



Uri Aran

Untitled (I love you)

Madre Museum, Naples

12 February — 18 May 2026

Sadie Coles

HQ



The **Fondazione Donnaregina per le arti contemporanee – museo Madre, Naples** presents the first institutional retrospective of work by the American artist **Uri Aran** (Jerusalem, 1977). Conceived especially for the spaces on the third floor of Palazzo Donnaregina, the exhibition is presented as a sort of mid-career retrospective: a path put together by the artist in direct dialogue with the architecture of the museum, bringing together many of his most important works alongside new pieces created especially for this occasion. This exhibition is very much part of the development of the artist, whose research has been featured in some of the most prestigious institutions on the international scene, including the Walker Art Center's Platforms: Commissions and Collection program in Minneapolis (2019); the Whitney Biennial (2014), curated by Stuart Comer, Anthony Elms, and Michelle Grabner; the Italian solo exhibition *Puddles* at Peep-Hole in Milan (2014), curated by Vincenzo De Bellis and Bruna Roccasalva; the 55th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (2013), curated by Massimiliano Gioni; and the solo exhibition *Here, Here and Here* at the Kunsthalle Zürich (2013), curated by Beatrix Ruf.

The project presented by Aran at Madre, which constitutes a major work in its own right, sits within an artistic trajectory that has explored the ways in which we communicate, behave, perceive, and build relationships with the world and with others for over twenty five years. At the center of his work is often language—not only as a tool of communication, but as a space where cultural differences, personal memories, and forms of identity are manifested. Aran uses words, objects, images, and gestures to compose works that seem suspended between the familiar and the unexpected. Through installation, sculpture, video, and painting, he gives shape to rich visual scenarios, where elements of everyday life are deconstructed and reorganized into compositions that evoke fragmentary and open narratives. In a discourse on subjectivity that embraces vulnerability and the complexity of relationships, Aran works at the margins of codified discourse. The exhibition at Madre will comprehensively recount the evolution of his practice from the early 2000s to the present day.





Animals

Excluded from functional language, for Uri Aran animals represent a fundamental 'tool' through which to observe the mechanisms of affection and projection that govern human relationships more clearly. In his works, animals do not speak or argue, yet they allow humans to express themselves and feel understood. However, animals are never reduced to symbols; they remain ambiguous presences, at times affectionate, at other times disturbing. In this ambivalence, Aran's work does not offer alternative models but highlights the linguistic, relational, and educational structures that govern the way humans learn to behave and relate to one another.

From this perspective, the taxonomy plays a central role in the process of understanding reality. In works involving real or plastic animals, such as in the video *Untitled (I love you)* (2012) or in bi-dimensional works as *Teachers* (2025), and *Tenants* (2025), classification appears to be a seemingly innocuous gesture, yet one fraught with cultural implications. Ordering, naming, and distinguishing means attributing value, establishing a hierarchy, but above all transforming what is alive into a compartmentalized and manageable category. As in language, here too, the reading of reality risks being reduced to a presumed incontrovertible truth; however, as often occurs in Uri Aran's works, what seems true is merely the result of normative construction.

In the video *Untitled* (2006), the embrace between the artist and the dog stages a form of relationship that lies beyond functional language, without clarifying an emotion or a univocal meaning, but highlighting the limits of speech. The presence of animals in his works, as well as that of cookies provided as rewards, allows Aran to reflect on the theme of education as a coercive system of behaviour regulation. The artist questions its effectiveness, highlighting the fragility of educational models based exclusively on the consecration of merit.



Neighbourhood (Little Drivers Like These), 2025
2 parts, left: oil, oil pastel, and mixed media on somerset paper
site size: 113.7 x 76.2 cm / 44 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 30 in.
frame size: 149.9 x 94 x 5.1 cm / 59 x 37 x 2 in.
right: inkjet print and mixed media on adhesive paper
149.9 x 76.2 cm / 59 x 30 in.
HQ29-UA22393D

[High-resolution image](#)



Untitled (I Love You), 2012
single channel video
duration: 4 mins, 29 secs
HQ29-UA22588V

[Viewing Link](#)



The Bride, 2025

oil, oil pastel, graphite, charcoal, and mixed media on somerset paper

site size: 113.7 x 76.2 cm / 44 ¾ x 30 in

framed size: 134.6 x 94 x 5.1 cm / 53 x 37 x 2 in

HQ29-UA22394D

[High-resolution image](#)

Untitled (Books), 2024

wood, paper, ink transfer, 36 parts

installation dimensions: 14 x 75 x 50 cm / 5 ½ x 29 ½ x 19 ¾ in

HQ27-UA20628S

[High-resolution image](#)





Still life in house plan, 2025

oil, oil pastel, graphite and gesso on canvas, HDO

19.1 x 26 x 1.9 cm / 7 ½ x 10 ¼ x ¾ in.

