

batuz

a book on my own

1949 – 2010

a preliminary selection of his painterly oeuvre
of the last six decades

3-5-11





35+

a book on my own

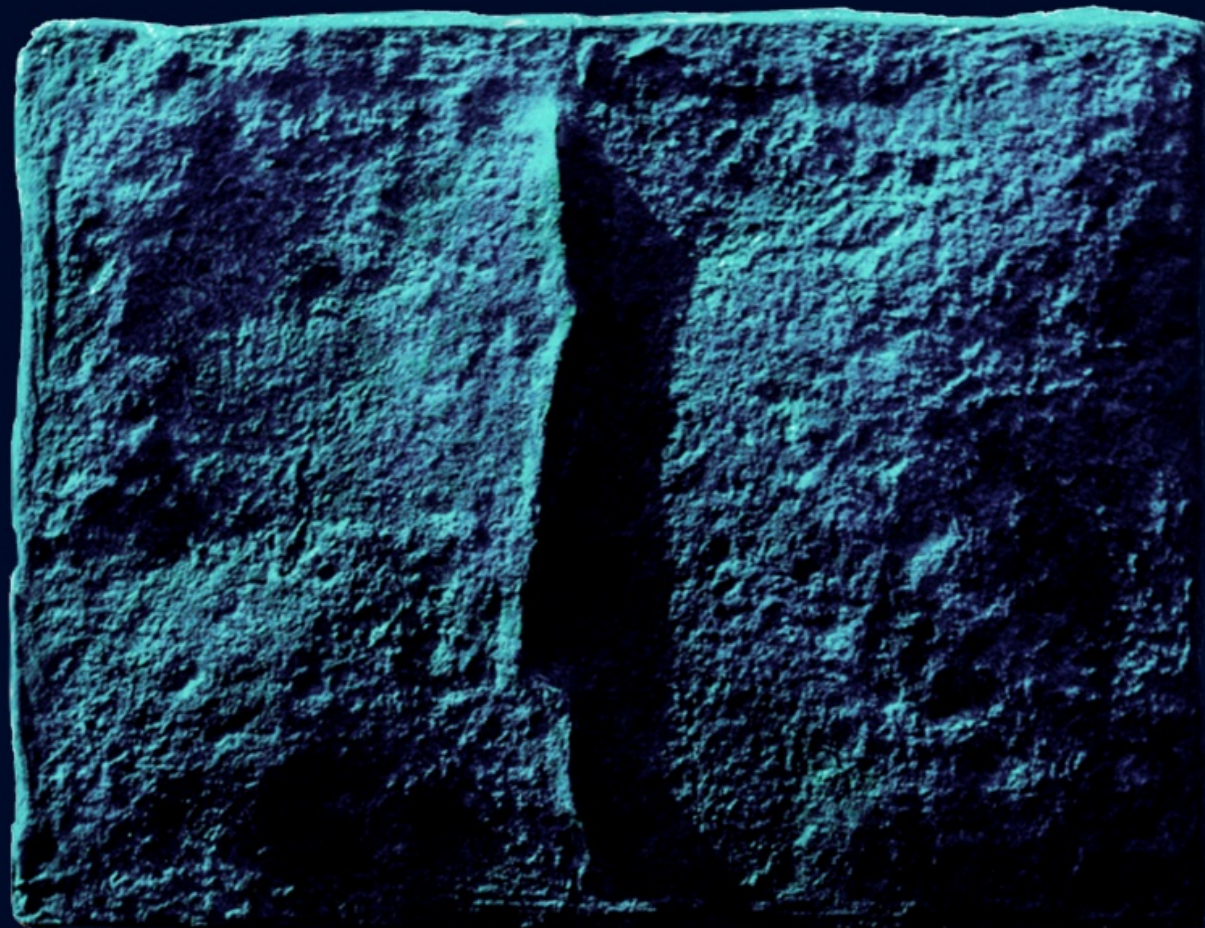
1949 - 2010

a preliminary selection of his painterly oeuvre
of the last six decades

... a fragment is no less important than
the whole ... it is enigmatic, but
simultaneously familiar to us, because
we remember it. It forms part of
us, as we are part of it.













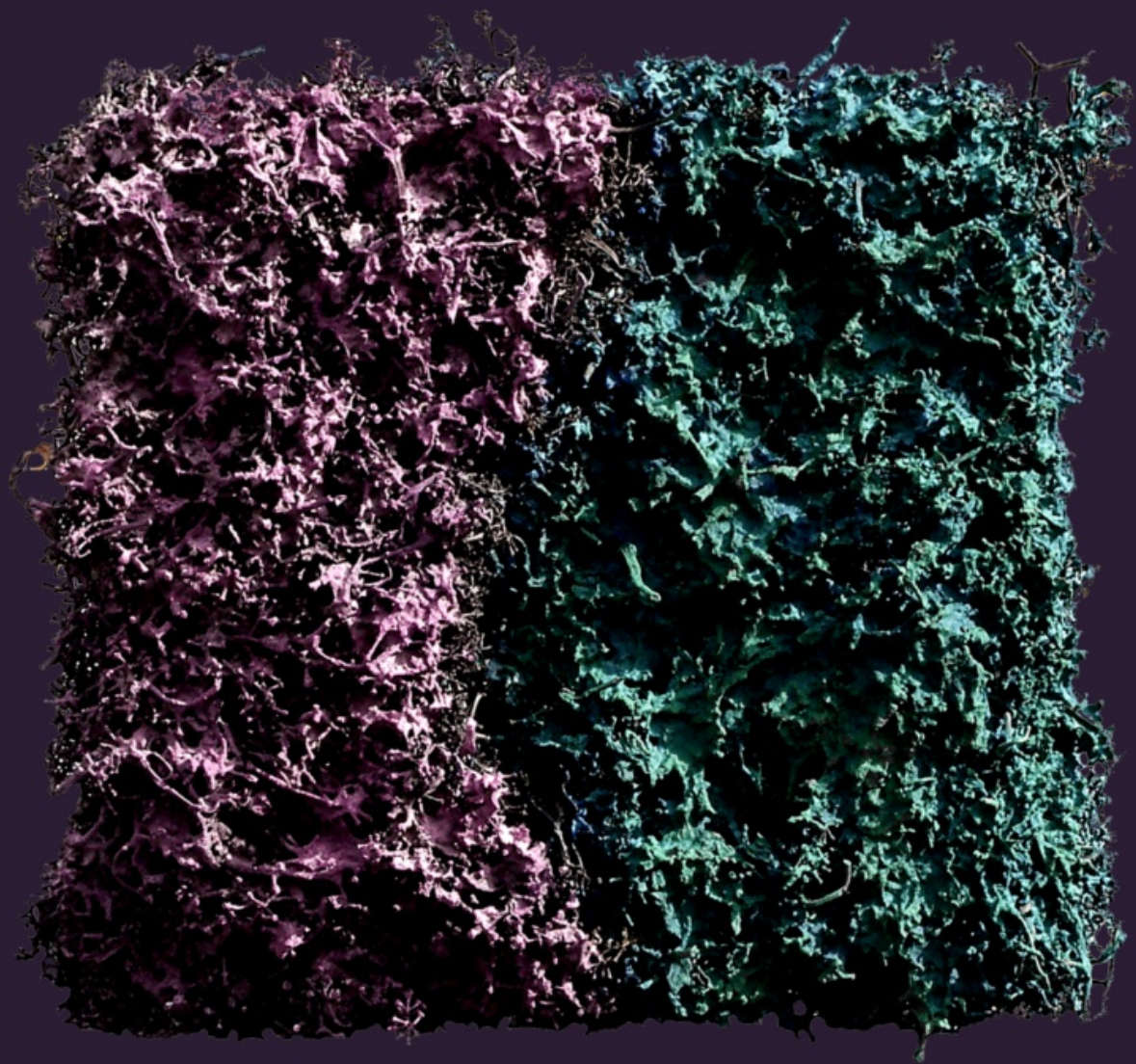




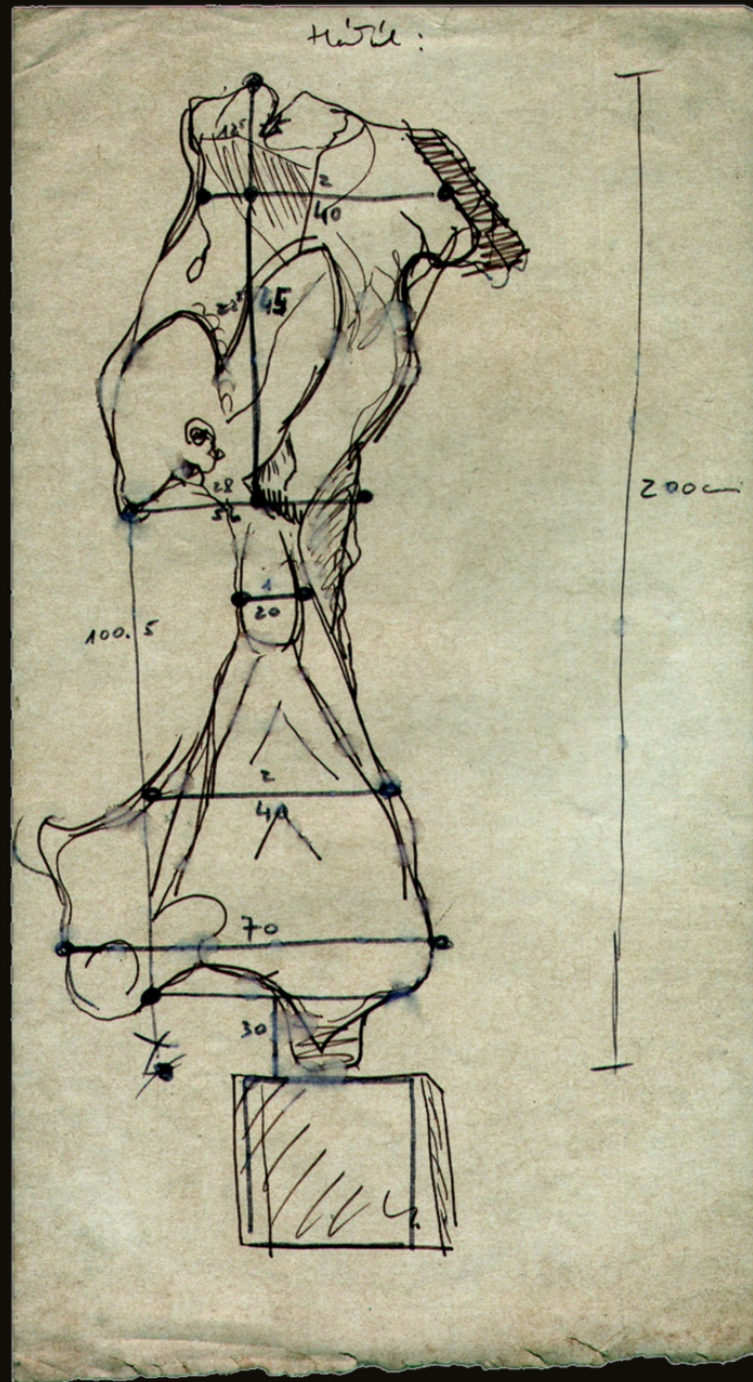
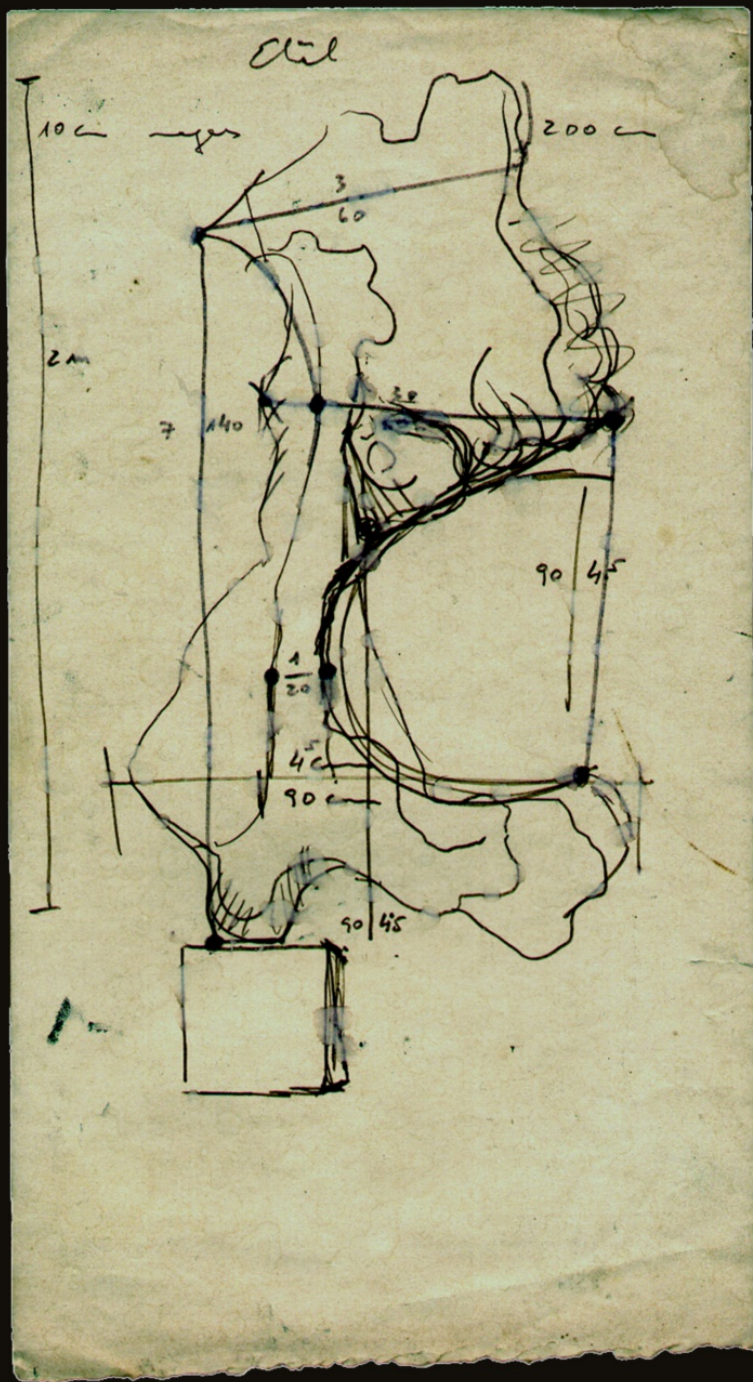








