

XEROLAGE 39



John Rinninger

Introduction by Stephen Perkins

John Rininger, mail & stamp artist, magazine publisher, and networker died unexpectedly at 45 from a seizure in his apartment in Chicago on November 11th, 2006. The works in this posthumous issue of *Xerolage* have been taken from a number of different sources, and they can only offer a faint trace of his work, his concerns, and the many passions that animated his idiosyncratic personality. I can't say I ever understood John, he was a complex man, and yet one sensed a sharp intelligence, an intense curiosity about the world, and I responded to that, and I'm richer for knowing him.

My first contact with John was through the mail in the form of envelopes filled with his photocopy collages, his artists' periodicals & books, and anything else that was at hand at the moment he sealed the package. The thing I noticed straight away was his total engagement with the photocopy process, its technical capabilities and the incredible freedom in the way he remixed images, texts, and the variety of both. Out of this curiosity and fixation with the photocopy machine poured a continuous series of completely individual and wonderfully weird & intense publications that were all part of a long-running publishing project that originated as a collaboration with Dominique Johns from the mid to late '80s, and then continued by himself up to the present under the name *Catalyst Komics*. In between John collaborated with a number of other editors/artists notably with Tom Long & Gene White on the four issues of *Even Paranoiacs Can Have Enemies*, other collaborators included Brad Goins & Andrew Oleksiuk.

John's fascination with the photocopy machine led him to work for Kinko's in the late 1980s in DeKalb as well as the last few years of his life in Chicago. He was thus a part of an unheralded elite of photocopy artists who combined their artistic interests with a means of earning a livelihood, as well as securing their employer's unwitting sponsorship for their work.

Although none are reproduced here, John's artists' stamps were another of his continuing activities. Produced under the *Rausch Post* imprint these are beautifully crafted digital works that shared the unique qualities that were also found in his collages. What distinguishes the stamps from his photocopy work is a more restrained style and the fact that they were in color.

As I write this, I have on my desk the last 5 issues of *Catalyst Komics* (#804-808). There's an overwhelming theme of water in the images that John used for these publications, indeed it's no coincidence that his last email address was water805@covad.net. In one of these issues (#807) he connects the entire 12-page booklet with the sentence "we enter the circle at night and are consumed by fire." This Latin palindrome (In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni) also happens to be the title of Guy Debord's sixth and final film. In Debord's notes for this film he writes that "the entire film...is based on the theme of water...evoking the evanescence of everything...as a metaphor for the flowing of time." Debord continues his commentary on In Girum remarking that, "Secondarily, there is the theme of fire; of momentary brilliance — revolution, Saint-Germain-des-Pres, youth, love, negation in the night, the Devil, battles..." this second theme is also proudly claimed by John in his biographical text (see back inside cover) in which he writes that in the Haymarket Centennial Miracle Mile Run of May 1986 in Chicago he "led the attack on the IBM Building 401 N. Mich." I have no doubt that John was referencing the title of this exemplary situationist film, paying homage to a hero, and savoring a text that resonated with his own struggles.

It's neither ironic, nor surprising that John should be exploring such profound subject matter so close to the end of his life, for a persistent theme throughout his later work was his search to achieve what he called a "purity of heart". This quest led him to focus on the difficult, and oftentimes painful, questions of our existence. As I conclude this introduction I'm looking at a work of John's from 2004 — it's a postcard-sized photographic montage that combines a profile of his face with eyes closed and an image of a blustery seascape, beneath this is a phrase that appears in a number of his works that reads "the heart is mostly made of water."

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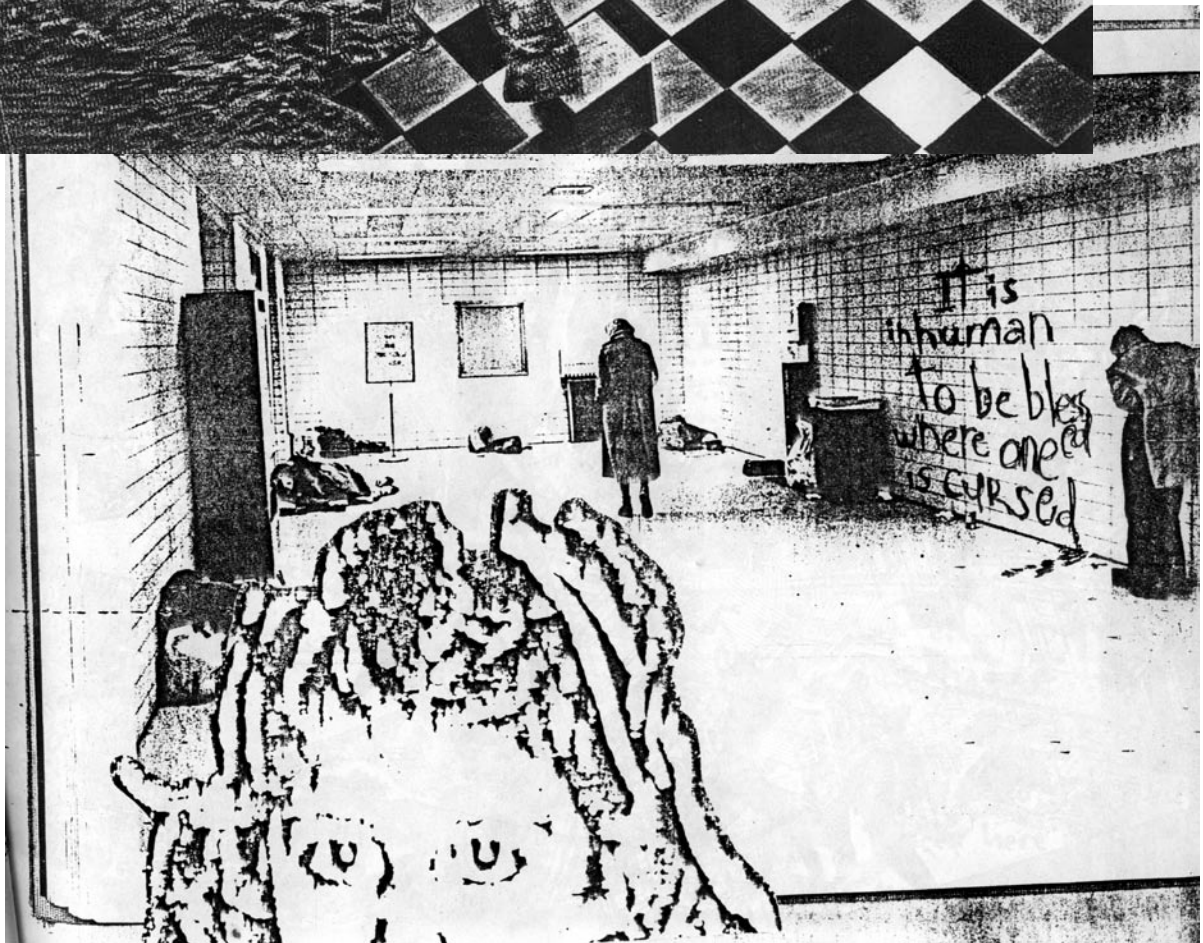


