



LUCKY DRAGON

Daigo Kukuryu Maru

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2-4
Introduction	5-7
Etchings	11-29

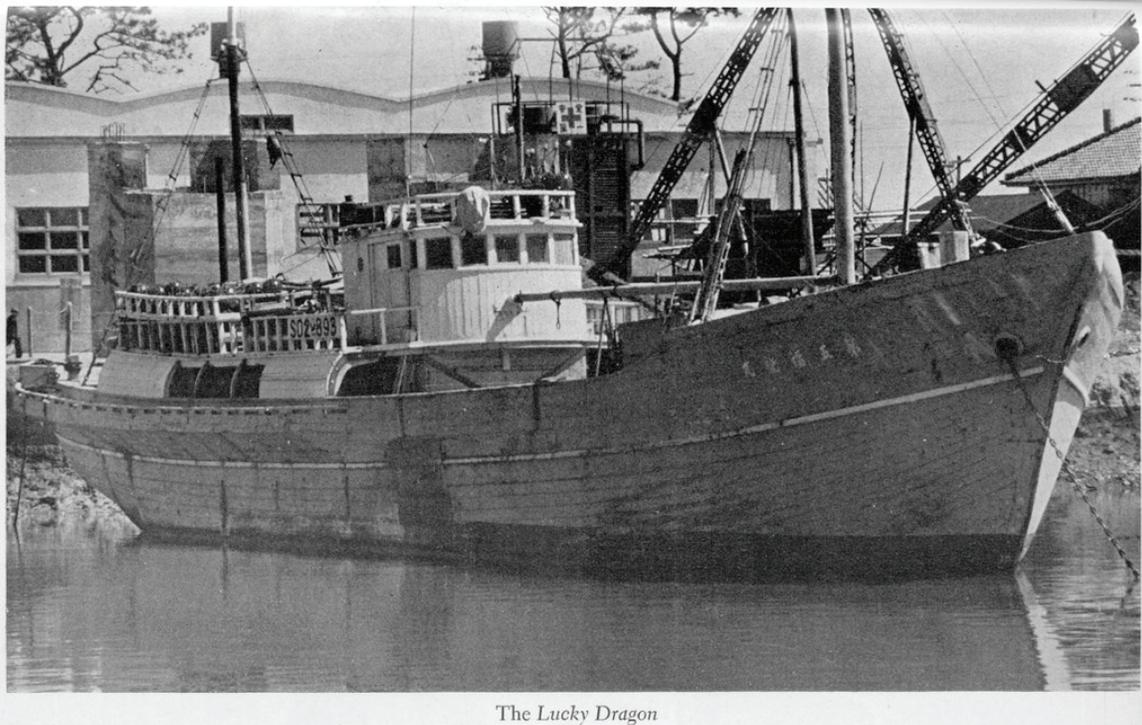
I wish to thank my friend and mentor George McKenna for trusting in me and offering me this amazing opportunity to make and exhibit the Lucky Dragon. Safe journey my friend.

Special thanks to Jeanette, Staci and my buddy Jim Leedy.

The digital, self-published edition of this book is available for download on my website.

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LUCKY DRAGON



The Lucky Dragon

To the crew and families of the
Lucky Dragon 5

Lucky Dragon: a suite of sequential etchings 1985

In 1985, George McKenna, the curator of prints, drawings and photographs at the museum, offered a solo exhibition to Hugh Merrill of his etchings and small paintings at the Nelson-Atkins Museum.

The summer prior to the exhibition Merrill stumbled on the book, *Lucky Dragon*, in the Linda Hall Scientific Library at the University of Missouri - Kansas City. The book told the story of the *Lucky Dragon*, a Japanese fishing vessel, in 1954 that was searching for new tuna fishing grounds when she cast her nets 80 miles off an island in the Pacific Ocean where an American hydrogen bomb test was about to occur. The boat and crew were caught in a snowstorm of hot radioactive coral flakes. The story of the crew became one small event in the movement to ban the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons. One of the crewmen died, the others suffered from radiation poisoning and were suddenly outcast in Japanese society.

Merrill was deeply affected by the story and used this event as the subject for the *Lucky Dragon* suite of prints. Merrill took a 24 by 36 inch zinc etching plate and, using an abstract visual language of forms, space, light, and sequential movement, created an emotional tonality that took both himself and the audience beyond the facts of the event to a deeper emotional understanding of power and loss.

