



Pouran Jinchi Entropy

Pouran Jinchhi

Entropy

November 17 - December 23, 2010

Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller (LTMH) Gallery
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New York, New York
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www.ltmhgallery.com

(Cover)
Untitled 2 [Entropy Series] (Detail) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm

Pouran Jinchi's paintings are covered with swarms of Persian letters. The surfaces pulse with movement. Their visual impact is undeniable. But they are not easy to decipher—even for Persian-speakers, even for those familiar with poetry she copies, which she prefers not to reveal; even for those versed in calligraphic conventions, which she subtly transforms. Are they to be read or to be looked at? Are they abstractions, semi-abstractions, landscapes, whirlpools, cosmic floating bits? They gleefully disperse. They have a sense of humor.

To speak of calligraphy in a contemporary work of art is a complicated affair. Historically, it embodies centuries of sophisticated formal invention. Aesthetically, it demands a re-evaluation of the beauty and visual pleasure. Its aristocratic lineage defies critical expectations and avant-garde histories. Late modernist experiments were few and far between. In more recent times, Islamic iconography forces complicated negotiations of identity, difference, expanding art markets, and globalized consumption.

Amidst the tangle of questions, what remains clear is that a traditional practice was taken up in the postwar era by artists across formerly Islamic lands, and has now evolved into a contemporary strategy. Writing, from calligraphy to graffiti, has become one of the most visible markers of contemporary Middle Eastern art. Words and letterforms are used as a language of shared meanings and a system of abstract forms. But what does it mean to write, as Pouran Jinchi does, across canvases that are *paintings*?

Certainly, the history is important. In the seventh century, the rise of Islam was accompanied by the centrality of its holy book. The divine word demanded divine forms. By the tenth century, the first system of proportional writing was developed, and calligraphy was on its way to becoming a high art. By the fifteenth century, detailed manuscripts were prized possessions across Islamic lands, whether they were the Qoran, the *Shahnameh*, or a treatise on astronomy. But calligraphy's highest ambitions were spiritual—the balance of order and invention in the pursuit of divine harmony.

According to the sixteenth-century Persian calligrapher Baba Shah Esfahani, there are three stages to calligraphic mastery. The first is “visual practice” (*mashq-e nazari*), where the apprentice simply studies the writing of a master. “*The beginner should be told to do this practice for a while, so that his nature becomes attached to spiritual pleasures.*” The second stage is “pen practice” (*mashq-e qalami*), or actual copying. But there is a third stage: “imaginative practice” (*mashq-e khiyali*). “*‘Imaginative practice’ is when the scribe writes not according to a model but with reference to the power of his own nature. The benefit of this practice is that it makes the scribe a master of spontaneity (tasarruf).*”¹

Jinchi's process takes Baba Shah's “imaginative practice” as its springboard, and could be seen as its distant, defiant heir. She has dispensed with the traditional calligrapher's allegiance to the perfection,

to standardized script, and to conventional forms of presentation. The underlying style of her writing is *nasta'liq*—the fourteenth-century script predominantly used in Persian poetry and known for the harmonious balance of its floating lines and hanging curves. She uses metal calligraphy pens to achieve the uniform widths and straight lines. But the letterforms are distinctly her own. A curve is thickened here; a line is sharpened there. Dots, caps and accents are set adrift. The script is gently nudged away from legibility to more visual deliberations.

Jinchi's series of “Entropy” paintings are less about reading than they are about seeing and sensing. A trained calligrapher, engineer and painter, her work begins with a structure only to slowly unravel it. The scientific connotations of her series title indicate as much: entropy is thermodynamic principle by which energy is measured as it disperses. Since the mid-nineties, her work has used Arabic and Farsi words in drawings, paintings and occasionally sculptural installations. In “Entropy,” as in previous series, there is a similarity to *siah-mashq*, or practice sheets used by calligraphers where one letter or word is copied until it is perfect (the sheets are often finished works in their own right). But Jinchi's interest lies in how letters are broken down and reconstituted as semi-abstract forms.

