



# Western Garden

## Acknowledgment

Thanks to Gabor Peterdi and Al Held

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Designed and edited by Kathryn “Kat” Day  
All artwork Hugh Merrill

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## Hugh Merrill Bio 2022

Hugh Merrill is an artist, educator, writer and community activist. In 1985 he had a one-person exhibition at the Nelson Atkins Museum, and his work is collected in over 50 museums including the New York Museum of Modern Art, Kansas City Kemper Museum, Cranbrook Art Museum, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the Poland National Museum of Poznan. He is a long-time professor at the Kansas City Art Institute. In 1996, he collaborated with French artist Christian Boltanski on the city-wide community arts project *Our City/Ourselves: Portrait of Community* at the Kemper Museum. Hugh was the president of the Southern Graphics Council International from 1991 to 1993. He developed Chameleon Arts and Youth Development as a resource for disenfranchised youth communities which provided over 1 million dollars for community arts and youth development programming during its 25 years. Merrill was selected as one of 42 international artists for Richard Noyce's book *Printmaking at the Edge* published in 2006. Hugh has been awarded multiple grants including 2 NEA grants, Melon Foundation, Yaddo Fellowship, and the 2007 Distinguished Education Award from the Southern Graphics Council International. The Nelson Atkins Museum invited Hugh to curate *Print Lovers at 30: Celebrating Three Decades of Giving* in 2008. In September of 2010, his retrospective *Divergent Consistencies* was exhibited by the Leedy Voulkos Art Center.

Hugh is the author of:

*Divergent Consistencies: 40 years of studio and community artwork*

*Shared Visions: Thoughts and Experiences in Social Arts Practice*

*Preaching to the Choir: thoughts on contemporary printmaking*

*Learning Journal: Teaching in Foundation*

*Nomadic*, published by 39 West Press in 2016

*Dog*, published by Stubborn Mule press in 2018

*Whiteout: Journey of Privilege*, published by Spartan press in 2019

*Making and Collaboration*, published by Chameleon Press







## Western Garden

After Rachel Carson's Silent Spring and the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland catching on fire, it became clear that human impact on the environment was spinning toward a dead zone. Before the EPA, it was certain that to sustain the natural world was our choice. When you flew into LA, prior to unleaded gas, you dropped into a thick cloud of smog, trapped in place by the San Gabriel mountains. You wanted to hold your breath forever, rather than inhale that shit they called air.

Agent orange rained down on Vietnam and coal companies tore down the mountains, strip mining in the Appalachians. The blue crabs and oysters, delicacies from the Chesapeake Bay, began to disappear, the rich fishing grounds off Newfoundland emptied and the boats stayed ashore. People fought unleaded gas and seatbelt regulations and cried about the government taking away their rights.

The rust belt began to grow, and industries shut down leaving toxic waste pools and huge surreal empty factories. From Baltimore to Johnstown and beyond, as Bruce Springsteen said, the big boys did what Hitler couldn't do, shut down American industry. Norma Jean, fought for textile worker's rights and unions, now all those factories are in China. Wetlands needed to sustain migratory birds were drained as was the everglades. A land that had once been a "garden" was now only a real-estate scape of abuse and ownership.

Earth day started April 22, 1970. Slowly some of the worst of our capitalist consumer behaviors would be checked and now you can fish in that Cleveland River and fly into LA or Denver and not land in a world of smog. But we all know that we are environmentally. Neck deep in the big muddy and the damn fools keep saying push on.

Waist deep in the Big Muddy  
And the big fool says to push on.  
Waist deep in the Big Muddy  
And the big fool says to push on.  
Waist deep! Neck deep! Soon even a  
Tall man'll be over his head, we're  
Waist deep in the Big Muddy!  
And the big fool says to push on!

Pete Seager

The Western Garden suite reflects this landscape, of abuse, ownership, more abuse, profit and toxic waste. It was the landscape I had lived in and inherited. A landscape that does not support community, society, or life. It is a huge industrial pile of rubble, a society that profited and left these immense spaces behind, empty, and unusable. Yet retaining a sculptural magnificence, and intimidating beauty. Like Ginsberg's Sunflower Sutra there in the shadow of the industrial waste dump is beauty.

“Unholy battered old thing you were, my sunflower O my soul, I loved you then!  
The grime was no man's grime but death and human locomotives,  
all that dress of dust, that veil of darkened railroad skin, that smog of cheek, that  
eyelid of black mis'ry, that sooty hand or phallus or protuberance of artificial  
worse-than-dirt—industrial—modern—all that civilization spotting your crazy  
golden crown—”

These words snatched from Ginsberg's poem Sunflower Sutra capture in words the overall scream of my Western Garden Suite. Enough Said for now





## **Western Garden Prints Western Garden and Graduate School 1973-1981**

1. Oliver Street Garden 24 x 18 Etching 1972
2. Fountain Street 24 x 18 Etching 1972
3. Lake Place 24 x 18 Etching 1973
4. Elm Street 24 x 18 Etching 1973
5. Raytown 24 x 18 Etching 1976
6. Western Garden #1 24 x 18 Etching 1977
7. Western Garden #2 24 x 18 Etching 1977
8. Western Garden #2.5 24 x 18 Etching 1977
9. Profane 24 x 18 Etching 1978
10. Sacred 24 x 18 Etching 1978
11. Royal 24 x 18 Etching 1978
12. Gaza Royal 24 x 18 Etching 1979
13. Bad Ditch 1 24 x 18 Etching 1979
14. Bad Ditch 2 24 x 18 Etching 1979
15. Bad Ditch 3 24 x 18 Etching 1980
16. Kinvad 1 24 x 18 Etching 1980
17. Kinvad 2 24 x 18 Etching 1980
18. Kinvad 3 24 x 18 Etching 1980
19. Kinvad 4 24 x 18 Etching 1980
20. Western Garden Woods 1 24 x 18 Etching 1981
21. Western Garden Woods 2 24 x 18 Etching 1981
22. Western Garden Woods 3 24 x 18 Etching 1981
23. Western Garden Woods 4 24 x 18 Etching 1981

### **Connecticut to KC**

24. Springtime in New Jersey 6 x 9 Etching 1976
25. Montana Surprise 6 x 9 Etching 1976
26. Kansas City 6 x 9 Etching 1976
27. Virginia Beached 6 x 9 Etching 1976
28. Room to move 12 x 12 Etching 1976

### **Yale Thesis Exhibition 1975**

29. Object 1 36 x 24 Shaped Etching 1975
30. Object 2 36 x 24 Shaped Etching 1975
31. Object 3 36 x 24 Shaped Etching 1975
32. Object 4 36 x 24 Shaped Etching 1975



