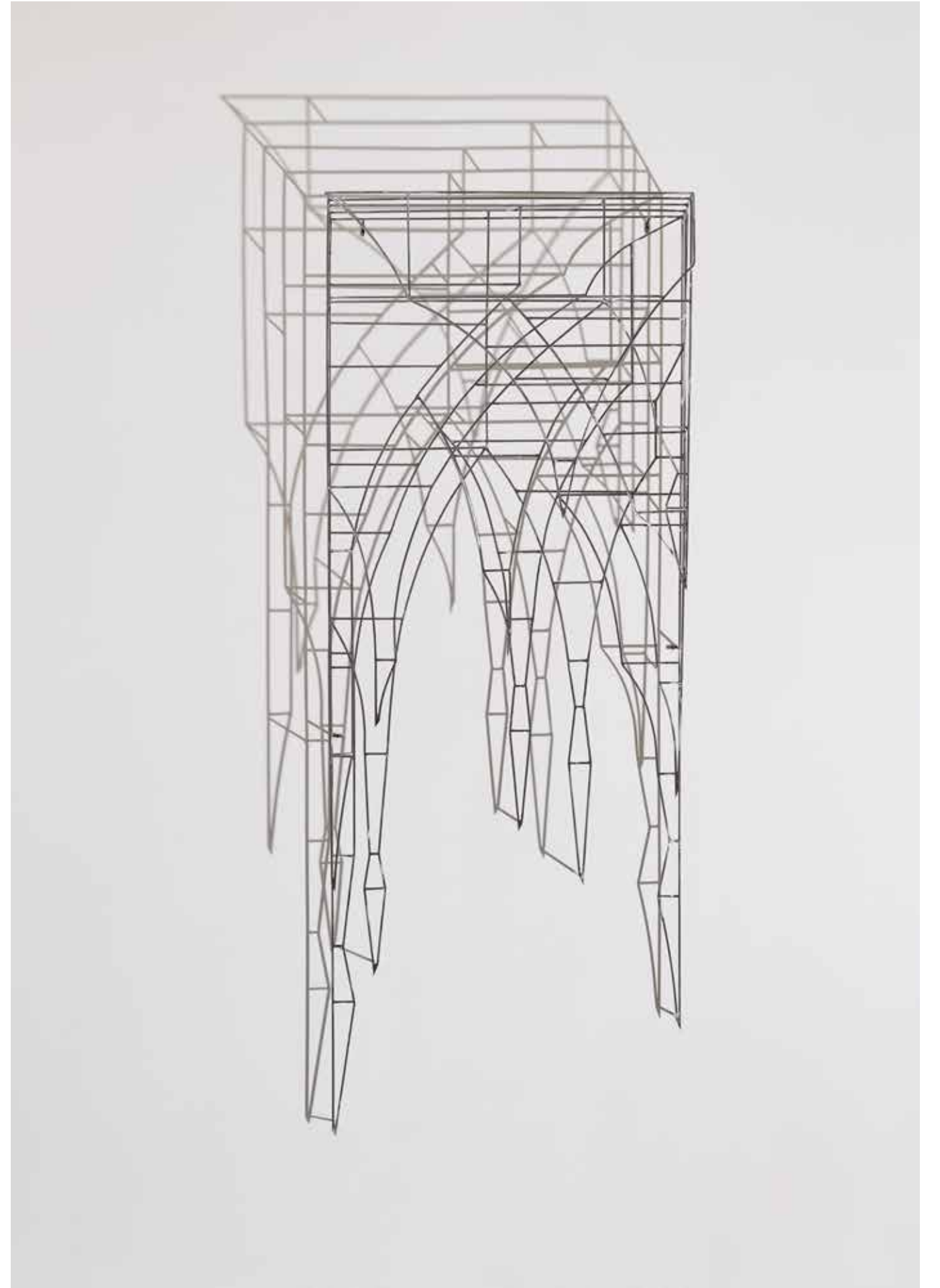














DIGGING: ARTIFACTS FROM THE FUTURE

Afruz Amighi discusses her practice with friend and fellow artist, Ali Banisadr and curator, Brooke Lynn McGowan.

Brooke: Let's begin with what we can see: your linear, rational, and structural works are often presented in a darkened environment, devoid of, even absorbent of, and antithetical to color.

Afruz: When I am thinking about a new sculpture, the colors that come up for me are the ones inherent to the medium that I think would best suit the forms I want to make. The use of the word color is not so accurate for me, because I think more of the luster of the material, its reflectivity when subjected to light, its ability to cast shadows.

The actual application of color onto material is something I've only done once, and that was to paint an already white epoxy based sculpture with white paint. There is something about applying color onto something that already possesses its own natural color that feels false to me, fraudulent, like eventually it will peel off and reveal something grotesque.

Ali: Tell me about your transition from working with textiles to steel?