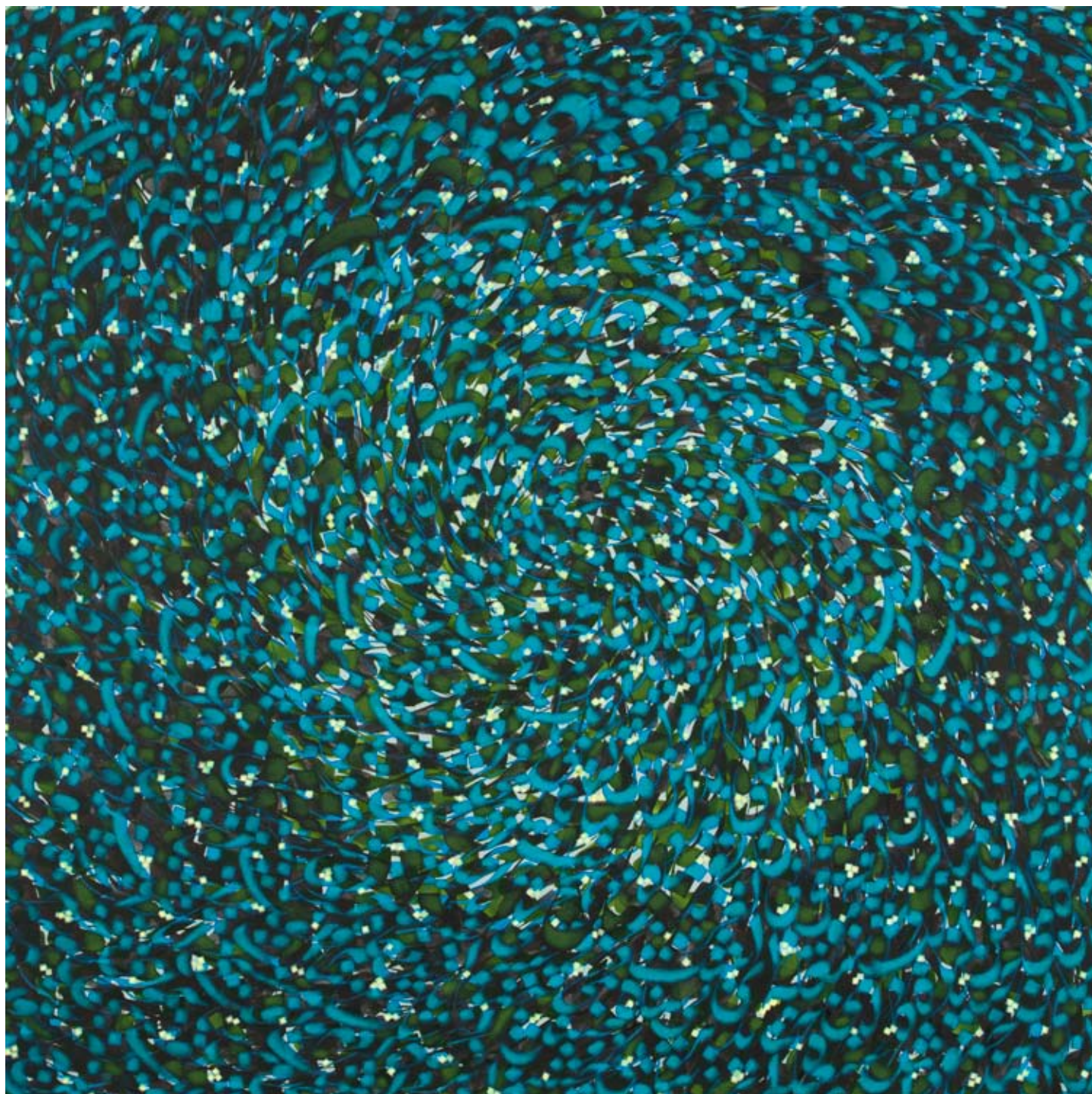
With all this discussion of writing and reading, it's easy to lose sight of their most striking aspect—the drama of their color. Translucent strokes give way to opaque masses. Warm and cool tones create glittering fields and spirals of movement. Clear emeralds contrast with rich purples, turquoise blends into olive. The palette is based in the cool end of the spectrum. One could speculate on the symbolism of her greens, a significant color in Islam as well as recent Middle Eastern politics. There could be more to the masses that surge across the canvas, falling into heaps, drifting apart, and rising up again. For her part, Jinchi remains silent on all symbolisms, whether literary, socio-political or formal. Her focus is the emotional resonance of line and color.

To speak of calligraphy in Jinchi's work is to speak of painting and drawing, of beauty and pleasure, of formal experimentation in line and color. While her script and its language carry one kind of evocation for those who can read them, the controlled energy and free spontaneity register on a more sensory level. Calligraphy fuses with painting to create structures that have yet to be fully explored in their historic, aesthetic, or critical import for our current moment. For now, these paintings resist being deciphered as texts. And that just may be their most attractive aspect. Their defiant formalism suspends and defers meaning—just for a moment, just for an encounter. Visual effect is pursued for its own sake: as groundwork for a fluid, fleeting, and perhaps moving encounter.