# Western Garden





Oliver Street Garden 24x18 Etching 1972

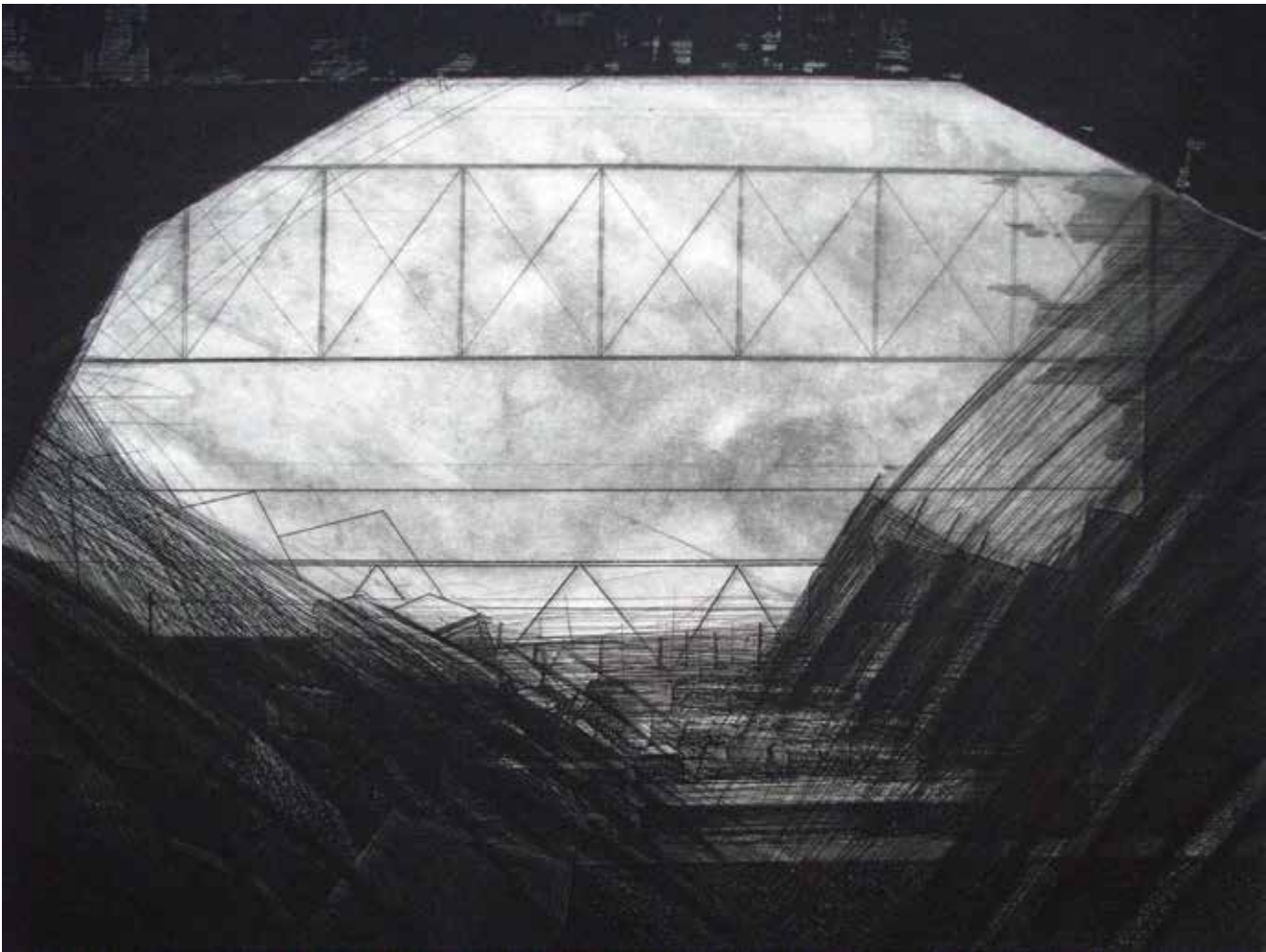




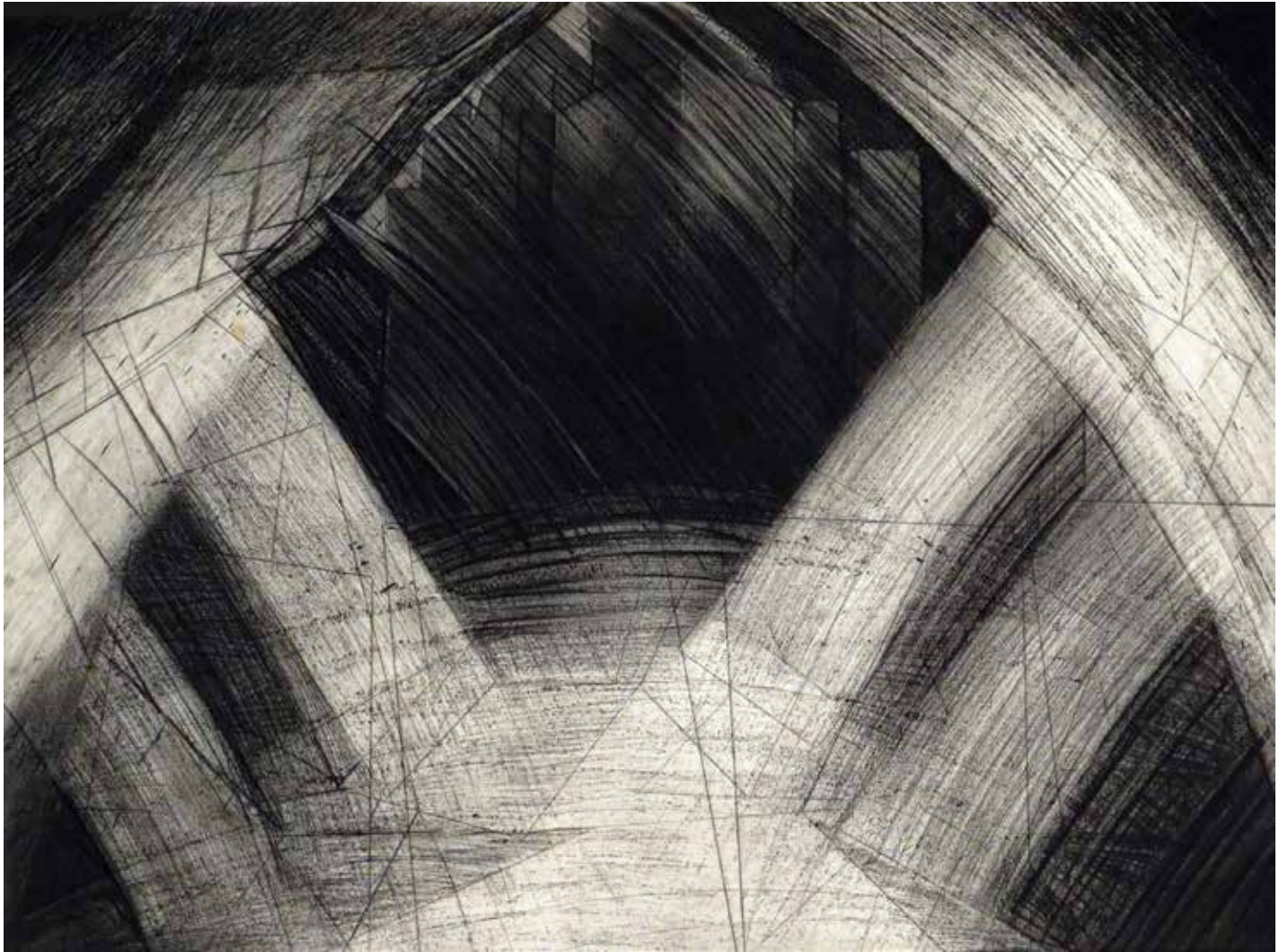


Lake Place 24x18 Etching 1973





Elm Street 24x18 Etching 1973

