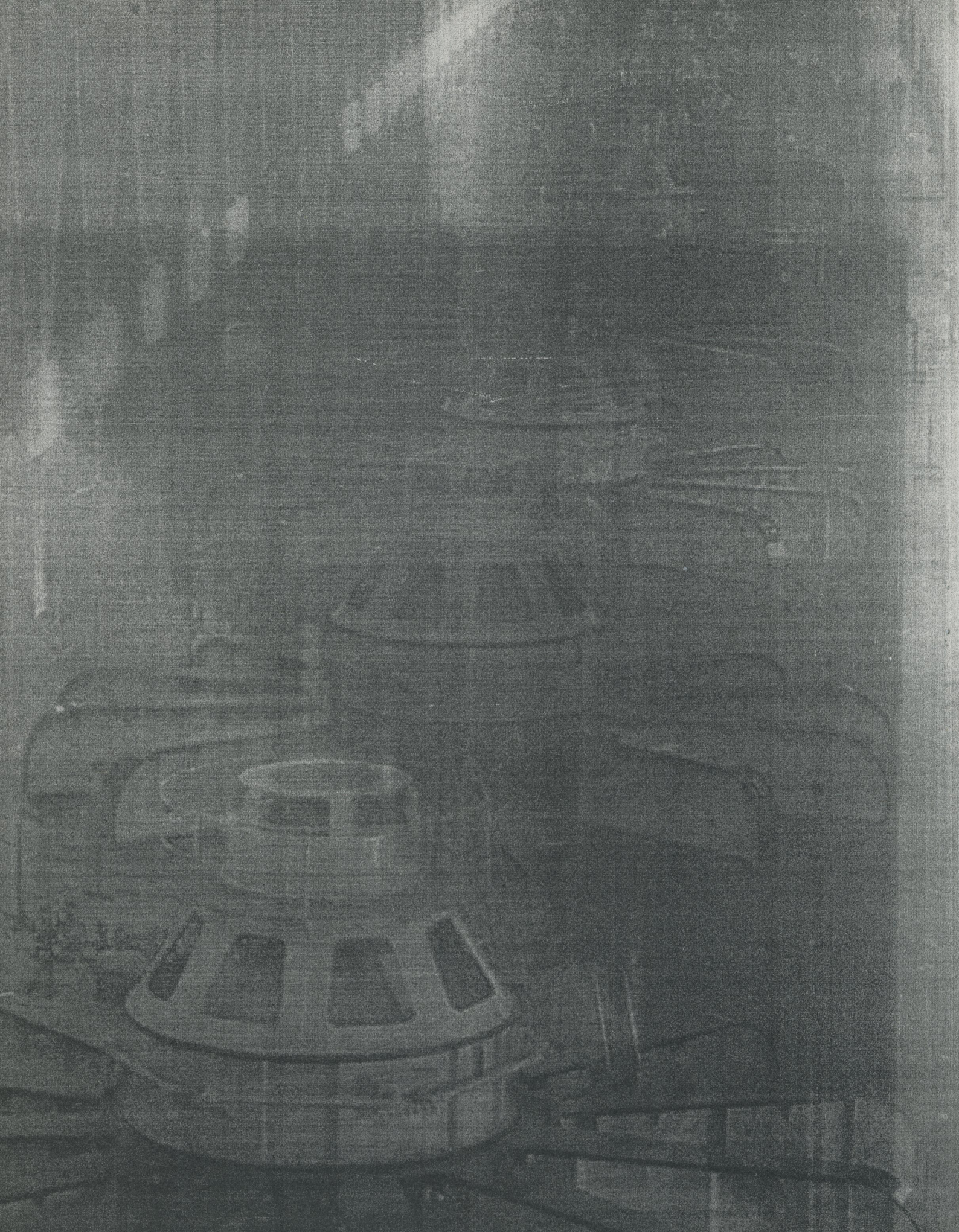
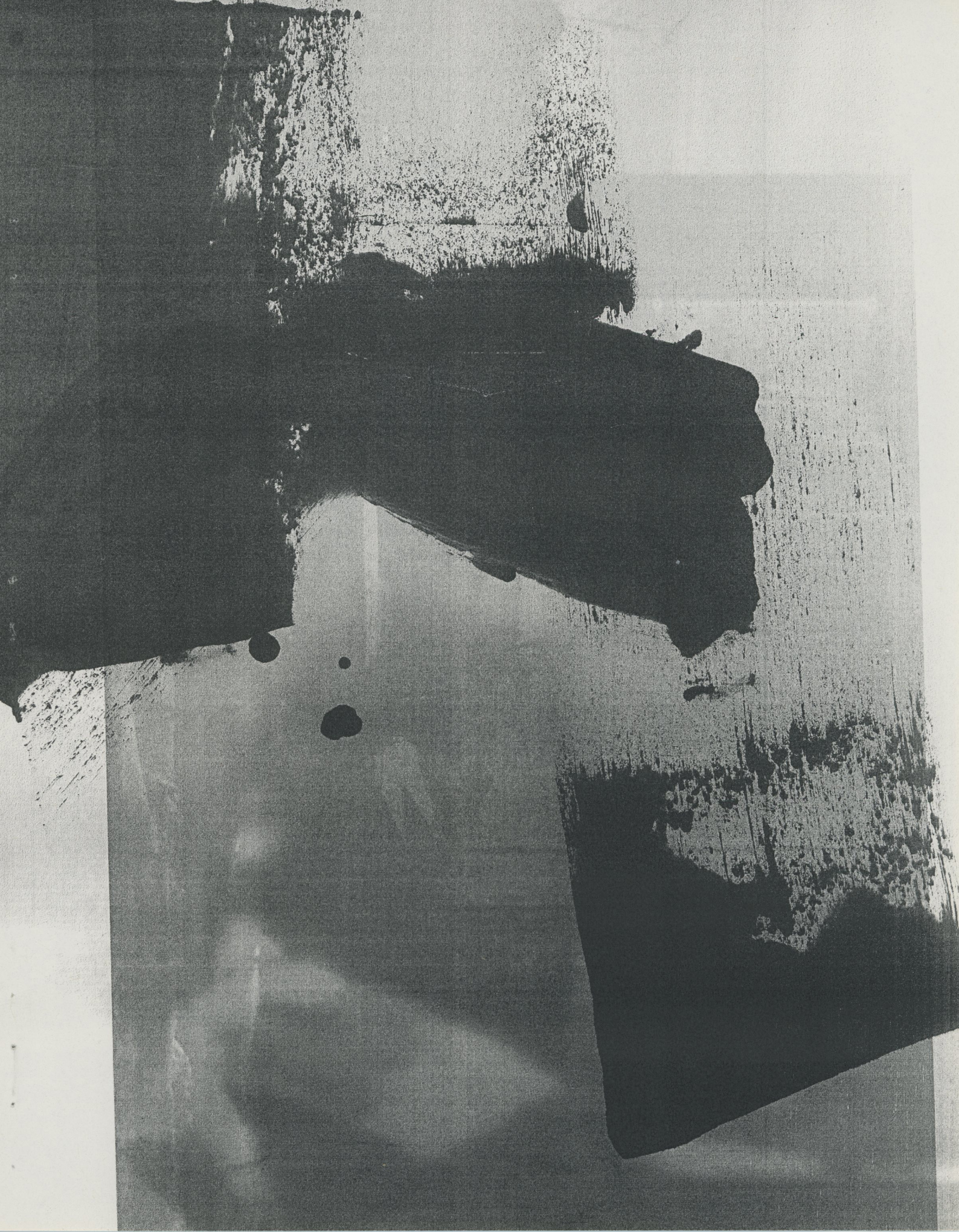