Afruz: When I was working with textiles, I was interested in making sculptural work, but I didn't know the traditional techniques associated with it, like casting or welding. So I used light and shadow to create the illusion of depth. While my physical work took place in the two-dimensional realm, drawing designs and cutting them into the textiles by hand, the experience of viewing the work, took place in the third dimension.

Eventually, I wanted the physical work to be in the third dimension as well. So a few years ago I learned how to weld. I hated it at first... but then I learned how to make things that had been on my mind for so long. In the past, I was always scavenging for discarded things, like furniture or lighting fixtures, whatever was left on the side of the street, hoping they would match the forms I had in my head. But it never worked out, I tried, but the 'found objects' were too pre-determined, manufactured, I couldn't make them mine.

Ali: It is interesting how an artist's physical environment influences their work, in your case you have literally researched the materials that you have observed around you and used them in your work. It is fascinating that you can find material that is used for construction (mosquito netting) and turn it into something beautiful and sacred.

Afruz: I love industrial materials. They have this anonymity to them. Often I will see a material somewhere in the city, like the mosquito netting you mentioned. One night on my way home from JFK, I noticed all these buildings that were in a state of construction... they were draped with black netting and lit with these giant bulbs from inside. I thought it was so elegant.

I ordered hundreds of rolls of this netting and it sat in my studio for six years before I figured out what to do with it. That's how my process usually goes. It starts with a sighting, usually architectural, leads to the hoarding of a particular material, an incubation period, and then the assimilation of a new skill, like welding, to go forward with it.

Brooke: Speaking of the relationship between materials, media and landscape - how do you relate to landscape, as a genre, as a medium, as a kind of imperial knowledge, but also, viscerally, as a relation to place?

Afruz: My relationship to landscape is architectural, urban. Urban in an ancient way. The atmospheres I am drawn to are stony, metallic, cold. I feel like it is through this kind of landscape that I am able to access that part of the world that exists outside of it, the intangible part, the organic part. I guess I relate most to the landscapes of de Chirico....empty, devoid, hollow, structures which rarely contain figures, but, like the construction site, they aren't empty, they contain a sense of absence, which is something else.

I was absent from the upheavals that shaped the course of events for my family, the revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, and yet I was so intimately affected by the psychological ramifications of those events. As a result I experienced this fixation with themes that were at once proximate and distant.

Brooke: Can this sense of absence or detachment also be a site of trauma, or a way of addressing it?

Afruz: For me, like many others, it is easier to explore trauma that is once removed. In an early body of work I was dealing with the issue of displacement. I was using woven polyethelene, a material used in the fabrication of tents in refugee camps... cutting patterns from mosques and palaces into this material and illuminating it to create a wall of shadows.

I was using a material associated with abjection to cast shadows containing patterns and designs associated with power and opulence. Somehow in the realm of shadows, a dematerialized realm, these two opposites made contact.

Brooke: In the sense of material, your work seems to be transcendent, and draw upon a certain idea of history, towards this ancient urban. It is a language which invokes archeology.

Afruz: I think many sculptors are engaged in a process of digging, unearthing objects, or in some senses artifacts, from the future, structures that have a relationship to the past but have not yet been realized.

For me these structures are nearly all abodes. Whether they reference cathedrals or mosques, tombs or shrines, they are places of refuge, solace. They are idealized homes I build for myself to live in for a time, and then walk away from.

Ali: Your work always has echoes and fragments of religion in it, can you speak a little about that?

Afruz: I grew up with a Jewish mother and Zoroastrian father, but they were both staunchly secular, atheistic. Still we celebrated many religious holidays, mostly because my mother loved the arts and crafts component...decorating eggs, setting up the haft-sin table, making elaborate ginger bread houses. I think I came to associate religious ritual with object making.... its strange, I don't consider myself religious, or even spiritual, but I do structure my life with many rituals....

Temples, cathedrals, mosques, even humble shrines consisting of a candle and some plastic flowers, have always been fascinating to me. Humans, we forget things so easily, but when we build things our experiences become imprinted on them. Shrines are like vessels of collective memory. Last year when the Temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra, Syria was bombed by ISIL, a piece of human memory was obliterated.

Ali: I always feel like I need to be quiet, respectful or even kneel down in front of your work. Even though many are made out of steel, they feel fragile and in need of protection.

Afruz: That's very nice to hear, because I always hope that someone will find some sense of quiet with my work. And I think this quiet can be channeled with materials like concrete and steel, materials that are often associated with the opposite sensations, urban sprawl, frenzy, oppressive containment.

I usually work these materials to their physical limits, to the point that there is so much negative space that the material itself has become almost non-existent. Materials that were once associated with strength, industry, become something outside of that. Yes, fragile and in need of protection, but also protectors themselves, guardians.

