THE WORK BEYOND

THE WORK BEYOND

EDITED BY DAVID GALLOWAY

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editions

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His childhood is spent in Carthage on the very site of Phoenician tombs, in the presence of a vanished civilisation preceding our own by many thousands of years.

From the age of five he begins to model a mixture of bread, sand and earth. His gesture resembles an excavation, a sort of archaeological dig. Thus are born thousands of small objects, bodies and heads, in an organic material incapable of resisting the passage of time.

For a long while he makes no connection between the fruit of a pure, singular experience and a path that will be open to art, even if the question of meaning gradually outweighs the aesthetic experience as he begins exploring the concept of place, in order to restore it to pristine perfection.

Henri Barande describes this place as an interior time, the inside before the excavation and exhumation. His concept unites that time and the time contained in the old loam before the pillage: before being opened, the earth encloses the tombs, which are pure memory.

He produces several combinations that he describes as having ‘tumbled out of time’ or as ‘tombs’. In each case, it is a matter of producing time, not reproducing or representing the past. He explores his creations as an archaeologist explores several excavation sites, with no interest in assigning dates in present time, since he regards every experience as timeless.

Each tomb is a totality. The number of objects it contains is an element of its totality. Saitobaru contains 888 pieces, the Temple of Inscriptions 400, Tophet 297, and so on. The number of objects in the Tomb of Tombs, in sublimation, is infinite.

Faced with a memory that demands to be buried in order to be forgotten, the deployment gradually becomes less important than its own release at the moment of desecration. Furthermore, instead of giving it a chance of survival by exhibiting only his tombs, Henri Barande ritualises the death of memory in a pure, transfigured space where time itself is transfigures. A unique destination that accommodates all the entities of the world and their objects, in order to dismantle them. An ‘elsewhere’ conceived as a heaven for objects, where they associate freely and their combination is no longer fragmentary, but a natural state.

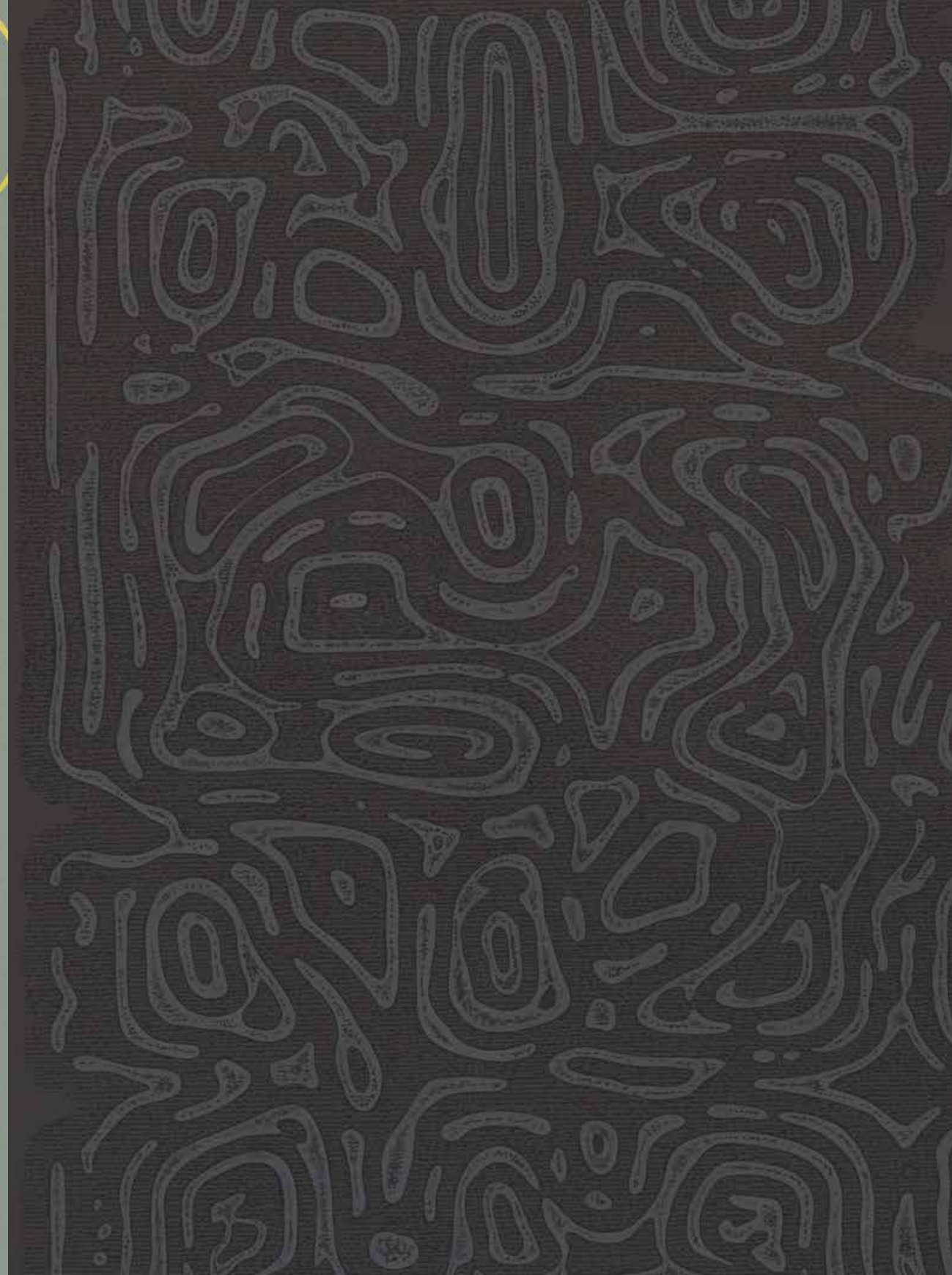
Sublimation: The Tomb of Tombs

Where some might say ‘void’ or ‘chaos’, he says ‘logos’ in its original meaning of ‘the relationship of one thing to another’. The objects have one aspect in common: what holds them together can also separate them, exclude them, or make them harmonise with each other. They have an infinite number of combinations.

In the Tomb of Tombs, sublimation, the objects represent only themselves, devoid of any symbolic function: they are henceforth only lumps of stone or grains of sand disposed along an infinite line at the edge of the world. No one will ever know their secret, even if they have one.

The figure, the simple inscription, merges into transfigured space, frees itself from prayer, and returns to innocence. Abandoning its desire for recognition, it has become purely an object.

Sublimation: The Tomb of Tombs



HENRI BARANDE

ENCOUNTERING

DAVID GALLOWAY

During an extended visit to Paris in September and October of 1907, the Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke repeatedly visited the Salon d'Automne to view the memorial exhibition of works by Paul Cézanne, who had died the year before at his home in Aix-en-Provence. As admiration for the painter grew into something very like worship for the 'Homeric' genius, he shared his rapture almost daily with his wife, the artist Clara Westhoff, in an extraordinary series of twenty letters. Some ran on for several pages, in which he not only revelled in the 'blaze of clarity' that infused the paintings, but also marvelled at the schooling of his own facility for truly 'seeing' a work of art. The Salon d'Automne closed on 22 October – the first anniversary of the painter's death. When Rilke's journey continued to his native Prague, he immediately visited the Manes Pavilion, where an exhibition of modern paintings included four Cézanne canvases, for each of which he wrote detailed descriptions in a further letter to Clara. For the remainder of his life, Rilke dreamed of composing a monograph on Cézanne's works, as he had done for those of his former employer, Auguste Rodin, but repeatedly shied from executing the monumental task. Nonetheless, Cézanne's vision would infuse the poet's celebrated *Duino Elegies*, begun in 1912, and many of the works that followed.

Rilke's eloquent and insightful letters have helped me better to understand my response to Barande's achievements and his contribution to my own visual apprenticeship. Furthermore, the letters on Cézanne collated and published by Clara Westhoff-Rilke in 1952, shortly before her own death, sometimes read like a herald of Barande's personal philosophy of the role of the artist. His favourite passage is from a letter written before Rilke's epiphanic experience of viewing Cézanne at the Salon d'Automne, but it constitutes a kind of prologue to that experience. The passage is worth quoting here at length, for the light it sheds on Barande's approach to his own art:

> Works of art, to be sure, are always the result of having been in danger, of having gone through an experience all the way to the end, to a point where no one can go farther. The farther one goes, the more individual, the more personal, the more singular an experience becomes, and the artwork is ultimately the necessary, irrepressible, and most definitive personal expression of this singularity … Therein lies the enormous aid of the artwork for the life of the one who must make it: that is his essence; the knot in the rosary at which his life utters a prayer, for himself the ever-recurrent proof of unity and veracity, which presents itself only to him, however, while to others appearing anonymous, nameless, as mere necessity, as reality, as existence.
> *Rainer Maria Rilke, Letter to his wife (Paris, 3 June 1907)*[1]

For Henri Barande, who once described himself as 'a stateless person', who neither titles nor dates nor signs nor sells his works, the final lines of the quotation have particular significance. When he agreed, after long deliberation, to the

Months followed in which the artist acquainted himself with texts that I had published before inviting me to visit him at the ancient wine-growing village of Chexbres, near Lausanne. He knew, without asking, that his guest would arrive at Geneva airport wearing a bow-tie, just as I knew, without asking, that I would be met by a gracious, elegant man dressed in black. Neither of us was disappointed. The artist's home offered one of those resplendent views of Lake Geneva for which Chexbres is celebrated, but throughout a convivial evening, the expectation that I might see works there remained unfulfilled. Only on the following morning was I admitted to the nearby inner sanctum that housed his sculptures and paintings. The location was improbable: a banal industrial zone with a flurry of signs pointing the way to a veterinarian's office, a wholesaler of packing materials, a shipper, a printer, a hall for indoor tennis, and various industrial services.

Entering the vast, dimly lighted, hangar-like hall in which Barande displayed his works was like stepping out of time. On sixty artist-designed tables in bronze and granite, miniature sculptures were composed into arresting ensembles of fifteen to twenty individual pieces. It was less the components themselves, however, than the tensions and harmonies they created through juxtaposition that lent the ensembles their distinctive aura (a principle Barande would also follow in the presentation of his paintings). Both fabricated and found – or 're-found' objects, as the artist describes them – communed with works in marble, plastic, bronze, jade, ivory, silver, chrome, concrete, aluminium, wood, or figures formed from simple flour-and-salt. Bread sculpture, produced in many ancient cultures, was the artist's first medium, which he employed during his childhood in Carthage: 'From the age of five he begins to model a mixture of bread, sand and earth. His gesture resembles an excavation, a sort of archaeological dig. Thus are born thousands of small objects, bodies and heads, in an inorganic material incapable of resisting the passage of time.'[2] In the following decades that led to our first encounter in 1998, Barande estimated that he had produced some 40,000 individual sculptures.

My first, spontaneous association with the works I saw was with the densely heterogeneous displays of amulets and burial objects at the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities on Cairo's Tahrir Square. (An official description of its holdings cites objects that have 'survived the millennia, stored safely away in tombs, awaiting the resurrection.')[3] I would soon learn that the tomb comprised the most central sign, symbol and metaphor in the artist's philosophy: '… a pure, transfigured space where time itself is transfigured. A unique destination that accommodates all the entities of the world and their objects, in order to dismantle them. An "elsewhere" conceived as a heaven for objects, where they associate freely and their combination is no longer fragmentary…'.[4]

As I would soon learn, Barande's aesthetic had been profoundly shaped by his childhood in Carthage, where he played among the excavations, witnessed archaeological discoveries, and found a secret entrance into an ancient,

subterranean burial ground that had been covered over by the Romans centuries before. Such indelible experiences found an echo in a smaller space adjoining his vast exhibition hall, where Barande had created a deeply moving installation inspired by the tomb of the Medicis. The most striking single component here was a large, minimalistic chair – a kind of skeleton of a chair – that would appear in Barande's smaller sculptures as well as in his paintings. For the artist, the chair signifies earthly power and its tenuousness and vanity. In this case, the chair was that of Giuliano de' Medici, son of the fabled art patron Lorenzo de' Medici, who became titular head of the family when his older brother was appointed to the papacy as Pope Leo X. Almost as an omen of the Medicis' decline in earthly power, Giuliano had been named after his handsome, sporty uncle, Florence's 'golden boy', who was assassinated at the age of twenty-five.

A further, particularly striking aspect of the Medici installation was the presence of large-format paintings lining the walls. Like all of his works on canvas, these had an identical height of 2.15 metres with particularly deep stretchers, so that the paintings might have been giant slabs of stone affixed to the walls. In the remarkable setting of his atelier, for two engrossing days the artist generously shared with me his unique vision and some of the private experiences that had shaped it. In retrospect, this two-day encounter was a kind of ritual initiation that would leave its imprint on both of our lives. At the end of my visit, I told my host that I would like to propose an article on his work to the publisher of *ARTnews*, America's oldest and most widely read art magazine. 'I'm not that far yet', he gently declined, but promised that when he was, I would have first option on such a piece. Nearly a year followed, in which we met again in Chexbres, in Paris, and in my own retreat in Haute Provence.

When the green light eventually came, I approached Milton Esterow, the venerable publisher of *ARTnews*, with the somewhat bizarre request to write a feature on an unknown artist – a Moroccan-born Frenchman who had grown up in Tunisia and in Algeria and now lived in obscurity in Switzerland – who had never exhibited or sold a work. Esterow promptly and enthusiastically agreed. Yet the project subsequently threatened to derail when the artist declined to provide the magazine with a photograph of himself. That hurdle, too, was surmounted, and as the publication date of September 1999 approached, Barande displayed increasing curiosity about the piece. (He had never asked to see the essay I submitted, let alone suggested that he wished to approve it.) As a shortcut, I proposed we go to New York on the day the first copies were scheduled to arrive from the printer. And we did.

Our brief visit gave me the chance to show a new friend 'my' New York, wending our way from the Morgan Library to the New York Public Library, to Grand Central Station, Rockefeller Center, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the Frick Collection, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Cooper-Hewitt. With the exception of Rockefeller Center and the Waldorf, all of those imposing landmarks had been erected in limestone, granite and

marble between 1902 and 1913, at the height of the so-called 'Age of Elegance'. Designed by leading architects of the time, they were largely financed by the wealth of visionary private citizens. Most were purpose-built as cultural institutions, while others – including the Frick and the Cooper-Hewitt, both originally private residences – had been converted to museums after their owners' deaths. Today, they hold millions of books and manuscripts, paintings and sculptures, ancient artefacts and design classics that make the city of New York one of the richest cultural locations in the world. Without wishing to question the civic pride that motivated their patrons, they were also erecting enduring monuments to their own taste and achievements. Filled with treasures from throughout the world, the institutions they left behind can also be seen, in the Barandian sense, as glorious tombs. ('Each tomb is a totality. The number of objects it contains is an element of its totality.')[5]

Not surprisingly, the atmosphere of a tomb would characterise the first public presentation of Barande's work, held at Sotheby's Zurich headquarters in the summer of 2000. The show's title, *Meteoron*, is an ancient Greek term for both a tomb and for 'everything beneath the sky'. Barande's debut was fostered by Guy Jennings, Deputy Chairman of Sotheby's Europe, who had been among a small, discrete group of curators and critics invited to view the artist's studio the year before. Barande received carte blanche to transform the exhibition space as he saw fit, and what resulted was a kind of twilight zone: a dimly lighted sepulchre in which the viewer was an explorer, a discoverer, even a worshipper. Sculptures were clustered on bronze-and-granite tables that stood on shining beds of rock salt – a reference to the salt with which the Romans attempted to destroy the earth sixty years after their conquest of Carthage. The low, glowing beam of a laser demarcated the edge of the salt-fields, while paintings hung above them. Barande had already begun to include his sculptures as 'models' for the paintings, along with his own elegant Sumi-ink drawings, sometimes with images from fashion magazines, art history, newspapers and computer-generated patterns. Since 1984 he had increasingly devoted himself to painting, eventually saying farewell to the sculptural medium he discovered as a child in Carthage. In time, most of those works would be destroyed or buried at an undisclosed location, while the remainder were concealed within simple grey cubes that resemble mausoleums void of names or dates.

Intentionally or not, this banishment into an unknown tomb reflects a traumatic episode that Barande described in his lengthy dialogue with the French Cultural Attaché to Brazil, Romaric Sulger-Büel:

> On every anniversary of the death of my grandfather, I'd stand behind the stele, not facing it, to avoid the horror of seeing my own name on the tomb. We shared the same first name, the same identity … Later I learned that my father's brother, who died at the age of seven, also had my first name. So my name was on a second tomb, somewhere near Oran. I had the identity of two dead people. So I refused to accept the name. In my mind I had no name, and I wasn't expecting one. I was relieved of the weight of a name, of the weight of death. This non-identity allowed me to see myself differently and partly helped make me the man I am – conscious, separate, accepting this great separation.[6]

Nonetheless, in 1980 Barande resolved to return to Algiers and renew his quest 'to find the tomb and face it at last'. After days of fruitless searching, 'I told myself that my birth was buried and I needn't go on seeking as if it were my own tomb, I should just leave it buried there like an angel in the darkness.'[7] Requiring a name for administrative purposes, however, he ultimately took that of his maternal grandmother.

The presentation that Barande developed for his Sotheby's show was not merely noteworthy for its beauty and its inherent drama, but also for underlining the importance of context to the reception of his works. Not only do individual elements, in all their diversity, enter into a kind of colloquy, as the art historian Michel Weemans details in his essay in this publication, 'La Grande Image'; they also experience a process of enrichment through the aura evoked by the setting itself. However ubiquitous and almost platitudinous the statement has become, it is tempting to summarise this experiential process with the Aristotelian maxim: 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. Though applicable to a significant degree, the assertion cannot fully account for the compelling synergy of Barande's presentations. The artist himself has spoken of 'the confrontation within juxtaposition', which was dramatically apparent in his exhibition of paintings at the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2011, entitled *Nice to be Dead.*

With a plethora of images flowing and jostling their way in unbroken sequences, *Nice to be Dead* approached the aesthetic of presentation in a fashion strikingly different from that of *Meteoron* but no less mesmeric. The entire exhibition space was reconfigured into contiguous spaces derived from a common structuring of ancient tombs. In answer to an interview question by Elisa Fedeli on the 'scenography' of *Nice to be Dead* and its 'correspondences with the architecture of Egyptian pyramids', the artist replied: 'There is an entryway that evokes a tomb, then the antechamber, the first room and, finally, the second and last room.'[8] Yet possible similarities to the darkly shadowed interior of the Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel, for example, were contravened by the radiant light that flooded down onto the white walls and floor through gauze-covered ceilings. Writing in *The Times* of London, Rachel Campbell-Johnston described the installation as 'a fluorescent white mausoleum'.[9] In his interview with Elisa Fedeli, Barande commented on the somewhat disconcerting effect the setting was likely to have on viewers: 'Visitors don't have a shadow, because of the effect of the light: do they really exist? They have every right to ask themselves that question. They are shadows without a shadow, while the paintings are on the walls of the tomb. Because they have been there forever, they have no need to justify themselves. Only our own presence needs to be interrogated.'[10]

The metaphor of viewers as ghosts was in keeping with the show's somewhat enigmatic, even improbable title. Reading Barande's interviews and his own 'anonymous' writings, one is impressed by his ability to quote effortlessly from both ancient and modern philosophy, classical authors and contemporary filmmakers, along with theorists like Maurice Blanchot, Gilles Deleuze, Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault or Roland Barthes. His musical references may well include Handel, Monteverdi, Debussy and Satie. At first glance, it may come as something of a surprise that the title of his Paris exhibition, which attracted considerable attention from the art establishment, referenced a song by the proto-punk legend Iggy Pop, friend and sometime collaborator with David Bowie, Johnny Depp, Jim Jarmusch and David Lynch. 'Glad to be Dead', first released on the solo album *Préliminaires* in 2009, opens with the stanza:

> It's nice to be dead
> It's nice to be underground
> Free of the ugly sounds
> Of life

The singer-composer's radical energy found a ready listener in Henri Barande. In an interview conducted at the time of the Paris show, he remarked, 'I have an immense admiration for Iggy Pop, his being, his life, his music. "Nice to be Dead" is a hymn to joy, as I hope my exhibition is.'[11]

The distance from Paris to Ypsilanti, Michigan, where Pop grew up in a trailer park as James Newell Osterberg, Jr., seems almost insurmountably vast, but in fact a deeper and genuinely French connection links the singer-songwriter and the artist. The album *Préliminaires* was inspired by Iggy Pop's reading of Michel Houellebecq's highly controversial futuristic novel *La Possibilité d'une île* (2005). When he learned of the singer's tribute, the author responded that he was honoured to be acknowledged in such a way by a multi-talent who had deeply influenced him as a teenager. For Barande himself, it was the author's fifth novel, *La Carte et le Territoire* (2010), charting

the career of an artist named Jed Martin, that had particular impact. 'Houellebecq offers us a wonderful portrait of the artist,' he remarked. 'He takes him as he is: different from others as much as he is indifferent to others. The artist asks no recognition from society because he only recognises himself in solitude, when confronted with himself. Only a great writer can grasp this dimension of the artist. I note with a smile that Jed Martin is an anagram of my own name, however imperfect, as most anagrams are. The artist is more a man of borders than one of territories: there is no cause to occupy them. There is no fair sharing of them. There is neither territory nor division.'[12]

Moving through the gleaming, interlocking spaces of *Nice to be Dead*, past row upon row of arresting images, was a tantalising journey of discovery. While highlighting the artist's gifts as a colourist, it underscored the narrative dimension of his paintings. Much as film-stills suggest potential stories, the sequencing of pictures echoes the dynamic that Barande admires in the work of David Lynch. As he noted in his conversation with Romaric Sulger-Büel, 'For David Lynch the miracle of film lies in the way one shot succeeds another.'[13] The director himself underscored that potential when he remarked, 'It's always surprising when you work at the editing table – how the story moves from one place to another, for example. The possibilities of cinema are endless, and the viewer always understands the transitions. The possible forms are incredibly rich, richer than the current cinema allows. There's so much to do, to invent, to try out.'[14]

Henri Barande would no doubt concur: 'There's so much to do, to invent, to try out.' The journey has just begun.

ENDNOTES

1. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe über Cézanne*, ed. Clara Rilke (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1952), p. 9 (trans. David Galloway).
2. Henri Barande, 'Sublimation', this edition, p. 7.
3. Brochure published by the Supreme Council of Antiquities (Cairo, n.d.).
4. Barande, 'Sublimation', p. 8.
5. Ibid.
6. Henri Barande and Romaric Sulger-Büel, 'Identification of an Absentee', this edition, p. 201. Originally published in French as *Identification d'un absent* (Paris: Manuella Editions, 2006).
7. Ibid.
8. Elisa Fedeli, 'Henri Barande', *PARISart*, 8 April 2011, Interview section <http://www.paris-art.com/interview-artiste/henri-barande/barande-henri/395.html>.
9. Rachel Campbell-Johnston, 'Paris in Spring and the Views are Breathtaking', *The Times*, 7 April 2011.
10. Fedeli, ibid.
11. Interview with Jean-Paul Bath in the review *Prestigium*, 22 April 2011 <http://www.henribarande.com/entretien/79-2>.
12. Clément Sénechal, 'Henri Barande: tombeau d'un absent', *Mediapart*, 3 May 2011 <http://www.mediapart.fr/journal/culture-idees/290411/henri-barande-tombeau-dun-absent-0>.
13. Barande, 'Identification of an Absentee', this edition, p. 216.
14. Ibid., p. 220, note 27.

THE WORK BEYOND

HENRY-CLAUDE COUSSEAU

Henri Barande is one of those artists who push themselves to extremes. His creativity first emerged when he was a child, and he has pursued it almost compulsively ever since. Yet his output not only remains unknown to the public and to arts institutions, but to a large extent has been annihilated at his own hands. His work was previously dedicated to creating a world of miniature forms and figures, but today it has been reduced to mere vestiges carefully concealed from observation. Nevertheless, out of this destructive act there has arisen, over some fifteen years, a stunning array of monumental paintings. They hang, distant yet absorbing, sharpened by colours of rare refinement, playing freely with the dialectics of the abstract and the figurative.

Despite the fact that he has produced so much, it is almost as though Barande is actively seeking anonymity. His works bear neither titles nor signatures, and they are not for sale. They exist in a world of their own. An artist in his own right, he has acquired the means to be free from material constraints, to devote himself to his task uncompromisingly, literally to disappear behind his work and to live through it alone. Simply to be absent from the scene. But he initially set himself the rule never to exhibit his work. Not only to avoid the ritual gaze of other people, but also to draw closer to it himself, to scrutinise it without pretence or indulgence, and even to be able to destroy it as he saw fit: to remain free, protecting himself from the curiosity of others. It was only recently that he became aware of the impact his work has on people, gauged the stir it has caused, and so decided to break his private, unspoken pact.

Until then, there had been something suicidal about his practice, a withdrawal for the sake of the grim pursuit of his art. One seldom comes across this attitude, and it is bound to raise the question of the legitimacy of a solitary, mute corpus of work normally intended for invisibility and oblivion, exhibited without the usual support of recognition and without the cooperation of the professional arts community. The way the work is produced calls into question the institutional function of art and the art system as a whole. One of Barande's quirks is to avail himself of the most sophisticated modern technologies and apply them to painting and its history. In particular, he uses the classic method of citing known motifs, but reinterprets them through the filter of digital images. He prefers to do so by hand, but balances this by using projections. He thereby manages to produce images that contain, paradoxically, both the unicum and the many. By virtue of a cryptic, ambiguous sleight of hand, they superimpose the original onto the reproduction, the prototype onto its serial dimension. In so doing Barande has hoisted the art of his time on its own petard, using the same means and the same conceptual references.

Cruelly separated from his beloved native Algeria, and having experienced the pain of a loved one's mental breakdown, Barande believes his life is a prolongation of a death that has already occurred, and that his work is the surviving version of a previous existence. Looking at it, one is inevitably reminded of the writing of Maurice Blanchot, of the final silence, of the authority of death, which fertilises it. The artist's images are distanced, deadly, linked by fragments, like an unending story, similar to

the writer's unceasing meditations on neutrality, on absence and tonelessness. The images are all part of the construction of an immense figure, the tomb – the word the artist would like to see applied to everything he produces. The tomb is the central paradigm in the thought of this absent one (as he likes to describe himself), but it does not take the shape of that funereal, elegiac and ecstatic celebration familiar to the baroque world. It is more like Mallarmé's tomb, to which that writer often referred, especially after the death of his son: it is a silent monument, an architecture weakened by an inconsolable affliction, a poem fissured by an impossible grief. Today, after that total collapse, Henri Barande is building a lofty and monumental narrative, a sort of immense, shimmering frieze of incandescent colours and muted, dusky accents. It is carried by an inexorable scansion, a repetitive form, in which a weaving, talking, converging pattern of images emerges as in an altarpiece, sharpened by the clever visual procedures the painter uses. It is a world of refinement, yet worried and tragic, made of disembodied images doomed to the transparency of memory. Its features borrow from a paradoxical mixture of Mannerism, Pop Art and Hyperrealism, but it is immediate, instantaneous, built from the power of detail, of citation, articulated in random, iconographic combinations so that every hanging, every exhibition is different.

It is the opposite of what preceded it, those first actions of modelling bread mixed with sand, secretly and productively forging the rudiments of a universe that reinvented sculpture and rewrote, despite itself, the history of the world. Now there remain only fragments, rescued from disaster like funerary artefacts doomed to burial, enigmatic, where shapes appear in the perfection of their birth, in the preciosity they have acquired during their long night's journey into the daylight of our gaze. They are reliquaries of a kind, comprising at once ideal figures and natural eccentricities, archaeological traces or simple everyday things, carefully arranged and suggesting innumerable, infinite groupings, showing a hidden meaning, an imperceptible intention that imbues them with a bewildering significance.

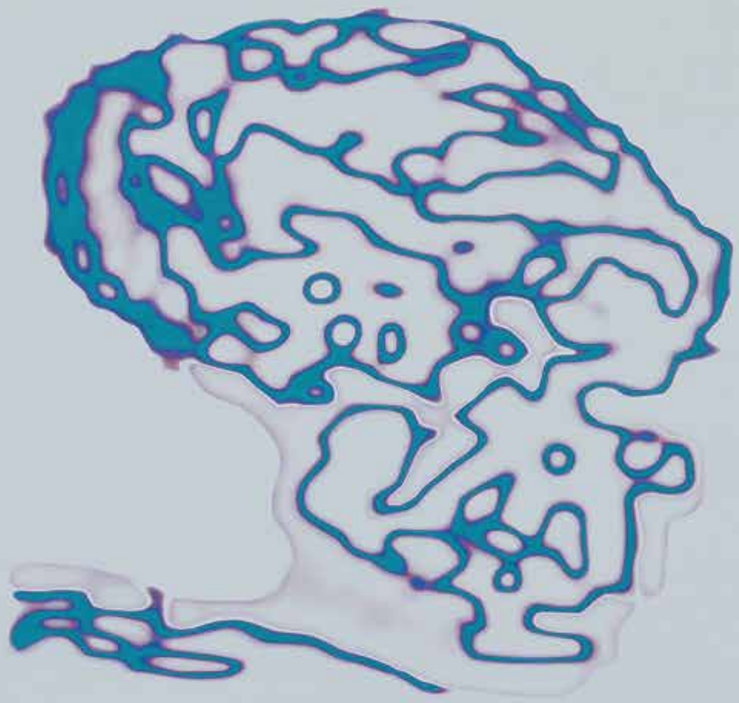
At first sight, the sculptures and paintings seem completely different. But a closer examination reveals comparable processes. Each tomb that now contains the remnants of his previous output is like a miniature *Wunderkammer*. The remnants are different yet inseparable, conveying the permanent quest for the missing piece that was supposed to fuel and pursue the story others began. They show the same meticulous taste for the plastic perfection of minimal forms, materials that are rare or carefully shaped by time, and they display the ease with which they juggle with scale, suggesting both the monumental and the miniature. The artist plays with the ambiguity between the artifices of nature and those of the sculptor, now a modeller, now a metalworker, transforming a humble piece of bread into gold. But his speciality plays with the magnetic principle of attraction and repulsion, which governs the way the objects are arranged in their boxes – like a secret alchemy. The same principle applies to his paintings in their own way, and, despite their silent restraint, their stratagems are no less sophisticated.

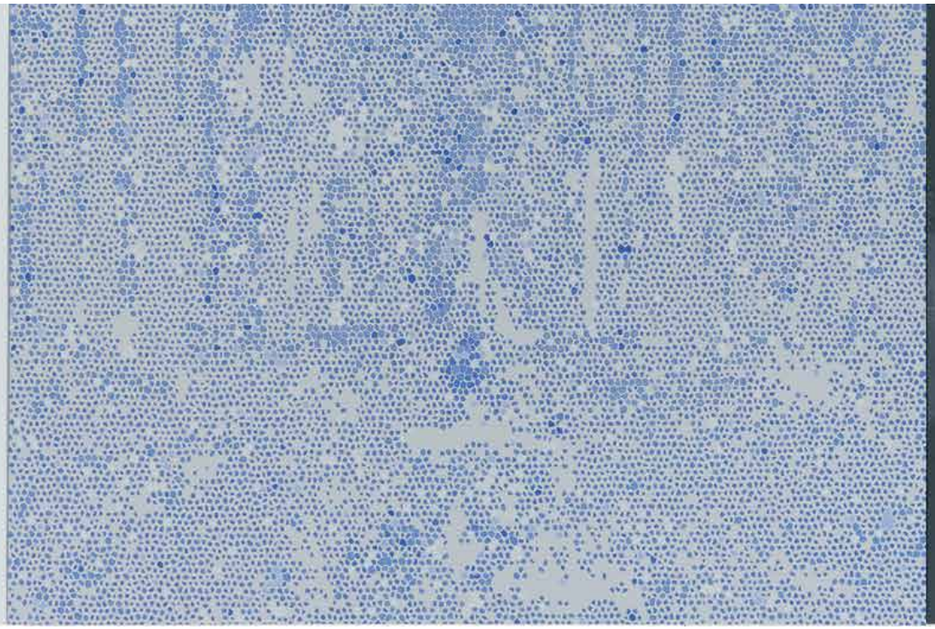
Behind their apparent distance, Barande's images show a marked liking for composition and for the fragment. They enjoy the tricks artists have always practised, wishing to defy the ordinary conditions of human vision, recreating reality with the overdeveloped and infallible gaze of optical instruments. Having played as a child among the ruins of ancient Carthage, used to those 'beyonds' of the ruins, Barande is able just as easily to wander around the meanders of his memory: the contemporary pixelated image can today be quite naturally superimposed on the memory of the mosaics in Tunisia's Bardo Museum. The powerful imagery of those carpets and hangings of crystallised stone has the concision of the figures and motifs that haunt his pictures, and their shimmering splendour belies the artist's slow, demanding, laborious method to obtain the precision of colour that gives them their fascinating tonality.

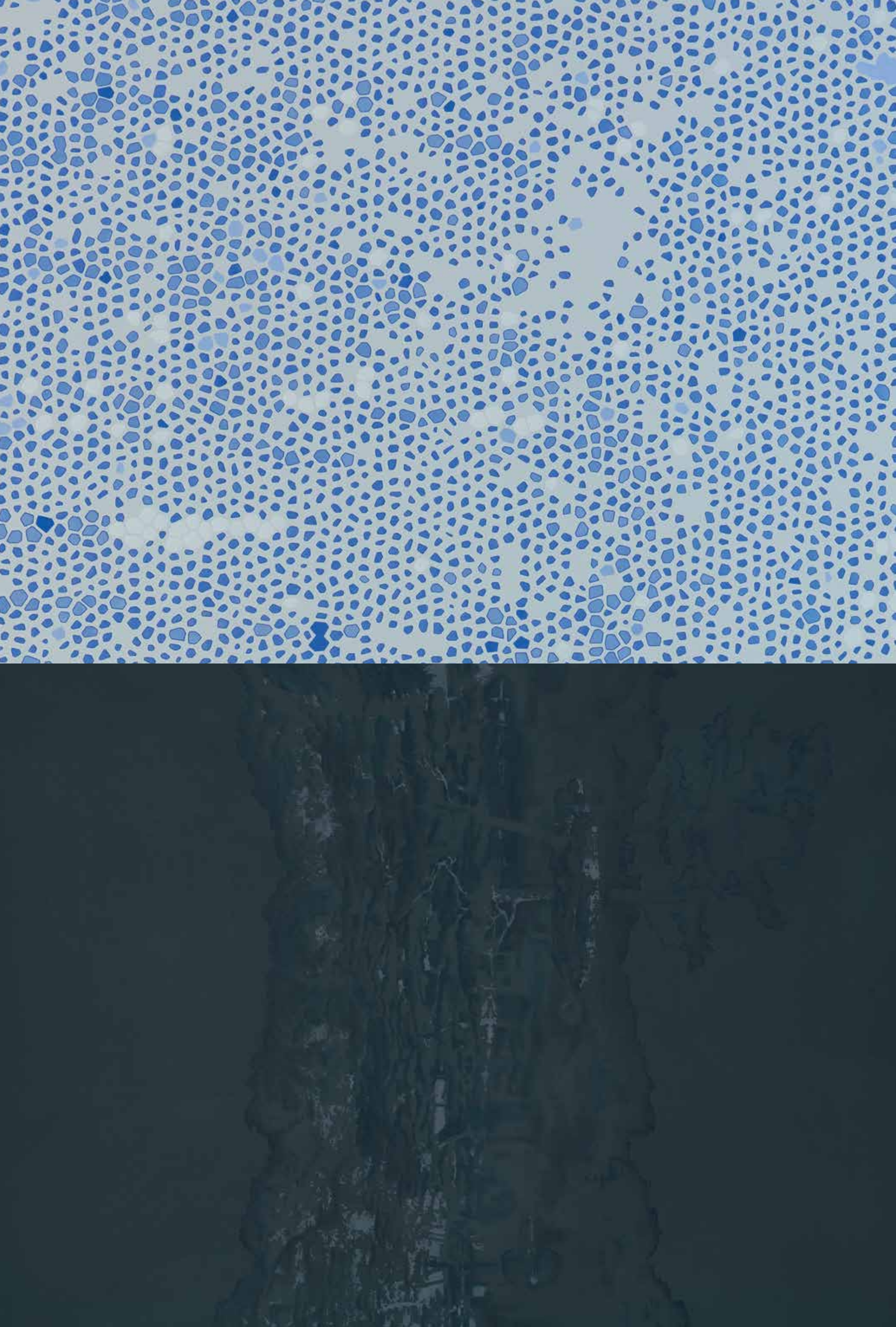
The need for 'metaphysical freedom', as he himself calls it, leads Barande in the steepest ways of asceticism. He is the 'absent one' who wishes simply to disappear behind his work and thereby procure his own annihilation. The theme of disappearance, of the death of the artist, is central to Blanchot's writing, and Roland Barthes, in a text on Balzac entitled 'La mort de l'Auteur' ('The Death of the Author'), gave it this resounding conclusion: 'The birth of the reader [here, viewer] must be ransomed by the death of the Author [or Artist]' (trans. Richard Howard). The neutrality claimed is that of writing, the identity of the 'body that writes', an identity that creates the writing and in a sort of osmosis comes and obliterates itself in it. The same goes for the work of Henri Barande, for it also proclaims its neutrality and the absence of the artist, asserting that its presence is proof of his death, and finally substitutes itself entirely for its creator. The anonymity he asserts, this death he keeps telling us to take literally, is really proof of the most absolute trust the painter can place in his viewers. For by inviting them to dispense with the usual protocols, to step over the boundary of his retreat, he creates the conditions for a truly intimate meeting, free of all prejudice. This is when his work merges with him, literally becomes his body – beyond all conventions, beyond any limits, to the point where there is no longer any difference between artist and viewer.

