



2012

Bad Infinity (or) Some Examples of Displacement

Andrew Meerow

Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#)

© The Author

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/2805>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

BAD INFINITY
(OR)
SOME EXAMPLES OF DISPLACEMENT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

BY

Andrew Meerow, MFA
Virginia Commonwealth University
2012

DIRECTOR: Holly Morrison
Department Chair, Associate Professor
Painting and Printmaking

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
INTERVIEW (REFORMATTED FROM ARTIST-MADE BOOK).....	2-24

ABSTRACT

BAD INFINITY (OR) SOME EXAMPLES OF DISPLACEMENT

By Andrew J. Meerow, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012


Major Director: Holly Morrison, Department Chair, Associate Professor, Painting and Printmaking

The following thesis is comprised of an edited interview between Andrew Meerow and an undisclosed questioner in which the two discuss Meerow's visual thesis, a body of paintings titled "Some Examples of Displacement." The interview addresses the production of art and value as Meerow's primary subject, a reflexive position that absorbs qualitative interpretation in either direction. In keeping with the intentions of the artwork, the interview is re-organized, censored, and collaged such that the discussion itself is addressed not as a procedure of truth, but as a performative gesture toward that pursuit.

“BAD INFINITY”

(OR)

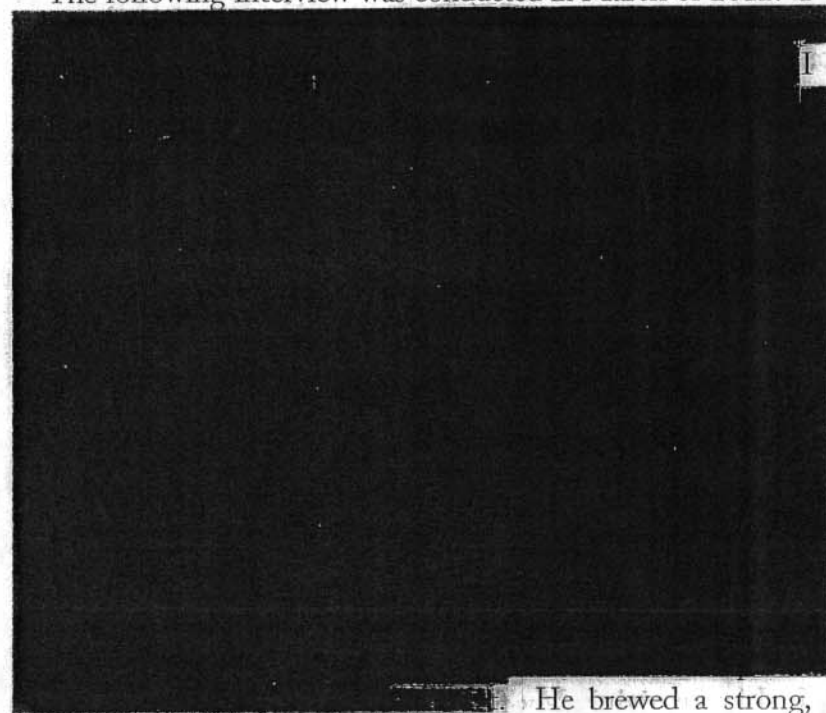
SOME EXAMPLES OF DISPLACEMENT

 He brewed a strong, french-press of coffee, placed it on the table between us, and we began.

~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~

The following interview was conducted in March of 2012. I



He brewed a strong, french-press of coffee, placed it on the table between us, and we began.

~ ~ ~

Question Man: So how's it been going?

Andy Meerow: Good. Just trying to keep calm. I'm not sure if I'm nervous about [REDACTED] or moving back to New York, but basically if I'm not thinking about one of those things at any given time, I'm thinking about the other.

Q: When are you moving back?

AM: In like a month.

Q: Do you know where you're going to live?

AM: No.

Q: I hate looking for apartments in New York.

AM: I know, it's depressing.

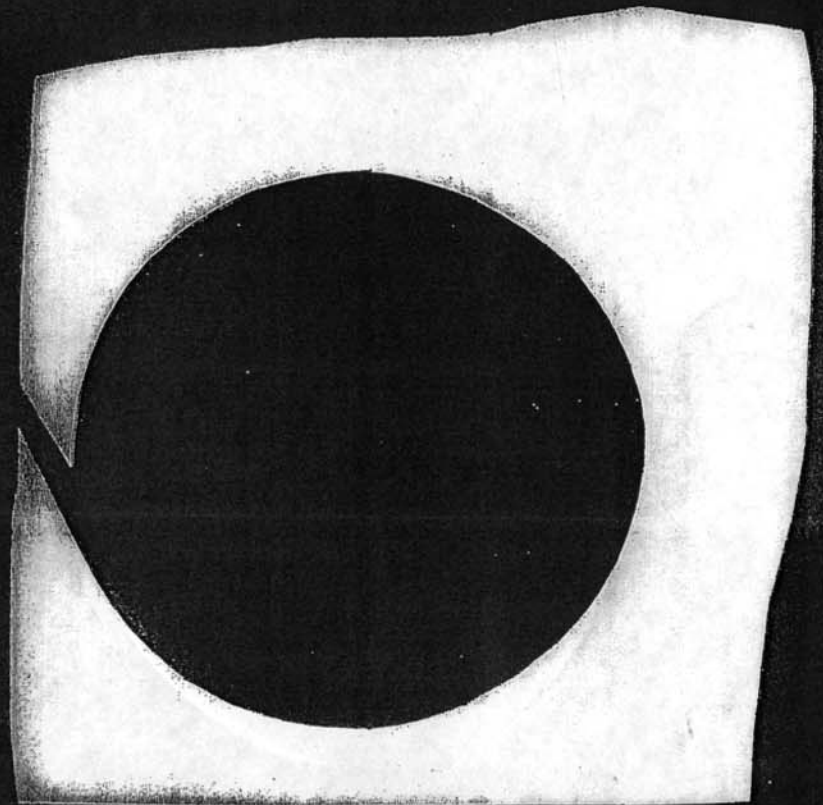
Q: This place is super nice.

he said
now

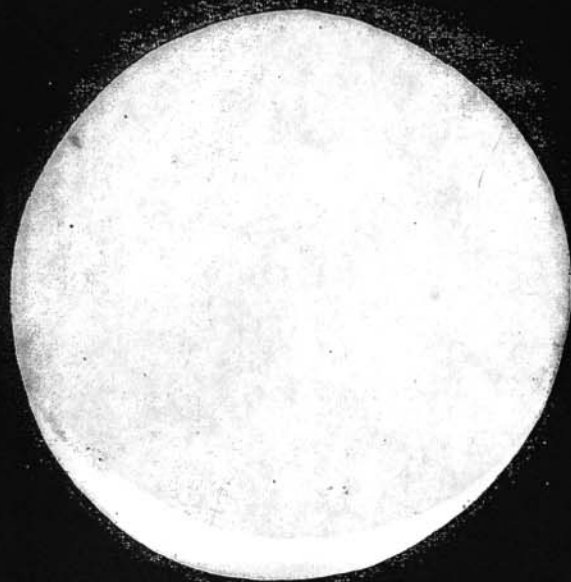
Q: [REDACTED] guess more

Q: I want to start by talking about your new set of paintings.

