

HAUNT: Particulars relating to some unaccountable noises in the House

A GRAPHIC SCORE FOR STRING AND PERCUSSION

COMPOSED BY CHRISTINE McDONALD

For
Neena Wang,
Kate Greenwell
Brooke Frank
Bucky Miller
Hayden Bennett
Denver Nuckolls
Zachary McDonald

My Stove Works Residency Cohort, I love you.

HAUNT: Particulars relating to some unaccountable noises in the House

Artworks and Statement by Christine McDonald

First performed in collaboration with Denver Nuckolls & Zachary McDonald

This body of work engages the wooden floor as both medium and mediator, situating the apartment not merely as private architecture but as a porous and sonorous site of relationality. The creaks and groans of floorboards function as an acoustic index—a material trace that evidences contact, stress, and habitation. These sounds destabilize domesticity’s presumed enclosure, reminding us that “home” is co-constructed through the permeability of infrastructures and the audibility of neighboring lives. In this sense, the floor articulates a shared, involuntary intimacy: our movements circulate across surfaces, resounding as both presence and interruption.

The rubbings translate this acoustic-spatial condition into a visual archive. By pressing graphite against the fibrous lines of the floor, the work captures a double displacement: the vertical forest reoriented into horizontal plank, and the horizontal surface reinscribed as cascading sheets along the gallery walls. This gesture reanimates the floor as a suspended forest, a spectral ecology wherein the labor of bearing weight is transformed into an aesthetic of line, repetition, and descent. Tim Ingold has argued that materials are not inert but “storied,” carrying histories of growth and use; the rubbings operate precisely in this register, treating the floor as both witness and collaborator.

From these rubbings, a musical score emerges, extending the project into the domain of performance and sound. Interpreted by musicians, the score exemplifies a transmedial translation: architecture becomes notation, notation becomes resonance. In this recursive loop, the domestic is abstracted, amplified, and redistributed into aesthetic experience. Here, the project also converses with acoustic ecology, where sound is understood not merely as byproduct but as ecological relation. The floorboards speak again—no longer as creak or groan, but as orchestrated vibration, staged as collaboration.

Ultimately, the project situates itself within contemporary dialogues; the rubbings recall post-minimalist strategies of index and repetition, while the sonic component extends into the terrain of sound studies and experimental music. In foregrounding the floor as both archive and instrument, the work resonates with practices of relational aesthetics: it is not only the object but also the intersubjective field—neighbors overhearing neighbors, musicians interpreting graphite traces—that becomes the site of meaning. In this way, the project underscores how infrastructures of dwelling are never silent supports but active participants, continuously translating weight, time, and proximity into aesthetic and social forms.

Title: HAUNT, particulars relating to some unaccountable noises in the house (for Bass and Percussion) - PART ONE

Instrumentation: Upright bass, drum set, and auxiliary percussion

Duration: 10 - 20 minutes

Notation: Derived from graphite rubbing of hardwood floor (2025)

Performance mode: Semi-improvised, following structured visual cues

General	Approach
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The rubbing is read left to right as a continuous	timeline.
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Each horizontal plank represents a distinct rhythmic layer or phrase family.

The vertical seams between boards serve as tempo-
ral divisions (roughly equivalent to measures or time segments).

The density and texture of the graphite indicate energy, attack, and complexity.

The white circular holes mark points of emphasis,
either as sharp percussive accents or resonant punctuations.

The two performers read the same score but interpret different domains:

Upright Bass: interprets vertical movement and tonal contour — focusing on pitch,
sustain, and gesture.

Percussion: interprets horizontal grain and surface pattern — focusing on rhythm, texture, and attack.

Interpretation	by	Possible	Area
Left Vertical Columns	(spine of darker graphite and holes)		
Acts as the structural grid or pulse spine of the piece.			

Percussion establishes an irregular but grounded ostina-
to here: low toms or muted frame drum strokes that form a shifting tempo base.

The holes mark accent points — brief cymbal bursts or rimshots.

Bass mirrors these accents with harmonics, double-stops, or snapped pizzicati,
grounding each accent with harmonic color.

Upper Boards (first and second horizontal sections)
Texture is lighter and more uniform --> represents a groove establishment phase.

Bass plays open, resonant tones, gradually introducing rhythmic cells of 3s and 5s.

Drums use brushes or mallets, tracing the grain texture: sweeping gestures punctuated by light taps.

Both build a sense of gentle propulsion – like tracing the wood grain with fingertips.