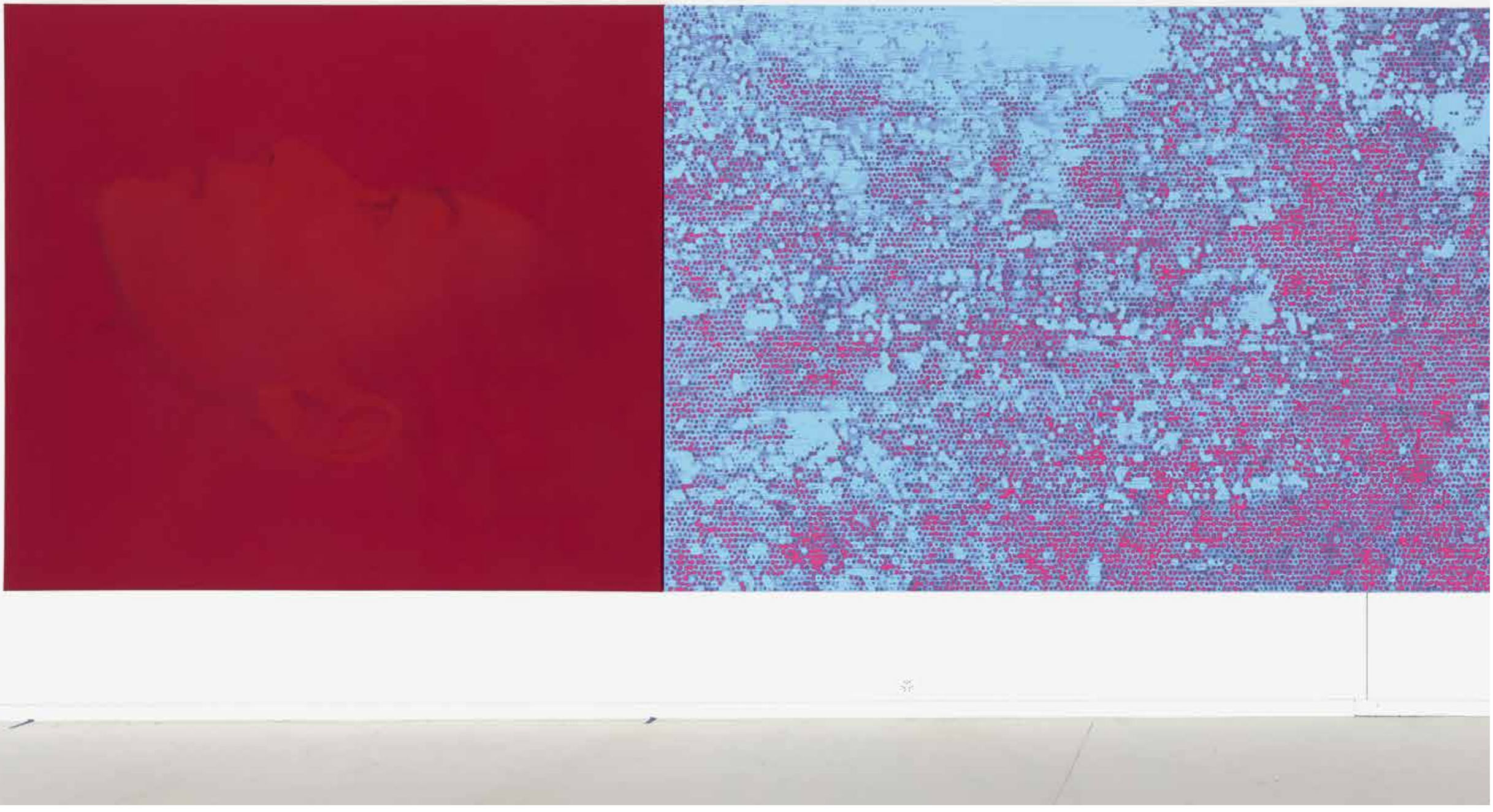
However, Blanchot reminds us that in order somehow to escape a death we cannot master, over which we are powerless, which 'we never attain', we might prefer a voluntary death. So suicide is a path at the end of which we are likely to find the origin and the meaning of the work, because both are taking the same risk, because both appeal to an experience of the same gravity, because Blanchot's 'power of dying' is in the final analysis the same power to which the work gives us access. The work is a definitive process, like the irreversible glance cast by Orpheus descending towards Eurydice in the infernal regions. The work is the sole condition, the sole method of attaining its hidden goal: the power and sovereignty of the profound. Henri Barande has always understood this. And for him, it has always been the price to pay.