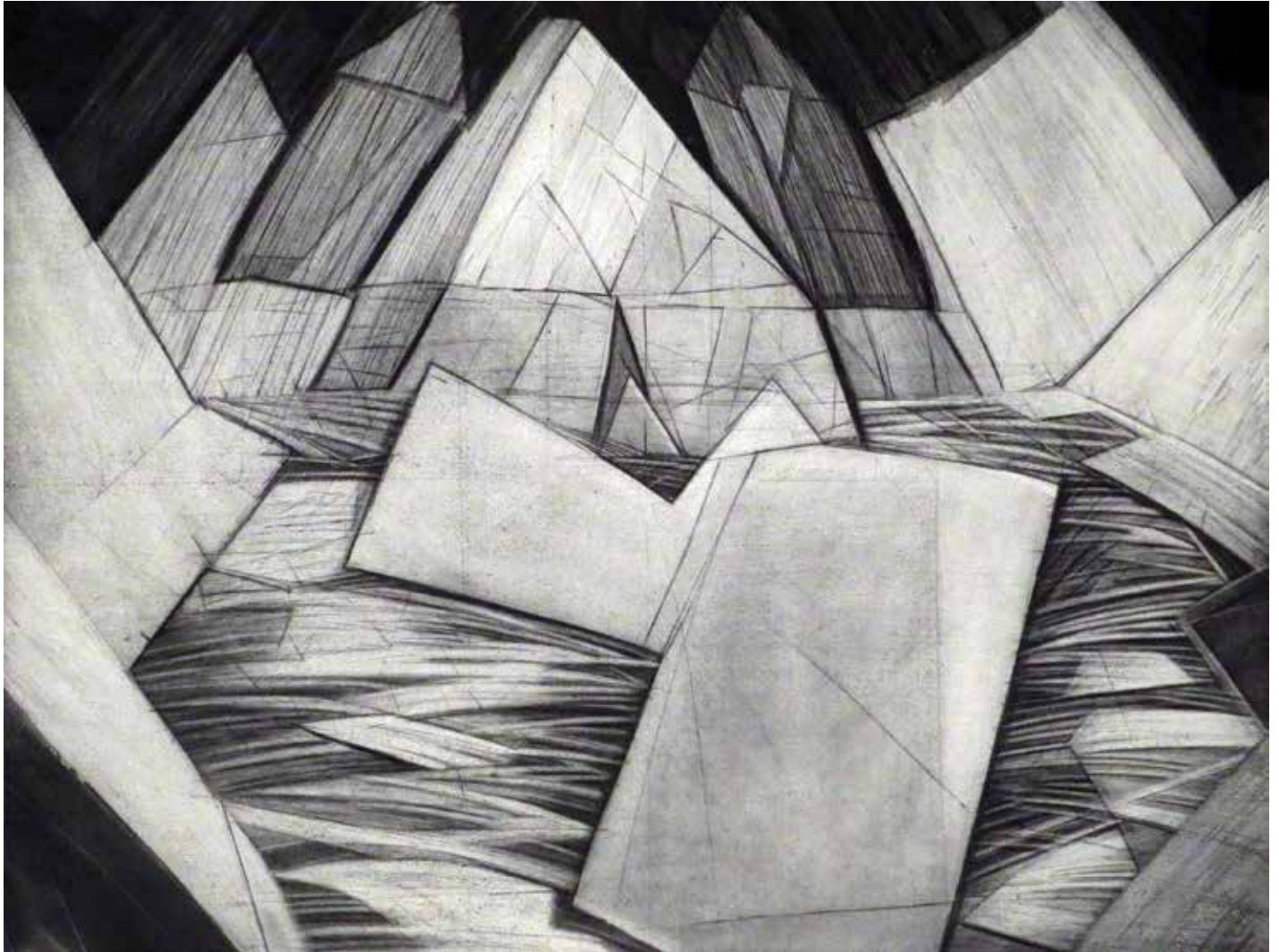


Raytown 24x18 Etching 1976



Western Garden1 24x18 Etching 1977



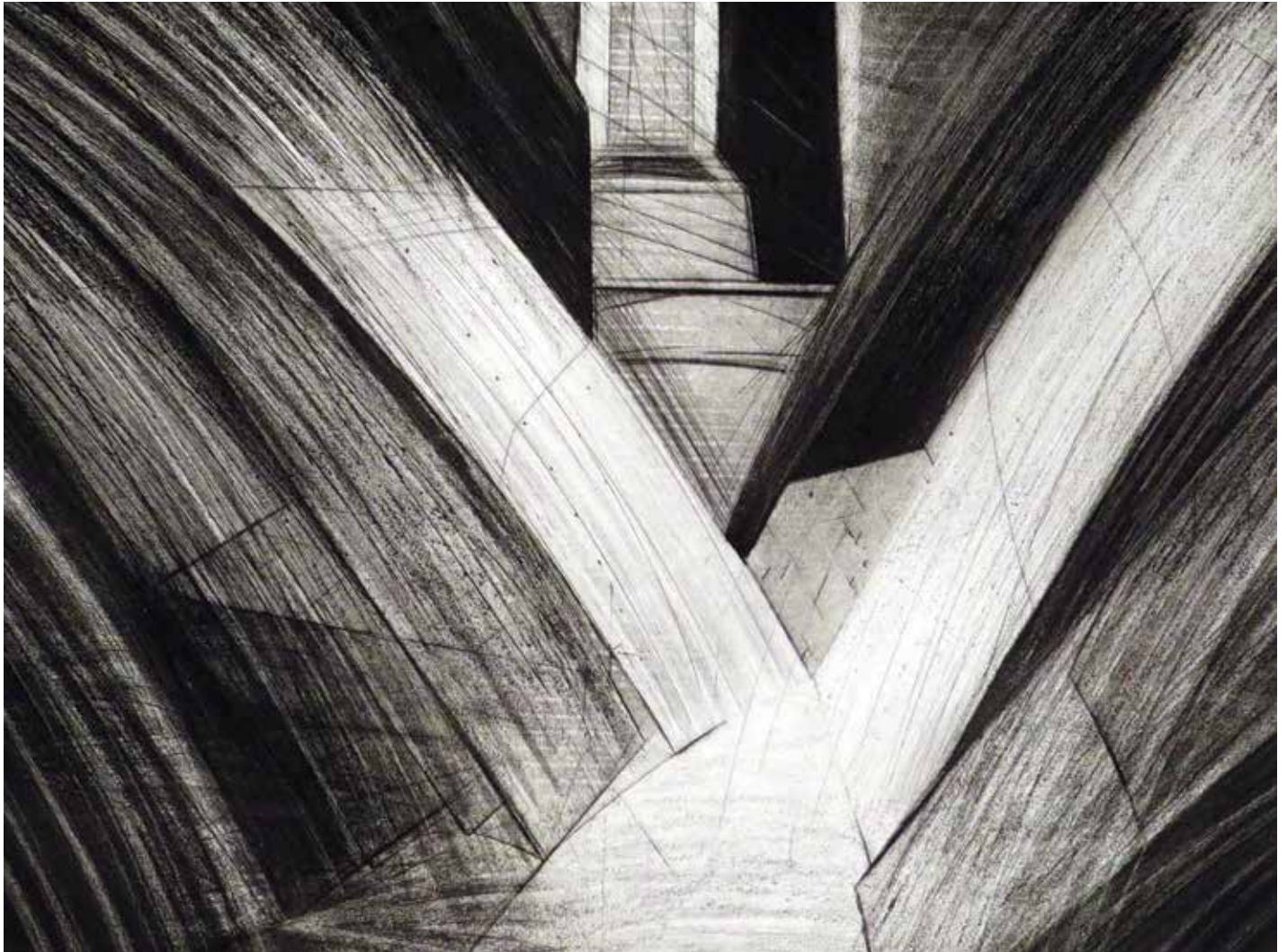


Western Garden #2 24x18 Etching 1977



Western Garden #2.5 24x18 Etching 1977



