

THESIS

DIALOGS

Submitted by
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In Partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Fine Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, CO

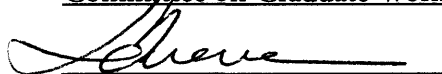
Spring 2005

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

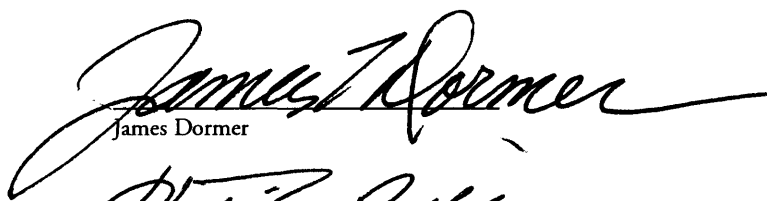
April 1st, 2005

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER
OUR SUPERVISION BY MARIE HANNIGOVA ENTITLED DIALOGS BE
ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

MARIE HANNIGOVA: DIALOGS

Dialogs, my body of work, strives to show that computers are not to be blamed for the deterioration of design quality in general. My work brings back the human touch to computer design. Although computer-based, it is visually stimulating, interactive and personal. The irregularity and imperfection that result from traditional art methods are amplified and elaborated upon in computer programs. The images are abstract in nature encouraging the viewer to use his/her imagination to interpret them. The viewer is encouraged to actively participate in the pieces: to touch them, change the image by opening a blind, flip pages of a book or place a removable tattoo on his/her body.

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Aknowledgements

This work is dedicated to my husband Jan:

Thank you for your love, support and pacience.

A big thank you to my advisor John Gravdahl:

You gave me opportunity to grow as a designer and teacher.

Special thanks to my graduate committee members:

Phil Risbeck, Jim Dormer, Marius Lehene, Haonan Wang.

Your wisdom and feedback gave my work a direction.

And also my parents Alena and Ivan Nievald:

You let me go so that I could be all God made me to be.

And lastly, my deepest thanks to God and Jesus Christ:

You are always there for me.

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Chapter 1

Historical Precedents

David Carson believes that when a means of communication has outlived its relevance, it becomes a work of art.¹ Many fine art forms originally started as crafts used in daily production. They moved into the art realm when new, more efficient production techniques were invented and the old ones became obsolete. This is the case of etching and stone lithography that, although originally fine art media, they came to be used in printing book illustrations, posters and other promotional materials. Once offset printing presses became prevalent, lithography and etching moved back into the fine art disciplines. Digital printing might soon make offset presses obsolete and a new fine art medium will be born. And who knows, one day we may not need a piece of hardware to store and manipulate information. Then computers may move into the traditional fine art category as well.

The lack of spontaneity that characterizes computer-generated design has stimulated a renewed interest in and regard for traditional processes and one could say that my work falls into this category. A similar movement resulted as a reaction to the social, moral and artistic confusion of the Industrial Revolution in England.^{2, 3} John Ruskin observed that industrialization and technology caused gradual severance of art and society to reach a critical stage, isolating the artist. This caused eclecticism of historical models, decline in creativity and design by engineers without aesthetic concern.⁴

The designers associated with the Arts and Crafts movement advocated a return to handicraft production rejecting the cheap and tawdry mass-produced goods of the Victorian era (see fig. 1). William Morris called for “fitness of purpose, truth to the nature of materials and methods of production and individual expression by both designer and worker.”⁵ He wanted to return the focus to the individual artist rather than the process, reclaiming the

creative process that got lost through the mass production. The cry to return to a world that is simpler, slower and more mystical where regional and cultural differences form one's own identity is consequently not unique to the computer era but started a long time ago.⁶

Another precedent to my work can be found in the pop art movement. Its artists used mass-production tools to create fine art pieces. Representing and incorporating common-day objects, they gave them the dignity of fine art. The resulting pieces are often very rich and expressive. They do not feel detached but capture the mass culture that surrounded these artists. Andy Warhol used photography and silkscreen process to create portraits of famous people (see fig. 2). The photographs are often repeated in a composition giving the appearance of mass-produced work. However at a closer inspection one notices significant irregularities from one image to the next. The different variations of one image rendered in different color combinations give rise to diverse interpretations and emotions (see fig. 3).

1 Blackwell, Lewis, David Carson. The end of print: the grafik design of David Carson. New York, NY: Universe Pub.: Distributed to the U.S. trade by St. Martin's Press, 1997.

