

Tawaf/ Sa'y is inspired by the pilgrimage footsteps of exemplars – Malcolm X, Ali Shariati, and of course Hajar – the Black woman whose courageous determination led to the opening of the Zam Zam well in Mecca, which has quenched the thirst of millions of pilgrims for thousands of years.

This text-based paintings series appropriates text from *Hajj* the meditative memoir of Ali Shariati (1933-1977), the Iranian sociologist, revolutionary and philosopher. In his memoir, Shariati states “the rituals of Hajj are a memory of Hajar” - a Black Ethiopian woman, mother of Abraham, revered in Islamic tradition, and from whom the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Arab people descend. The two hajj’s rituals: Tawaf - circumambulating around the Kaaba (a black cubic structure) and Sa'y - running between two mountains, are reenactments of Hajar’s struggle in search for water in the Arabian desert. The kaaba is described as the “center of love” and the hajj pilgrim as “the compass rotating around it”. The work layers fragments of his text in repetitive circular and linear patterns, referencing the symbolic motions of these two commemorative rites contained in the pilgrimage to Mecca. This series delves into the connective tissues between ritual form, immateriality, and struggles towards material needs along with social justice. These works are a formal exploration of reconciled binaries in the hajj ritual performance tradition and invoke aesthetic references to Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī’s 10th century astronomical renderings and expand on text painting traditions of artists Mira Schendel, Glenn Ligon and Jasper Johns.

“ Hajj is the combination of Tawaf and Sa'y. It resolves the contradictions that have confused mankind throughout history:

Materialism or idealism? Rationalism or enlightenment?

This world or the hereafter? Epicureanism or asceticism?

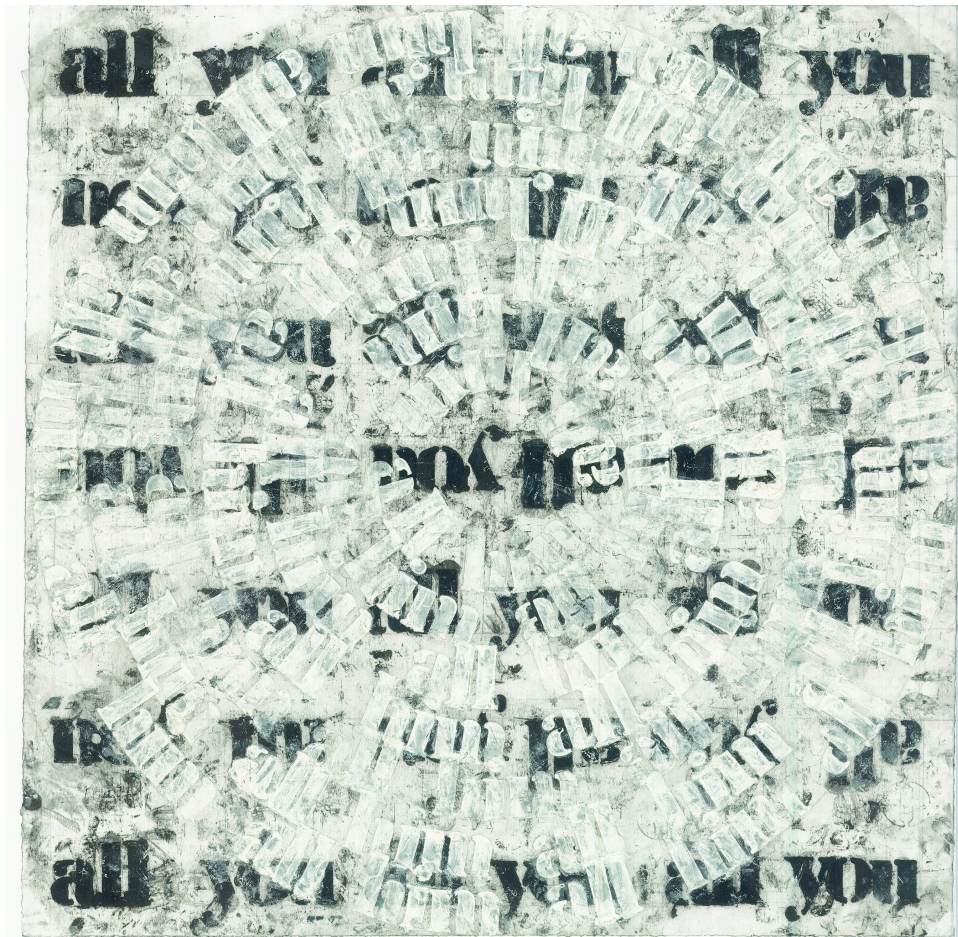
The will of Allah or the will of man?