It quickly became clear to Merrill that he should only make one image or print a day then change the plate creating a new image the next day. Thus creating a sequential series of related individual images to investigate the *Lucky Dragon* events. Prints traditionally are produced so as to make editions, to make more than a single image. Merrill saw the importance of using the traditional etching process to create a series of individual images mono-types. Early in the process, Merrill set a rule for himself to make one completed image each day and continue this process till the plate could no longer be worked. Only one impression of each state exists. The plate was worked for over 70 days, producing 70 unique impressions. The original 70 impressions were edited to the 36 images exhibited at the Nelson Atkins Museum in 1985.

Merrill discovered in the sequential process a mechanism for sustaining an emotionally driven studio investigation:

“Each day, as I changed the plate, I became more deeply involved in the subject, the physical and emotional experience. The process of struggling each day to conclude an image documents my studio narrative. The studio narrative is the act of making and remaking and is always an act of discovery. It records both changes in the material, my interaction with the plate and the subject. In the end the plate became so thin that it could no longer sustain reworking.”



Aikichi Kuboyama
radio operator on the Lucky Dragon #5

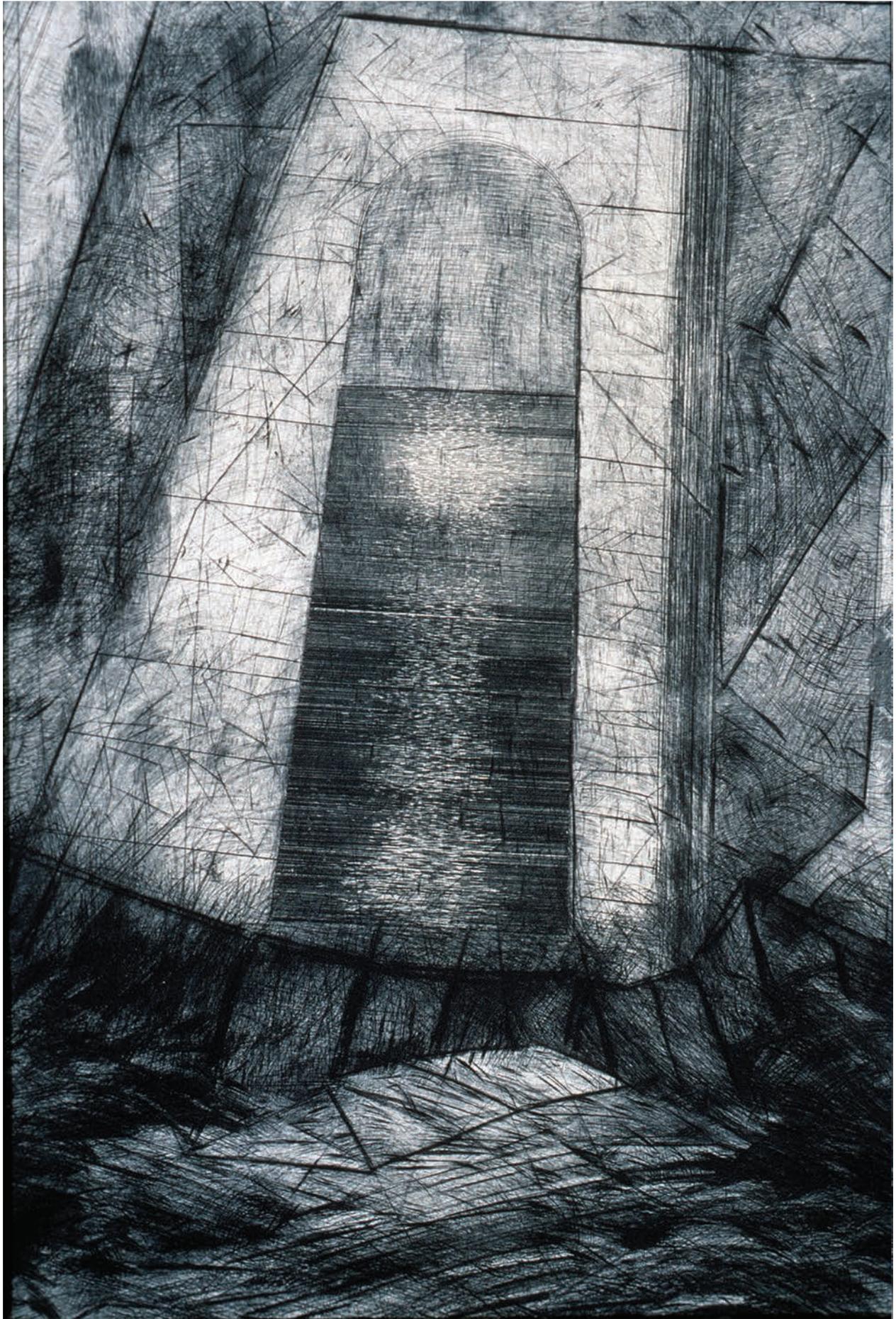


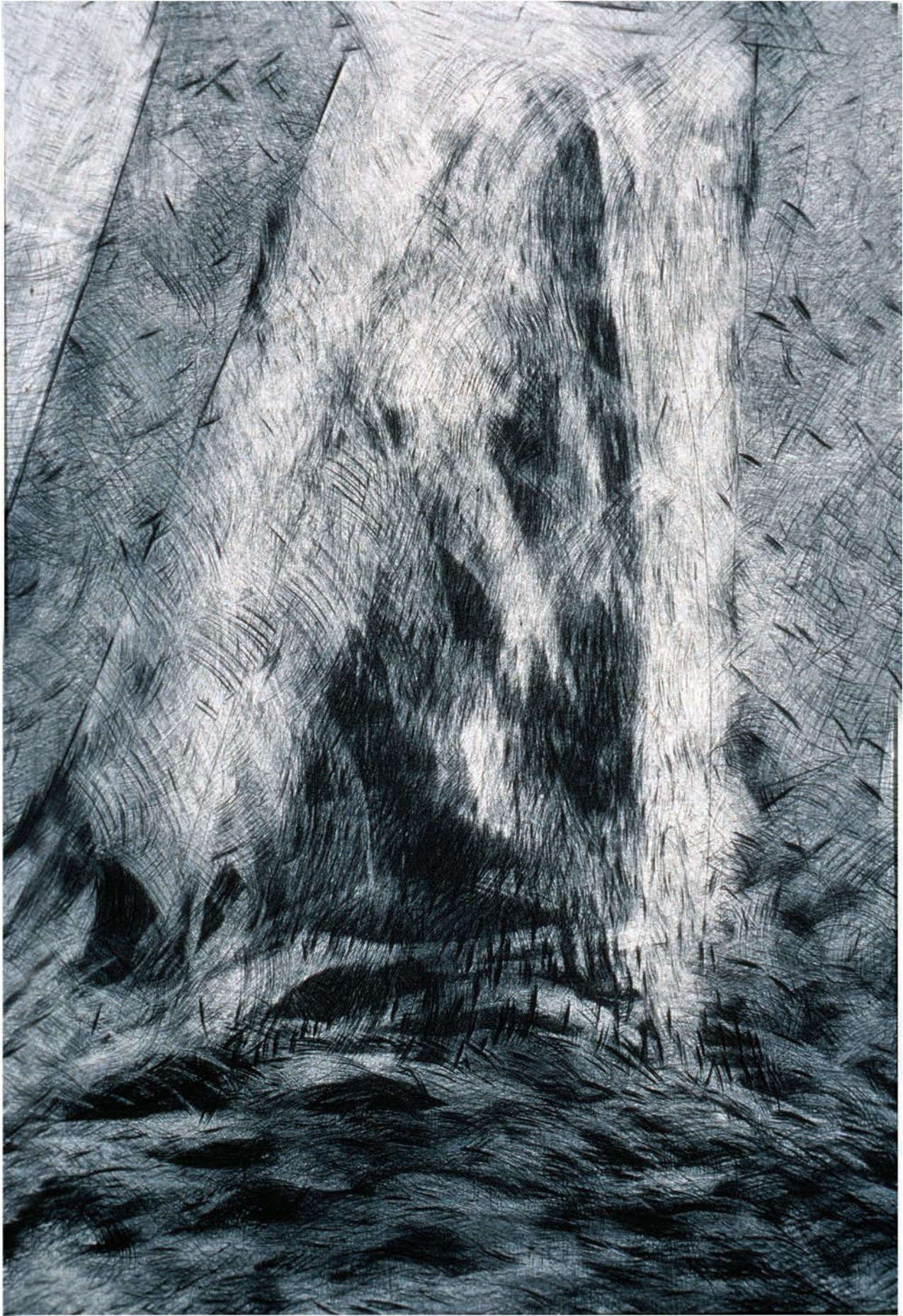
Lucky Dragon 5
Sequential Etchings
Hugh Merrill 1985