A SENTENCE FOR THE SUN by William Eric Brown & Tom Melick;
published by Stolon Press, Sydney.



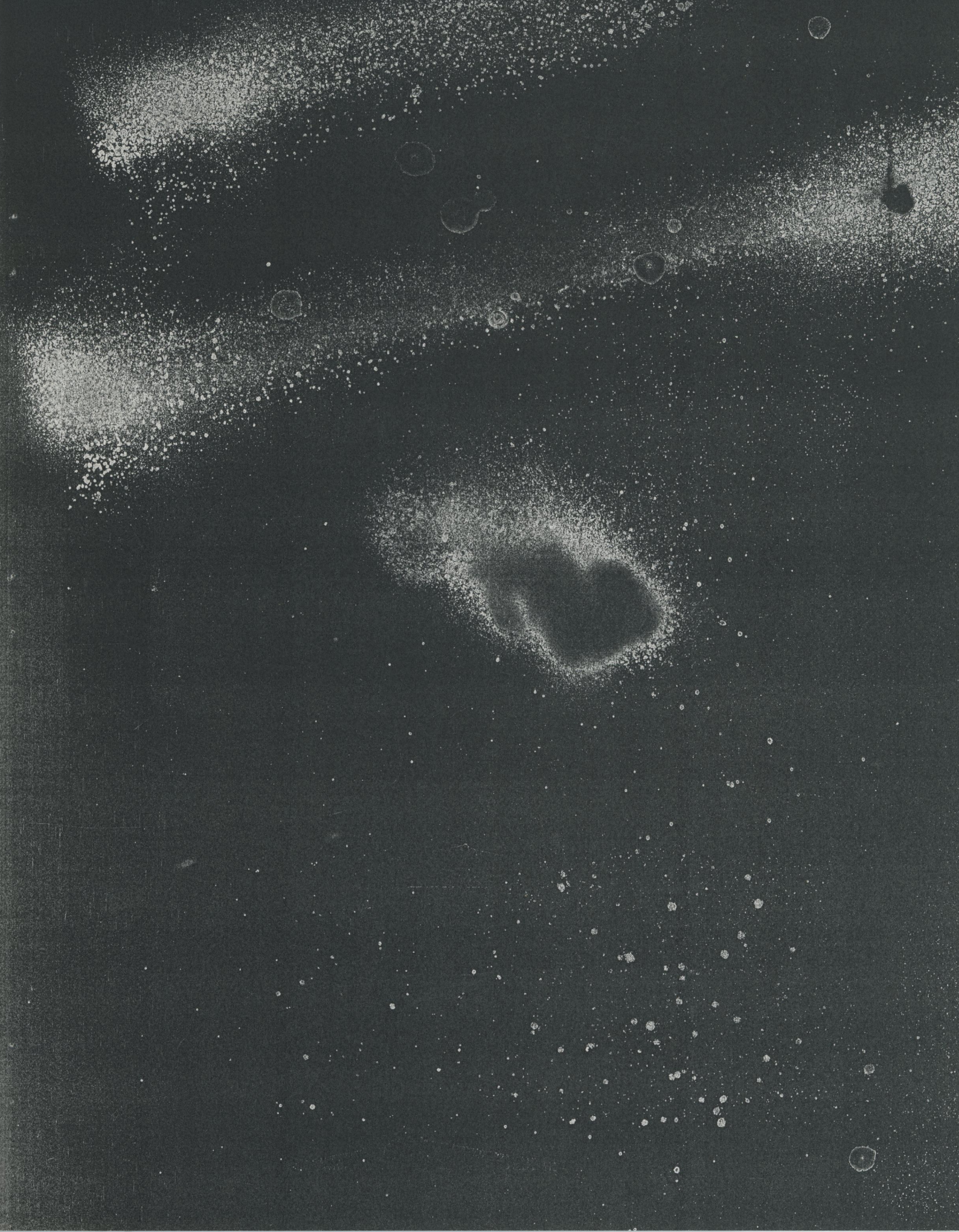


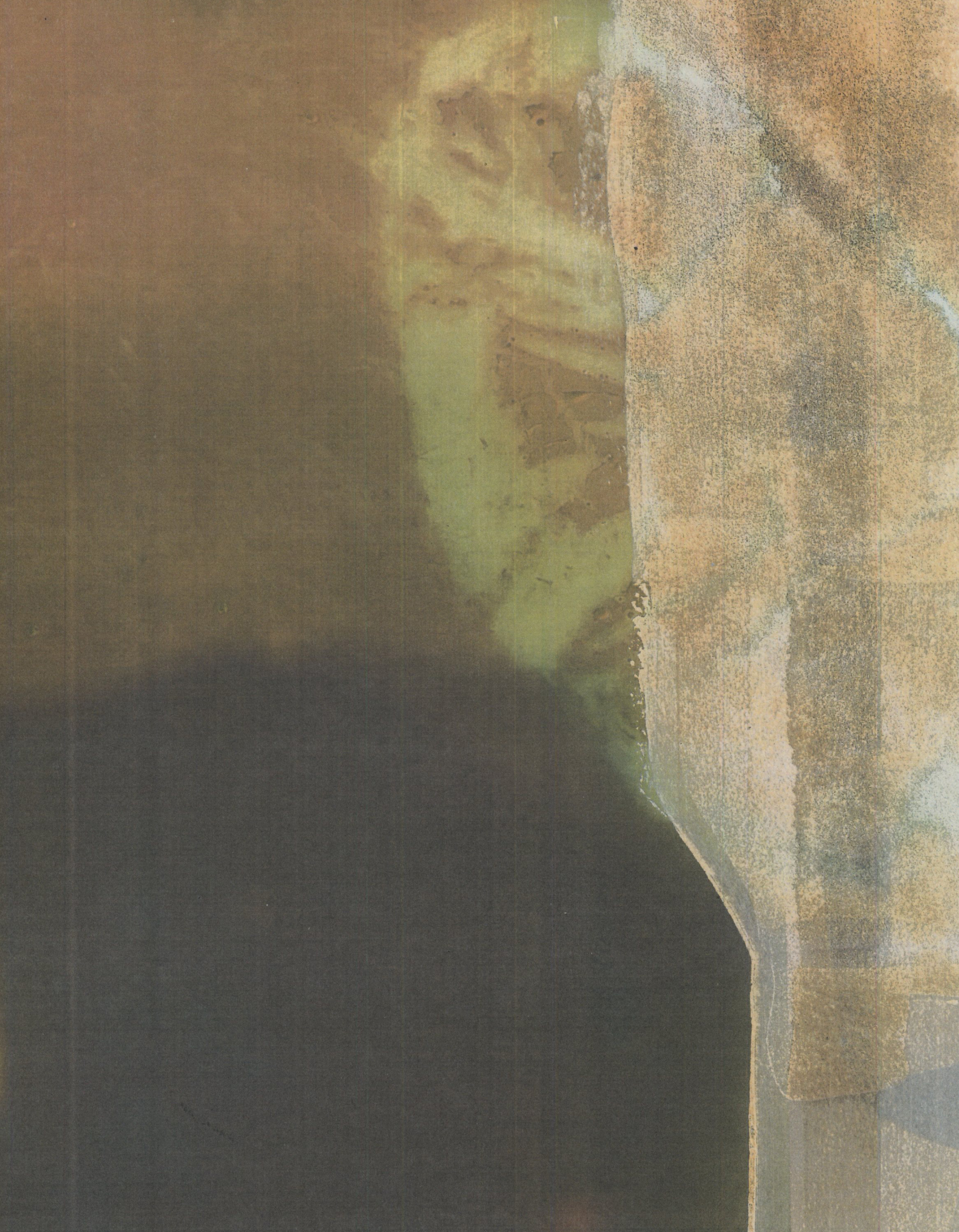






Before it had a name... a distant permanent storm... a 4.5 billion year old nuclear war... a creation of condensed interstellar dust... a collapse... the destruction of four million tons of matter every second... sending itself... wriggling through space... to your face... the morning light...





the light wriggles in waves towards Earth until
it reaches the chlorophyll in a plant... the retina of an eye... the silver
halide crystals in film... the tip of your nose... upper lip... chin...
think of the collision of atoms... the constant colliding... the sound of
the Sun... from a distance it hums and vibrates... closer... it explodes