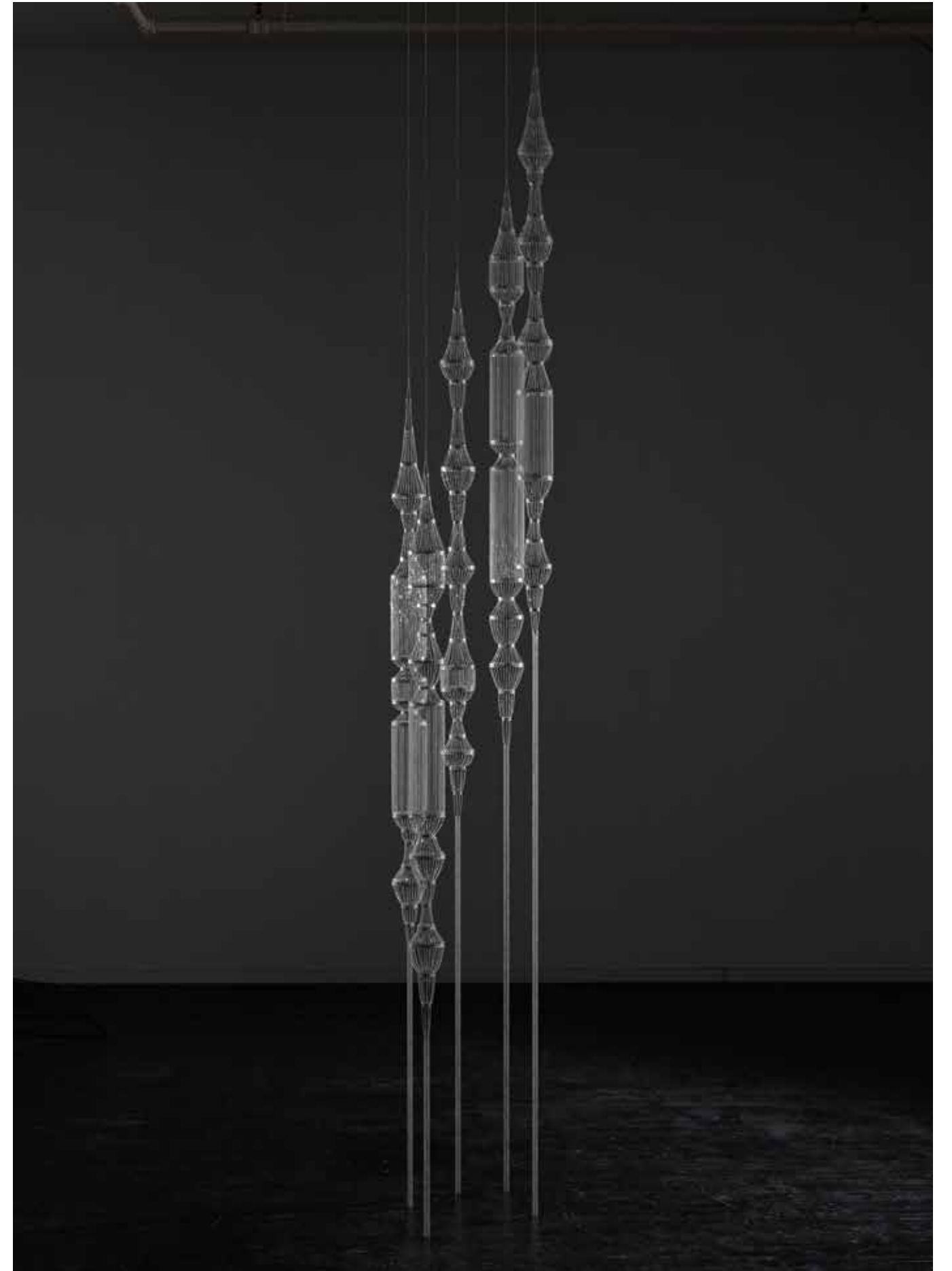
Brooke: Working at the material's limits certainly defines a performative quality in your work, deeply linked to the importance of light and shadow. How do you relate to the history of the use of light (and dark) as a medium?