HQ28-UA21904P

[High-resolution image](#)

Language

In Uri Aran's work, language is not a transparent tool but a system that accumulates, archives, and confuses meaning. Far from the idea of communication as a clear transmission of meaning, words are treated as unstable materials, subject to shifts, delays, and interpretative ambiguities. What is said always seems to come a little later, as if the meaning had already slipped elsewhere. Like in poetry, in Uri Aran's works, the functional capacity of language is put to the test. The act of naming does not coincide with that of knowing. Instructions, lists, and classifications function as devices that promise clarity yet produce ambiguity, transforming language into a tool stripped of the authority that habit and custom tend to confer upon it.

In installations such as *Bread Library* (2025), language takes the form of an archive that catalogues and embraces multiple possibilities, while at the same time emitting a specific odour. A set of elements that make visible the arbitrariness and mutability inherent to language. Recognizable typographies, familiar graphic structures, and standardized linguistic registers generate expectations, allowing us to recognize a language even before we understand it, projecting preconceptions onto it. Aran often works in this gap where language appears credible even before it is understood, thus revealing its intrinsic fragility. In Aran's work, speaking does not mean expressing an intention but exposing oneself to a loss of control. Language becomes a field of negotiation in which multiple meanings coexist without resolution.

An example of this is the video *Untitled (Baryshnikov)* (2008), in which the artist asks his interlocutor to place increasing emphasis on pronouncing a statement. The viewer of Uri Aran's works is not called upon to decipher a message, but to confront the limits of language itself, accepting that meaning is not a stable given but a temporary and changing condition.





Bread Library, 2020

bread, plywood and mixed media
installation dimensions variable
HQ25-UA18412S

[High-resolution images](#)



Flower, 2025

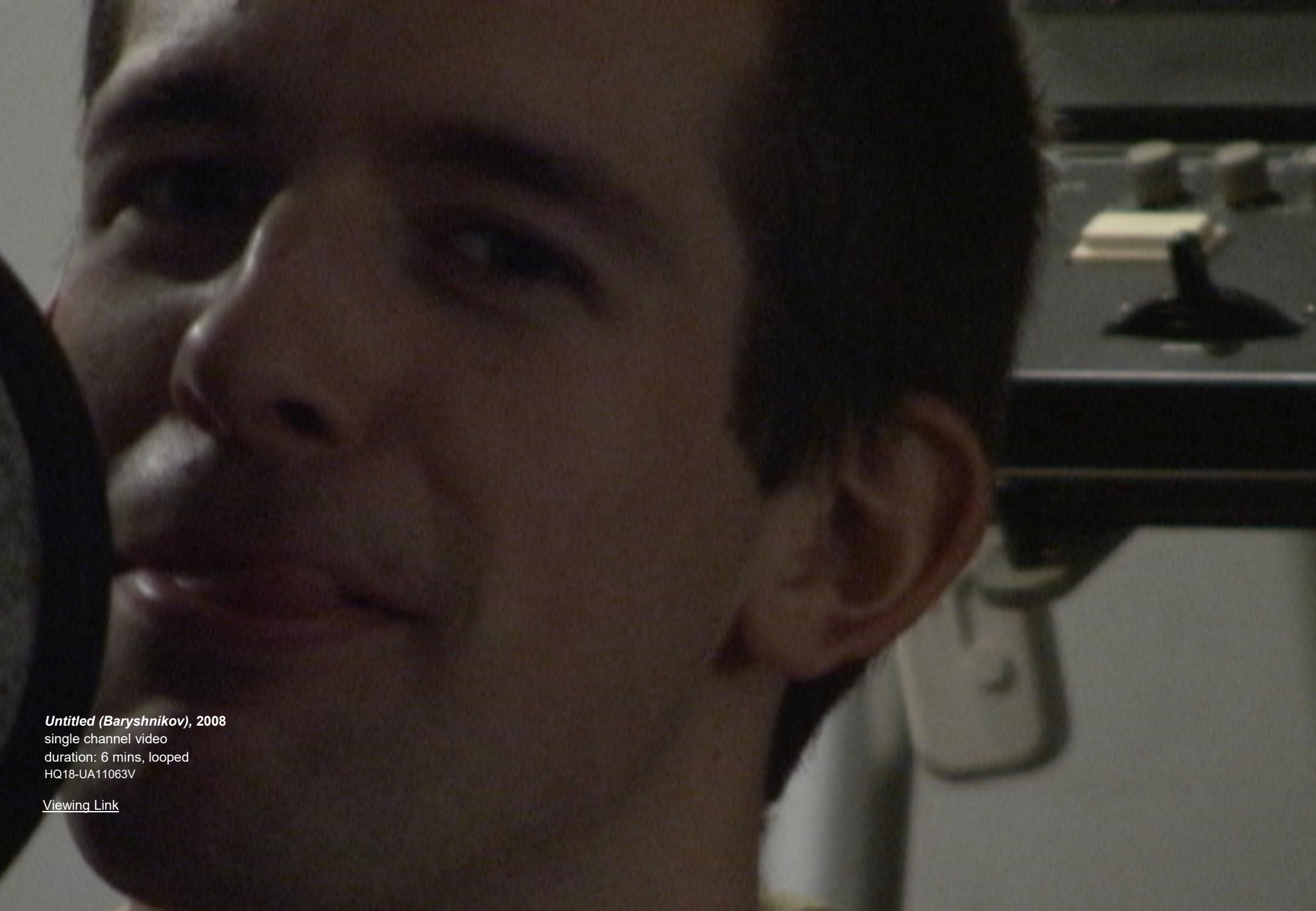
oil, oil pastel graphite and beeswax on cotton, HDO