To rely on Him or the will of man? To rely on Him or rely on oneself?

---**Both!** ... A lesson not by words perception, science nor philosophy but by showing you an example of a human... a black Ethiopian slave and a mother. It is Hajar!”

-*Hajj*, Ali Shariati

Purchase my *Tawaf/ Sa'y* series [Here](#) and [Here](#).

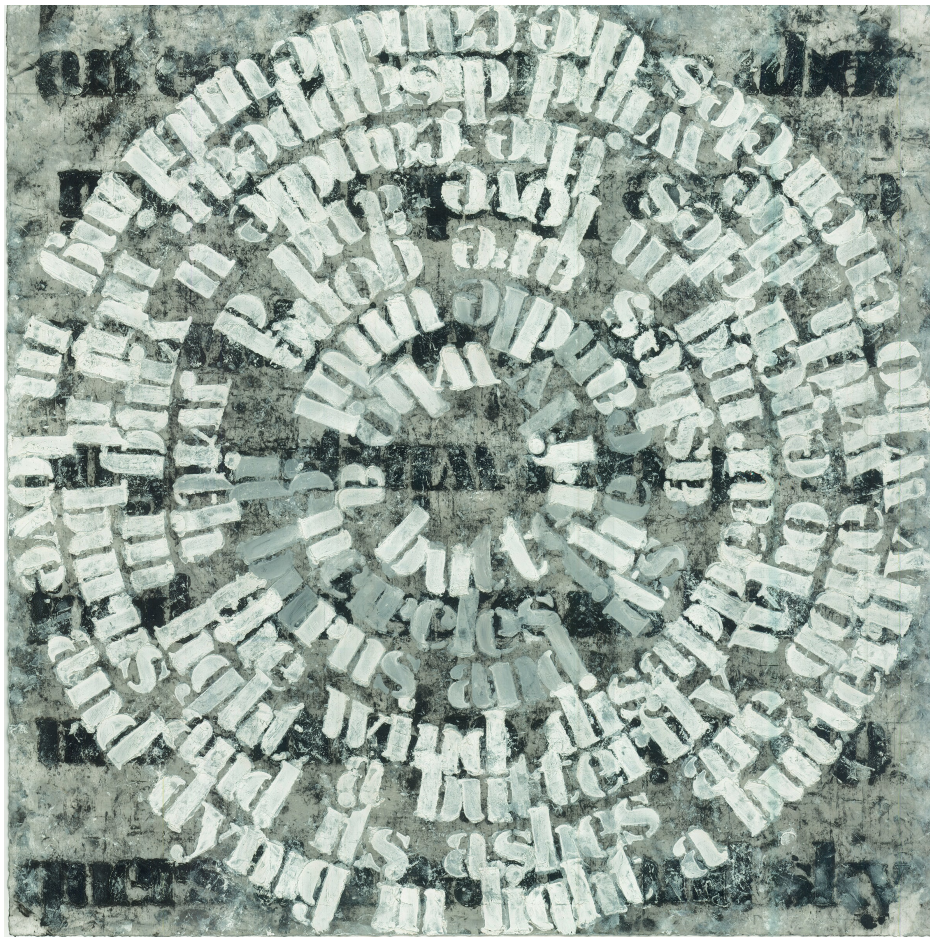