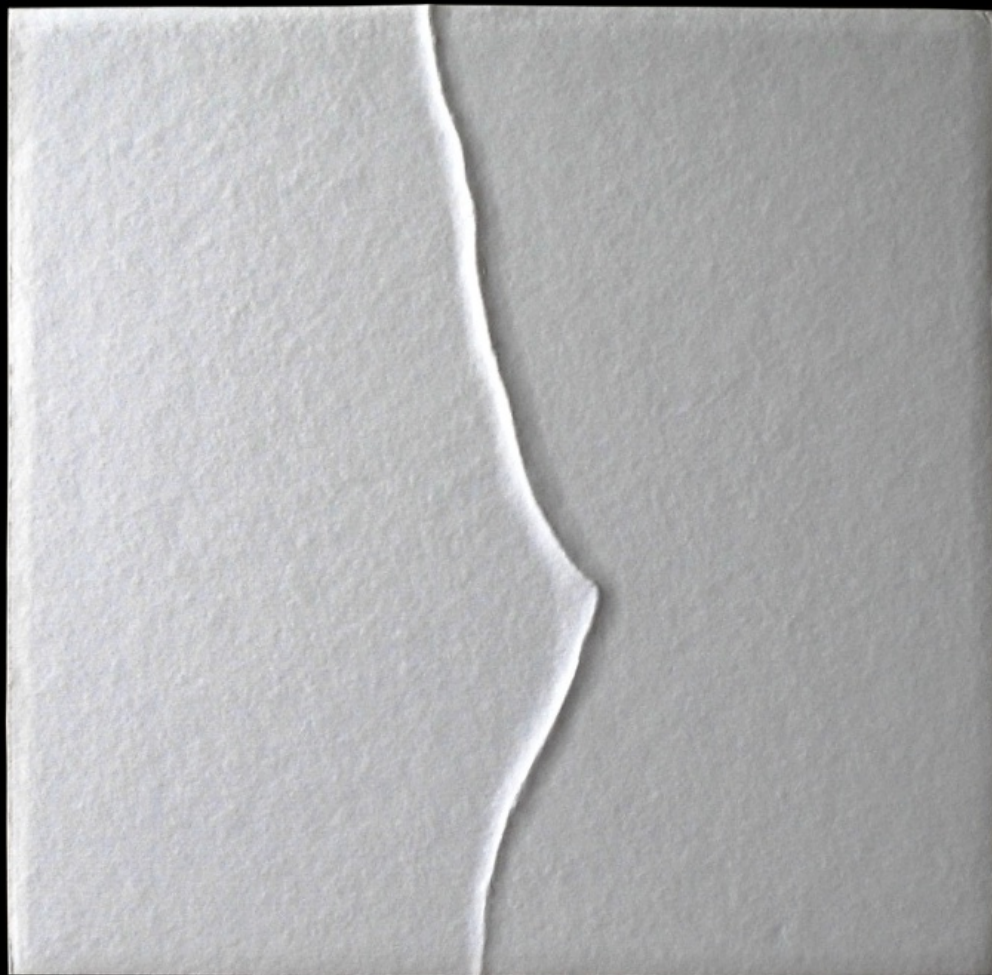






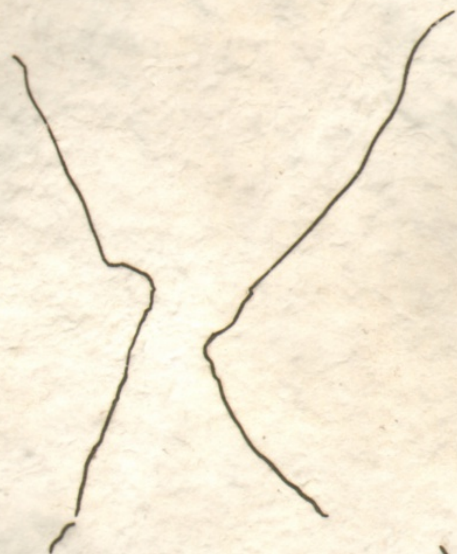












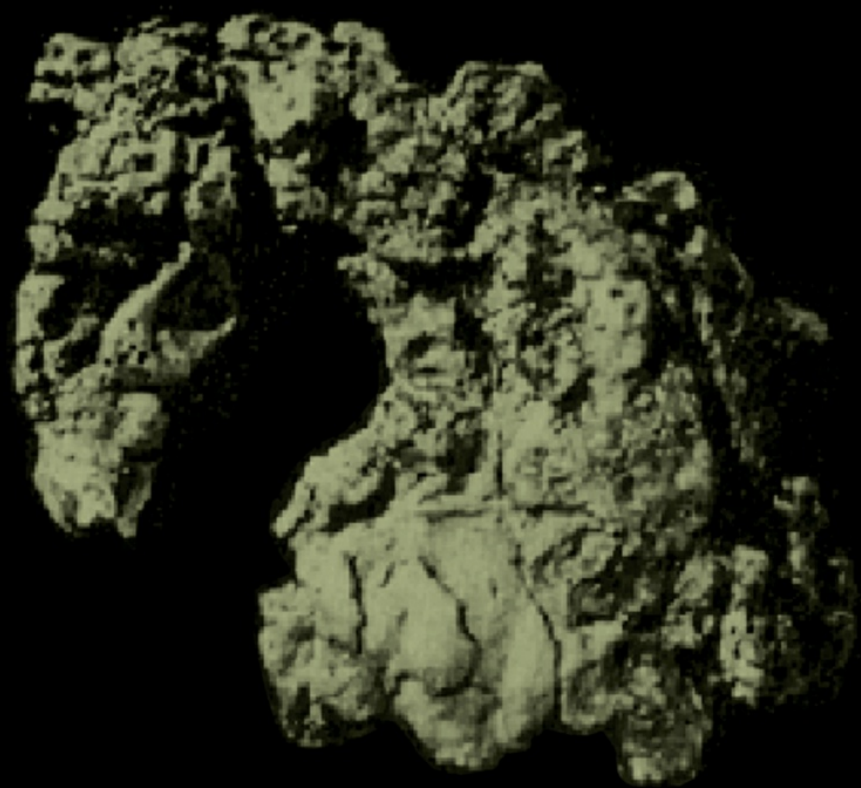
in memoriam

Société Impériale







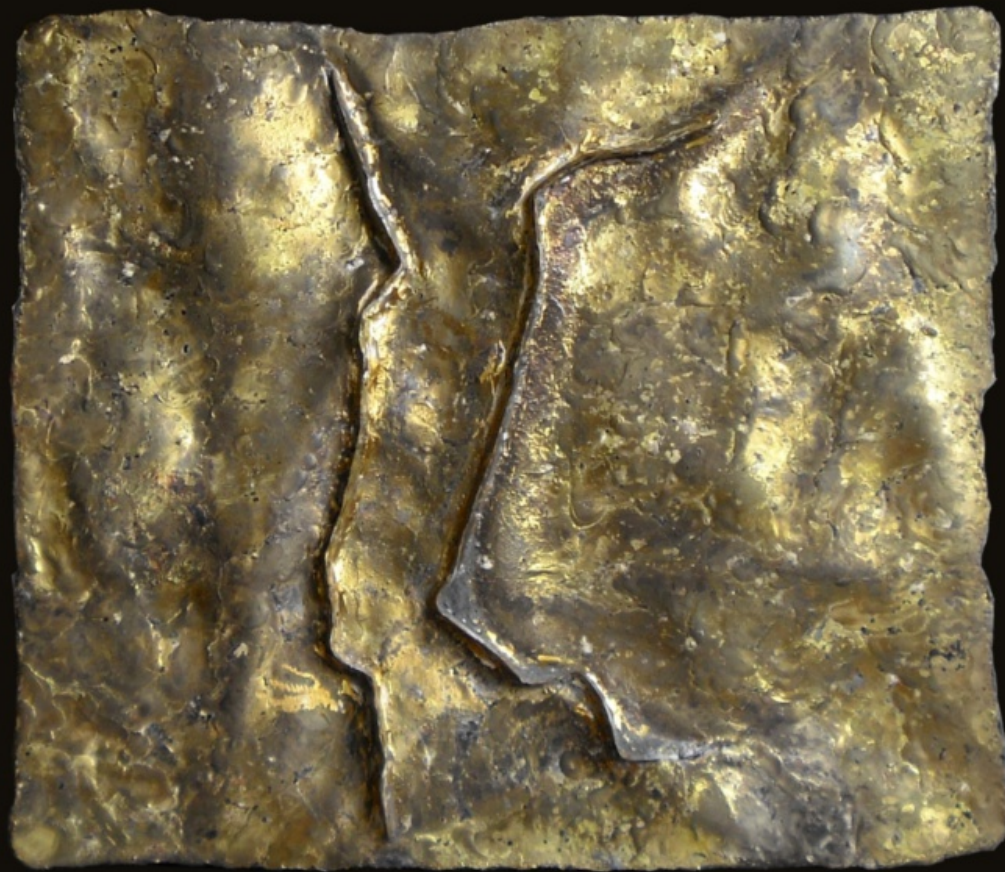