29.8 x 36.8 cm / 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ in

HQ29-UA22129P

[High-resolution image](#)





Untitled (Baryshnikov), 2008

single channel video
duration: 6 mins, looped
HQ18-UA11063V

[Viewing Link](#)



Studio

For Uri Aran, the studio space is not simply a place of production, but an operational structure where time, materials, and relationships come together. The artist describes the table as a meeting point between time and aesthetics: a surface on which things are placed, moved around, accumulated, and left to age. Assembling each of his works himself, Aran conceives of the studio and the tables that inhabit it as emotional spaces.

These accumulations, at times seemingly chaotic, are not random. In the sculpture *All This Is Yours* (2010) or in the painting *Camp* (2016), found objects, notes, drawings, sculptural materials, obsolete technologies, signs, and marks coexist on the same surfaces with its own 'material democracy'. In the video *A to Q* (2010), the artist films an internet clip from a concert with his cell phone while displaying a series of objects and materials, organized according to a partial and arbitrary alphabetical classification. In both his sculptural and video works, the order of things appears provisional. What the artist defines as 'bureaucratic formalism' is expressed as a subtle critique of social structures that tend to categorize everything yet without clarifying the meaning of things, indeed emptying them of it.

The table is a recurring device in Aran's practice. It is the place where one learns to be, to put things in order, to respond to a task, to domesticate while being domesticated; but it is also a space under which to take refuge. The studio becomes a reduced model of larger social structures, in which bureaucracy, the office, and the home environment overlap. Elements such as sofas, sinks, or functional surfaces take on a dual nature: both objects of use and symbolic devices.

Through the notion of the studio, Aran makes visible the material, temporal, and social conditions that determine artistic practice. The work is not presented as a final result, but as an open process, based on ideas and preconceptions that are constantly negotiable. "The work, the dog, the artwork, all want to be better, be good," as the artist mentioned.





Summary (in a few words), 2024
metal grid, transfer print, graphite, oil pastel, underglaze pencil,
trim, resin, corn husks thread and clear glaze on ceramics
40.5 x 44 x 14 cm / 16 x 17 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in
HQ27-UA20627D

[High-resolution image](#)

695 (Arch Stanton), 2023

metal, flux core MIG wire, wood and plastic coins
154.9 x 132.1 x 5.1 cm / 61 x 52 x 2 in.
HQ29-UA22514S

[High-resolution image](#)





Mine, mine, mine, 2025

oil, acrylic screen print, polyurethane,
oil pastel, graphite and mixed media on HDO
121.9 x 81.3 cm / 48 x 32 in
HQ29-UA22079P

[High-resolution images](#)





Touching a plan, 2025

oil, oil pastel, graphite, polyurethane and
beeswax on canvas, HDO

20.3 x 29.2 x 1.9 cm / 8 x 11 ½ x ¾ in.