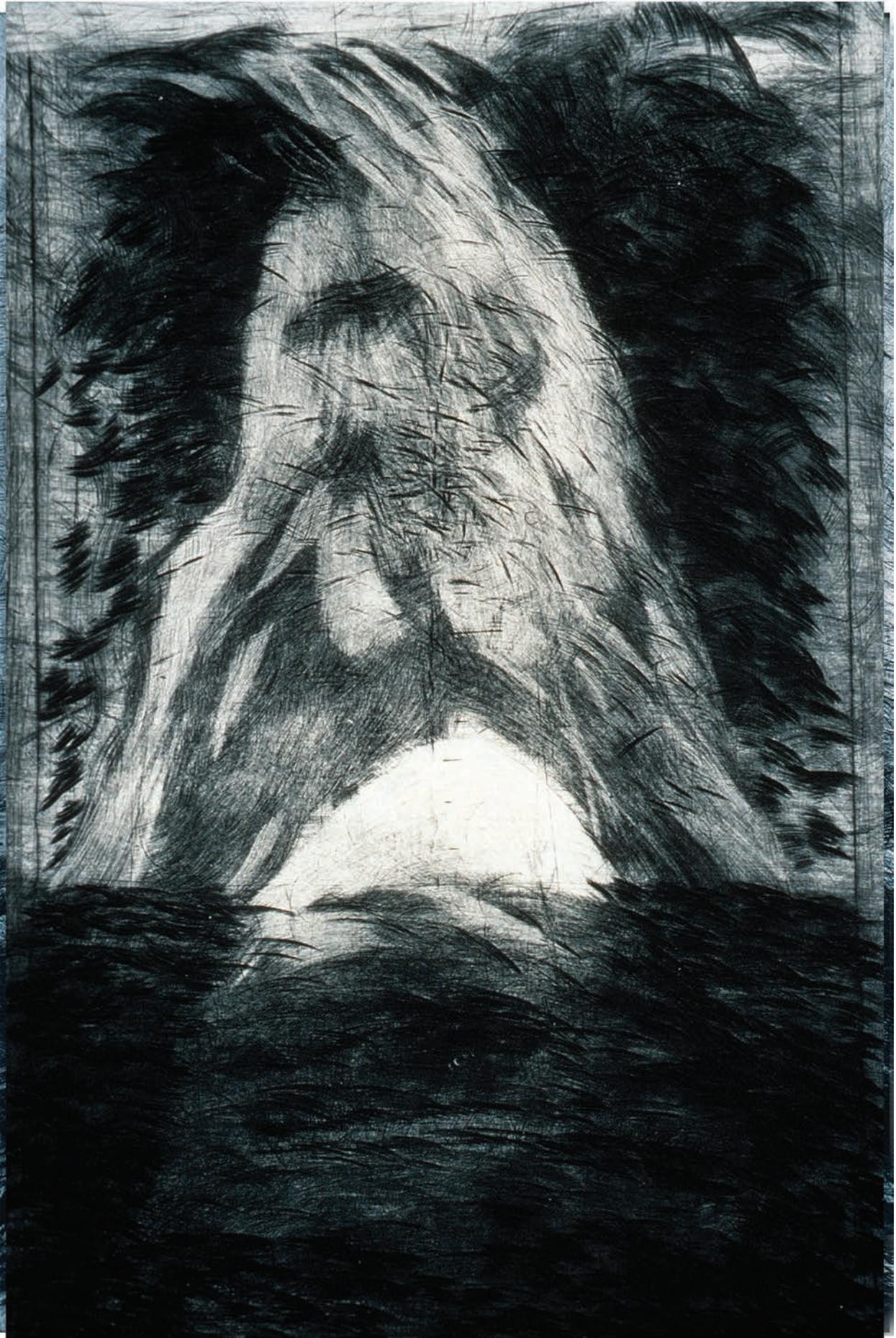