Middle Boards (central horizontal bands,)
Transition to high rhythmic density and syncopation.

Percussion moves polyrhythms between snare and small metal percussion (ride bell, shakers, claves).

Bass shifts to percussive col legno battuto or slapped pizzica-
to, alternating between sustained drones and clustered bursts.

The groove should feel both grounded and unstable – as if the floorboards themselves are vibrating.

Lower Boards (bottom sections, dark and irregular)
Represents release and decay – but not rest.

Both players stretch time here.

Bass could use a bow to pull long tones out of resonance; percus-
sionists return to brushes or hands, using skin or wood surfaces.

The rhythm becomes breath-like – short flurries separated by silence.

The holes in this area cue isolated, crystalline sounds:
struck cymbal edges, harmonics, or ghost notes.

Allow resonance to fill the gaps – let the piece “breathe.”

Temporal Framework
Total performance time: 10 - 20 minutes, determined by the players' pacing.

Each "board" may last 2 - 4 minutes, with natural overlaps and transitions.

Performers may occasionally loop backward visual-
ly, as if retracing grain patterns, before proceeding forward again.

Dynamic and Expressive Range
Begin in near silence (pianissimo, tactile sounds only).

Gradually rise to a physical, textural climax by the middle section (forte, rhythmic tension).

End in an ambiguous fade — neither resolution nor fadeout,
just disappearance of pulse.

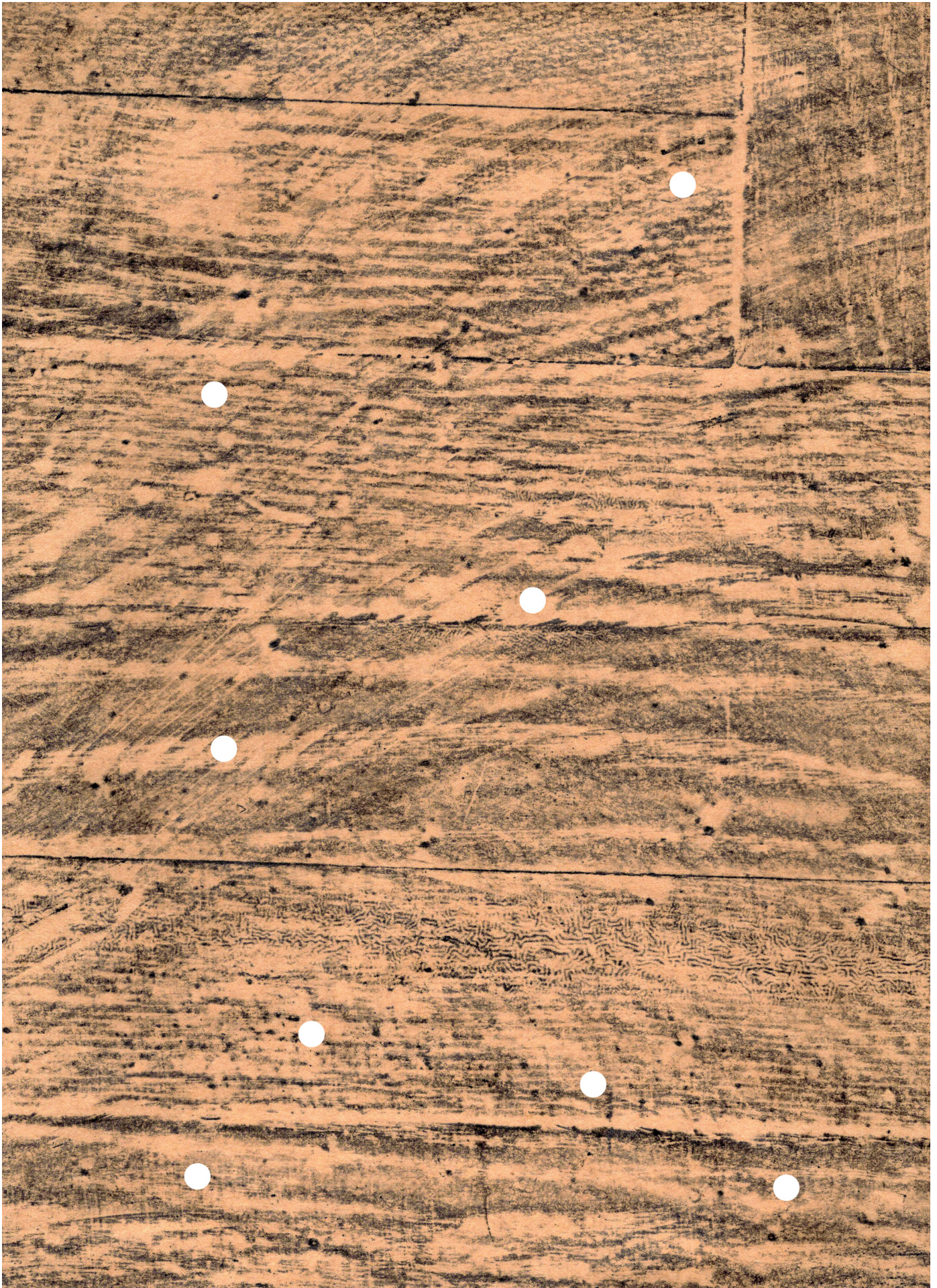
Optional Additions
Amplify the bass slightly to capture low-frequency resonance and bow noise.