HQ29-UA22124P

[High-resolution image](#)

Time From Memory, 2020-2025
oil pastel, acrylic, and graphite on HDO
247 x 94.6 x 3.8 cm / 97 ¼ x 37 ¼ x 1 ½ in.
HQ29-UA22122P

[High-resolution images](#)





Untitled, 2014 / 2026

plaster, metal ball bearings, resin cast dog biscuits

10.36 m × 86 cm × 76 cm / 34 ft. x 34 in. x 30 in

HQ29-UA22572S



Yours and Mine, 2025

oil, oil pastel, graphite, charcoal, and mixed media on Somerset paper
134.6 x 94 cm / 53 x 37 in.
HQ29-UA22130D

[High-resolution image](#)



Untitled, 2006

single channel video
duration: 3 mins 24 secs
HQ29-UA22607V

[Viewing Link](#)





Camp, 2016

oil pastel, colour pencil, acrylic, wood stain, china marker, collage,
graphite and mixed media on HDO in artist's frame

56 x 76.2 x 7 cm / 26 x 30 x 2 ¾ in.

HQ24-UA17281P

[High-resolution image](#)

Emotions

In Uri Aran's works, emotions are never represented directly, nor are they named as explicit content of the works. Rather, they emerge as side effects of situations, gestures, and materials that are capable of triggering memories, sensations, and odors, often ambiguous and not clearly traceable. The structural limitations that the artist attributes to language are also to be found in the complex representation of emotions. Common objects, such as bread and biscuits, but also balls, plates, and jars, act as emotional triggers rather than symbols. Their smell, their materiality, and their everyday use evoke a dimension of memory and nostalgia linked to childhood, without however indulging in any form of idealized vision.

In Aran's work, childhood is never naive: it is a time when emotions are experienced with extreme seriousness, and when every gesture may take on disproportionate weight. Humor, always implied and never explicit in Uri Aran's work, also plays a major role in his research. Humor seems to lend humanity to what the artist collects, films, and assembles, infusing the objects represented with a comfortable sense of recognizability and familiarity. Nonetheless, emotions do not serve to explain the works or make them more accessible; on the contrary, they help to keep them in a state of openness, in which what is perceived remains partial, unstable, and consequently deeply human.





Riva, 2006 / 2026

single channel video with sound

duration: 3 mins 46 secs

HQ29-UA22566V

[Viewing Link](#)