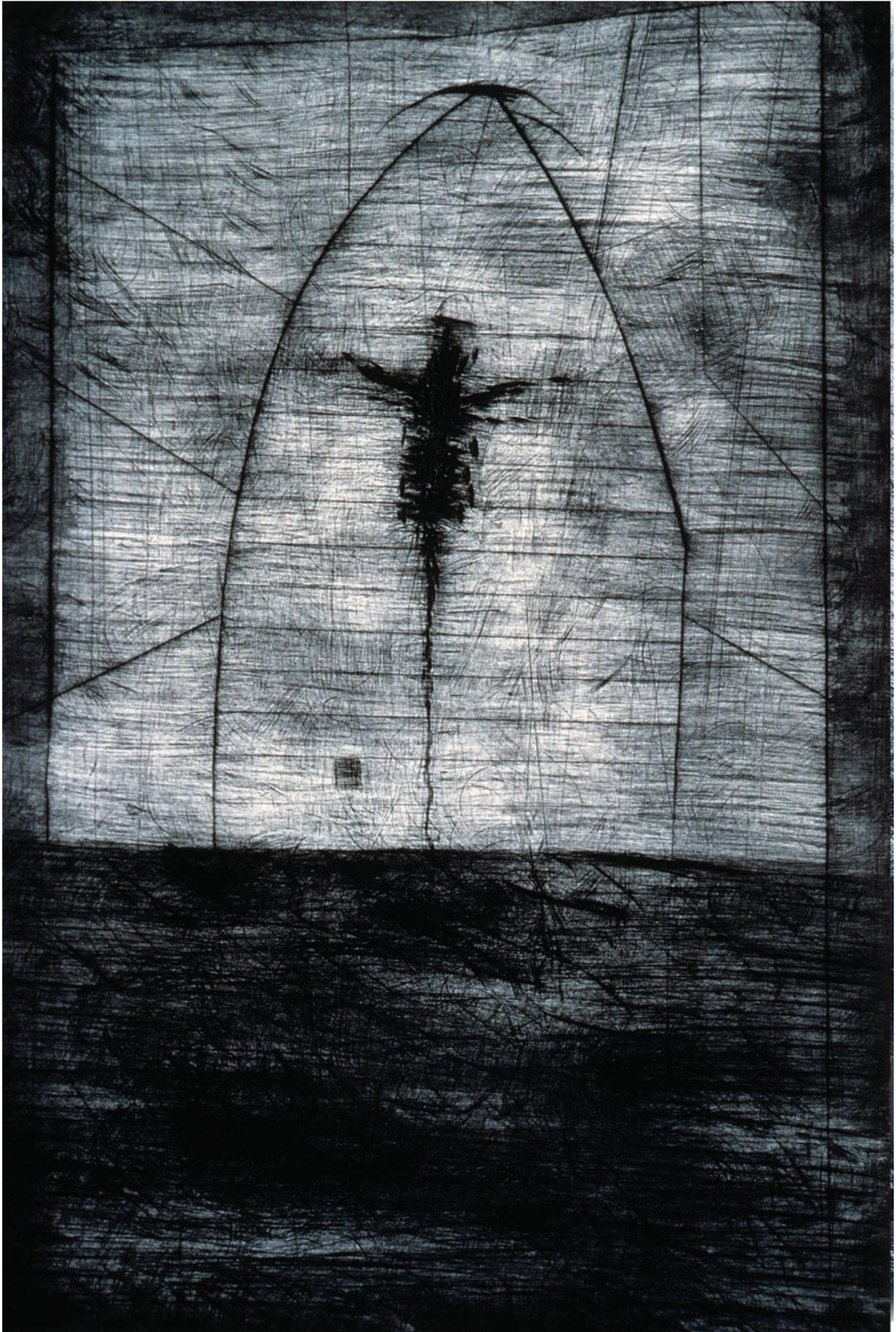


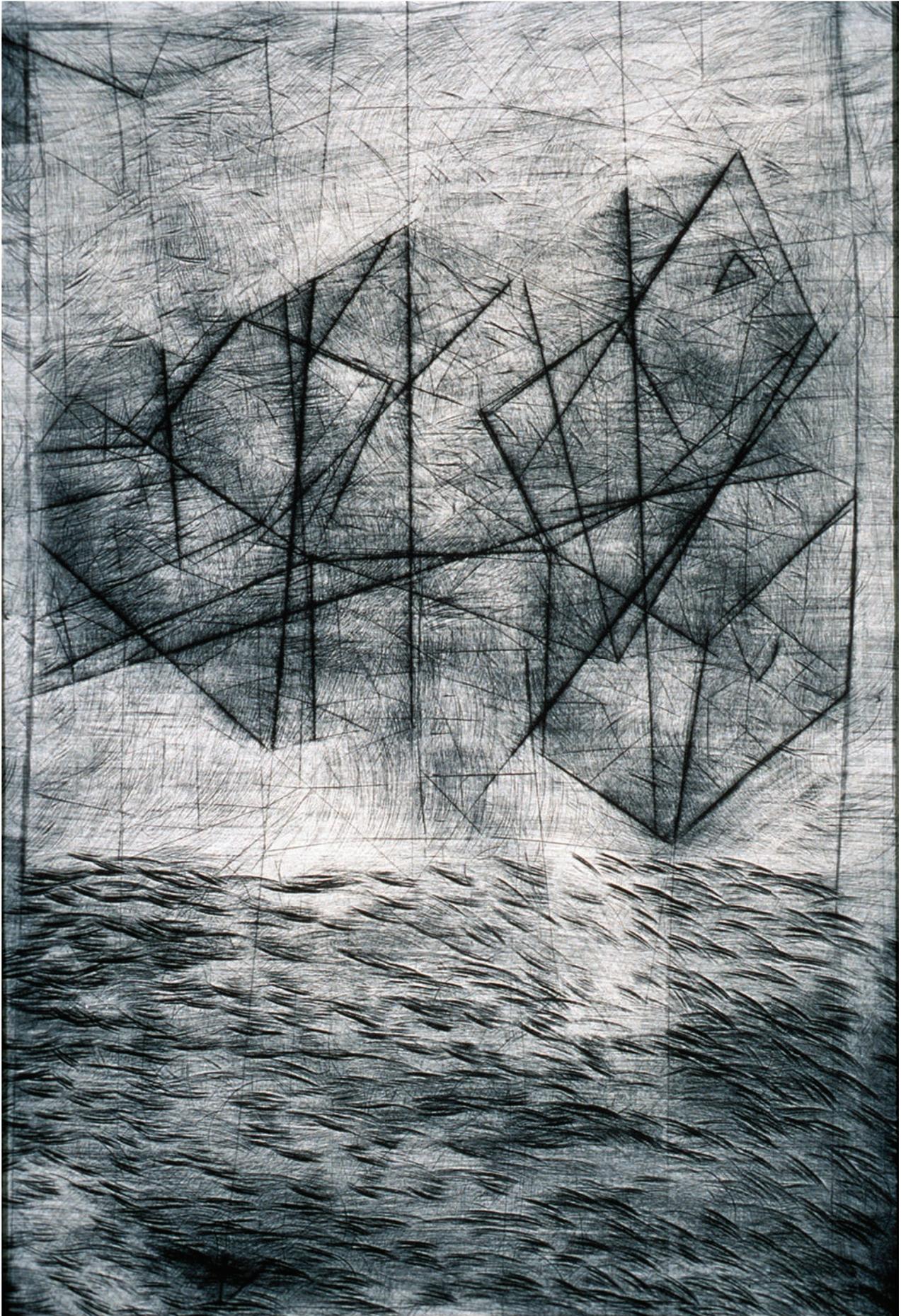