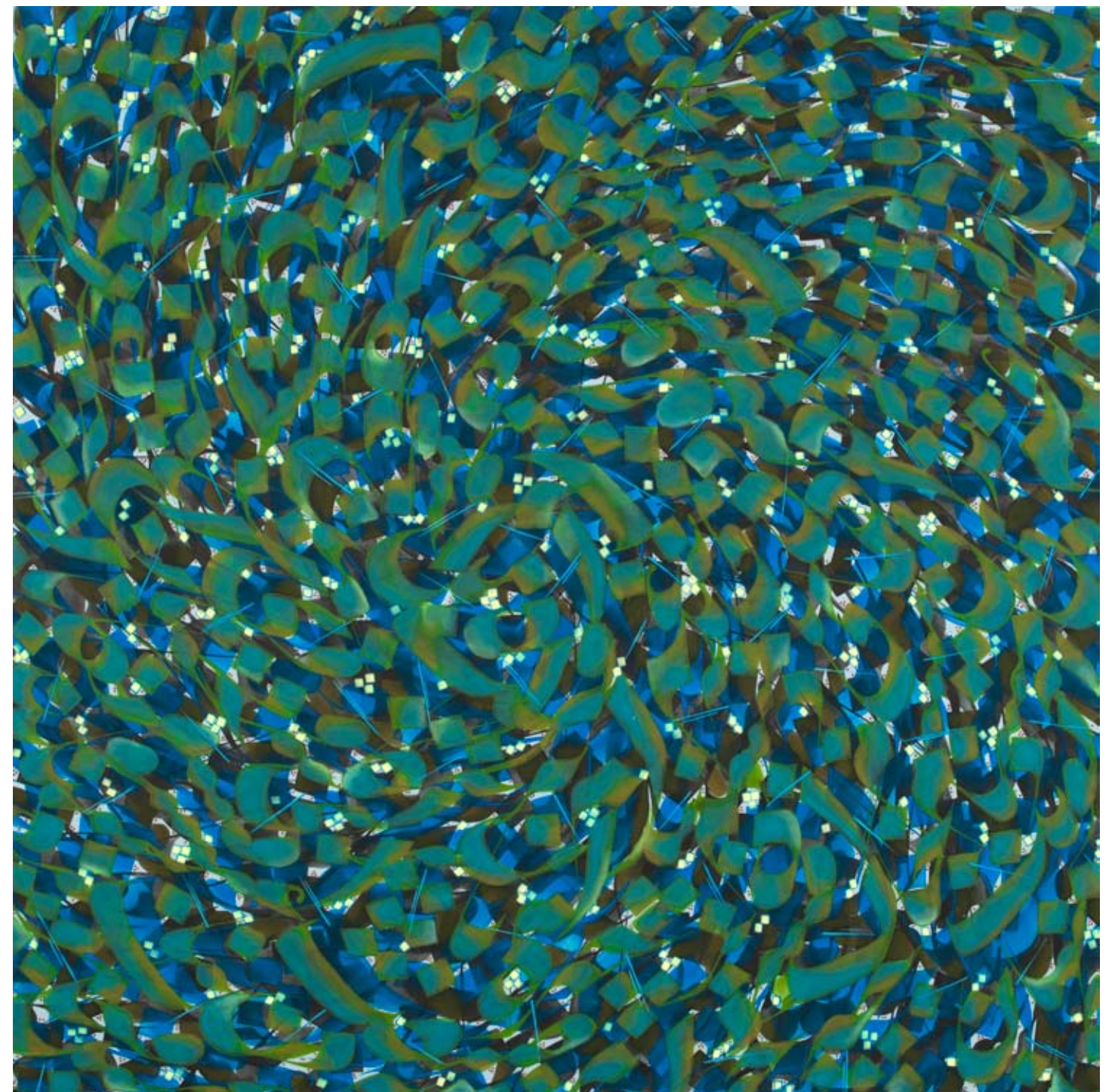
— **Media Farzin**

Media Farzin is a New York-based art historian and critic.

¹ All quotes and descriptions from Carl W. Ernst, “The Spirit of Islamic Calligraphy: Baba Shah Isfahani's *Adab al-mashq*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 112, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1992), pp. 279-286



Untitled 1 (Entropy Series) 2010
 Ink and acrylic on canvas
 48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