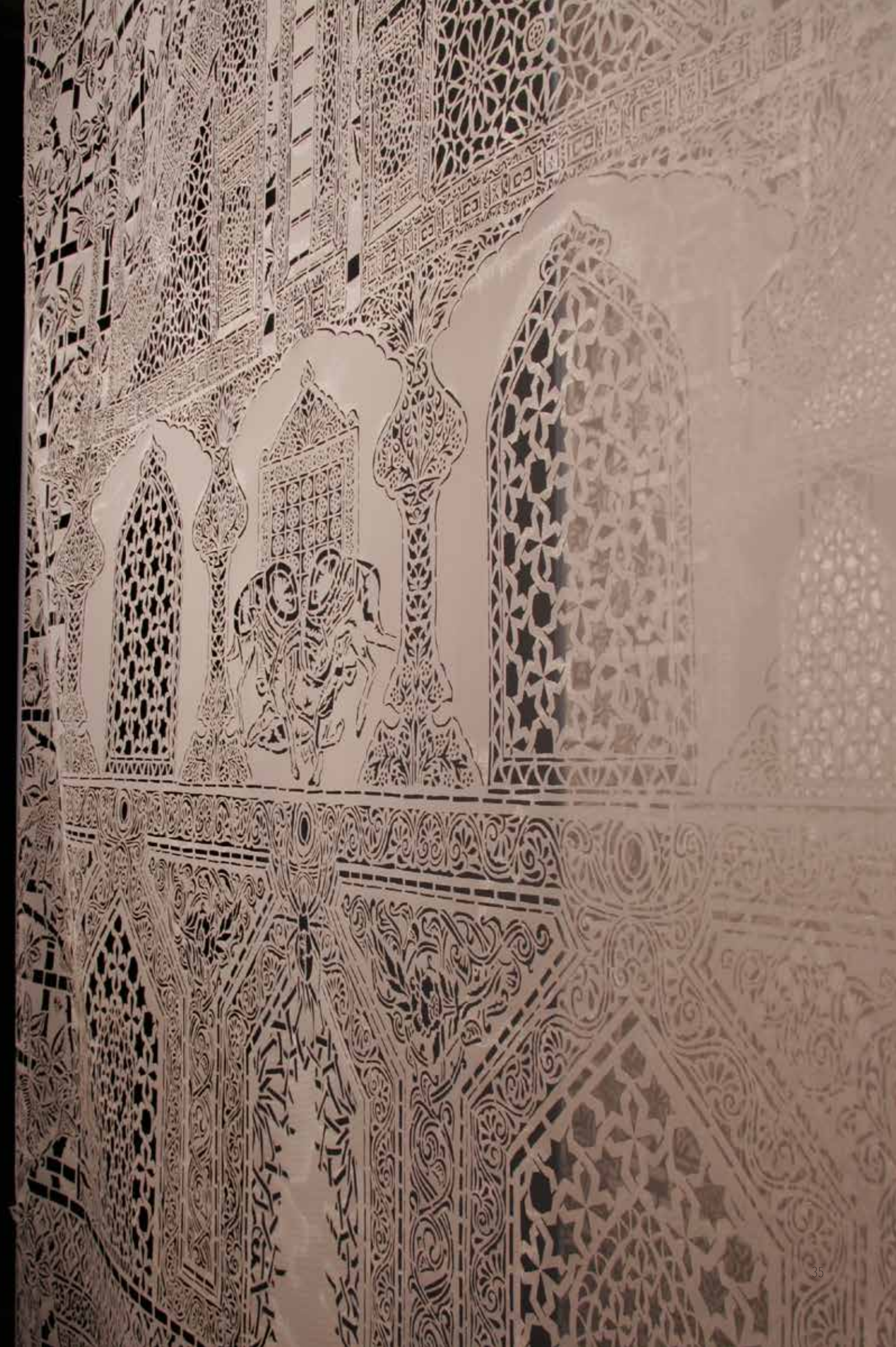
Afruz: I use light and shadow to create proximity. I have never been interested in irony, because it usually acts as a distancing mechanism. I want to bring the viewer in closer. Light and shadow help me achieve this, somehow their interplay softens the lines between subject and object.

The two moments I experienced this sensation most deeply were when first seeing Dan Flavin's "monument" for V. Tatlin at Dia Beacon, and then some years later when looking up at the muquarna filled ceiling of the Abdolsamad Tomb in Natanz, Iran. They had the effect of interrupting time, creating stillness. Yet at the same time they spoke to impossibilities, false promises.

Brooke: You also respond to questions of violence and civilization—a deep mining of the need for the transcendental and its spatial-architectonics of worship to answer these horrors, but also protection, guardians. I can't help but asking, how does your work respond to Benjamin's angel of history? He is the observer of failed, if not false promises.