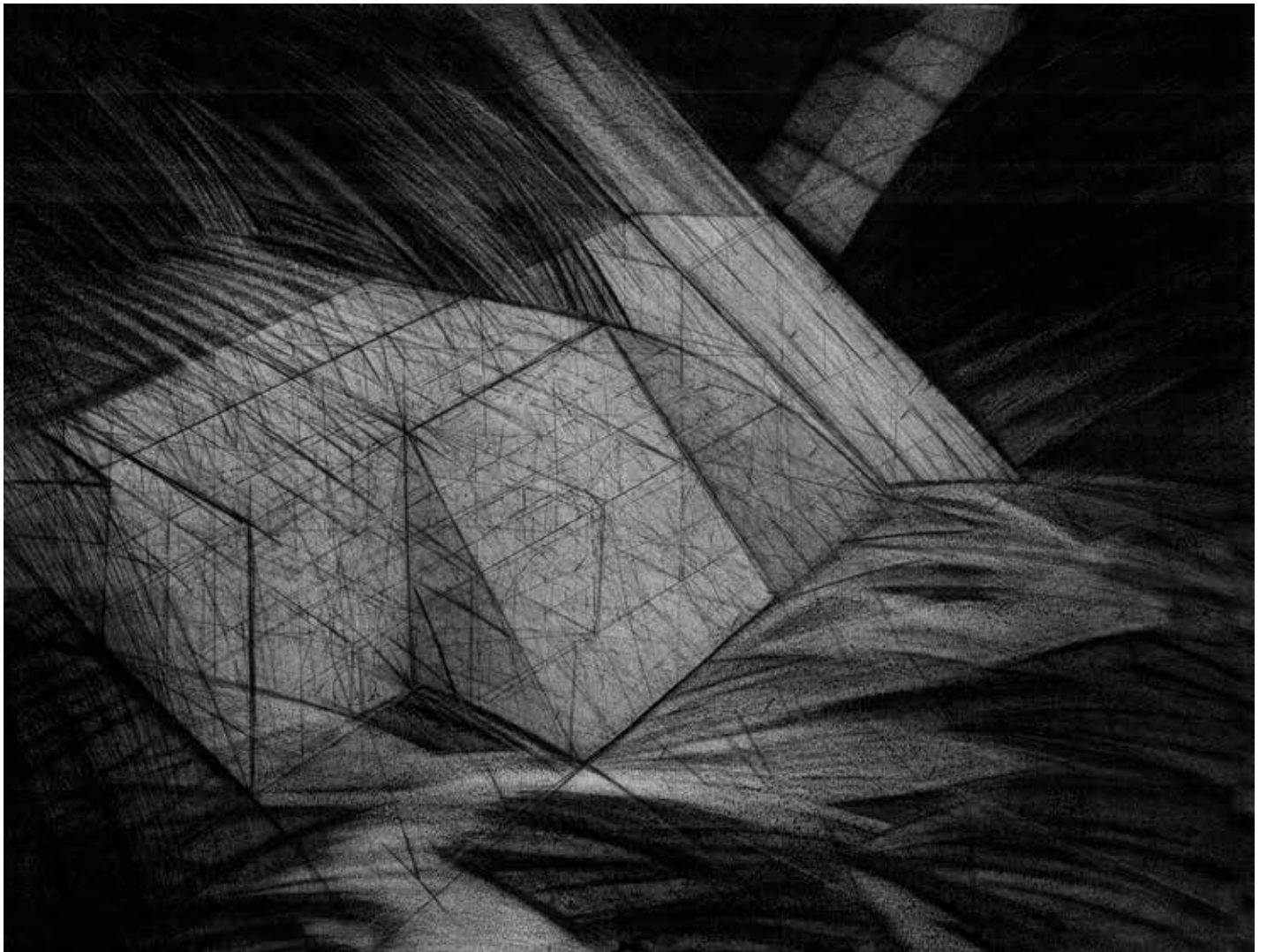


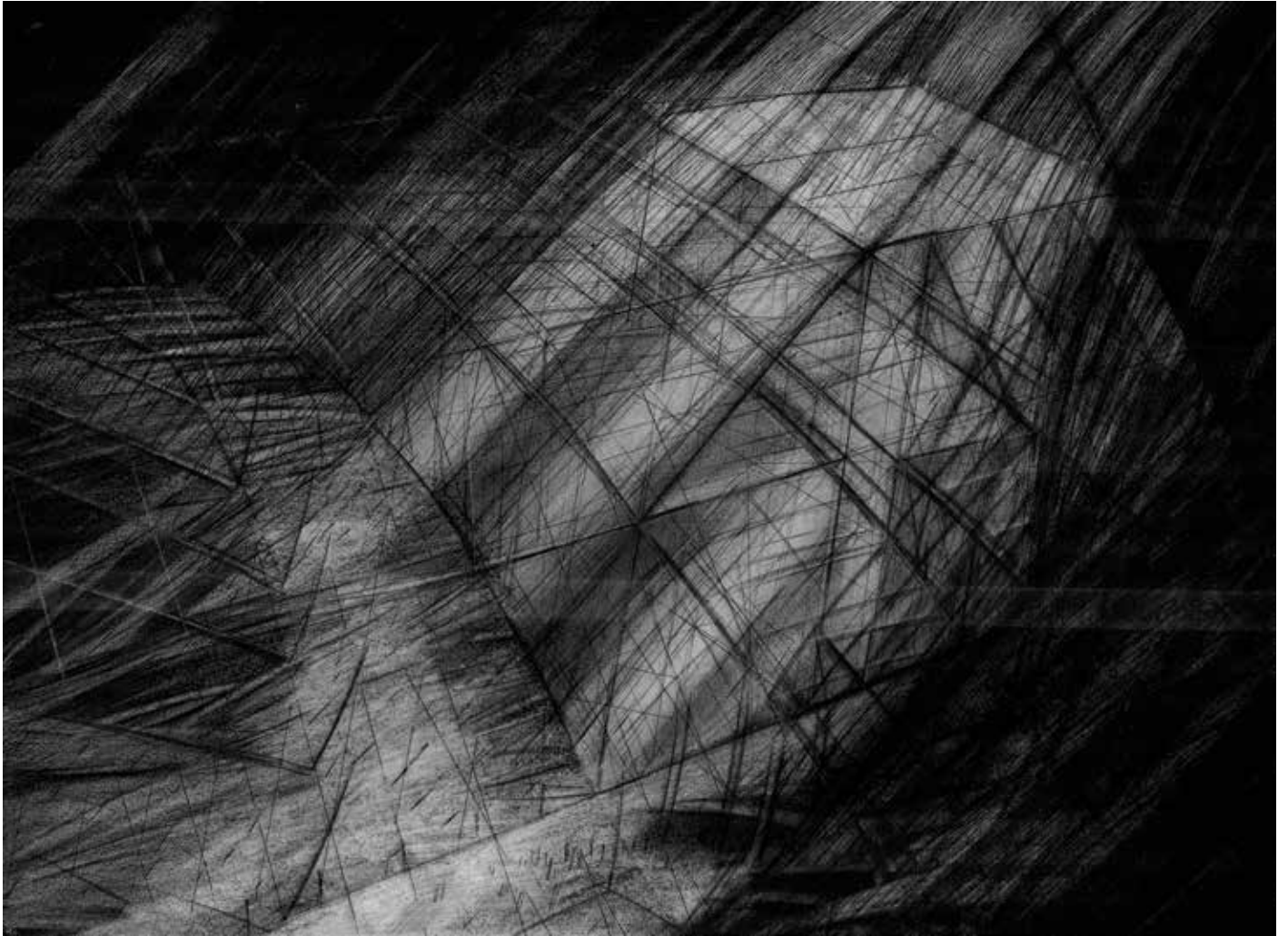
Western Garden #3 24x18 Etching 1978



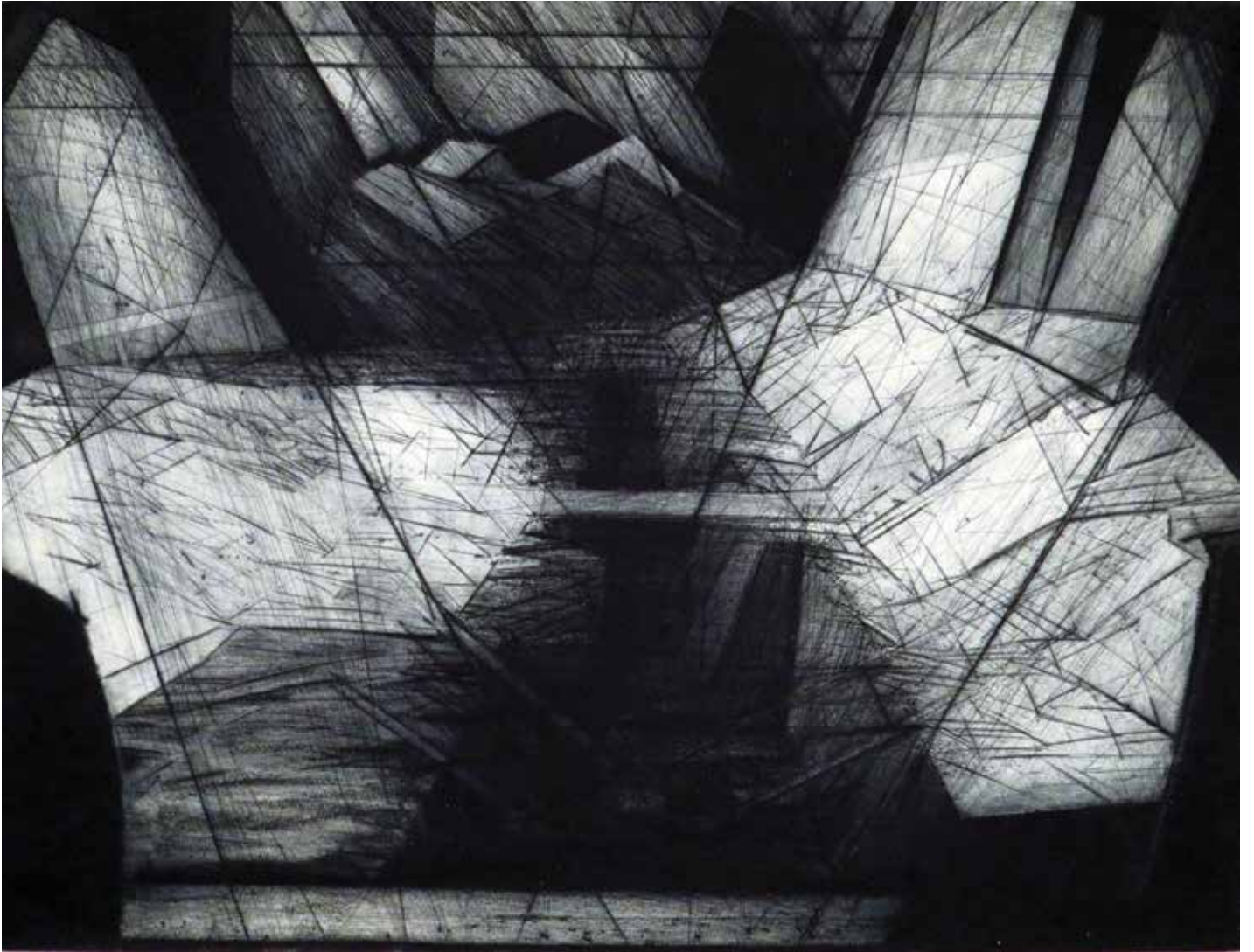
Profane 24x18 Etching 1978





