

**JACOB VAN SCHALKWYK**

*King of Snake*

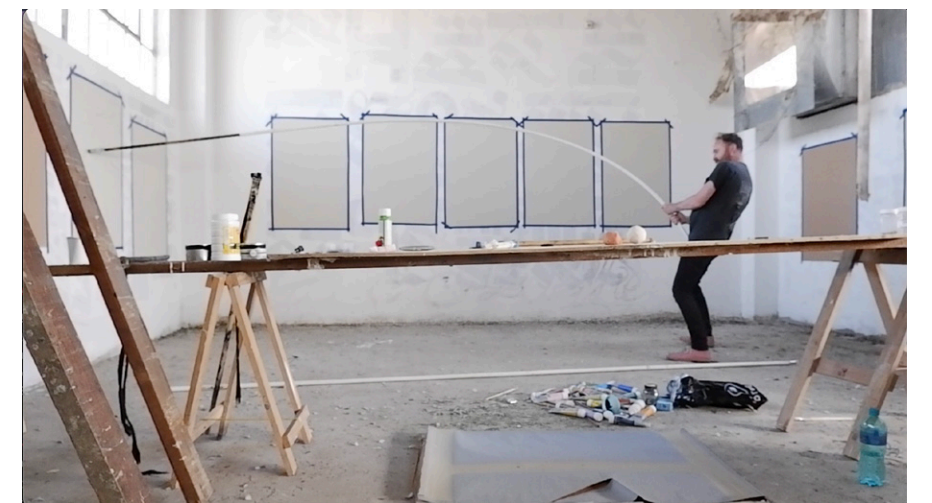
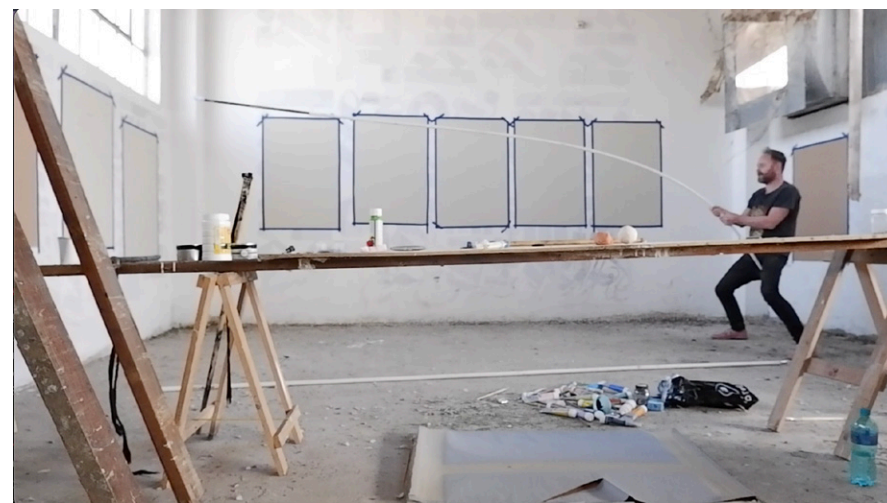
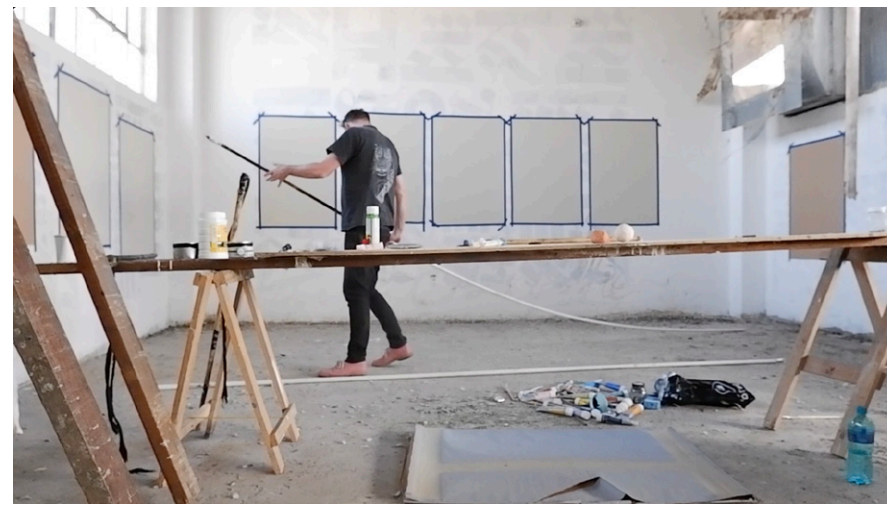
series of seven drawings