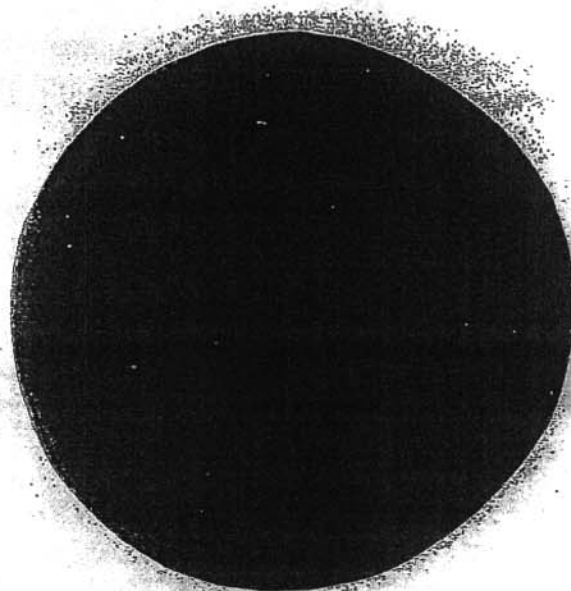
AM: Oh good



Q: Can we start by talking about this figure, the circle and its negative? What's behind that motif, and where did it come from?



Q: Can we start by talking about this figure, the circle and its negative? What's behind that motif, and where did it come from?



It came from an older work of mine.



years
form
allish,
y. So
cle. I
using
s very
been
ind of

seem
into art

myself
esthetic,
it's the
s right
se big
le go

FIVE. Four is a superficial
read, I mean, not in a bad way. It's the first layer. Almost a
decoy.

Q: How do you mean?

functioned. Pre-pop I think it was whole-heartedly
intended as a scientific approach, something necessary to
the serious research of the painter. Then Pop came along
and sort of called that out as a kind of high-cultural
branding mechanism, a way of self-contextualizing
something as serious research, even if it was kind of naval
gazing.

Q: Can you elaborate?

AM: It's just a form that I took from an older body of textile collages. I suppose looking back is an important part of these things.

Q: Clearly. I mean one could say these paintings are aggressively derivative, not just of your own work, but of classic, canonical moments in modern painting.

AM: Yeah. But you can't make those paintings any more. Even if you make them, it's not them.

Q: But don't you think that's kind of a cop out? Just letting atmospheric conditions re-contextualize your work. At some point don't you have to start brokering in new ideas?

AM: (long pause)

New ideas. I don't know. I don't think I'm really that drawn to ideas. More executions, objects. But couldn't we say that the cop out or the aggressively derivative, as you say, is about as new an idea as any? Personally, I get in trouble when I become too focused on the new, on that which is out in front of me on some imaginary, distant horizon I can't reach. It's like a mirage.

For ideas to float around.

Q: Okay. Well I think we're going off on a tangent but I really want to know more simply what this cut-out form is about. I mean, is it just a decorative motif?

AM: Could be. Like Marimekko or something. But I think no, it's more. It represents an action, call it the "doing" of the painting. And the cut-out shape (as well as the black hole, if we see it as such) becomes at once figure and void. But that singular action of cutting and removing the shape, that is the representation that I'm most interested in.

Q: So the content is you doing it? Are you sure that is enough?

AM: Well, it also looks a certain way.

We often think of painting as an inventory of actions, very literally, we called it "action" painting. But now these actions are a language of their own. Where they used to speak to painting as verb, now they represent it as noun. We have to go through weird, circuitous processes now to access the verb again.

Q: And what's so important about the verb?

AM:

The verb is something that artists do. The noun is just an idea that surrounds certain historical objects. I think if we look back we'll see painters trying to keep the verb vital and meaningful, and so as a result the paintings change.

1001 1000. 11000!

Q: So the figure images action, the action images painting, and the painting images...

AM: The figure. You know that school bus song, "This is the song that never ends?"

Q: "There's a hole in the bucket."

AM: Becket.

Q: Come on dude.

AM: Sorry.

Q: So they are kind of impossible, or non-committal?

AM: Impossible yes. You cannot put the circle back. You cannot fix the bucket. Non-committal, I think no. I mean, on the level of painting, visually, they are forceful as hell, right?

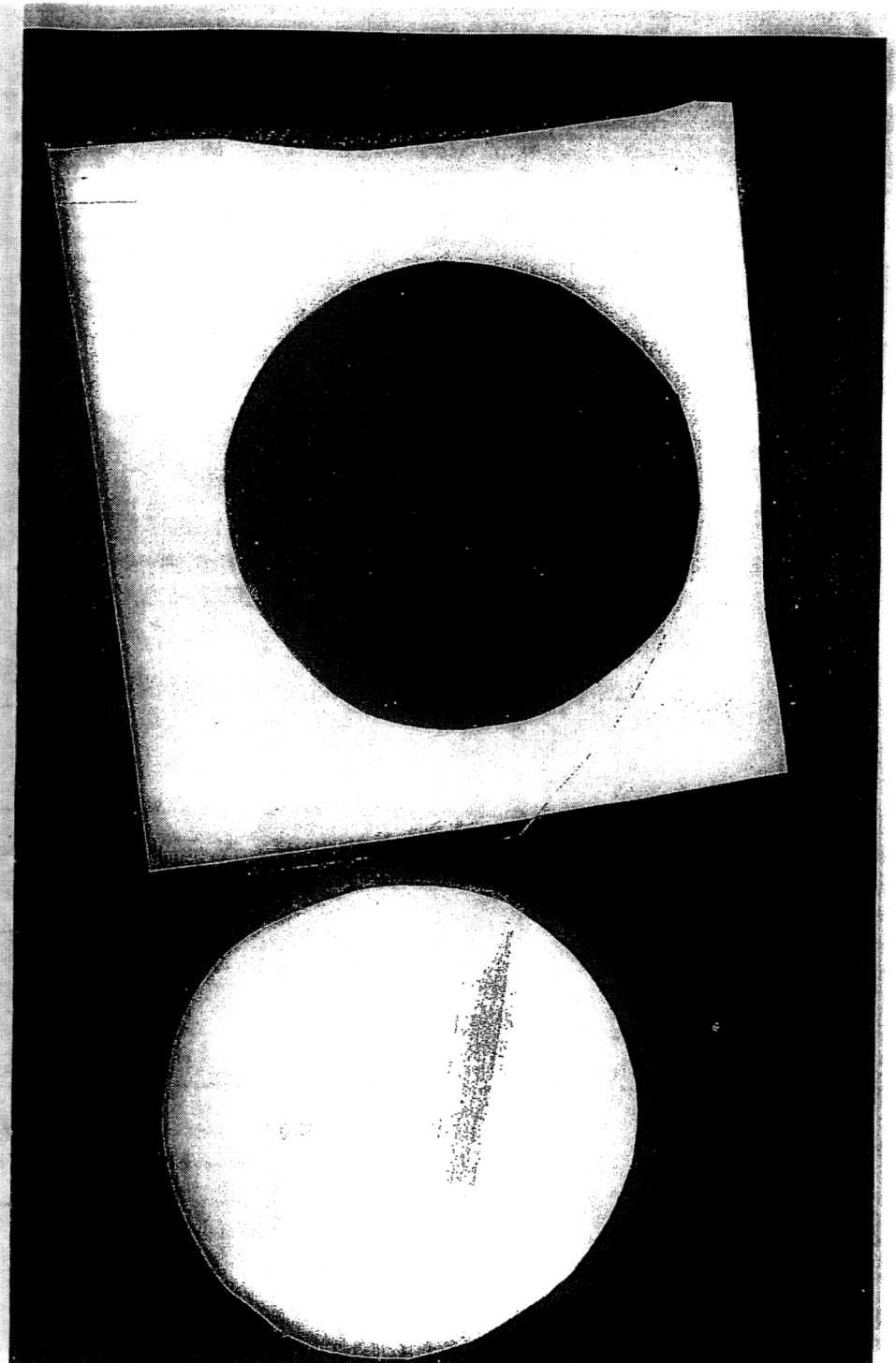
(pauses)

I think about music lots. About tone and delivery.

Q: These are pretty "cool."

but I think about music a lot. I have

to talk about tone, or delivery.