flamboyantly... unembarrassed... the setting off of electric reactions
disrupting the magnetic field...





and there it is... on your face...
as we wait at the airport... the morning light... too much light and
life burns... the image is overexposed... too little and it shrivels...
the image fails to appear...



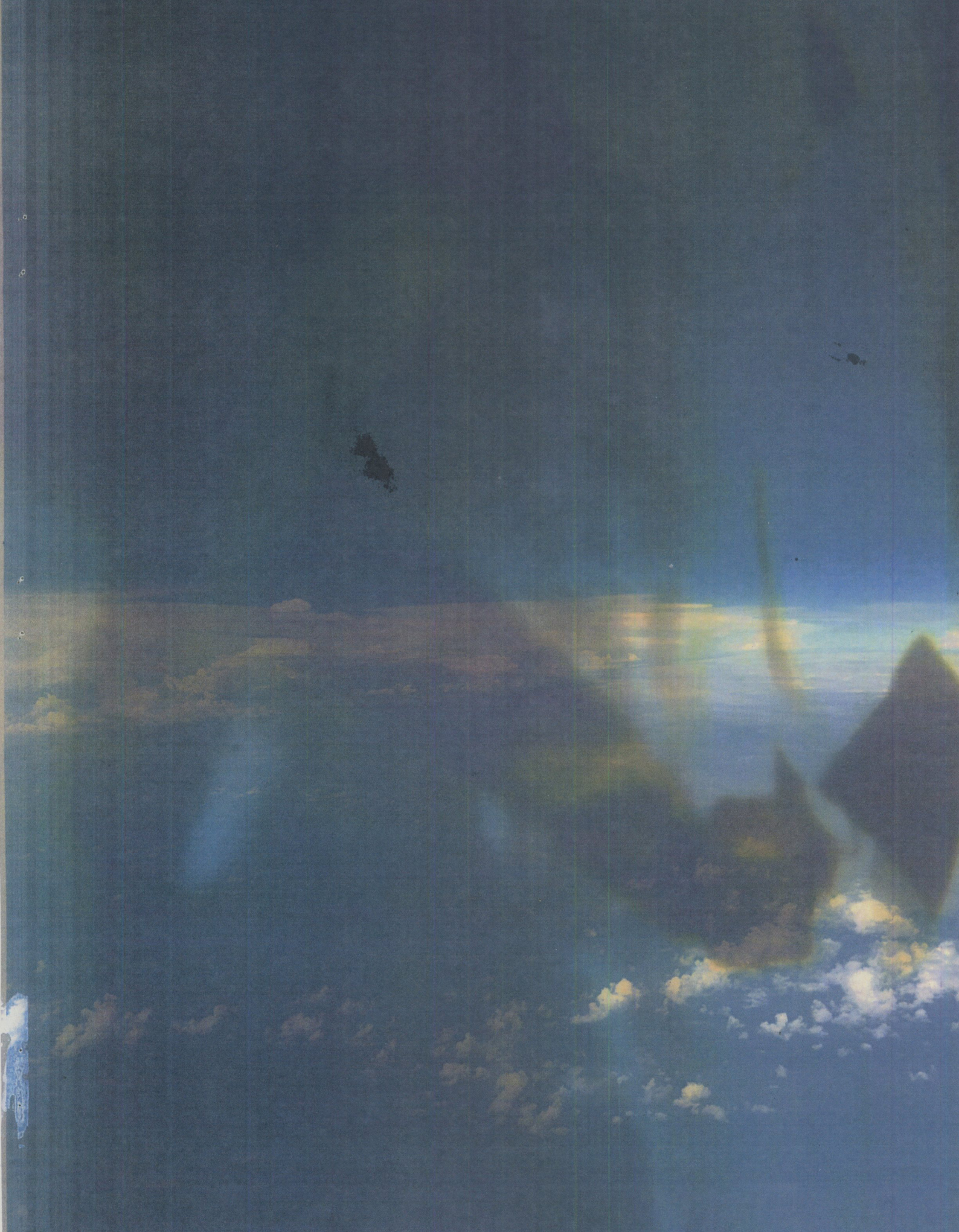
Plotinus thought of the eye as a microcosmic Sun... ancient Egyptians considered the Sun and the eye companions... both making the world visible... Lucretius said the eyes avoid bright objects and refuse to gaze at them... but the eyes can be forced to look... or cannot look away... if the eyes cannot look... or be forced to look... the camera can... but for now all I can see is the Sun... dancing on your face...