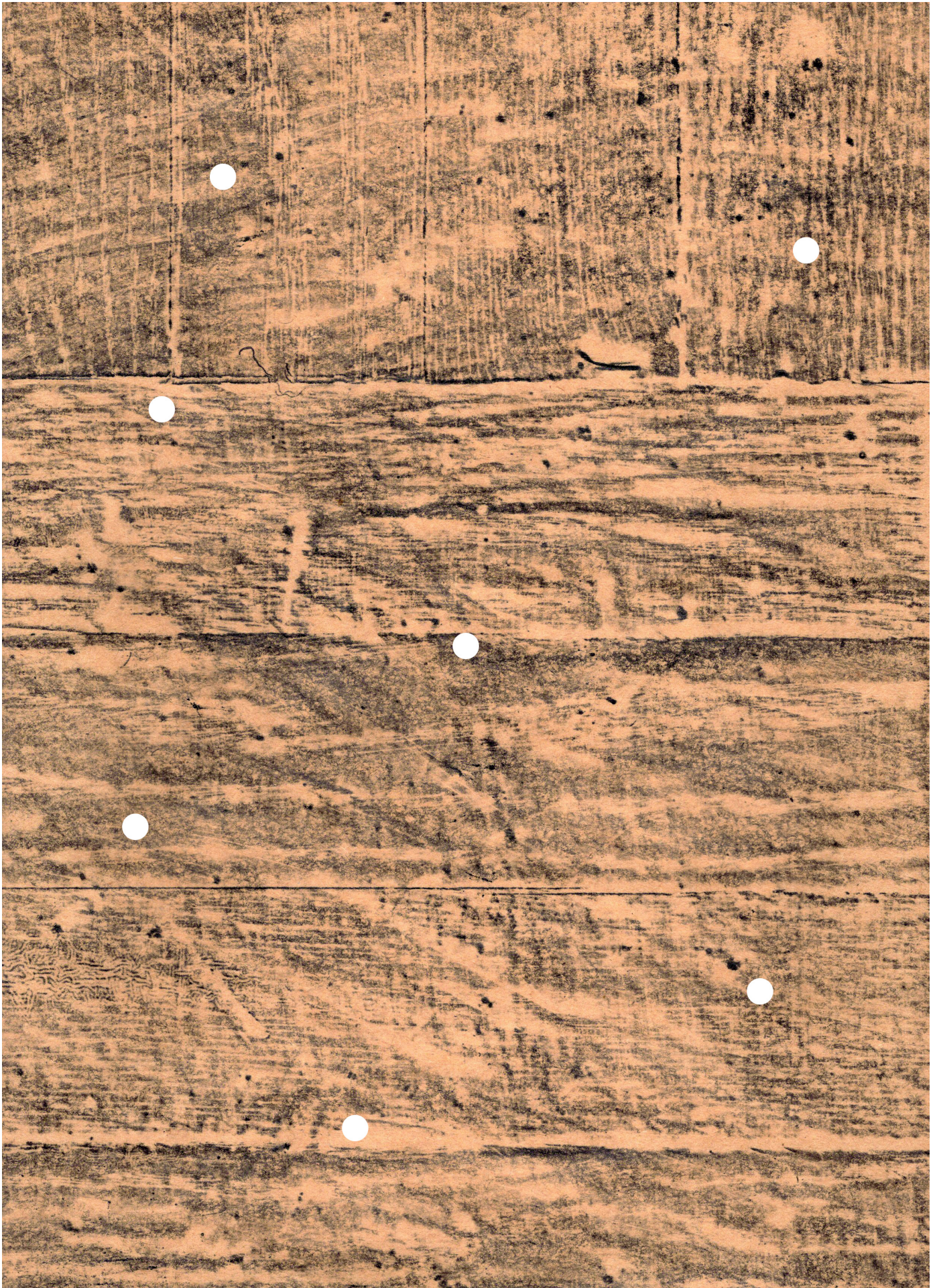
Percussion setup could include wood blocks, brushes, cymbals, frame drum, snare, and found wood surfaces.