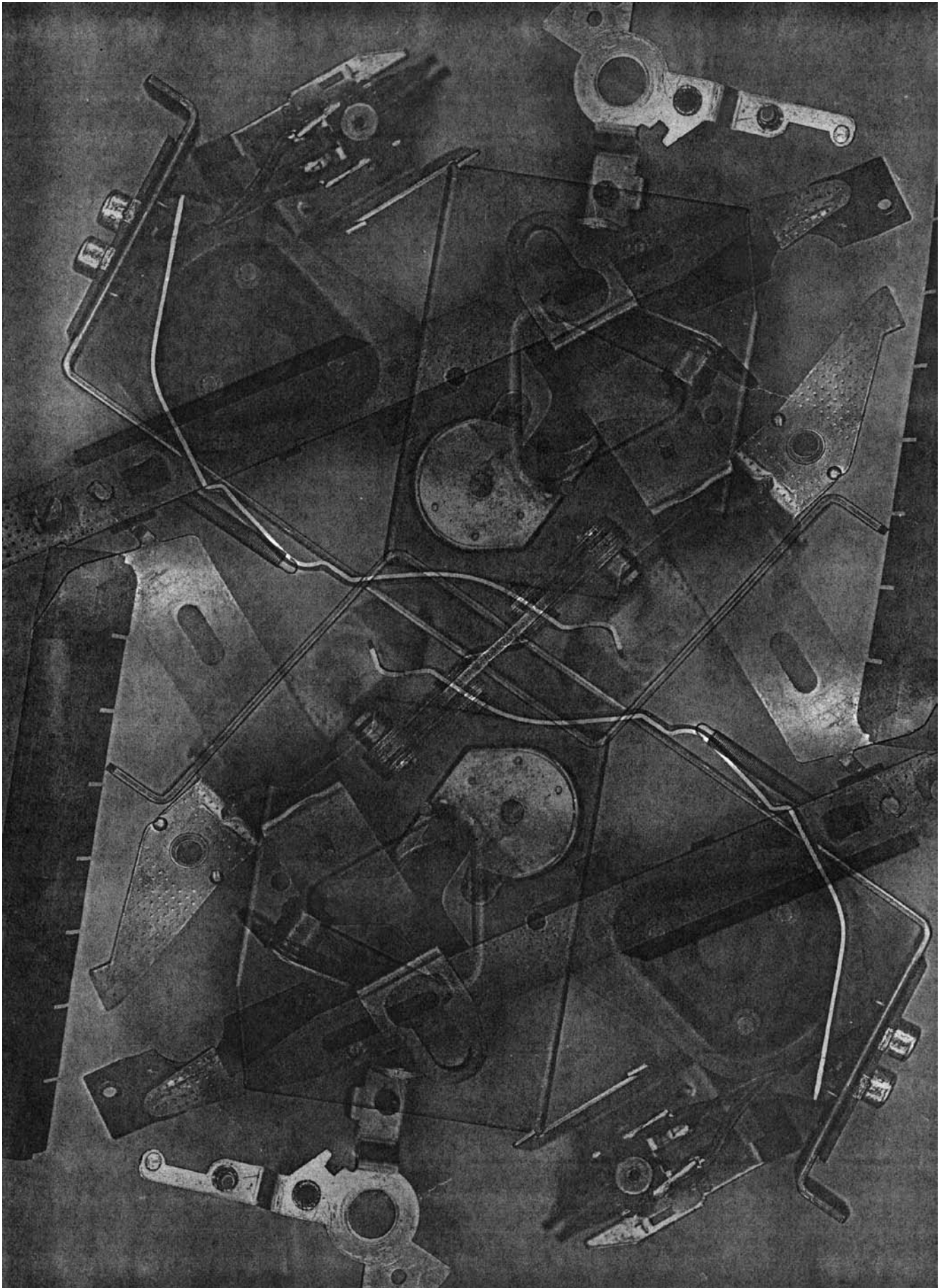
Figure 11-12. The close range. The image shows the extensive damage to the face.