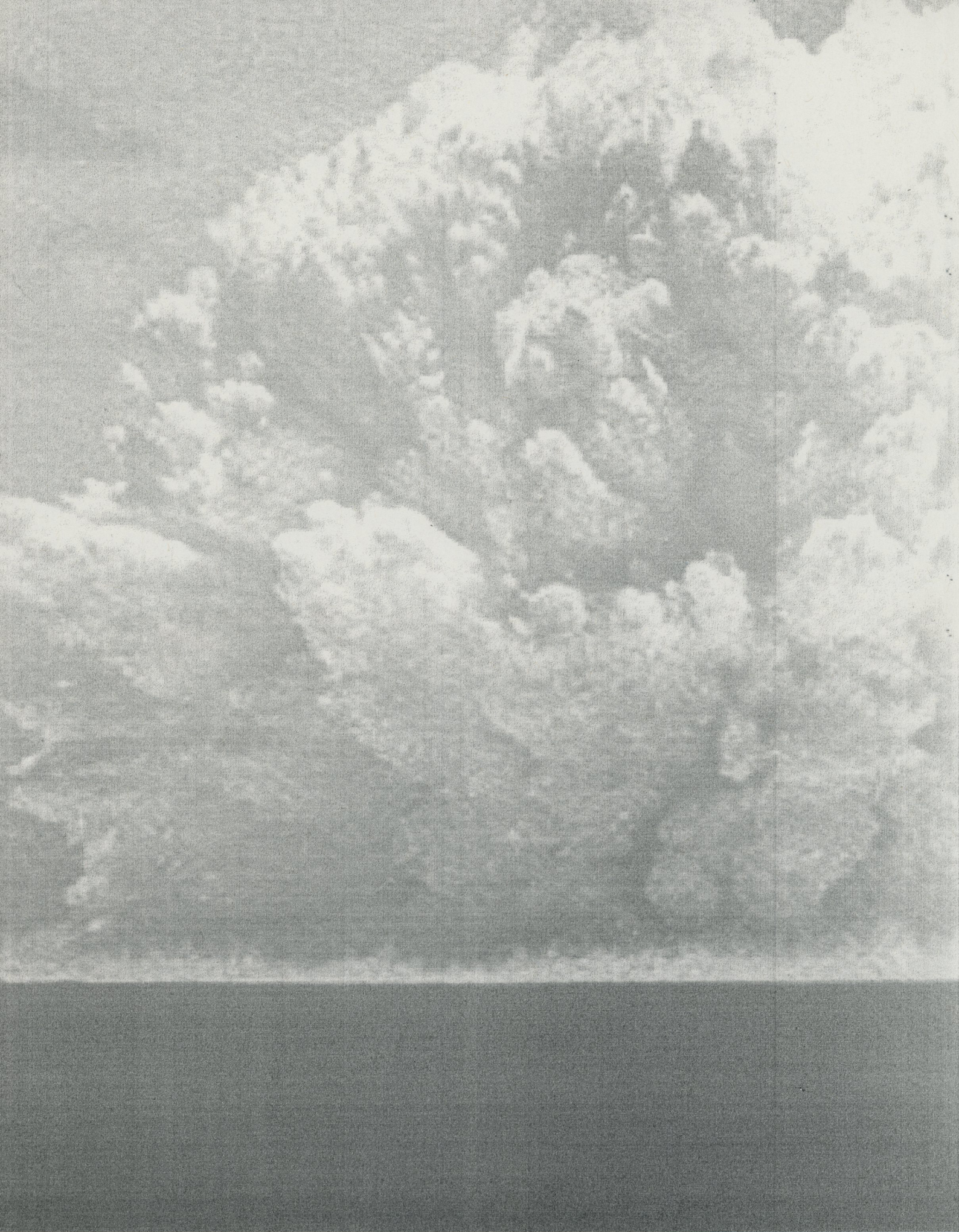




which the camera 'captures'...
we like to say... the camera... once content as a singular apparatus...
for that was enough... attaches itself to other objects... faces... bodies...
buildings... devices... and once attached it never lets go... a parasite...
sucking... serving... a function... the English were the first to equip
their bombers with cameras... pilots flying over Nazi Germany
dropped their bombs too soon... it was reported... but once they were
monitored... like workers in a factory... their successes and failures
could be recorded... assessed... destruction became an object of
analysis... a metric... a product on the production line... the pilot
replaced by a camera... culminating in an operator at a military base...
8,000 miles away... drinking a Caramel Ribbon Crunch Crème
Frappuccino... from Starbucks... looking at a live video... tracking
targets... is that a gun or a camera... is that a journalist or a combat-
ant... are we in Afghanistan... Yemen... Pakistan... Somalia...
Palestine... Syria... Las Vegas... Virginia... Lucretius says unmanned
aerial operators now outnumber pilots in the US military... who
are told by their command they are birds... or better yet clouds...
or better yet Suns... "nobody can ever escape it for a single moment"...