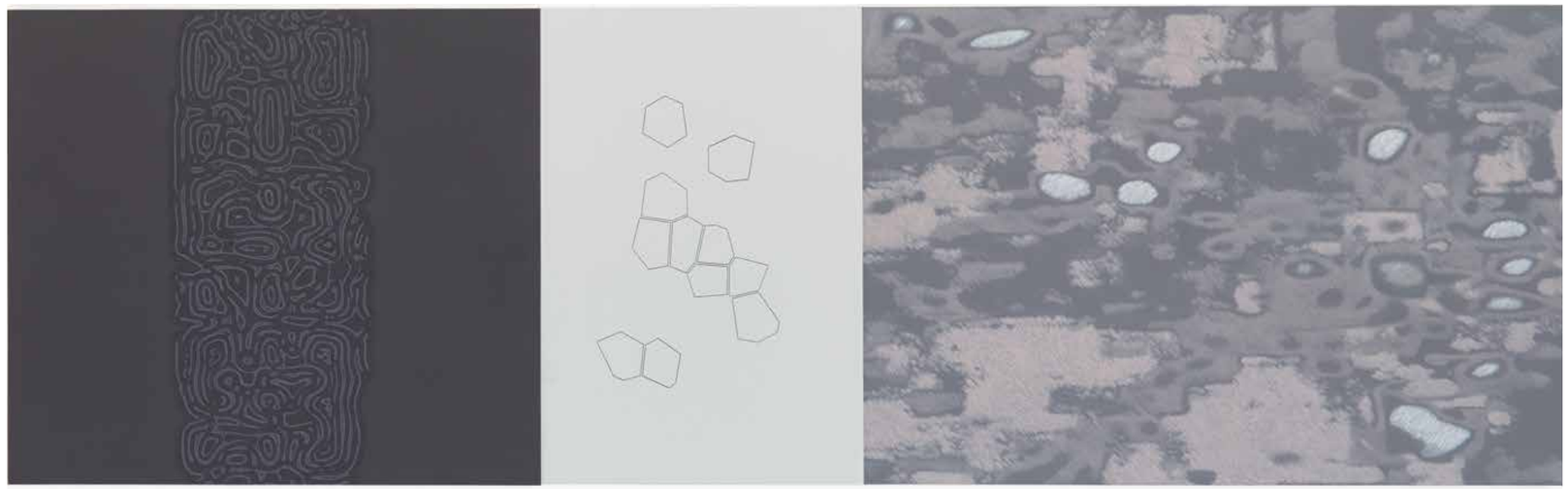
PAINTINGS

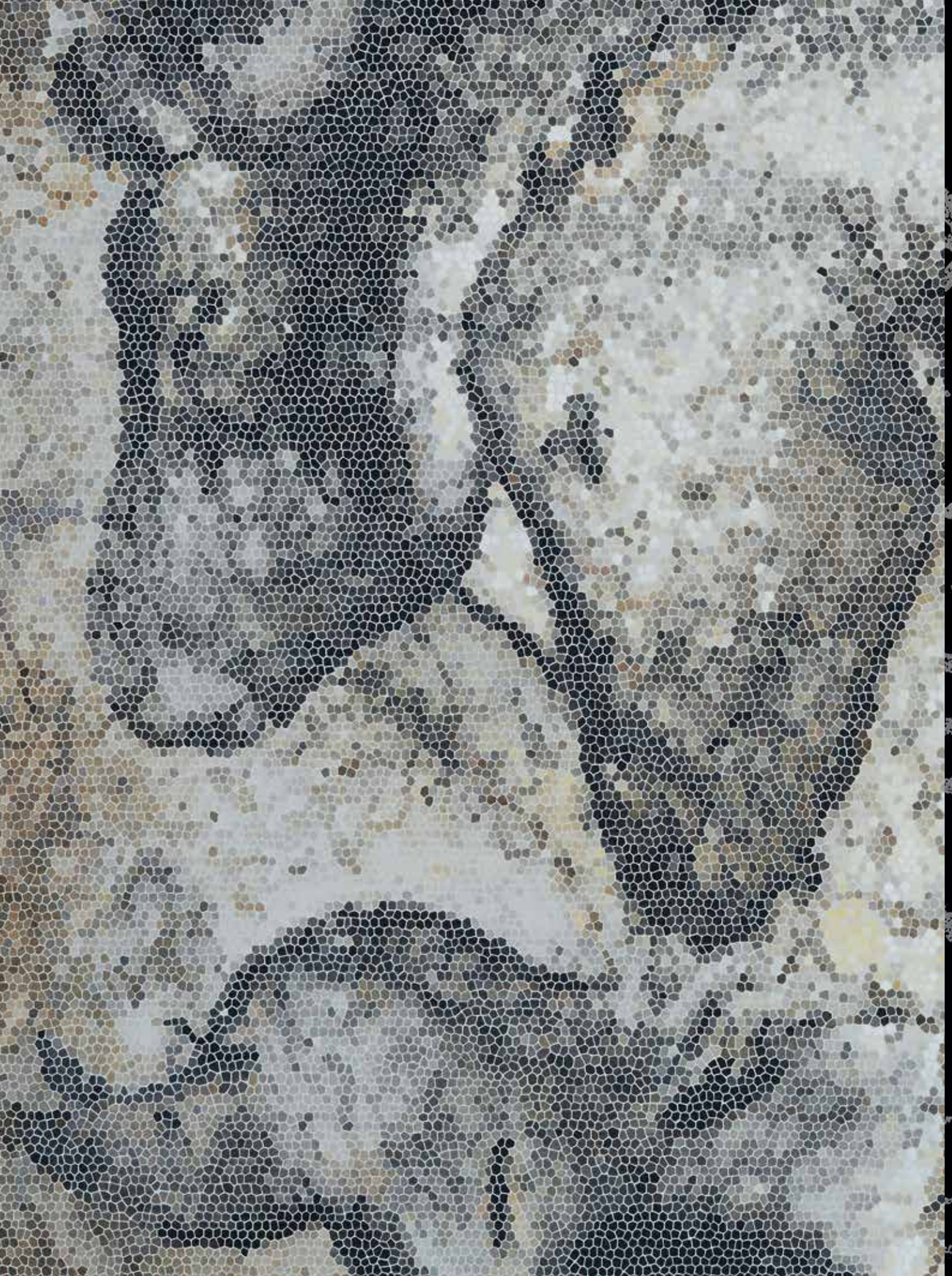


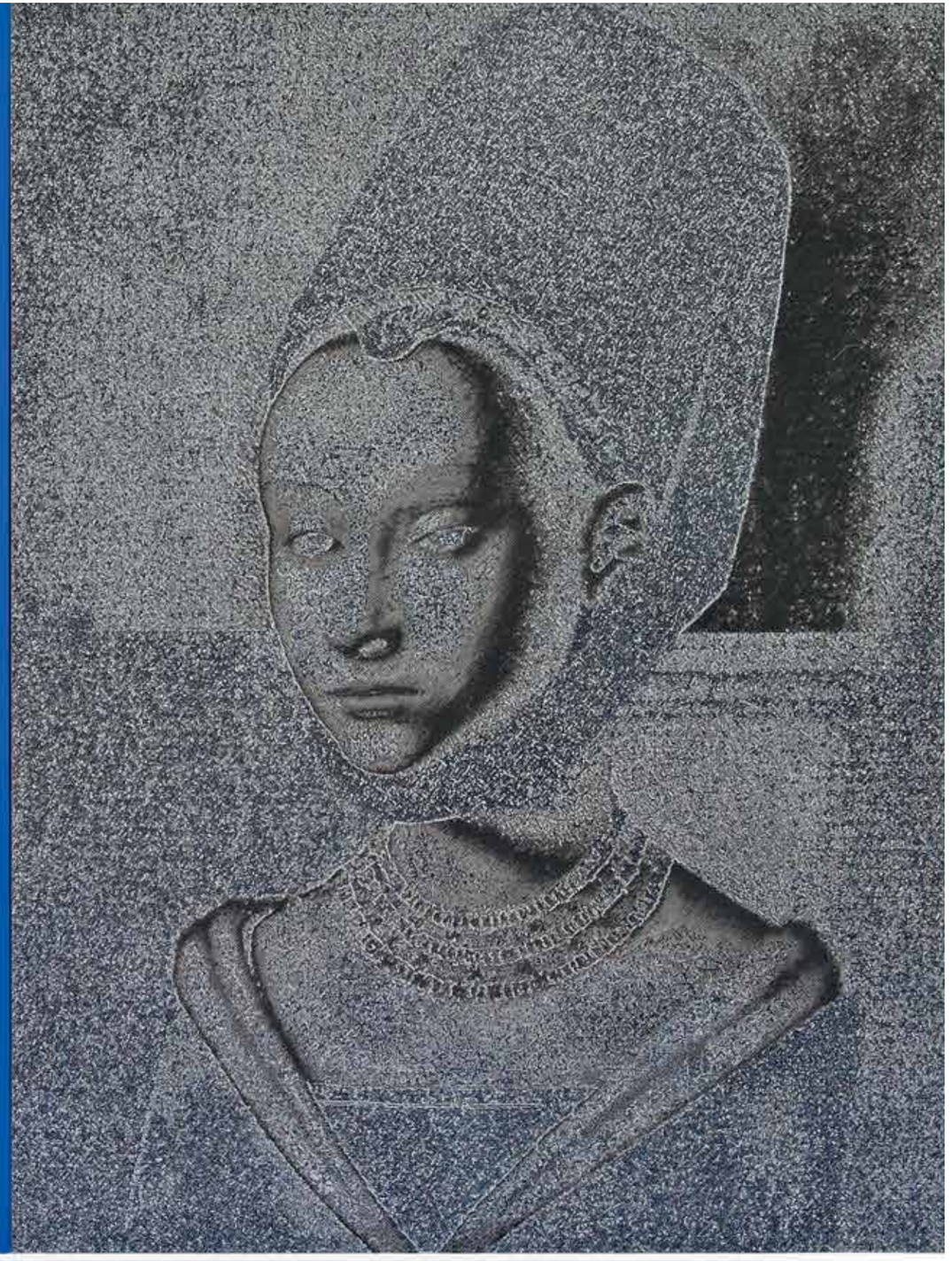


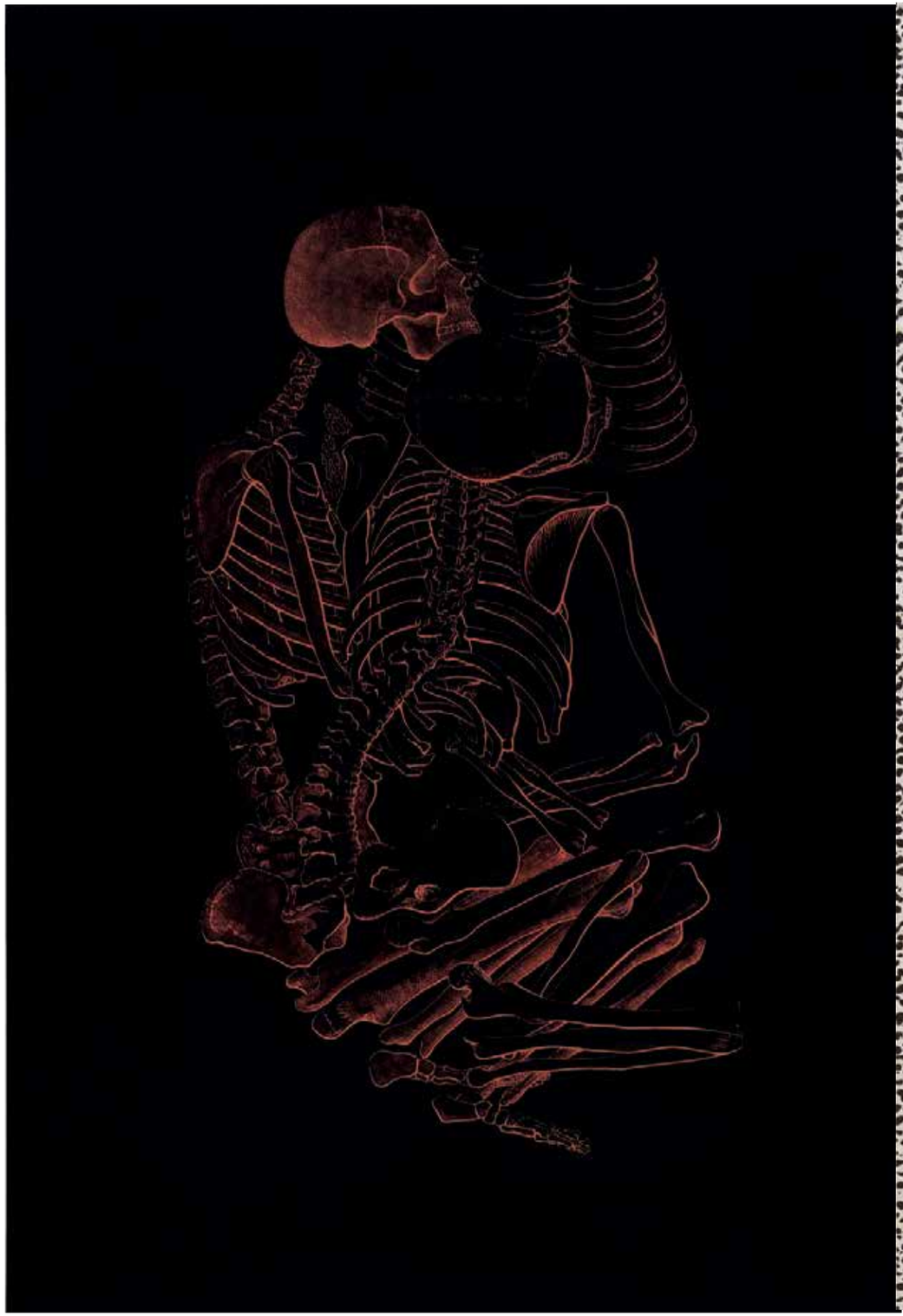


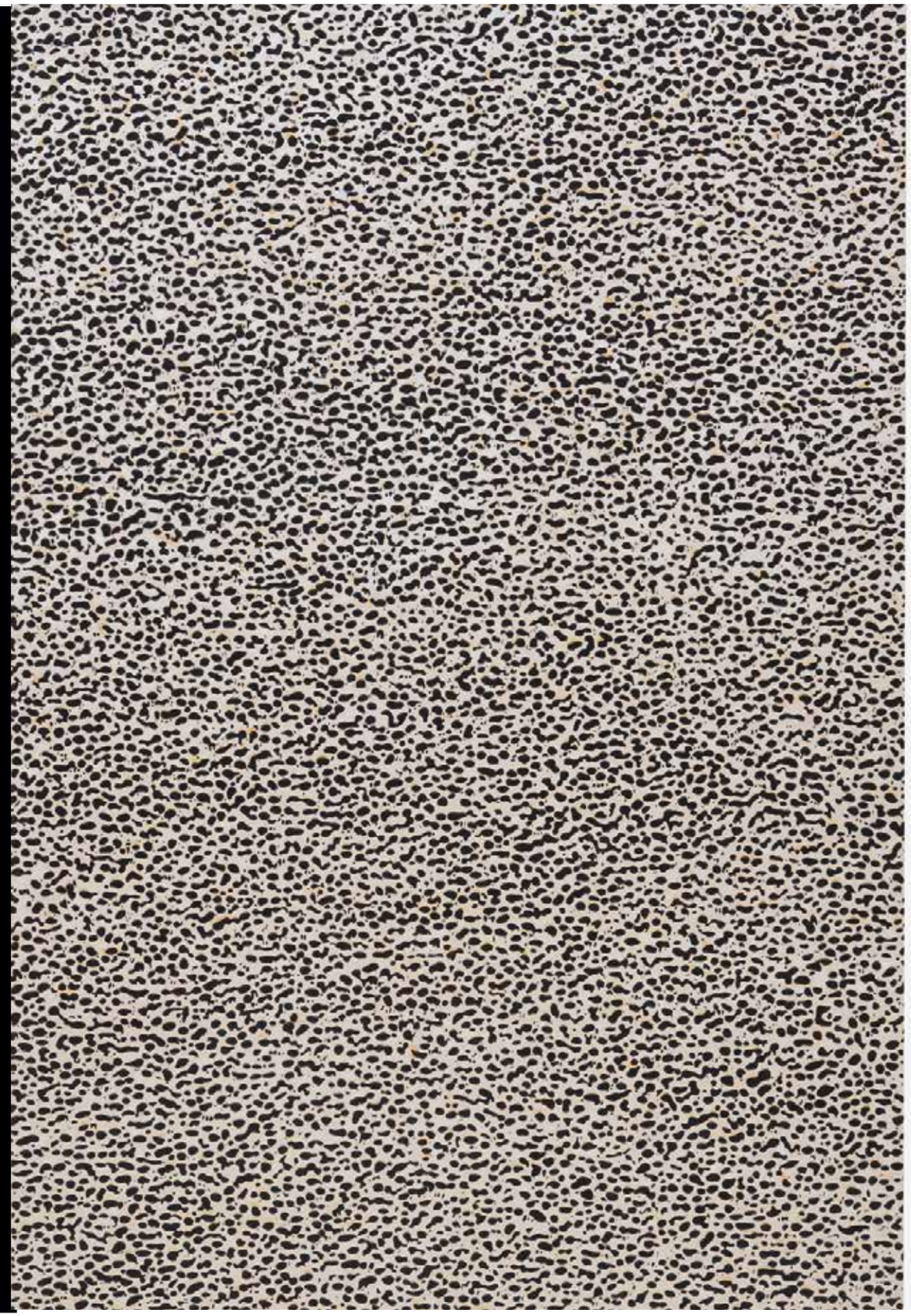


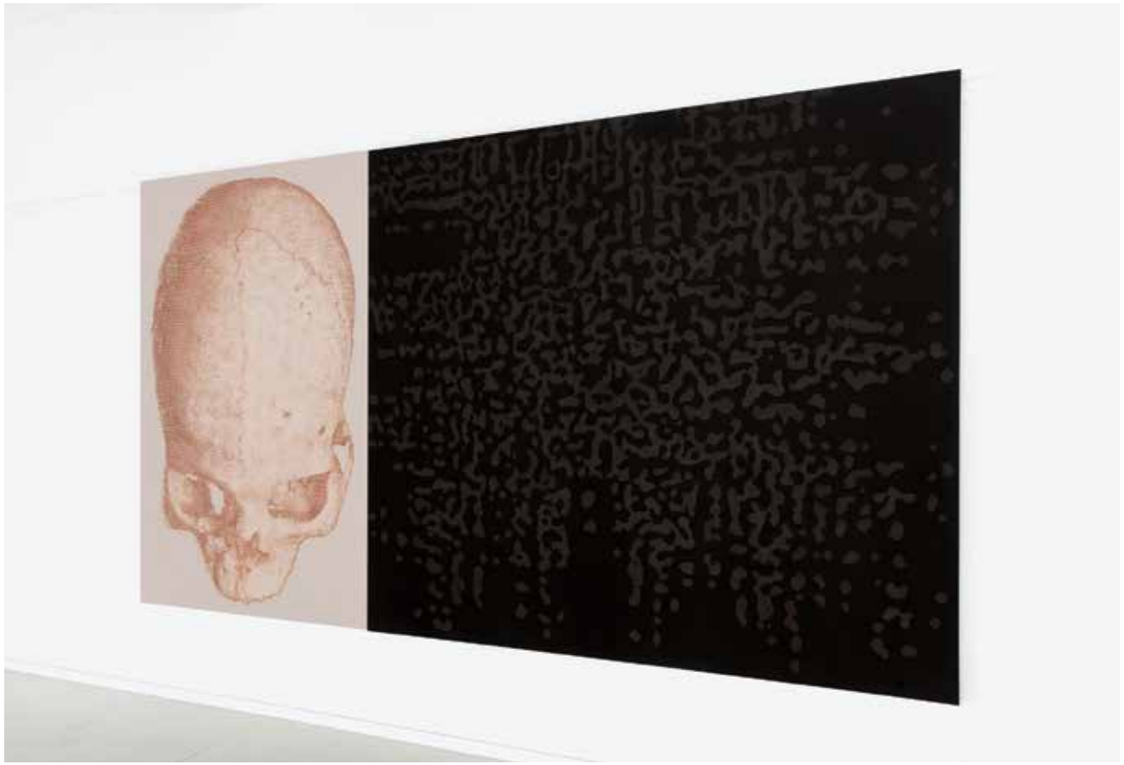


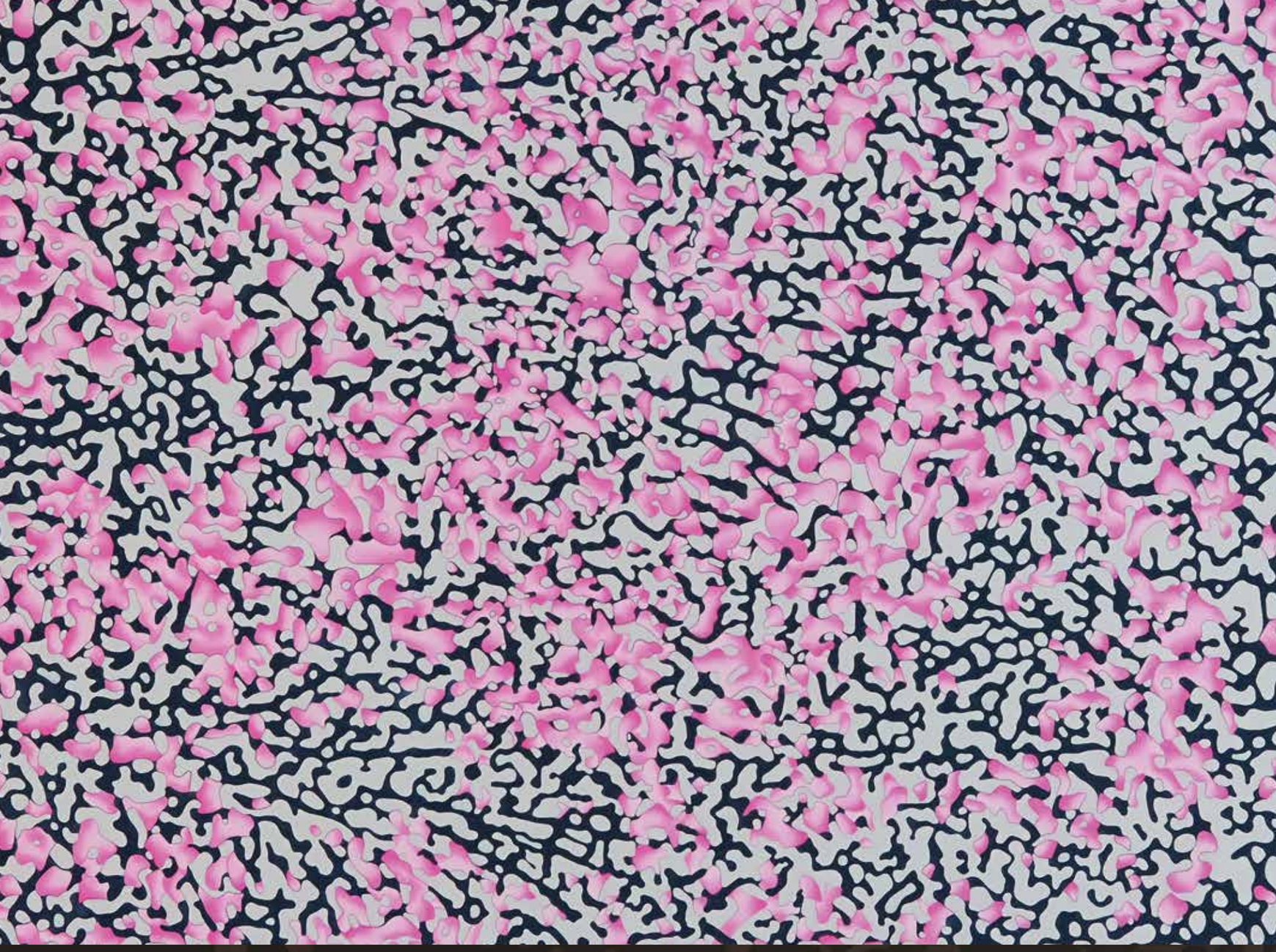


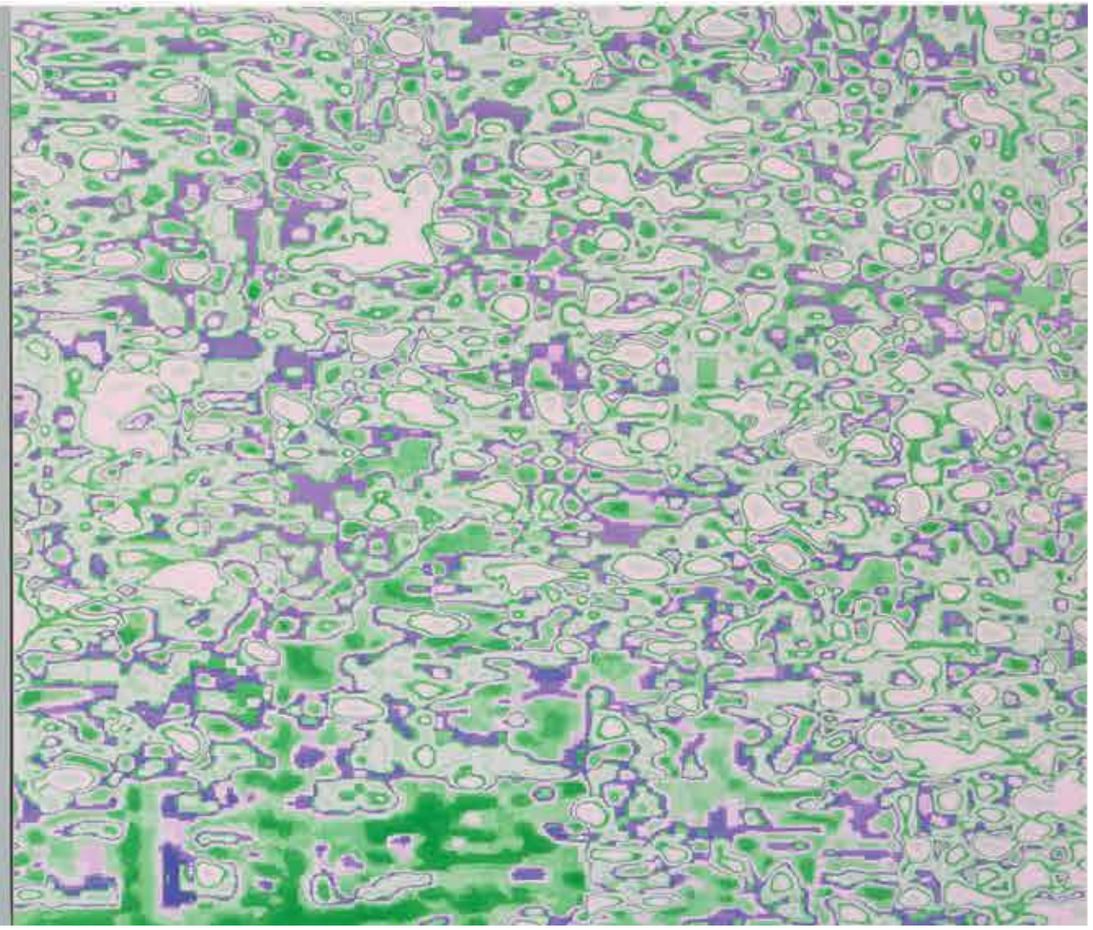


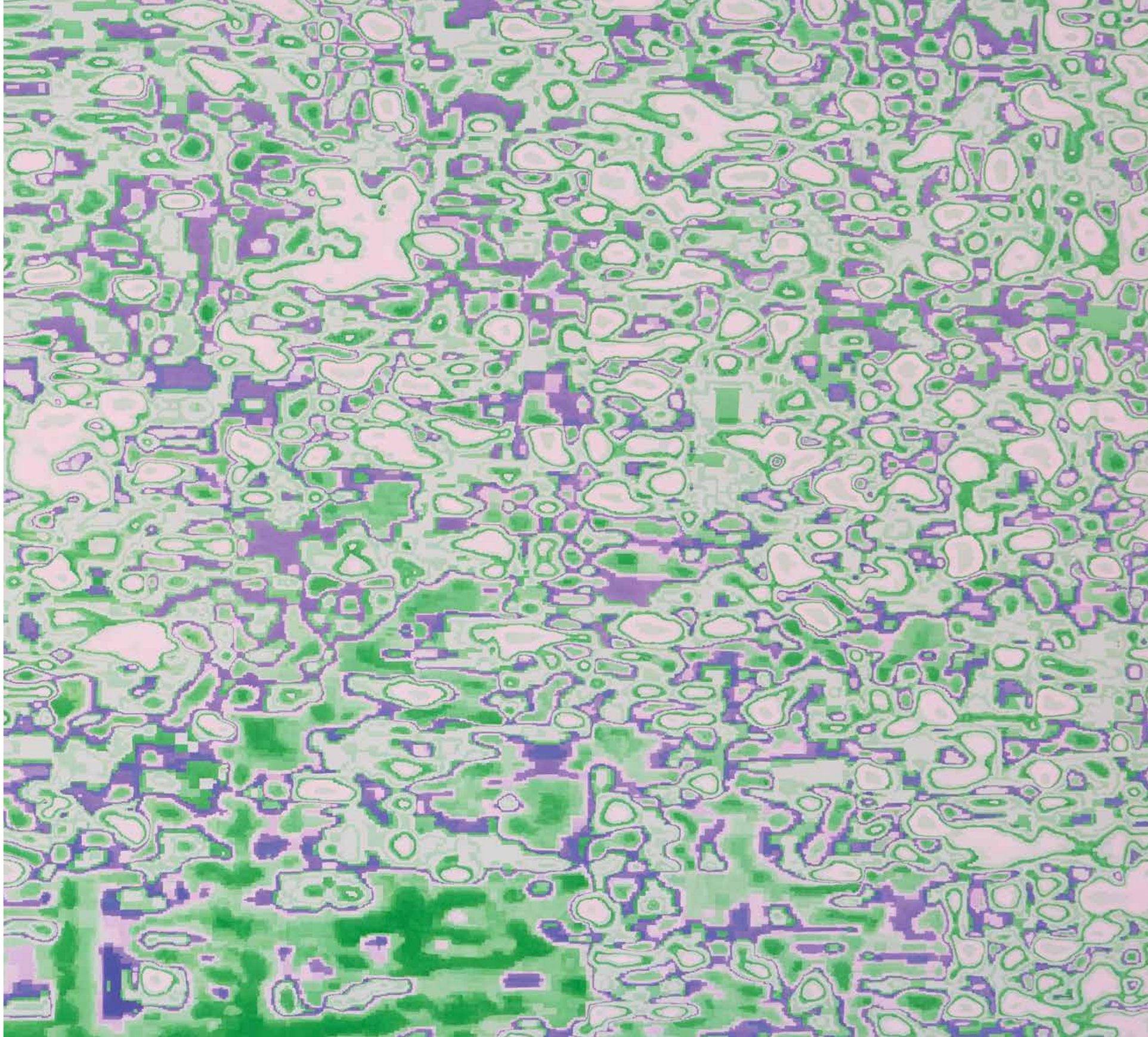


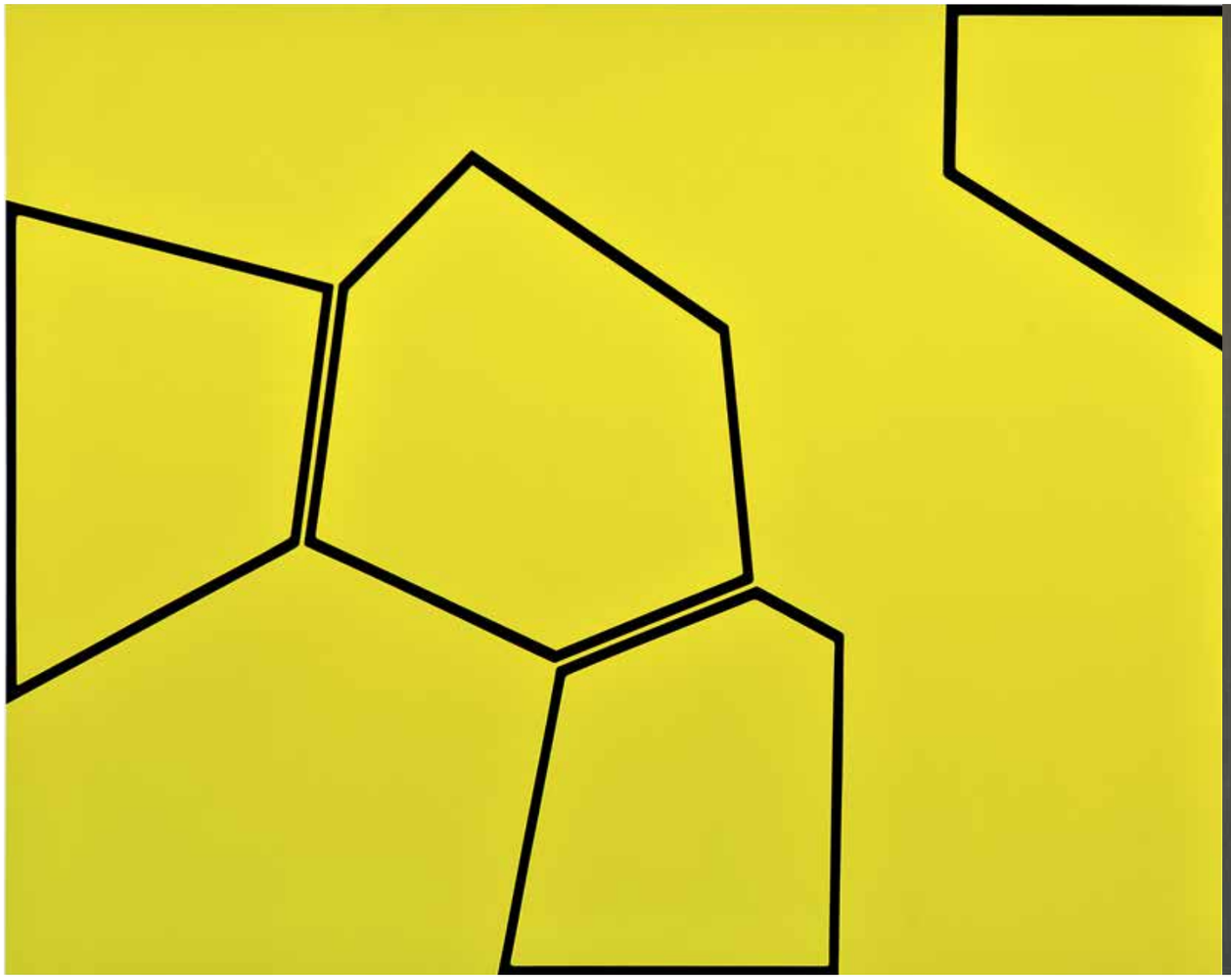


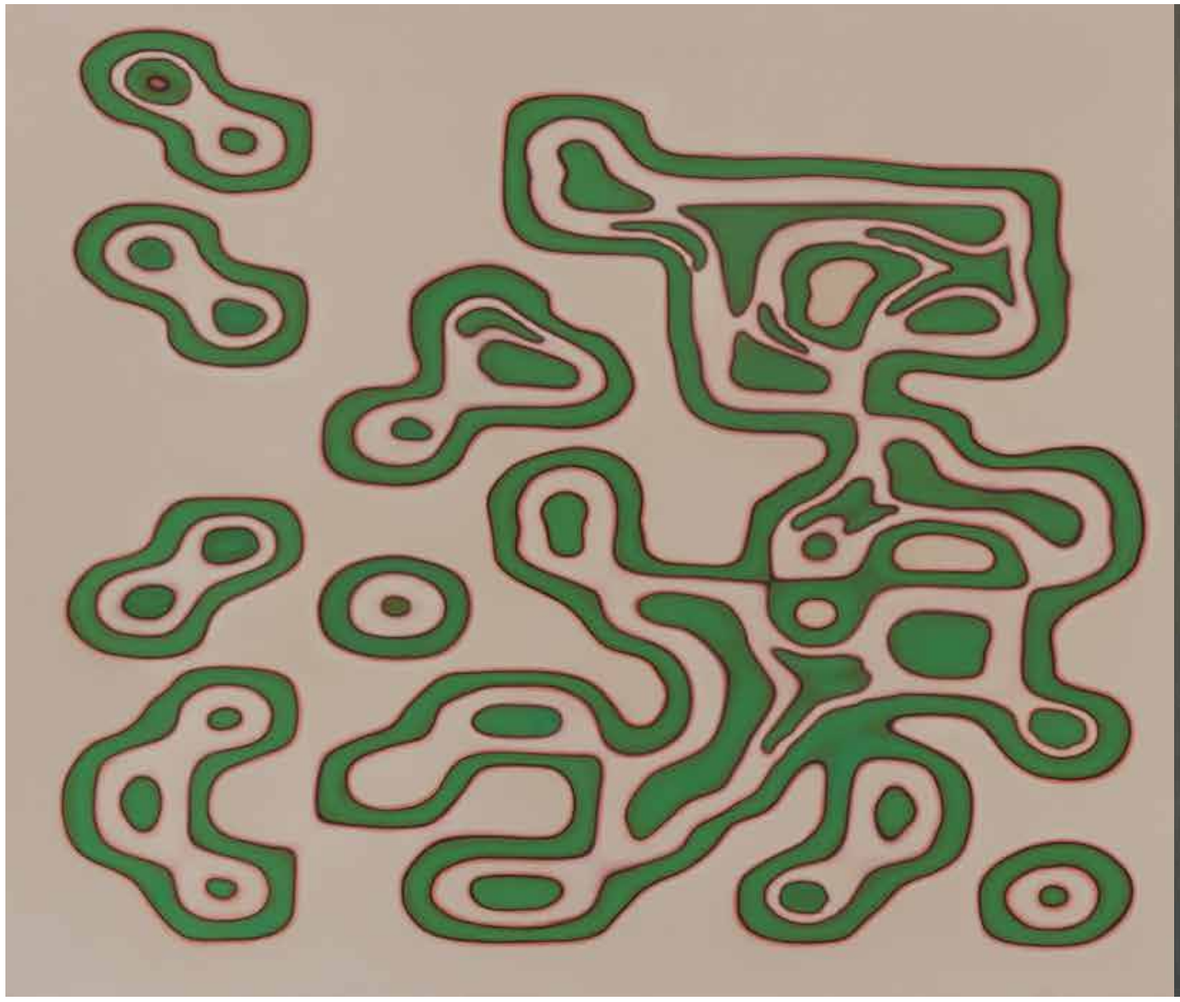


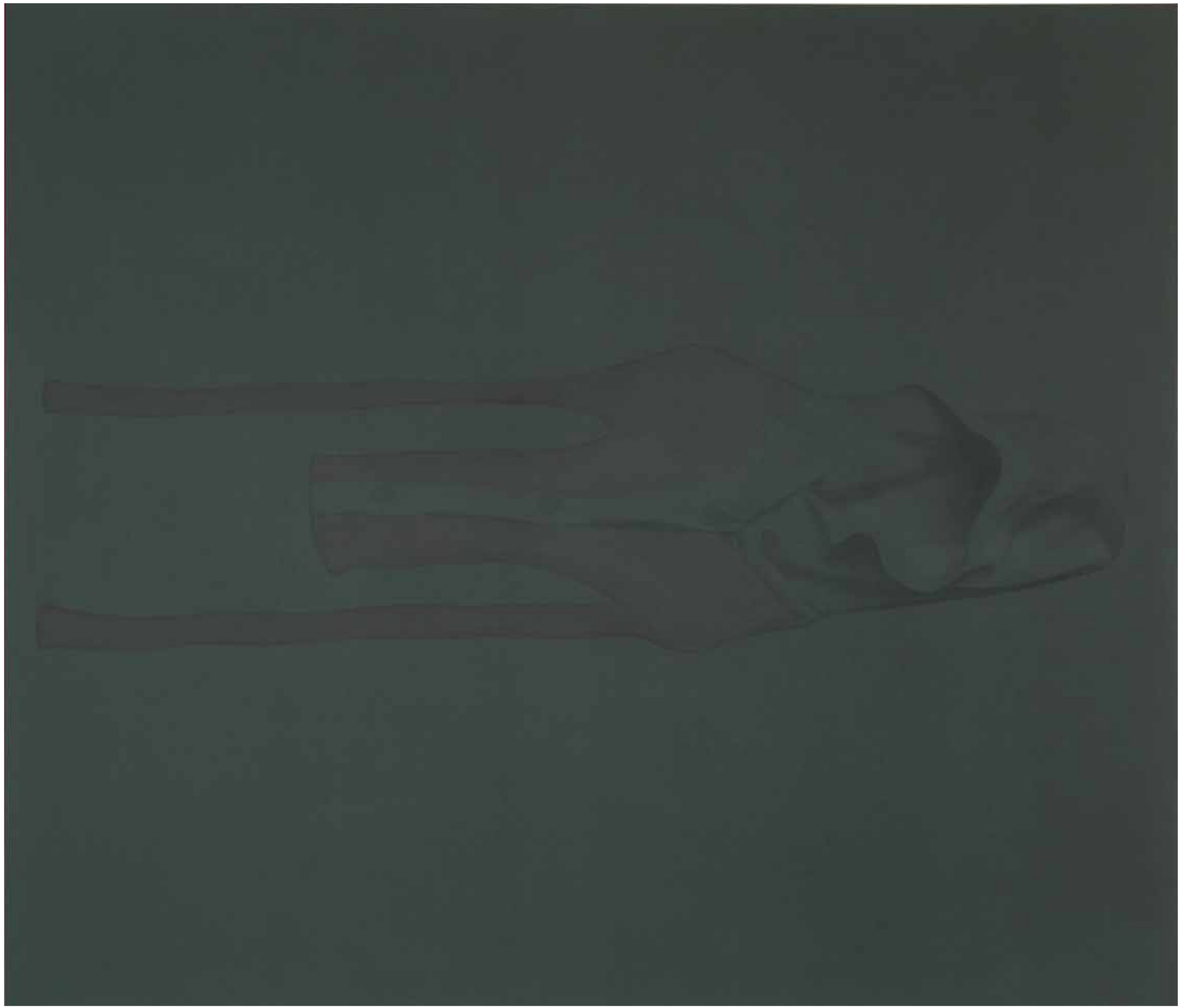


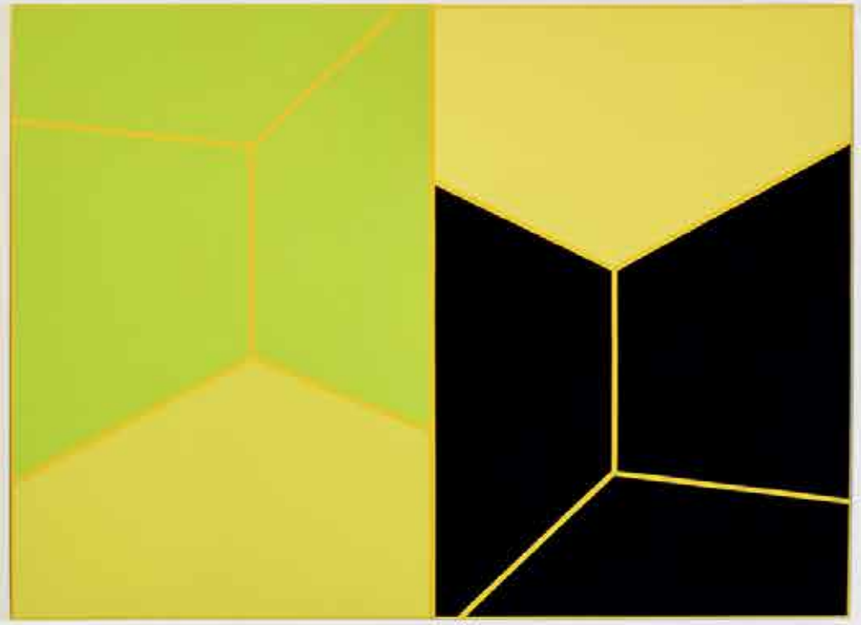


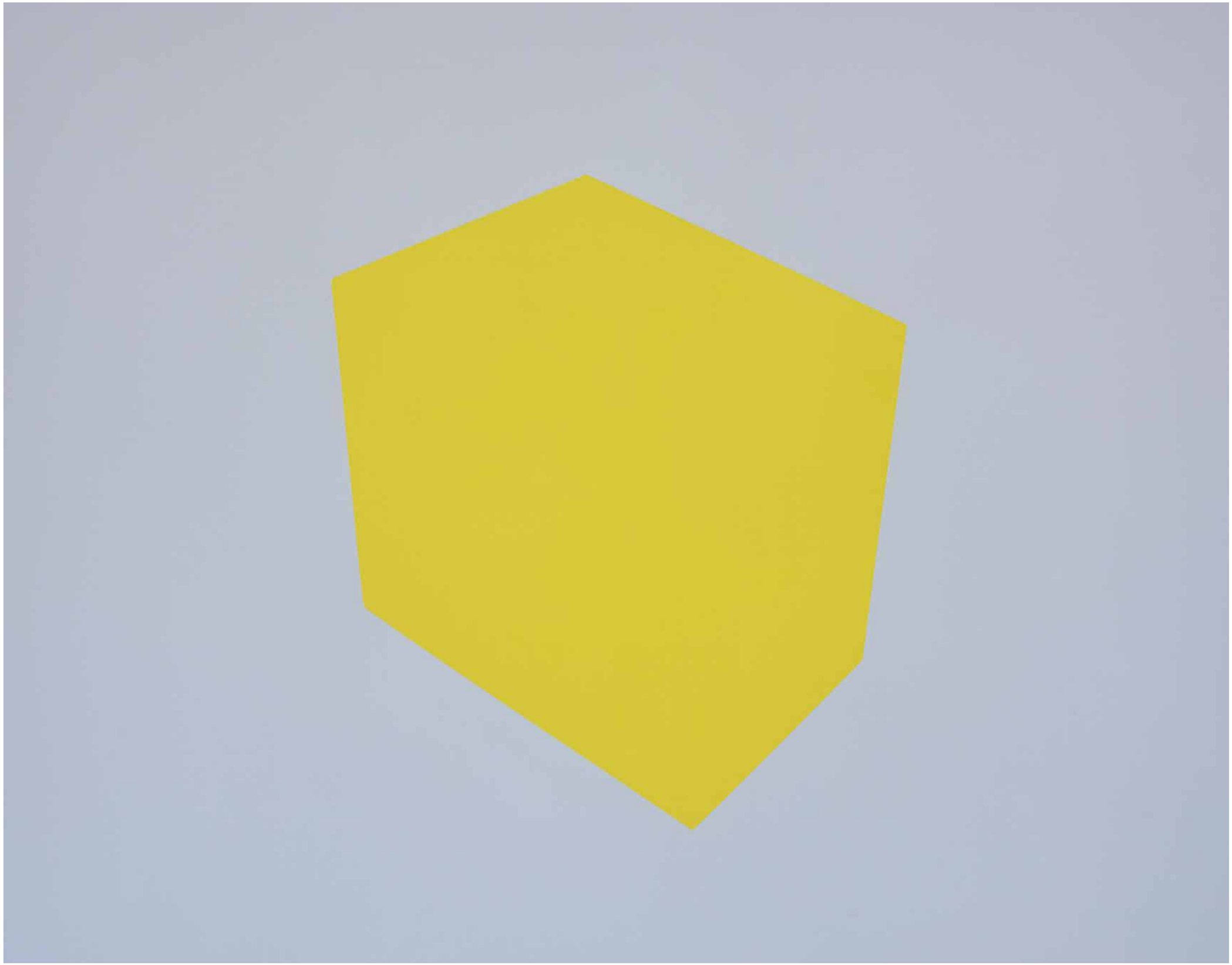


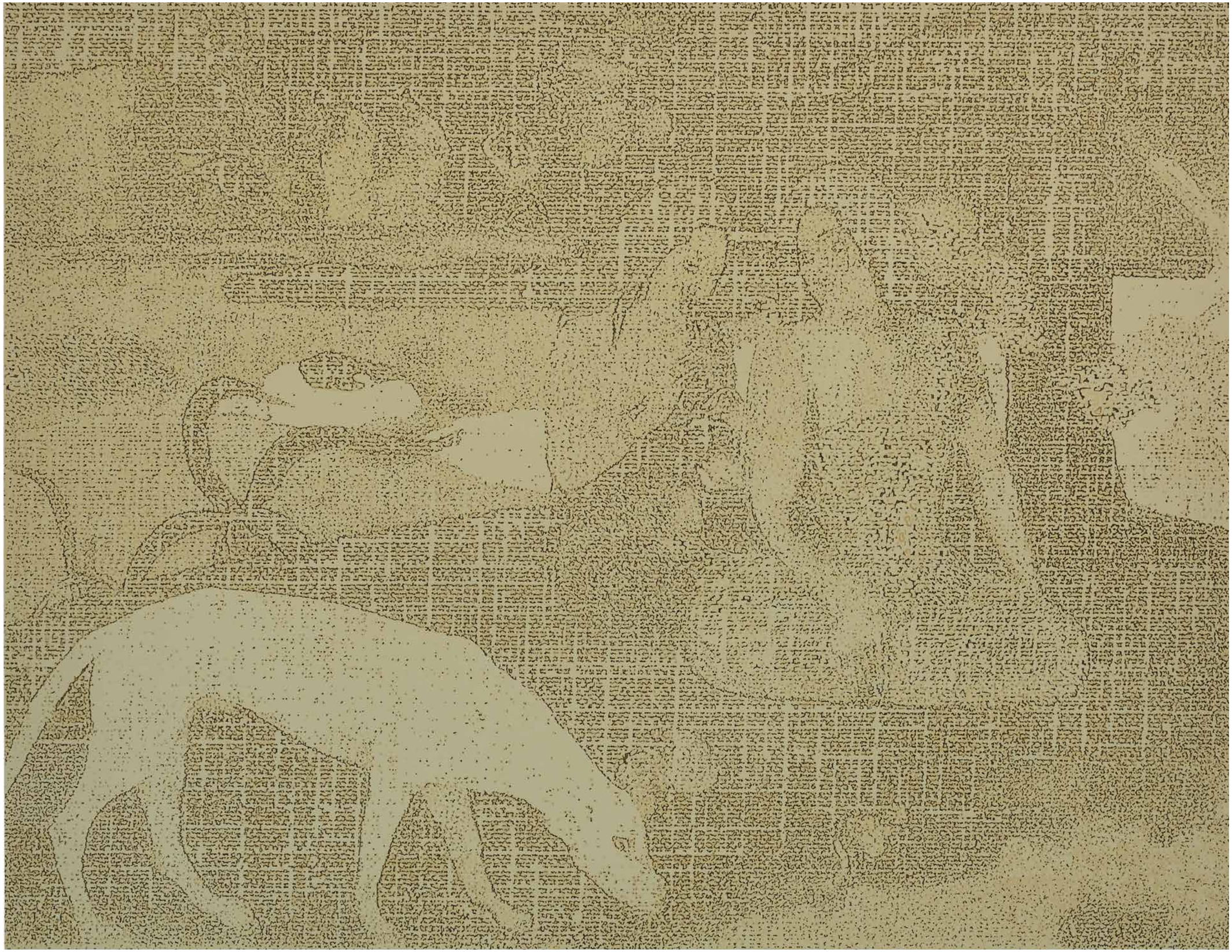


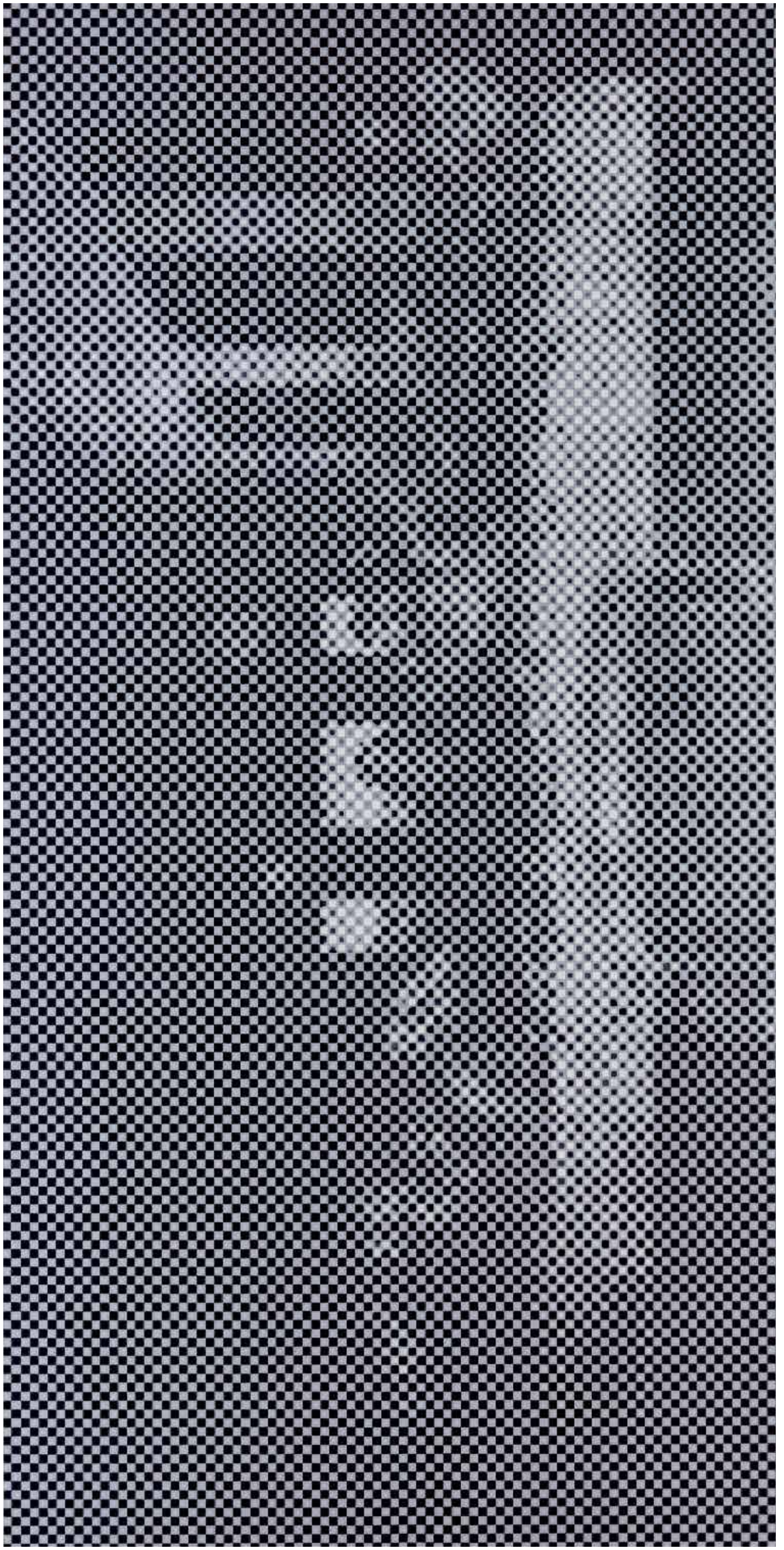


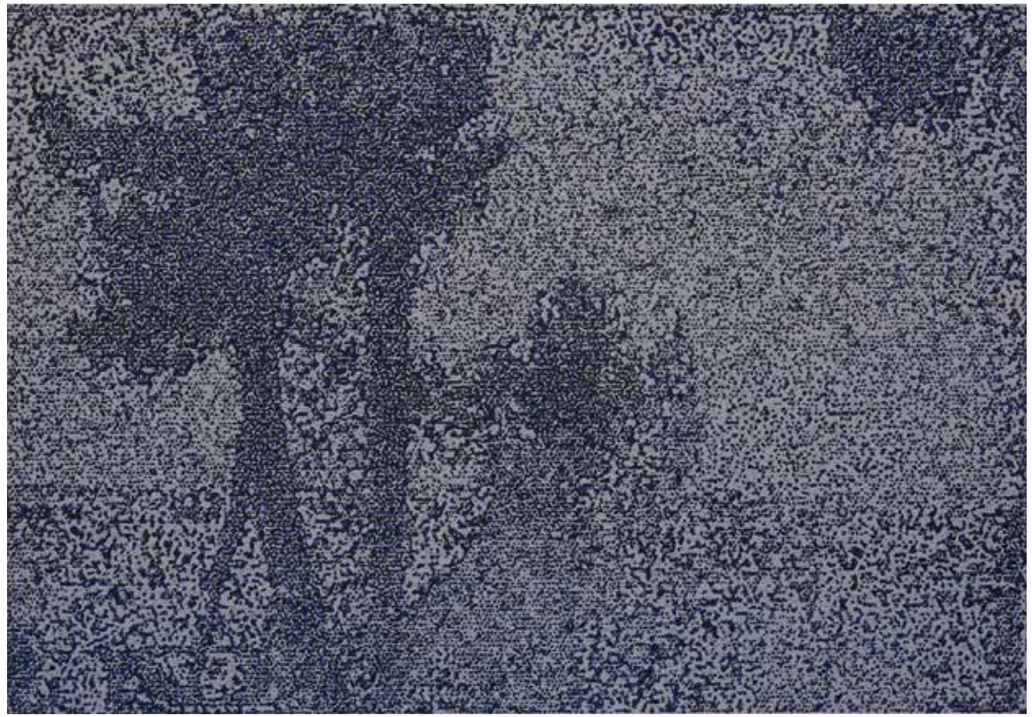


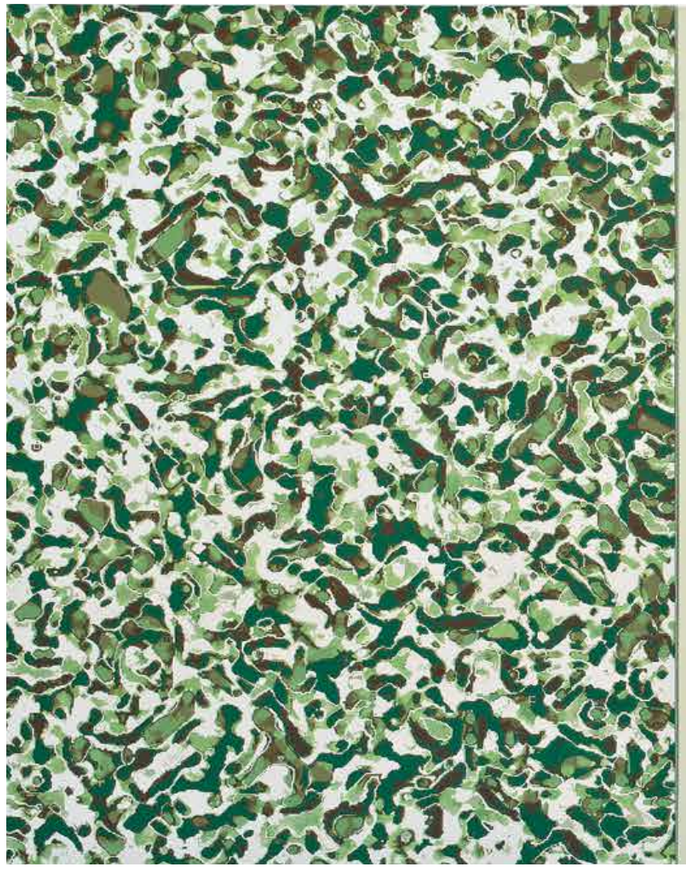


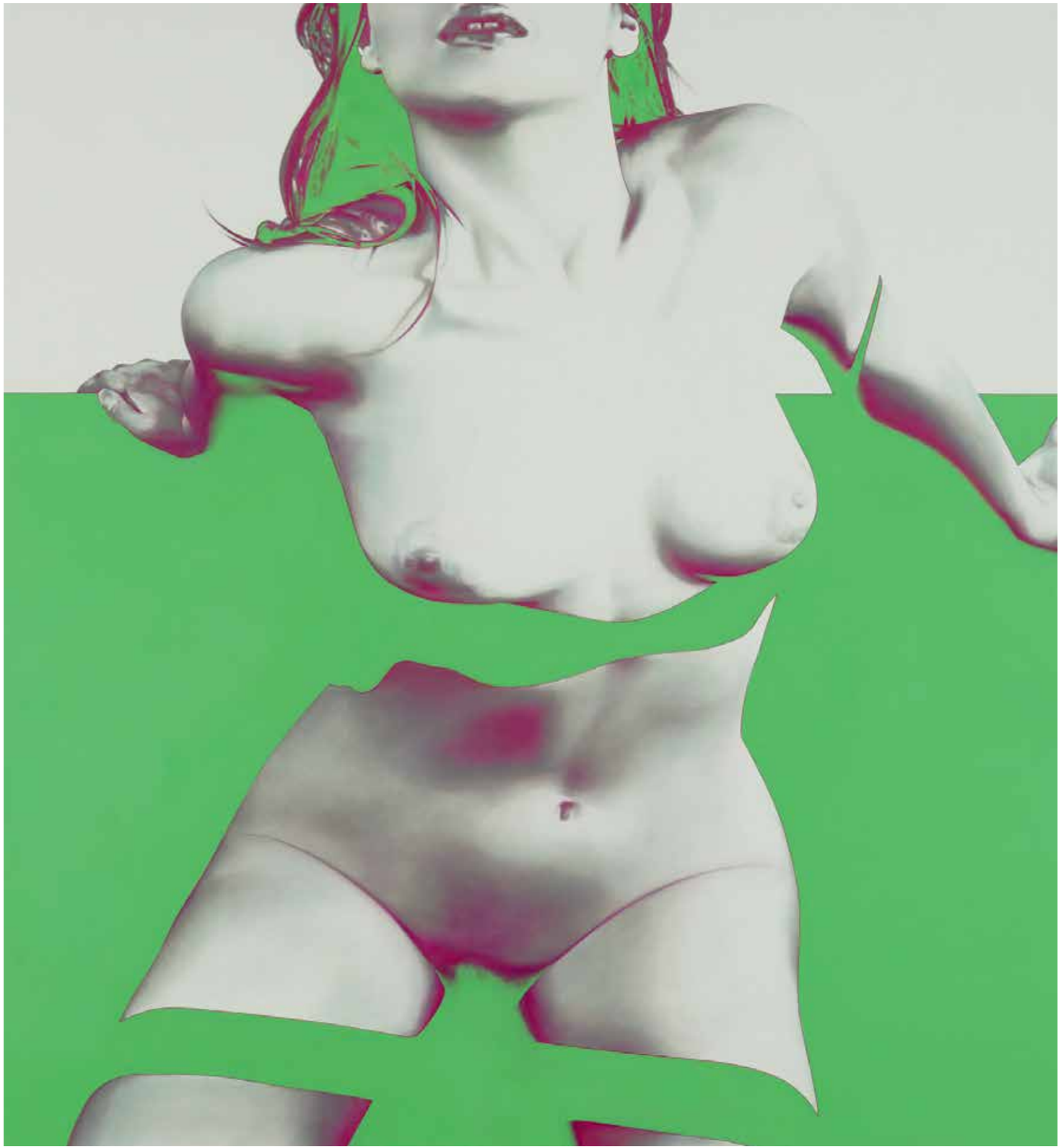


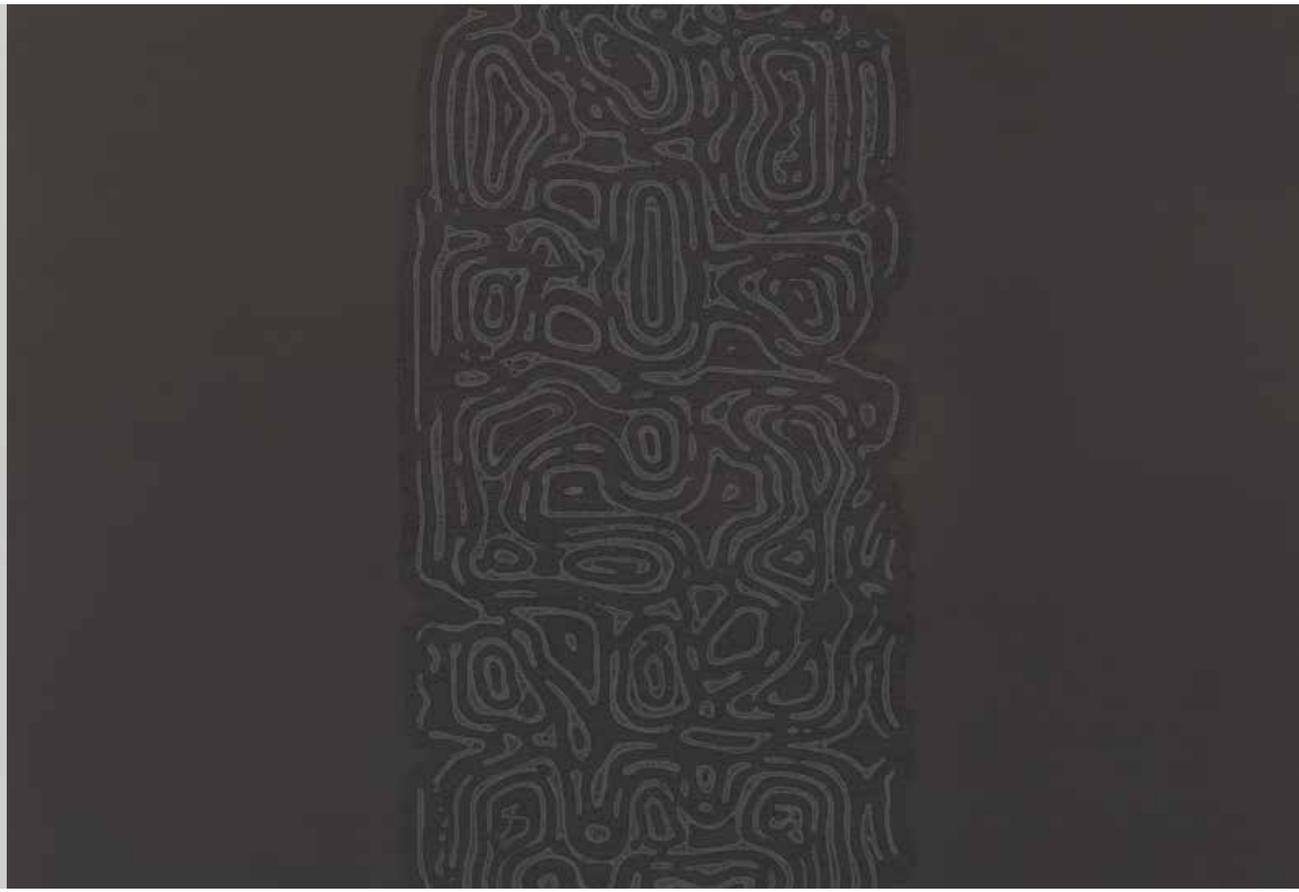


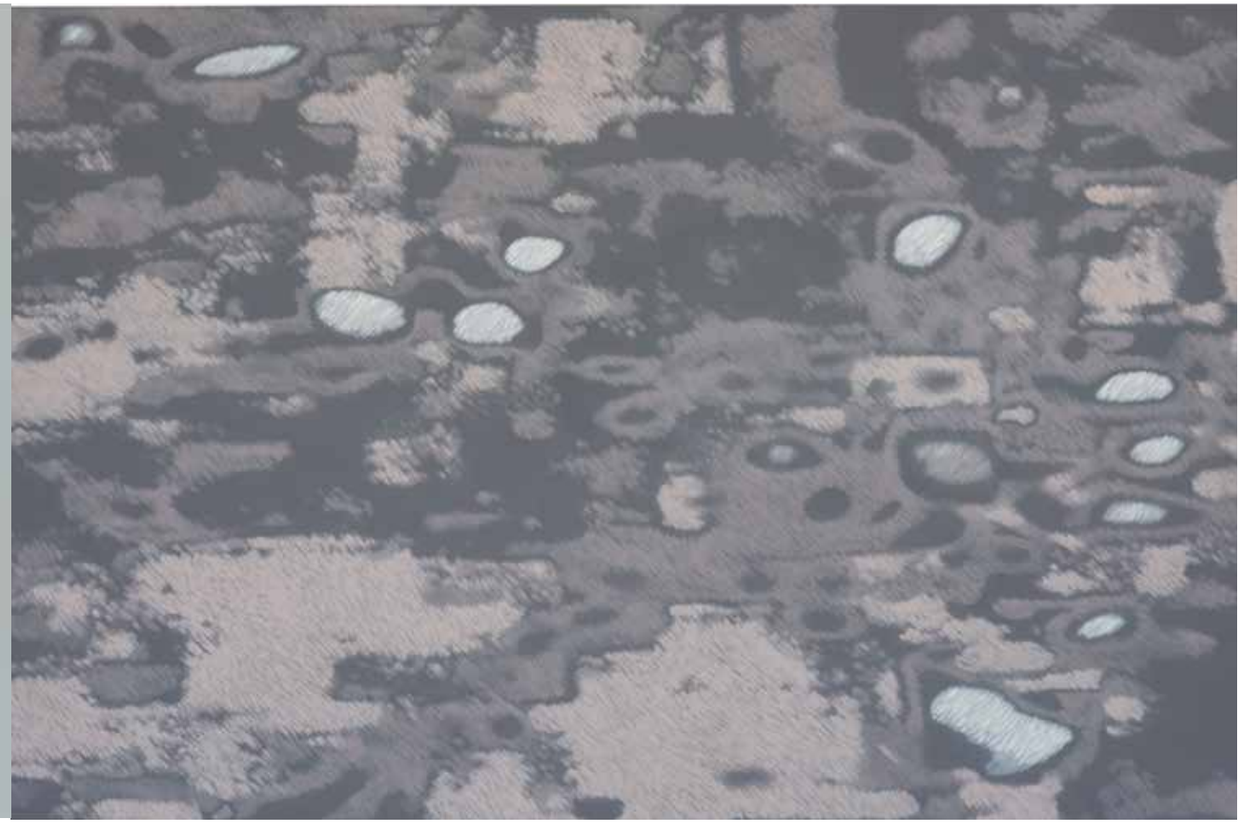


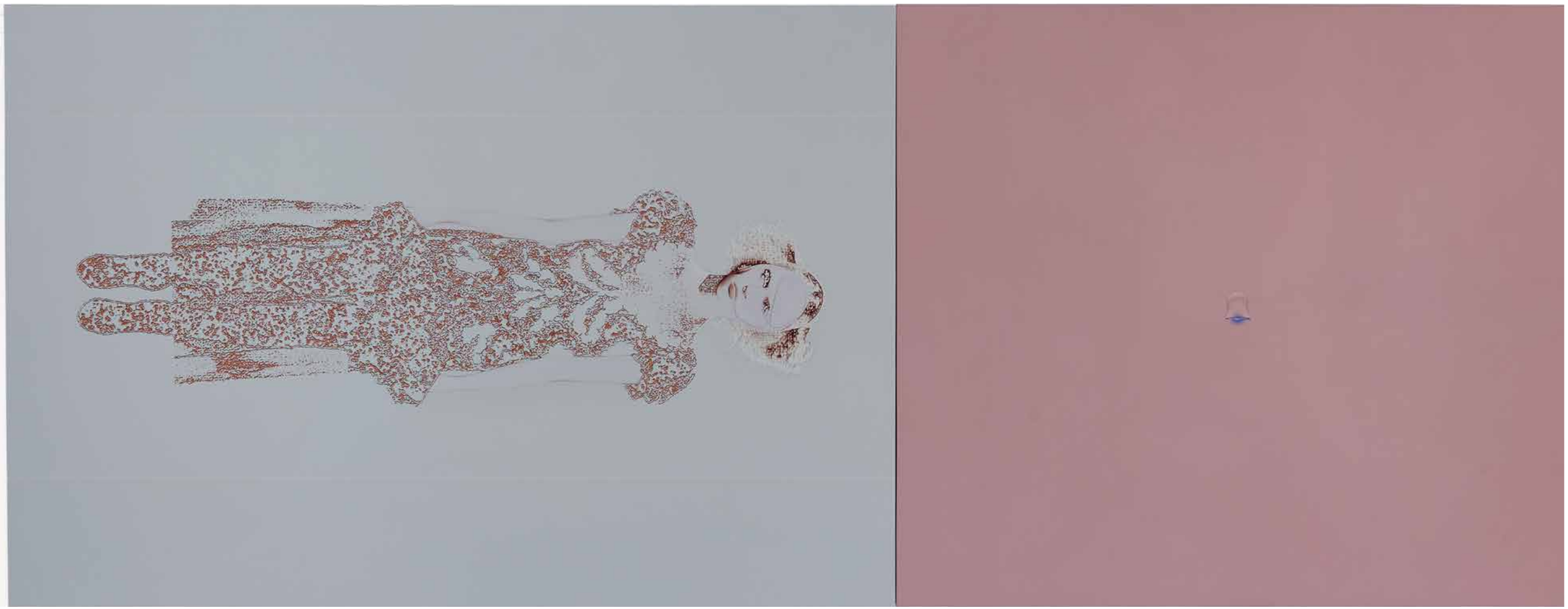


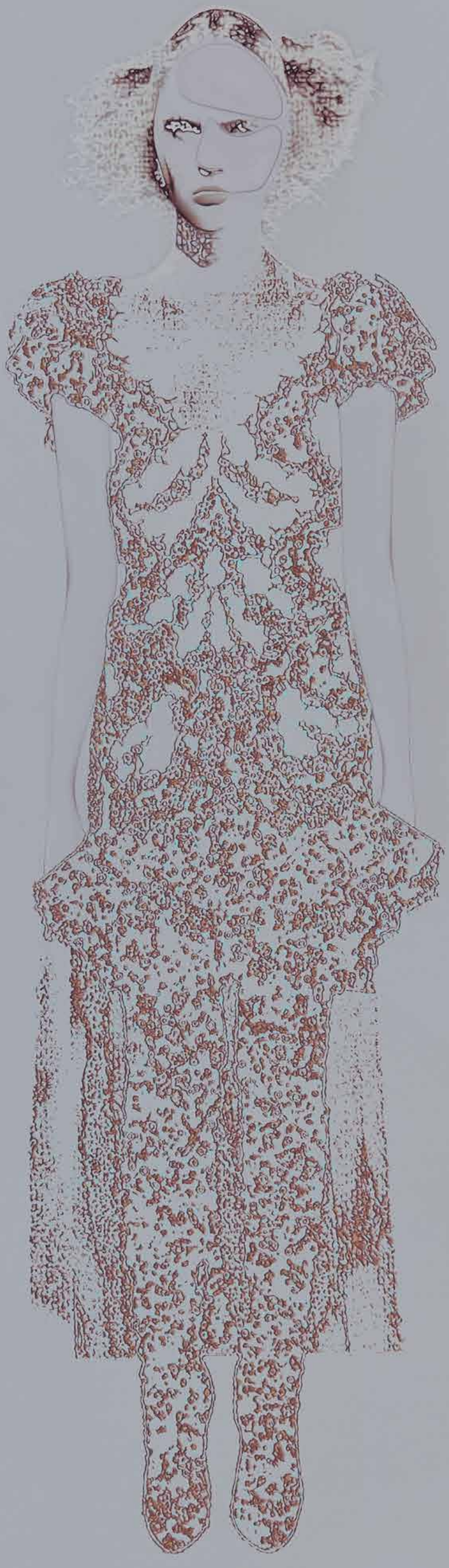


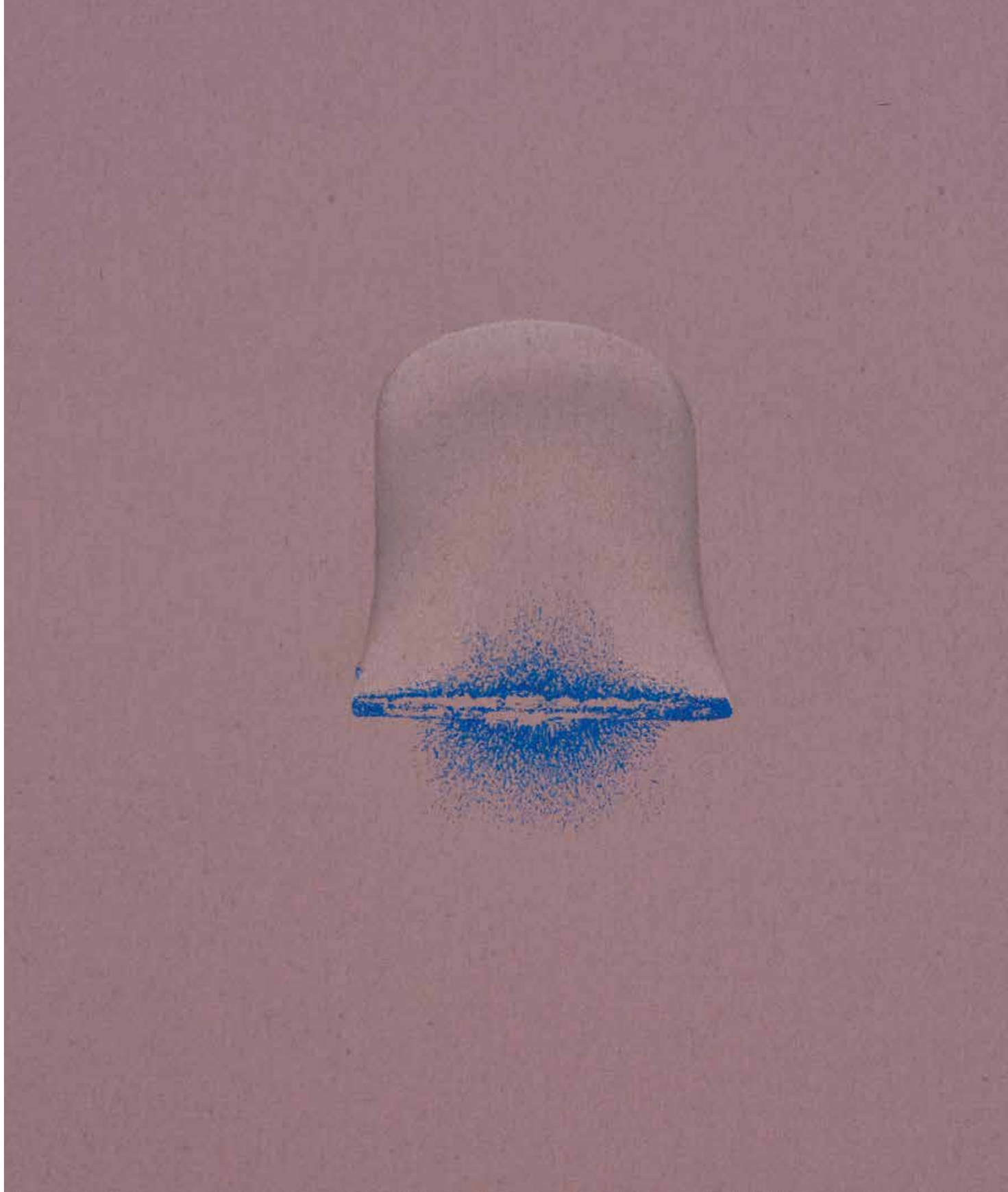


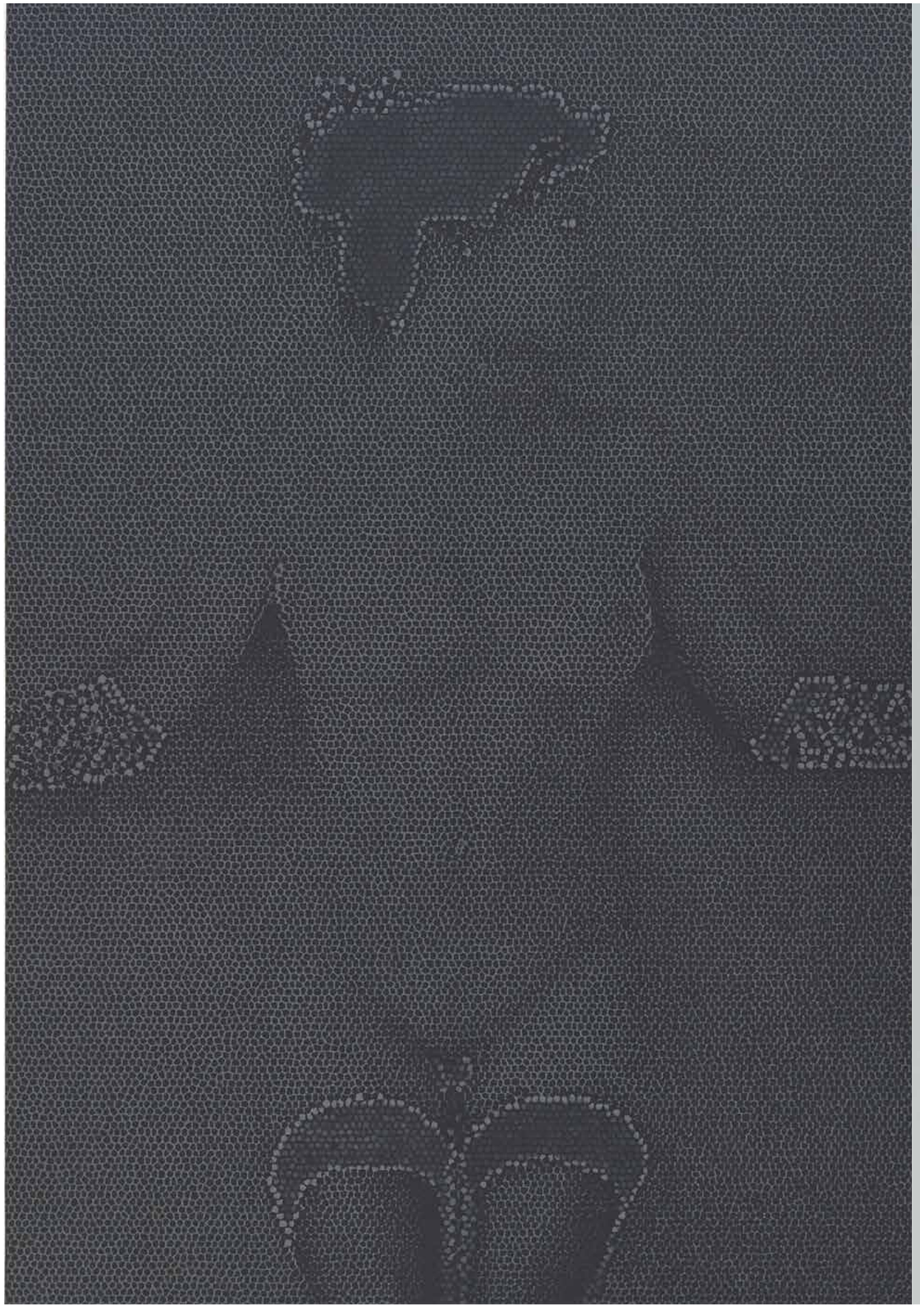


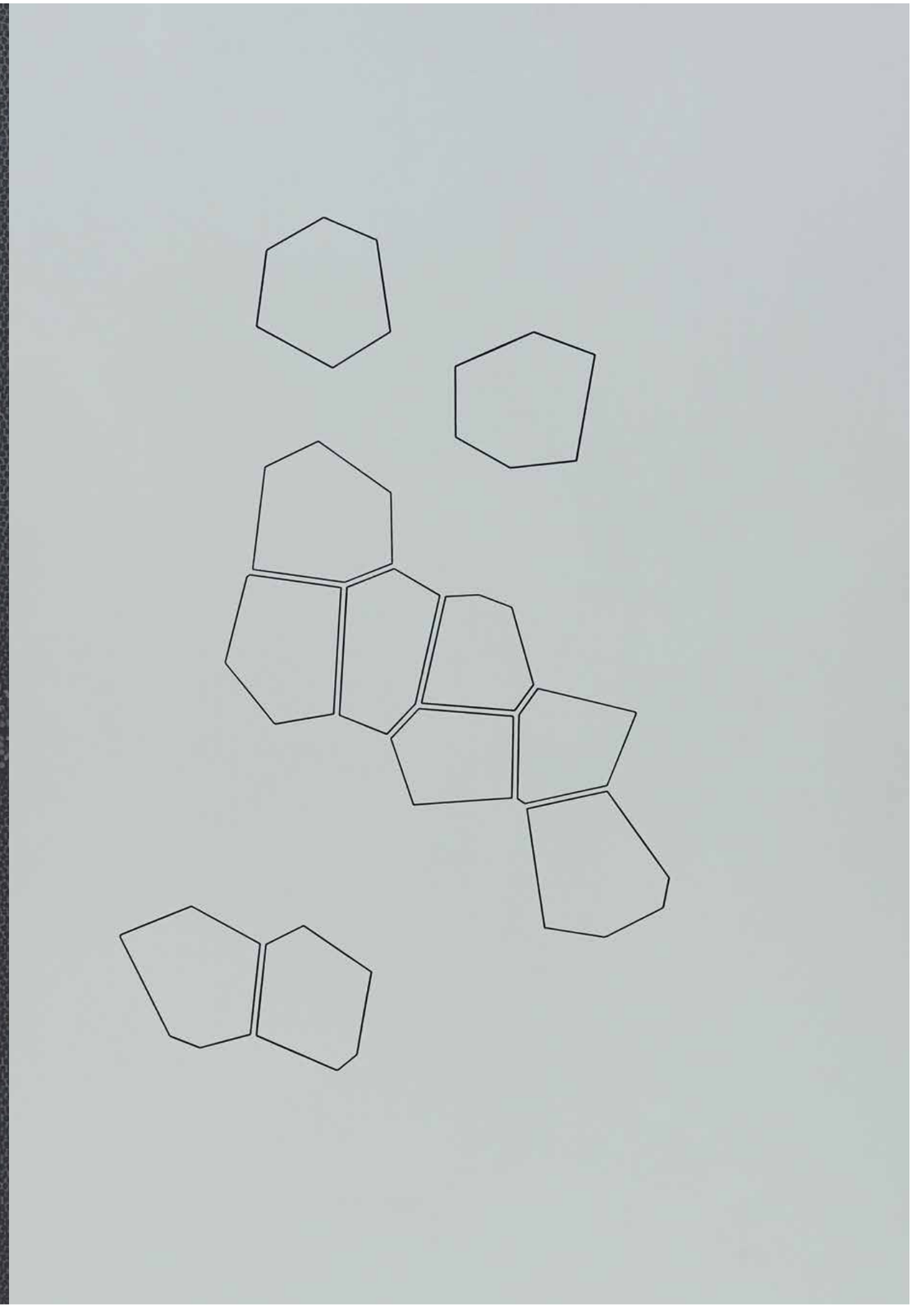


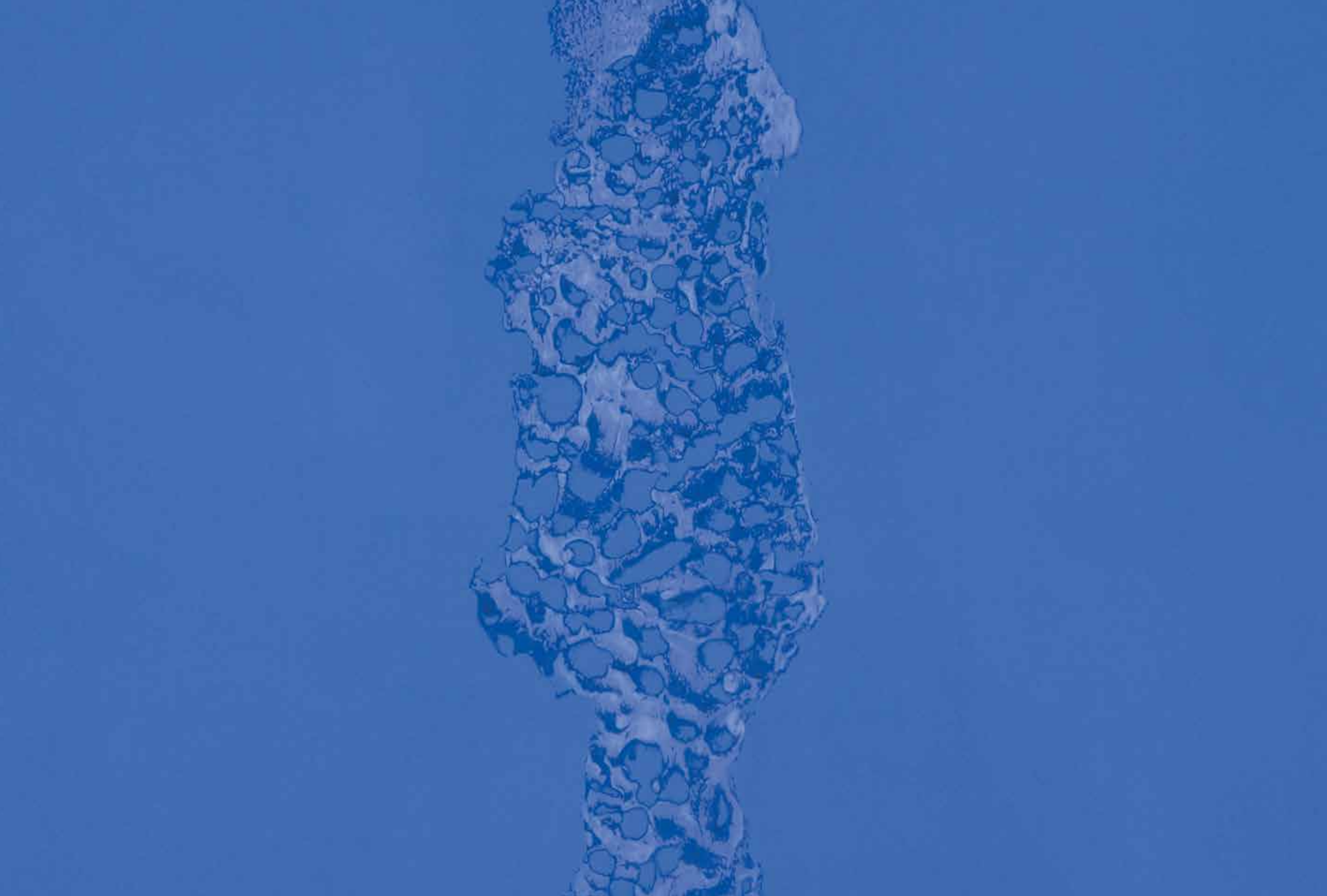


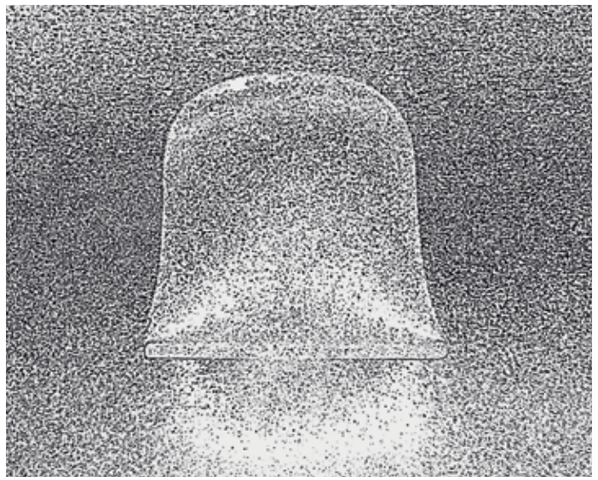


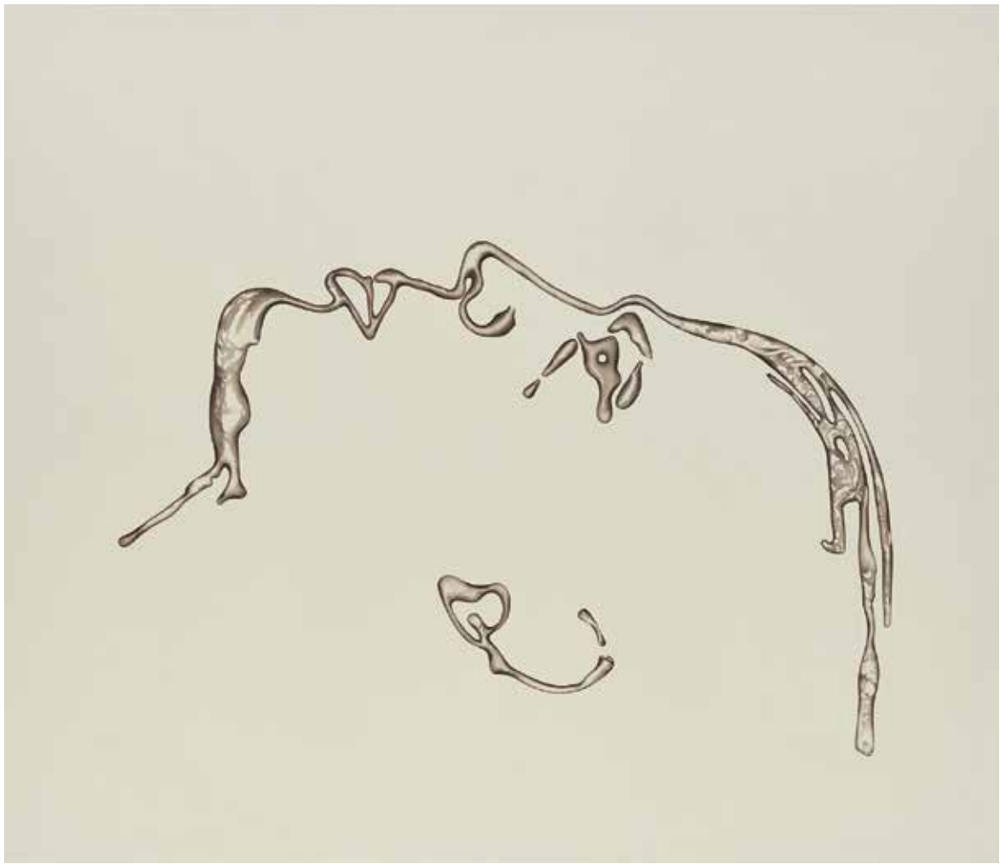


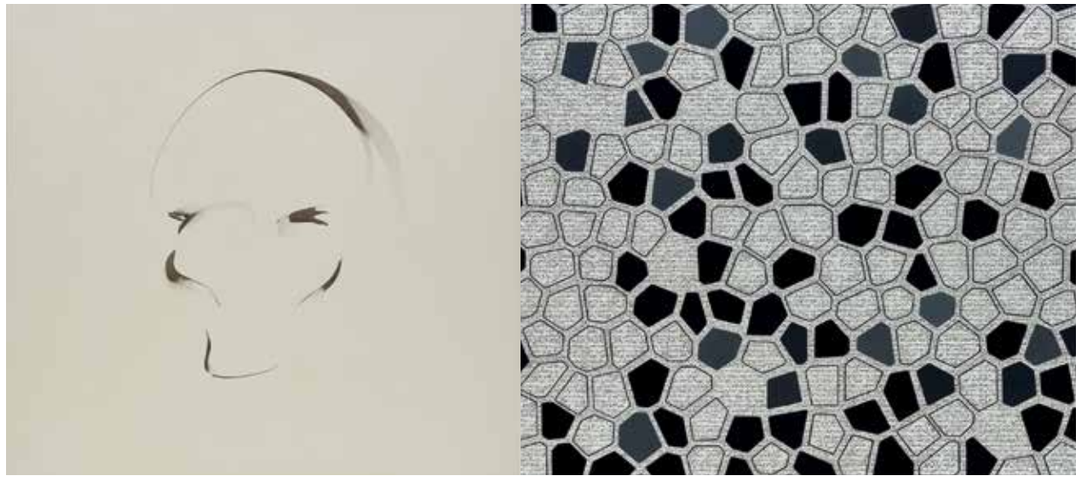


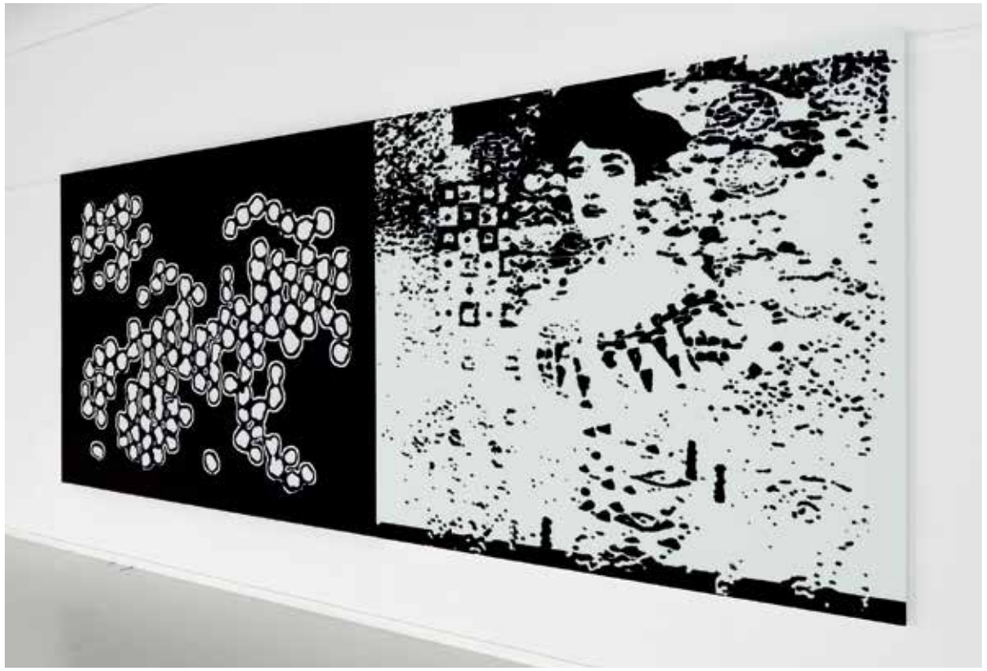


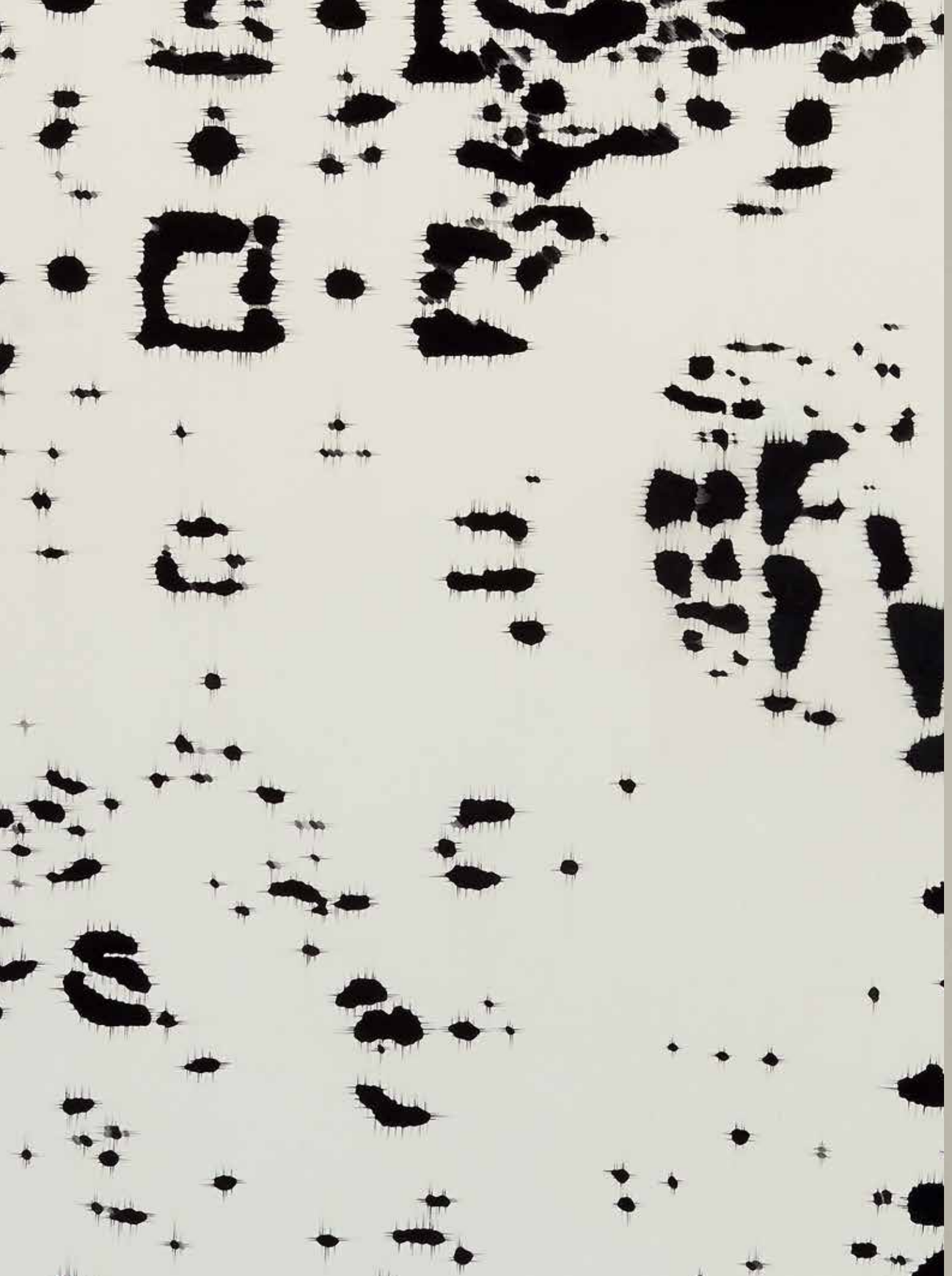


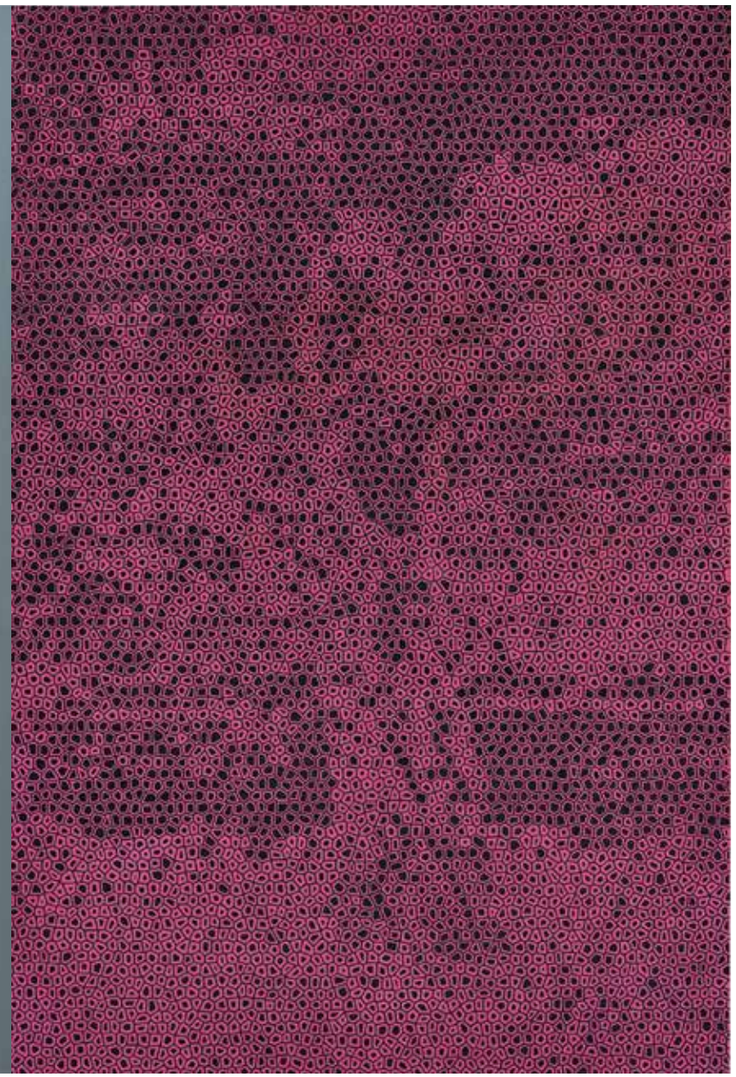


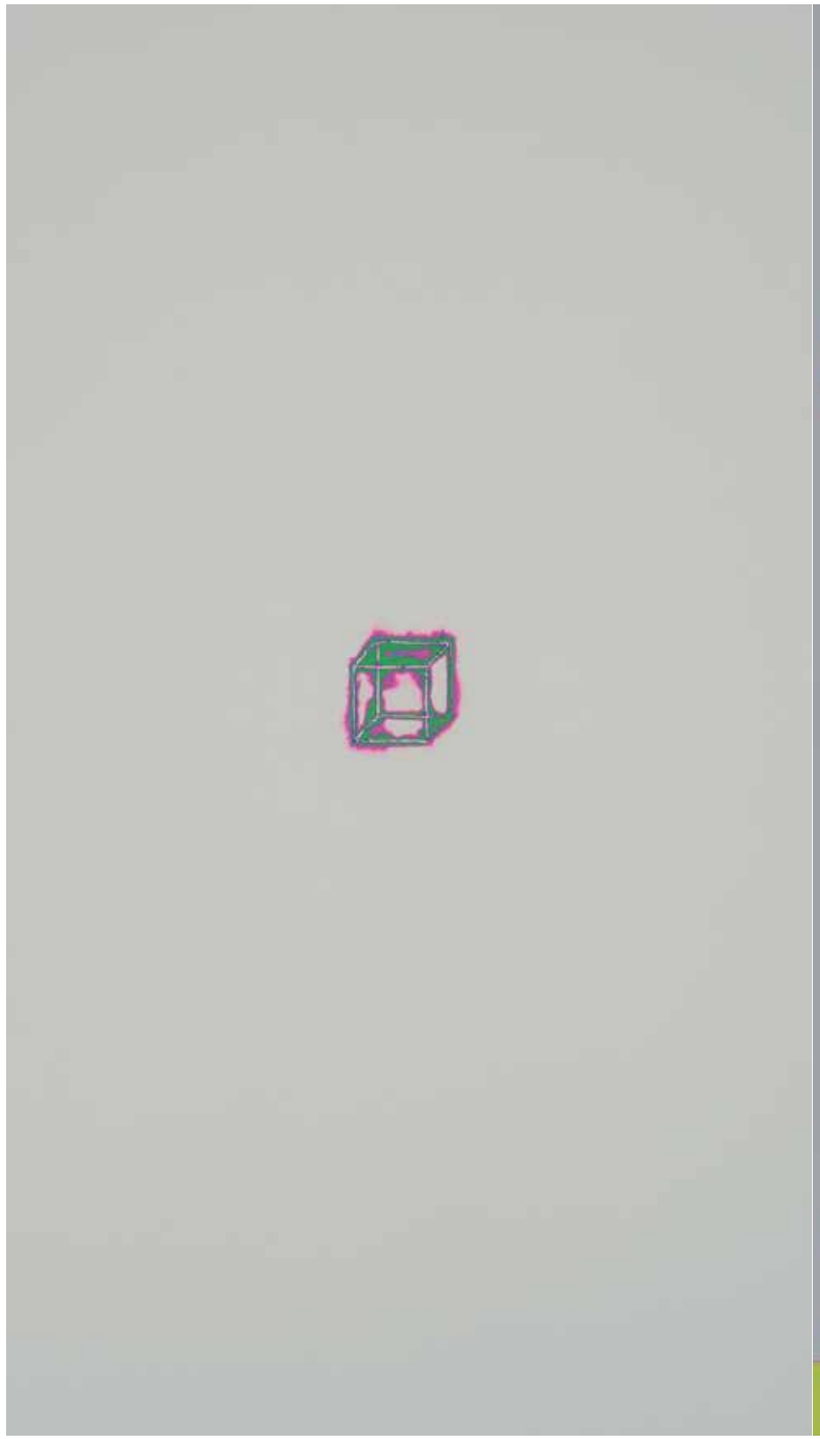


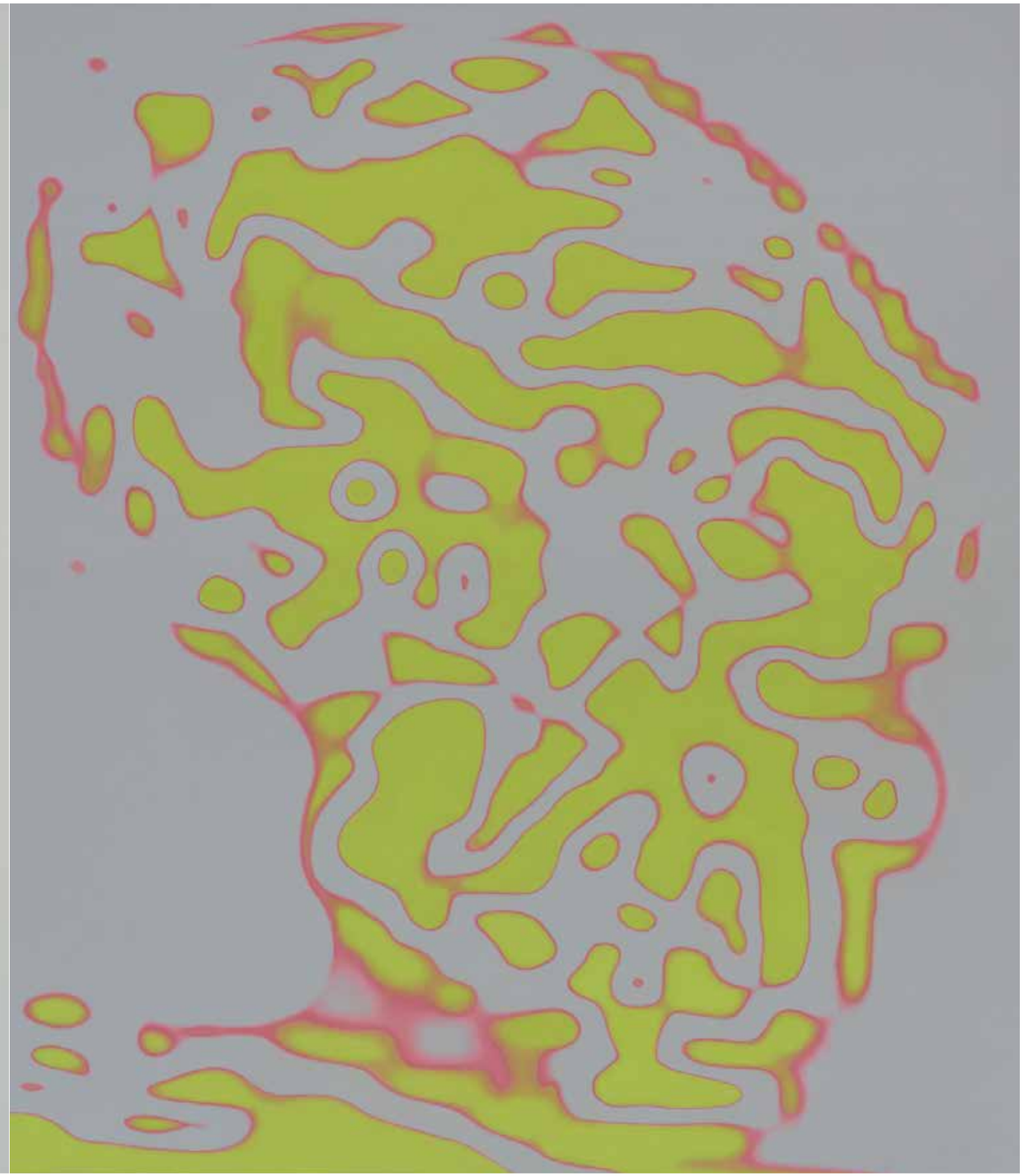


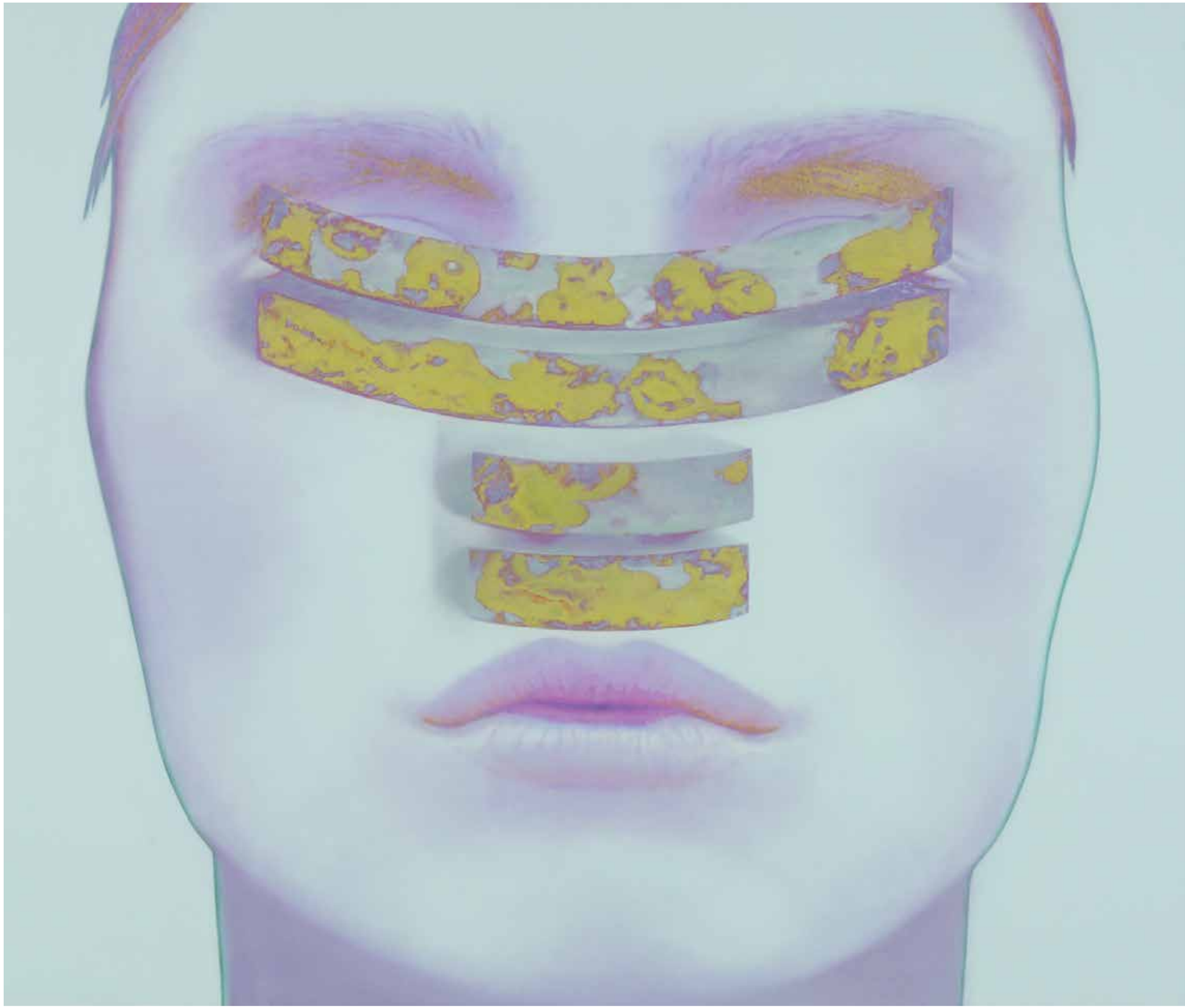


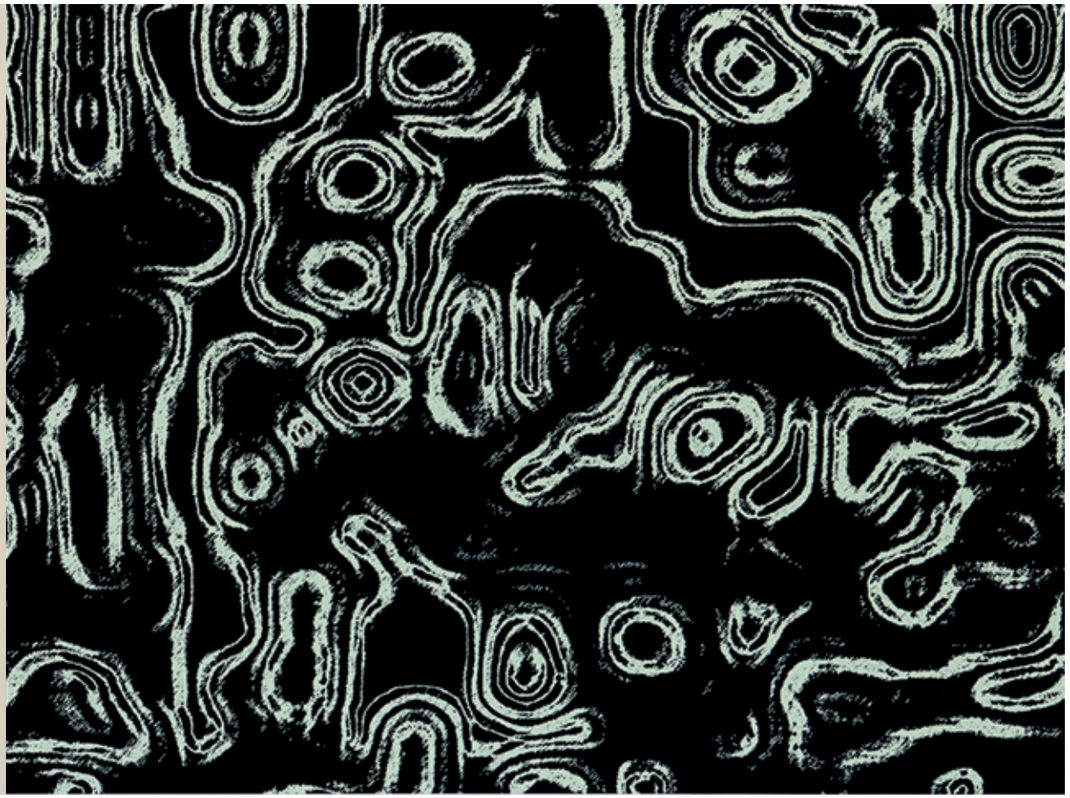


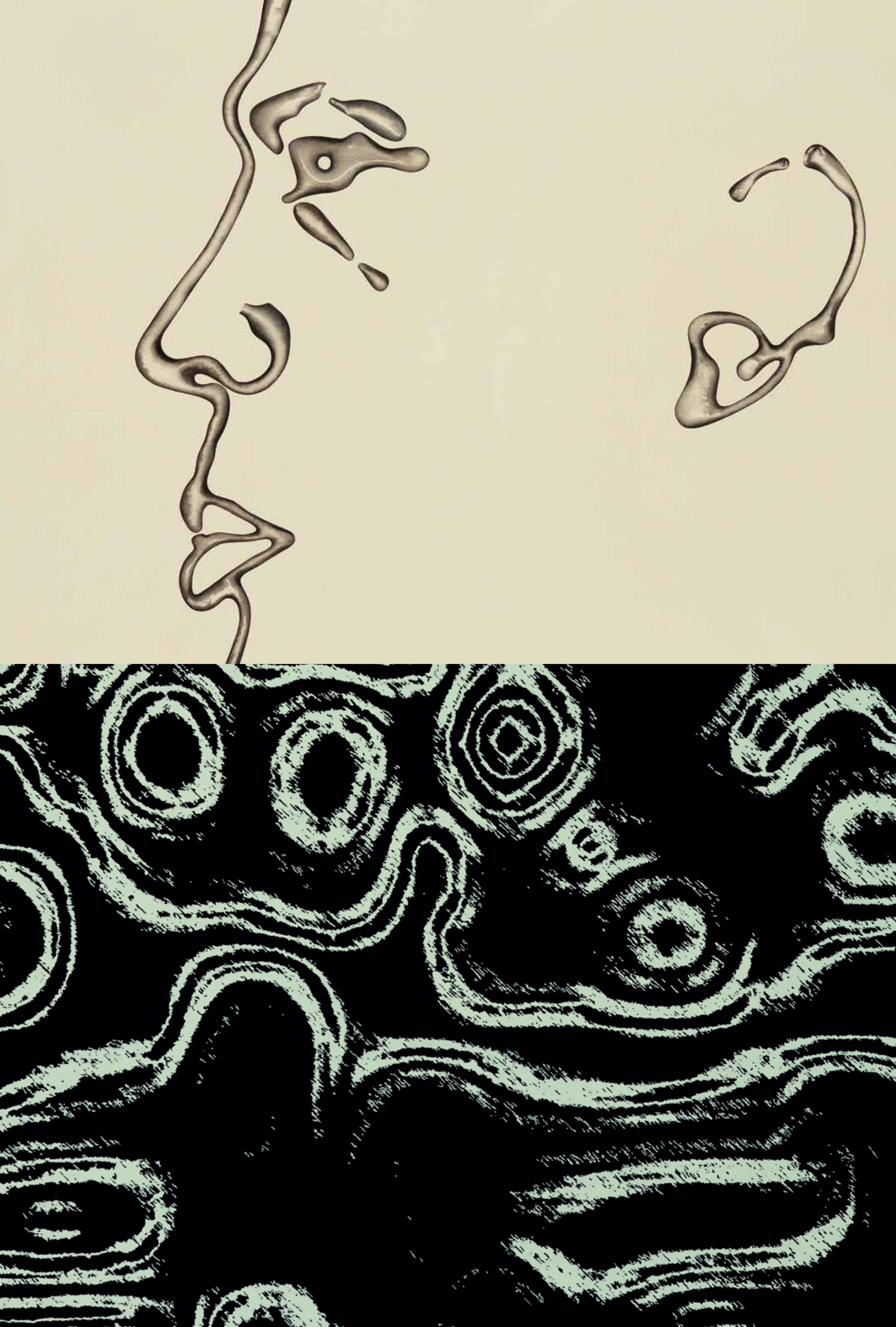


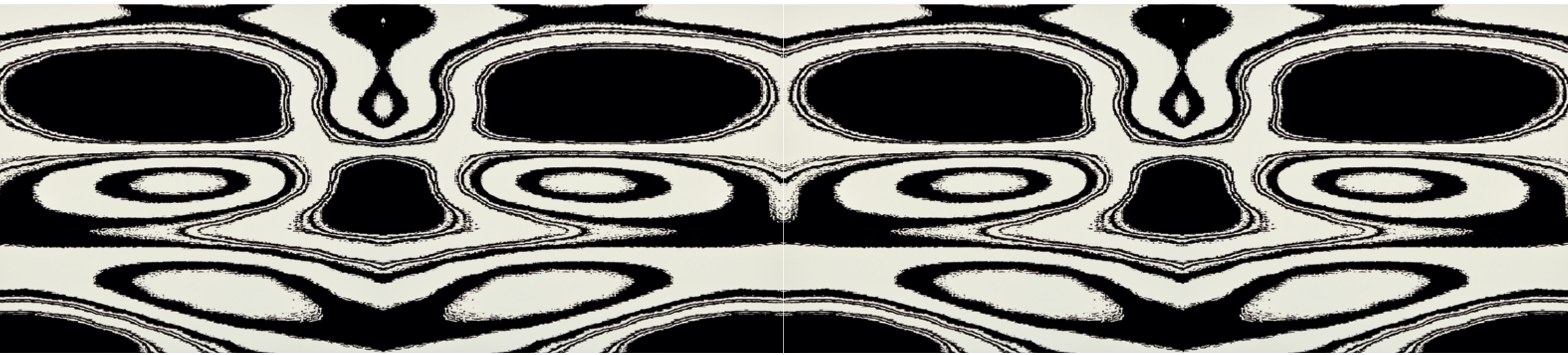


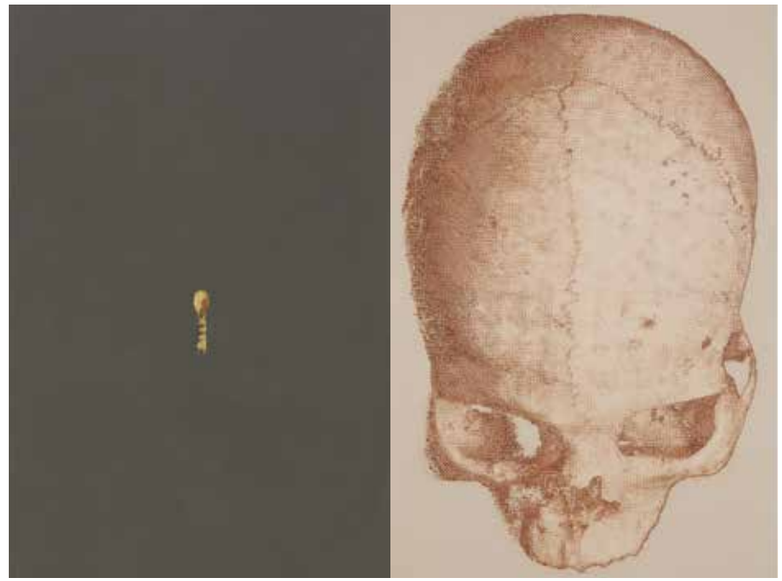












IDENTIFICATION OF AN ABSENTEE: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN HENRI BARANDE AND ROMARIC SULGER-BÜEL

Romaric Sulger-Büel: There is a tenuous yet essential link between the places of your childhood and your work today, work that's hardly ever been shown. Do you fear that showing it would alter its spirit? It seems as though you've shut yourself behind a wall of silence. Should the silence be broken? I've tried to persuade you, but then I began to doubt: was I moving away from your thought instead of getting closer? And was it perhaps important for you to remain indifferent, and happy to be left alone? Certainly I would have left you in peace if I hadn't feared your paintings, like your sculptures, would disappear. So I won't feel sorry, especially not in this workshop of yours, which makes me feel I've left the Earth. I still feel human and alive, but I find it hard to free myself from this 'elsewhere' you've created. And I can't help being surprised to find you so detached from your creations! Have you cast everything aside, including yourself? Doesn't an artist belong primarily to what he's created?

Henri Barande: A creator is always seeking a relationship of metaphysical freedom with his work – a distance that allows him, when necessary, to disown it painlessly. But before the work leaves him, it becomes strange to him. There's a text by Maurice Blanchot on this lovely paradox.[1] Didn't you once write to me – worried perhaps that I might make it disappear – to say that it was already out of my hands? If a work no longer belongs to its creator, how does he belong to it? All creation involves a self-relinquishment, for a creator always hopes to free himself from himself. His real wish is to hide or even disappear as his work emerges.

Romaric Sulger-Büel: In order to be perceived, isn't the work of art subject to the same wish, to be free from its creator?
Henri Barande: That which is most ardently awaited won't come. Neither meaning nor the absolute. This expectation is expressed very well by Rilke, I think: 'What meaning would we have if the one for whom we are longing has already existed?'[2] That's such a lovely, entrancing thought: you can't expect an absolute that comes from the past. And if an absolute appeared to us in the future, we would somehow or other be its creators. Then the absolute wouldn't be what we were expecting. The only thing that can console us for what's expected but doesn't come is the image of what's coming and is unexpected. That's why art is all future, because it leaves us expecting something new, only to disappoint us with the absence of the absolute, but at the same time giving us pleasure. The 'presence' of the work, being the sole representation of this non-absolute world, can only be liberated from its creator.

Doesn't Hegel suggest the opposite when he writes, 'Art is … for us a thing of the past'?[3]
Curiously, for Hegel art is an activity converted to humanism as if to a new religion, with an aesthetic of guidance and compassion. For Adorno, art is close to people by virtue of its inhumanity towards them. For Jean-François Lyotard, art may even be inhabited by the inhuman. Whether too human or not human enough, art will always sit in the dock. You can accuse it of hideous crimes, but it will find no reason to justify itself. Why should it defend itself? Art isn't subject to the values it's supposed to serve – it never has been. Whereas man has often set up courts and scaffolds before turning away with a feeling of rejection or loathing.

When grappling with artistic freedom, some people, including the great, have been baffled. In his text on Michelangelo's *Moses*, Freud provides an interpretation that restores art to the past.[4] He sees in the great sculpture an illustration from the Bible: Moses comes down from Mount Sinai, furious with the unbridled sexuality of his people. Freud, so quick to make a sexual connection, suppresses one proof: in the sculpture, Moses has the characteristics of a faun – the shape and position of his legs, the features of his face, the little horns on his head. Regardless of the translation of the Hebrew QRN (*qaran*), these horns conveniently replace those of the Apis bull-god that is the origin of the golden calf.

The little church in Rome that houses the tomb of Pope Julius II also houses a Moses who is faun-like. What's more, while one hand sensuously strokes his beard, the other is resting on his genitals. Under the influence of a strong emotion, his arms can no longer hold the commandments. Is he in the grip of desire? Furious because unable to control it? Or has he already yielded to it? Michelangelo's genius shows us a Moses subject to the imperious demands of his sexuality. He's not represented in the traditional way as relating to the body of the 'other', but to his own body. This makes the work eminently modern. Were the popes of the time fooled? Probably not entirely. Freud wasn't ready to take such a lesson from such a work. And this applies to society in general, satisfied with a version that matches its virtual idea of the world.

Art consists of the celebration of its own freedom. It gives itself to whoever accepts it as it is, and not to others, be they Hegel or Freud.

Your thought is a highly sophisticated engine for your work. It is prolific, and because it's so carefully marshalled, more subversive than you're ready to admit. It's made up of passages arranged like doors opening onto other doors that are themselves about to open. Can you imagine one day making their interpretation tolerable?
So reality can only be interpreted in a way that makes it tolerable? Can you imagine Kandinsky using that as a reason to abandon his colour theory? Joyce to abandon *Finnegan's Wake*? Lautréamont his *Chants de Maldoror*, Nietzsche *Zarathustra*? Would *L'Âge d'or* ever have come to the cinema screen? Or the most recent films of David Lynch?

Have you no indulgence for someone who wants to discover you? Can't you help people understand your work in all its different expressions? Do people have to agree to follow you without your telling them how you got where you are today?
For anyone who wants to discover, what better way to do so than to open his mind to resolute acceptance, as proposed by Heidegger? There's an echo of this in Rilke's poetry: 'When … shall we at last be open and receivers?'[5] All the artist is suggesting is that people open themselves up to this gift of infinite reception. To free oneself and open up to the invisible, art suggests an experience nobody wants. So why demand another method? One that would be different from the work of art and therefore less true. I am well aware that men make their finest journeys in what's inauthentic, but do you think they'd accept this simulacrum the way they don't accept the work of art? Don't you hear them muttering, 'Yes, it's dead, but it's unfortunate, it's still moving'? Barthes writes, '[the artist] plays with signs as a conscious decoy, whose fascination he … wants to make others … understand.'[6] Might I myself be a sign? Within my own iconography, I couldn't be. To see properly, I suppose you need 'the gaze of him who does not cleave to himself, who cannot say "I", who am no one'.[7]

Dialogue between Henri Barande and Romaric Sulger-Büel

THIS NON-IDENTITY ALLOWED ME TO SEE MYSELF DIFFERENTLY AND PARTLY HELPED MAKE ME THE MAN I AM– CONSCIOUS, SEPARATE, ACCEPTING THIS GREAT SEPARATION.

It seems to me that this loss of identity in your life goes as far as a loss of name. Why have you connected 'life' and 'concept' so much?