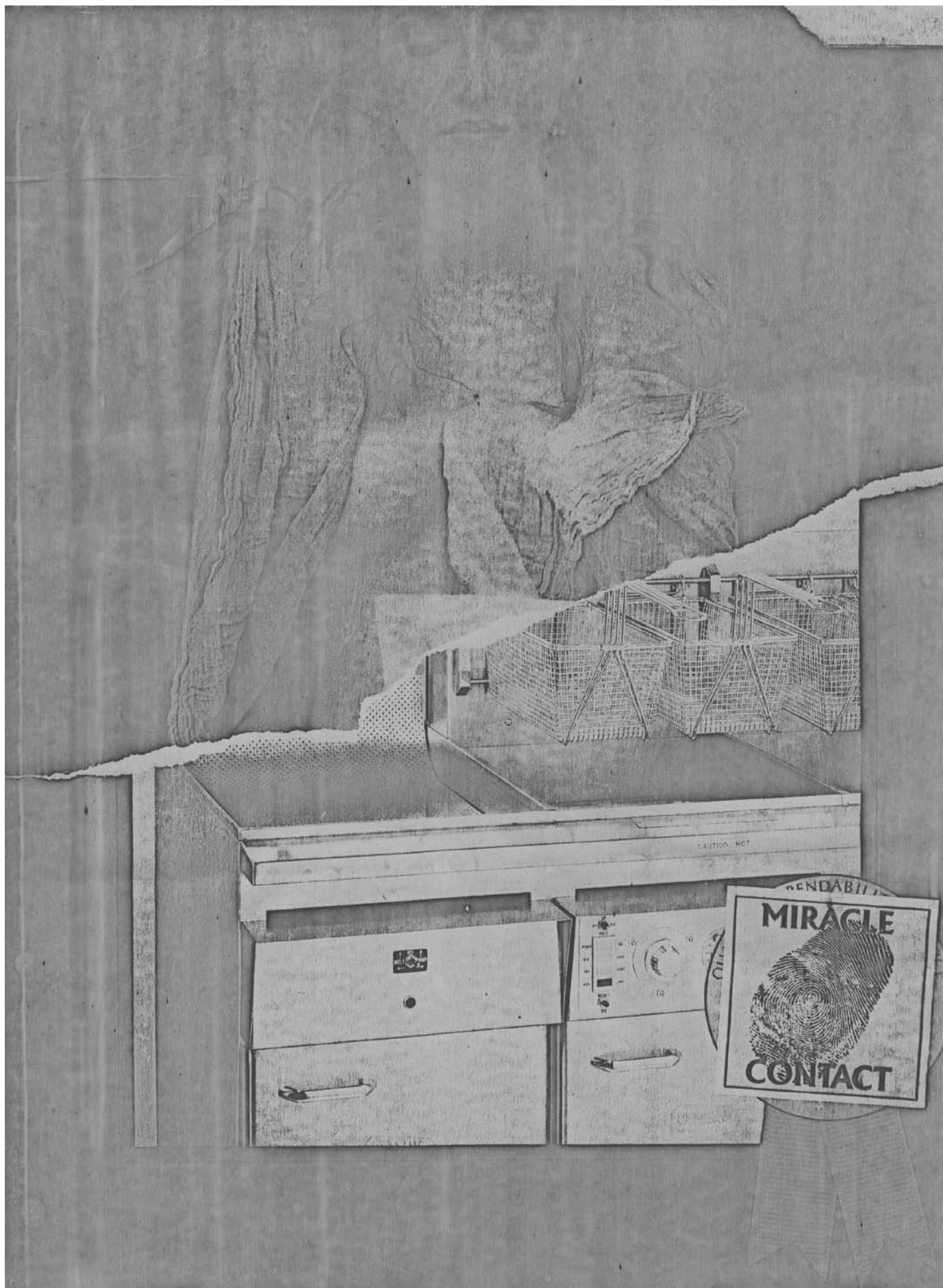
velocity bullets fired from rifles or large bore may drive the surrounding tissues of the bullet into the body. These fragmented bones may become secondary missiles causing internal lacerations such like a bullet. This may not be apparent at the time of the injury.

round or low velocity bullets may determine the exit point of the bullet.