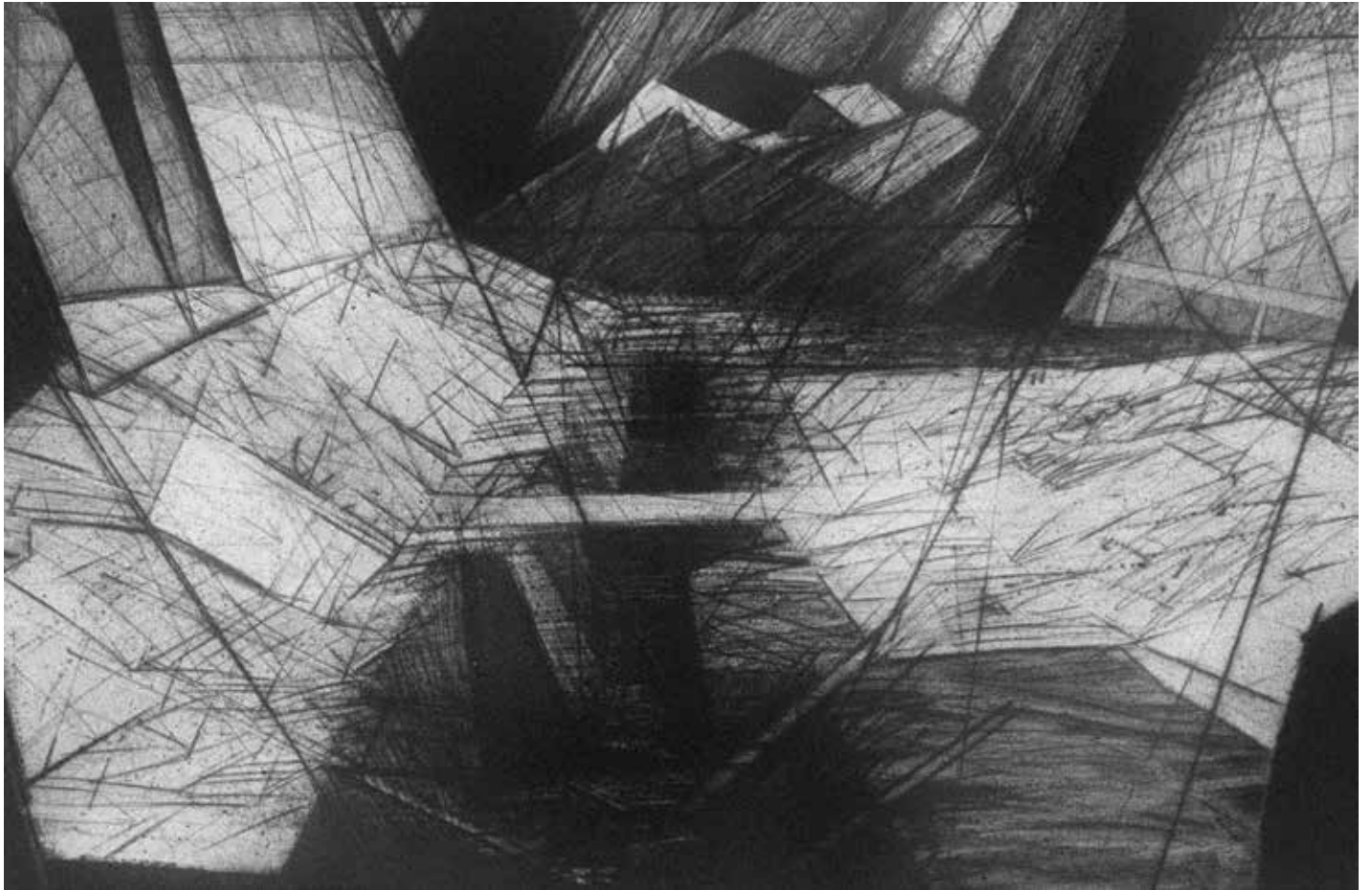






Bad Ditch 1 24x18 Etching 1979

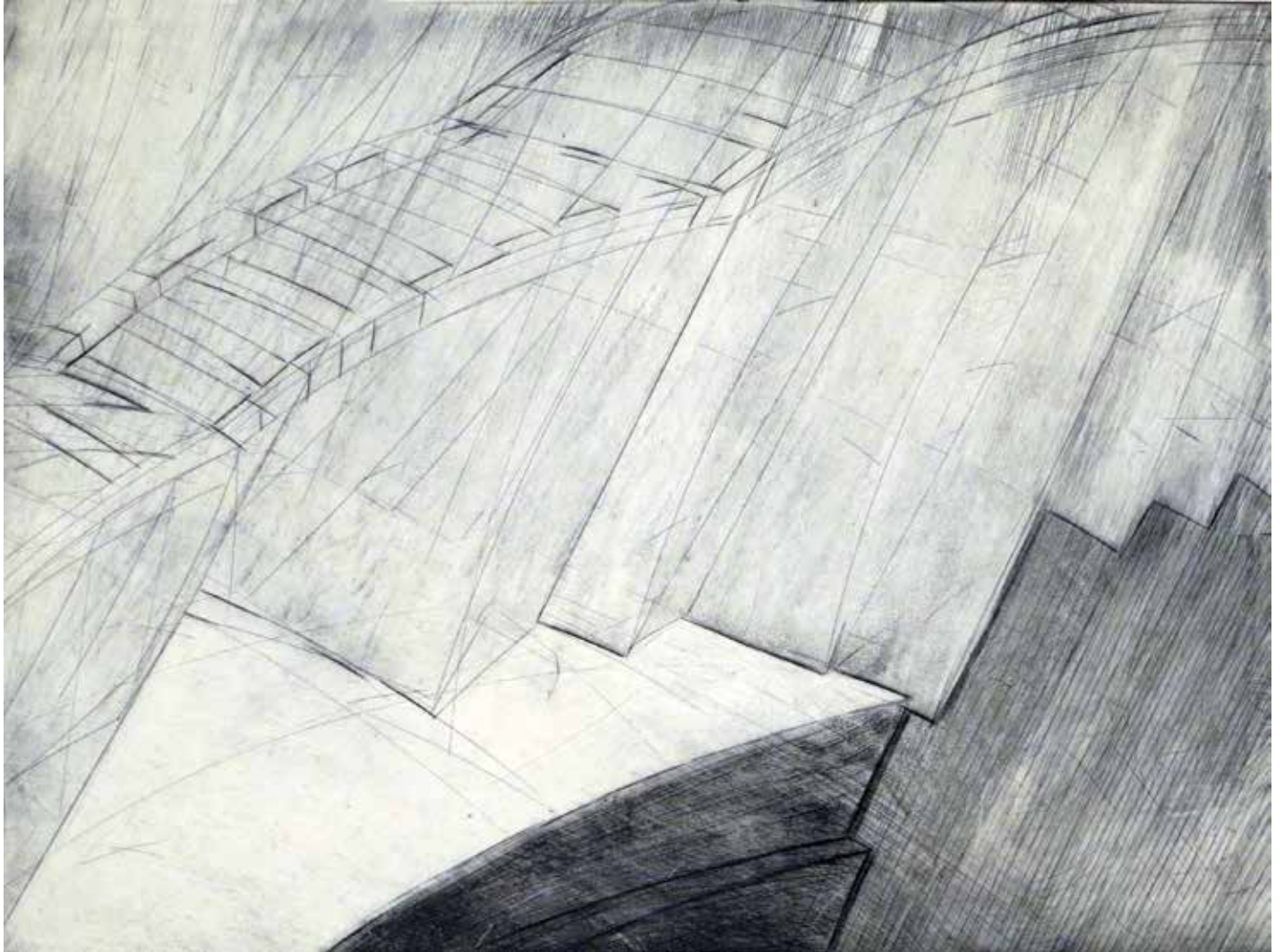




Bad Ditch 2 24x18 Etching 1979



Bad ditch 3 24x18 Etching 1980



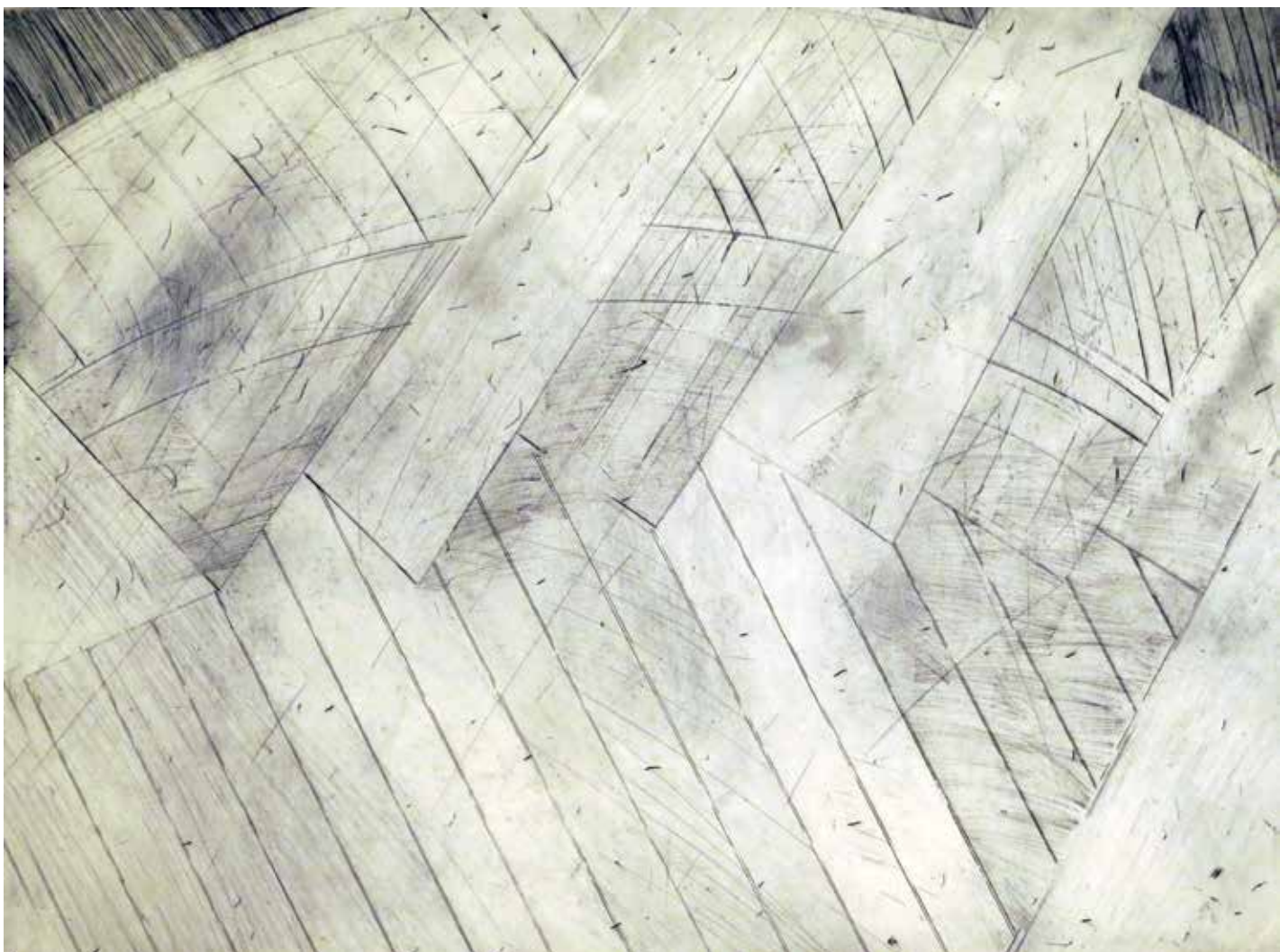