AM: Emotionally yeah. But that's for a reason. Not so much to be cool in the fashion sense, but so that there is room for the viewer to play around and decide if things are serious or not. Like some friends of mine see these paintings and think they are just hilarious. But then I sort of look at them and I'm like, are you sure? I mean, are you just saying that 'cause I'm here and you think I wanna be this snarky asshole?

Q: That's funny.

AM: With the painting I don't think I was really trying to be ironic about painting as much as I was trying to bring production back to the foreground. Like, in this black and white it seemed like a way to get people to think about making paintings, not making them.

Q: And what was your interest in those later production and so on?

①

Q: (Laughs) Yeah. So what happened to all of that digital printing and text? I mean, I agree with your friends perhaps regarding that older work which seemed really laden with irony.

AM: I guess I've been trying to calm the work down.

Q: I see.

AM: With the printing, I don't think I was really trying be ironic about painting as much as I was trying to bring production issues to the foreground. Like, in this backwards way it seemed like a way to get people to think about making paintings, by not making them.

Q: And what was your interest in these issues, production and so on...

AM: Well, not just painting production, but value production.

Q: How do you mean?

AM: Like when you take some appropriated material, found text or something, some non-art thing, and you reproduce it within the vernacular of, I dunno, fine art or post-minimal painting or whatever, what you are doing is testing the way we produce value within that vernacular. Printing was a way to make that transfer or elevation happen really fast.

Q: And you think that speed is important. ?

AM: Well, facility. It's not so much that value production is possible that is interesting, but that it can be done really easily, like a trick. This is an old conversation that started and ended with the readymade I guess. Warhol in painting I guess. The elevation of value can be de-skilled as an operation.

Q: Seems to stay relevant though.

AM: Did you read that book Rich Texts by John Kelsey?

Q: Parts of it. Its good but some of it pisses me off.

AM: Of course. I mean, I think it's supposed to. Anyway, he has this one quote in there about painting where he talks about its hallucinatory properties. He says something like "painting has an uncanny ability to hallucinate the crisis of art."

Q: That's interesting. Can you talk about that more?

AM: Yeah, well from the moment I started painting I was always super excited about building stretchers, priming canvas. Should I use linen? Oh wow so pine is not good you should use poplar? Do people actually use oak or maple or something? I bet they do, etc... And it always amazed and amused me when I'd finish stretching a decent sized canvas. This is when I was like 20 years old in undergrad. I'd feel like some **pervert** or fetishist because of how good I thought it looked. **me**, it would just look finished.

Q: I guess **art history** set that read up for you.

AM: Totally, but it **worked!** I mean almost so much as to be totally paralyzing.

Q: Yeah.

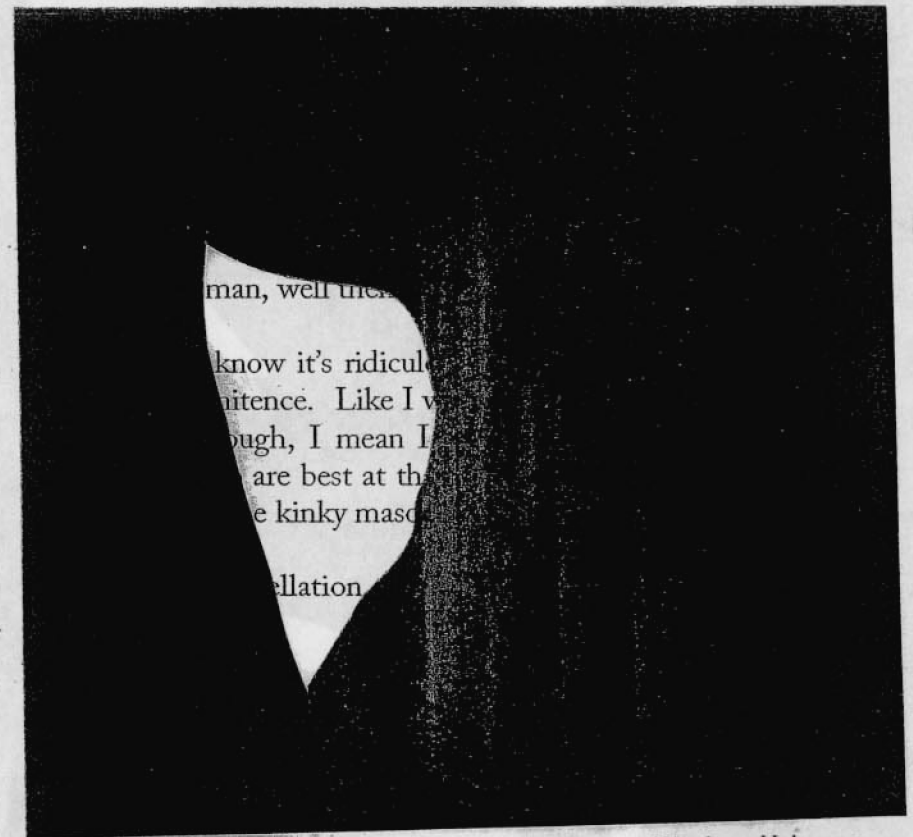
AM: So then this **paralysis** and paranoia infiltrates your moves. It becomes **what you are** painting about. I think that can be a problem. For **me** at least.

Q: Right.

AM: So I think there **way** to deal with it more productively. I mean, **4 some** people the paranoia is perfect. It just suits them **the kind of experience** they are able to embrace. **Kippenberger** Jonathan Meese, etc. But I just can't deal with it.

Q: What, painting?