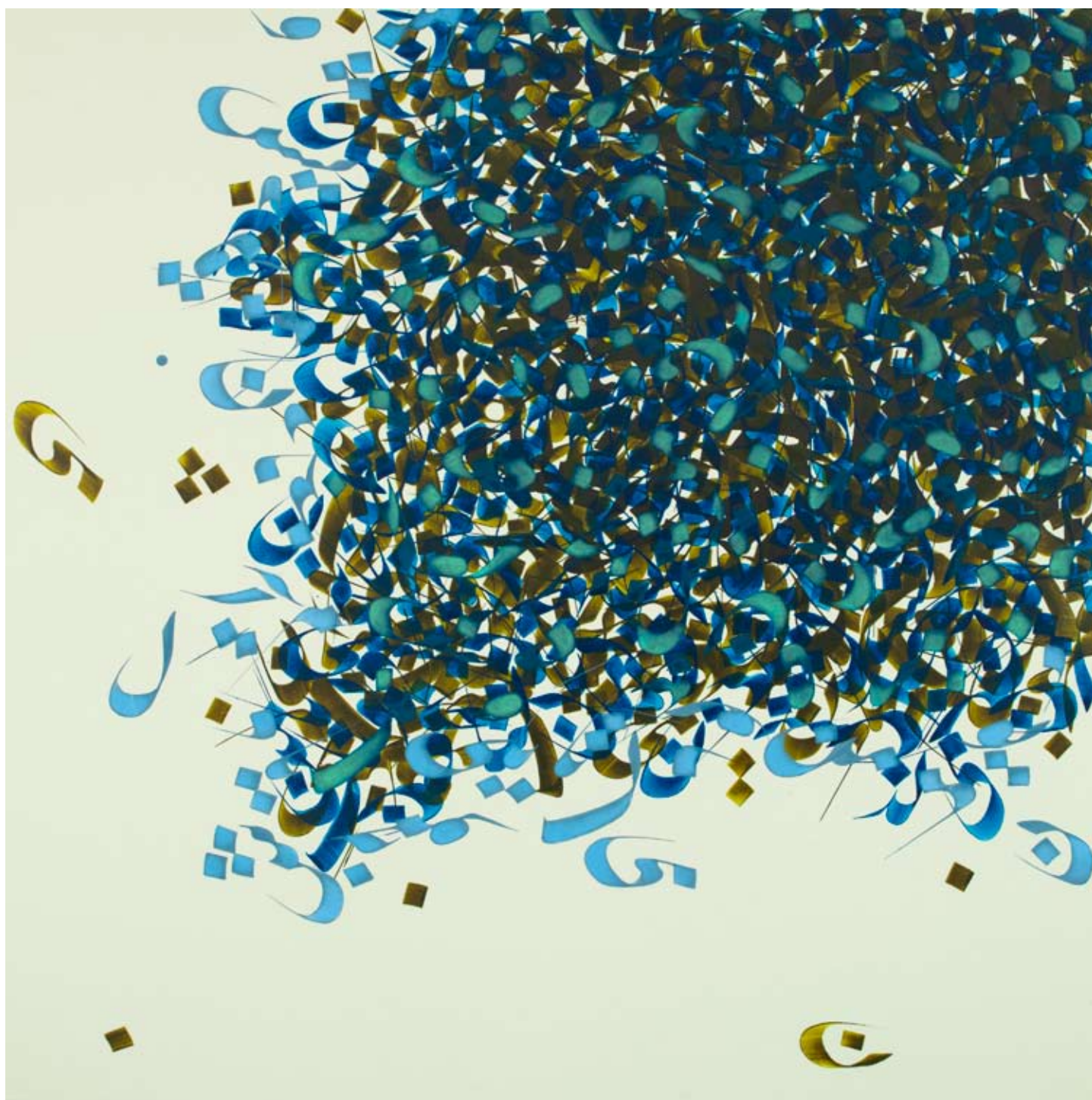
Untitled 2 (Entropy Series) 2010
 Ink and acrylic on canvas
 48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