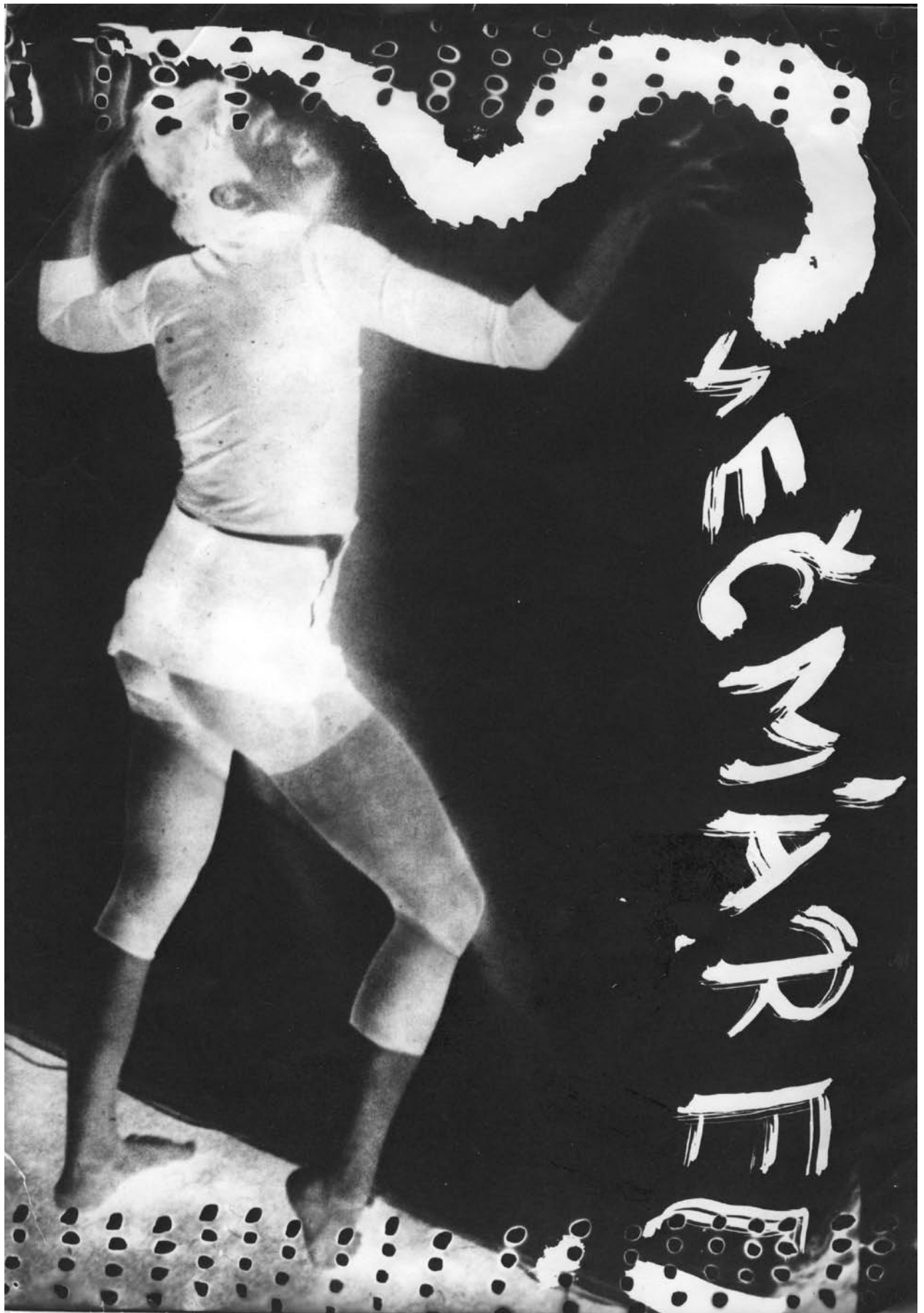














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