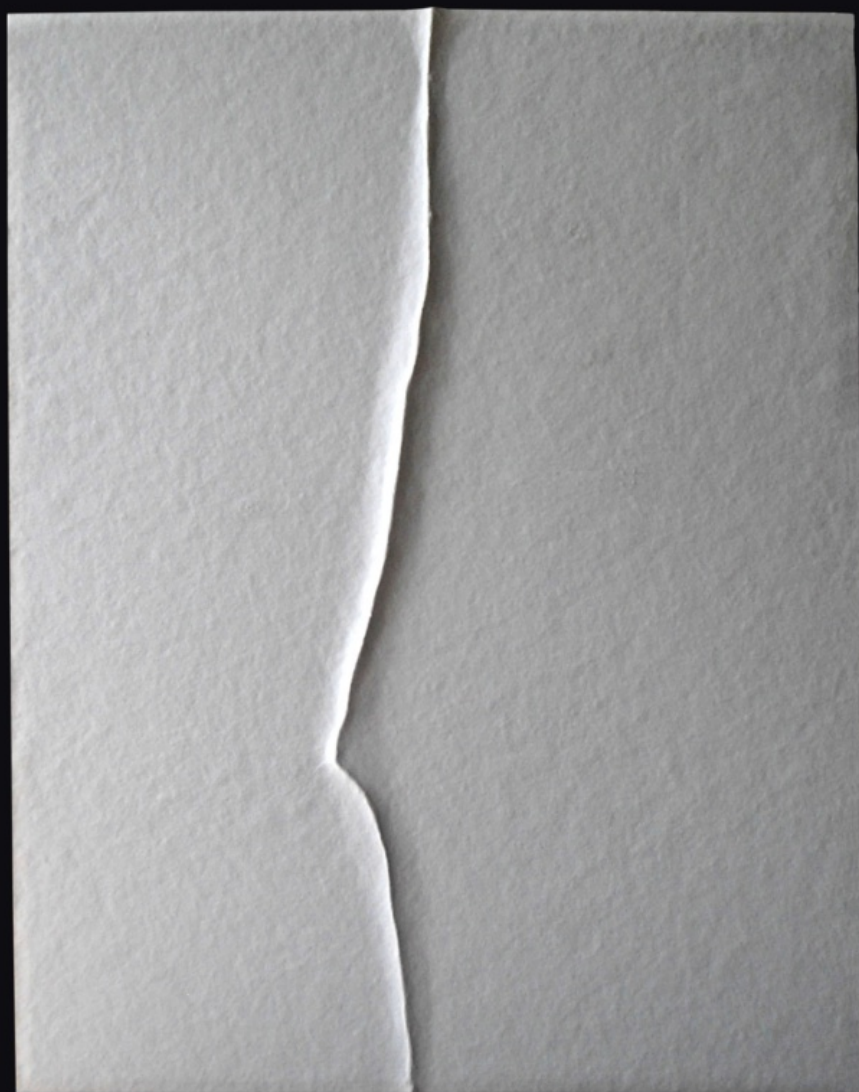
















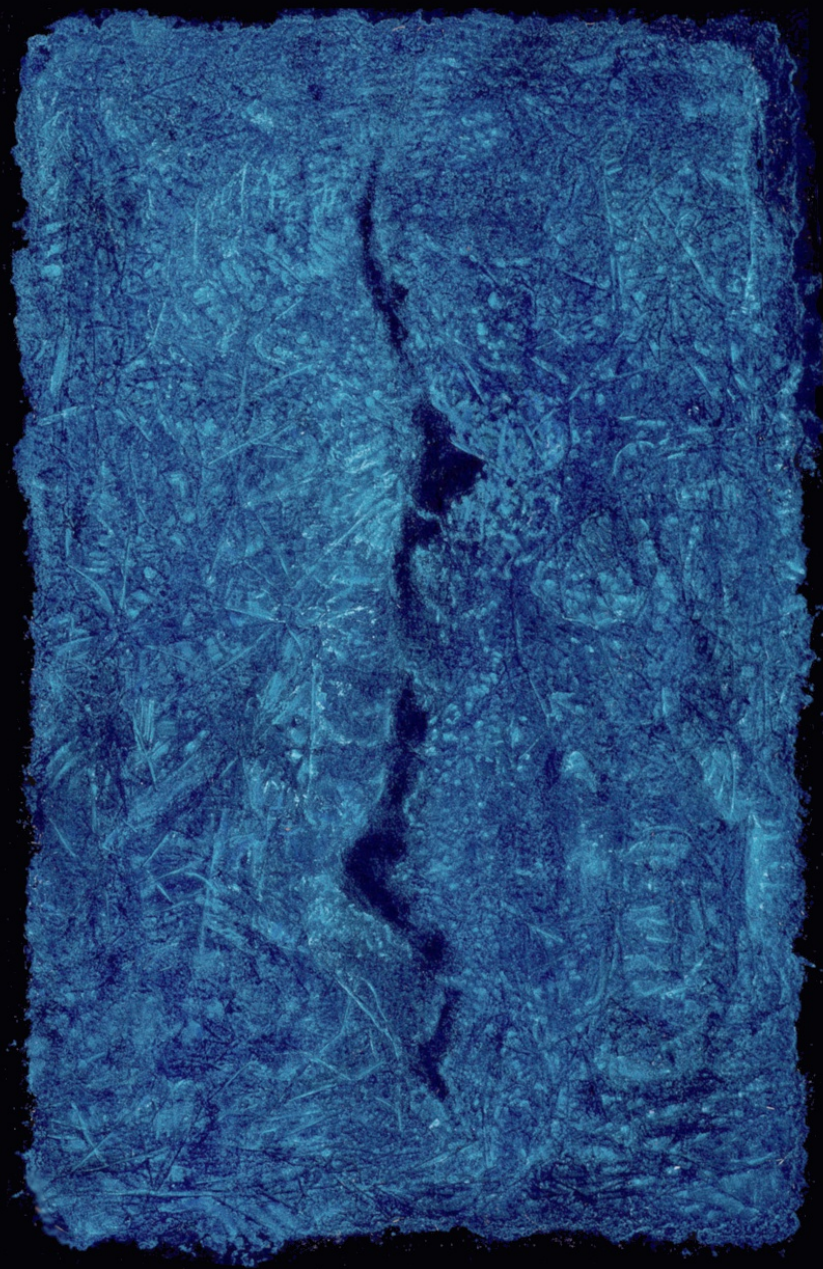








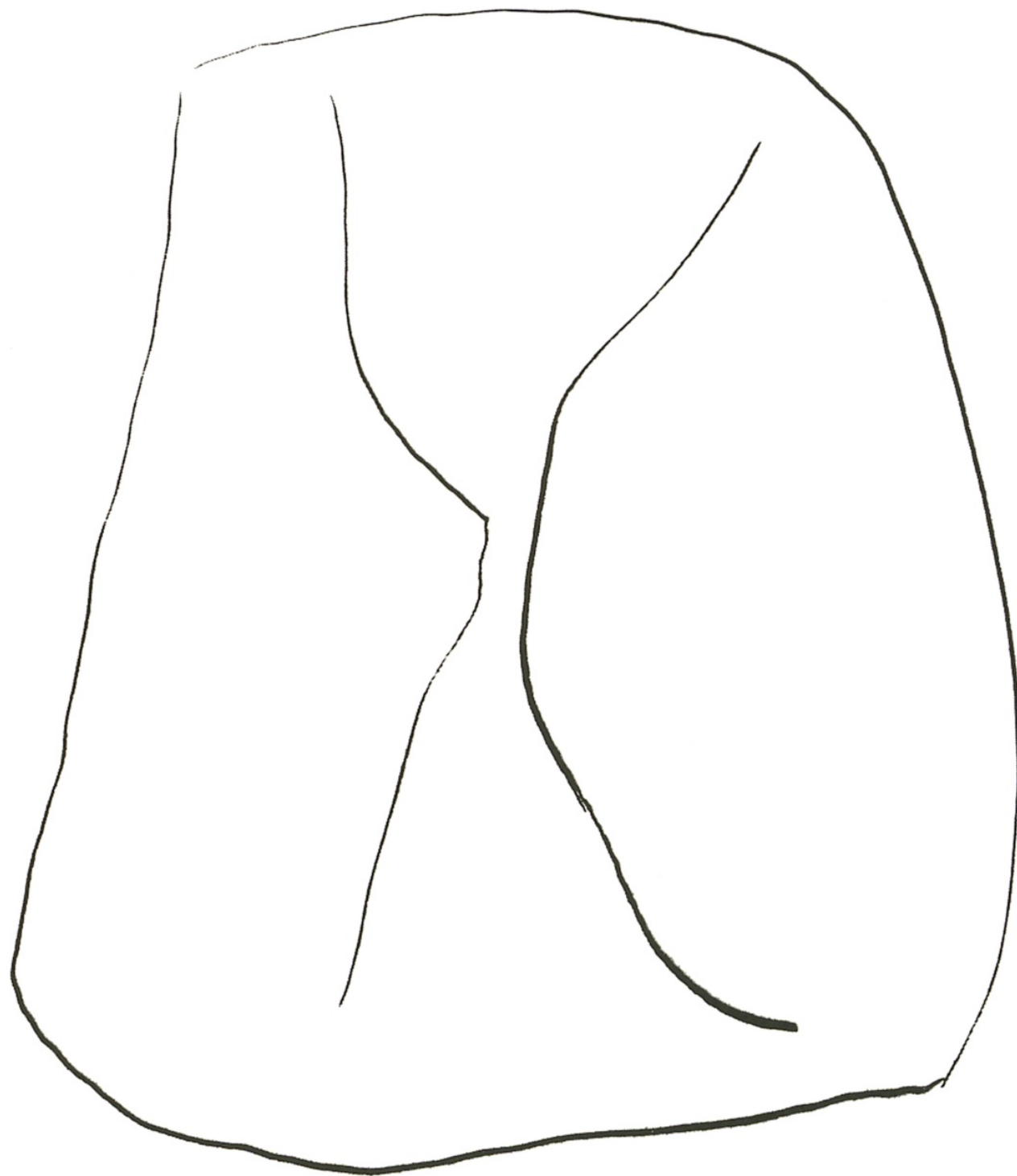




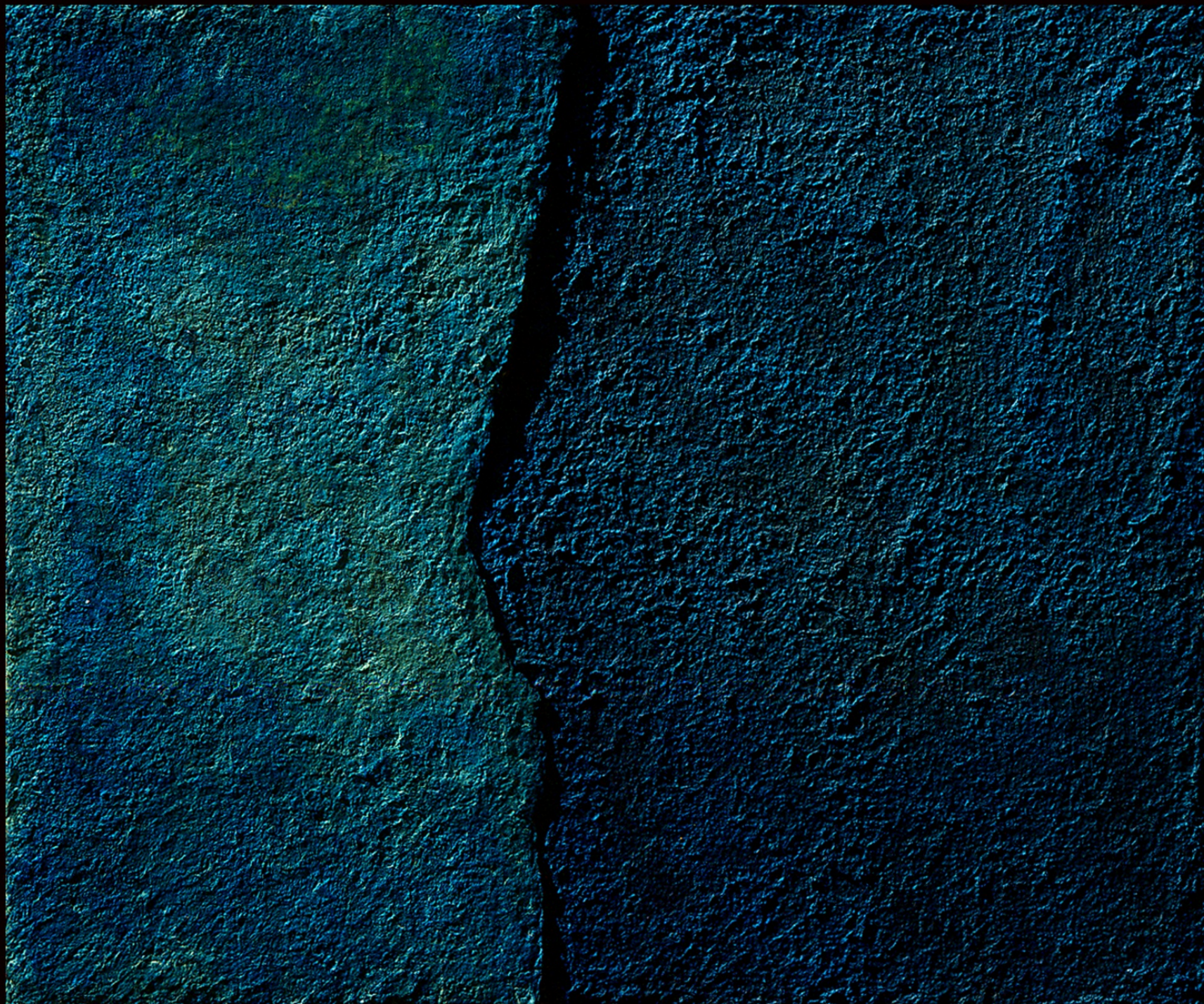




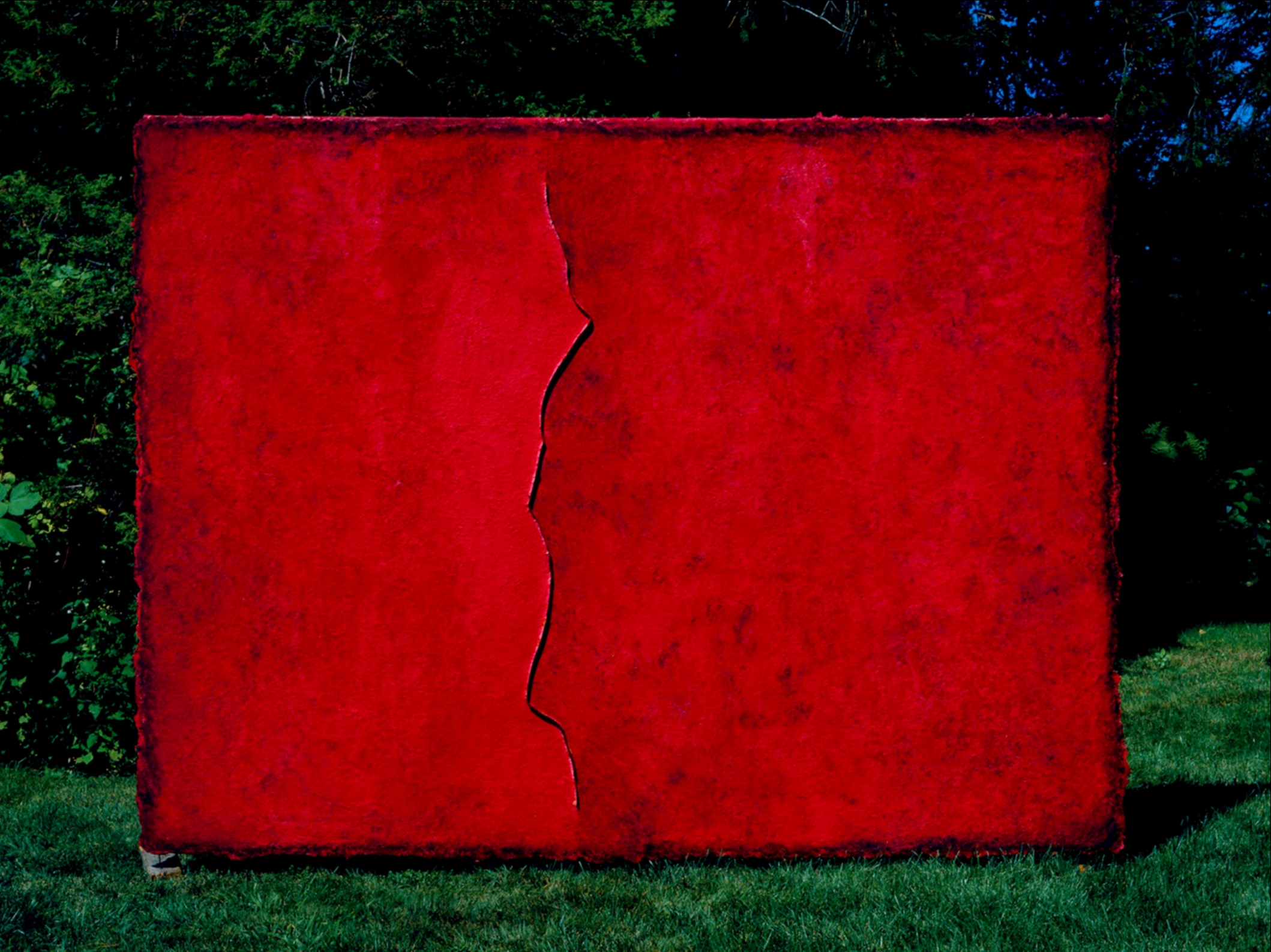






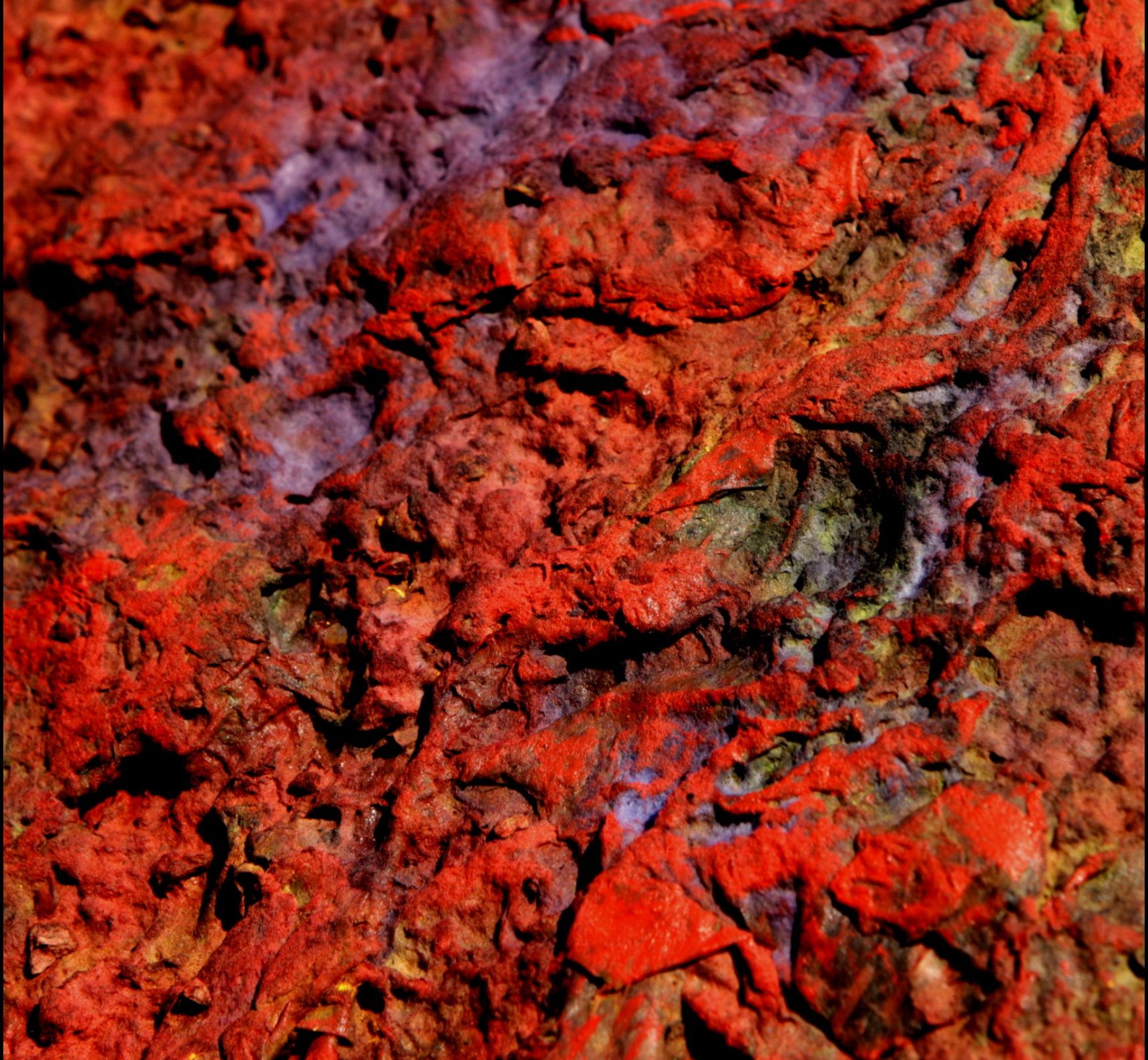


















The history of the
Line goes far back.

It originates
with clarity;
The Two are born
out of One

To define themselves
They must struggle
Each fights for
his own Territory.

The end of this
struggle becomes
The border.