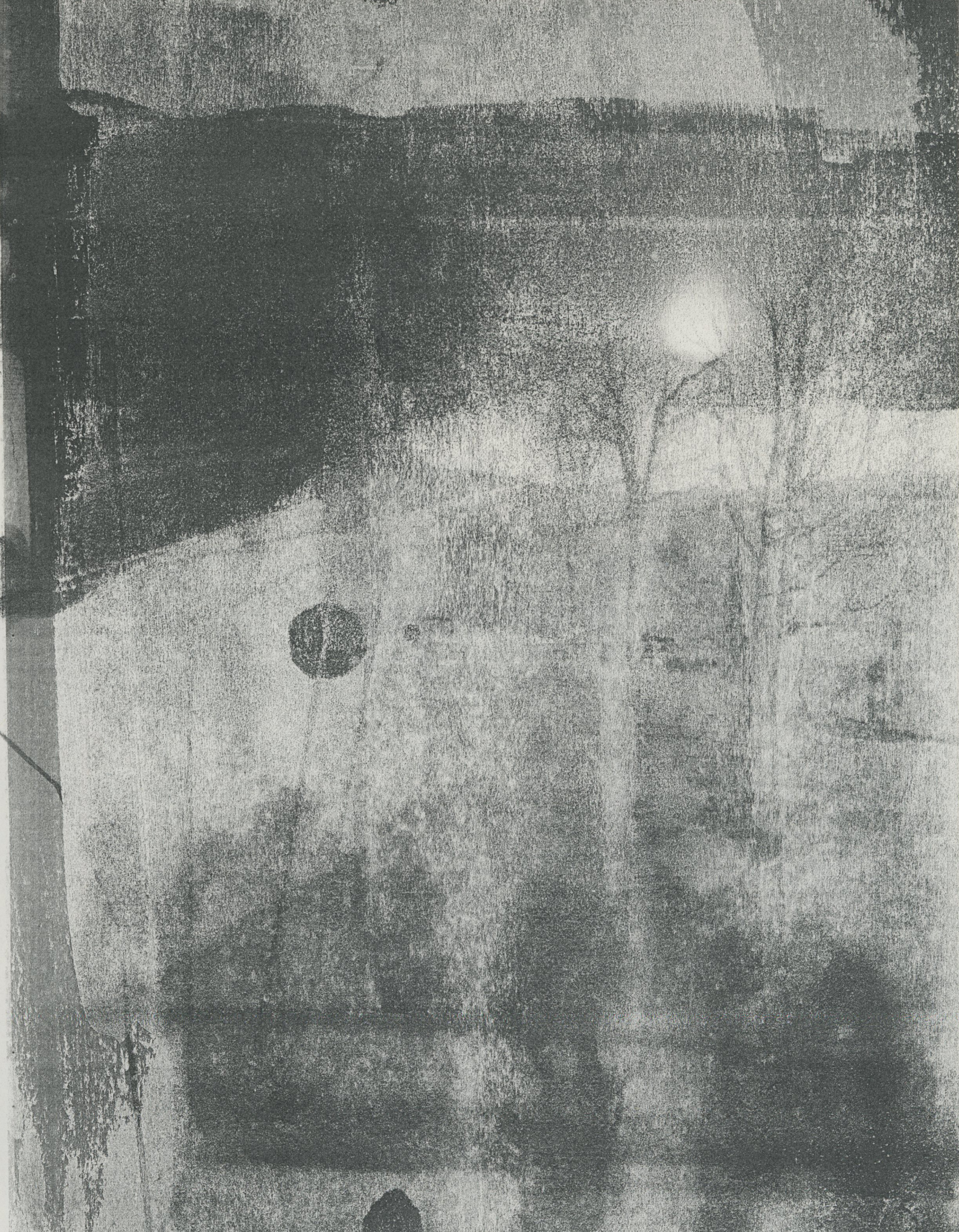
Francis Ponge said of the Sun... "we are in its hands"... a military mantra... a drone sentence... flying at 60,000 feet for 33 hours above its target... flying as close to the Sun as it can... flying to steal its glare... its omnipotent radiation... its impossible energy... Icarus' mistake was not his hubris but his technology... the pilots are told... feathers and wax... now aluminum alloys... now composite radar absorbent materials... this is a war sentence... being spoken as we wait at the airport...







being spoken in 1945... by pilots who refer to the nuclear bomb as a bucket of sunshine... the most terrifying morning light... August 6 1945... 8:15 am... the Sun is poured on the Earth... it is poured again three days later... this time it is 11:02 am... two Suns... every bomb finds its target even if it misses... the worst expression of intelligence and imagination... but intelligence and imagination nonetheless... this is a war sentence... a war imagination... repeats Lucretius... and then nothing... Yasujiro Tanaka is only three years old when Fat Boy falls from the sky... if he had been in Kokura... the original target... instead of Nagasaki... before the pilots changed plans at the last minute... Tanaka would not remember 'a million camera flashes going off at once'... a blue sky turns a blinding white... and then nothing... meanwhile Fred Olivi... the American co-pilot on the Bockscar Nagasaki Mission... describes 'the light of a thousand suns' illuminating the cockpit... from the air the light burns blue... it burns the sky a crazy cartoon blue... complete combustion... it scars the sky... and within the putrid white of the mushroom a pinkish salmon colour... turning coral... incomplete combustion... and from the ground... immediately after the brightest of flashes... Tatsuichirō Akizuki... a doctor... saw three colours... black... yellow... scarlet... Lucretius teaches that nothing comes from nothing... from the air... a thousand Suns... from the ground... a million camera flashes... and after nothing... black... yellow... scarlet...