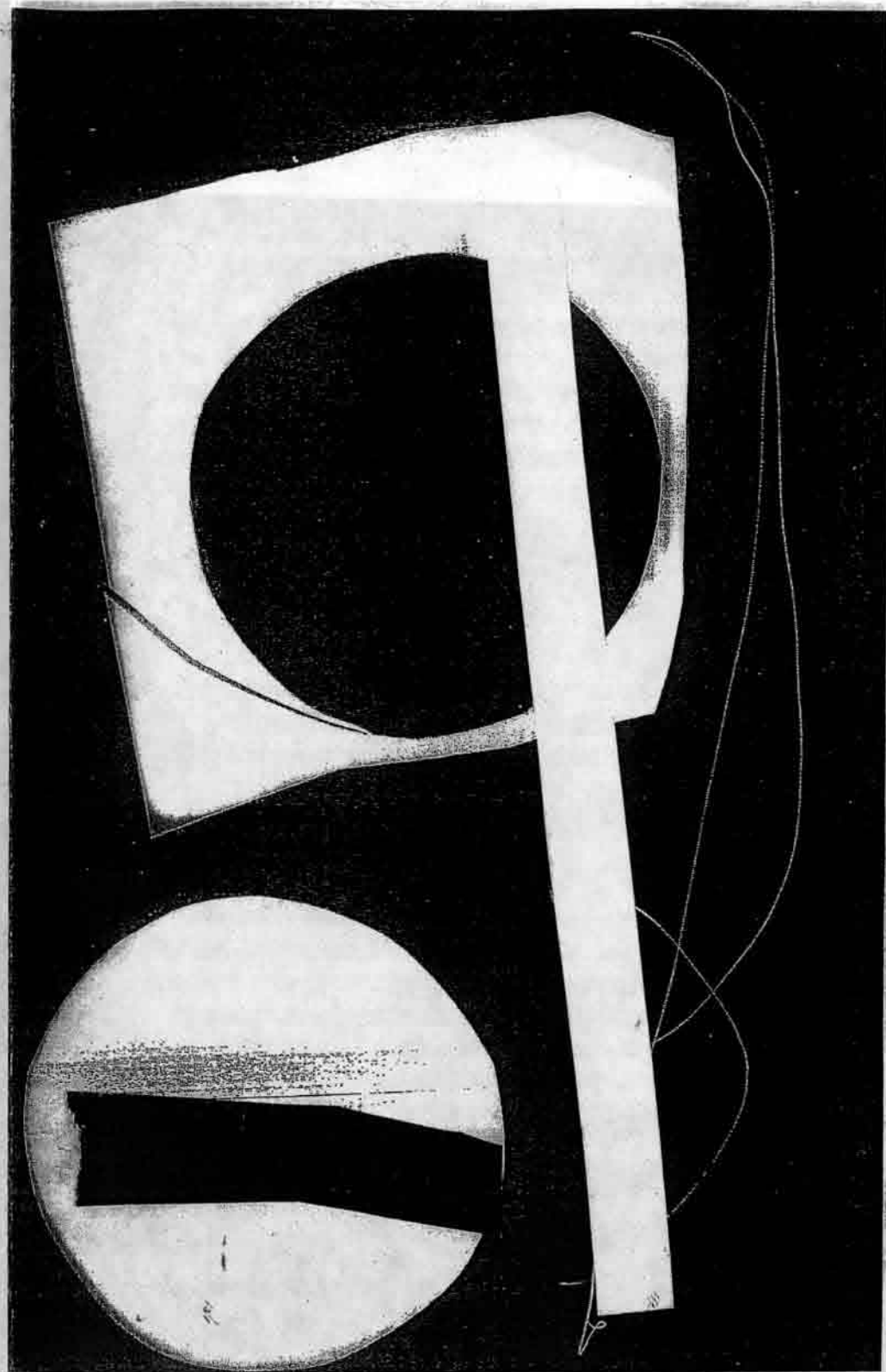
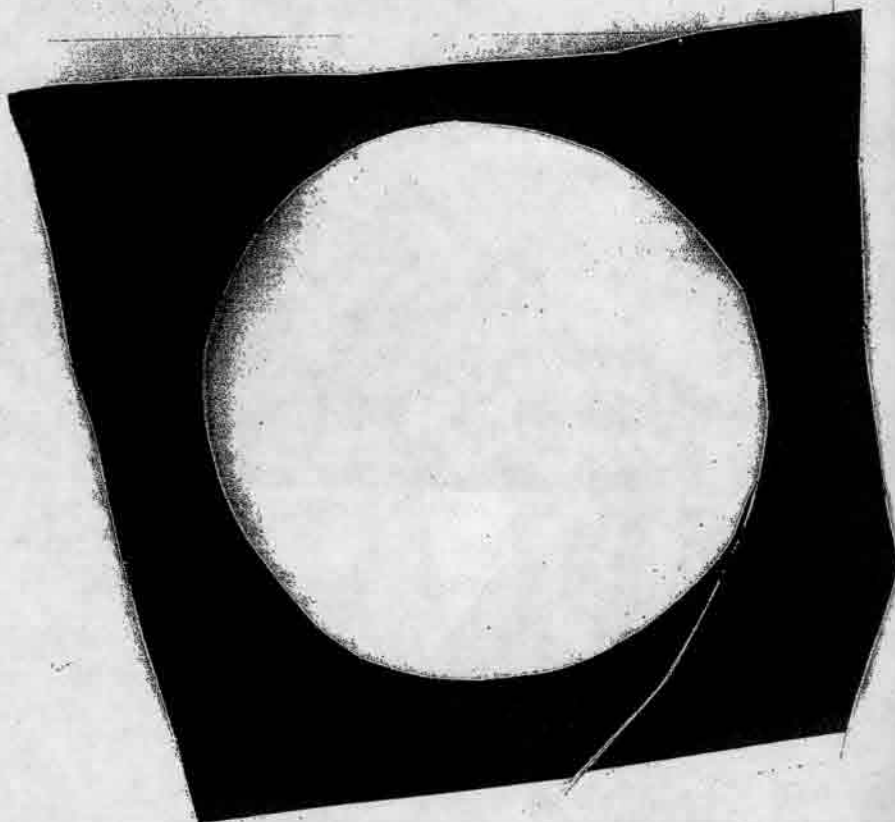
AM: (laughs) Yeah, I just can't do it. I think I'm always sort of beating myself up about that. That it just doesn't work for me emotionally.



kind. ivatisse cut-outs. Blinky Palermo.
El... Krebber, Forg, Henning Bohl, all of that
they say in fashion, casual elegance.

through
Prada or Antonioni's films or something.

they're pretty personal feeling to me.



Q: How s

AM: I
thin
get
and
ro
th

can be
loaded
tion was

Q: It's

AM: Yeah totally.

thin/

get

and

10

t/

10

10

10

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

100

10

10

1

10



AIV

chat

series

of th

Q:

AIM

11

10

10

Q: I see.

AM: I mean, there is still a kind of heaviness. This series of work is titled "Some Examples of Displacement." So I think that functions in a lot of ways, obviously the circle/hole thing, but then a displacement of time and meaning as well.

Q: Do you consider them abstract?

AM: I don't think there is really such thing as an abstract painting anymore, because no matter what, the painting is so entrenched in reference and representation, even if its just representative of other art. Plus there are a lot of potentially figurative reads. Yin-yangs, snake-eyes. A friend of mine saw them and immediately said they were guillotines, which I thought was pretty awesome. [REDACTED] something heavy to this black and white, binary symbol. But I like how these *could* be read as abstract.

Q: Why's that?

the
think the
viewpoint as in
about the painting
for me to get to, cause
think like I do, but that's
know?