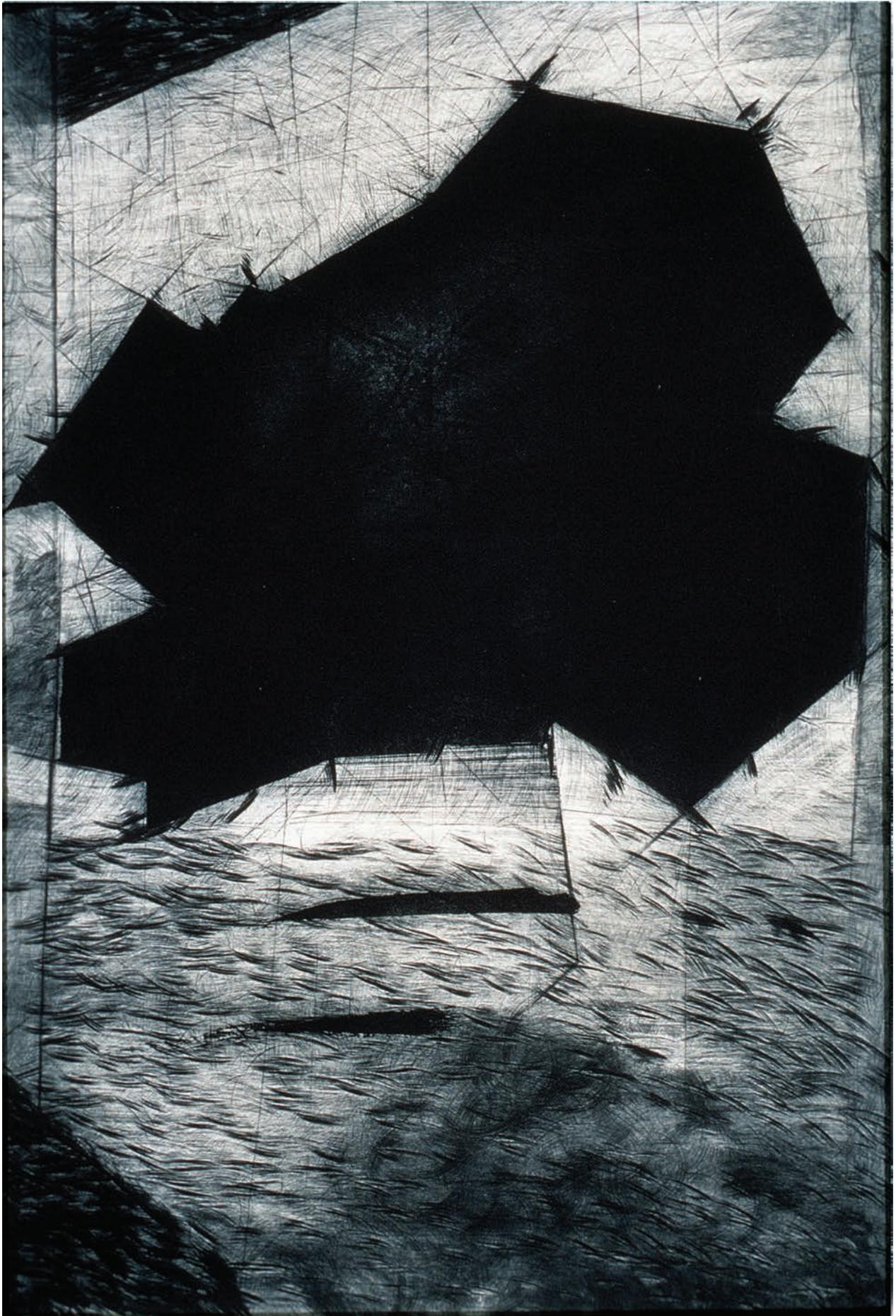


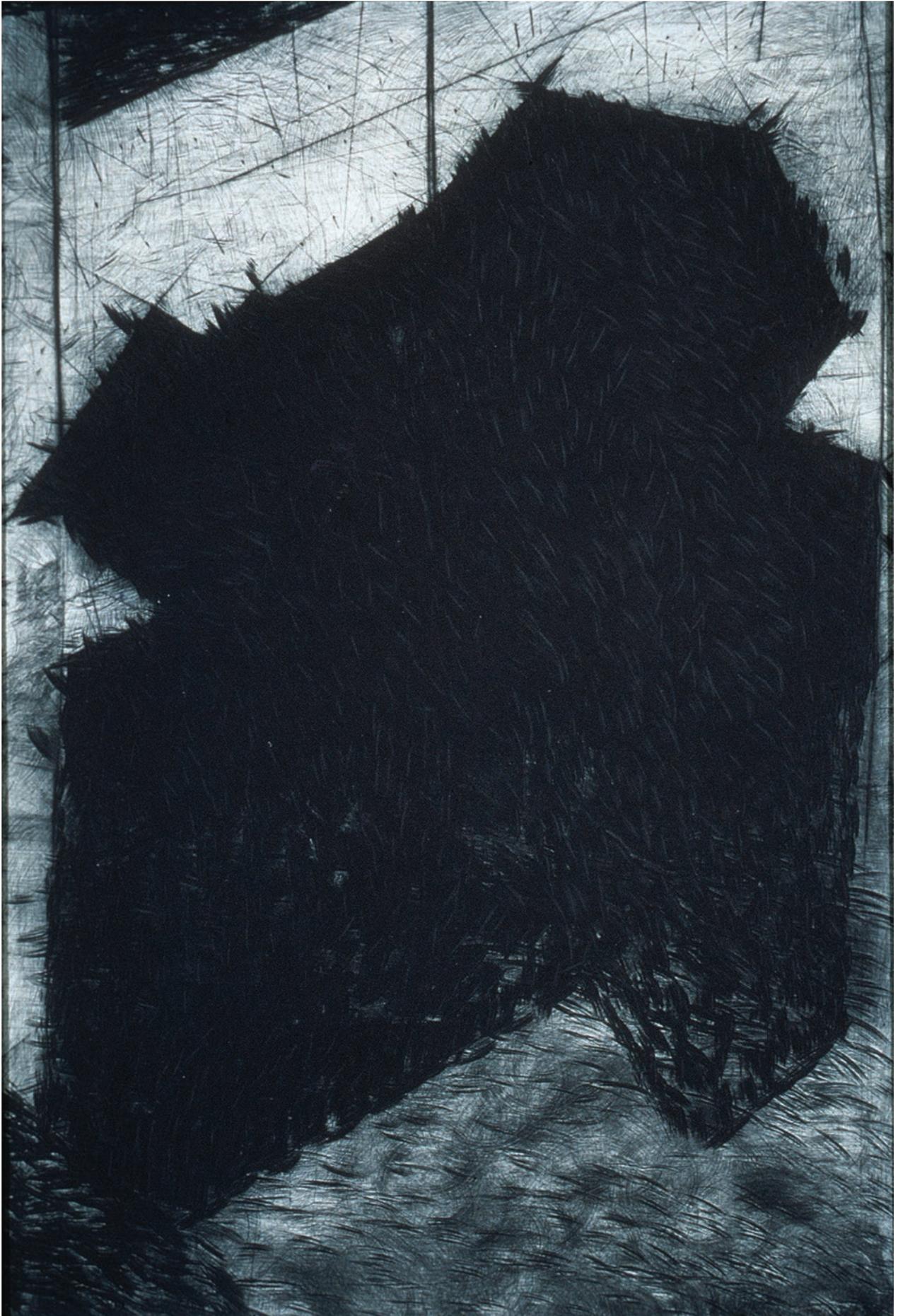