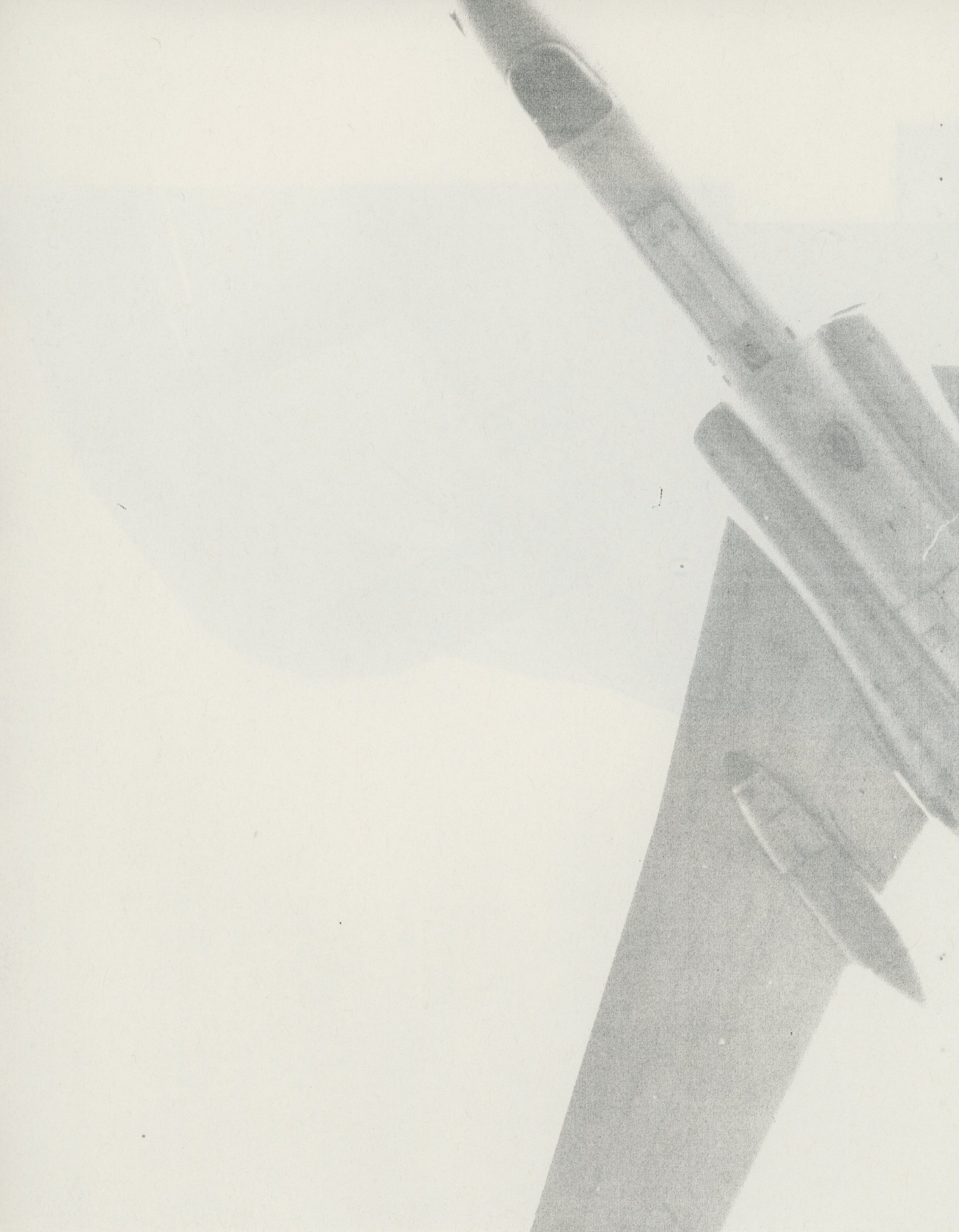


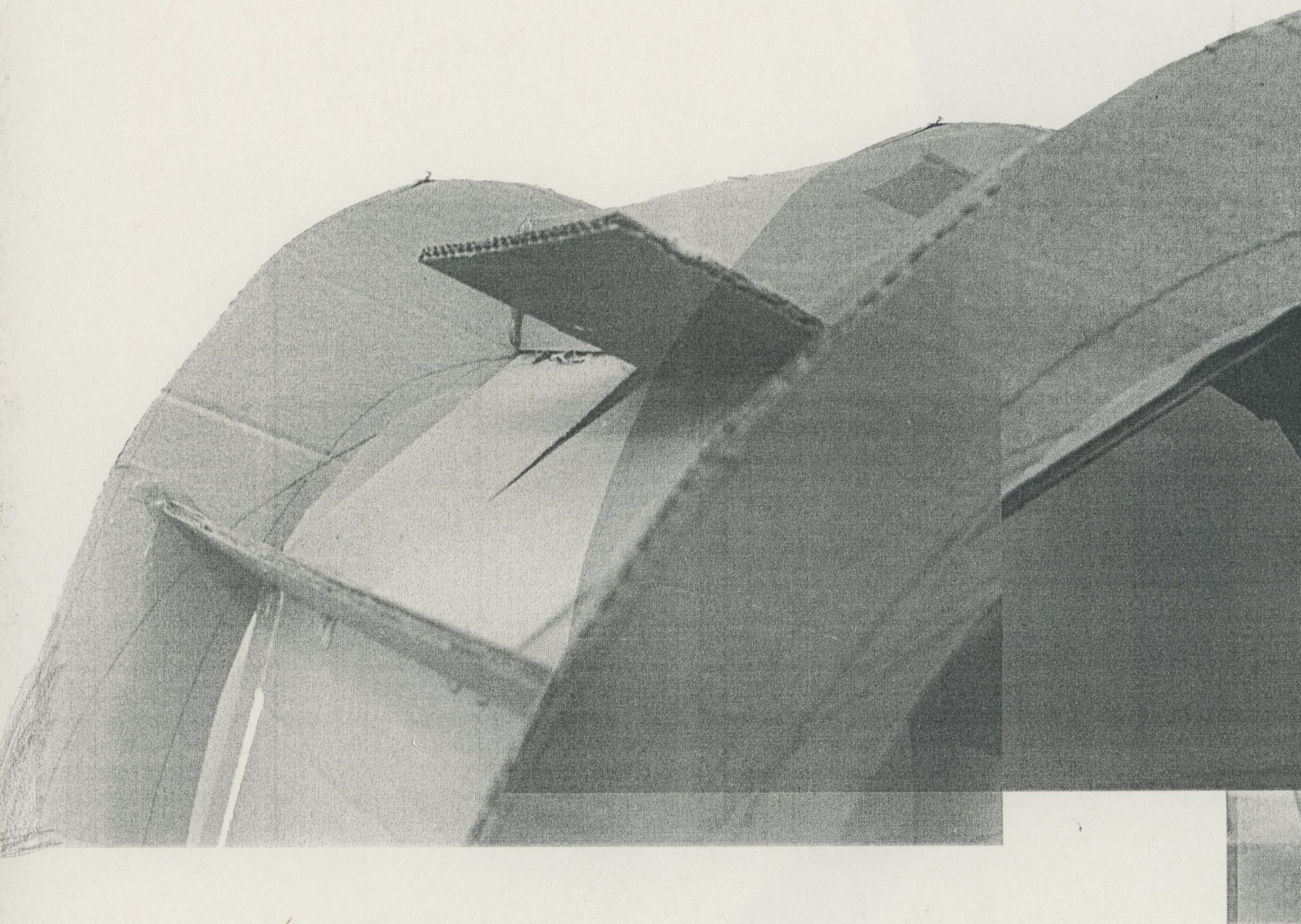


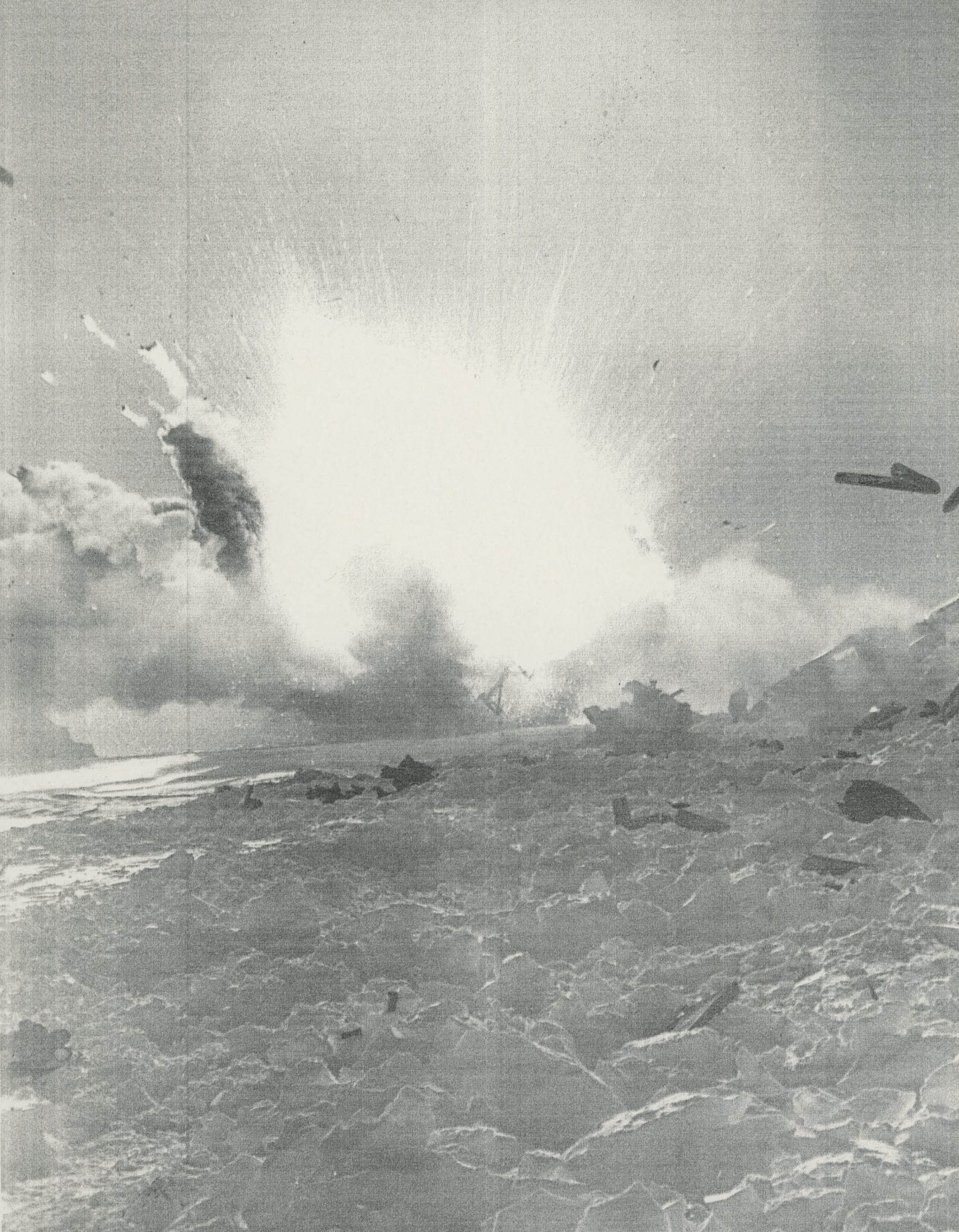
what were the colours
in Hiroshima... when Yoshito Matsushige took five black & white
photographs... the only photographs from that day... five photographs
for 135,000 dead and wounded... he develops them at night... rinsing
the images in a toxic stream... the image appears... a man's shadow
burnt into the steps... a life reduced to its shadow... an impossible
reversal of presence... a shadow without a source... a perversion
of the supposed origins of art... Pliny the Elder wrote... since 'all
agree that it began with tracing an outline around a man's shadow'...

but this is an end not a beginning... a death not a birth... an image
dissolving... but not into nothing... what is left is not nothing...
what is left is never nothing... a shadow made permanent by an
artificial Sun... a grim monument... to an ending that must be seen
by others... endured by others... thought by others... a photograph
that appears in a stream like a ghost... or is mistaken for a shadow...
as we wait at the airport...

July 23 1945... *Life* magazine prints a story on 'The German Space Mirror'... 'Nazi men of science seriously planned to use a man-made satellite as a weapon for conquest'... the 'Sun Gun'... it is an idea as old as Archimedes' mythical invention... during the siege of Syracuse in 212 BC... when Roman warships were supposedly set ablaze using a collection of carefully positioned mirrors... and then Hermann Oberth... remember the name... a German physicist and engineer... designs a concave mirror to orbit the Earth... the intended weaponisation of the Sun... and on the next page... an advertisement for orange juice... a man returning home under a glaring Sun is greeted by a woman and two children... the little girl holding a glass of orange juice... 