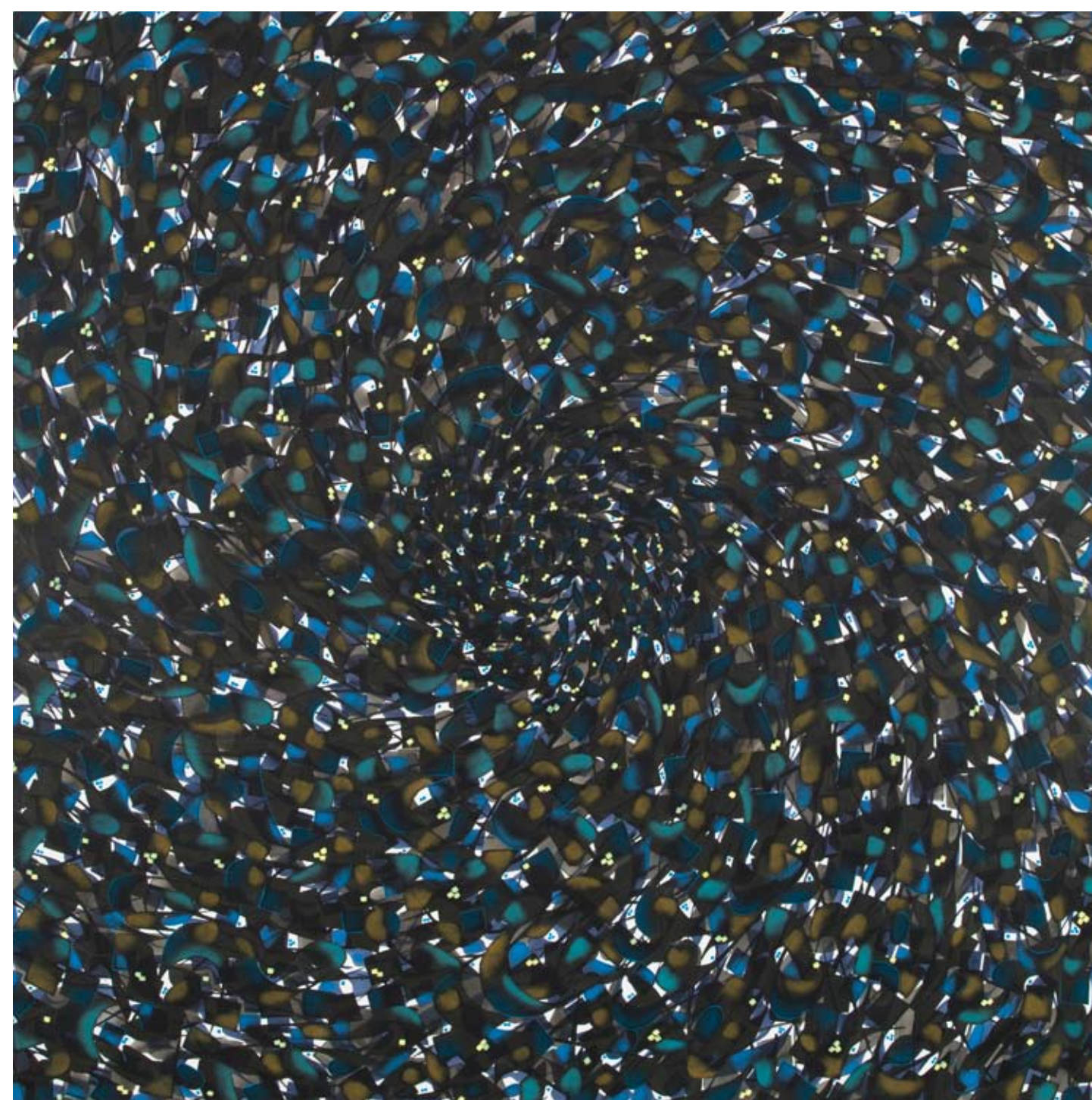
Untitled 3 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm

Untitled 5 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 in / 152.4 x 122 cm





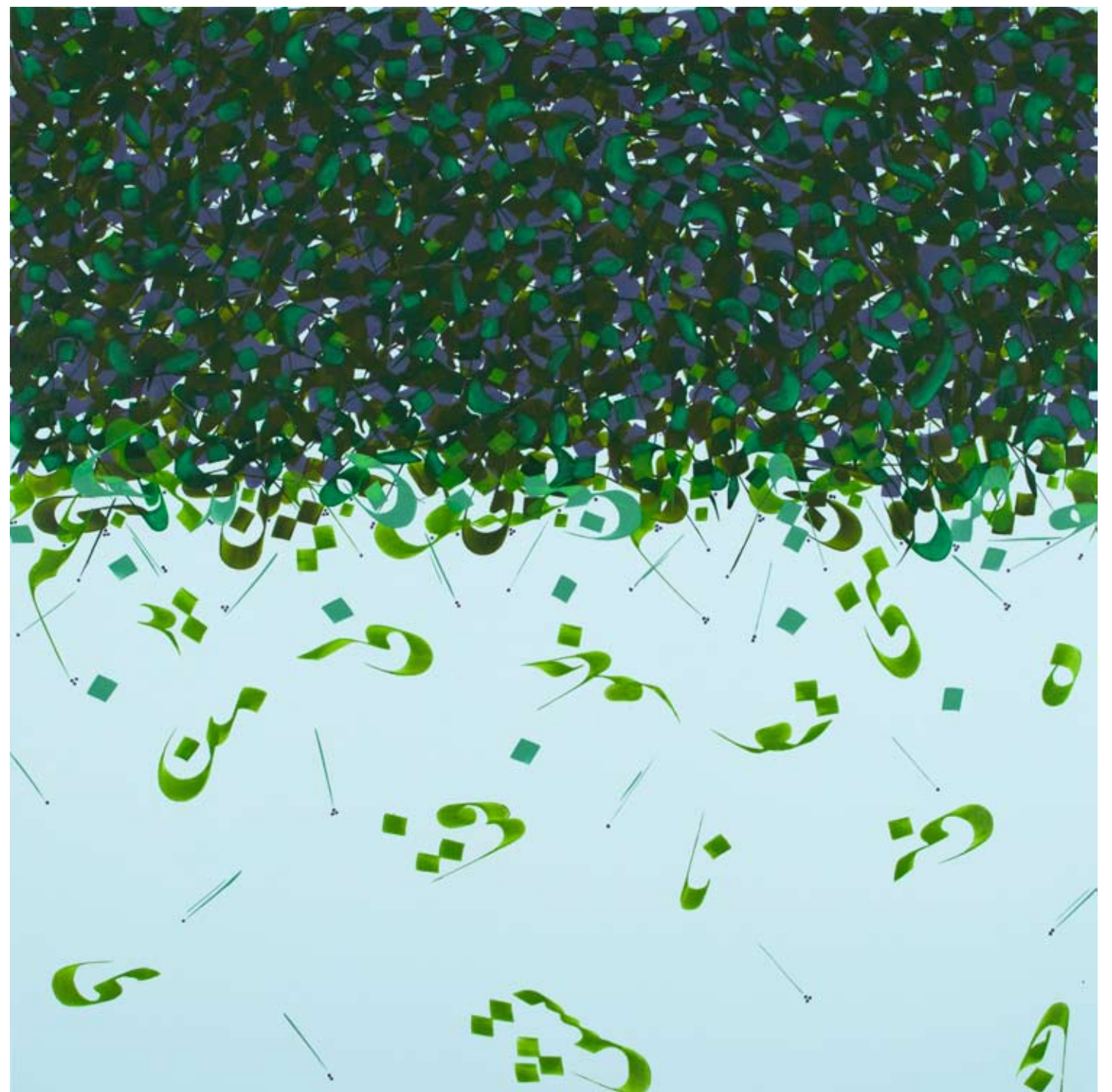
Untitled 6 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