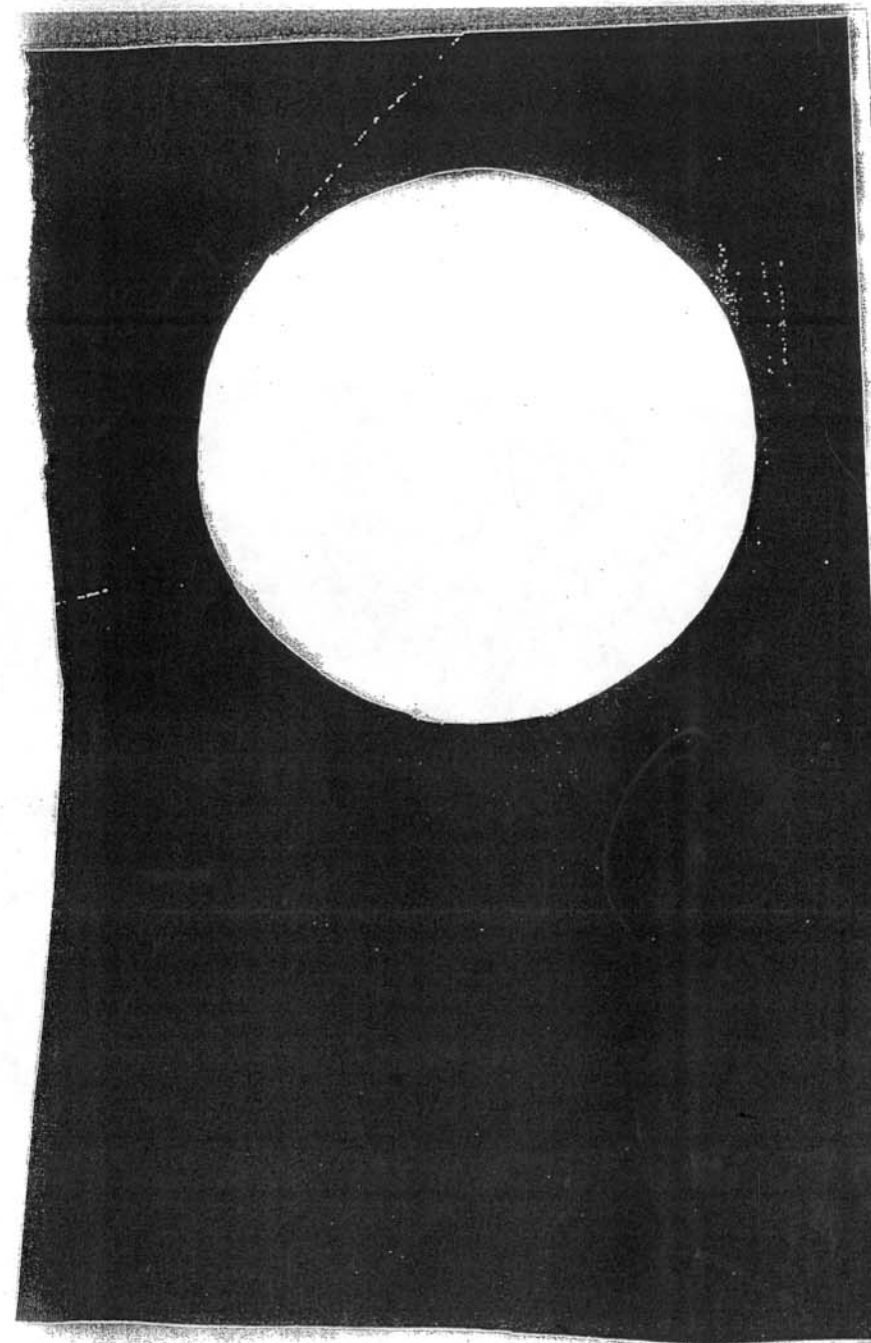
Q: (laughs) That's an
that bumper stick

AM: P

Q:
then I read
takes the piss on

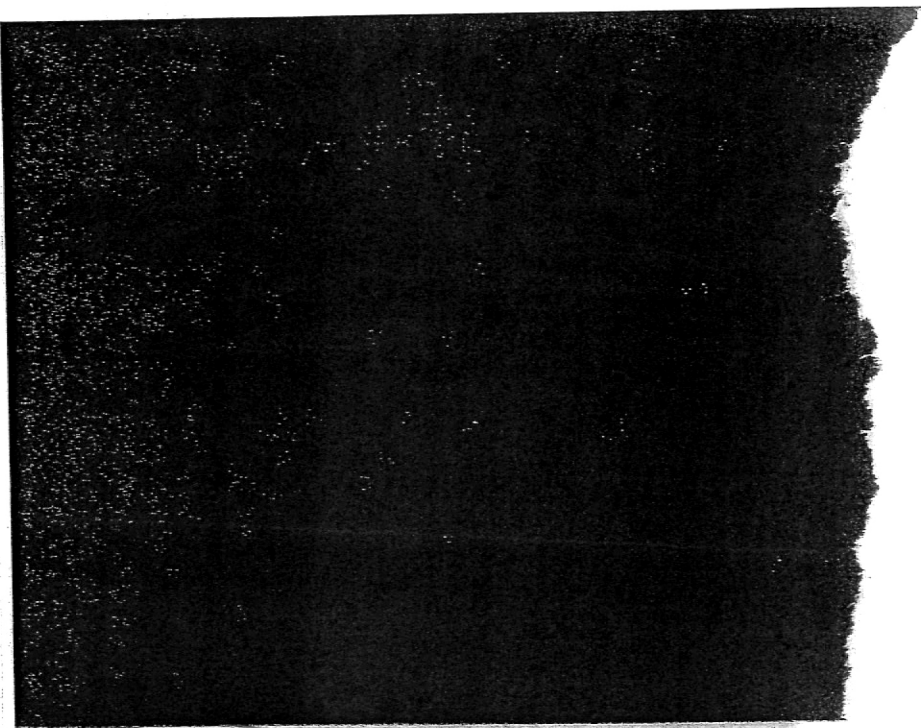
AM: Maybe I should make

Q: Yeah, do it!



AM: So, yeah, if you make work that demands that a viewer trace your exact social and emotional perspectives it can be pretty selfish or boring or scripted.

Q: I agree.



AM: David Joselit.

— "Painting beside itself"

Q: Yeah, I read that. There are interesting ideas in that essay.

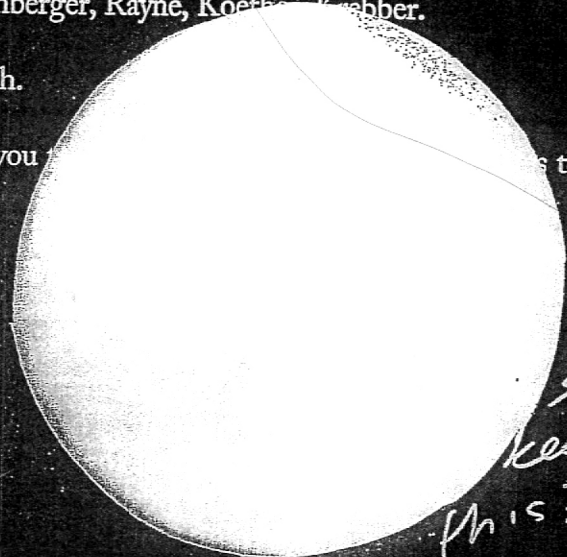
AM: Totally, he talks about the ways that painting can incorporate the networks surrounding its production and distribution into its visual field, or its materiality. A lot of my favorite painters are in that piece.

Q: Kippenberger, Rayne, Koethe, Kabbler.

AM: Yeah.

Q: And you

is too?



ra
s
keep
doing this?
setting up over
relationships?

Q: And you see this work as being in line with this thinking? I'm not sure I see that. Can you explain how?

THIS THINKING?

Q: I mean, I see the repetition, but that to me seems a really old and not particularly interesting way to talk about the artist as a "producer."

AM: I agree. Regarding production, I think an interesting aspect of this work is how it is not necessarily skilled or de-skilled. People often talk about Warhol as this automaton, I guess because he said he wanted to be a machine, but really his paintings were so sensitive, so varied, and so skilled. His sense of color and draftsmanship was constantly at play and constantly evolving, not to mention that the aesthetic itself was so original. I mean, after soup cans, and that really straightforward stuff. The portraits, I mean who ever saw something that looked like that? I think it's strange that he is spoken about in terms of appropriation and the automatic.

Q: As opposed to your work?

AM: Well, we've talked about them being derivative stylistically. But let's talk about the fact that I've started here by making ten paintings, and I haven't done a single edit. They all went fine. I'm happy with all of them. So, on one hand you could say this is because I'm a real deal professional and I know what I'm doing. But, on the other hand you could say it's cause this work is easy or lazy or derivative. Am I just performing production, with the paintings as props in that performance, or is there really some formal necessity to the mass of the series?

The way I've installed them pushes the conversation further into one of distribution and display. So, on the left, you have a stack of paintings, and on the right there are some hung in a row. The viewer stands in this space between the work on the floor and the work on the wall. That space has a lot of potential energy. They might begin to imagine themselves as curator or art handler. I want to communicate that these things are made to be moved around. Again, displacement. I think that further politicizes them. Like, I produced these things and now they have needs.

*we were talking about
Greenberg's Avant-Garde n
Kitsch here -*

Q: Right

AM: [REDACTED]

right! Not as empirical truth, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] artists keep coming along and they want to be endlessly rewarded for aestheticizing the new and different ways in which things are fucked up. Like, the internet and social networks are the new way that power is fooling us into complicity and so on...which may be true...but then, I dunno, is that what we do, just go on holding up mirrors and pointing fingers forever, for a profit?

Q: There's a pridefulness to it I suppose.

AM: Have you ever heard the term "BAD INFINITY?" I just came across that term the other day.

Q: No.

AM: It's a Hegelian concept. It refers to a situation that presents the illusion of possibility, when in actuality things are only possible within the confines of the situation. It's a cool philosophical idea that can be applied to the ways we think about, um, progress and capitalism.