On every anniversary of the death of my grandfather, I'd stand behind the stele, not facing it, to avoid the horror of seeing my own name on the tomb. We shared the same first name, the same identity. If you saw your name on a tomb, mightn't you imagine you were dead? Later I learned that my father's brother, who died at the age of seven, also had my first name. So my name was on a second tomb, somewhere near Oran. I had the identity of two dead people. So I refused to accept the name. In my mind I had no name, and I wasn't expecting one. I was relieved of the weight of a name, of the weight of death.

This non-identity allowed me to see myself differently and partly helped make me the man I am – conscious, separate, accepting this great separation. However, in 1980 I had resolved to return to Algiers. I'd decided to find the tomb and face it at last. At the cemetery I spent many fruitless hours trying to locate it. The following day also yielded nothing, so I told myself that my birth was buried and I needn't go on seeking it as if it were my own tomb, I should just leave it buried there like an angel in the darkness. But I still had to take a name for administrative purposes. I took that of my maternal grandmother, thus leaving the male world and joining the female. I was glad that fate didn't make the name more a part of me, for I still wanted to isolate myself. There was no need for the name, since I existed without it.

I've always had an affinity with unidentifiable matter itself – sand on the beach, a stone on the ground. No territory was closer to me than this nameless space. I experienced reality that wasn't preceded by a name, transfigured by it or reduced to a specific meaning. Names and meanings are lost in a space belonging only to me. Sense perception takes the place of reality. In the course of these successive absences, I've preserved myself from the human and its grip on me, which affects me too strongly.

That last aspect doesn't disturb me, but I'm still concerned that there will be nothing left of you. I thought your archives were better arranged than mine, but I notice the tombs have engulfed a lot of information, as well as a fascinating number of objects. The 'traces' are all the harder to find because you are at the centre of the elaboration of the loss. That's what you're working towards – loss of object, loss of name, loss of meaning, not to mention the loss of any sense of time, since you refuse to sign and date your works. If these elements weren't excluded from your work, how would they negate it?
Do you suppose what's in store for us is anything other than disappearance, non-recognition, non-recognisability? What artist truly has any illusions about his work? Could such a work even be started? Loss, disappearing, is a means for releasing tumult, and the act of destroying something has always seemed to me as productive and as necessary to the world as the act of creation. Anyway, how can you say an item is destroyed, has vanished for good, if you don't know where

or how it might reappear? Destruction and loss are ways of interiorising, fertilising the terra incognita, of drawing a little closer to the mystery and meaning of manifestation. It's true that the violence of the destruction worries those close to one, because they think the item is gone forever. But when the thing is created, it's not a given that it belongs to the world. Even through its dark side, it has no debts to call in. For my part, I grant it only the debt of existence, which it pays by disappearing.

You're in a state of denial, and I predict you always will be. For you, denial was 'the' revelation. What comes after is just the demanding, essential, poetic and metaphorical translation of that revelation: the five-year-old child knew this. And he's been reviewing this knowledge ever since, according to a story that isn't really his.

I seem to recall Jean-François Lyotard saying in one of his texts that he understood as a child that adults couldn't teach him anything. Even before he meets any great artists, the child understands what's going on around him. He asks questions that adults won't ask, or rarely. The child knows there's no answer to his question except the improvised, often false answer provided by an adult.

I've often heard that the world of the artist is in league with the world of the child. But childhood lacks two elements essential to creativity: independence and free access to sexuality. The artist opens up a space that belongs to neither adult nor child. But it's around the age of five that the mind begins to scoff at the world. There's a wonderful text by Hokusai on age and ages.[8] Many artists and writers say they were five when they realised they were different. As for me, the first time I felt a sense of separation was at the age of three. Some members of the family were boiling a lobster. I remember pushing open the kitchen door, curious about the terrible noise the animal was making, and I suddenly had the sensation of being alone. I mean, alone in perceiving the scene in its entirety. Later we moved from Morocco to Tunis, when I was five. My life there was the start of a larger and more definitive separation.

The visible medium is certainly the refusal, but it's structured around an infinite plan for recomposition, even though, helped by the same prayer, I have always returned to the real world from which I come.

Are you sure you come from nowhere? Strangely enough, I have the feeling you come from the land of certainty. Shattered certainties that remain the death of certainties.

Doesn't art appeal enough to the collapse of these worlds? Worlds where you fear they will resurface in the new clothes of cynical certainty of certainty and in a place where 'not thinking' would be neither innocent nor sacrilegious? Society repulses doubt, considering it too corrosive for its foundations, but doubt is the jewel that art carries within itself. Doubt also acts on us as truth, because it allows us to reach and then surpass all our resurrections. And it only assails us in passing.

Dialogue between Henri Barande and Romaric Sulger-Büel

THE HIJACKING OF OBJECTS DIDN'T BEGIN WITH MARCEL DUCHAMP, NOR DID SURREALISM BEGIN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

How are art and thought connected?

Art remains an experience of thought. Thought returns art to its proper domain, that of liking experience for itself, at the risk of learning only from experience, at the risk of travelling towards one's own liberation. Furthermore, movements in art often precede movements in thought.

Beyond your own story, I know something about your relationship with history. I wonder if you could have done this work without your knowledge and love of different cultures and their histories?

Part of creativity draws on culture, and for the making of art offers itself as memory. But the most precious part of creativity is against any form of note-taking or reminiscence. It sees itself as a liberated experience, detached from any referent, distanced from all culture. A true path gives entry to oblivion. Memory is hushed and returns to the deepest, oldest strata, stays there for a while in the form of foundations, then disappears. It's true, isn't it, that we should 'let [ourselves] be borne on by the force of any living life, forgetfulness'?[9]

Finding myself at the age of five on the actual site of ancient Carthage allowed me to say prayers different from those learned from my parents. Our house was closest to the ruins, and I loved playing among the Phoenician tombs with friends my own age, who were all Arab.

What I suddenly began modelling with was bread. I'd hold it and press it, the warmth of my hands softening it, and I would mix it with sand from the beach, with earth, salt or seaweed. It was irresistible. Before it even got to the table, any bread was robbed of its crumb, leaving only the crust. Of necessity, a family pact was sealed over the word 'mania', for better or worse. Over this necessity hung a heavy silence that never lifted.

Those fragments of suppressed power, formed by my fingers or picked up from the ground as my eye spied them, were the same shape as the faces painted on Phoenician necklaces. What was fascinating about the fragments I made was that they were haphazard, and often more archaic than the shapes I had access to. As if my actions were excavations, with access to the beginning, reinventing the source, the 'birth'.

Antiquity is still part of my work today. I'm immensely happy when I see its power. It's exhilarating, I suppose. Antiquity is one of the reasons for my animal desire for 'anonymity', 'namelessness'. What comes out of the ground belongs to everyone, and cannot have a name. In this spirit I studied and loved ancient cultures. But if your question implies the existence of foundations, I can be fairly sure I haven't seen any. Art history, unlike art, which can do without it, cannot choose to overlook 'knowledge'. Yet this history feeds on its own ignorance. The hijacking of objects didn't begin with Marcel Duchamp, nor did Surrealism begin in the twentieth century. Instead of cordoning off knowledge and then reinstating it via critical studies, I wanted to explore my own strangeness, to recognise it as a language. Although unintelligible and not my mother tongue, still it was there to be experienced. Strangeness persisted when I was arranging writing, drawings and objects in the same circle of incomprehension. Strangeness was always