**2021**



Man United play Leeds United on my phone, Saturday afternoon, 14 August 2021, Yew street STUDIO.





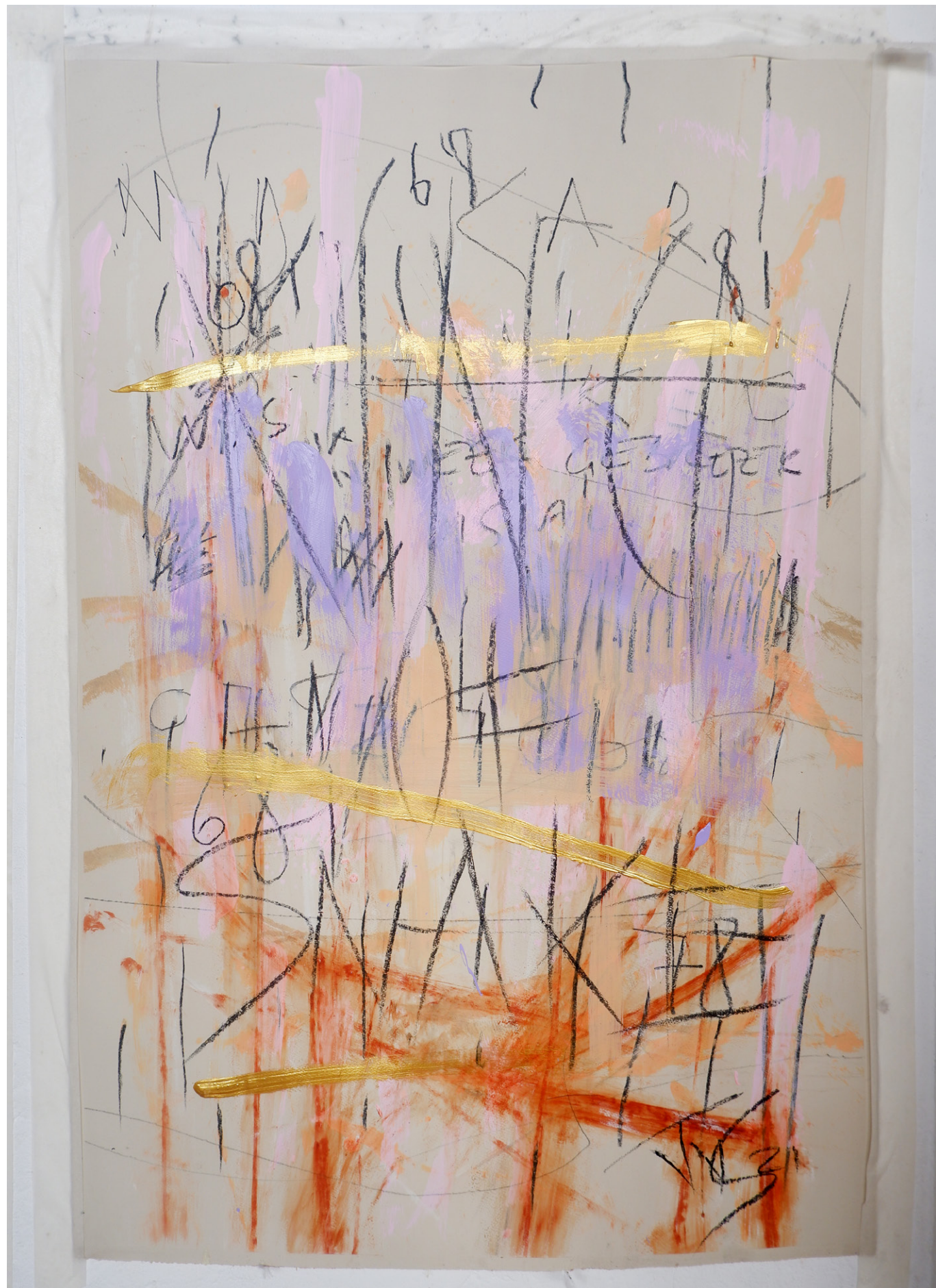
Stills from video documenting drawing process, Yew Street, Cape Town, August 2021.