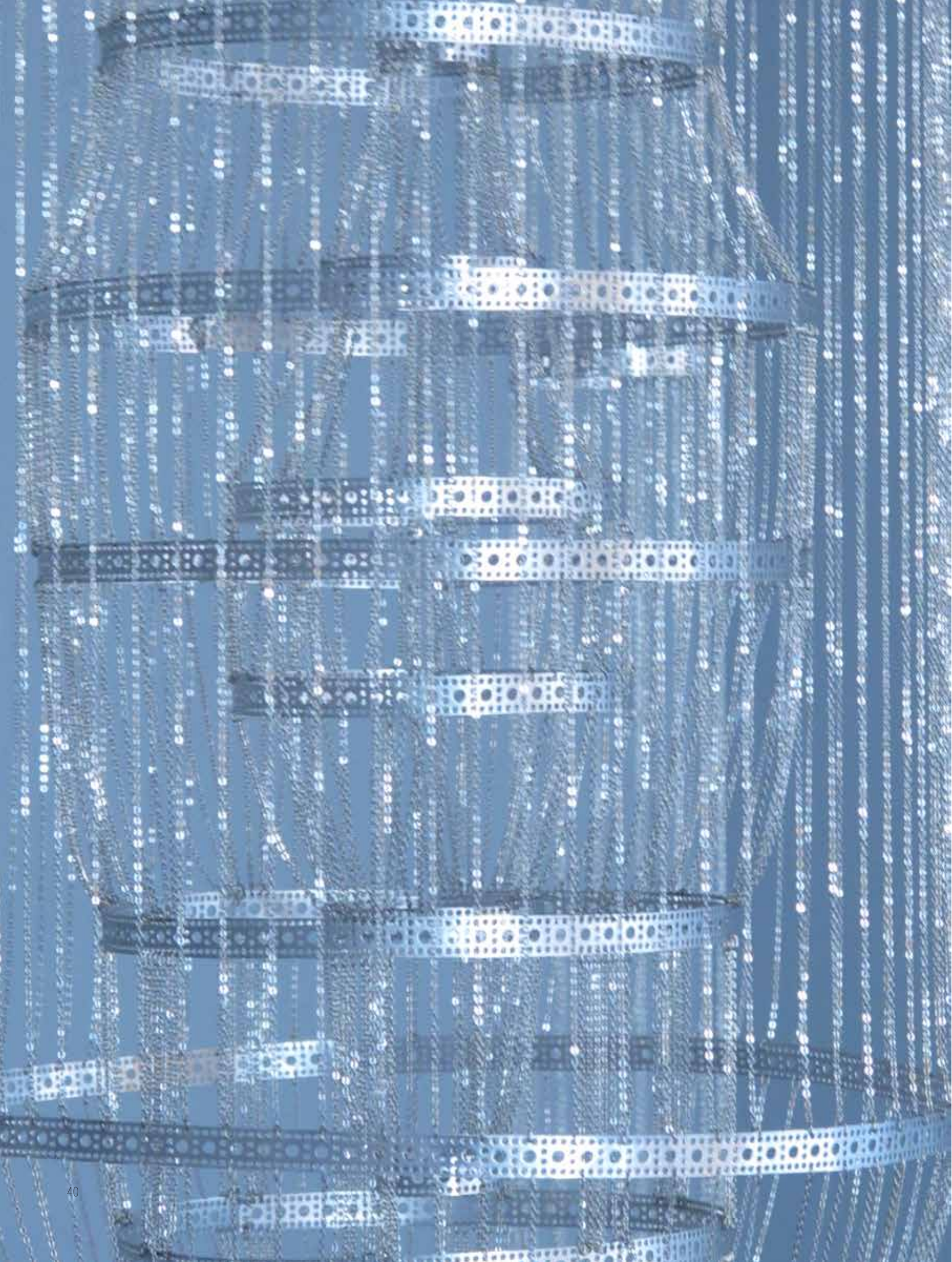
Afruz: The question of the tipping point is what intrigues me, the point at which things fall apart...what happens in those moments just before violence completely overtakes us. But I don't see transcendence, in whatever form, as an answer, rather as temporary respite... Benjamin's angel of history will never turn its back from the future, but perhaps can be given momentary pause for wonder.