WHAT COMES FROM THE UNCONSCIOUS ALWAYS BURSTS INTO REALITY IN A BRUTAL WAY. IT IS TRUE THAT MY WORKS ARE BORN WITH THE METAPHYSICAL INTENTION OF DENYING THEIR OWN HISTORY, TO BE LOST IN THE TIME AND CHAOS OF JUXTAPOSITION.

at the heart of the fragment. I still want to advance – within my own questioning – via this glyphic language.

Have I ever asked to be comforted because of what I am? Yes, I've asked writers. And then artists. One day my strangeness was capable of being shared with theirs. I joined the dance – shall I call it 'fraternity'? The original prayer, addressed to myself, was never, as a creator, to enter the void of what appeared to me. Such a request was destined for that time of my life.

When we're confronted with this monolithic, horizontal juxtaposition of your canvases, each measuring 2.15 metres in height, the impression one gets is of an 'elsewhere' that would find its rightful place if the ground swallowed it up. What strange visitor are you to open such an abyss at our feet?

In one sense, the 'time' that emerges from this juxtaposition might be today, in as much as it results from a separation from itself. But it might also be a time that doesn't exist. Originally, the 'open' of this time-tomb was in a time that doesn't exist, inaccessible, a time consumed and transfigured in space. But in the hypothesis of the 'open', in a time to come, one question remains: if I discover it in the year 7777, is it I who directed the archaeologists towards the site? To open it now would forbid me to open it in thought. If the strangeness perceived by today's viewer is his predestined response, I can only deplore that the strangeness isn't without a name, isn't by a creator who has gone, or, better, isn't without a creator in the first place. Although I must concede that this sensitive, original vibration, largely conceptualised since then, gradually emptied itself of its substance so it couldn't be brought to fruition in the 'open' of today. Nor do I mind admitting that this kind of reserve would be meaningless if maintained. But the mind stays in the 'open' of this nameless time-tomb, in a time that isn't.

Do you think such a place can be imagined outside the 'Poem'?

What comes from the unconscious always bursts into reality in a brutal way. It is true that my works are born with the metaphysical intention of denying their own history, to be lost in the time and chaos of juxtaposition. Because the works are in no particular order, hung at random, they tend towards abstraction, irradiating solely through the absence of meaning. What you'd normally recognise as a painting is here at once perceived as a world of signs. If they are presented in large numbers and in a way inaccessible to understanding, the signs offer themselves to us as forbidden fruit: the delicious collapse of the symbolic. Like any text in contact with a different imagination or culture, living or dead, these glyphs expose the inert matter of this labyrinthine text to interpretation and hence the possibility of giving life and hope to the poem, or – let's go mad here – to the ultimate possibility of making it universal and sacred. Why not in a place that belongs to no one, whose horizon has found a path to this place to which I return every day?

This place that beckons you, and to which you beckon, might it be a tomb?

No reader has access to a reading-room of such horizontality, unless to profane it. Moreover, the signs in this place are free of any meaning, of the need to expiate it solely for writing and thought to continue. This a-symbolic recognition of the sign is both mythological and aesthetic. And just as Surrealism sought to do, this recognition marks a desire to commune with the non-living, and – let's be clear – that's a pagan desire. So one could see the receptacle of this codex as a hypogeum to be deciphered in a perceptible afterlife. The tomb is a sign of the sign, and is in perfect accord with the metaphysical quest and the desire for resurrection. As Nietzsche reminds us in *Zarathustra*: 'only where there are graves are there resurrections.'[10] What sign wouldn't like to be a tomb if life could thereby be renewed? Within the ghostly matter of these semata there subsist, when they return to life, traces of a struggle between the living and the non-living, but only the artist can decide when to cry out: 'The sign is alive.' While the reason for any work is to approach the living sign, it doesn't mean artists can therefore believe it of this world – or even of the other world. Where is it then? So we go back to the first question: what place are we talking about? Still no answer. Poets have turned this interior, enclosed world, the supposed tomb, into an open, infinite space, and the only ones who can enter it are the ones who know it to be inhabited.

Do the artists' cries have anything to do with those we've been hearing for two thousand years for the resurrection of Christ?

The relationship of freedom between art and reality is stifled by the pious, enclosed in a logic of revealed truth. Also, art is martyred in the world every day, like freedom perhaps, but worse. Art will always be a bedrock of hope, in competition with Moses and at loggerheads with all forms of religion and tyranny, since the hope they want to see spring up in people's hearts is the disputed territory. That's the reason for its martyrdom.

Yet Judaeo-Christian culture cannot ignore the real roots of its certainties: in the civilisation of ancient Egypt, before Moses, before Jesus, a dying person hoping for life after death would recite to Osiris:

I have not killed,
I have not stolen,
I have not slept with my neighbour's wife,
I have not blasphemed.

This negative confession to Osiris, a prelude to the Tablets of Stone, didn't include the commandment featured in Exodus, prohibiting the making of idols, which stemmed from fear of any life or presence that might emanate from them. But this commandment, more than the others, proved useless. It neither prevented superstition from gaining a foothold within religion, nor art from persisting in exploring the invisible.

What do you regard as the routes for gaining access to spirituality?

Man thinks he was created in the image of God. Does he imagine that an animal, because it lacks a human face, has less reason to hope and despair? The Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, an immense bird, believed he was a god until the day when a demon held a mirror up to him, showing that he had a face. Terrified to discover he was a human being, he fled and never came back.

I always feel the animal's view of the world is close to mine, especially when through good luck, like any artist, I become for a brief moment like 'water in water'.[11] Only what fully engages all my senses can bring forth what is made to emanate from my mind. Do we really think the artist has left the human species the instant he leaves the world of certainties, the world that links all memories? He has simply made his way along a different, fragile track, a flashing path where there's no longer any need to erect an altar of the senses. Plunged into autism, animals have marked the ground before us with their tracks. Who knows that they don't see beauty in the foliage of the trees at sundown?

Not many people in despair can, as you do, find so many little joys, like so many pretty stones gathered on the steep and dangerous road that runs alongside madness.

Madness? I have suffered from it, but especially since it wasn't mine. I experienced it via someone close to me. Someone subjected to the Calvary of undignified treatments as well as the illness itself. What comforts a mind that's slipping away is knowing, in lucid moments, that death is more dignified, and hoping it will come soon to end the hell. When the mind is under attack, it protects itself with delirium, the final force. Thus we are tempted – wrongly – to protect it from itself. How can one receive such pure distress, reassure, put out the light of such a fire? Not being able to share this abyss was a way of experiencing a beginning: the idea of despair, its awakening, came to me like that.

In this protective gesture with respect to the deranged mind, of the animal world, non-living, do you perceive the call of something sacred?
Poets find the sacred in the tiniest particle of matter. They bring it forth at every moment from the tomb of its origins: from the non-living, the non-human. And a sacredness born of this 'nothing' is eminently sacrilegious. And the call of the sacred vanishes in the abyss of the Poem. Apart from that, the protective action you call mine, perhaps it should be equated with the obsession I've always had with isolating myself. As if, having sworn to disregard the call, to compensate for the disappearance, my absence, I had to allow myself a little humanity. I think that's how I do it.

Introspection, your own body, doesn't stop you from thinking of the body of the other, to be concerned for it.
You're right. I'm a bit tired. I'm a very humane human.