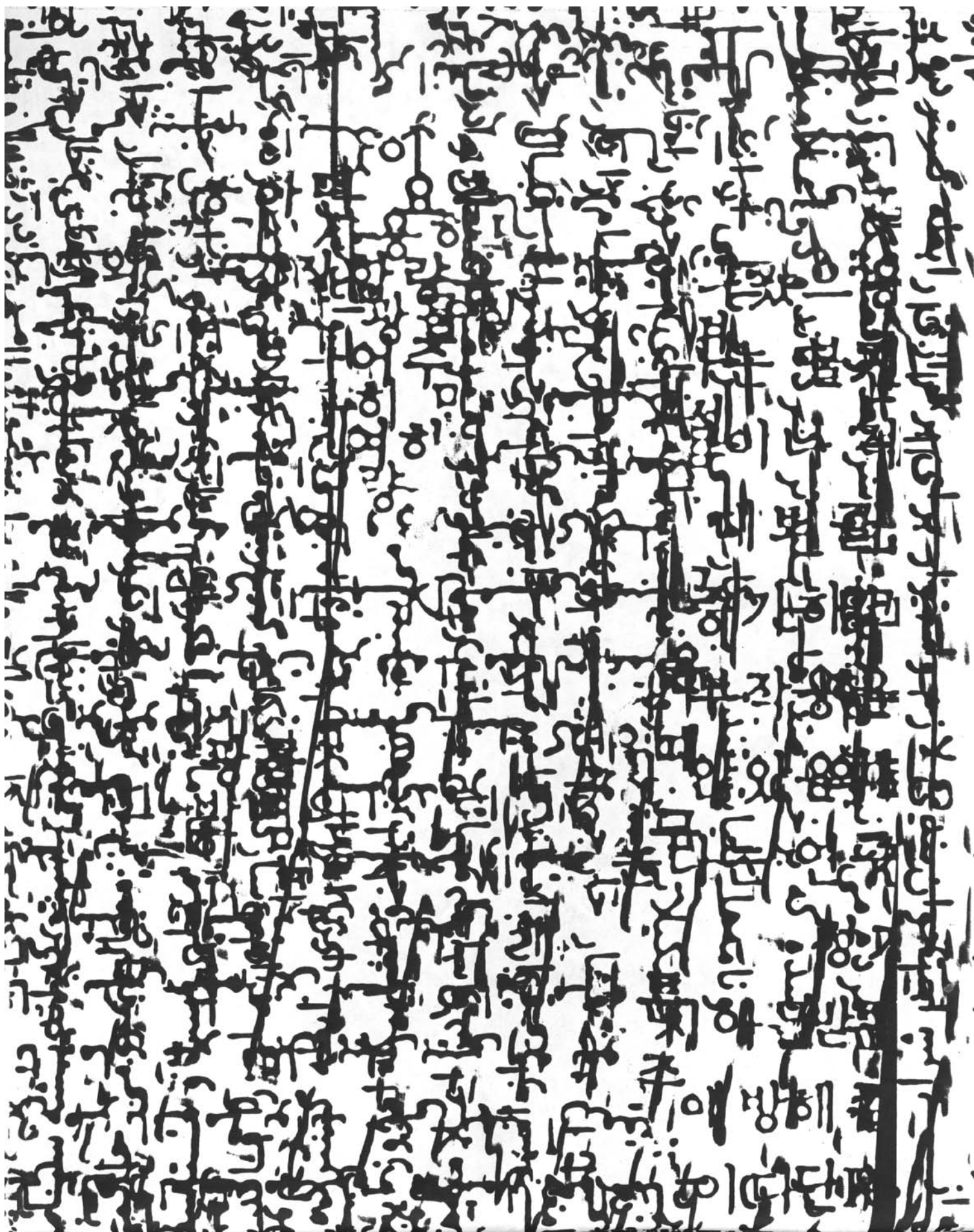
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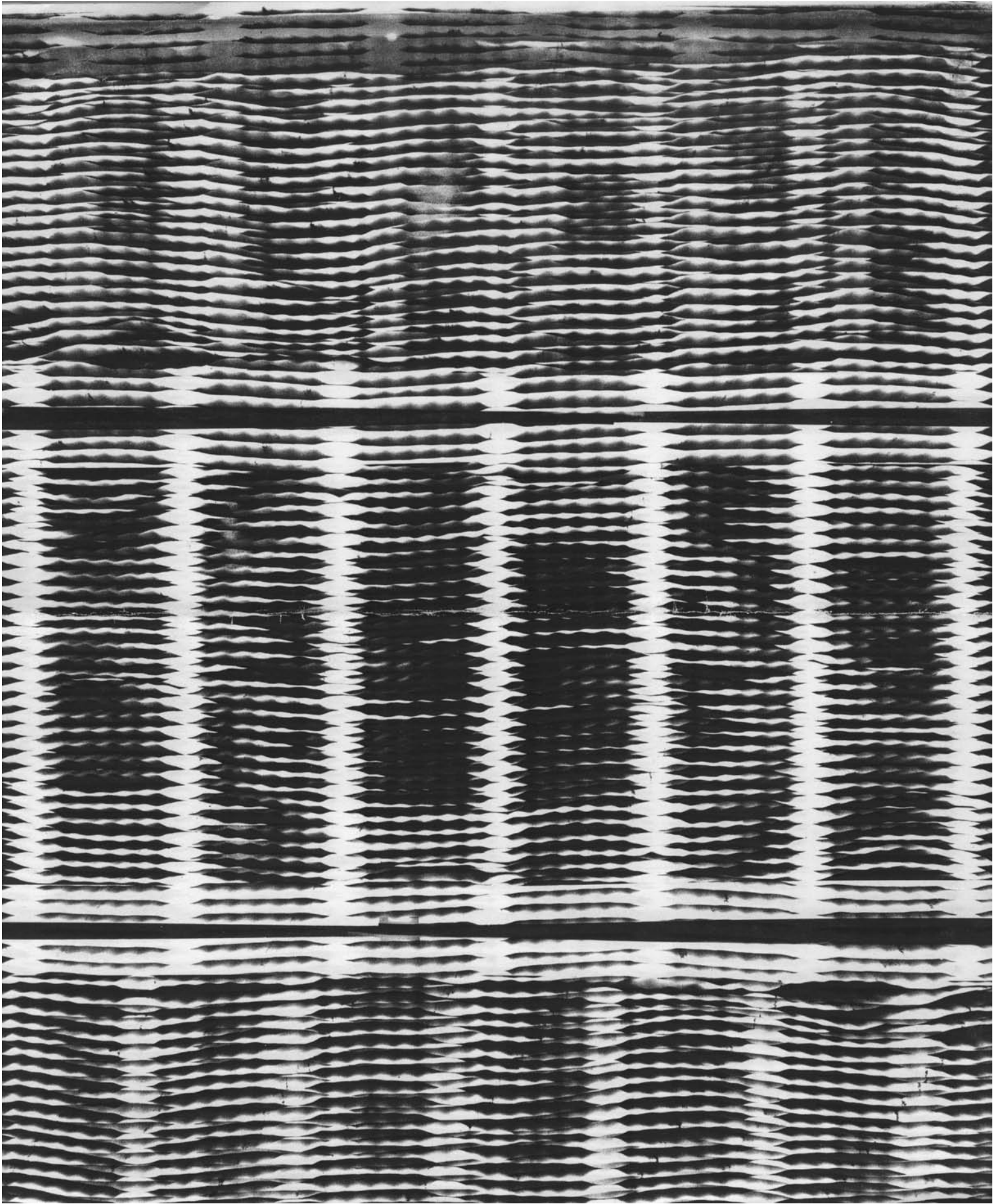