King of Snake series in progress, STUDIO, Yew Street, Cape Town, October 2021.





King of Snake\_01, 2021. 1120 x 760mm



King of Snake\_02, 2021. 1120 x 760mm





King of Snake\_03, 2021. 1120 x 760mm



King of Snake\_04, 2021. 1120 x 760mm





King of Snake\_05, 2021. 1120 x 760mm



King of Snake\_06, 2021. 1120 x 760mm



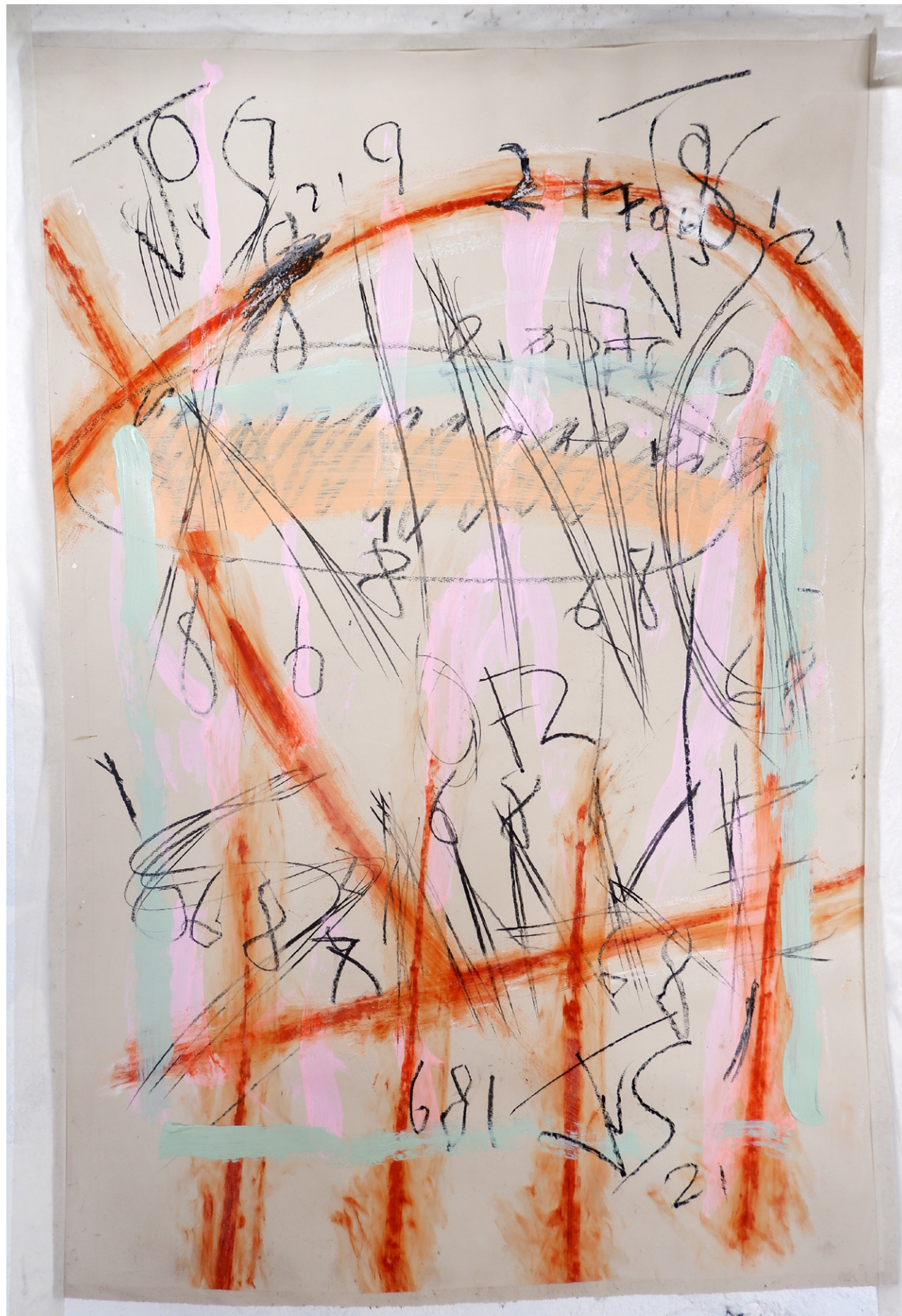
# *King of Snake*

Comments, 2023

In 2021 I was invited to work in a dilapidated factory space on Yew street in Salt River, Cape Town. The top floor of the building, which I was asked to occupy, had long since been abandoned and left to decay. With windows and parts of the roof missing, doves had moved in and generated knee-high piles of guano. Bird corpses and skeletons in stages of decay accompanied the concrete floor. This was a place where doves chose to die. With light from all sides and no pressure to be clean, it made for an ideal studio space. I asked my friend Jan-Henri Booyens to join me in the building. We both had work to do. We moved in in July and were kicked out by October. Incentive to develop the building had been lost. The plans I had presented to establish an art center – a multimodal space focused on addressing youth unemployment, anchored by artist studios – had been scrapped or absorbed and shelved for future developments without my participation. I was sent a lawyer's letter demanding I cease and desist from defaming the entities who had invited me in. In a sense, nothing happened. In another, I got to make King of Snake.

The seven mystical drawings that make up my King of Snake series function as transparent compositional records of the kind of catastrophic transgressions necessary to generate/access 'new' forms. Beginning by lampooning the role of the male artist seeking new form and greater freedom of gesture through attempts to draw with graphite fixed to a four-meter-long PVC pipe, the drawings plot their own development and devolution as the results of a series of material and conceptual errors/mistakes in the studio. From initial, mostly illegible marks resulting from my slapstick extension of the distance between the drawing instrument and the substrate, through their irreversible evidence of unintended neo-Nazi code masked frantically and