Kinvad 2 24x18 Etching 1980

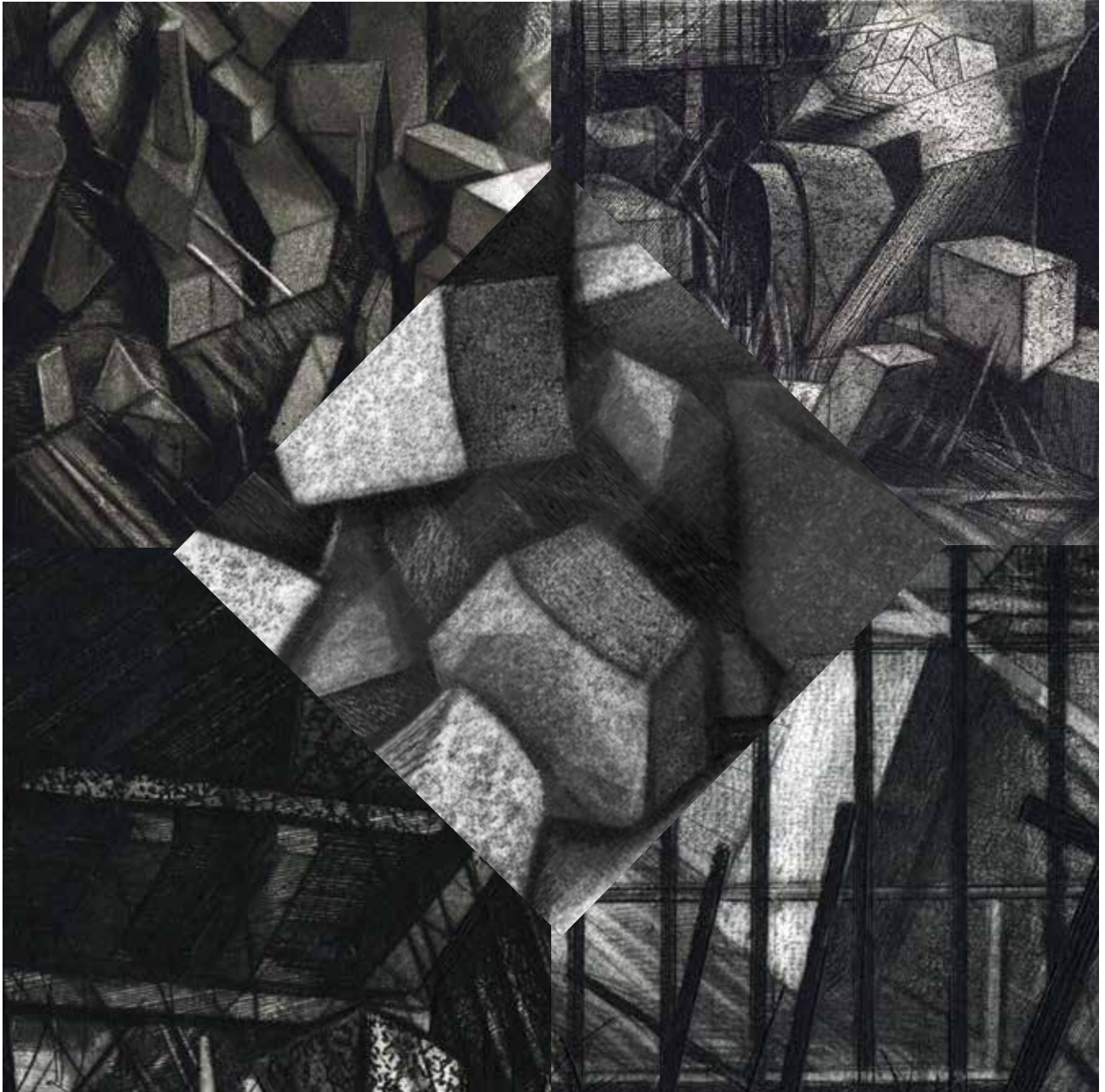






Kinvad 4 24x18 Etching 1980





Western Garden Woods 1 24 x 18 Etching 1981

# Connecticut to KC



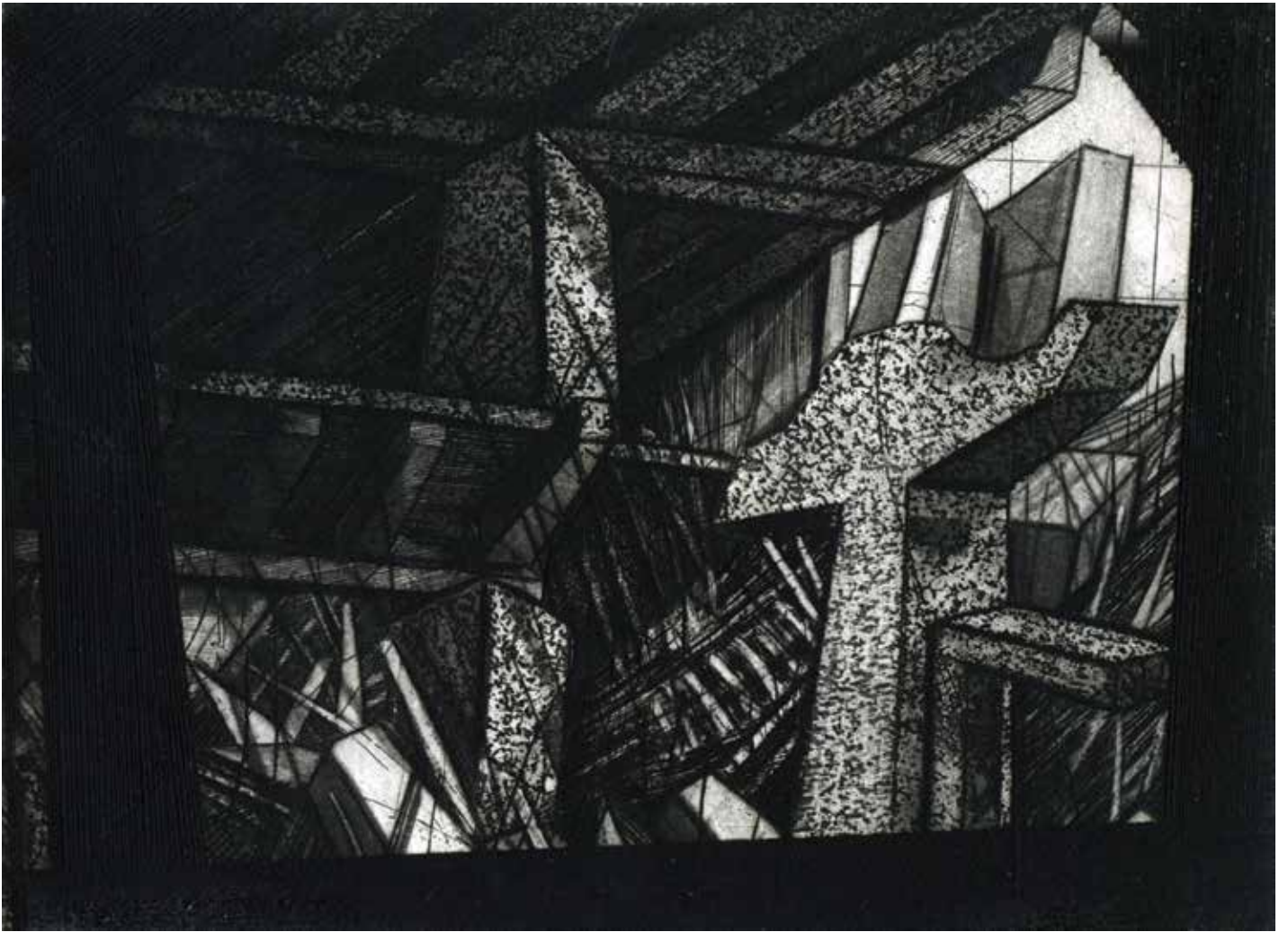