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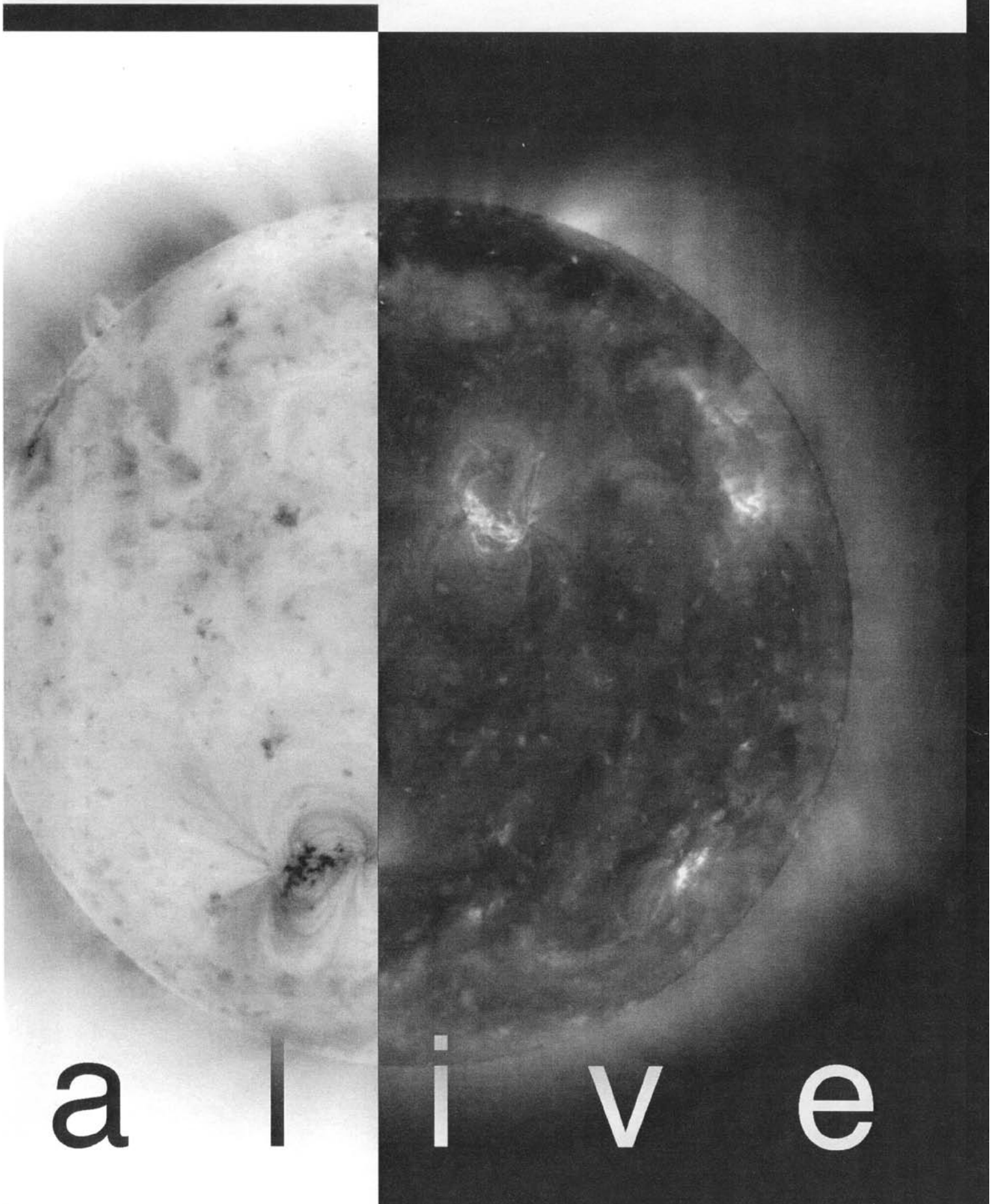