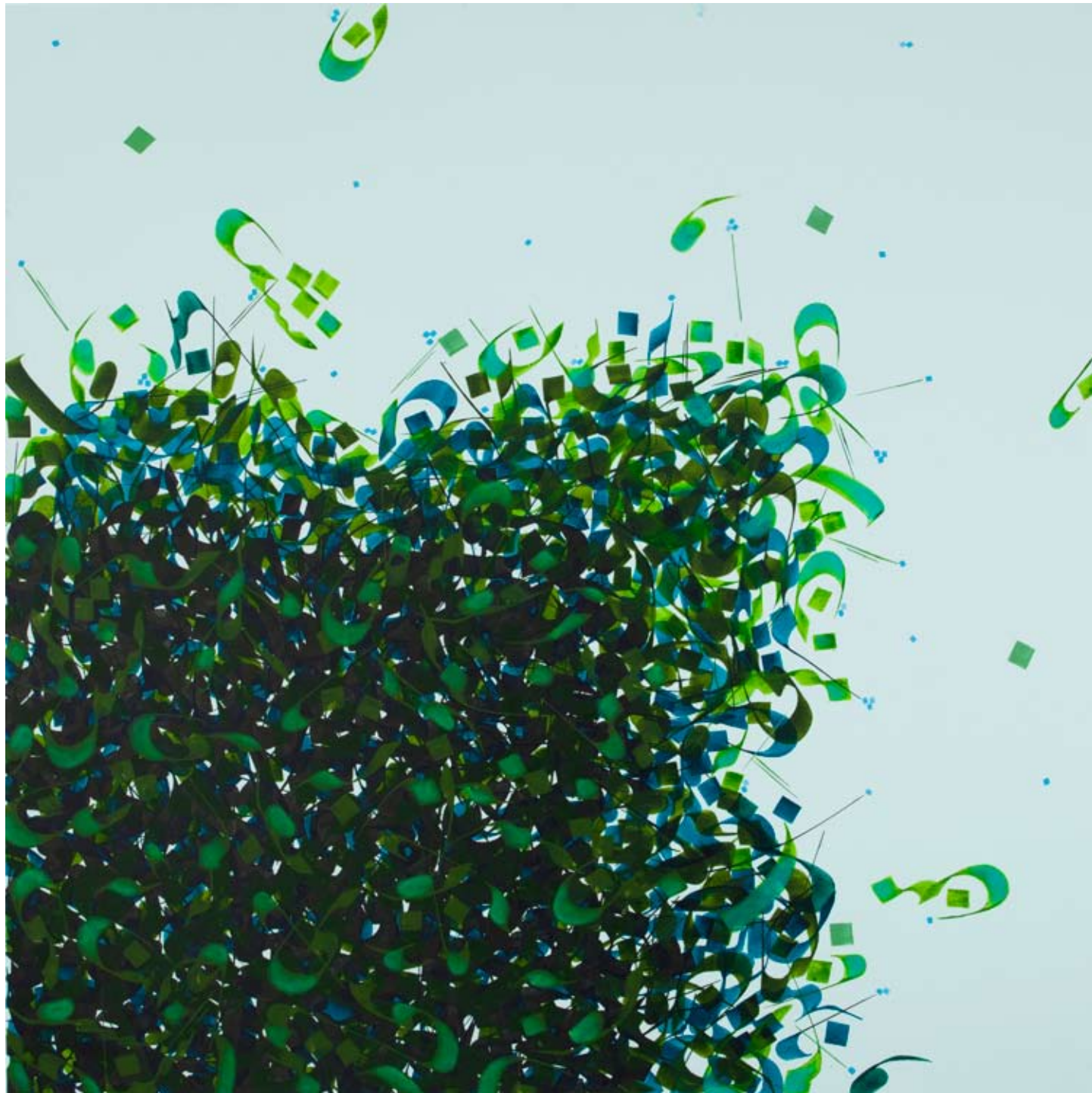
Untitled 11 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