unintentionally by plagiarism referencing the exploitation and outright creative and intellectual theft of Black artists' work by white men, my King of Snake drawings consist of a set of openly calamitous, failed and rebellious drawing sessions that each left their residue in forms that actively resist being made sense of or being diminished through consolidation and reflection into a 'significant' visual language. They conclude in amounts of time spent away from the act of drawing, focused instead on an irreverent task of 'finishing' the Snake game on my Nokia phone in order to return to the studio with a sense of accomplishment. With a sense of completion achieved outside of the studio and creative/artistic endeavor, I re-entered the studio to complete the drawings in a single session that consisted of the repeated, critically aware, verbose, self-abusing misuse of my signature all over the compositions and the branding/marketing of each work with mock triumphant lettering designating each composition as nothing more than the title of the work: King of Snake. As such my King of Snake drawings are exact replicas of the many property developments I see replacing our heritage buildings all over Cape Town, year after year.

On a technical level, these drawings present my first solution for including ceremonial clay as drawing material on paper. Having drawn directly into the paper with ingots of ceremonial clay gifted to me by a traditional healer from Swaziland – with the expressed imperative to find a way of drawing with the material – I found that by coating the marks in pH-neutral wood glue I was able to successfully compensate for the friable nature of the clay, thus ensuring a mark that would remain and endure on paper. As such, they are my best attempts at ethical usage of my cultural heritage to respectfully effect the greater good in the society I am privileged to occupy.



King of Snake\_07, 2021. 1120 x 760mm



# JACOB VAN SCHALKWYK

## *King of Snake*

series of drawings

Ceremonial clay, lithographic crayon, charcoal, graphite lead, wood glue and acrylic on Somerset Etching paper.

### **Representation**

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### **Artist**

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