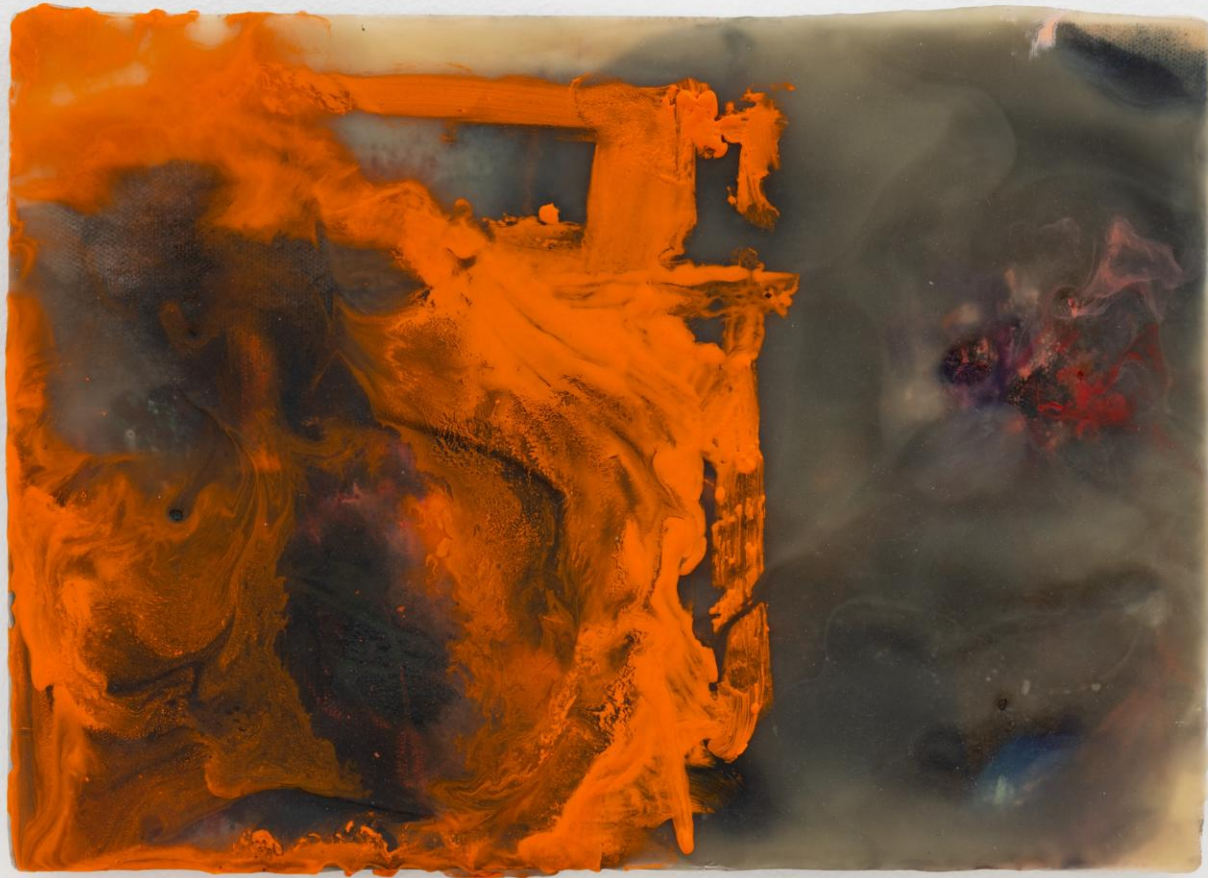


Like These A, 2026

gesso, oil pastel, graphite, pen, and mixed media on MDO
21.6 x 27.9 x 1.9 cm / 8 ½ x 11 x ¾ in.

HQ29-UA22522P

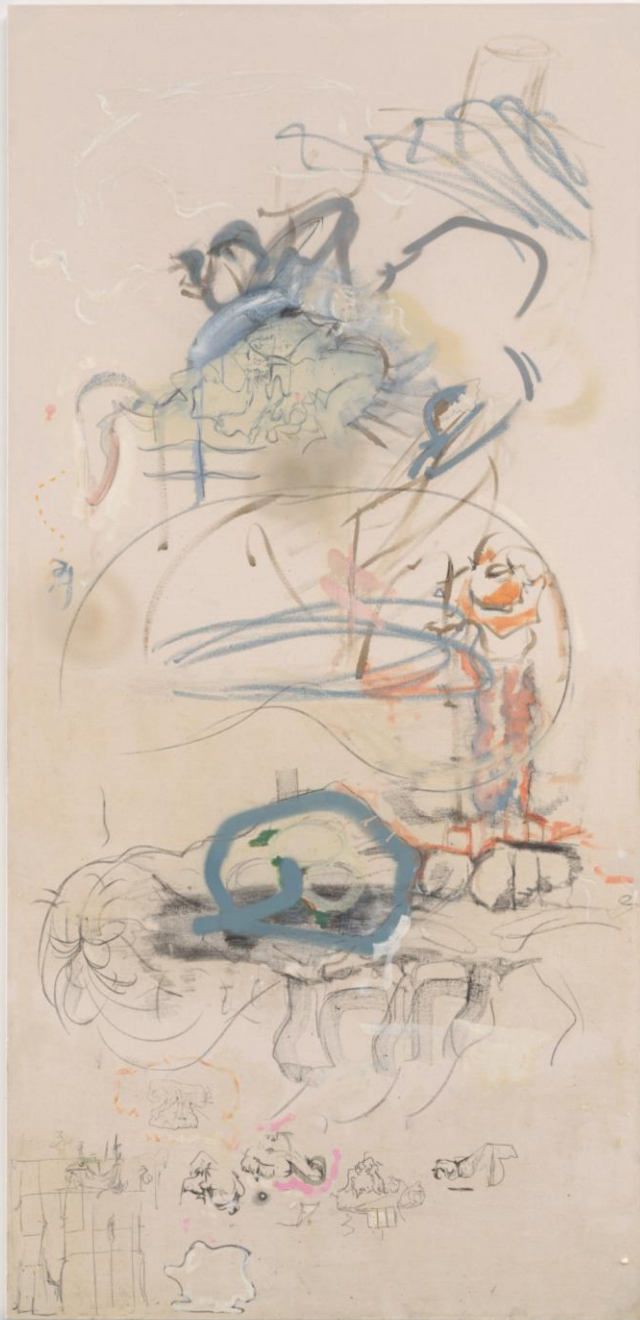
[High-resolution image](#)