'What a Wonderful Helping Hand: When Thirsty Throats and Tired Bodies Demand Real Refreshment'... and on the next page... a man lies in bed... cigarette in mouth... arms raised... missing both hands... the caption reads 'Lying in bed after losing his hands Sgt. Harold Russell has too much time to think... an attendant removes his cigarette after each puff... how an amputee learns to get along with hooks'... wounded in a training accident when a half pound of TNT explodes in his hands... the Sun... thirsty throats... tired bodies... the naturalisation of the family... orange juice... an explosion... missing hands... hooks... this is a war sentence...







as our flight is delayed.... wriggling irrationally
through time... this is a story... in no particular order... this is
an image... appearing in a toxic stream... flowing into other images...
like words in a sentence... for the dying Sun... a sum of misunder-
standings... a form of nonknowledge... giving too much of itself...
without receiving... without wanting... for any living body... is a delicate
balance of matter... a complex cellular arrangement... a collage
of atoms... cosmic silt and matter... either accepting the disturbance
of the Sun... or rejecting it cruelly... this is Bataille... theorizing on
a general economy... the Sun as the source of original wealth...
superabundance and excess... the living organism receiving more

energy than is necessary... being used for growth... or if growth is no longer possible... lost without profit... spent... willingly or not... gloriously or catastrophically... sensibly or irrationally... like two Suns... the one not looked at... 'the most elevated conception'... let us call it the academic Sun... and the Sun that meets labouring eyes and bodies... let us call it survival... Lucretius says all life is a struggle in the dark... but Bataille says it is a struggle in between the scorching heat... the rising and setting... of two Suns... a delicate balance... of source and recipient... like carrying a drop of water... in the cradle of the tongue... through the desert... to reach you... or hiding a photograph... in a shoe... and walking for miles... to reach you... or finding your face... in a crowd... to know you... or blasting a rocket... towards the Sun... and never returning...