Despite the importance of your work in your life, there's always that concern for others. I think this preoccupation is an integral part of your work.
Our body, you know, is shorn of everything but grace…

Instead of making fun of it, talk to me about grace. Are there chosen people?
Among those who are 'chosen' by fortune, as we all are, I think it's the innocent who have received grace. Who are the innocent? It resides solely in the heart of those chosen: the pure at heart don't know that they are pure. This does away with many claims. On the other hand, the grotesque laughs at the pure but denies being grotesque. Doesn't that apply to the whole planet? Of all the many magnificent works that show us the pure at heart, *The Idiot* is probably the most accomplished, along with *Théorème*, I suppose. I'm laughing at myself, for I cannot laugh at the innocent.

One gets the feeling that things take life in you and take on immense proportions in your thought. I've already told you that when I was a child, out there on the edge of the land where French thrived, up there in the Vosges, in the mountains with the famous 'blue line', I often had the strange feeling I was reliving my birth in that region so close to Germany and Switzerland, but with one doubt: was I really French? Now I see in that doubt an insane will to be like the others, to merge with their history. As if my Vosges and Swiss origins posed a danger that I didn't belong to anyone, or that everyone would abandon me. Since then I've lived abroad, like you. From there, France was seen as through a prism, making it easier to tolerate.
The diverse cultures of the Maghreb, where my family had lived for three generations, were one day brutally and randomly separated, like a veil being torn apart. No one culture belonged to me enough for me to feel I completely belonged to it. And like you, I'm a mixture, with all the related uncertainty. Moving away

I THINK THE SECRET THAT MAN IS CONSTANTLY SEEKING FROM OTHERS IS ACTUALLY INSIDE HIMSELF.

at seventeen, as I did, was a banishment. Those of European origin were forced to leave their country under circumstances we all know about, with no hope of ever returning. Now, when I pass a foreigner in the street, I always wonder where he's from and if, like me, he's waiting for a sign that he should return, or if he's hoping to forget it at last. Where will he die, this stranger who is me? Can he die? Nothing is either real or palpable in this pain that is always yet to come.

Is that why you turned from a forced to a voluntary exile?
Do you recall what Dante said about exile? 'You shall prove that you cannot leave the trace of one's steps on a path that is not one's own.'[12] Also, rather than accepting myself as an immigrant in France, a country people said was mine, I wisely chose to leave it. I've lived in Switzerland for 27 years now. It's a country where you're still entitled to feel like a foreigner, and to be free to feel like that. I consider myself a French-speaking stateless person.

Could you consider my question about exile as being about that other exile, the interior exile?
It's natural to look within for nourishment. As Rilke says, 'Every artist is born abroad … and his home is nowhere but within himself.'[13] It's a paradox, but isolation forges a close link with that which one is fleeing. The work of art depends on the degree of fusion with reality revisited in solitude – as long as it's the solitude of the ascetic: depending on the work, either the sublime or the abysmal. Hence Bataille's beloved vertigo of the conscience. But its weakness is that any path from isolation to reality wants to be acknowledged as it looks itself to acknowledge reality, believing that's the way to force entry into its 'inaccessible'.

I know you as someone profoundly estranged from the world, and you're estranged from your past, but also from posterity. Aren't you ultimately estranged from yourself? You're a profoundly subversive person, as I've said to you before, and to my mind that means you're someone nobody was expecting. But were you expecting it?
Fragility was my only true happiness and the sole territory I've ever occupied. Isn't the denial of self the worst of all denials? What's more, I've always remained true to myself, even at the worst moments, because I've always thought I mustn't expect anything in return. To protect myself I made up my own rules, which I was sure would lead me to disaster. I'd never have to obey them. I could never have taken an order without hating it and wanting to kill whoever gave it. I admit that sometimes the pain and permanence seemed close to death. It's a story that should have ended badly. I've never been fooled, and I've never imagined surviving. The only thing that saved me was the unlimited love I received. I've always been loved. And others have always wanted me to love them. It's been a joy to be loved the way I have.

To answer your question, I feel unique in the sense that, like everyone, I have the duty to believe myself so to be. After all, aren't we all bathed in the blood of others?

Is there a place on this earth that you can 'inhabit', a place where you could move around without infecting us or being infected by us?
My first wife said I was incapable of staying on the ground, that I was always taking off. During the first few years of our life together Anne feared I might suddenly vanish. Recently, a neighbour said to me: 'Henri, you've already left us.' Is it a new illness? Can anyone really think it's the only one in the world? Isn't it palpitating, ready to rise up in the heart of every man? After all, must we refer to any awakening or strangeness as an epidemic or fresh catastrophe? Schiller spoke about his talks with Goethe, saying, 'Each of us received something he didn't have, and gave something in return.'[14] But it was tuberculosis that Schiller gave his friend Novalis, who died of it at the age of 29. Can we always be sure of what we give in exchange for what we receive? Should I seriously be worried about being infectious? Haven't you already been contaminated? Aren't all of us contagious?

One of the characters in Thomas Bernhard's play Heldenplatz *says this: 'Wherever you go, today's world is nothing but a world of stupidity from one end to the other.'[15] For him, his country is 'nothing but a stage where everything is on its way to putrefaction, death, and figuration dug into the hatred of itself'. Austria was the laboratory of a monster who would turn the world into a monstrous and ugly Greater Austria, in which wallow 'the disaster of thought, the spinelessness of politicians, and the ignominy of newspapers'. So is Austria just an allegory to tell us that Great Britain, the United States and France and all the rest are now nothing more than 'a world of stupidity'?*
If there's no longer a 'here', should we then go looking for an 'elsewhere'? It's the absence of a 'here', it seems, that provokes such a powerful revival of fanaticism. It seems everyone should account for their lives in a 'here' experienced as the beyond of all possible 'elsewheres'. Hence the censorship man practises on his own brain. Should we not put the words violence, hate and execution in place of the word 'stupidity'? And isn't our intolerance of the intolerable a delicious evil that isolates us?

You have given us art that has its own undivided autonomy: autonomy in the face of its contemporary surroundings, autonomy in the face of the everyday world, which leads me to believe you will certainly be 'read', and finally autonomy faced with yourself, the artist, whatever you may say. In a way, haven't you got what you want? Let me be blunt: what more do you want? Are you already far, far away, where no one is expecting you?
Like any artist, like any man, I suppose, I don't know what's coming tomorrow, for I have no trouble admitting I have no idea what's going on today. What we think we've attained with

difficulty is about to collapse at any moment, and life is ready to be re-written on pain of death. In one sense, I might be able not to be where I'm expected, being in ignorance of the place and of others' expectations. I wisely expect nothing from others, so why should they expect something from me that I know nothing about? I think the secret that man is constantly seeking from others is actually inside himself.

The work is there, with an unstoppable momentum. Does it know where it's going? It murmurs 'nothing' and 'nowhere'. Despite myself I'm dragged into the realm of possibilities, and like all artists I experience the limit as something metaphysical. If it's night, it's night, I can't help it! Can the sign be buried alive? Who could reproach me? You're witness that I haven't alienated anyone, at least none that were available. Should I alienate the horizon? I'm still decidedly in this retreat.

You link the opposites gently before brutally tearing them apart. Don't you feel like a bow stretched between opposites, as Heraclitus was? And always to be drifting in the permanence of the sign-change!
Your exasperation makes me laugh, which is surprising given the occasion. But we're all waiting for humour, I think. Laughter is the best medicine. Isn't our tension, which you reproach me for, the result of our expecting a laugh that may never come? We've often talked about it in relation to cartoons. They contain an expression of the human spirit and are one of the last spaces for freedom of expression. I love Reiser, Cabu, Wolinski and many others. I remember Wolinski's cartoon of a psychiatric institution for the sound of mind. I still find that very funny.

Laughter doesn't care where it comes from – the tragic, the sublime, the obscene. But not all laughter is welcome. It depends on who's laughing. There's stupid laughter and cruel laughter. Well, that's the case for any laughter one doesn't share. I'd like to quote fragment 124 from Heraclitus: 'The most beautiful universe is a heap of dung spread out at random.' I'd love to be Heraclitus.

David Galloway writes that you're a magician. I know that a lot of people who meet you think of you as an alchemist with certain powers. Is witchcraft involved?
In giving itself freely, art escapes from the entire esoteric process. The artist, of his own free will and eschewing initiation rituals, seizes the real to discover his freedom. He only admits to one power: to enchant, or rather to disenchant. And no creative strength will ever come about from any sort of concealment. We might be surprised that art can engender and liberate to this irrational extent, but let's not disregard the journey every artist makes to the heart of the crisis of Reason. The marvellous is born less from the metamorphosis of concepts or objects than from the transfiguration of the artist. The work is self-transformation before being given to others. From this point of view, creation is always a question of degree: 'I feel sad as happens when, burning, we discover in ourselves that which is not yet consumed and will not be able to be, not being commensurate to the fire.'[16] Bataille's confession refers to what is consumed in art. Everyone's desire for his own incandescence. All alchemy has this fire, but in creativity the artist makes no mystery about what he is, about his transfiguration. He always dwells in the territory of thought.

I'd say you were a man of frontiers, rather than territories. Isn't your concern to reach the limits, and once there, to remain there and not worry about territories? Aren't you acting as if you weren't allowed to enter them? What have you done with the territory of sculpture? Is sculpture no longer in your thoughts?
The autistic nature departed from the importance, or the metaphysics, of the object – man appearing to me as something second-hand, something imperfect that walks. Nature's caress can make me feel differently. Even when diluted, this disposition has never left me, even in the worst moments, when, curiously, it helped me live. Aren't I being ungrateful to it, now that I'm thinking of starting the last stretch of the journey in order to leave it behind? Anyway, my innate tendency to attach too much importance to objects is about to expire. I hardly dare admit to you that it's already dead through sculpture.

My plan was always to bury my creations, but in 1994, which is when I ceased to give life to objects, I began destroying them. Was it simply to get rid of them? I began to prefer to retain the marks, traces, photographs of some of them.

In 2004 I was visited by a couple from New York, the writer and philosopher Israel R. and his wife Catherine T. Once they'd got over their emotional reaction to my destroying the last of my sculptures, we began a discussion, and at the end of it, Israel sowed a doubt in my mind. What if the burden I was bearing was not my own perception of my works, but other people's perception of them? Was I making 'my' sculpture disappear so it would leave only a mark, or was I erasing the traces of what people only ever regarded as evident proof of my insanity? Uncertain, I decided to keep the few hundred sculptures I hadn't destroyed. I covered them with something opaque so they couldn't be seen. To tell the truth, I feel they are all the more visible for being covered.

Sculpture has always been for me an inhabited thing, where the spirit finds both pleasure and

pain. In an act of irreversible separation, I began getting rid of them, and tracing their spirits or sometimes their spaces onto a canvas shroud. Their ghostly images appeared and I put them alongside other apparitions from drawings and photos. The destruction of thousands of sculptures has a certain coherence, but I think you can't understand such an act of distancing and separation without perceiving the absence in its original dimension, as the only source capable of nourishing our rebirths.

Was it this fascination with absence that led you to deny your gift, to make an existential denial?

I admit I yielded to my gift, all the more easily since it was nowhere in my memory. One day in 1980, the sculptor René Coutelle discovered my bread pieces and said to me, 'I've bad news for you old boy, you're a sculptor'. I'd always been given to believe this anomaly was not human, and its power and obsession were beyond me. But here was someone making me see it as an undeciphered omen. I realised then that my creativity would no longer be a free act. It would now bind me differently to the world, denying me my survival system, which was to love and tolerate the world by the grace of the mere hardening of a piece of bread. From then on, I conspired against the gift and solely to get rid of it became obsessed with surpassing it.

And what about drawing? What have you done with that territory?

On the occasion of your Degas exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo, you showed me Paul Valéry's text on the artist. I remember Valéry's idea: 'It may be that drawing is the mind's most obsessive temptation.'[17] Dürer believed that art was in nature — but you, without doubt, you need more than one mark to bring it out. I'm more interested in outline than perspective, so I enjoy line drawing. That's why I see that the line is part of my life, part of me. And the line doesn't deny depth: it rearranges it as a true component of abstraction.

Why did you give up writing? Wasn't that disloyal? By giving it up, didn't you free yourself, in part, from excessive closeness to death?

I've long believed that it was only thought that guided writing, while knowing that writing on its own couldn't reflect what I am. I felt it conflicted with poetic writing, which had long been a part of me, like a continuation of heavily tattooed skin. In time, both types of writing fertilised each other and transcended themselves in painting. In their own way, they express me better than I could express what I have to say.

Regarding death, why should it ignore me, who hasn't ignored it for one single day? Death alone knows. Its promise to all of us brings it close. It's the uncreated part of us all. What posterity could call itself more enlightening — even luminous? Far from turning its back on death, painting rapturously opens a path that I feel is calm.

SCULPTURE HAS ALWAYS BEEN FOR ME AN INHABITED THING, WHERE THE SPIRIT FINDS BOTH PLEASURE AND PAIN.

And what about pleasure? Do you still wish to be, to become what you are?

I've taken the joy of being myself and shared it with nobody. I am of those – the poets – who have power over birth and death at every moment, without end, without sharing. 'As for the rest, I have been living inside a lyric poem, like every madman.'[18] Perhaps I'm guilty of being myself – but doesn't that apply to each and every one of us? Like any poet enjoying the exalting satisfaction of his presence in the world, I'm well aware how devastating it is to return to reason, to the denial of the open, of everything that has appeared. Creators wander between the folly of the 'Poem' and the terror that justifies the desire for death that only death can appease.

If I ('still', you say) have the wish to be, the being that I am refuses to be enslaved by its own story. There's a joy in living alongside oneself, in being the nameless reader of one's own life. One bestows freedom upon oneself, at the whim of the path one takes, to tackle life via the most inaccessible route. Did I ever imagine painting would allow me to stay in the present of this world? Abandoning any attempt at language, the act of painting set me firmly in a present without language. Isn't the unexpected the essence of eternal expectation? You caught me in my garb of renunciation, but ought I to confess everything, as one confesses a misdeed?

I remember that Roland Barthes, in his Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, talks of the wandering Jew of the ghost ship, and I think he puts my initials in the margin. The wanderer is seeking love, for only love can redeem a wrongdoing. Well, I think you are loved. You're loved because, to quote Barthes again, you are 'lovable'. Can you think I don't love you? I don't know if you love, but I know you are loved.*

I imagine love to be a watering hole where men and animals come to drink. But whether ugly or beautiful, their herds crop in vain the grass of cemeteries, where I know the nights are cold.

A woman is performing life in front of me. I am watching her. She occupies my mind as long as she's capable of being sensual. Unlike woman, man is a tragic warrior, always wounded, struck down more often than not. He never emerges unscathed from combat, especially that of love. You need a lot of experience to like love for what it is, to extract its brutal force and turn it into something sensible. In our emotions there coexist as many reasons to love as reasons not to love. They're often the same. Hence my astonishment – sometimes indifferent, sometimes ungrateful – at those I arouse, even if I can detect the emotions of hate and love (though sometimes I confuse them, justifiably). Still, I do confess that I love. I like people, and as I get older, I imagine I love them better. I approach them from afar, from a metaphysical viewpoint. I concede that they have the same courage for living as I do, while recognising that, conversely, anyone could despise himself for not having the courage to die. Do you remember Gorky's letter about Chekhov's plays?

He says, 'there passes before one a long file of men and women, slaves of their love … slaves of the dark fear of life', and it ends like this: 'At moments out of the grey mass of them one hears the sound of a shot: Ivanov or Treplev has guessed what he ought to do and has died.'[19]

At home in Barra de São João I like to write well away from that 'dark fear of life'. Sometimes I get up to look at the river on those fine, peaceful mornings. I admire the incredible tableau of the mangrove on the opposite bank and the thickly forested mountains. Through the open windows I feel gusts of air. Sometimes a cyclist goes by, often a fisherman, rarely a car. But the surprising thing is that 300 metres away, behind the house and before the sea, there's a totally different world: a road with red lights, lined with nasty shops. It noisily recalls what Thomas Bernhard talks about so forcefully. But what if art has also taken the path of triviality and monstrosity?

If the monstrous is the attribute of the gods in classic metaphysics, modernity has constantly thrust it upon us as our only horizon. The evidence that man has left the dwelling of the Being, as Peter Sloterdijk reminds us, or that he has the will to force nature to leave the realm of possibility, is the sign that we're all subjected to the question of the monstrous. But can we agree on a definition? Is the most monstrous the labyrinth? The Minotaur? Or the people who annually bring him seven youths and seven maidens to devour?

The artist is alone in definitively producing a freedom that affirms nothing and subjects nobody. Do you recall that wonderful idea from the person so dear to you? 'If we call freedom not only the capacity to escape power but also and especially the capacity to subjugate no one, then freedom can exist only outside language.'[20] By freeing us from the altar that each human, as soon as he's born, erects to the senses, art puts itself outside language: along with the unheard-of acts that are 'void of speech',[21] shouldn't we include criminal acts? Knowing such proximity, couldn't the monstrous lose some beauty? We've got to admit it: the world is rendered to the world at the price of a language that is contrary to nature or else incomprehensible. Art might be in accord with our thought, or assume unresolved forms, but it will always have the power of a prayer.

Marcel Duchamp said in his lecture to the Philadelphia Museum College of Art in 1961: 'On the fringe of a world blinded by economic fireworks, the great artist of tomorrow will go underground.'[22]

Because he called the 'merchants' thieves, the great Aesop was betrayed to the priests. They claimed that by insulting them, he'd insulted the gods. And still today, I think telling the truth to the business world is like insulting the gods.

Aesop, the great storyteller of antiquity, was punished for his insult by being thrown off the cliff at the temple of Apollo at Delphi. It's a far cry from the end of all our lives, which artists and poets show in all its power and devastation. Art and Economy will probably always end up agreeing, and swapping gold coins in a clever game of light and shadow, but that doesn't mean our incantations must invoke the new demon, protector of a 'great tomorrow', when the world will be different. Nietzsche offers a less prophetic thought when he says, more aptly, 'The night is also a sun'.[23]

Doesn't Hegel have the same regret when he states that the artist 'could not by any act of will and decision abstract himself from [the world]; nor could he … contrive and organise a special solitude to replace what he has lost'?[24]

It's naive to think that art can shelter the sugary matter of naivety. The confectioner's art, Heidegger would say. Art has never claimed to be the place, as Hegel thinks, where you kneel; rather, it's where you lose your footing. It's far more formidable than the volcano we're all sitting on.

You have money, let's say 'gold', and thus can afford to be stubborn. Your 'gold' is Rimbaud's 'gold', earned on the fringes of poetry. Still, one's bound to be surprised at the distanced, if not clinical relationship you have with it. It's as if gold could defile you, or be an illness that could kill you.

In my family, money never had a value in itself; it was just something we lacked. We were poor for generations, agricultural labourers, until my grandfather, who was a schoolteacher and then a headmaster. My father was the opposite of a moneyman. So by earning this gold, as you call it, I damaged the better part of myself. I answered the call that wasn't one for reasons that definitively weren't there. I experienced my short sojourn in business as a sacrifice. It was extremely hard, and death was always in the balance. Although people recognise in me a certain talent for making 'gold' out of nothing, my mind and my body always denied it: I've always listened to my body and have never exploited my mind for profit. There's no doubt that it's a magnificent job being a businessman. But I left the business with deepest relief as soon as I could hand over the reins to a remarkable man, who is still in charge of it. Since 1980 I've served only myself and have given up serving industry and finance. In a way, gold has

THE PUBLIC IMAGINES THE PAINTER AT WORK, BUT DOES IT KNOW THAT THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF WAYS TO PAINT?

submitted: it is the great protector of my dissidence with respect to the power of money; it's turned me into the rebel you know, liberated from those powers.

Your works aren't available on the market. You seem to be content with a status that gives you the choice of being either the least known of known artists, or the best known of unknown ones. Don't you feel the need for some sort of recognition?

I don't accord myself any recognition, so I can't expect to receive it from others. In any case, any demand for recognition is invalidated by the part of me that refuses to recognise myself. Furthermore, no recognition will exempt me from the following question: Can that which can't be heard perhaps be 'heard'? Unless, like the speech of the Sybil, it has to wait a thousand years before being heard for a thousand years. Does everyone believe that there's no silence that he can't hear? As I've said, I have long seen life in the concavity of matter, and long thought that my cry was not to be heard.

Fortunately, there are cries I can't hear. And fortunately there are others, like yours, which I can. I'd like to know if the size of your works has exempted you from the duty of responding to this cry, whether the ease of putting them out of sight because they're small has allowed you to prolong the time of rupture and exemption.

I intuitively saw the link with something organised, something human, but I wasn't bothered if I lost sight of the link. Far from any appurtenance, outside any field, I wandered in a space that nobody, no power could concede, since they were ignorant of its existence; a territory you describe so well in your house up in Barra de São João. I've been happy like that.

Because I rarely had to vouch for my own moments of impatience with what I did in my life, I lived away from the troublesome consequences of that impatience. That time was necessary for me to clear a path that led me, through a freedom wrested from myself, to proximity to the beginning, close to a freedom to think against everything, including oneself; the freedom also to seek one's way off the beaten track, freedoms that all societies deny. Everywhere, thought is policed to suppress difference, to isolate it pathologically. I've sometimes also wondered if I bore the stigmata of those fated to be locked up, having as their only choice the asylum or the prison cell. To be sure, my works are small, but like anything else, they are born in a flash of lightning.

Your originals are so detailed that they can be accurately enlarged to this famous height of 2.15 metres. Where other artists would have opted for mechanical enlargement, you enlarged them by hand.

Despite significant progress in mechanical reproduction, the example of Andy Warhol didn't acquire a following. The creator of small-scale originals isn't an anomaly: from the famous cartoons of the Renaissance to Kandinsky, Moore and many others, every artist has faced the challenge of his rapport with the work, and meets the challenge in his own way. The public imagines the painter at work, but does it know that there are thousands of ways to paint? I don't think so. But is there a single reason why this lack of understanding should extend to the rules of enlarging an original? Our contemporaries were the first to make it a mystery. It is a reductive view of art to imagine that enlargement must be done in solitude or that the artist is the grander for doing it himself. And trying to disguise the reality of this process gives the impression that the public isn't qualified to understand what it's all about. The artist allows himself some assistance with manual enlargement, but he is in total control.

One critic, admiring Giotto's frescoes, said he missed the parts not painted by Giotto's hand, while admitting he didn't know which they were. Yet this didn't stop him admiring what wouldn't have existed if those parts had been painted by Giotto and if his assistants hadn't made their necessary contribution. The task of enlarging an original so it can be displayed is a task the artist cannot complete on his own.

In manual enlargement, the first task is matching the colours. You have to reconstitute the colours of the original. It's a long and time-consuming task. Then the original is projected, enlarged, onto the stretched canvas, which has been prepared with a base coat. Next, guided by the projection and referring to the original, you begin laying down the colours, taking care not to let any brushstrokes show. The enlarged work, then, is the copy of the small-scale original. But you never stop assessing whether they match. No allowance is made for interpretation, except to consider that the enlargement, a print that is both similar and dissimilar in size, is in itself an interpretation. I'd like to point out here that I perceive my creation (the small original) in an interior dimension that is that of the final work. So it is enlarged because I want to see it in reality as I see it in my imagination. Finally, each new image comes and jostles the others on display. So that the new image can find its place among the preceding ones, it's better to avoid the speed of mechanical enlargement. I chose the manual process therefore because of its slower rate of production and its guarantee that the colours are true to the original.

I know your resistance to having any pictures of you published. I know about your ARTnews *refusal. The well-known American magazine was intending to publish an article even before you had held the smallest exhibition. It was an extraordinary tribute that you should have been pleased with. But the article in question nearly didn't appear because you refused point-blank to let their photographer come and photograph you. In the end, a two-page piece did appear, although without your picture. Could you explain this phobia to us? I've been through your family album – so you have been photographed! – and took out four photographs of you. I'd like to hear your comments on this.*

WHAT WORRIES ME WHEN I SEE MY BODY IN A PHOTO OR REFLECTED IN A MIRROR IS SUDDENLY HAVING TO ACCEPT THAT I EXIST DIFFERENTLY FROM THE WAY I FEEL I EXIST. I THINK PEOPLE LOVE PHOTOS FOR THE SAME REASON THAT I HATE THEM.

Isn't the body 'the fantasmatic space par excellence'?[25] So don't be surprised if I have some difficulty with mine, as you perhaps have with yours. What worries me when I see my body in a photo or reflected in a mirror is suddenly having to accept that I exist differently from the way I feel I exist. I think people love photos for the same reason that I hate them. It's not so much that I'm distanced from my presence when faced with it as that it's a proof and trial of reality. A trial of terror, and a printed proof. Because I embrace absence and feel in perfect harmony with it, only the photographic negative can bring me to life, because in it I lose the face (that of death) written on every positive image that photography produces of the world. To take my picture is to punish me for existing in the way I do. When I look at a photo, I'm punishing myself for seeing the world as others see it. A fracture separates me from photographs: their purely anxiety-provoking side arouses in me the fear that lies within the glossy surface of each picture. It's every man's fear of being invisible, of being born and dying invisible at the open gates of hell, and of not being seen, of not seeing himself. By contrast, my fear is that of being visible. Photos also prove that I'm guilty – guilty of not being the 'other'. Guilty also perhaps of not being the executioner, or of fleeing to elude capture. Must I scuttle myself just to be in a photo? Will my being in a picture save the world?

Might the crucifixion be a subject for you? I think someone close to you said that you were the only man he knew capable of crucifying himself.

I always see the victim as conquering the torture, and that was the case, in a way, with the crucifixion of Christ. The cross is deeply symbolic. It can't help being present in my iconography. It is a major anthropomorphist sign, present in pre-Christian cultures; living signs are always revived. The word 'symbol' comes from the Greek *sumballein*, which means 'to put together'; semantics reminds us that there cannot be a solitude of the sign, that the destiny of any sign is to appear in a juxtaposition and that such a sequence of signs doesn't therefore mean their procession is intended to make sense. The language that I write on my pictures affirms nothing, and that's why it will escape the torment of the cross.

Is it this distancing of the symbolic field that results in the freedom of the sign?

The pictures in juxtaposition are connected and disconnected. Sometimes they harmonise with each other, and sometimes they flee from each other in horror. What opposes them is the

unexpected source of their interaction, and their unfathomable separation is fed by the link created before it ruptures. Since no specific place is assigned to them, their infinite number of combinations is proportional to the chaos resulting from the state of impermanence. At the heart of this collapse of the symbolic, reality is sublimated as the only method of return. Return of the world of before, of the eternally unavowed desire for a beginning, of the world that precedes all knowledge. The freedom of the sign results in sublimation, not the other way round, because being free makes the sign vulnerable to the trap set by Eros: to experience the unexpected attraction. If Eros had no part in the act of giving up freedom, there'd be no reason for the picture to be there, nor for it to be what it is. Sublimation is the necessary condition for Eros to appear and for me to be able to admit to myself how necessary painting is to me.

Pierre Reverdy writes in Nord-Sud ***that 'the image is pure creation of the mind, born of the reconciliation of two realities on condition that their connections are distant and right'.***[26]
Facts easily give the lie to that sort of claim. Doesn't he himself say that loosening the connections between things by bringing them together is the peculiarity of poetry? Not allowing oneself to reconcile some images for subtle reasons of rightness and distance seems to me without foundation. Unlike Reverdy, what interests me is to yield to the unfathomable distance between the signs. The unforeseeable attraction of two opposite destinies is inconceivable and by nature unreasonable. So you need to go beyond positions of principle to side with the oppositions.

For Lautréamont, beauty is born of the fortuitous meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella. This assertion at first seems incoherent, but it transcends the mind by preventing it from yielding to the celebration of dialectics alone. Taking chaos into consideration has become a way of thinking and of seeing the world – but also a way of tackling science, since the heart of chaos has become mathematically accessible. On the path towards turbulence, the unforeseeable opens our minds to the accidental, to fascination with life, by removing us from what is overdetermined. The disordered processes of simple systems have a creative destiny because they're random and thus engender complexity. For David Lynch the miracle of film lies in the way one shot succeeds another.[27]
At Carthage, the Punic cemetery known as Tophet is full of stelae, or tombstones, which were erected in the open air, but the Romans covered the cemetery with a vault a few centuries later. Little by little, the surrounding area became covered in soil, and as a child I'd get in through a hole. This space was the result of two very different cultures, and by unfettering me

emotionally from the rest of the world, it connected me to the unfathomable strangeness of the place, although I was quite ignorant of the real causes of my emotion. Who can renounce the happiness produced by the meeting of two conflicting worlds? Can painting do so?

Isn't there, in the background of your paintings, a desire to reach music alone and, despite your denials, the sole dream of embracing the absolute?
Juxtaposition reveals both dissonances and harmonies sometimes incompatible with the laws of harmony. If you prolong the moment of surprise, and resist the gladness, sadness or distress inevitably produced by a multitude of opposites, then you will hear music: unexpected music, for the voice of this space is silence. ***Finnegan's Wake***, long regarded as untranslatable, was imagined as a musical score, where the actual substance of the words was transfigured with the sole aim of eliciting their own sonority. In the West, speech creates the world of signs. But in the East, it's the trace that creates the world, the trace being any figure emanating from matter; moreover, there are infinitely more signs than the sounds they're supposed to represent. When I turn towards myself to speak of the intrusive form, I can't help but reveal its resonance. If I consider myself Eastern, the West is the intruder; if I consider myself Western, the East is the intruder. In the West, creativity allows you to work at the sole task that's recognisable by man and for man. But in the East the task is to leave the universe of each sign as gladly as you entered it. The role of eroticism in this metaphor is obvious: how could a mind delight in a separation if other promises weren't offered in the meantime? Primitive Eros coordinated the constitutive parts of the universe and thereby brought harmony to chaos. May the modern Eros, through the freedom he implies, remain the only trace our civilisations will leave of a metaphysical rallying. Faced with the violence unleashed by all absolutist religions, Eros offers himself to us as an impassable horizon, the only entity that can claim to be poem, philosophy, architecture, painting, dance and music. The least you can say is that the path justifies Eros: it is his true foundation.

ENDNOTES

1. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 53. 'Every writer, every artist is acquainted with the moment at which he is cast out and apparently excluded by the work in progress. The work holds him off, the circle in which he no longer has access to himself has closed, yet he is enclosed therein because the work, unfinished, will not let him go.'
2. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, December 23, 1903, trans. M.D. Herter (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1962), p. 50.
3. G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, p. 11.
4. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1939).
5. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Second Part, poem V; in *Ahead of All Parting: The Selected Poetry and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1995), p. 471.
6. Roland Barthes, 'Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, Collège de France, January 7, 1977', trans. Richard Howard, *October*, vol. 8 (Spring, 1979), p. 14.
7. Blanchot, op. cit., p. 153.
8. Hokusai: 'From the age of six I had a mania for drawing the forms of things. By the time I was fifty I had published an infinity of designs; but all I produced before the age of seventy is not worth taking into account. At seventy-three I learned a little about the real structure of nature – of animals, plants, trees, birds, fishes, and insects. In consequence, when I am eighty, I shall have made still more progress; at ninety I shall penetrate the mystery of things; at a hundred I shall certainly have reached a marvellous stage; and when I am a hundred and ten, everything I do, be it but a dot or a line, will be alive. I beg those who live as long as I to see if I do not keep my word.' And he signs, 'Manji, The Old Man Mad About Drawing'. From the Preface to *The Hundred Views of Fuji*, cited in *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg* (San Diego-New York-London: Harcourt, Inc., 1970), p. xxiii.
9. Barthes, op. cit., p. 16.
10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 88.
11. Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1992), p. 19.
12. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Paradiso*, trans. Anthony Esolen (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 183. 'You'll leave behind everything you love / most dearly: this will be the arrow shot / first from the bow of exile. You shall prove / How someone else's bread can taste of salt, / and that you cannot leave the trace of one's steps on a path that is not one's own.'
13. Rilke, *Das Florenzer Tagebuch* [1942], ed. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber (Frankfurt and Leipzig: Insel, 1994), p. 38.
14. Cited in Henri Aubertin, *Quelques mots sur le romantisme des dix dernières années en France* (Toulouse, 1840), p. 273 (citation trans. Henri Barande).
15. Thomas Bernhard, *Heldenplatz* (London: Oberon Books), 2010.
16. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 2014, pp. 128–9.
17. 'Il se peut que le dessin soit la plus obsédante tentation de l'esprit.' Paul Valéry, *Degas, danse, dessin* (Paris: Gallimard; Collection folio essais No. 323), 1998.
18. 'Pour le reste j'ai vécu au sein d'un poème lyrique comme tout possédé.' Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Qui Je Suis* (Paris: Editions Arléa), 1999.
19. 'There passes before one a long file of men and women, slaves of their love, of their stupidity and idleness, of their greed for the good things of life; there walk the slaves of the dark fear of life; they straggle anxiously along, filling life with incoherent words about the future, feeling that in the present there is no place for them. At moments out of the grey mass of them one hears the sound of a shot: Ivanov or Treplev has guessed what he has to do and has died. Many of them have nice dreams of how pleasant life will be in three hundred years, but it occurs to none of them to ask themselves who will make life pleasant if we only dream. In front of that dreary, grey crowd of helpless people there passed a great, wise, and observant man; he looked at all these dreary inhabitants of

his country, and, with a sad smile, with a tone of gentle but deep reproach, with anguish in his face and in his heart, in a beautiful and sincere voice, he said to them: "You live badly, my friends."' Maxim Gorky, *Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Andreev*, trans. Katherine Mansfield, S.S. Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1934), p. 111.

20. 'If we call freedom not only the capacity to escape power but also and especially the capacity to subjugate no one, then freedom can exist only outside language... We can get out of it only at the price of the impossible: by mystical singularity, as described by Kierkegaard when he defines Abraham's sacrifice as an action unparalleled, void of speech, even interior speech, performed against the generality, the gregariousness, the morality of language.' Barthes, op. cit., p. 6.
21. Ibid.
22. Marcel Duchamp, 'Where do we go from here?', *Studio International*, 189 (January–February 1975), p. 28. Text from a symposium at the Philadelphia Museum College of Art, March 1961.
23. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 263.
24. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, op. cit., p. 11.
25. 'Le lieu fantasmatique par excellence', cited in Blanchot, *Une voix venue d'ailleurs* (Paris: Gallimard; Collection folio essais No. 413, 2002).
26. 'L'Image est une création pure de l'esprit. Elle ne peut nâitre d'une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées.' Pierre Reverdy, *Nord-Sud* (Revue Littéraire), March 1918, No. 13, p. 3.
27. David Lynch, press conference at the Venice International Film Festival (interviewed by Thierry Jobin): 'I got into cinema via painting, because I was looking to live on one of the arts. [...] Cinema didn't really save my life, but it's the profession that provides the most fun and that's closest to painting. It too allowed me to invent and discover new worlds. [...] I always shoot out of sequence. I never know in advance what I want exactly. I believe in the existence of a unified field on which all questions and all human minds are based. I'm certain, therefore, that we're all united at the deepest level. Otherwise I don't see how one idea could connect with another occurring a few feet or thousands of miles away. I first write a script to get an initial idea of the scenes, but after that I let the story emerge on its own from all the outside influences. Doesn't matter if the result is concrete or abstract; what makes the film is the infinite connection between all the ideas that are born during its creation. [...] All films lead towards the unknown. So viewers shouldn't be afraid to approach a film using their intuition. To feel things without necessarily understanding them. To make it their own experience. To trust their own convictions. Cinema is such a wonderful language. The industry should remember that, to make films that are more unexpected. Films go further than words. Getting into a film requires the same type of approach as the inexplicable mechanism by which you like and understand this or that kind of music. Of course, your intellect travels during the screening, but what speaks to you in films surpasses it as it surpasses the language of words. You just have to stay receptive, even though formulaic films don't encourage that. [...] The way one shot follows another and the effect produced by this association is the miracle of cinema. It's always surprising when you work at the editing table – how the story moves from one place to another, for example. The possibilities of cinema are endless, and the viewer always understands the transitions. The possible forms are incredibly rich, richer than the current cinema allows. There's so much to do, to invent, to try out.'

Dialogue between Henri Barande and Romaric Sulger-Büel

LA GRANDE IMAGE

MICHEL WEEMANS

Let us contemplate the concluding words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Eye and Mind*, which describe the basically incomplete state of a created work:

For if in painting or elsewhere we cannot establish a hierarchy of civilisations nor talk of progress, it is not because fate is holding us back, but rather that in some sense the first painting plumbed the future. If no painting completes the painting, if no work is absolutely complete, every created work changes, illuminates, fathoms, confirms, exalts, recreates and creates in advance all the others. If creative works are not secured, it is not just that like everything else they pass, it is because nearly all of them have their lives before them.[1]

This condition of 'discompleteness'[2] and, so to speak, of impossible acquittal constitutes the singular lesson contained in the work of Henri Barande. The lesson teaches that the work remains discreet – the form of discretion that the philosopher Maurice Blanchot sees as awareness of divestiture and of the inappropriable. No picture completes the picture. But as Henri Barande would probably say, all works of art make this condition a possibility and use it to exercise freedom. If a painting begins by being incomplete, if it is non-complete at the start of its future, then the experiencing of it becomes part of time as well as place, a trail of indetermination, drawing an invisible line of non-acquittal that is also a driving force.