Q: So you see your new work as a kind of slowing down, or resistance to progress?

AM: Yes! Or maybe just rethinking the definition and thinking about progress as cyclical, as something with more of a memory. I mean, even on a small scale the way I came up with this work was by looking back at paintings I had made previously, before I started placing new demands on the work and how it should function.

Q: I have this 'zine of your writing with me. The one called "Invisible Machines." What we're talking about now really reminds me of a passage you wrote. Lets transcribe it for the interview.

AM: Okay.

Q: It goes:

"We have heard before that artistic critique is problematized by its interdependence on oppressive institutions and the dexterity with which these institutions adapt themselves to include, and thus dissipate critical potential. Remember the punks, who made a farce of critique by showing us how many ways one can wear a suit that doesn't fit and still look good? (Are you familiar with the work of menswear designer Tom Browne?) My recent work enacts these problems, not just of radical subject material, but of myself as radical subject. Foucault speaks of the subject (the individual) not just as the effect, but as the instrument of power. Nothing angers and embarrasses us more than an artist who is naive to these conditions, who revels pridefully in the opportunity for his or her subjective display. While the effort to remove myself from my work responds to this situation, it also tests a suspicion that the systems of thought (and commerce) surrounding our art world will insert me right back.

AM: Test being the operative word there. (laughs)

Q: Do you consider yourself "removed" from these circle paintings?"

AM: Well, there is definitely a coolness to them, like we

were saying. But then I'm really involved. It's like I was saying before about how the first read of these is kind of a decoy.

spoke a lot about specific audiences, style etc. Like it was such a bad thing to understand what type of person might like your work. Well, I shouldnt say type of person, but what type of taste.

Q: Right, like it's all supposed to be some big mystery.

Q: Yeah.

AM: Well yeah it's funny 'cause on the one hand you'd have classes in MFA programs that where we quarantine so-called "professional" thinking - grant writing, artist statements, how to photograph your work, etc. All of that is this separate conversation. It's like, we don't want to sully the purity of your studio practice. But I'm like, well shit, we might as well make THAT our work too. I've heard fellow students kind of naively ask in those classes "how do you get a gallery", or something like that. And then the teacher or lecturer or whomever would be like "Well, pay attention to the art scene. Go to shows. Know what kind of programs are featured at what kind of venues. Go to the openings, meet people, etc." . But then fast-forward to next week in your studio and the same people will be like, this work seems really directed and like it knows too much what it is, or something like that. An you're like, oh sorry, I thought we were supposed to know what we were doing, right? Isn't that the whole point here. And they're like, well not in THAT way.

Q: (Laughing)

People used to try to address "universal themes" and so on. We can't say that anymore, but then specificity carries a whole other set of problems. In graduate school we

AM: It's a really funny thing. Like we are supposed to become these hyper professionalized, educated artists and yet any direct address of the conversations we are projecting our work into, the "scenes" or whatever - it's still really touchy.

Q: You sound defensive.

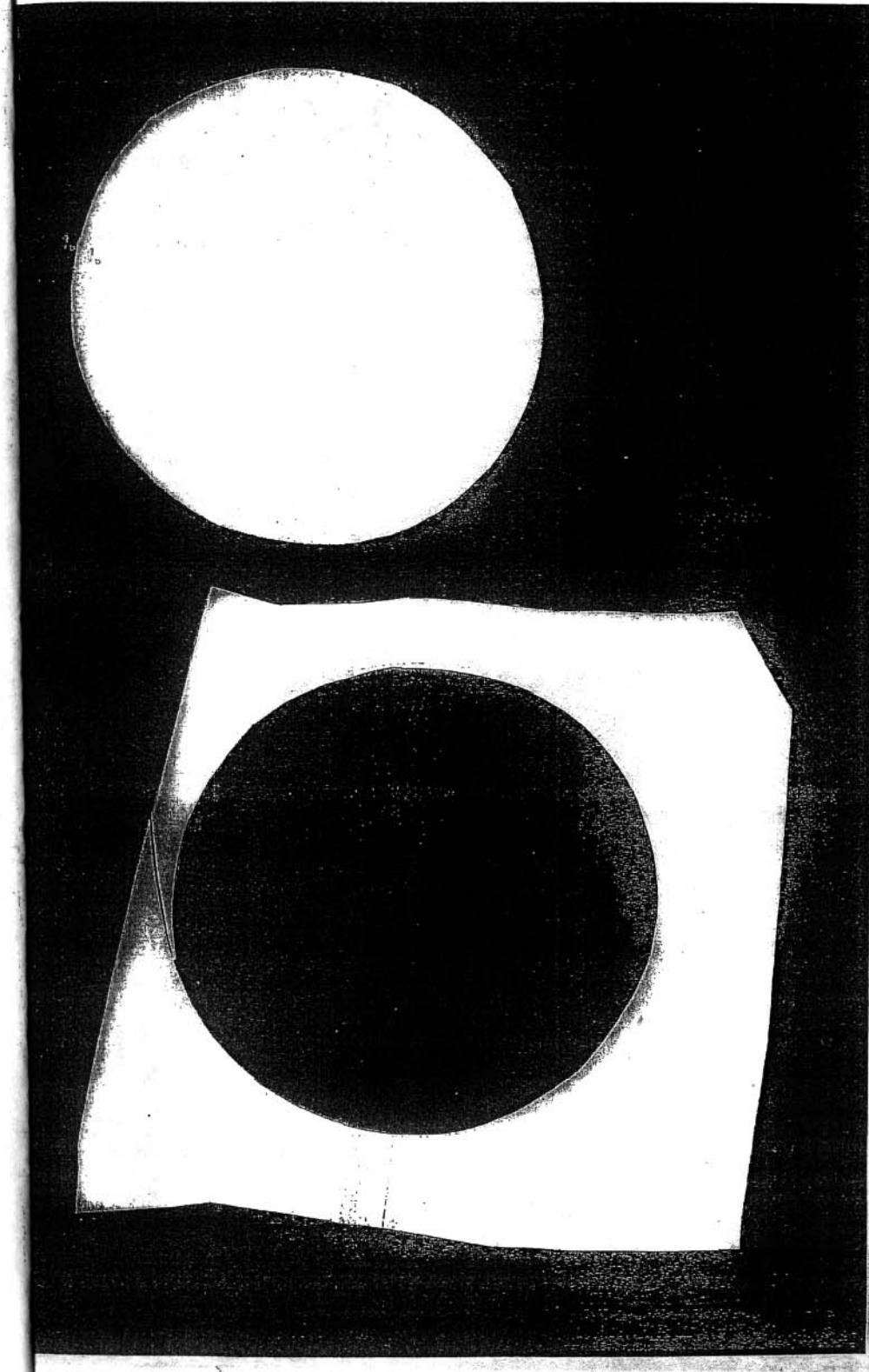
AM: I am!