Untitled 8 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



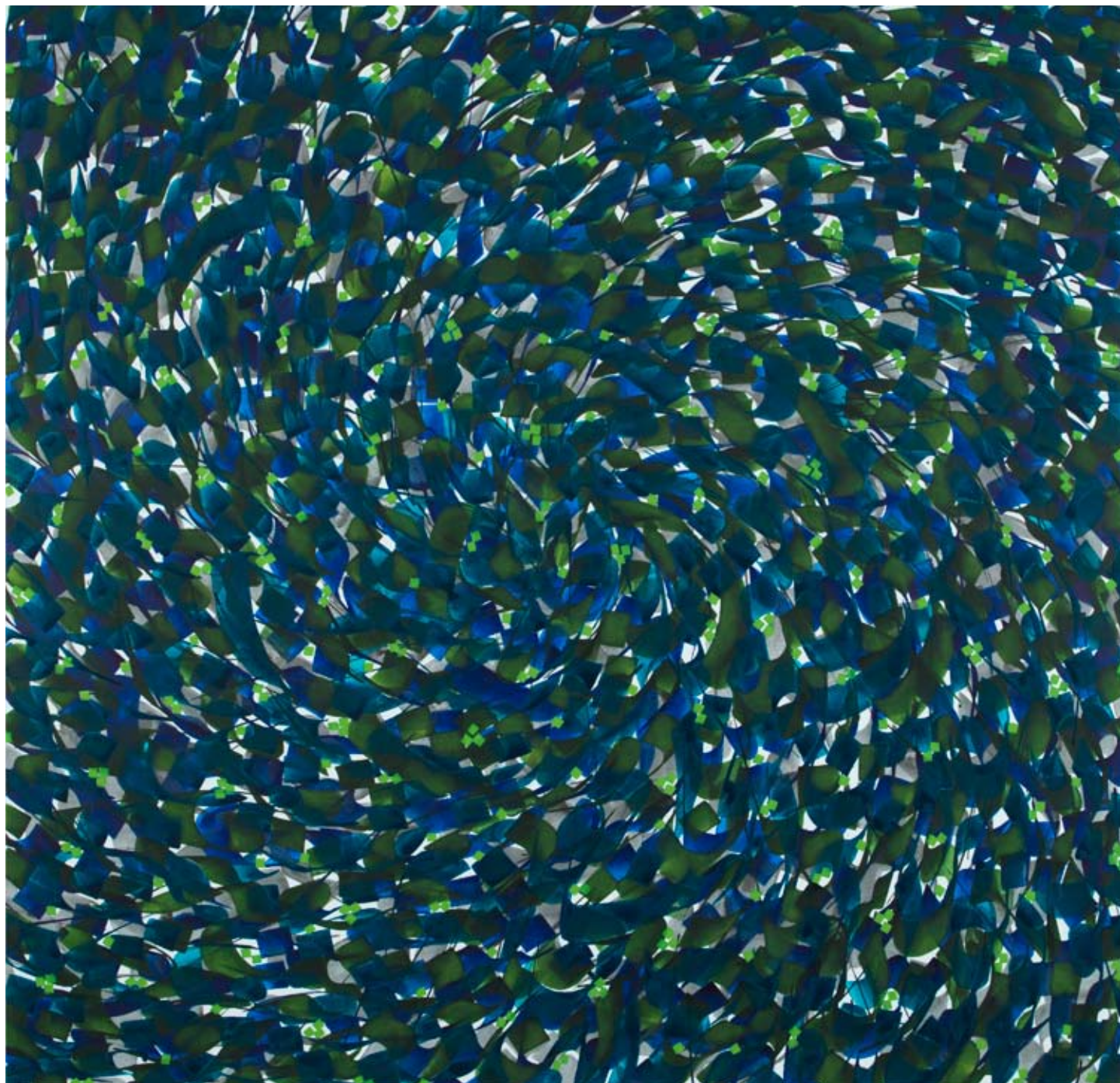
Untitled 9 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



Untitled 10 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



Untitled 7 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



Untitled 12 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in / 122 x 122 cm



Untitled 13 (Entropy Series) 2010
Ink and acrylic on canvas
72 x 48 in / 183 x 122 cm