Nsenga Knight

Tawaf/ Sa'y: All

Oilstick, Olive Oil and Gesso on Vegetable Parchment Paper

22.5 x 22.5 in

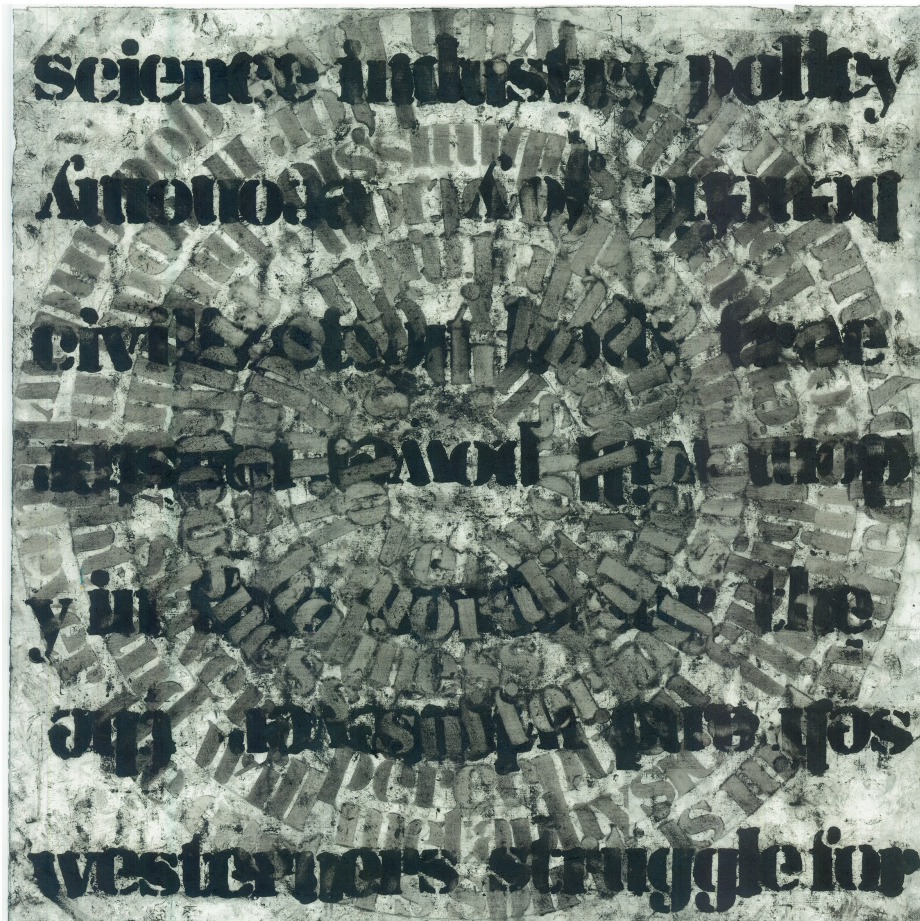


Nsenga Knight

Tawaf/ Sa'y: Butterfly and Eagle

Oilstick, Olive Oil and Gesso on Vegetable Parchment Paper

22.5 x 22.5 in

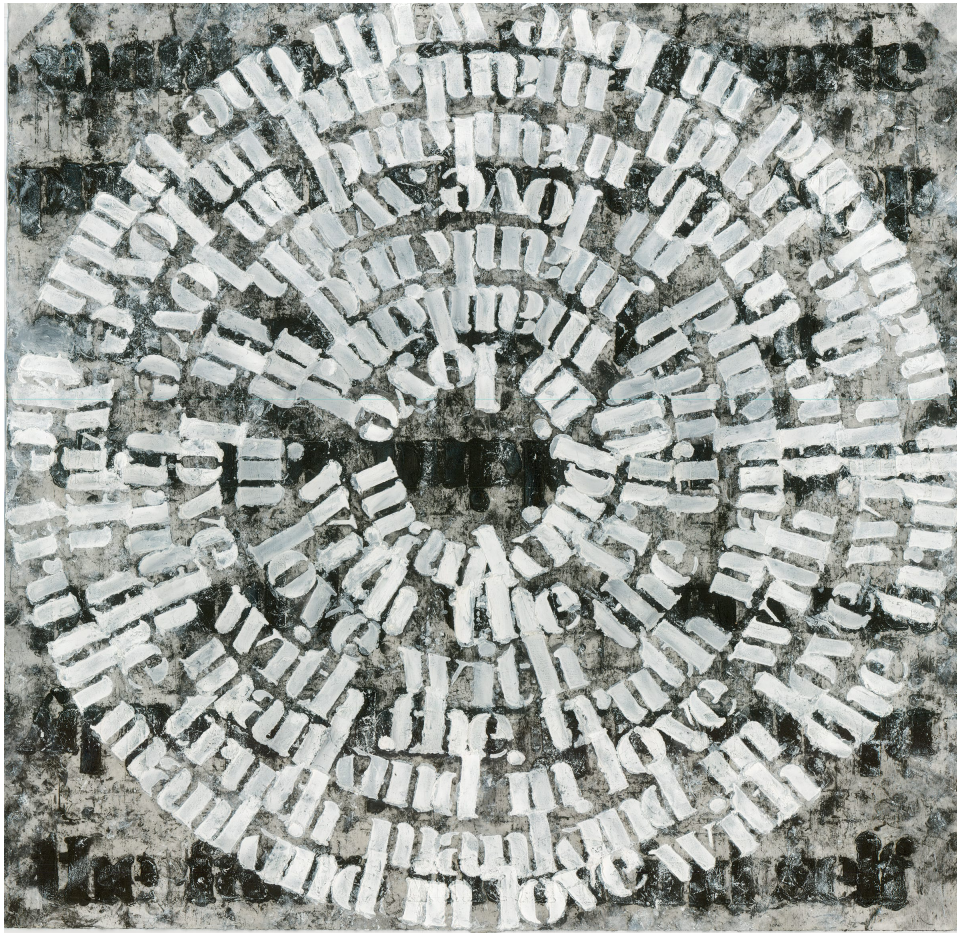


Nsenga Knight

Tawaf/ Sa'y: In Love With/ Struggle For