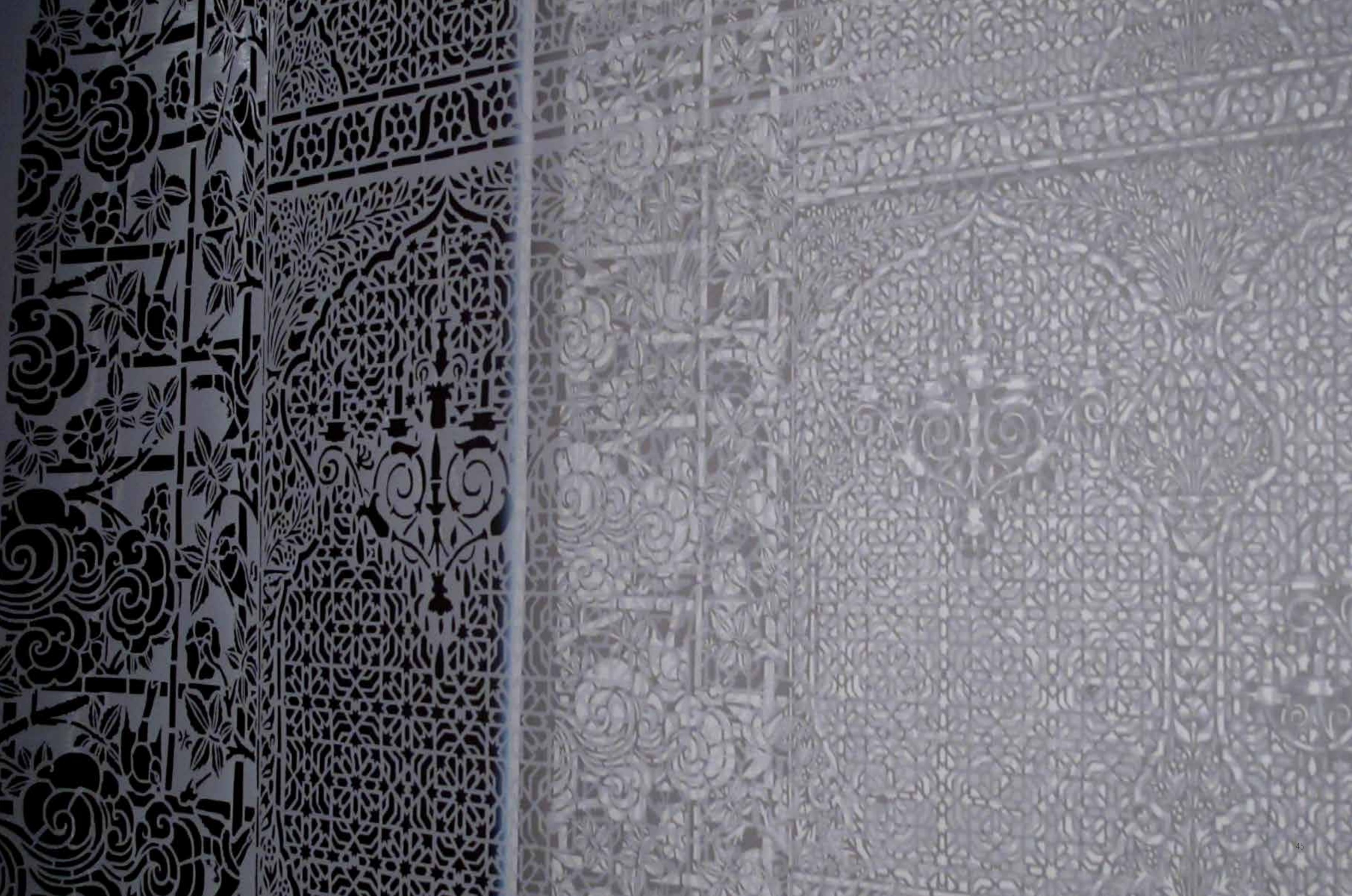


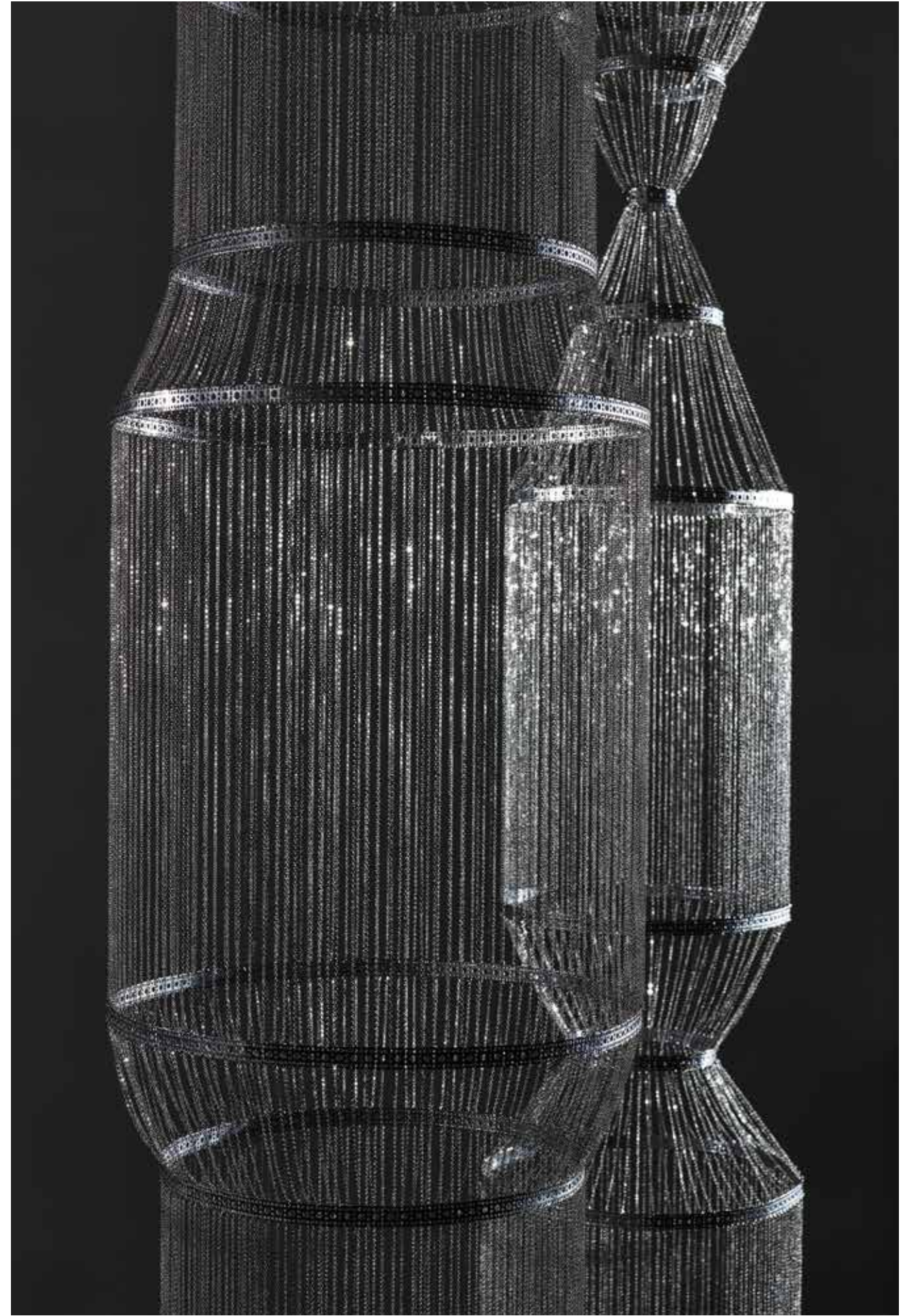




















A F R U Z A M I G H I

Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York (b. Tehran, Iran, 1974)

EDUCATION

2007	MFA, New York University, New York, NY
2002	Summer Studio Program, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY
1997	BA Political Science, Barnard College at Columbia University, New York, NY

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016	<i>Māngata</i> , Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
2014	<i>Far from God</i> , Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York, NY
2012	<i>Suspended City</i> , Bloom Projects, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts, Forum, Santa Barbara, CA
2011	<i>The Hidden State</i> , Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York, NY
2010	<i>Angels in Combat</i> , Isabelle Van den Eynde Gallery, Dubai, United Arab Emirates <i>Cages</i> , Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016	<i>Wondrous Worlds: Art & Islam through Time & Place</i> , Newark Museum, Newark, NJ <i>Night Paintings</i> , Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY
2015	<i>New Ways of Seeing</i> , Dorsky Gallery, Long Island City, NY
2014	<i>Far from God</i> , Fields Sculpture Park, Art OMI International, Ghent, NY <i>The Language of Human Consciousness</i> , Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia <i>Past Tradition</i> , Exhibit 320, New Delhi, India <i>Love Me, Love Me Not</i> , Heydar Aliyev Center, Baku, Azerbaijan
2013	<i>Love Me Love Me Not: Contemporary Art from Azerbaijan and its Neighbors</i> , The 55th International Art Exhibition la Biennale di Venezia, curated by Dina Nasser-Khadivi, Venice, Italy
2012-2015	<i>Doris Duke's Shangri-La: Landscape Architecture and Art</i> touring exhibition, The Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC; University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu, HI