POURAN JINCHI

BORN

1959 Mashad, Iran
Lives and works in New York, USA

EDUCATION

1993 Studio Painting, The Art Students League of New York, New York, NY, USA
1989 Painting, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
1982 Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering, George Washington University, Washington DC, USA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2010 *Entropy*, Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller (LTMH) Gallery, New York, USA
Ritual Imprint, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE
2008 *Pouran Jinchi*, The Vilcek Foundation, New York, NY, USA
A Survey, Art Projects International, New York, NY, USA
Headgears, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE
2007 *Recitation*, M. Y. Art Prospects, New York, NY, USA
2005 *Alef*, M.Y. Art Prospects, New York, NY, USA
2004 *Alef*, 511 Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2003 *Derakht*, 511 Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2002 *Entangled Thoughts*, Macy Gallery, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
2001 *Antworks*, M.Y. Art Prospects, New York, NY, USA
Derakht, Shibata Etsuko Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
2000 *Ruba’iyat Series*, M.Y. Art Prospects, New York, NY, USA
Pouran Jinchi: Recent Paintings, Art Projects International, New York, NY, USA
1999 *Poetry Paintings*, Nikolai Fine Arts, New York, NY, USA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010 *Light of the Sufi: The Mystical Arts of Islam*, Museum of Fine Art, Houston, TX
Translation/Tarjama, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
2009 *Iran Inside Out*, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA
Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam, Brooklyn Museum, New York, USA
Translation/Tarjama, Queens Museum of Art, New York, USA
Selseleh/Zelzeleh: Movers & Shakers in Contemporary Iranian Art, LTMH, New York, NY
Unknown Territory – New York: Il Lee, Pouran Jinchi, Flipe Rocha da Silva, Art Projects International, New York, NY
2008 *East West Dialogues*. Curated by Dr. Layla Diba, LTMH Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2007 Culture Village, Flashback/Forward, The Third Line Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2006 *A Distant Mirror*, M. Y. Art Prospects, New York, NY, USA
2003 Art Miami, Miller/Geisler Gallery, Miami, FL, USA
2002 Art Miami, M.Y. Art Prospects, Miami, FL, USA
Flag Art Festival, *Poetry of the Winds*, 2002 FIFA World Cup, Seoul, Japan
2001 Art Miami, M.Y. Art Prospects, Miami, FL, USA
Benefit Auction for American Friends of Cambodia Trust
2000 *The Rose and The nightingale*, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
United Nations Millennium Day, Benefit Exhibition, New York, NY, USA
Group Show, St. John’s University, Queens, NY, USA
Benefit Auction for American Friends of Cambodia, New York, NY, USA
The Learning Project, Benefit Auction, The Craft Museum, New York, NY, USA

Group Show, Vibrant Gallery, New York, NY, USA
1998 *Third Annual Exchange Show*, Nikolai Fine Arts, New York, NY, USA
Artists for Gardens, Benefit Exhibition, The Puck Building, New York, NY, USA
1997 *Two Artists Show*, Gallery Stendhal, New York, NY, USA
1996 Art Exhibition, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The Federal Reserve Bank, New York, NY, USA

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2009 Cotter, Holland, The New York Times, Art in Review, *Tarjama/Translation*, New York, August 13, 2009
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2008 Kóan Jeff. Baysa, Ctrl+P Journal of Contemporary Art, reproduction, *Lost in Transliteration*, issue 10, March 2008
Art Asia Pacific Almanac 2008, *Countries: United Arab Emirates*, reproduction, vol. 3, 2008
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Quick, Sara, OK! Magazine, *Pouran Jinchi*, January 31 2008
Art Tattler Online, www.arttattler.com, January 21 2008
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Asian Art News, *Painted Fabrics*, January – February 2008
2007 Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen, *Desert Oasis - or Mirage?*, Art + Auction, reproduction, October 2007
CNN Traveller, Inside the Middle East, *Under the hammer*, reproduction, March 2007
2006 Ekhtiar, Maryam, Eastern Art Report, *Practice Makes Perfect: The Art Of Calligraphy Exercises (Siyah Mashq) In Iran*, 2006
2002 Goodman, Jonathan, Art in America, *Pouran Jinchi at M. Y. Prospects*, October 2002
2001 Kennedy, Kendal, *Form Following Function: Pouran Jinchi’s Antworks*, 2001
Goodman, Jonathan, Art Asia Pacific, review, *Pouran Jinchi*, reproductions, issue 32, 2001
2000 Cotter, Holland, The New York Times, Fine Arts & Leisure, *More Abstraction*, January 21, 2000
Zimmer, William, The New York Times (Connecticut Edition), *What 72 Artists Figured Out About Boxes Measuring 1 by 1 by 1*, January 2, 2000
1999 The New Yorker, *Short List*, December 27, 1999

ACQUISITIONS

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, USA
Federal Reserve Bank, New York, NY, USA
Sprint Corporation, Kansas City, MO, USA
Lehman Brothers, New York, NY, USA
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY, USA
Farjam Collection, Dubai, UAE

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