Structure Detail, 2026

oil, oil pastel, graphite, polyurethane, beeswax and mixed media on canvas
29.2 x 20.3 x 2.5 cm / 11 ½ x 8 x 1 in.
HQ29-UA22500P

[High-resolution image](#)



Blue Joe, 2020-2021

oil, acrylic, wood stain, charcoal, graphite, oil pastel,
colour pencil and China marker on canvas
221.3 x 106.7 x 3.8 cm / 87 1/8 x 42 x 1 1/2 in.
HQ27-UA20818P

[High-resolution image](#)



Untitled, 2025

18 parts, mixed media on paper, framed
each: 39.4 x 54 x 2.5 cm / 15 ½ x 21 ¼ x 1 in.
HQ29-UA22611D

Untitled (1,2,3), 2020

Cuspidor cup for Flight Dental Systems, electric water pump,
pedestal and ceramics and underglaze pencil
119.4 x 50 x 47 cm / 47 x 20 x 18 ½ in.
HQ29-UA22567S

[High-resolution image](#)





Recital

In Uri Aran's practice, recital does not coincide with the idea of performance in terms of representation or staging, but with a fragile, imperfect, often hesitant practice. The artist's interest focuses on forms of action in which the gesture is not yet fully codified. In this sense, acting becomes a way of questioning the relationship between sincerity, learning, and the construction of reality. Actions, gestures, and behaviors are put to the test within constructed situations, often guided by partial instructions, rules whispered by the artist, and long, doubtful silences, which do not guarantee a clear outcome to what is being observed. Recital is not aimed at representation, but at the execution of something that remains partly opaque even to those who undertake it.

In his video works, Aran frequently includes other people as an active part of the process, entrusting them with actions or sequences to be sustained over time. In the video *My Friend* (2020), for example, the artist films his friend Harry, who often appears in other works, repeating a series of phrases, revealing a deep, almost symbiotic, but nonetheless mediated relationship between him and his interlocutor. Through recital, Aran directs and at the same time withdraws, using the presence of others as a means of stepping out of his own role. This ambiguous position—midway between director and *deus ex machina*—does not provide total control. On the contrary, it leaves room for hesitations, mistakes, deviations, and moments of experimentation. Aran's interest lies not in the result but in the seriousness with which a gesture is sustained over time, making visible the structures that make it possible and, at the same time, fragile and maneuverable.

Writing, Telling and Giving, 2025

polyurethane, oil pastel, graphite and mixed media on HDO
32.4 x 22.2 x 3.8 cm / 12 ¾ x 8 ¾ x 1 ½ in
HQ29-UA22126P