2 Supon Design Group and Anderson, Jack. Computer Generation, 60.

3 People are drawn to outmoded means of production to connect to the flow of experience. Making is like touching reality. The control that comes from repeated action, the smell of materials, the handling of tools and the feeling of accomplishment upon completion give the creator the sensation of being fully alive. The balance of body, emotions and intellect associated with the act of making provides self-worth and even a sense of spiritual awareness as the maker connects with other people.

4 Meggs, Philip B. A History Of Graphic Design. 162.

5 Meggs, Philip B. A History Of Graphic Design. 162.

6 Clement Mok, Commentary in Supon Design Group and Anderson, Jack. Computer Generation, xi.

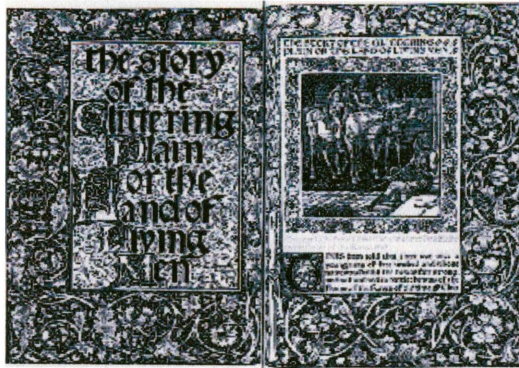


Figure 1. William Morris (designer) and Walter Crane (illustrator), title-page spread for *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, 1894.



Figure 2. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Diptych*, silkscreen, 1962.



Figure 3. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn*, silkscreen, 1962.

Chapter 2

Research on the Known Techniques, Practices and Opinions

When I was an undergraduate student, I noticed my classmates rarely did anything by hand. Some even created their thumbnail sketches on a computer. The results were often too sterile and impersonal. The headlines were centered and unimaginative. The lines never varied, the circles were perfectly round and the shading was unnaturally uniform.

I set out to find a way of making computer designs that would be imaginative, irregular and appeal to multiple senses. I explored lithography that translates drawings on stone or plate to prints. Apart from the expressiveness of drawing, the process itself can introduce irregularity. The time the drawing is etched, the strength of the acid solution, the quality of the roller or the consistency of the ink influence the result and the fidelity of the print to the drawn original. It layers one color on top of the other. Where two colors overlap a third one forms. Its appearance depends not only on the hues intermixed but on the level of transparency of the ink.

I started creating black and white abstractions on lithographic stone (see fig. 1) and then moved to plates that allowed me not only to work bigger since stones were cumbersome, but it let me preserve each plate for later use in combination with other plates. This way a small number of plates yielded a number of prints that significantly differed from each other. Transparency that allowed the colors of different ink layers to intermix colors added further surface richness to the end print (see fig. 2).

First I drew with litho crayons and ink, moved to washes, but then I discovered a technique that seemed most appropriate. It made use of litho coal, a fine powder otherwise known as laser toner, that adheres to the plate and after being etched, the resulting image is very close to the original drawing. I used a foot-wide brush that

graphic designers used to dust off final designs to create gestural abstractions (see fig. 3) very reminiscent of Chinese calligraphy.

Intaglio is a printmaking technique used since the Renaissance. The textured plate adds depth to the flat paper surface. The drawing does not sit on the surface of the plate but is rather engraved into it, creating ridges and valleys going down into the plate at varying depths. Lines and textures are added and subtracted with sharp instruments so the line quality is very different from one created on a lithographical plate. It is often more uniform and bold.

After exploring different techniques of line and texture making, I explored applying litho coal that I had used to in my previous litho experiments. The resulting print was inversed from my drawing: wherever I applied the powder, the paper stayed white, and wherever I left the plate open, the ink adhered. I was able to layer two different drawings on one plate with one being more dominant. The surface of the print was very rich in texture and added a three-dimensional element to the paper (see fig. 4).

Next I focused on researching what the design world thought about the computer. Most, accepting its existence, were wary of its impact on design quality. They believed, and rightly so for most part, that the ease of creating imagery on the computer caused one not to think creatively. The computer processing of information was too predictable, precise and perfect. It was not spontaneous. There was no room for intuition that has so much guided human artistic behavior historically. However it is important to remember that it is not the computer that dissolves the creativity but its software forces one to go along given paths potentially causing a similarity of solutions. My work tries to leave these paths to find irregularity and intuitive solutions.



Figure 1. Marie Hannigova, *Biomorphic Matter*, lithography, 2002.