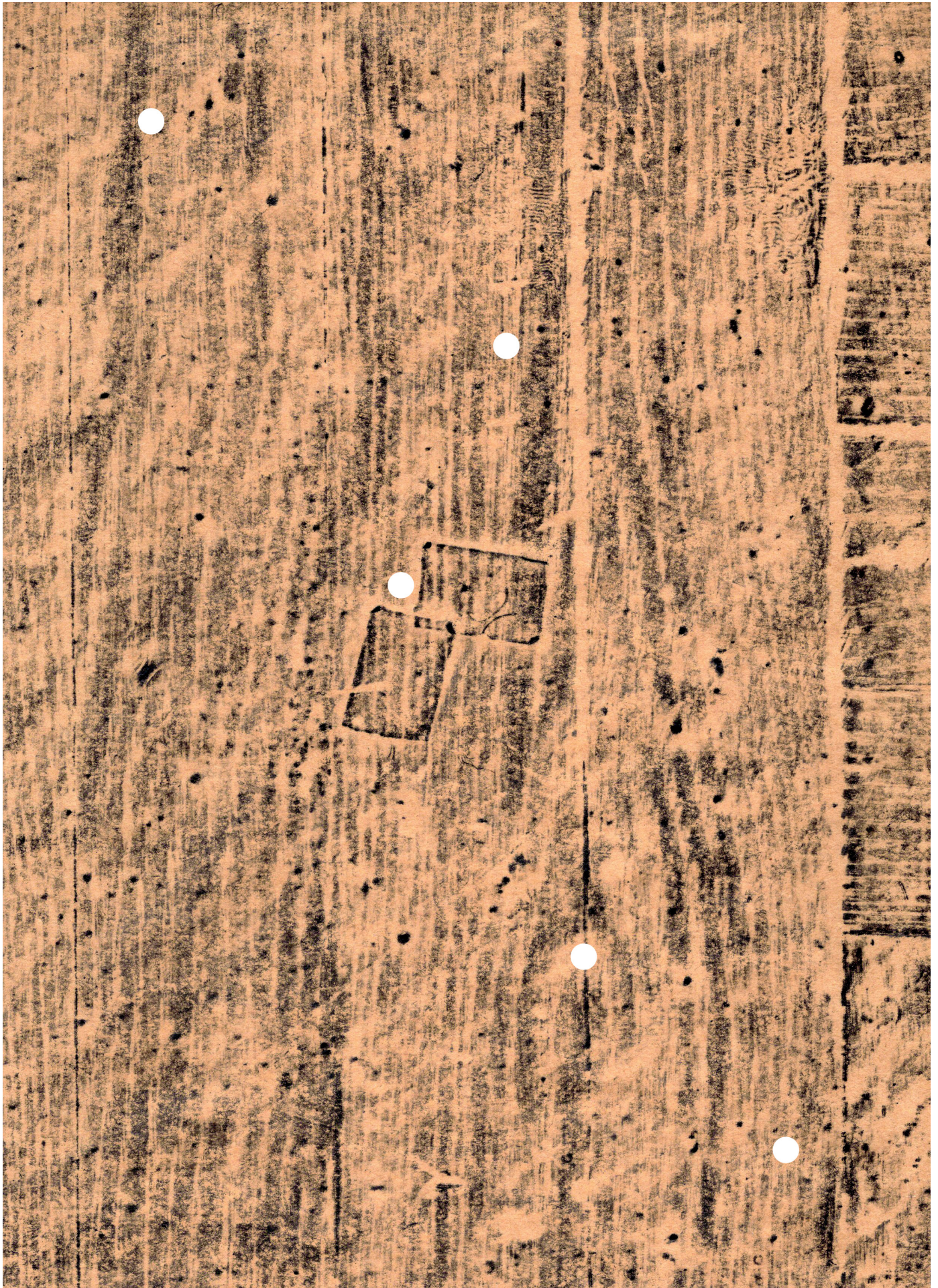
Stage lighting can subtly shift from warm to cool tones