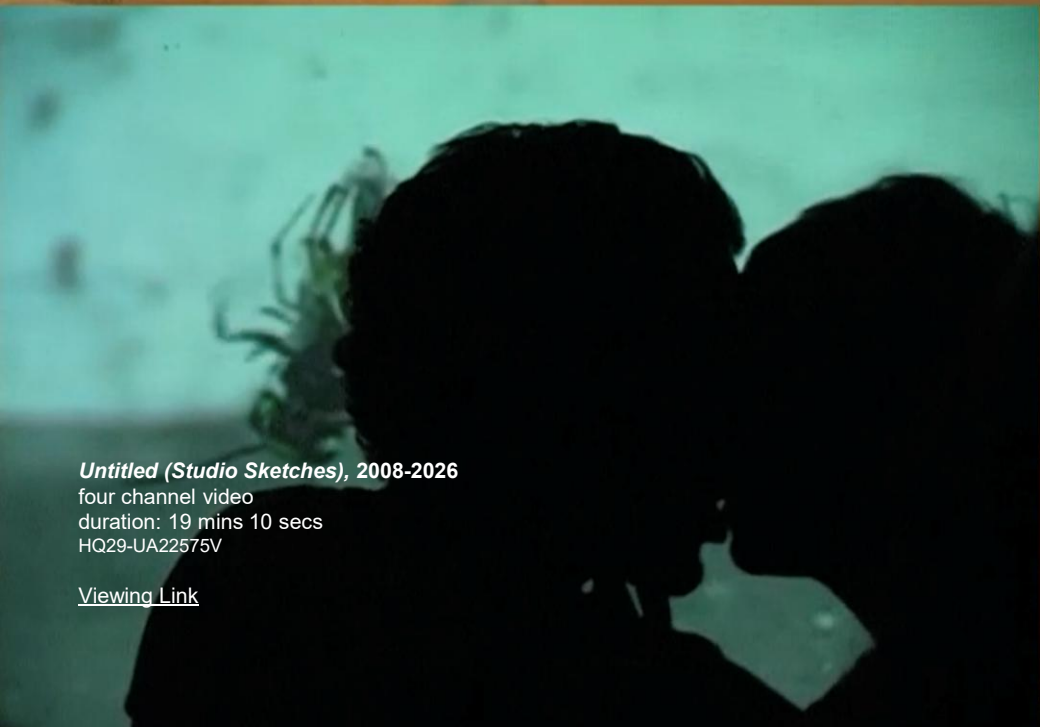
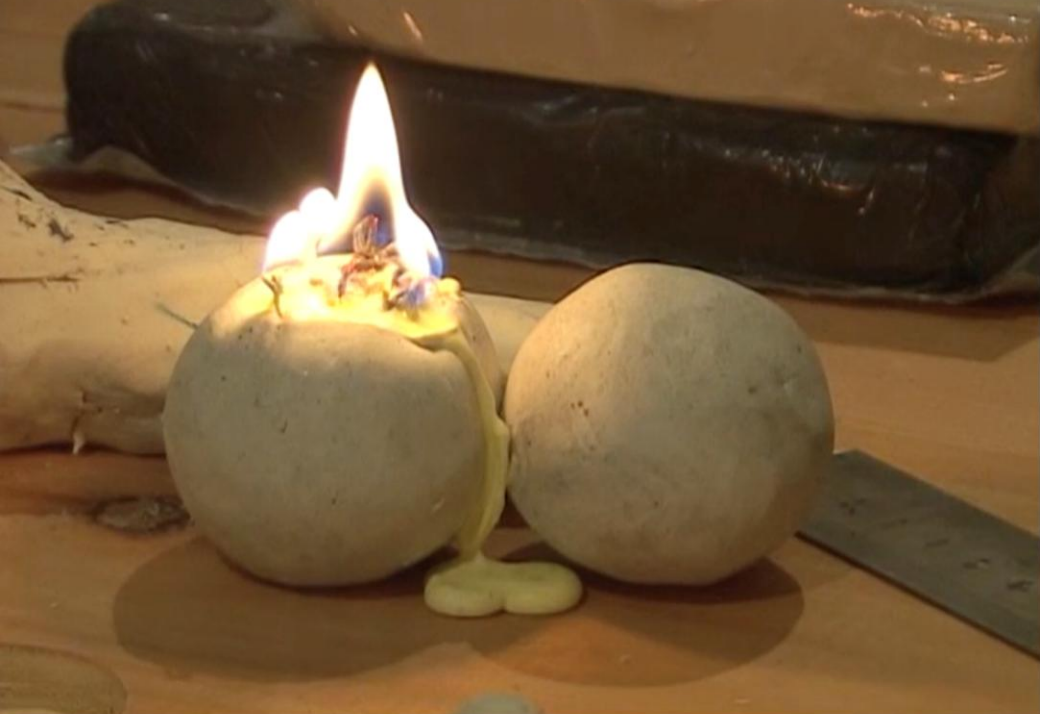
[High-resolution image](#)



Untitled, 2026
bronze, patina and mixed media
dimensions variable
HQ29-UA22545S

Favourite, 2024
single channel video
duration: 5 mins 8 secs
HQ27-UA20717D

[Viewing Link](#)



Untitled (Studio Sketches), 2008-2026
four channel video
duration: 19 mins 10 secs
HQ29-UA22575V

[Viewing Link](#)

My Friend, 2020

single channel video

duration: 08 mins 48 secs

HQ29-UA22574V

[Viewing Link](#)







Moi, 2025

graphite, oil pastel, ceramics, inkjet transfer
and mixed media on HDO

16.5 x 26.7 x 3.8 cm / 6 ½ x 10 ½ x 1 ½ in
HQ29-UA22127P

[High-resolution image](#)

Music Stands, 2026
mixed media
dimensions variable





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