Oilstick, Olive Oil and Gesso on Vegetable Parchment Paper

22.5 x 22.5 in

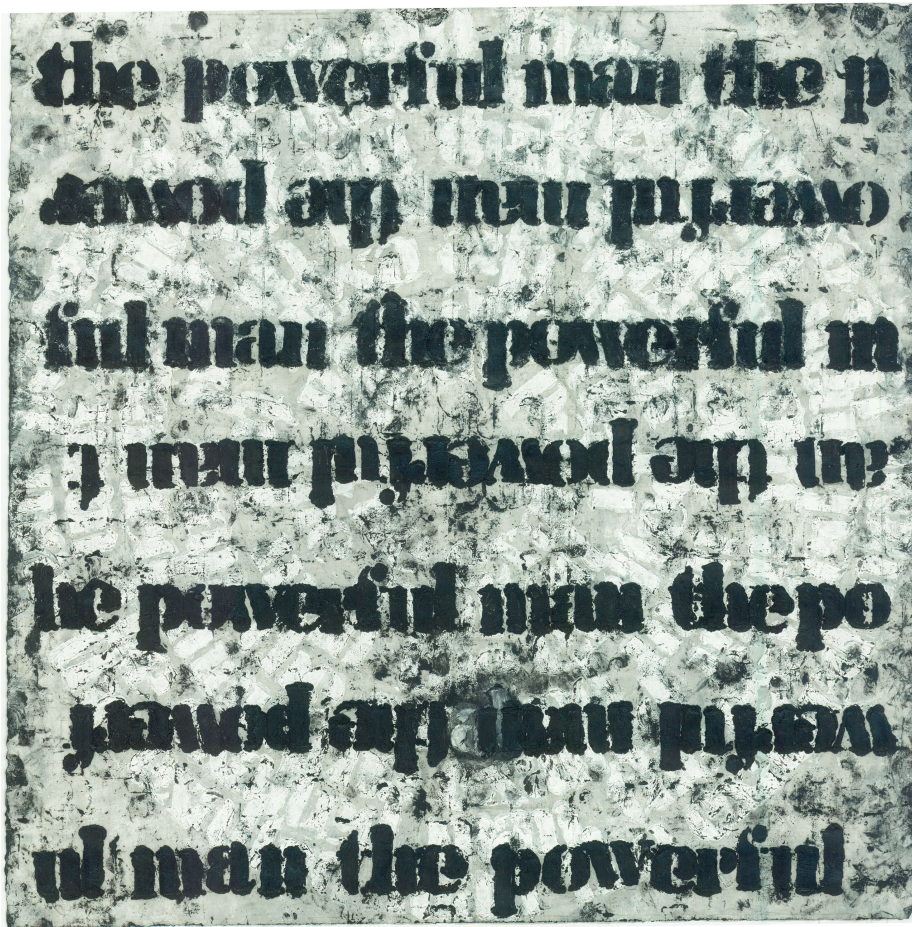


Nsenga Knight

Tawaf/ Sa'y: Mankind

Oilstick and Gesso on Vegetable Parchment Paper

22.5 x 22.5 in



Nsenga Knight

Tawaf/ Sa'y: Powerful and Exalted

Oilstick, Olive Oil and Gesso on Vegetable Parchment Paper

22.5 x 22.5 in