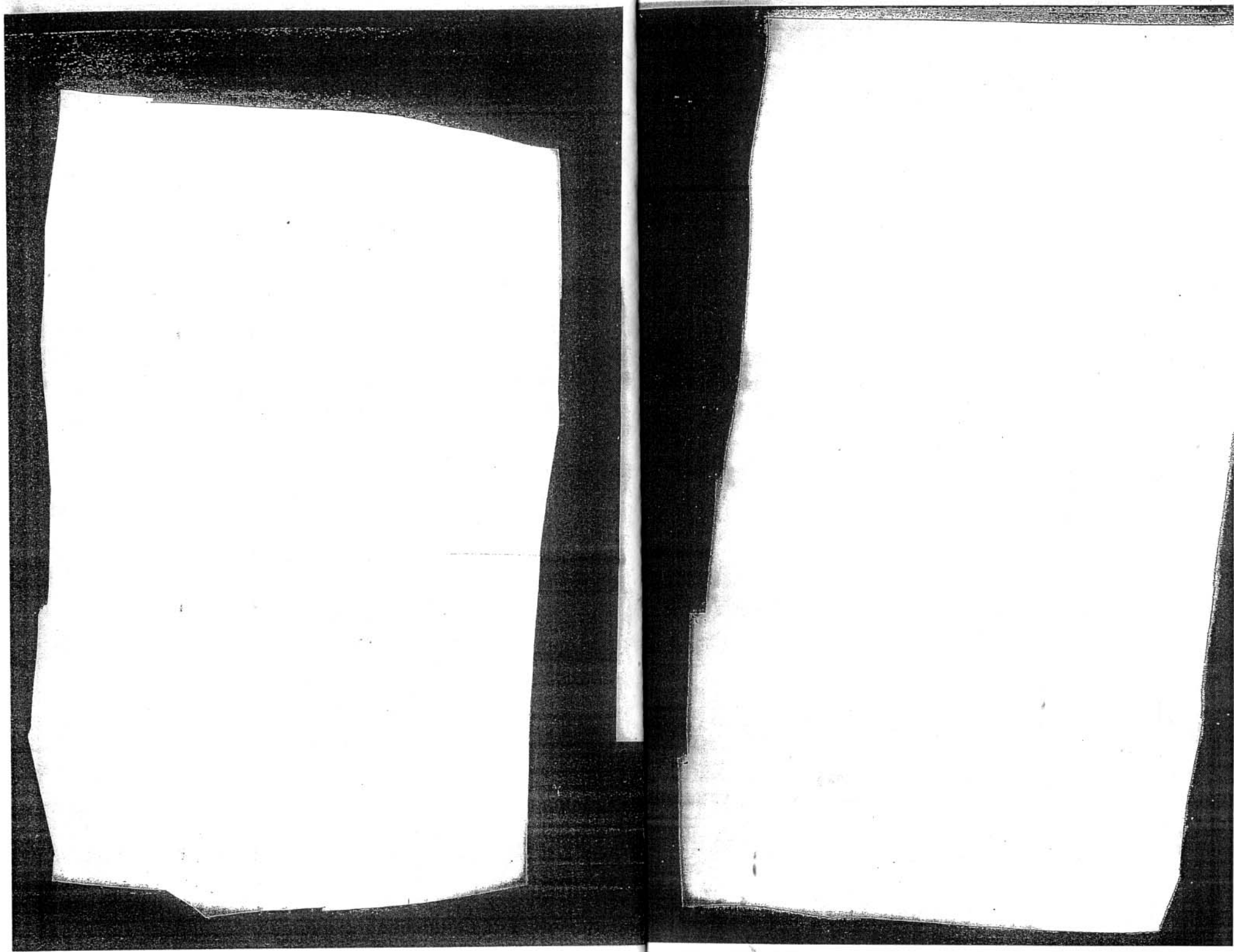
Q: Why do you think that is?

AM: Well, because I think these problems can all be up-taken as content. So there were a lot of times in my studio in grad school when we were having some argument about the work and I would get infuriated 'cause I was like "this argument is the work." You just sort of have to get it though. It's a subtle thing. Rosalind Krauss is probably the person we read here who was kind of a lightbulb for this kind of thinking, at once old and new. You know, the question of just what constitutes our "medium." So, like we were saying about the Joselit piece, styles and audiences and venues of distribution are very much part of what I consider to be my medium. ~~Really, I think this~~ is a fundamentally modern way of thinking, minus the idealism and essentialism of the artwork itself as thing that can be isolated. It's just, as Krauss says, a consideration of our media as something that expands outward with very long arms.

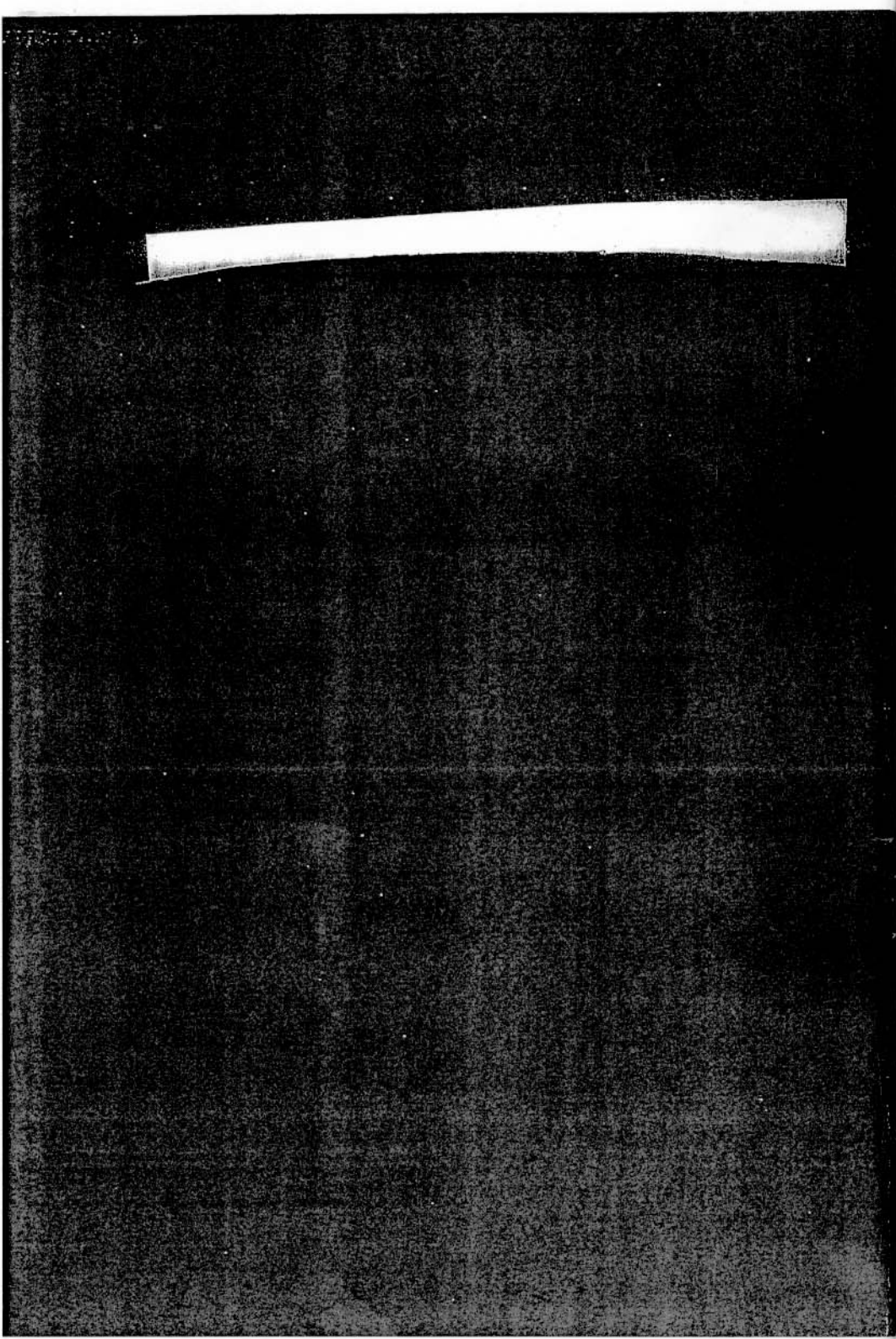
Q: So you don't think the work can really ever be isolated?