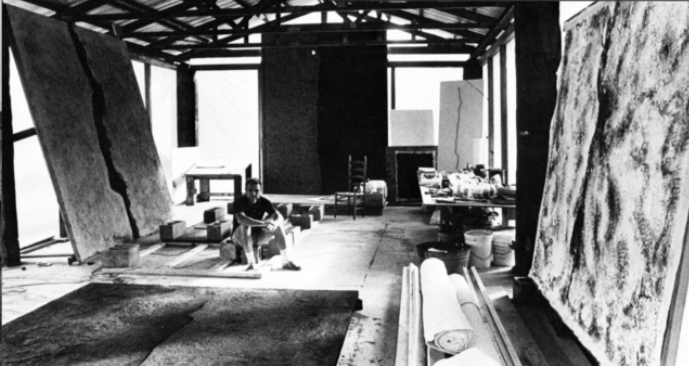
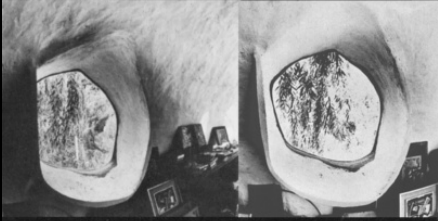




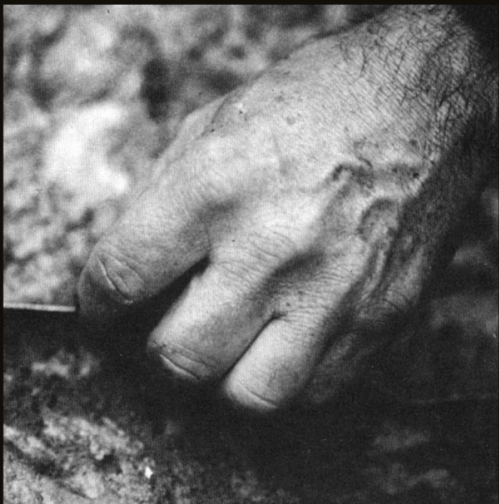


















... and the line will go on forever

Like a brook on river splitting rocks,
dividing fields, with its unfathomable
mysteries and incessant endeavor,
evolving thus millions of new forms
and then ever more numerous
in generations.

Annotated Illustrations

I believe that essentially every work of art is autobiographical, since it reflects the very particular vision of an individual, who in turn is formed by the experiences he has had to live through. For me, art and talking about art are two very different things that cannot be



Atelier, Schloss Schaumburg 1987

substituted or interchanged. A painting cannot be described or reproduced, nor much less explained, because its essence is precisely that which only the original conveys to us. It is here that the "Work-Artist" question arises: 1) Work only, nothing known about the artist. 2) A lot known about the artist and relating this knowledge to the work.



*Stone found accidentally
Pedestrian zone, Potsdam 2001*

In the first case, when we contemplate a work of art, knowing nothing about its creator, the only way we can know something about him is through the work itself. If the work is genuine, it tells us a lot about the artist. It contains the whole essence of his life; it is his life's compendium. "Reading" a painting and attempting to reconstruct the personality of its creator I always came across a lonely man: a man trying to reach me through the centuries or millennia. I don't know him; I know

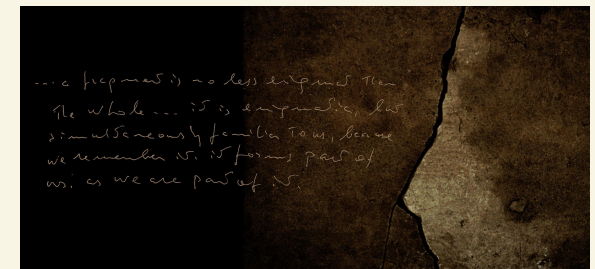


a book on my own, title page

nothing about him; at the same time I do know him; he is me. He makes me take his place; he puts me in his point of view; I see through his eyes; I see the way he sees; I become him. And this was his intention! An artist always forces us to see as he sees.

In the second case, when we have a lot of information, we "read" the picture the other way around. We try to justify and confirm all we know about the artist's life by applying it to the picture. Here we run the great risk (very widespread these days) of explaining everything that motivated the artist - why he painted the picture, what styles and techniques influenced him most - intellectual in-

fluences and his emotional life, chronologically adjusted and synchronized with the creative act. The result of all this is always the same: everything is explained, except art. Most people think that knowing all about the artist they know more about the work. However, this is not so certain. On the contrary, the multiplication of facts about "both" can lead, in a geometrical progression, to an infinity of data which, far from bringing us closer to understanding the work, serves merely to confuse and distance us. On the other hand, I believe a work of art is a testimony of unique destiny, and there is nothing wrong in looking back at the events and circumstances that brought it into being.



Handwritten text on stone

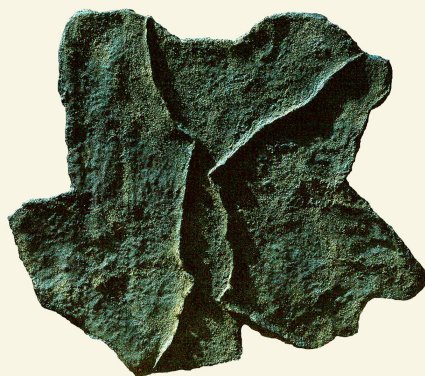
Indeed, there are very early experiences that in some way "condition" and determine our lives and all future experiences are mere contingencies to those primeval events. My first twelve years were spent in a patriarchal environment, in an atmosphere reminiscent of a tale of Chekov or comparable only to Oblomov's dream. Our estate "confronted" the rest of the village, situated on the other side of a brook. Alone. Enclosed by a wall between three and four meters high, and covering almost three blocks, it was a world apart. You could feel that there you could

survive for years without any need of the outside world. There were carpenter and blacksmith workshops, a repair garage, and even workshops to repair stirrups and saddles.



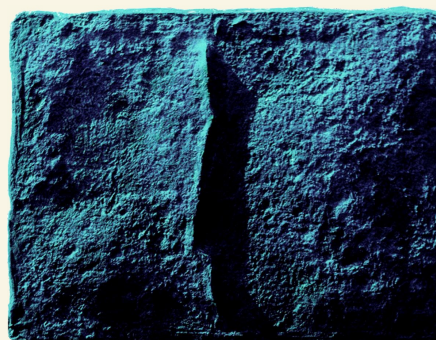
*Grey-Grey, 107 x 122 cm
Schloss Schaumburg 1987*

There were also vast reserves of food. I remember how I, along with the village kids - my playmates and fellow adventurers - used to inspect that larder. We once counted over sixty hams! People didn't work for us; they lived with us. It was a perfectly natural relationship... in some cases over several generations. If anyone referred to a horse, cart, or anything else on the estate, it was always "our" horse, etc., as if it belonged to them. In fact they looked after and cared for everything as if it really were their own. The social gap was enormous and insurmountable; on the other hand, the human relations were more direct and intimate. Old Mihaly taught me everything there is to know about horses - it wasn't for nothing that he wore the mark of a bas-relief horseshoe on his forehead. I learned a lot in the carpenter's shop,



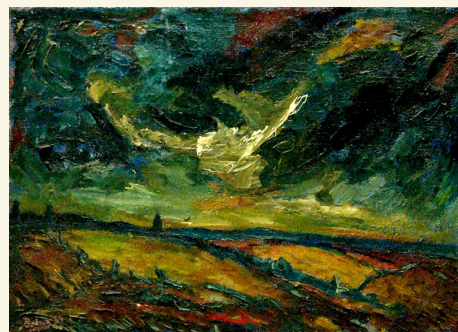
*Fallen Meteor, Schloss Schaumburg 1986
approx. 190 x 200 cm*

where Janos was my best friend; and I felt enormous admiration for Muki, the mechanic, because he could walk on his hands and do somersaults... I could go on forever talking



*Green Sculpture, 40 x 55 cm, side B
February 23, 1982*

about these people who cared for me and gave me so much affection, and whom (perhaps for the last time in my life) I trusted completely. I was certain that they loved me, that they would keep me safe from danger and protect me from evil. The wall around our estate wasn't symbolic: it was real. Not a thing managed to get past it, to penetrate it, until one day it was demolished completely.



Storm, oil on canvas, 56 x 77 cm, 1952

That's how it had to be, that's how it should have happened. In the autumn of 1944 the front, which had been thousands of miles away, came closer at ever-increasing speed... Very early one morning, when dawn had scarcely broken, I was awakened by Angyel, my favorite maid, and, while she sobbingly dressed me, she told me that she would never see me again - that we were going and that "they" were staying. When I went out onto the front terrace I saw six great canvas-covered horse-drawn carriages with two men sitting on the driver's seat of each one.

Everyone was there to see us off, and amidst sighs of grief, my mother, my sister and I got into one carriage, while my father went ahead in the car with his chauffeur. For a boy of my age the feeling was somewhere between a funeral and a picnic. I was soon to find out!

I think that having been forced to leave that idyllic place where I spent my childhood, and the abrupt and cruel change that followed, was more than just affecting me, it opened wounds that have never completely healed. I



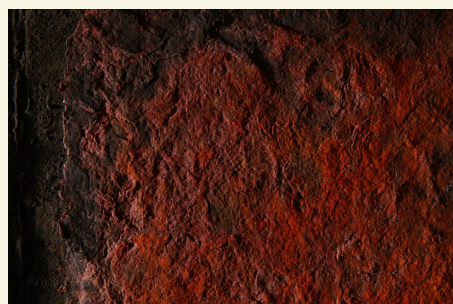
Steel, 122 x 132 cm, October 1981

lived through four years of shame and humiliation. Four years of starvation, mostly without shelter or in refugee camps in more than precarious conditions; sometimes with 200 people in the same room, seeing, hearing, and living human attitudes which, stripped of any social bonds, gave free reign to animal instincts and emotions guided by the sole need to survive in whatever way possible. For a boy not yet twelve and considering his upbringing, this encounter with an unknown world couldn't have been cruder. My father lost almost 40 kilos, became ill, and was never the same man again. During the weeks of continual flight, often being bombed or machine gunned by our so-called liberators, we lost all our belongings, and at the end we had to abandon the last two carriages near Friedberg-Pingau.

To be left without any resources, I realized, is worse for an adult (and even more so after a life without privation) than for a child. For me it was perfectly natural to go to the huge rubbish heap behind the barracks where, among other things of value at that time, I

found a medium-sized basin which, though battered and rusty, was intact.

This basin was for months our only utensil: we washed ourselves in it, washed clothes in it, or took it to get the twice-daily soup (the only food to be had) which was watery and smelt foul. Then all four of us ate from it passing our only spoon from one to the other... I think it's not necessary to go into more



Red detail

details, moments and experiences that filled the next four years of my life; at the same time it's necessary to emphasize that these events did influence my future life, my whole existence and my painting, which are nothing but the crystallization of all the experiences I went through.



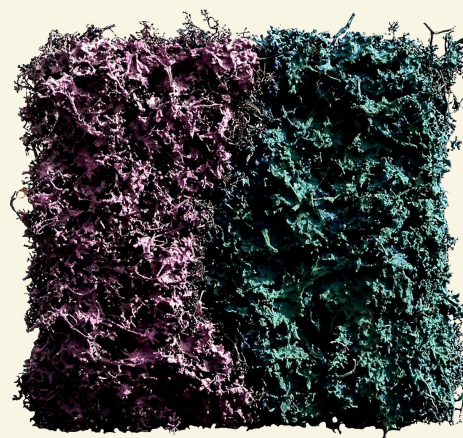
*Portfolio Meditation sur la Frontier
1986-87*

The USA troopship John Stuart Heintzelman has hardly begun to move. I was Standing beside my father on that cold, rainy night and, as I watched the coast of Europe receding, I felt profound pain and tremendous anguish - sensations I remember to this day. It was perhaps the feeling of abandoning the known



Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm, 1963

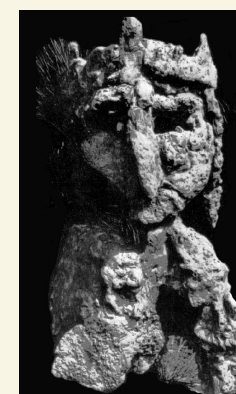
for the unknown; and perhaps this feeling, to a large extent if not totally, explains and in a way determined my life (and those of many others who traveled on that boat) finding our ways during the next decade in the new country. When we arrived we had no knowledge of the language or of the place and no money. The authorities, once our identity papers has been handed over, lost all interest in our fate. Everyone for himself. Under these conditions it was obvious that those who had arrived together would stay together.