2012	<i>Doris Duke's Shangri-La: Landscape, Architecture and Art</i> , Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY <i>Contemporary Iranian Art in the Permanent Collection</i> , The Hagop Kevorkian Fund Special Exhibitions Gallery, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY <i>Making Tents</i> , Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Ketchum, ID <i>That Sinking Sense of Wonder</i> , Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
2010	<i>Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam</i> , Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX <i>Structures within an Intervention</i> , The Guild Art Gallery, New York, NY <i>Tehran – New York</i> , Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery, New York, NY

Jameel Prize Exhibition, Sakip Sabanci Museum, Istanbul, Turkey; Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, United Arab Emirates; Beiteddine Palace, Lebanon; National Museum of Damascus, Syria; National Gallery, Riyadh,Saudi Arabia

2009	Jameel Prize Exhibition, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK
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AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2011	New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Sculpture
2009	Jameel Prize Winner, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK

RESIDENCIES

2010	Doris Duke Foundation, Honolulu, HI
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SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK
Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX
The Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, India
The Bristol Museum, Bristol, UK
Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku, Azerbaijan
Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, India
Newark Museum, Newark, NJ

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Kalsi, Jyoti. "Light-coded Statements," Gulf News, (October 15, 2010)
Levy, Michelle. "Beauty Ensnared," ARTslant, (January 31, 2010)
Barakat, Alexander. "An Interview with Afruz Amighi," Muraqqa, (October 2009)
Boucher, Katie. "Contemporary art, Islamic Tradition," The National, (July 8, 2009)
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Deepa A, "Finding Inspiration in Islamic Traditions," Islamonline.net, (July 2009)