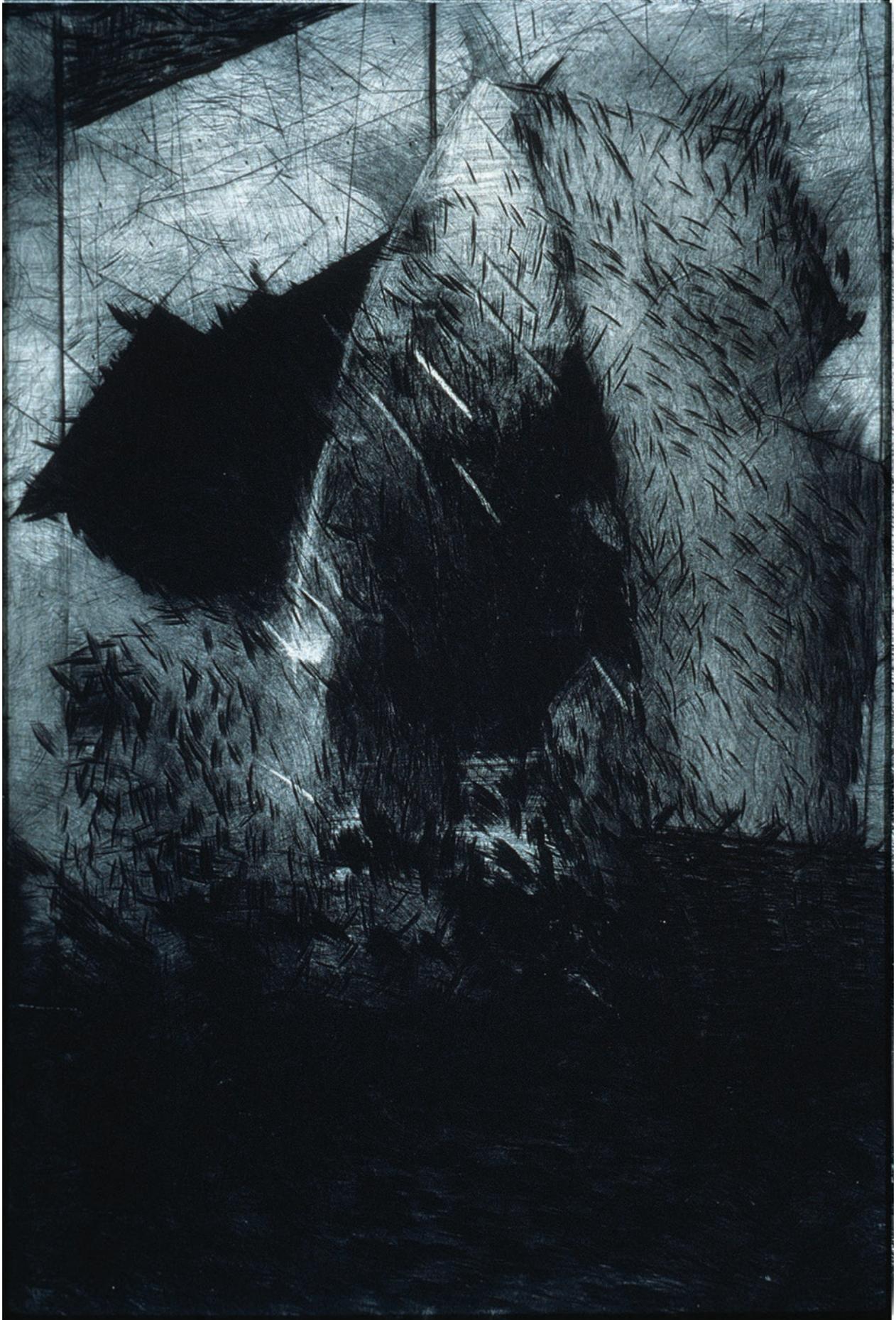
















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