Springtime in New Jersey 6x9 Etching 1976





Montana Surprise 6x9 Etching 1976

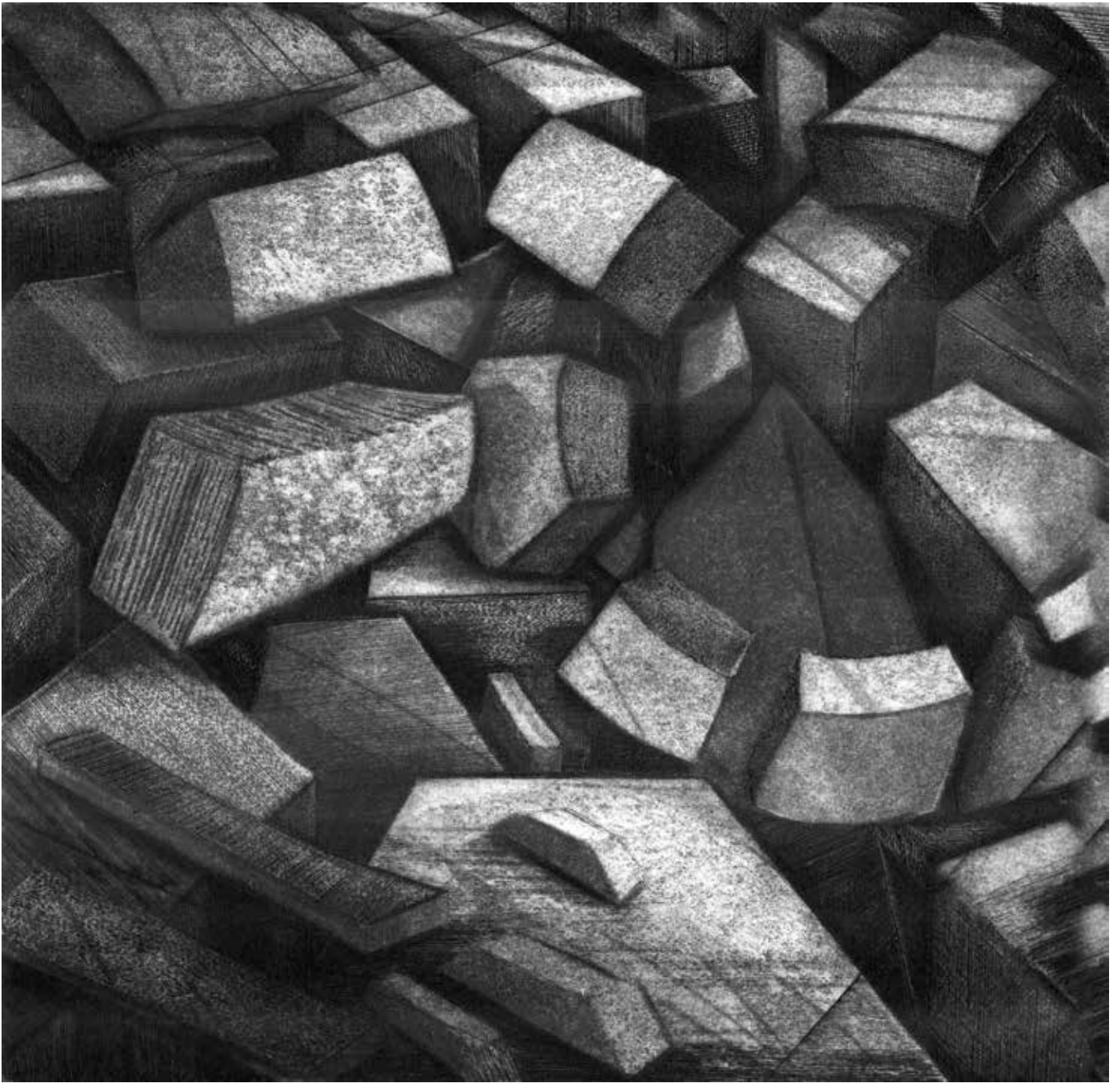


Kansas City 6x9 Etching 1976



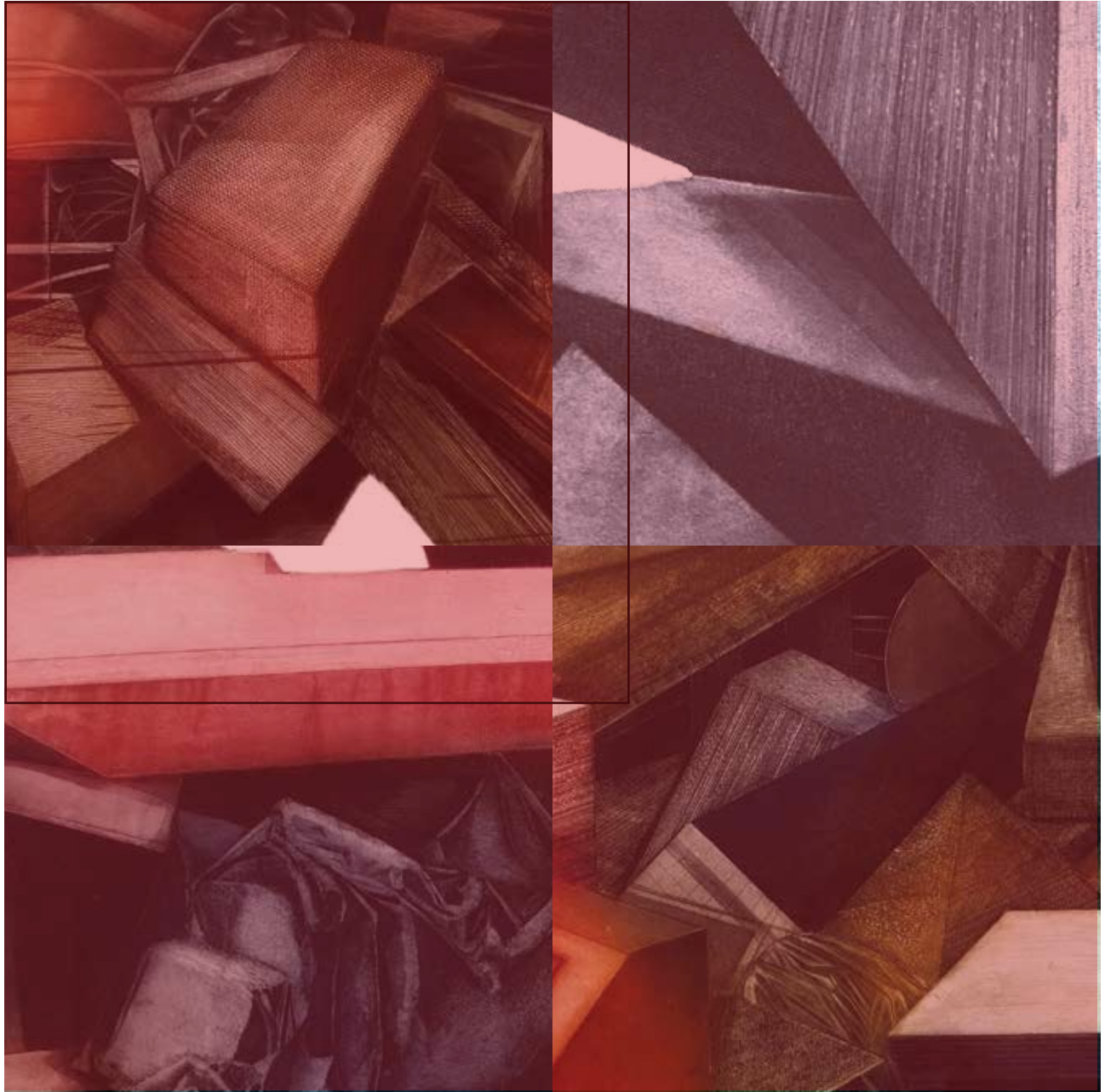