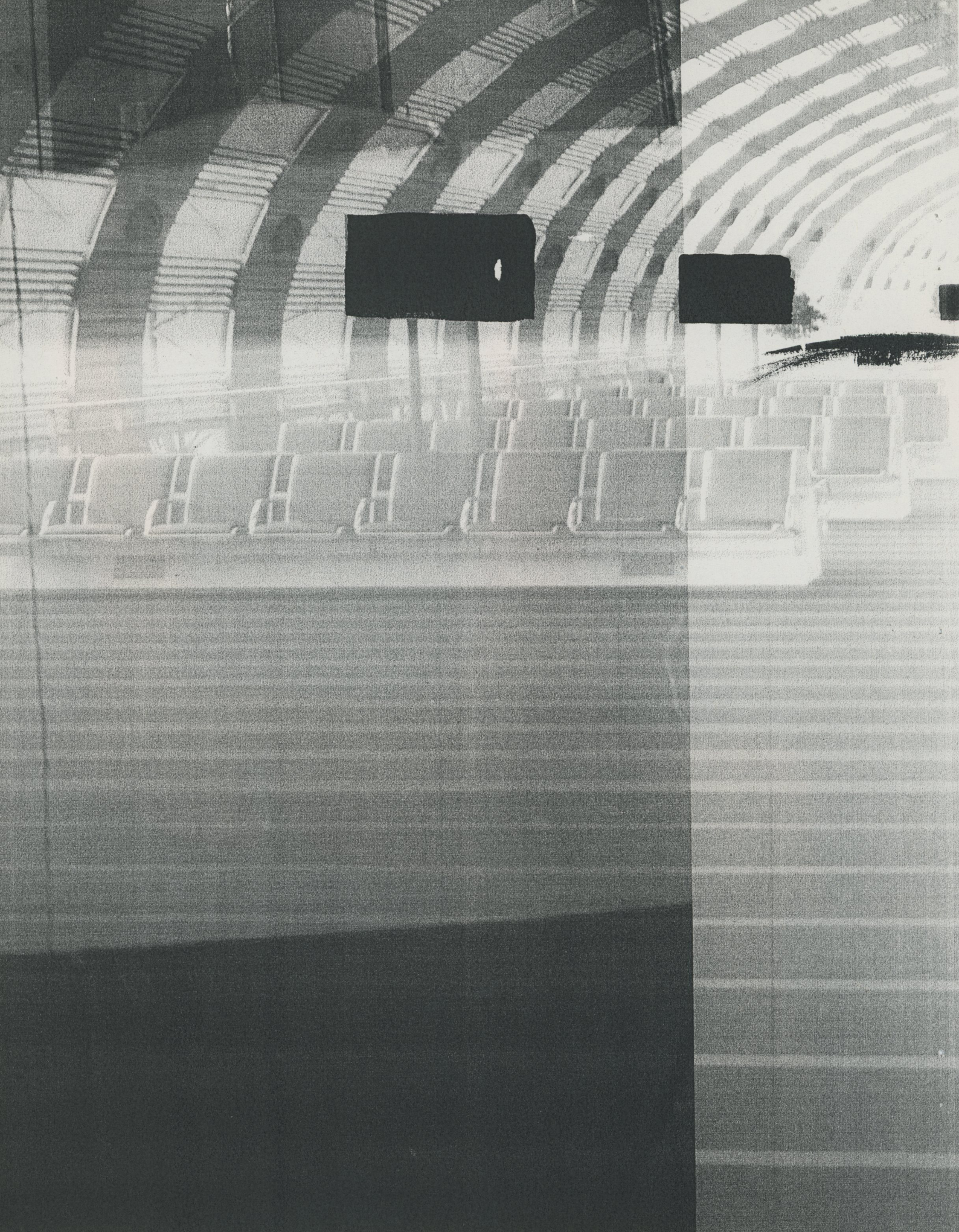
the same as when you left...
as Hermann Oberth imagined... in his rejected doctoral thesis...
Die Rakete zu den Planetenräumen (The Rocket into Interplanetary Space)... self-published in 1923... with designs for a rocket that would become the basis for modern astronautics... dismissed by physicists of the day as a fantasy... Oberth... who read Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Around the Moon* as a child... and gave up medicine for astronautics after being wounded... in bed with too much time to think... Oberth... who designed a rocket for Fritz Lang's 1929 film *Die Frau im Mond* (Woman in the Moon)... and suggested changes to the script... 'Herr Lang... we can't have travellers walking around inside the spaceship... they would float around freely in zero gravity... and there is no atmosphere on the moon... the travellers would need to wear suits and helmets like deep sea divers so they could breathe'... Oberth... whose rocket failed to materialise in the film... but who is eventually recruited by the Nazis to work on the Nazi missile program... developing the V-2 rocket... with Wernher von Braun... which unlike the Sun Gun... escapes from the imagination into the world of things... becomes the first long-range missile... the first thing made on Earth to travel into space... the first object to break the speed of sound... crossing the Kármán line... exploration a fallout of destruction... tourism the outcome of invasion... as we wait at the airport for a flight that will never leave... or so it seems...

and who could blame Oberth for travelling to America after the war...
to work at NASA... to help send a man into space... on the moon...
in his office at NASA he has two prized possessions... a copy of

Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (On the Nature of Things)... and a print of Vincent van Gogh's 1888 *The Artist-Painter on the Road to Tarascon*... otherwise known as *The Painter on his Way to Work*... the original presumed destroyed in the Allied bombing of Magdeburg in 1944... a figure... painted with an ambiguous expression... carrying painting supplies... holding a walking stick... wearing a straw hat... making his way along a rough dirt road... an unsteady path... an unknown surface... his shadow a jittery distortion... was it the shadow that inspired Francis Bacon to paint his own version of the image... did he see this figure as haunted... a phantom on the road... a shadow escaping its source and dissolving like "a gutting candle runs into its own grease"... something unearthly about the scene... his way of walking... his alien posture... pretending to be human... as if gravity had been forgotten... or not understood... in the moment of representation... a leg floats off the ground... the shadow taking on a life of its own... and we are back in the gaze of the Sun... the flight delayed... we hear...

as a sentence comes to an unfinished end...
for only a moment has passed... it seems... but it is long enough...
for the Sun... to have warmed your face... and for us... sitting still...
to have moved beyond its light





A SENTENCE FOR THE SUN,
published by Stolon Press, Sydney, December 2021.

Images by William Eric Brown, text by Tom Melick,
and typesetting by Robert Milne. With thanks to Diane Fortenberry.
ISBN 978-0-6453840-0-0, www.stolonpress.com