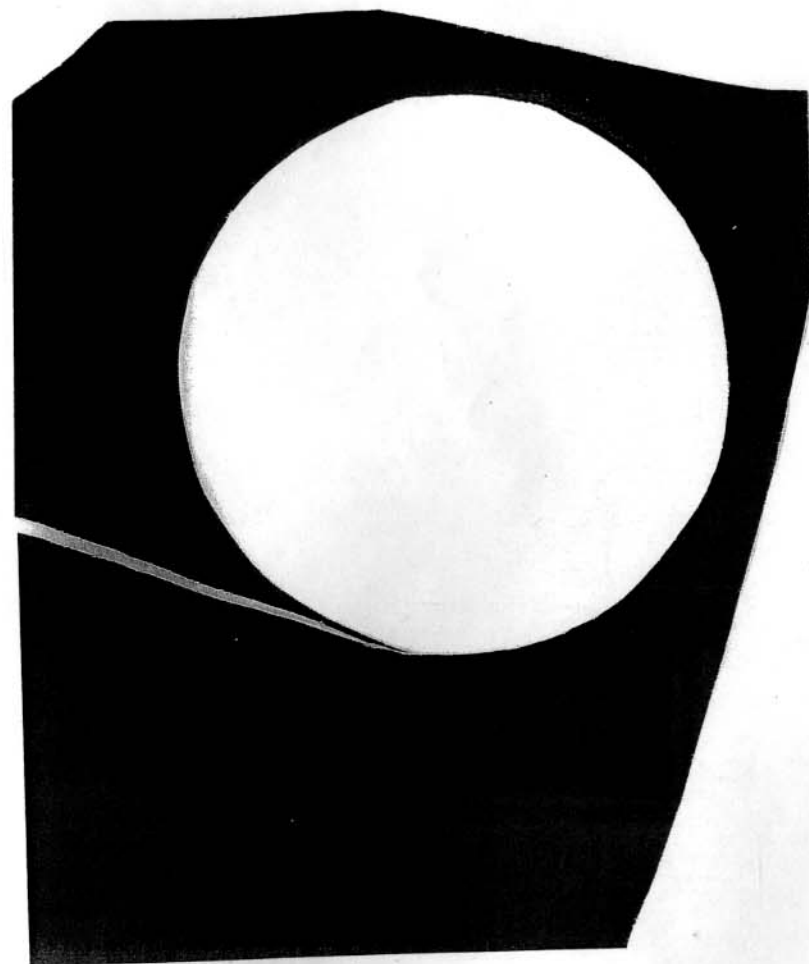
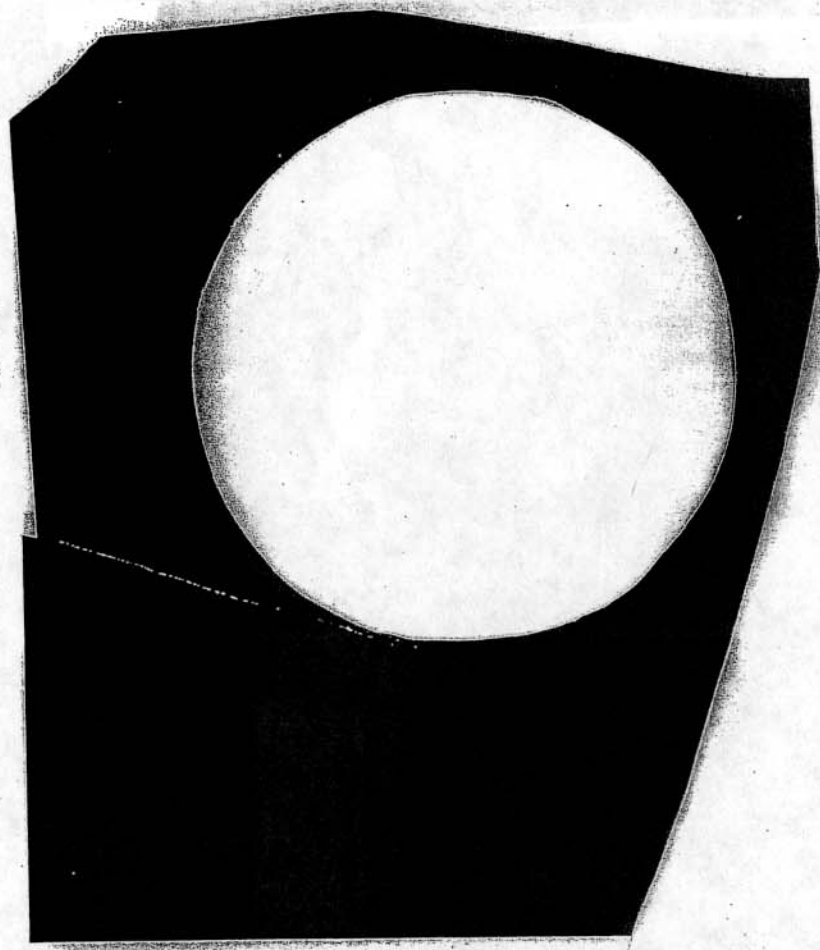
AM: No way. There are always missing parts, and there are always secrets.

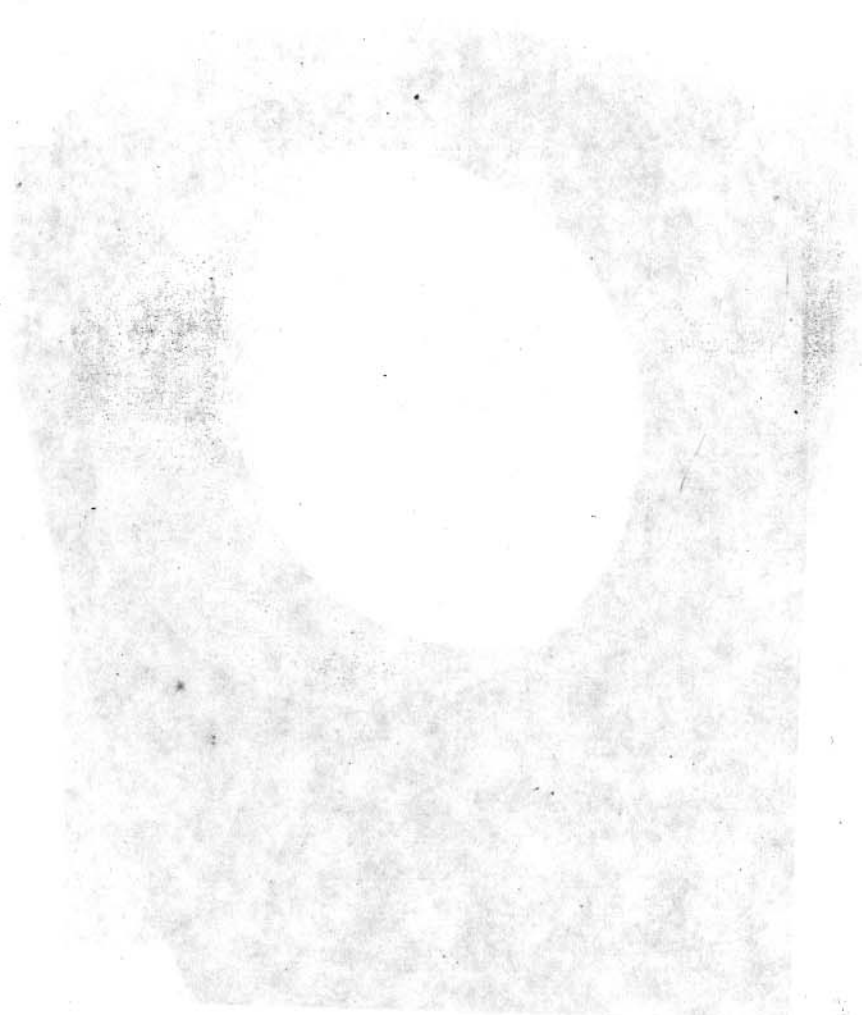












ANDY MEEROW