*Small Ogro, Violet-Green, 40 x 44 cm
Villa X, 2008*

Thus we and three other families managed to find a dwelling with three rooms, and this in turn produced an atmosphere of a ghetto. The six thousand Hungarians who had recently landed in Buenos Aires published seven dailies and weeklies in the first years. They wrote to each other; there were frequent press campaigns and discussions until the early hours of the morning. Until I was twenty I too wrote in all these papers and I received my education by taking part in those

hard philosophical, literary, and political debates, pitting my wits against men of great experience in all these fields, men who were three times my age. I worked from the very



*The King – assemblage
of volcanic stones –
Villa Gesell 1966-67*

beginning, as I had done in Austria, but this was very hard, exhausting, physical work, and I fell ill a year later. The doctor diagnosed inflammation of the heart muscle; for me it was total exhaustion. Wanting to help somehow to keep the family from my sickbed, I asked for two brushes and the primary colors, and kerosene. Sawing up pieces of wooden fruit boxes I began painstakingly to copy postcards, without having any notion about painting. My father framed some of them and after only six months sold the first to a gift shop. The price this monstrosity fetched was higher than a laborer's monthly salary.



Closer look at The King

As if trying to disassociate myself from such creations of mine, I didn't sign them with my name and surname; I simply put "Batuz". Fif-

teen years later, at my first Buenos Aires exhibition, the media started to refer to me only as Batuz, and so it has stayed ever since. One might assume from what I've said so far, that our contact with the new environment was restricted to work and daily chores such as shopping. All social life - dances, games, sports, etc. - took place inside the Hungarian community. Later on, I managed little by little to free myself from these ties, although it was by no means easy because they were tremendously strong. I believe that owing to this situation, I began to paint and study by myself. I never had a teacher, I never attended an academy - not even elementary school. The war interrupted my schooling which was done by tutors at our estate. And then after four years in refugee camps came the emigration. I had to work.

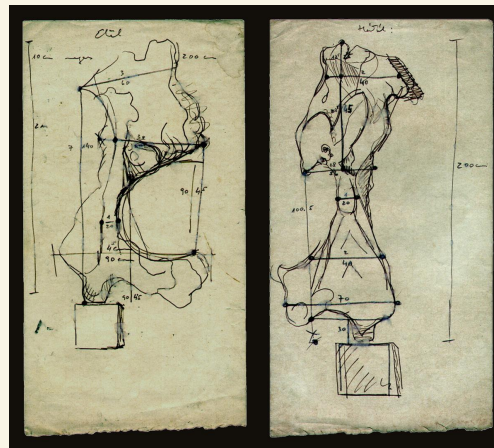


212 x 232 cm, January 22, 1982

From what I've said before, you can tell there was no direct influence from the new environment on my painting or on my way of life. The influence was more complex, it seems to me. The components of the culture that surrounded me doubtlessly has been registered in my subconscious, though there is no direct influence one could discover in my paintings of that time. It is in my later work that one is able to see that I must have been there. Two great dangers of being an autodidact are that firstly, you can easily fall into pseudo-intellectualism, and secondly, it's easy to get lost in the many paths that open up before you. On the other hand, the danger for academics is that they "never get lost", or if they do, along comes the teacher who takes them by the

hand and leads them back to the "well-trodden path".

Since my self-education began so precariously and humbly, like the apple boxes on which those little pictures were painted, it was natural that at the time I should have become in-



Drawings for Sculpture

terested in other classical paintings. And so I started to copy them too (Rembrandt, Velazquez, Rubens, etc.).

Two years later I saw one of Monet's "Haystacks" in the Wildenstein Gallery (twenty years later they became my exclusive dealers) and you can imagine the profound impres-



*Sculpture, cement, 1967
(destroyed)*

sion that that painting caused on me when I tell you that I painted no less than twenty-eight copies and variations on the theme. Then came more paintings by Monet and I think that this experience "taught" me to

paint and handle oils and brush strokes in a freer way than I had earlier, copying the old



Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm

masters. From this "liberation" emerged a few experiments with nature which, due to my temperament, carried me towards expressionism. Despite the fact that I saw reproductions of the work of the "Bruecke" artists, which impressed me and made me attempt to follow them, my paintings came out closer to the work of Soutine. Looking back now, it's easy to understand why.

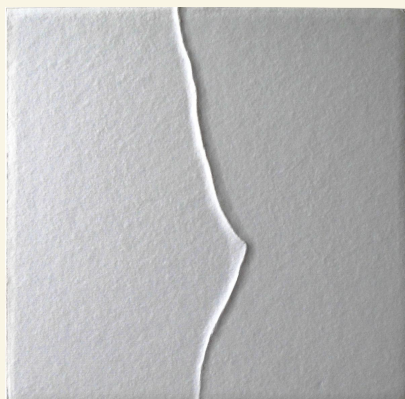
It took me fifteen more years before my first exhibition in Buenos Aires. The exhibition was a great success. For the first and last time in my life, every painting was sold. The gallery owner told me, "Senor Batuz, you have made it! Don't change your painting in any way. Carry on doing the same thing and I shall put my gallery at your disposal every year. You'll see that in twenty years time you'll



Work in Grass, Greens Farms, Connecticut

be a Maestro." I and my destiny disagreed with him. It was then that I told my wife, Ute: "All this can't be so good if they like it so much". My intuition obviously told me that to make a contribution to painting you have

to reveal another, very personal, vision which, in turn, will take the public much longer to accept, and even more time to understand. (How right I was. More than twenty years!)



*White Line, coinage by hand,
Villa X, 2008-09*

To be able to devote myself exclusively to painting I moved with my family (my wife, Ute, and my first son, Sasa) to Villa Gesell, on the south Atlantic coast. It was a solitary place then.

I was really alone there, not only because of the solitude around me, but also because, due to the distance, I became cut off from Buenos Aires, and specially from that community of fellow countrymen which had until then represented the social structure I lived in. Like any "liberation", this one wasn't easy either, since I had never before been alone.



*The Hirshhorn Paintings, 108 x 175 cm,
August 18, 1980
(last acquisition of Joseph H. Hirshhorn before his death)*

Until you've lived in solitude, it's difficult to imagine what it means. No car, no telephone, no TV and no radio. But I'm certain it was precisely the absence of these commodities

that made me take up the tasks I had proposed for myself with greater intensity.

The landscape of living sand dunes and sea simplified the theme. It was there that I painted my first abstract picture, a logical step since my expressionist landscapes had already reached a certain degree of abstraction. The



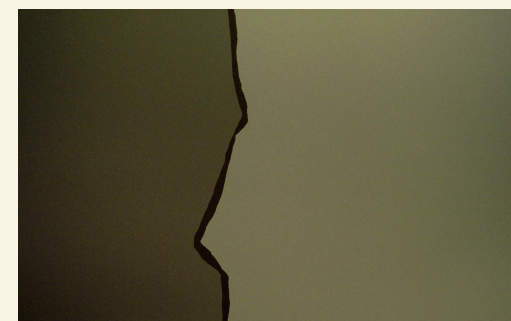
*Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm
Villa Gesell, 1967*

only thing is that neither I nor observers at that time realized this. Looking back at these paintings now, in the light of my later work, I can see that they already contained the signs and substances of my later research. The windows of my studio, the shapes of the treetops, these now had more interest in themselves rather than as just descriptive elements to be included in a picture. What was beginning to emerge here was the interrelation of forms (the tension between forms) which would be the central point of my pictorial experiments.

Experiments with the first abstractions: beaches, the simple forms of dunes and the twisted but well-defined shapes of bushes interacted and gave the picture a "centrifugal" composition: despite the chaos, an order exists since there exists a balance between forces.

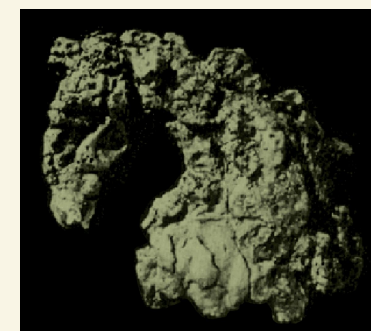
At this time I was given a book on Kandinsky which, as well as having reproductions, contained his essay "On the Spiritual in Art". This, as you can imagine, was a major revelation to me at that time. More than a revelation, it was a confirmation, an approval that gave me immense moral Support in my desperate, solitary struggle. It showed me that I was on the right track.

After two years of working with free and dynamic compositions, I came across on the beach what they call there "volcanic stones" and other stones formed from calcified material, all of which have tremendous expressive force. I started using them in reliefs and structures joining them together with wire and concrete. But this find also showed me the power of a single shape and its surroundings, contrasted with its "negative", or what I saw by holding them up against the sea or the horizon. I soon made from one of these stones (I still have it; it's about 8 cm high) a concrete sculpture 250 cm high. And there was the "line" which as yet I still couldn't



*Botond No. IV
Portfolio The Grey Botonds, 1987*

"see", but which fourteen years later can be seen clearly in one of my paintings. These experiences with shapes in sculpture and construction began to be reflected in my painting, but it took me a long time to detach myself from those elements which I then believed to be essential to my work, and without



*Horse, assemblage of volcanic stones
Villa Gesell, 1966-67*

which the paintings would have seemed naked to me (If only I had known how much more beautiful they are naked!). The effort of

these eight years was not in vain: that total dedication and study of forms gave me a firm basis from which my subsequent work developed.



Portfolio Meditation sur la Frontier, 1986-87

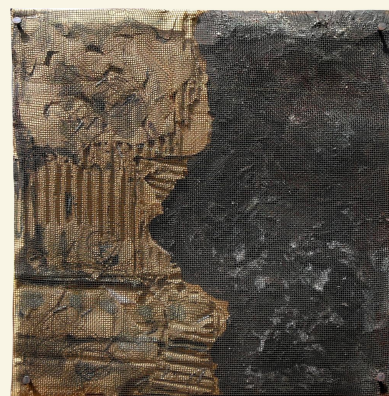
Meanwhile my personal situation was desperate. People who came to visit me, apart from ridiculing my work and having a good time at my expense, kept on asking me why I didn't go out to work so that my family could live more decently. The indifference to my work was such that despite that Wildenstein Gallery has contracted me as "Exclusive artist", which meant I belonged to the country's artist elite, and despite the exhibition the gallery put on for me with positive reviews in all the major papers, not a single painting of mine was sold at that exhibition or ever again in that gallery.

Among the critics who reviewed my work favorably, one in particular stands out: Rafael Squirru, founder and first director of the Modern Art Museum, and later director of Cultural Affairs for the OAS in Washington DC. He had deep vision and knowledge of what was happening in art worldwide.



*Forms in Tension, pulp, irregular
Altzella, 2001-02*

During the five days he spent in Villa Gesell, and in our subsequent conversations, he made it clear to me that my work had to be confronted with other works of our time, and that this would only be possible if I traveled to where the action took place - New York. Naturally, this was not an easy undertaking, least of all on the economic side. It was as if, without knowing how to swim, I took my wife and three children by the hand and jumped into the deep end... which is precisely what I did.



*Small with wire mesh
Greens Farms, Connecticut*

My interest in life has always been based primarily on "being", and to a lesser extent on "living": On unique existence, on unique and unlimited experience of human consciousness, on capacity that this unique existence



*The Bull, found by excavation in constable,
Altzella 1996*

gives a person the chance to live all human experiences not merely that experience which limits one to a certain social class and historical period, where everything is reduced to a battlefield in a bathtub.