Virginia Beached 6x9 Etching 1976



Room to Move 12x12 Etching 1976

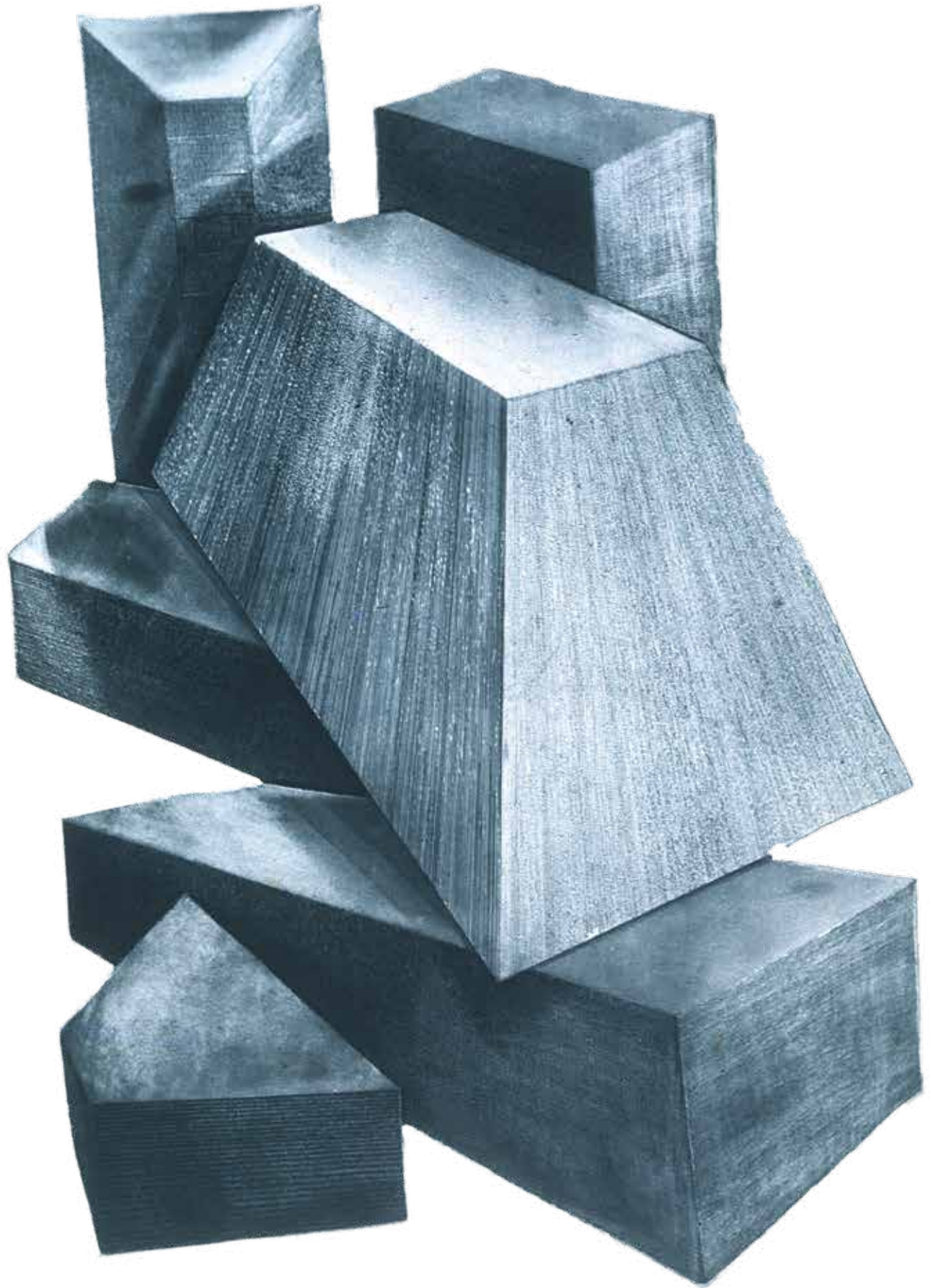




**Yale Thesis  
Exhibition  
1975**







Object 2 36x24 Shaped Etching 1975







Object 4 36x24 Shaped Etching 1975