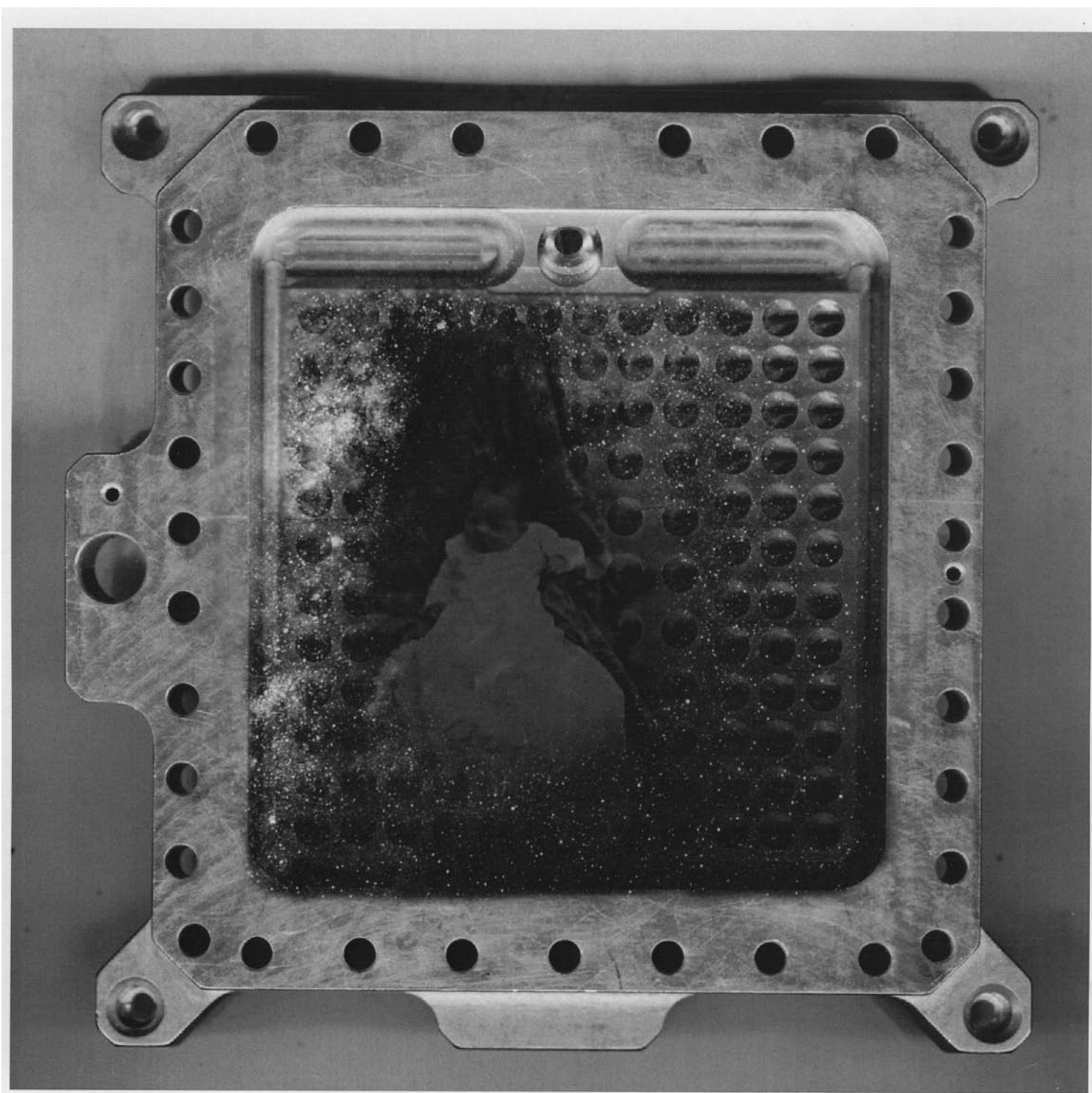


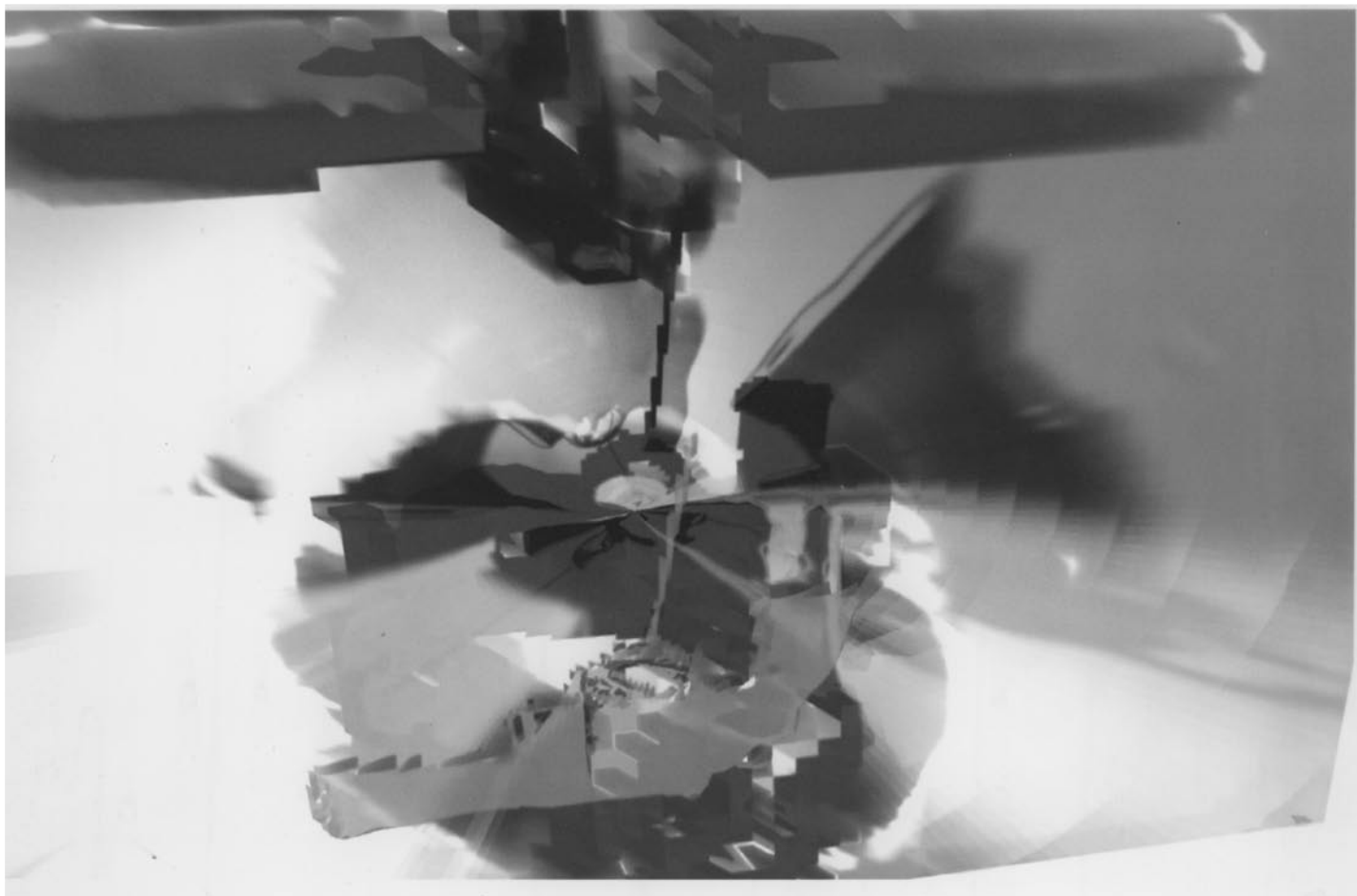




MTO DTC







Hello, As you can tell I'm not a professional artist. I never understood those people. I don't claim sovereignty over these things. As I've gotten older, I hate things less. Museums, the whole structured image delivery device system that is galleries - even people who wear too much black; all these things I am not at war with anymore. Audrey is a friend of mine. I like 20% of the images (which is very, very good). So I trust her. Now she wants me to show to you - 10 slides, a bio - of what looks like me. Apparently the book (Tomb of Louis XXX) sitting under the perf machine did the trick for you. I hope you know Bataille. I am, like his Father, writing you blind. The video is something Tom Trusky shot for his book art class in Boise; the sound is Karl Stockhausen which I cranked a lot during construction. I've done alot too many mail art/stamp things and at the time I was tired of the lack of singularity. When I did this thing in 92/93 it was to will one thing and have purity of heart in order to destroy the heart; I wanted to image the shadowfriend through a rotoscope.. the thing is 600 foot long by 3 foot wide - around 14000 images mostly solvent transfers. I was a color copy specialist. When I was at Purdue (nuke engineering/english - honors (1)) I read a report from NASA about animation systems that used persistence of vision as an animation device and later at Indiana University (comp. lit/pol.sci. BA'83 (2)) - living with Tibetan Bon freaks - we laughed at television noticing that images in a serial form were triggering emotions conditioning the viewer's memory. It's a perverse Art of Memory referencing the impossible, vast real world for cash. Now to image the heart, one must try look at it. The attachment of looking clouds the viewing. So by relentless working (image intoxication (Rausch)), I induced a working delusional state of possession to reach an automatic imaging plateau - for a year. I kept a full time job at Kinkos and at Columbia College library (I didn't sleep much). What it was or what that truly means I hesitate to put down as words. Regardless, I'm pretty sure I can get Tom to send it back if you want to show it in small sections; I worked immediately in a 20 foot swath but had enough memory to hold 70 foot sections and on occasion all of it.

The slides are easier and I think you can work those out. Slides are an occasional cross section usually occurring when someone insists on taking them. Now I didn't play much with art people in Champaign but in Cham/Urb was some of my best collage work, in Cage/Johnson mail art circles, worked for Domino's Pizza, almost in the IWW but they got Maoist, in the Haymarket Centennial Miracle Mile Run May1986 Chicago (led the attack on the IBM Building 401 N.Mich.), magazine insanity with Dominique Johns and Brad Goins later with Tom Long and Gene White in DeKalb, Andrew Oleksiuk in Chicago and maybe Tom again (on tour - Some Zine 2 - www.idbsu.edu/hemingway/some2.htm (some copies in SAIC Book Art Collection, DePaul Special Collections, Sackler Archive, SubSpace Archive, MOMA via Clive Phillpot(3) and copy/mail/stamp art "museums" in Europe and America)), spray painting snow, xerox love, neoism, stamps, later