This intuition underlies one's discovery of Barande's work and its two faces: one hidden in shadows and made up of objects sculpted in raw, perishable matter, the other exposed to the light that hugs the surface of the pictures and their apophantic figures. From the very beginning, in order to reflect life, art assumes the property of recollection rooted in the pure experience of creation. At the age of five, the artist watched the exhumation of an archaeological fragment, which gave him the idea of trying to sculpt a mixture of sand, earth and bread. 'Those fragments of suppressed power, formed by my fingers or picked up from the ground as my eye spied them, were the same shape as the faces painted on Phoenician

necklaces. What was fascinating about the fragments I made was that they were haphazard, and often more archaic than the shapes I had access to.'[3] The compulsion to make sculptures coincided with his interest in things found on or underneath the ground, an interest in discovering the mystery and power of the objects in the archaeological sites of Carthage, where he spent his childhood. There he made forays into the Phoenician Tophet cemetery that the Romans 'eradicated' by covering it over with a vault. Entering through a hole, he gained access to a sepulchral darkness where he sensed the mysterious energy of objects that seemed to communicate with each other, along with the tension between a dominant culture and the one it quashed. His fascination for the vestiges of lost civilisations and their votive and cultural artefacts triggered an enthusiasm for ancient cultures and the archaeological excavations that revealed them. He insists that the earth 'is still the world's oldest museum, and its treasures aren't so much buried as sublimated'.[4]

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Henri Barande made thousands of sculptures in the course of the following decades. He stopped doing so when he decided to remove his 'autistic'[5] creations from sight by burying or destroying them. Since self-destruction is never just destruction alone,[6] in 1994 the artist began to preserve some of his creations in ghostly form by incorporating them into paintings. He preserved a few highly poetic ensembles, but hid them from view (Fig. 1). The proximity of the two sides of his work makes one think in terms of configurations, which he refers to as 'tumbled out of time' or 'tombs'.

INCHOATE LIKENESSES

The groups of objects and sculptures are fashioned or sampled by the artist and established or merely perceived in a glance – a glance that they return. Derek Pullen has suggested that they are part of the *Wunderkammer* tradition.[7] The analogy is attractive but misleading, since it refers not to a collection but to creations and their correspondence with nature.[8] Barande's small-scale sculptures stand side-by-side with small objects: fragments of stone and shells, bark, twisted elastic bands, pieces of marble, rock crystals, and figurines of opal or ivory (Fig. 2). When one notices the effects of juxtaposition, repetition and analogy, one grasps the basic principle of the work, which is to link the man-made with objects not fashioned by the human hand, and to link these in turn with the actual pictures. Dario Gamboni calls this principle the 'potential image'. The potential image can be in the realm of possibility or not, but it still manifests an inchoate dimension requiring both active and subjective perception. It belongs to the wider category of the double image – one that can be perceived in two different ways, like the natural images formed by clouds or rocks, composite or reversible images, crypto-images or hidden ones. But unlike these, which offer themselves immediately to one's gaze and once seen remain stable, the potential image remains latent, and its realisation depends on the viewer.[9]

In this body of work, the configurations and proximities themselves are factors of the image. One example is offered by the juxtaposition of a stone and a little oval sculpture made of bread and earth, with a knob and a few incisions forming a nose, a mouth and eyes (Fig. 3). The proximity allows one to see in the tiny stone a profile, with perfectly formed lips, prominent nose, high cheekbones and a round eye. The placement of two sculpted heads reveals an archaic torso in polished marble the colour of pale skin. Elsewhere, the groupings elicit anthropomorphism: a root and a mineral fragment, a pebble and a pink shell polished by the sea transform themselves into a person or a warrior from the ancient world (Fig. 4–5). Some apparently modest-seeming items turn out to be visually very complex. A simple piece of root is capable of projecting an entire series of aspects (Fig. 6). The swelling of the wood and a few deep cracks indicate eyes, mouth and nose. Grafted onto this mask, like dry lichen, is the profile of a hybrid

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creature half-cat, half-satyr. Not so much a double image as a poly-icon, the root also elicits other metamorphoses, becoming a body surmounted by a veiled head: an elegantly striated mother-of-pearl shell. The face hovering between figure and non-figure – between found object and artefact, between accidental image and sculpted image – makes sense of the idea of ambiguity defined by belonging to two categories (as in the Latin prefix *ambo*) and by the disconcerting effect caused by the indeterminate. An echo of this is to be found in a portrait, sculpted in a composite material, that navigates the porous border between natural image and artefact (Fig. 7). A phallic obelisk of rock crystal, a Japanese reversible double-image sculpted in ivory (Fig. 8), along with dendrites and marble plaques evoking Italian limestone *paesine*, recall the ancient fascination for nature imagery and the roots and landscape stones beloved of Chinese scholars. The little blue cube here has symbolic value (Fig. 9). Its front is either at top left or bottom right, depending on how one perceives it. A 'seeing as', in Wittgenstein's words, that 'does not enter perception' but conceals perception, 'half visual experience, half thought'.[10] The potential images hidden in the artist's work make us – due to the bi-stability of perception – experience a phenomenology at the root of the vision, and they ask the basic question about thought and interpretation that accompanies perception. Ancient shapes match the ancient recognition of shapes.

In fact, since the Renaissance, imaginary perception has been linked to the origins of art. As the medieval theoretician Leon Battista Alberti observed: 'Examining a tree trunk, a mound of earth or other similar things, people must one day have noticed certain features which needed only a slight change to resemble actual human figures' (*De Statua,* 1430).[11] The idea that the first work of art came from nature herself and from the wish to complete the inchoate likenesses she offers, has given rise to much speculation on the part of artists and theoreticians. The 'chance realism' that the fledgling skills of prehistory associated with animal representations hugging the irregular surface of Palaeolithic caves seems to confirm Alberti's hypothesis. When an anthropomorphic pebble was discovered in 1925 (Fig. 11), fresh debate was stirred over the question of the origins of art and the perception of images. An object with no sign of deliberate modification was interpreted as a very old example of an image not produced but perceived by humans, found and then carried far from its place of origin just because of its chance resemblance to a human face and its arresting 'expression'. One could easily set the Makapansgat pebble side-by-side with Barande's archaic sculpted heads (Fig. 10, 14), or even the coyote head formed from a llama vertebra (12,000 BC) (Fig. 15), next to his 'monkey head' knucklebone (Fig. 12). And it seems quite significant and reasonable that the monkey knucklebone and the coyote head recall the sculptures of Picasso and Giacometti, like the Phoenician heads they likewise resemble.

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The accidental image is also at the heart of Barande's paintings. Four iridescent red splashes thrown on the paper as if by chance suggest the underside of an insect, complete with fine lines indicating antennae and legs (Fig. 13). Elsewhere, water tossed 'at pigments, which fall apart, contradict and intensify each other' evokes a dancing figure with a skull for a head (Fig. 16).[12] Several drawings of potential images have been transposed to the paintings, including an embryonic head (p. 6) and an extraordinary seagull (p. 118), both of which arise from the magic confluence of paint and water, seeming to appear from the actual process of disappearing. A fluid diagrammatic landscape, when turned on its side, becomes the profile of a face, the ruin of a head returned to earth (p. 94).[13] The canvases also transpose the inchoate likenesses of what has 'tumbled out of time'. The sculpture showing the cruciform image of a potential face (Fig. 20) – one sees the eyes and a human expression – gives rise to a pictorial interpretation. A reprise and a mutation: by using a different medium, the artist transforms the possibility and the event. It is painted in gold on a purple background as a mixture of helmet and sarcophagus, lightened and transfigured into a fantasy image taking flight. The place of burial, of death, recently envisaged in the sculptures, becomes in the paintings an infinitely light figure, a supreme beating of wings.

By making destroyed or buried objects visible again, Barande metamorphoses them into a pictorial body. The little knot of elastic evoking a torso (Fig. 2) seems to have inspired several potential images, painted as if straight from the principle of the knot or swirl. One can, for example, make out – though it is still a case of 'seeing as' – a ghostly skull with hallucinated eyes along a line punctuated by fluorescent blotches (Fig. 17–18). In other canvases, in other nets, in other dotted lines, the skull is still present in different degrees of (in) determination (Fig. 19). More than the symbolic reminder of the duration and vanity of all things, we should recognise in these objects the incessant knotting of what appears absolutely in the tissue of its appearance, between the motif of obviation – of death, perhaps? – and the evanescence of the image itself. In fact, we are talking about time, so it is a moment in which painting reflects itself in that which is no longer available to be imagined. In this respect paintings and sculptures regard each other. The potential image is what connects the two sides of Barande's work, sculpture and painting. Indetermination can lead to dilution, and the interplay of appearance and disappearance that governs potential likenesses harmonises with the pictorial process itself, from the obliteration of the sculptures – destroyed or buried – to the traces of their ghostly inscription on the 'canvas shroud'.[14]

Potential images are by nature fundamentally unstable and metamorphic. This is accounted for by the switching or oscillation often mentioned in their regard. They are echoed by Gaston Bachelard's definition of the unstable, fleeting images of the aerial imagination that 'evaporate or crystallise',

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and that we have to seize 'between the two poles of this ever-active ambivalence'.[15] The artist makes them potential, but they depend on the viewer for their actualisation, making the viewer aware of the subjective nature of vision.[16] Barande shares this self-reflexive aspect of the potential image with a number of contemporary artists, including Jasper Johns and John Stezaker. It links him with a long and rich pictorial tradition,[17] with the added characteristic that his canvases are never alone. They are always in pairs or in series, so that perception of one panel is always influenced by those adjoining it.

This effect, not unlike the one Lev Kuleshov wrote about with regard to the filmed image, also occurs between distant images via visual echoes resulting from their being shown in a continuous line. Thus the perception of potential images in several paintings invites the viewer to see virtualities that are more implicit in other paintings. The large portrait of a woman (Fig. 21), for example, in which the recognisable part of the face becomes unrecognisable as it merges with the amorphous mass of thick hair hanging down one side, evokes the tension between figure and non-figure characteristic of potential images. The inversing effect of solarisation, the extreme elongation, and the almost organic treatment invest the three-metre-wide painting of a hooded waistcoat with a disquieting strangeness (pp. 106–7). Because it is horizontal and rather indeterminate, the picture invites the viewer to switch angles to decipher its subject. The hood now coincides with an emaciated head echoing those that painters from Dürer to Delacroix and Bonnard have hidden in the folds of cushions or the sheets of an unmade bed. In other pictures, the inchoate image resembles a ruin that the eye seeks in vain to complete. In one huge landscape (pp. 86–7), the implied figure of a bull is surrounded by shadows diluted into blots and dots, visual latencies that the eye, floating across the surface, interprets as nameless, moving, indiscernible forms.

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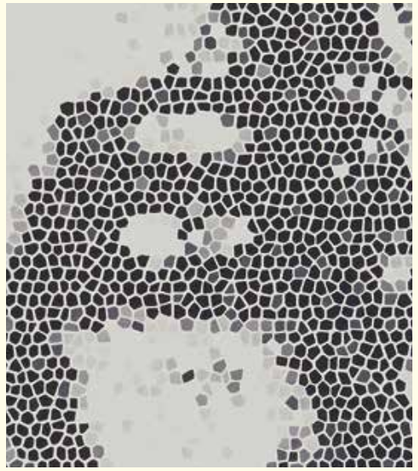

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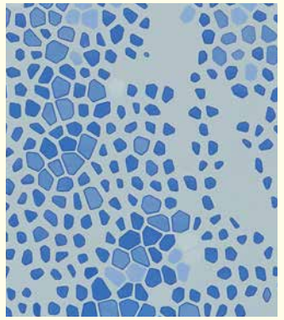

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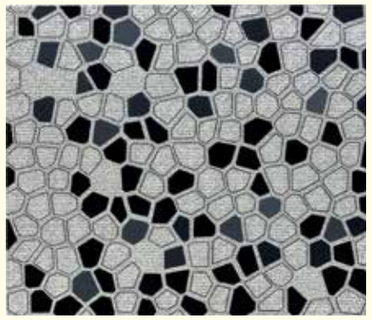

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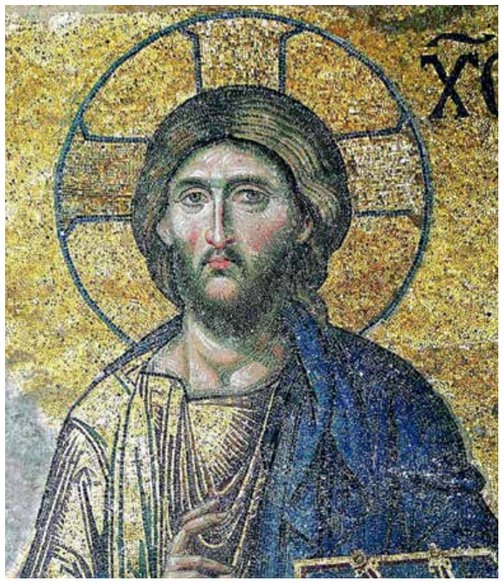
THE IDENTICAL HEIGHT OF 2.15 METRES, THE WIDTH VARYING FROM ONE TO SEVERAL METRES, HAS A HOMOGENISING EFFECT, WHILE THE MOTIFS, SOURCES AND THEMES VARY

THE MOSAIC IMAGE

The decision to give all the canvases the identical height of 2.15 metres, the width varying from one to several metres, has a homogenising effect, while the motifs, sources and themes vary: sculpted portraits and objects drawn from the 'tombs', drawings, and photographs taken by the artist mix with revisited art historical works. According to a non-deterministic logic, Barande's paintings can keep company with *Virgin and Child* by Jean Fouquet, or *Portrait of a Young Woman* by Petrus Christus, the nudes of Gauguin, the prehistoric horses of the Chauvet Cave, *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, figurative images from photographs, abstract images, informal compositions, and geometric abstractions. But the homogeneity is assured not so much by the format as by the processing of the sources. They first undergo a digital treatment that pushes them to the verge of recognition and abstraction. The extreme enlargement of a landscape photograph distorts its appearance to reveal its rudiments, its grain (Fig. 22). Ghostly coordinates then materialise in the texture of the pigment. Migration from the photographic image to the painting engenders hybrid pictures, 'photogenic paintings' in the words of Michel Foucault.[18] Thus Barande joins that band of painters who have chosen to include other mediums in their work, including photography, although his images distinguish themselves from theirs via a heightened hybridism, mixing the optical rules of photography, digital and pictorial imaging, and subjecting objects and images from diverse cultures and eras to enlargement, solarisation and pixelisation.

These processes lend his oeuvre one of its most arresting formal characteristics: its mosaic quality. 'Mosaic', of course, means an assemblage of small cubes or multicoloured fragments of different materials to make a decoration for a wall or a floor. It is in this sense that many paintings – the huge landscape (Fig. 23), portrait (Fig. 24), female nude, abstract composition (Fig. 27), not to mention images that are themselves fragmentary, like the animals depicted in the Chauvet cave (Fig. 26) – use, or rather sublimate in painting, the tessellation of a mosaic.[19] To the formal and technical homogenisation of disparate themes is added a temporal tension related to the durability of the mosaic, a 'veritable painting made for eternity'.[20] This tension lends the female nude painted from a photograph (p. 160) the completeness of a Bonnard nude or a mosaic water-carrier at Carthage. And it is associated, paradoxically, with the cave paintings of the world's first artists. The union of the single and the heterogeneous, together with their temporal layering, points to one of the essential aspects of this work: the impossibility of seeing or interpreting the pictures in isolation, because they are constantly joined together and depend, at the different levels where it applies, on the relationship of components of which the mosaic is both image and process. So the image is now *transhumée*, to use Foucault's term, and can be taken as a totality open to the heterogeneous.



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On the subject of Barande's paintings, it is worth considering how the mosaic, 'all in pieces, a facetted object',[21] creates a basic tension between the two poles of the unity of the whole and the discontinuity of its components, so that viewers have to weigh up the truth of what they are seeing.[22] The mosaic connection of the constitutive parts involves a visual switch that can seem problematic; in fact, its history is marked by the devaluation of the fragmentary in favour of the unitary aspect, heterogeneity yielding to homogeneity, the fragment merging with the whole. The unitary point of view was examined by St Augustine in his treaty *On Order*, where he speculates that seeing objects in nature is like seeing a mosaic. He castigates the short-sightedness of those who see in fragments only a muddled mixture, at the same time incapable of discerning the underlying image.[23] Since his youth in Carthage, St Augustine had been familiar with Greco-Roman mosaics, and the point of view of unity he discusses would subsequently dominate the history of the medium. But his text is important because it underlines the basic connection between vision and the mosaic technique – in other words, the point of view, the visual thought the mosaic conveys. Unlike a mosaic floor, which invites the eye to perceive both fragmentary detail and the composition as a whole, the height at which Byzantine mosaic workers placed the Christ of Constantinople's Hagia Sophia (Fig. 28) removes the discontinuity of the tessellae in favour of a unified whole, intensified by a specific visual effect. When two colours are juxtaposed and seen from a certain distance, the eye perceives a third colour. This mixing effect – as the Impressionists and Pointillists would rediscover – lends the mosaic more luminosity than would be provided by simply mixing pigments. Visual distance, luminosity from a mixing effect, and the golden background all combine to give the face of Christ an aura of spiritual vision that prefigures the beatific vision of the Kingdom of God.

Due to its principle of discontinuity, the mosaic was progressively discredited, giving way to painting and fresco, which were deemed more suitable for the renascent aesthetic ideals of the unity of form and place. And when the figurative sense of the mosaic was described at the end of the classical period as 'an ensemble composed of disparate elements',[24] it was the pejorative meaning of discontinuity that was emphasised. Hence, it is not surprising that after a long period of disaffection modern art rehabilitated not only the properties and use of the mosaic,[25] but also, through and beyond it, the heuristic values of incompleteness, fragmentation and materiality of the scattered image.[26] From the paintings of Cézanne to the pointillism of Seurat, from Cubism to collage and Rauschenberg's 'combine paintings', modernity began when the relationship between the unitary and the fragmentary was reversed, the tension between the parts and the whole kept visible.[27] It was not just the order of things that was called into question, but also the order of causes and 'reasons'[28] were reconsidered in favour of the fragmentary and the open.

Understood and tested at the twin levels of potentiality and execution, the mosaic principle fuels Barande's visual thought. This is how he structures his large blue-on-grey landscape, for example (Fig. 30). The composition is marked by an edge that curves down at either end, dividing the image into two halves. One can make out a clearing in the lower half, while a curtain of trees blocks the upper half. At the same time, large gaps of grey attract the eye to the detail of the tessellae with their subtle shades of blue, varying from light to dark, occasionally becoming white, alternating flat tints and pentagons with dark outlines. The overall impression is one of vibration, making the eye take in both near and far, surface and depth, the unity of the landscape and its fragmentation, the figurative and the abstract. The mosaic principle still holds true if one considers the tension between the picture as a fragment and the links it forges with the one adjacent to it and all those that echo it along the continuous, infinite, virtual and mental line at the heart of Barande's vision. As it happens, the large blue landscape mosaic is connected to the inchoate likeness of the picture with which it is juxtaposed (Fig. 30): a blue and pink knotted mass on a white background, which has a fluidity conjuring up a melting skull.

Since the pictures are set side-by-side, there is a constant interchange between them; perceived as 'fragments' of the whole, each forming a unit, they nonetheless remain open and related to all. So the juxtaposition of the skull-shape and the large blue landscape induces one to regard the dark zone in the middle as a potential image: to make out a silhouette seen from behind, looking into the forest, unless this is the spectator's

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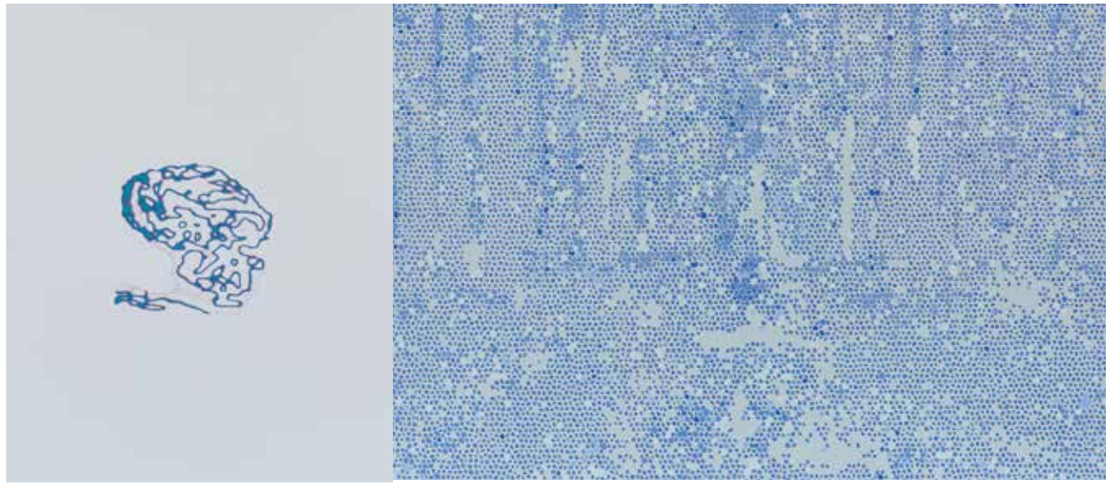

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own reflection or shadow. And again it is in the mosaic play of tension between the fragment and the whole that the eye makes out a similar layout in another compartmentalised landscape (Fig. 31), which is nonetheless underpinned by the solid scheme of the great classical paintings: the horizon separates the dark foreground from the lighter background, cut on the vertical by two trees with dark trunks and foliage. Here, too, a dark form occupies the middle of the landscape. It is indeterminate or potential, and an alert eye can see in it a portrait. On the left, an edge defines the outline of shoulder and neck, then the oval of a face – as it happens, the face of the artist's son reflecting on a piece of glass in a photograph-turned-painting.[29] The silhouette seems to pulse, to be absent and present, showing now front view, now rear view, muddling

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the viewer's vision, playing with and frustrating the classic metaphor of transparent surface / image. In a configuration like this, symbolic in so many ways, the connections between the mosaic structure, the potential image and vision, become objectified or even intellectualised.

On the one hand, the effect of appearance / disappearance echoes the switch that defines the potential image, which hovers between 'evaporation and crystallisation'. On the other hand, the intellectual nature of looking is repeated in the canvases, and to look at them is to be looked at. There is the frontal gaze of the female nudes (p. 84) or of the Kamikaze staring at us (Fig. 32), a gaze intensified by a colour, a monkey (p. 174), or a portrait rendered in swirls. These insistent gazes belong to the pictorial tradition of the look that buttonholes the viewer and involves a dynamic exchange between the two. The frontal stance and large format create an encounter with the viewer. Significantly, the intellectual scope also includes the effects of obstruction and blindness. The glasses worn by Marguerite Duras, for example, based on a sculpted portrait

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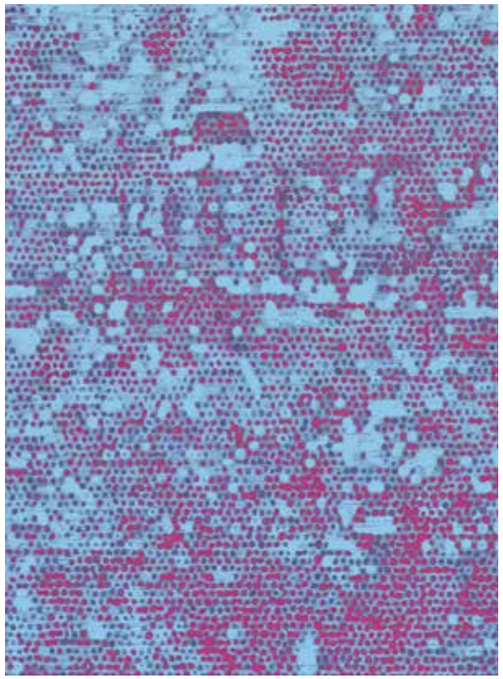
transposed and magnified in a painting, become a blind mask (Fig. 33). The eyes of the young woman after Petrus Christus are covered with a silvery dust recalling a television-screen snowstorm (Fig. 34). The eyes of the recumbent Ophelia, seen from afar, gaze at one intensely, but up close they dissolve into blurred spots resulting in a collision of vision and blindness, radiant beauty and disturbing disfigurement. More than any other image, the monumental female portrait with the half-obliterated face is imbued with symbolic value.

Through the 'filter figure'[30] and the motif of the impeded or veiled gaze, the painting obtains the intellectualisation of its own mosaic logic, stretched between an image-making aim and a perceiving aim, between unity and fragmentation, transparency and opacity



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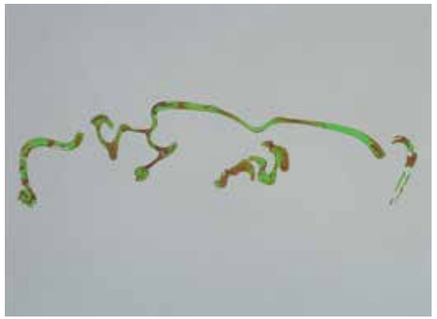

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PAINTING MEANS TO PAINT THAT FORM – SINGULAR AS IT IS – BUT WITHOUT BECOMING DEPENDENT ON IT.

THE GREAT IMAGE HAS NO FORM

The inchoate likeness and the mosaic image are joined in Barande's painting by a principle whose germ lies in the repeated creation of thousands of sculptures, nameless faces with indeterminate features, on their way to being real without actually attaining a particular likeness. The principle could be related to what the philosopher François Jullien calls 'variance'.[31] This means the ability of an image not to draw attention to one axis or to one aspect, but to leave different aspects juxtaposed and to keep together 'all possible approaches equally'.[32] He links the concept of variance with that of 'compossibility',[33] first described by the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who insisted on the need to consider every aspect of a particular person or thing, not giving precedence to one aspect alone. Referring to such possibilities, the most famous Chinese treatise on painting, the *Laozi,* in referring to these multiple possibilities, says succinctly: 'The great image has no form.'

According to Jullien, greatness of an image implies its compossibility, its ability to contain all possibilities without concentrating on one particular aspect, and treating all possible aspects equally. Likeness is not excluded but remains open because no feature is emphasised exclusively. This is why, alongside the compossible, the fundamental mode of the great image is evasive, indeterminate and indistinct.[34] Not the indistinctness limited to the representation of distance, or of disorder and confusion, but the indistinctness open to the inchoate and the evanescent, where things come and go, evasive, teetering on the edge of the perceptible.[35] 'To paint will therefore be to paint *this* form – singular as it is – but without becoming dependent on it.'[36] Everything plays out in the tension, on one hand, between the concrete form, without which the great image cannot exist, and, on the other, the unfathomable absolute, the transcendence to which the concrete image tends, but without 'falling into the Other, or turning us towards a Being or a Truth', without leading to a 'separate plane, that of the ideal (spiritual) and the symbolic.

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The “great image” is not the symbol deploying as idea.’[37] The image takes concrete form that is particular, and as such cannot be ‘the great image’; but at the same time the latter is unable to display itself ‘if particular images do not take form. The great image depends on being actualised in concrete form, but it is important that it not be dominated by the concrete, that the spirit not focus on the partiality of this concrete actualisation.’[38]

It is not surprising that the landscape, the ideal place for variance and the compossible, occupies a decisive position in Barande’s oeuvre. Indeed, the very notion of landscape needs to be expanded, as his painting invites us to do. In his work one encounters landscapes-becoming-portraits and portraits-becoming-landscapes: landscapes haunted, as we have seen, by the viewer’s reflection or the shadow of a filtered gaze (Fig. 31), a colossal skull showing the geography of its coronal sutures (p. 76), a horizon matching the fluid outline of a nameless portrait (Fig. 36, 38), a woman’s horizontal profile pulverised in an entropic landscape (Fig. 37), Klimt’s portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer transformed into an archipelago of radiant islands (pp. 166–9). Elsewhere, the landscapes seem to be made of nature’s raw materials: a vegetable power spreading out over a large pink and black surface (pp. 73–5), liquid power or waves and ripples along the surface of a horizontal canvas awash with the blue tones of the sea (pp. 35–7). Barande’s landscapes frequently have an abstract quality, just as his non-figurative pictures reveal a dimension of landscape. They are ‘absolute landscapes’, one might say, where the eye is not at the front, constructing the visible, but where it ‘can simply receive what nature presents’.[39] These are landscapes without location, as the portraits are without name. The presence of a Japanese temple might seem to offer a clue, but the indeterminate remains stronger than any explicit identification: not only is the scene doubled through symmetry and reflected in water, but the image is solarised, inverting light and dark, turning day into night and introducing an indistinct, vague feeling.

Faces emerge from many of these landscapes and vice versa: this also occurs in the juxtaposition of images playing on variance, compossibility and indetermination. Thus, the pairing of a wide landscape and a face that borrows from the former its horizontality, width and vibrant colour (pp. 46–7; Fig. 35). To the right the landscape shows the edge of a forest and a dense curtain of trees, displaying by variance the blocked vision of the artist’s other landscapes and linking the indistinct quality to the mosaic principle of pointillist fragmentation. Ground, trees and sky are indicated by dots of red and blue paint. A regular network of red, luminescent spots, little explosions of colour, spreads over the whole surface, which is itself riddled with bright, pale blue dots. The result is a merging of background and surface, near and far, wholeness and void, making the eye swing between the image of the landscape and the loose network into which it dissolves. It is an inchoate landscape,

SO THE LANDSCAPES ARE CLOUDED OVER, PAINTED IN THAT STATE OF SUSPENSE BETWEEN FORMING AND DEFORMING, BETWEEN PRESENCE AND ABSENCE.

an indeterminate surface that nonetheless fully exists as a landscape, an ungraspable image that grabs us. We are faced with the ungraspable again with the female portrait on the left that is sensually linked to the landscape. It is almost a red monochrome that reveals the delicate lines of a profile, barely perceptible, lifting and settling with the dark light. To describe the non-separation here between image and phenomenon, one would need Chinese aesthetics, which uses the same term, both noun and verb, to designate the image-making dimension and the advent.[40]

The idea of ‘the great image has no form’ involves not only variance and compossibility, but also the transition from one figure to another: the progress more than the stopping, the process more than the creation, having neither beginning nor end, always in transition from one form to another, one aspect to another.[41] This way of thinking is attentive to transformation, to what is underway, and this is why it focuses on landscape and some of its particular forms. For example, landscapes painted on rolls progressively unveil each moment as attached to the preceding moment and to the next, and the omnipresent void ensures passage between forms, between what appears and what disappears.[42] And there are evening landscapes in which the great image comes into its own:[43] ‘…when, in the transition from day to night, forms acquire haloes and turn dark, [and] gradually become indistinct. As the rising haze obliterates the ridges and the whole landscape begins to sink into penumbra, these forms, in becoming indistinguishable, call on us to go beyond their temporary individuation and return to the undifferentiated fount of things.’[44] So the landscapes are clouded over, painted in that state of suspense between forming and de-forming, between presence and absence.[45] ‘…the great image is “on the rise” and expansive. Even as it manifests itself in concrete forms, it remains inhabited by vagueness and haziness, which deploy it indefinitely. Even as the great image figures and shows a particular aspect, it contains many other possible aspects in its fount. In becoming fully realized, the great image remains permeated throughout by the “unfathomable” virtue of emptiness, opening it partway to the undifferentiated.’[46]

In the work of Henri Barande, the blurred and undecided are allied to the ‘virtue of the void’ – the void between the tessellae of mosaic images, the void that envelops like mist the forms that aggregate and disaggregate in grains of colour, the void encircling the figures that appear and disappear, the void, finally, that separates and links all the images along a continuous line. The void that works in things up close,[47] making them uncertain and open, is less an entity than an ‘operating factor’.[48] It dynamically takes part in the logic of variance and compossibility set in train by the mosaic tension between the discontinuity of the singular and fragmentary images and the continuity of the great image constantly in a state of becoming. Void and transformation inhabit each

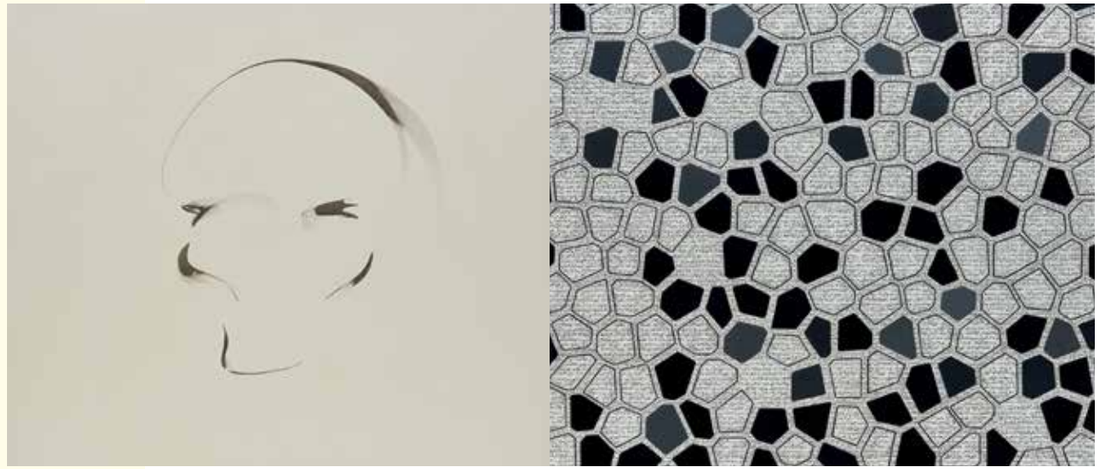
image, carried along in the same impetus towards its disappearance and figurability, depending on the forces of indetermination and the inchoate. And they inhabit all the images, taken in their continuity and togetherness. As the artist himself explains:

> The pictures in juxtaposition are connected and disconnected. Sometimes they harmonise with each other, and sometimes they flee from each other in horror. What opposes them is the unexpected source of their interaction, and their unfathomable separation is fed by the link created before it ruptures. Since no place is assigned to them, their infinite number of combinations is proportional to the chaos resulting from the state of impermanence. At the heart of this collapse of the symbolic, reality is sublimated as the only method of return. Return of the world of before, of the eternally unavowed desire for a beginning, of the world that precedes all knowledge. [49]

The resulting paintings seem to deploy a process of inexhaustible rearranging, since there is an infinite number of combinations involving hundreds of canvases. But the process is not wild or discordant. Landscapes and faces appearing and disappearing, enigmatic objects and abstract compositions, photographs and old paintings: his canvases link and unlink themselves in a never-ending juxtaposition that 'reveals both dissonances and harmonies, sometimes incompatible with the laws of harmony'. He adds, 'If you prolong the moment of surprise and resist the gladness, sadness or distress inevitably produced by a multitude of opposites, then you will hear music.'[50]

Thus is revealed the sequential and obsessive harmony linking human remains with vast jigsaw-puzzle abstract surfaces. A skull with Amerindian feathers sits next to a pink and black limitless landscape (p. 73). The solarised, ghostly traces of two skeletons in a foetal position (death as rebirth) are set side-by-side with a monumental surface covered with a black-and-white snowstorm (p. 70–1). An embryonic, skull-like head is juxtaposed with a segmented mosaic surface (Fig. 39) Further on, the image of a skull and one of a rhomboid from a tomb, enlarged to human height, frame another immense abstract (Fig. 40). This image, unreproducible like all of Barande's canvases requiring a direct perceptive relationship, is so big that it encompasses our entire gaze and submits it to an effect of vibration, an intense pulsation that is almost dizzying. The eye is engaged by a network of geometric figures that are flat and regular at the edges of the picture but become progressively deformed until they are sucked into the centre as if into an invisible vortex. It is an eye-landscape, both centripetal and centrifugal, on the threshold of expansion and reabsorption. It is an image of entropic regression that is also potential movement and energy.[51] It is the unfathomable, emblematic image of that visual thought devoted to opposing and communing forces in the universe, hovering between beginning and completion, between each image and the great image:

> Their community is described as unfathomable.
> Unfathomable and more unfathomable:
> Such is the gate through which crowds the indefinitely accomplished (*Laozi*).[52]



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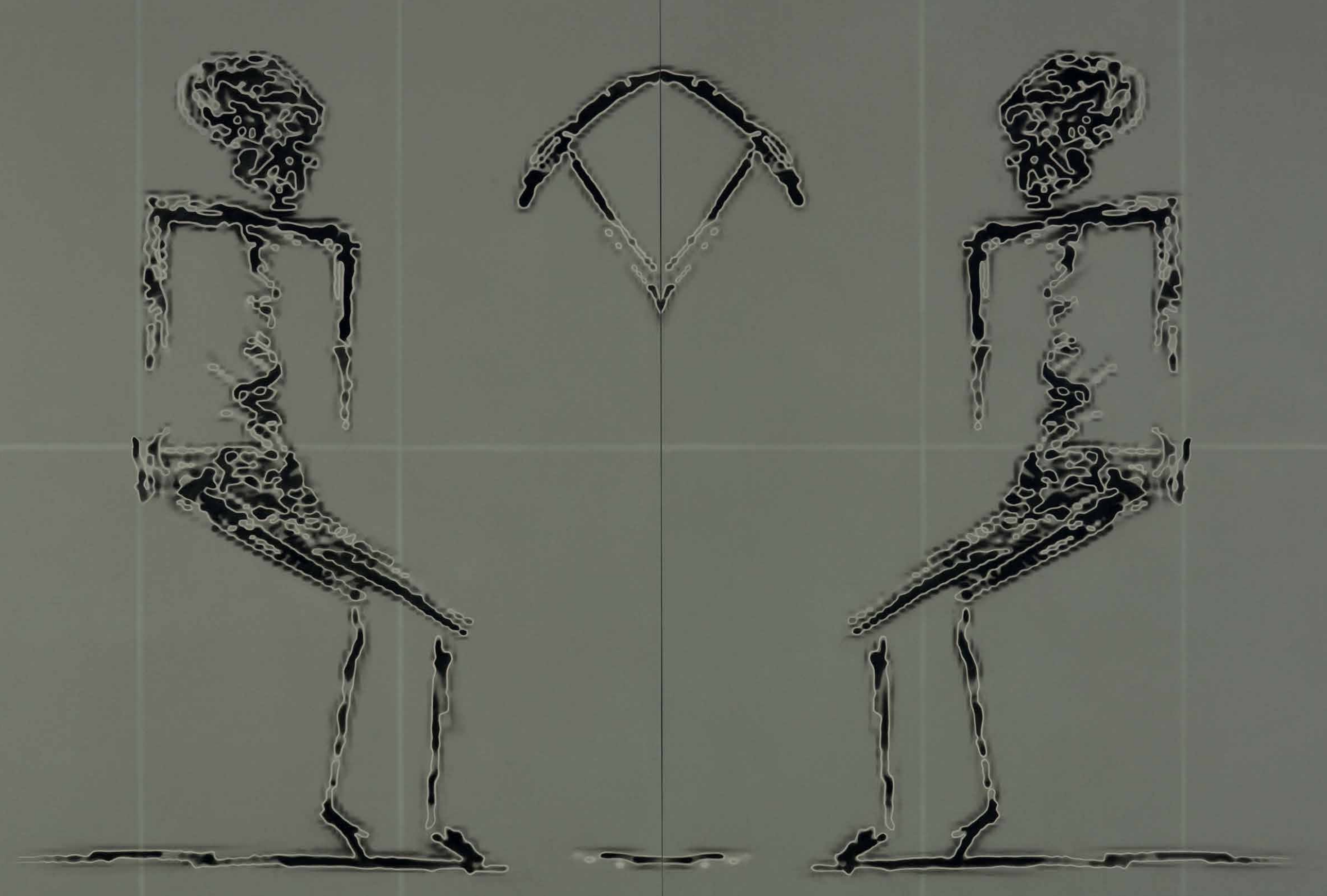
ENDNOTES