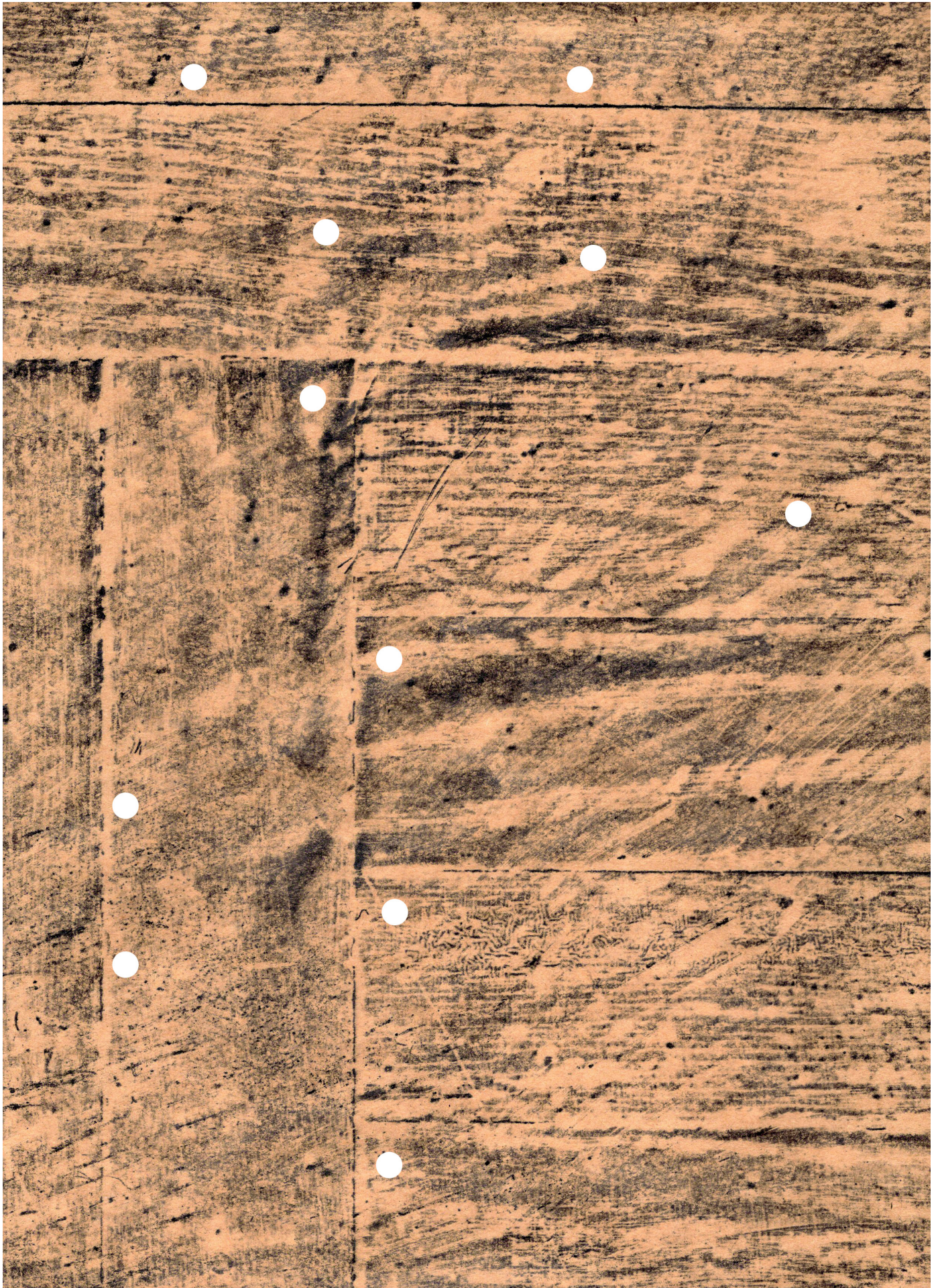
Composer's Note
This piece translates the physical imprint of a hardwood floor into musical texture. The rubbing records both surface and structure — the hidden rhythm of lived space. Musicians trace these marks as tactile cues, allowing the memory of touch to guide sound. Nothing here is fixed: the score is an invitation to inhabit a surface, to play a place.











A PDF VERSION OF THIS SCORE IS AVAILABLE ON
MY WEBSITE TO DOWNLOAD AND PRINT / PLAY
WWW.CHRISTINEMCDONALD.ART/HAUNT



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