For this reason I don't care whether I live in a castle or a hovel, since I see in both a derivation (a change of aspect) of the same question, since neither material nor social solutions nor success can divert my attention from the main question: the spiritual life of man. This is why I consider political and socio-economic events as immediate and marginal issues; and art as the other side of this coin, both in function and aims. The two sides are inseparable, but different. I don't believe that current affairs are so important. I'm convinced that the big news items in the daily press divert our attention from, instead of elucidating, the essential. I feel pity for those affected by chauvinistic revivals, which lead them to division and confrontation instead of to unity, and deviate them from the search for the highest aims of humanity.



El Oro de los Incas (copper)

This condition makes it impossible for me to concern myself with the immediate, to become a "committed artist", since for me art has another function.

Therefore, when I judge or consider the United States I can't refer to the political, social, or economic aspects of the country but only to their spirit, to the challenge and tremendous dynamism they represent. Therefore I don't see the U.S. as just another country, but rather as an attitude, a way of doing, a new human modality with all its inherent dangers and contingencies. A "possibility". A structure in which a Wernher von Braun can function alongside Einstein! In this structure the person's origin doesn't count; what does count is that the individual is given a chance to develop his capacity and contribute to the

maximum. It is a structure where Rothko and Gorki do their stuff and then slash their wrists, and Mondrian does the boogie-woogie. There are thousands of examples.



*Sketch, 22,8 x 29,2 cm
Villa Gesell, 1966-68*

There is a saying "To make it in America"; did he "make it or not?" But a deeper rather than a selfish sense is in this saying: you can't "make it in America" without building America. And America is therefore so great, because all the individual egoism works toward one goal: "making America". America is made of this very human drive. I was referring to this aspect of America when I wrote, "It became clearer and clearer to me, that America is not only a country or a nation, like



*Small work on frame, 63 x 60 cm
Villa X, 2008*

so many others, but another dimension - the dimension of freedom, in all the beautiful and tragic sense of this tremendous word". (Portfolio America Serigraphs 100/100 edition, 1976).

What I had always thought about the States couldn't have been closer to the truth, as I found out through my own experiences. The way I got there, and how I proceeded, is very much like that which I described above. My story is a typical American-story.



*Forms in Tension, pulp
Altzella, 2000-02*

The individual is alone - everything, or almost everything, depends on him, on each person's capacity to find his own way. All the possibilities are there, but all depends on how he faces the challenge. Either he succeeds, or down, down he goes.

It's a place where life is not just to be lived. It must have a purpose; you must make something out of it. This tremendous drive can push the individual to his limits. My arrival



Small Prägung, Villa X

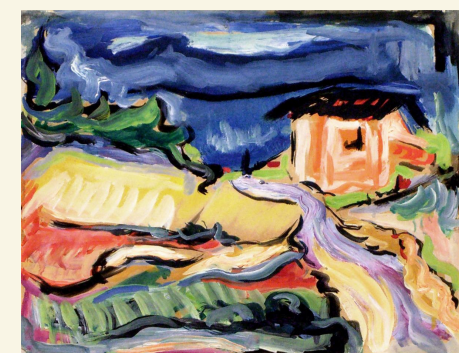
and first days were typical: no money, no friends, no knowledge of the language. The portfolio of serigraphs with text by Rafael Squirru that I took with me from Argentina saved our lives on several occasions. In a very similar way as Henry Miller sold his "Mezzotints", I sold this portfolio, sometimes under



*The Line (engraving)
Buenos Aires, 1991*

threat and sometimes in absurd circumstances, in order to keep going and not to starve amid such opulence.

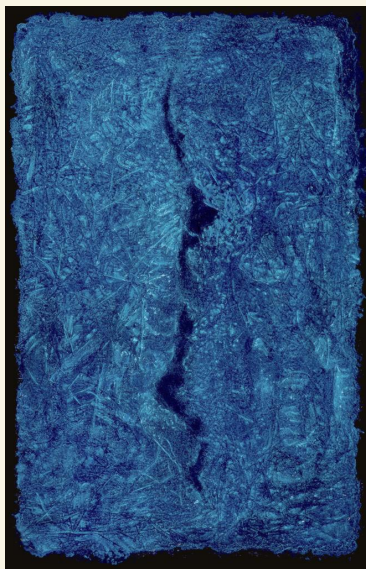
Never before had I worked and struggled so much as there - something in the atmosphere made me go on. In the first two years I put on eighteen exhibitions of works I'd brought with me from Argentina, sometimes in the most unlikely places: churches, public libraries, universities, small local museums, even in kermesses and fairs.



Sketch Little Cottage

The sole result was that one morning I got a phone call, not from a fat lady but from Joseph H. Hirshhorn, "The king of Uranium": he wanted to see my work!

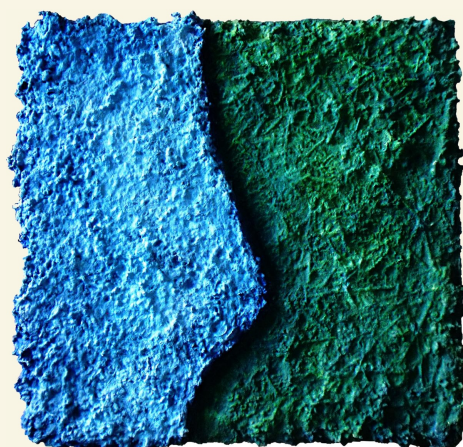
Perhaps the greatest collector of all times, he did not send one of his "curators", but came in person to the dilapidated studio where I lived, and treated me as an equal. Not only did he buy my works, but he also offered me his friendship which lasted and grew stronger until his death. Many other outstanding men



*Blue Pasto, 178 x 114 cm
May 1980
Bruce Kaiser's collection*

have followed his way to my studio since then, but the memory of Hirshhorn will always remain dear in my memory, because he had a quality that I most miss in our day: a great humanity.

After the first years of difficulties and struggles, as my work became recognized, I was able to purchase Greens Farms (the former estate of Hilla von Rebay, founder of the Museum of Non-objective Art - which became later the Guggenheim Museum). The huge house with three outbuildings on several

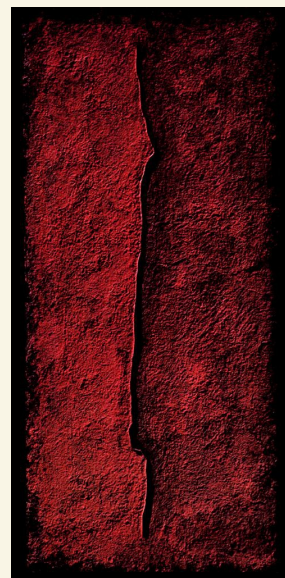


*Untitled
Villa X, 2010*

acres of land gave me the possibility to realize a lot of my projects that for many years had been slumbering in my mind. Then fol-

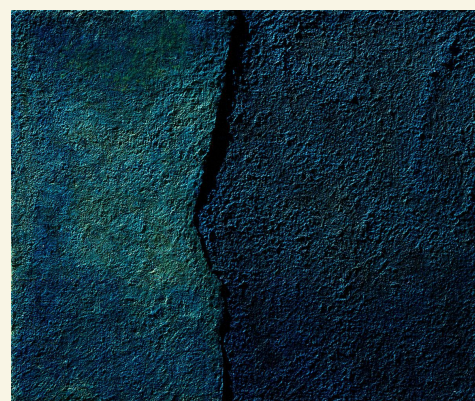
lowed six years of feverish activity like a moment. Only the amount of work realized testifies that it was a little longer.

Art criticism and history live on comparisons, both when establishing quality (putting one painting next to another and deciding, in the



Red Hara (Tokyo)

words of Picasso, whether or not it "stands up") and also when establishing influences and styles, setting up a certain method to deal with them, because there are as many meth-



*Hara catalogue, cover, 1982
(pulp, Dade City)*

ods as there are historians. This explains why when people are faced with an artist's work for the first time, and they have no deep knowledge of his previous development, they don't know where to "put" him; as a result they hurriedly concede him a place alongside those tendencies with which his work seems

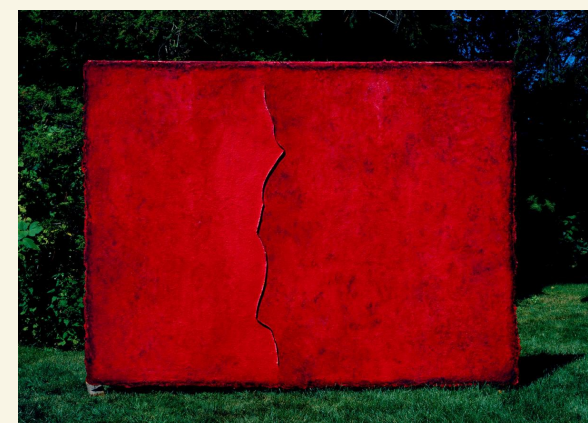
to have superficial likeness. Looking for likenesses they overlook the main characteristic inherent in the work. There are few eyes as well trained as those of Michel Butor, who



*Rispel-Tomato Stems
Villa X, 2009*

sees not the likeness, but in what ways a work of art differs from all the others in uniqueness and contribution. Without getting into the technicalities of a worn out terminology, he only writes. While writing about the work he creates a work of art himself - which now stands opposite mine, illuminating it. The task for the viewer of my work is made more difficult, since almost a quarter of a century of my development as an artist is "missing", because it took place in anonymity, far from the great art centers.

However, during all this time I was making notes, so this period of search is well-documented, as is the subsequent period when everything was being reduced to two forms



*Big Red, 206 x 279 cm, summer 1981
Pfeifer collection*



180 x 114 cm, July 15, 1979
National Gallery Berlin

and the relationship between them. The material so far published about all this is limited to *Forms in Tension*, a 100/100 portfolio of serigraphs printed by myself in 1975; and the catalog for my exhibitions in the Museu de Arte (Sao Paulo) and the Phillips Collection (Washington D.C.) 1978: "Interrelation of Forms". But these writings, which I include here, are so condensed that I think they will need more detailed explanation in the future:



Detail

Any painting, figurative or not, contemporary or from the past is reducible (despite all other statements it contains) to the interaction of forces. It contains soft and hard lines, aggressive or passive colors, that are not arranged, as generally supposed, in (the technicality of) a certain compositional manner, but

in response to an inner impulse of an intimate desire to place things the way organic particles or molecules are placed in matter.

If the human mind's compositional manner differs from this, then perhaps in the most varied and complicated method, but never in its substances.

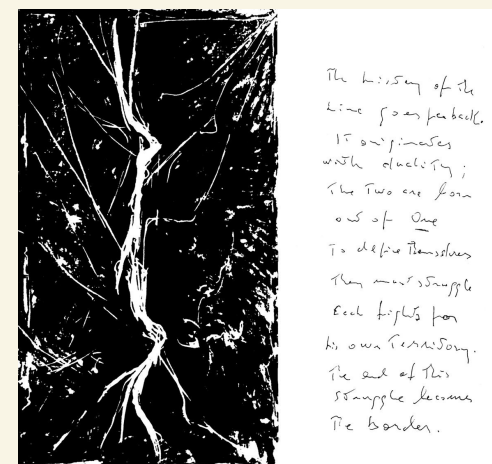


Recuerdo de la Vizcacha, 1986-87

By "Polymorphic" I understand the capacity of one form to assume an unlimited variety of shapes. The surroundings, the color and the limitation of space alter not only the appearance of these shapes, but also makes them become something else. Yet, at the same time, they remain substantially the same. ...each of these shapes is related to another shape or to the void, the nothing... sometimes to the negative which surrounds it, ...or becomes surrounded by it.