P L A T E S

page 7:
Nameless, 2014
Steel, fiberglass mesh, Wenge wood, ultra-suede,
invisible thread, gunmetal chain, LED lights
168 x 132 x 96 in / 427 x 335 x 244 cm

page 9:
The anchoress, 2014
Steel, chain, light
168 x 192 x 168 in / 427 x 488 x 427 cm

page 11:
My House, My Tomb, 2015
Steel, fiberglass mesh, chain, light
168 x 90 x 70 in / 427 x 229 x 178 cm each

page 13:
My House, My Tomb (detail)

page 14:
All That is Solid..., 2016
Steel, chain, light
Dimensions variable

page 15:
All That is Solid..., (detail)

page 17:
Forest, Aglibol, 2015
Steel, fiberglass mesh, chain, LED lights
168 x 104 x 60 in / 427 x 264 x 152 cm

page 19:
Forest, Aglibol (detail)

page 20:
Veins, Malakbel, 2015
Steel, chain, light
168 x 108 x 60 in / 427 x 274 x 152 cm

page 23:
Veins, Malakbel (detail)

page 25:
Night Paintings, Series II, 2016
Steel, light
61 x 31.5 x 12 in / 155 x 80 x 30.5 cm
59 x 31.5 x 12 in / 150 x 80 x 30.5 cm
59 x 31.5 x 12 in / 150 x 80 x 30.5 cm

page 27:
Lamentation, 2016
Steel, light
83 x 31.5 x 12 in / 211 x 80 x 30.5 cm

page 28:
Night Paintings, I and II, 2016
Steel, light
54 x 31.5 x 12 in / 137 x 80 x 30.5 cm
58 x 31.5 x 12 in / 147 x 80 x 30.5 cm

page 33:
Spiral, 2016
Aluminum radiator banding, base metal chain
72 x 4 x 4 in / 183 x 10 x 10 cm, each

page 34:
1001 Pages, 2008
Woven polyethylene, plexiglass, light
125 x 80 in / 317.5 x 203 cm
Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom

page 35:
1001 Pages (detail)

page 36:
Toofan, 2012
Aluminum radiator banding, base metal chain
204 x 12 x 12 in / 518 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm
Private Collection

page 39:
Untitled, 2013
Woven polyethylene, plexiglass, aluminum radiator
banding, base metal chain, light
Center panel: 144 x 120 in / 366 x 305 cm
Side sculptures: 156 x 12 x 12 in / 396 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm, each
Commission for the 55th Venice Biennale
Collection of Yarat Contemporary Art Center, Baku, Azerbaijan

page 40:
Self-Portrait in Chain (detail)

p.41
Self-Portrait in Chain, 2012
Aluminum radiator banding, base metal chain
144 x 120 x 60 in / 366 x 305 x 152 cm
Private Collection

page 43:
Fana'a, 2011
Woven polyethylene, plexiglass, light
96 x 68 in / 244 x 173 cm
Private Collection

page 45:
Fana'a (detail)

page 46:
The Offering, 2016
Aluminum radiator banding, base metal chain
72 x 12 x 12 in / 183 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm
144 x 12 x 12 in / 366 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm
120 x 12 x 12 in / 305 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm
Collection of The Newark Museum, New Jersey, United States

page 47:
The Offering (detail)

page 48:
Poppy Garden, 2007
Woven polyethylene, plexiglass, light
126 x 84 in / 320 x 213 cm
Collection of The Devi Foundation, New Delhi, India

page 51:
Trinity, 2013
Steel, epoxy, spray paint, wood, grout, light
Center sculpture: 101 x 15 x 15 in / 256.5 x 38 x 38 cm
Side sculptures: 108 x 13 x 13 in / 274 x 33 x 33 cm, each

page 53:
Crowns, 2014
Steel, epoxy, spray paint, concrete, light
31 x 10 x 9 in / 79 x 25 x 23 cm
25 x 12 x 10 in / 63.5 x 30.5 x 25 cm
31 x 10 x 9 in / 79 x 25 x 23 cm
27 x 10 x 10 in / 69 x 25 x 25 cm
31 x 10 x 9 in / 79 x 25 x 23 cm
25 x 12 x 10 in / 63.5 x 30.5 x 25 cm

page 55:
Far from God, 2014
Steel, epoxy, spray paint, light
Dimensions variable

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we have just realized there are some major flaws,
so we took a step back, and took a long look
at what we did, but the deeper we looked,
the more problems we saw, perhaps
it is time to leave, it appears there
is nothing left, what was there
is long gone, we just cannot
seem to find the ultimate
reason for this
fall
rise
to please
we ask you
is needed, and now
just a little more time
it is only a matter of time,
finished yet, but we will arrive,
order, toward peace, it may not be
to be in awe of, please follow us, toward
to worship, to trust, to satisfy, to consume,
it is in the making, it is being built, it is here

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