the ASCW - Aggressive School of Cultural Workers, defrocked by the Church of SubGenius, etc.. But in Dekalb - during the Art Strike - I had fun with those people and got into painting more. I was in the student shows - Arts Nova (Jack Olsen used to run this. Jack McCarthy might still remember me, Joshua Kind too (4)) - I won 2nd and 3rd places a few years in a row when I was there -Joe always beat me and Nicole too - and I got the "Surface/Edge" award for Graduate Painters one year. I was in Library School at the time and worked in the Technical Services department at the NIU library. Had a couple solo shows at the usual places and unusual - K-Mart bathrooms, alleys, underground. And I worked at Kinkos there and helped others make things. Katherine wanted to move to Chicago after she got her MFA - 1991. So I came to Chicago and played the emerging artist scene. A group show at MWMWMW; another at No Palace - I gave up. Started the scroll and just made things (5).

Later I found a nice place at the Book Art Center where they make things and teach people how to make things. Amy used to work there. We even taught a stamp class there once. My perforator is there so others can use. They let me show things and once let me curate a Mail Art/Stamp/Copy Culture Show ("Mail Art: Past, Present, Post" March 1997 - www.faximum.com/jas.d/ppp_01.htm). I did get Reed Altemus's entire archive (www.mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/isast/spec.projects/electrobib.htm l) of xerox art magazines there but it was hard getting people to handle them. Nice stuff of Donald Evans and Fluxus West via Jas Felter (www.faximum.com) was there too.

So now Bill gets me into Judy Saslow's gallery to curate a stamp show in October and I'm learning some things. Audrey got me into an exquisite corpse show at Printworks in Nov 99. It's a simple corpse - not animated. Where you work would make such a fine library; and you know Jno, another friend, so I can speak to you now.

John Rininger a.p.

BIO: John Rininger

I was born.

I'm probably alive.

I'm certain to die.

Catalyst Komic 801

1

I come from a family of Engineers. It was reflex. I also worshipped Ezra Pound in high school. Purdue liked my deep-strike cobalt-salted South Pole economy models. I actually turned down a co-op job at JPL to go to IU.

2

Had a thing for the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Great Schism of the Double Popes. Also took an art class— Francis Whitehead no less—"intro to studio". Ran away after 2 classes and got an F. But I did have Mary Ellen Solt as a teacher and had my first slide/laughter experience. We were the only ones who got the joke.

3

Steve Perkins introduced us. I never heard back from Clive after I sent Catalyst Komics 186 which was a functional pipe bomb. He apparently had not read much Lenin.

4

I think he might still might be pissed I dumped his POMO class in 1990 because he wouldn't address Speer and Loos and the flowering of Ruins in Corpses and the number of bodies Joe Bueys produced. DeKalb was a cow-town.

5

Also some sickness (see New City Halloween issue 1995) But I was healthy enough to hide Catalyst Komics logos in the cover art and thus claim the entire print run as a virus issue.

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