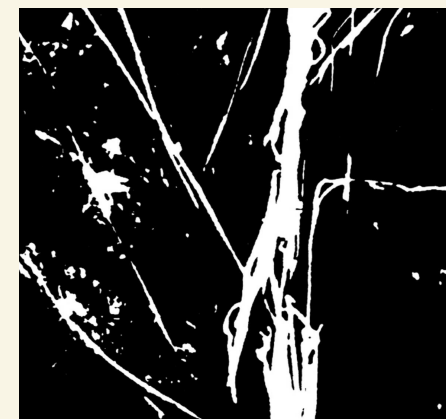
Small series, 32 x 32 cm



Drawing (charcoal)
Greens Farms, Connecticut, Autumn 1983

Make conscious the unconscious. Light, movement, cubism, squares, color theories, have always been under investigation, but not the gestural painter's form-relationship, which in one moment works and in another does not. It is in completely emotional stage.

This is the reason I draw my line carefully, study it, try to understand by observing each turn, each curve, inward or outward, and most important how that line meets with its opposite.



Drawing (detail)

This is what I examine closely. For it is my purpose to investigate the intimate relation between forms and exclude the accidental. I believe that there must be an underlying physical, geometrical law that is ruling these forces.

If we enclose two spaces with two lines, our attention is directed to each of the resultant forms which the independent lines enclose.

These become the positive forms and the space which remains between them is the negative space, whose form depends on the interrelation of the two others.

A line adopts another function when it is alone. In this case it has to define by itself the negative and positive space assuming the role



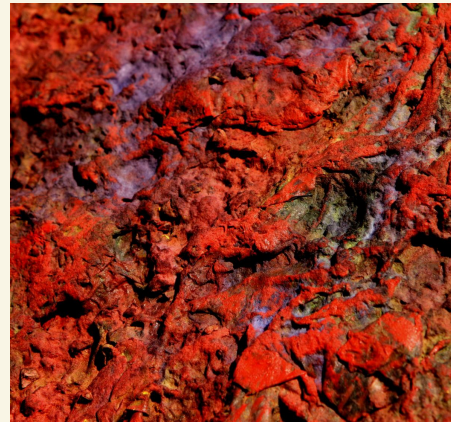
*Alpenlandschaft, 200 x 210 cm
Schloss Schaumburg, 1987
Pfeifer collection*

of two lines. In other words, the drawing has to be made in such a way that one side of the line encloses a smooth, soft form, and the other side encloses an aggressive one.

As in reality, both sides of the line define a different and opposite form. It is obvious that there is not one line - indeed it's always two.

In dealing with art we always propose the absolute.

But if in this attempt some lateral aspects become clarified, we should gratefully take hold



Saturated red detail

of them. Just as the whole appears to us only in fragments, so too does the truth in partial truths.

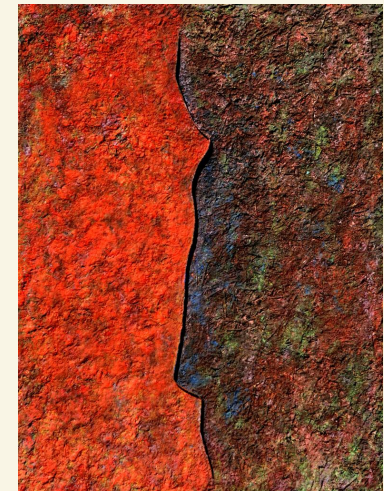
An object which gives up its particular significance and lends its form for a superior purpose is an anti-object.

A fragment is no less enigmatic than the whole... it is enigmatic, but simultaneously familiar to us... because we remember it and in part we anticipate it... it forms part of us, as we are part of it.

I strongly believe that if you have no purpose other than art and achieve an interrelation of

abstract forms, which has esthetic validity, then this truth must have usefulness in other activities of the human mind, as for example in the sciences.

As Lynn Arthur Steen, a mathematician at St. Olaf College, Minnesota, said: "...if a particular problem can be transformed into a picture, then the mind grasps the problem as a



*Vertical Red, 295 x 195 cm
Villa X, 2009*

whole and can think creatively about solutions".

For me art is an ontological occupation. In the work of art the subject matter can be social, political, psychological or religious. But it is only artistically revealing if it confronts and focuses on the "Seinsproblem".



*Blue, 396 x 178 cm, March 14, 1982
White, 389 x 96, March 8, 1982
Alizarin Crimson, 366 x 244, February 27, 1982
painted in Dade City, Florida*



Atelier 1
© Inge Morath photo

The statement of it has to be true. The truthfulness gives the value and transcendence of the work itself. Only in this way can it be relevant to us.

My painting is concerned with the relation between forms. The tensions are brought about by two acting lines - which encircle, cross or delimit space. Through the activity of these lines, the delimited or created space becomes also an acting entity, giving to the Nothing a meaning, as Heidegger does.

The tracing of an abstract line is direct handwriting. It carries no other message than the one it itself expresses.



Atelier 2
© Inge Morath photo

If a point, as for Leibnitz, contains the projection of a line, so much more does the line of a painter contain the essence of his whole artistic experience.

It is not the point whether a painting is composed or not composed, because it can be composed perfectly and still - in spite of all its beauty, colors, lines, shapes and textures - be meaningless to us if the inner form-relationship does not work.



Moments of the Past 1

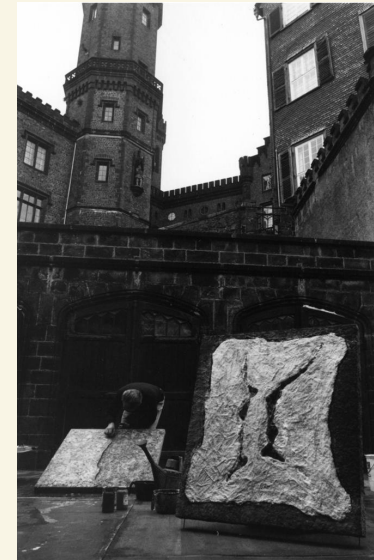
Very early on I became interested in the arts and their function in earlier civilizations. After acquiring a basic knowledge of history, I read Spengler, which obviously caused a great impact since his work opens the way to-



Moments of the Past 2

wards philosophical speculation about history. I continued to study philosophy for several more years, particularly Kant. Later on, with other friends, I fought heroically with and against Heidegger's Holzwege and Malraux's "Museum Imaginaire". After many years dedicated to these studies, it became more and more clear to me that the cultures about which Spengler and Toynbee speak are

totally different from our own in many aspects, but in one in particular (if we can speak of "our own" as one culture in the present situation). I realized that the present-day artist doesn't have, nor can he have, the same approach as artists in former cultures.



Schloss Schaumburg
© Inge Morath photo

Earlier painters functioned in a similar way and in similar conditions to those described by Spengler or Toynbee. The latter visualizes this situation for us in two words: challenge and response. The Greek artist knew his culture; his culture posed certain questions, challenges, and the artist responded to these questions. The same was true of Polynesian artists (New Hebrides), the black artist in Africa, the Mayan artist or the artist in the Inca empire.



Hands
© Inge Morath photo

The question was clear - unequivocal and from a well defined viewpoint. The response was even more defined. In all these cultures a concrete and direct dialogue was established: a dialogue without "interferences".

Each new work was one more response; each contributed to the challenge of that particular culture.

For this reason it's impossible to compare our present situation with that of artists in former cultures.



*Omen I with Batu, 429 x 277 cm
Greens Farms, Connecticut*

Nowadays the whole world opens out before us everyday and we know immediately what's happening from Tokyo to Ethiopia and from Buenos Aires to Afghanistan, or Matraderecske! The same thing happens vertically: we have before us vast amounts of material about the complete history of man: every culture, every custom, every belief. Everyone chooses what he wants, or is capable of. The questions posed by our age of super communication are many, unclear, incoherent, and above all, contradictory. It is an age of simultaneity where everything happens at once. It's the age of firecrackers. Contemporary art is a "small talk". The question is like the question asked at a cocktail party, where nobody expects a profound or relevant answer - nobody is even interested in the answer! Obviously the person replying doesn't go out of his way either, since there is no real challenge, no dia-

logue; only cut-off cocktail party phrases which can only be answered one way: superficially. Or ignored - which in this case means to know everything but to keep oneself apart, out of it. The artist must distance himself from everyday events.



Omen detail 1

It must exist - the distance between the immediate and art.

The painter of today cannot afford to be provincial or national, but solely and inevitably universal.

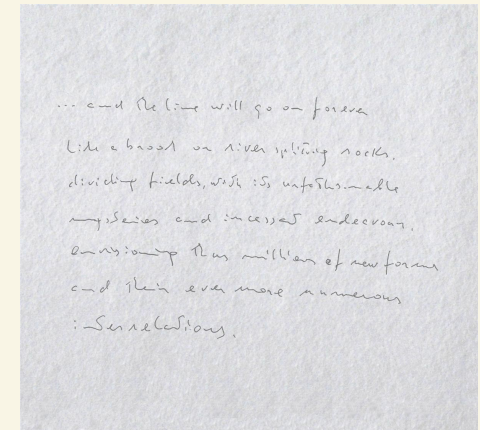
I believe deeply in regional and national values and I'm convinced that we must belong somewhere, have a center, if we are to make



Omen detail 2

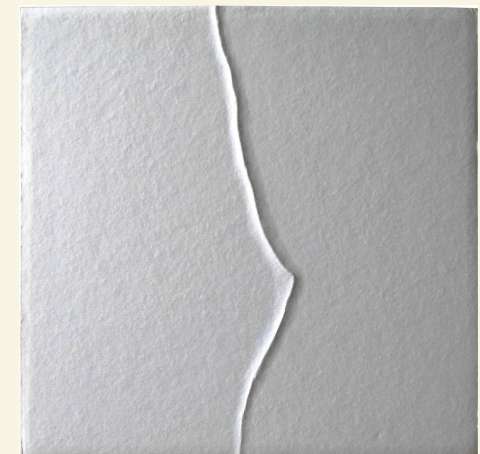
an important universal contribution. It's no accident that I preserve and look after my language and Hungarian traditions, since I know that it's only from a secure basis that you can build something firm. But this isn't to divide us; on the contrary it's to unite us in

a common task. The diversification in my judgment should have the objective not of dividing us, but of contributing new works and ideas, which, being human, are automatically universal.



The line goes on and on...

I believe my life is not an exodus. Despite having lived in so many different countries, I found in all of them the essential human values. This is really the only thing I care for. My art is the answer to this question.



The Line

Works in some public collections

Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, U.S.A.

Caixa de Pensions, Barcelona, Spain

Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, Germany

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, U.S.A.

Kunsthaus Zurich, Switzerland

Pan American Union, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

Musee des Beaux Arts, Zürich, Switzerland

The Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, U.S.A.

Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany

Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil

Museu de Arte Moderno, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela

Kunsthalle, Nuremberg, Germany

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid, Spain

Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, Argentina

The Metropolitan Museum, Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Montevideo, Uruguay

The Litchfield Historic Museum, Connecticut, U.S.A.

The Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut, U.S.A.

Museum of Art, Science & Industry & Planetarium, Bridgeport, Connecticut, U.S.A.

The New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, Canada

Museo de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, U.S.A.

Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Ind. U.S.A.

Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse & Onondaga County, NY, U. S.A.

Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany

Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, Portugal

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan

National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., U.S.A.