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, trans. Carleton Dallery in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 159–90. Revised translation by Michael Smith in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp. 121–49.
2. To use the term suggested by Gérard Wajcman: 'Great works are never complete. Not because they won't be finished, but because, once finished, they fill themselves with the times they go through, and complete themselves in an infinity of ever-beginning interpretations that they engender; even when finished, the works are lacking, not incomplete but rather "discomplete", with an essential and irremediable "discompleteness".' Gérard Wajcman, 'Le regard de l'ange', *Y voir mieux, y regarder de plus près: autour de Hubert Damisch*, ed. Danièle Cohn (Paris: ENS, 2003), p. 188.
3. Henri Barande, *Identification d'un absent. Entretien avec Romaric Sulger Büel* (Paris: Manuela Éditions, 2008), pp. 14–15 (translation taken from the present publication, p. 217).
4. Barande, *Sublimation* (cf. the present publication, pp. 7–9).
5. Barande, *Identification d'un absent*, op. cit., p. 28 (present publication, p. 223).
6. On the practice of self-destruction in modern art, see Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), particularly pp. 380–97.
7. Cf. Derek Pullen, quoted by David Galloway in 'A Reclusive Businessman's 50-Year Passion: Sculptor's Secret is Out', *The New York Times,* 12 August 2000.
8. Barande, *Identification d'un absent*, op. cit., pp. 14–15.
9. Cf. Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art* (London: Reaktion Books), 2008.
10. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Études préparatoires à la 2e partie des Recherches philosophiques*, trans. Gérard Granel (Mauvezin: Éditions T.E.R., 1985), § 554.
11. Leon Battista Alberti, *De Statua / La Statue*, ed. Oskar Bätschmann (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2011), pp. 62–3. On the potential image as origin of art, cf. especially Gamboni, *Potential Images*, op. cit., pp. 44–50; Jean-Hubert Martin (ed.), *Une image peut en cacher une autre*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2009), pp. 1–10.
12. Henri Michaux, *Émergence-Résurgence* (Geneva: Skira, 1972), p. 14.
13. In the tradition of the Dutch anthropomorphic landscapes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On this subject I refer the reader to Michel Weemans, *Herri met de Bles. Les ruses du paysage au temps de Bruegel et d'Érasme* (Paris: Hazan, 2013), especially pp. 171–203.
14. Barande, *Identification d'un absent*, op. cit., p. 30 (present publication, p. 224).
15. Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes. Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Paris, Cortis, 1943), p. 20. Cited in Gamboni, *Potential Images*, op. cit., p. 38.
16. Cf. Gamboni, ibid., p. 37.
17. About this, cf. *Images doubles. Pièges et révélations du visible*, ed. Michel Weemans, Dario Gamboni, Jean-Hubert Martin (Paris, Hazan, 2016).
18. To describe the art of Gerard Fromanger. Cf. Michel Foucault, *La peinture photogénique* (1974; reprinted Paris: Le point du Jour, 2014).
19. Before painting, mosaics were present in objects and sculptures: a fragment of white coral and rusted metal lace with a texture like a mosaic; a sculpted, fragmented body made up of precious red tessellae, fixed in a crystalline resin sarcophagus.
20. As expressed by Stendhal, stating that 'the veritable painting made for eternity is the mosaic', repeating a topos that dates back to Domenico Ghirlandaio: 'La vera pittura per l'eternità essere il mosaico.' Stendhal, *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*, vol. I (Paris, 1817), p. 155; cited by Lucien Dällenbach, *Mosaïques. Un objet esthétique à rebondissements (*Paris, Seuil, 2001), p. 43.
21. Cf. Dällenbach, *Mosaïques*, op. cit., p. 40.
22. On this structural definition of the mosaic cf. Dällenbach, *Mosaïques*, op. cit.
23. 'If a person were to look at an intricate pavement so narrowly as to see only the single tessera, he would say the artist, lacking a sense of composition, had set the little pieces at haphazard, since he could not take in at once the whole pattern, inlaid to form a single image of beauty.' *De ordine* 1.1.2 (BA 4/2: 72–74), cited in *Saint Augustine*, Penguin Lives, trans. Garry Wills (New York: Penguin Viking, 1993), p. 3.
24. Cf. Dällenbach, *Mosaïques*, op. cit., p. 41.
25. In the case of art nouveau mosaics, like Gaudi's, also numerous mosaic paintings such as Klee's checkerboard paintings, Dali's *Lincoln*, Chuck Close's mosaic portraits, and the pixelated works of Gerhard Richter.
26. Dällenbach, quoting Cézanne who claims one must 'use the actual qualities of painting to be a painter', analyses these values which question unity and mimesis, promoting incompleteness, emphasising the fragment and materiality. Cf. Dällenbach, *Mosaïques*, op. cit., pp. 90 *et seq*.
27. As Dällenbach shows, there was a parallel rehabilitation in literature, as e.g. Balzac, Apollinaire and Claude Simon favoured fragmentary writing in tension with a problematic unity, yielding to discontinuities and blanks that broke the causal or discursive thread. Cf. Gila Lustiger stating à propos of her novel *The Inventory*: 'I wanted to show not what is, but what isn't, the void, the lack (...) If you write in a linear fashion, the story has a logic that escapes what you want to say. So I like to make a break.' Cited in Dällenbach, *Mosaïques*, op. cit., p. 67, note 34.
28. Ibid., p. 56.
29. Which he sent to his father (oral communication from Henri Barande).
30. As Victor Stoïchita puts it. On the filter figure and the question of the impeded gaze in painting, cf. Stoïchita, *L'effet Sherlock Holmes; variations du regard de Manet à Hitchcock* (Paris: Hazan, 2015).
31. Here I am principally guided by his book *The Great Image Has No Form, or On the Nonobject through Painting*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and the chapter entitled 'The great image has no form', in *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004). Also by his very fine analyses of landscape painting, especially *Vivre de paysage ou l'impensé de la Raison* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014); and *In Praise of Blandness: Proceeding from Chinese Thought and Aesthetics*, trans. Paula M. Varsano (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004). On Jullien's heterotopical thought as 'detour thinking', cf. especially François Jullien, *Penser d'un dehors (la Chine)* (Paris: Seuil 2000); and *Oser construire pour François Jullien* (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2007).
32. An idea also expressed by Guo Xi, an eleventh-century scholar-painter, and exponent of painting that took in all views of a landscape. E.g. a mountain, 'seen from up close up is "so", seen from further away, "a different so"; and from an even greater distance, "yet another so". (...) "The form of the mountain is to be seen on each of its faces ... it is the form of one mountain and, at the same time, of tens and hundreds of mountains."' Guo Xi, 'Peindre une grande montagne', cited in Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form*, op. cit., p. 55. When he adds that the mountain 'is a large thing', we should understand, says Jullien, that 'large' does not mean size but 'the capacity to contain everything possible, without getting caught up in any, without limiting oneself to any'. Cf. François Jullien, *L'archipel des idées de François Jullien* (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 2014), p. 182.
33. On the closely connected notions of 'variance' and 'compossibility', cf. especially the following works by Jullien: *The Great Image Has No Form*, op. cit., pp. 43 *et seq.*; *Detour and Access*, op. cit., pp. 259–86; *L'archipel des idées de François Jullien*, op. cit., pp. 179–92; *Vivre de paysage*, op. cit., pp. 61–87.
34. 'In this sense, "great", whether referring to the tao or to the great image, signifies that which embraces the various possibilities and contains every angle of vision within itself. "Great" means that which is open to both one and the other, that which does not exclude. (...) "Great," in short, expresses the plenitude of compossibility (...) Parallel to "haziness," which expresses the indetermination of the foundational, the "greatness" of the tao or of the great image connotes the *de*-termination that most amply embraces determinations and con-fuses them.' Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form*, op. cit., pp. 50-1.
35. On the indistinct, cf. Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form*, chapter 3, 'Vague, drab, indistinct', op. cit., pp. 27–42; also Michel Makarius, *Une Histoire du flou* (Paris: Éditions du Félin, 2016).
36. Cf. Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form*, op. cit., p. 93.
37. Ibid.
38. The availability and compossibility that are part of the great image are best designated by 'blandness'. This is why Chinese thought and aesthetics attach such value to this word, which Western thought understands in its negative sense. Cf. François Jullien, *In Praise of Blandness*, op. cit., Note 33.
39. As Louis Marin puts it in 'Les plaisirs du désert en peinture', *Philippe de Champaigne ou la présence cachée* (Paris: Hazan, 1995), pp. 30–75.
40. On the term *che*, cf. François Jullien, *The Propensity of Things. Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).
41. Cf. François Jullien, *Procès ou Création. Une introduction à la pensée des lettrés chinois* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).
42. On roll paintings of landscapes, cf. especially Jullien, *Detour and Access*, op. cit., pp. 327–30; *The Propensity of Things*, op. cit., pp. 129–59.
43. 'To lodge one evening in the mists (...) while the landscape is losing itself in confusion: emerging-immersing, between what is there and what is not there – this is difficult to represent': Qian Wenshi, cited in François Jullien, *Le nu impossible* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 54.
44. Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form*, op. cit., p. 2.
45. It is both the transition between day and night and that between solid and liquid that gives the landscape its compossibility. 'Mountain(s)-water(s)' says the ideogram translated in the West by 'landscape'. Cf. especially Jullien, *Vivre de paysage*, op. cit., pp. 39–60.
46. Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form*, op. cit., p. 92.
47. Cf. ibid., p. 82.
48. 'The activity that defines it is (and only is) "placing in communication," de-opacifying, "permeating," and carrying further.' Ibid., p. 90.
49. Barande, *Identification d'un absent*, op. cit., p. 42 (present publication, pp. 229–30).
50. Ibid., p. 44 (present publication, p. 231).
51. 'The charm of the inchoate lies in its chaos', writes Michel Jeanneret on the Renaissance fascination with the indeterminate and chaos. Cf. Michel Jeanneret, *Perpetuum mobile. Métamorphoses des corps et des oeuvres de Vinci à Montaigne* (Paris: Macula, 1997), p. 93.
52. Cited in Jullien, *Detour and Access*, op. cit., p. 268.

Michel Weemans—La Grande Image



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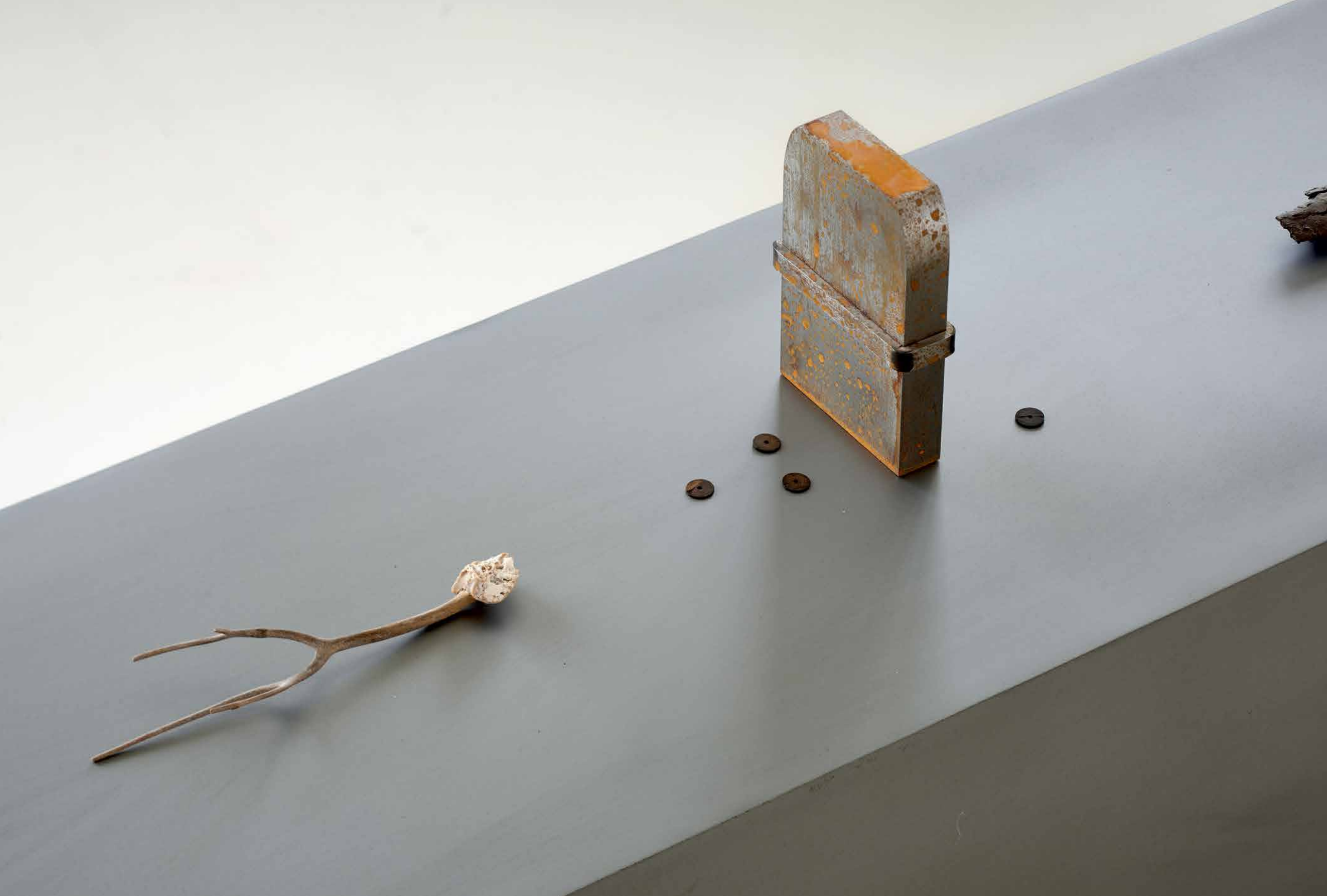

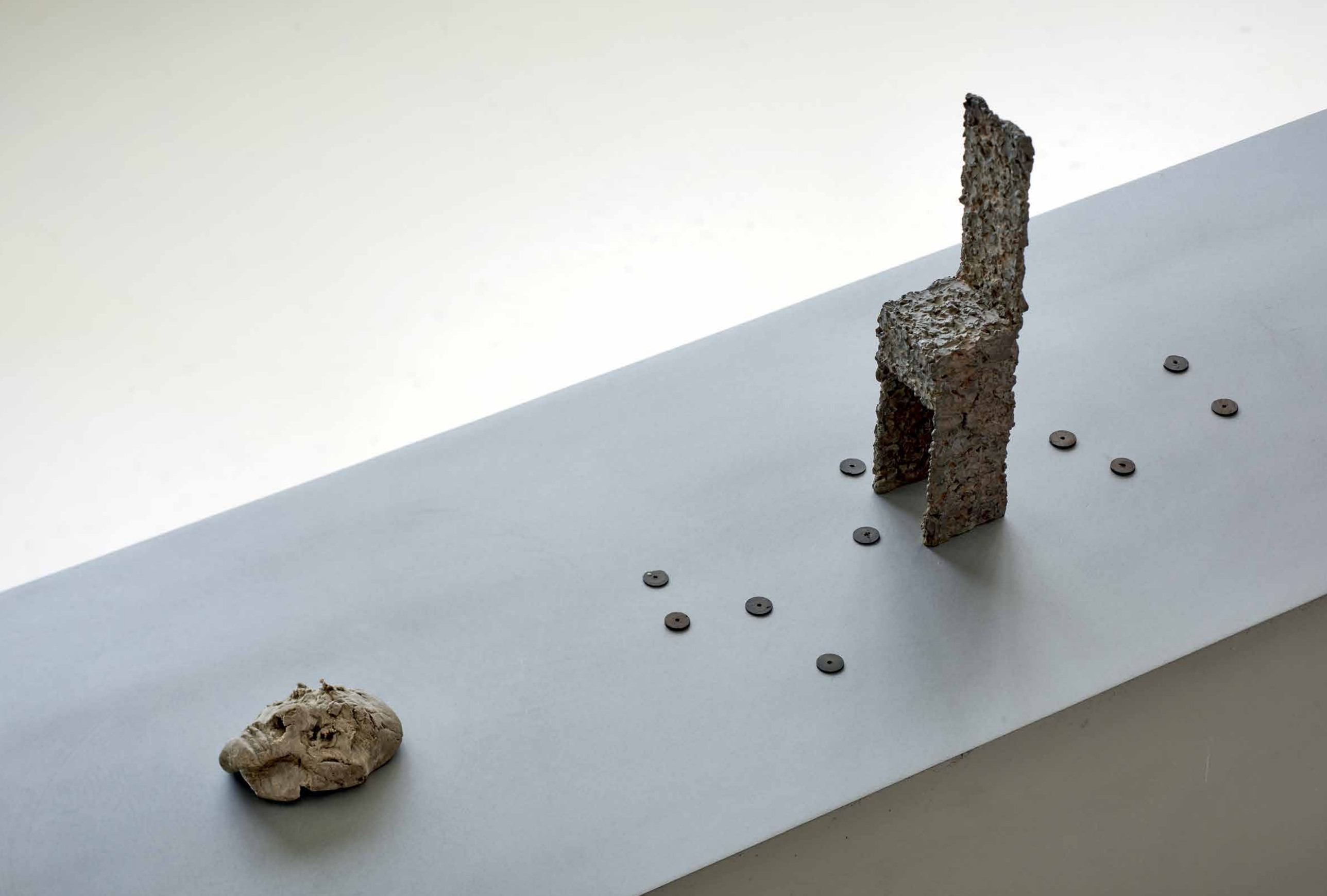

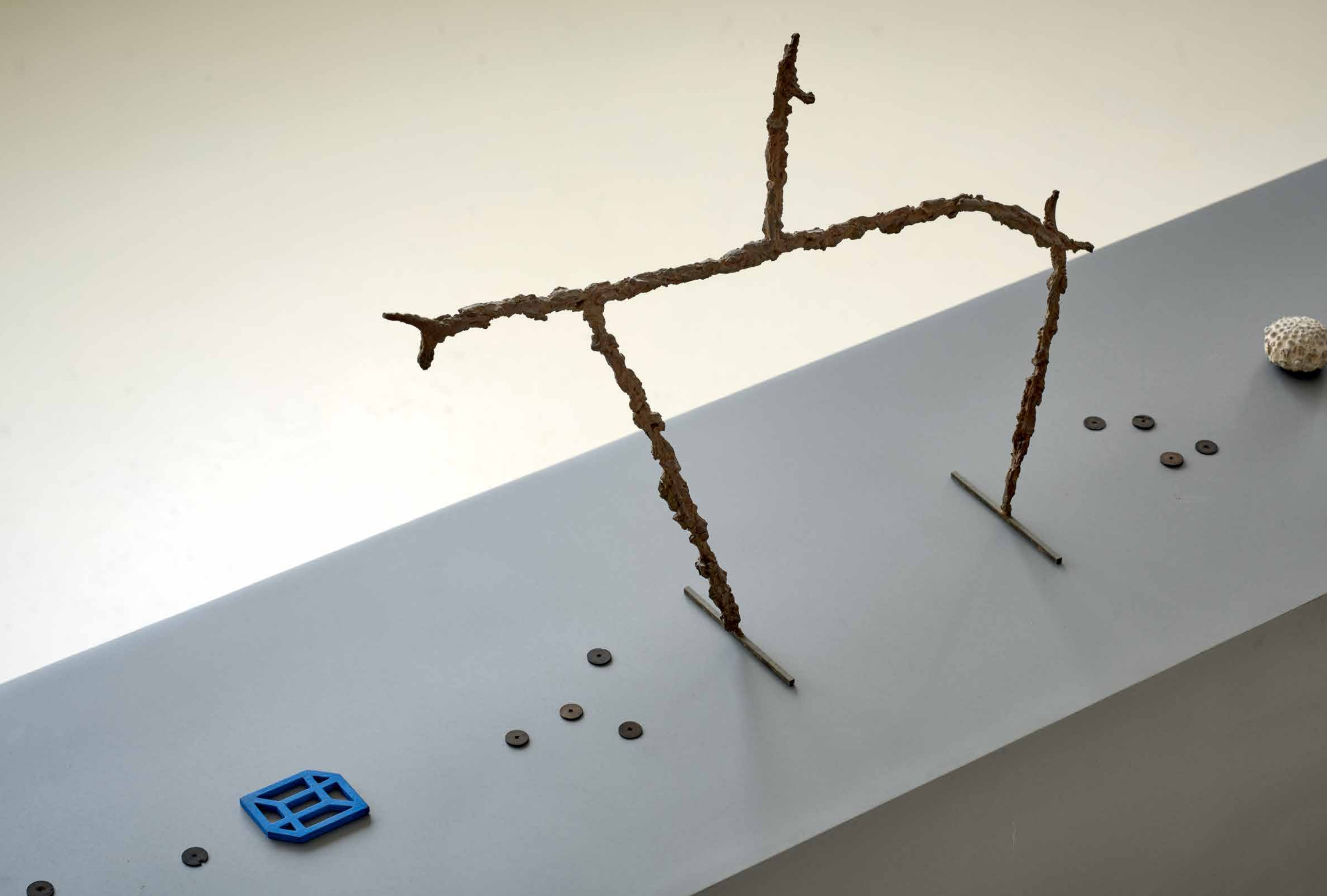

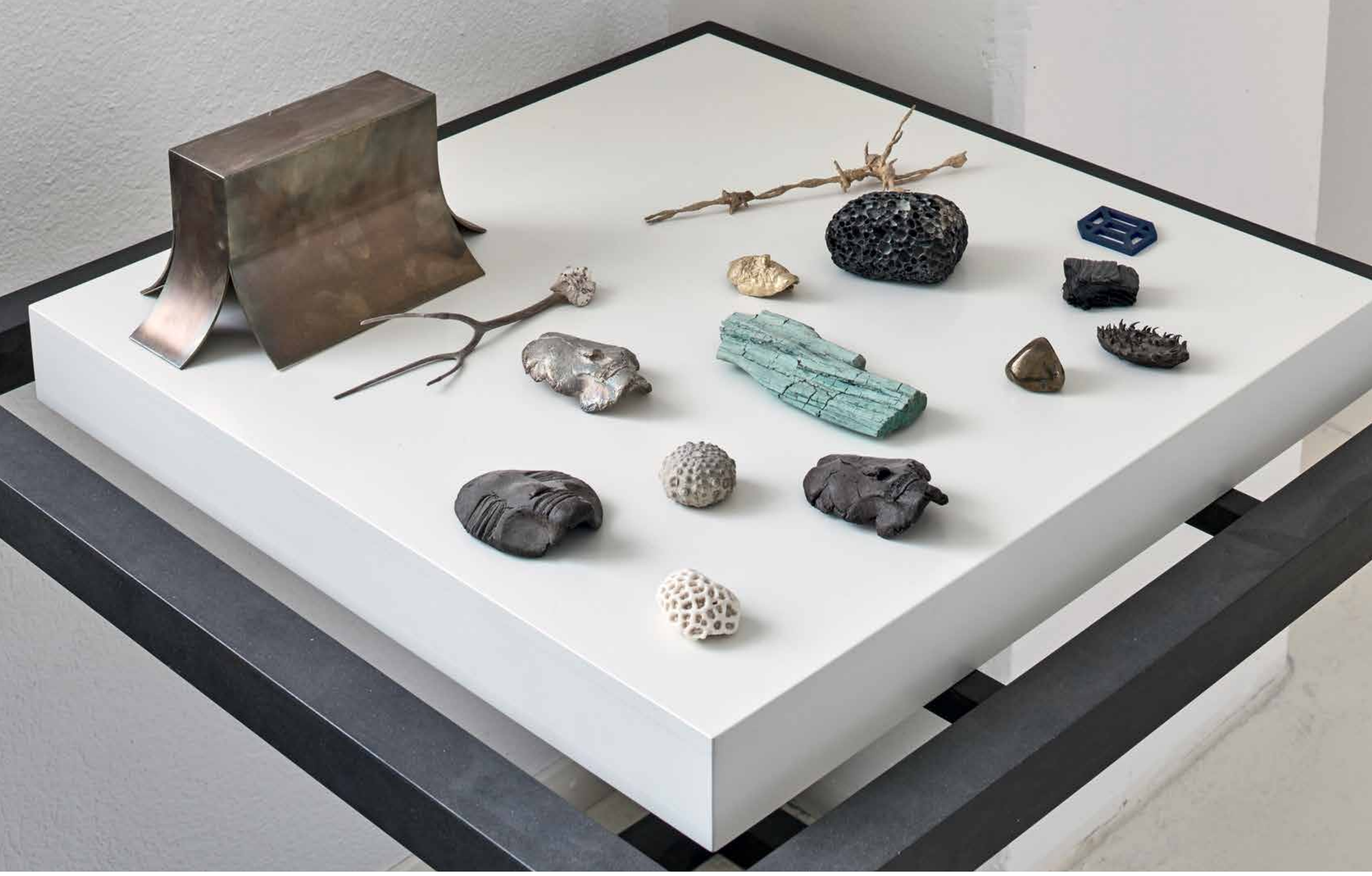

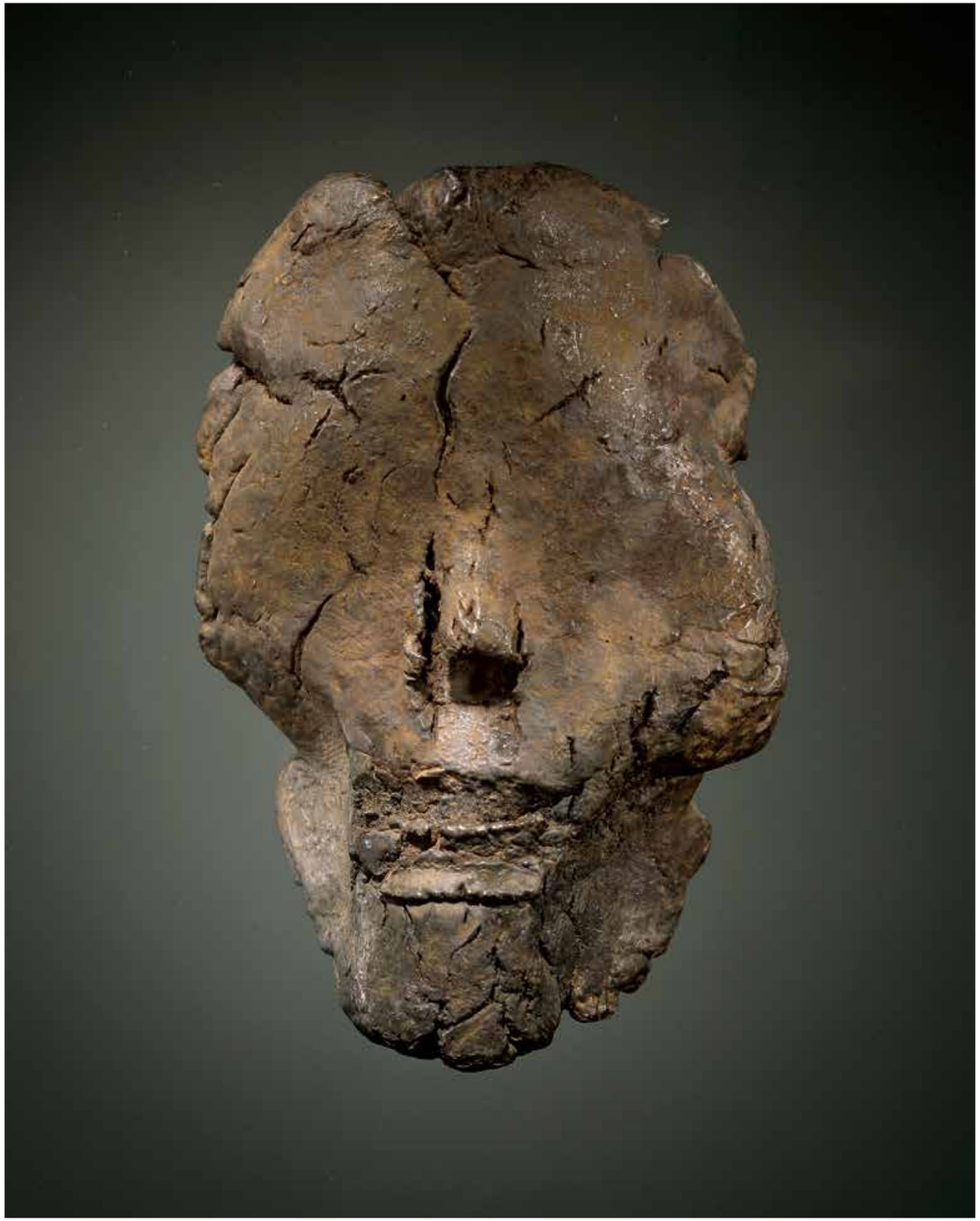

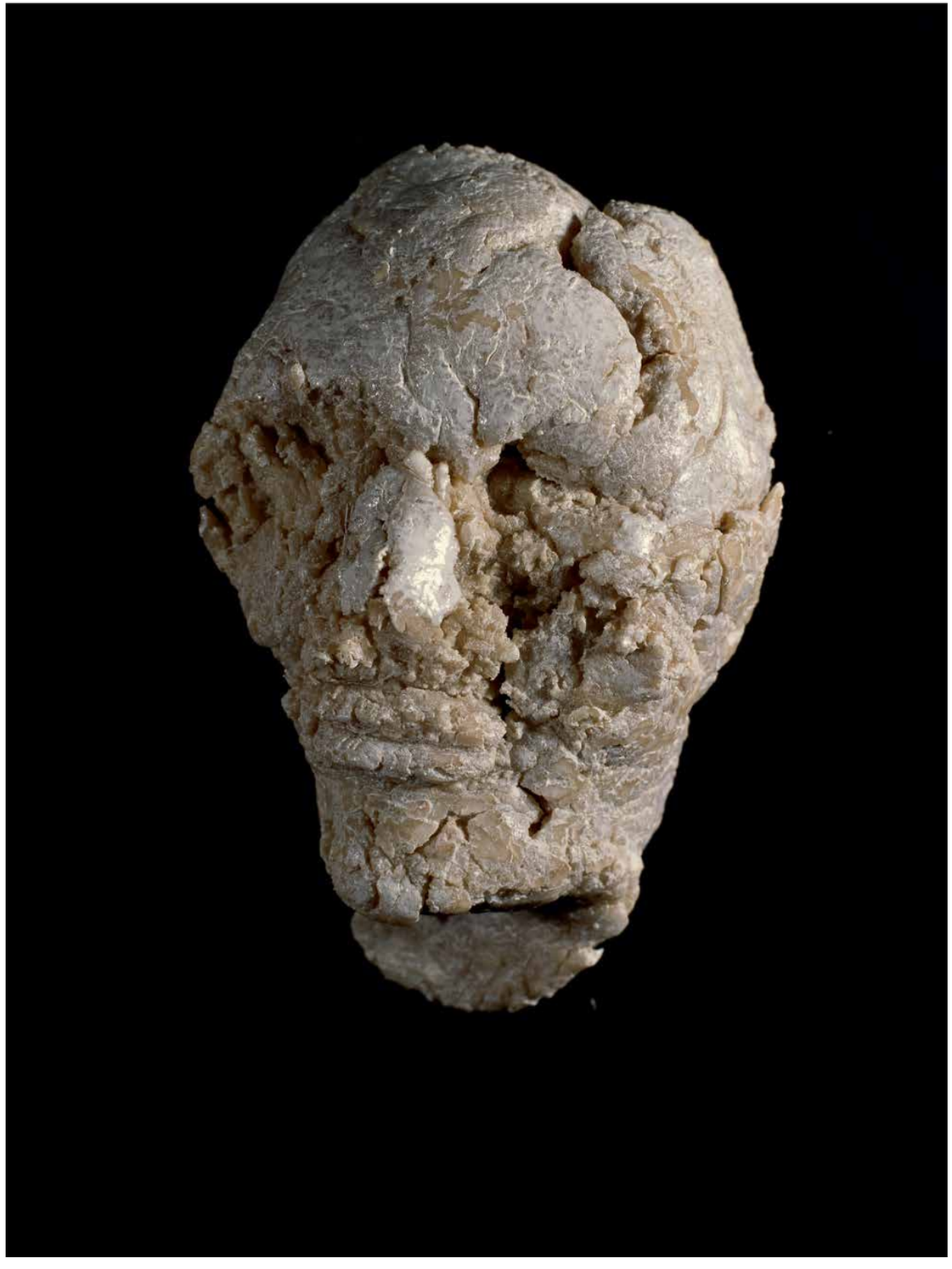

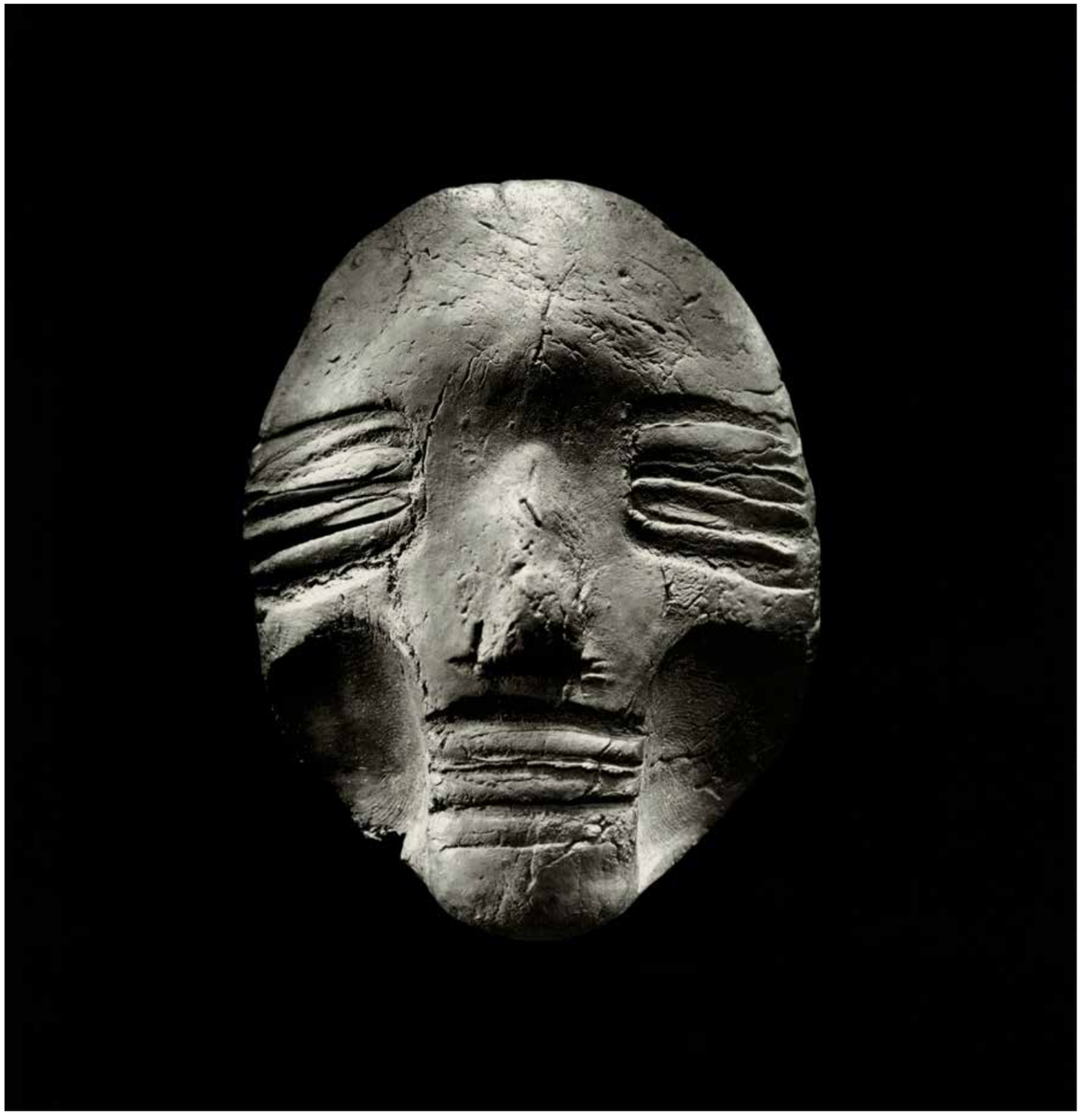

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