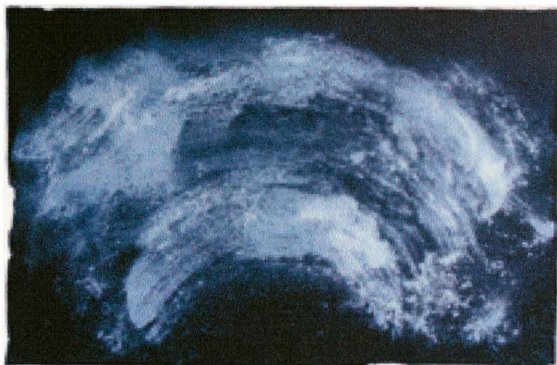


Figure 2. Marie Hannigova, *Cosmic Serenade*, lithography, 2003.



Figure 3. Marie Hannigova, *Zen*, lithography, 2003.



Figure 4. Marie Hannigova, *Birth of Passion*, lithography, 2004.

Chapter 3

My Work: Dialogs

Dialogs, my body of work, strives to bring the irregularity and expressiveness of human touch back into computer design. The works, abstract in nature, are meant to be interacted with and explored by the viewer. The etymology of the word dialog refers to a two-way relationship, a conversation or the exchange of ideas. It is a dialog between the artist and the piece, and the piece and the viewer. It is an interaction between the computer-generated impulse and human sensibility. And lastly, it represents one cultural identity interacting with another.

Dialogs does not give answers but offers a place for questioning and for slowing down the viewers' hurried lives. It does not command, but waits patiently for people to free their minds to listen to its unique voice. It invites the viewers to follow the trembling yet confident brush strokes, lines and spots with their eyes, to be submerged in the depths of the blues and the warmth of ochres.

The form of a window blind has become a vehicle of my recent *Dialog*. A blind, whether commercially produced or hand-made, becomes a transitional device at once separating and at once filtering what lies beyond. The viewer is encouraged to interact with the blind, open it and observe the transformation from one image to the next.

Seen on the wall, the blinds are recognized as images. However placed in space, they become objects physically invading the viewers' world. These are consequently forced to interact with the blinds by walking between them and flipping them opened or closed. The turning wand thus becomes a magical tool transporting the viewers to a new world of creativity and imagination. Additionally, looking through one blind to

the next may induce the viewers to examine their understanding of reality. Is the first image more real than the next? How does the perception of the original change when informed by the other blind?

In combination with printed imagery, a seemingly mundane commercial blind transforms into a window of activity, a stage of exciting strokes and intimate revelations where the viewer's imagination is free to wander freely and endlessly. At times one travels through the vastness of the universe only to find the microcosm of cellular form.

Although originating from one image, the individual blinds in the *Transformations* series each have a unique voice. While the colors and details shift either subtly or explicitly, they convey different moods and point out different aspects of the image. Some recall immense celestial bodies while others bring one to the level of tiny organisms. The series *Zoom* takes the transformative process even further. Originating again in the same drawing, the blinds open to a zoomed-in version of the image in a color scheme that reflects or complements the image at the front.

Blind Books, derived from the shape of window blinds, represent the fragmented information one is presented with. While each page spread works visually on its own, one is aware that these pages form a larger picture that cannot be seen at once. One focuses then on the minute details of each page, enjoying the subtle color gradations and textures. Even a sightless person would be able to enjoy these books by touching them, lending the title a second interpretation.

Cave series of tunnel books work off of traditional pop-up books substituting abstract images for illustration. There are six levels of paper. The very back one is the original image. Each successive one has more and more areas cut giving the image a sense of depth. The books in this series are derived from one image. The color changes introduce different moods, emphasize different parts of the image that influence the viewer's interpretation.

The *Micro/Macro* single-leaf prints are based on the same image as *Cave* books. The small size invites the viewer to intimately examine the work and enjoy the details. The imagery alludes to the microscopic as well as macroscopic worlds around us. The texture introduced by intaglio printing interacts with the varying colors being more noticeable in some and subtler in other prints.

Chapter 4

Technical Details of My Work

The process for creating blinds, tunnel books, single-leaf prints and blind books begins similarly but the final result is different. Here is what I usually do. I start with a black and white drawing not taller than a few inches. I scan it into the computer at a very high resolution and I magnify its size. I open the image in Adobe Photoshop, an industry standard for photo manipulation, and look for focal points in the drawing. I crop the image to create an interesting composition, modify its size and resolution to fit my purpose. Sometimes I distort the proportions and/or rotate it.

I add a layer of pure color. I use the layer options in the Layer Palette to superimpose the picture over the background color. I add another color layer and this time I modify the image so that the black areas of the original are colored in the new layer color. I play with different color combinations until I get something I like and save it.

Next, I look for interesting shapes I want to emphasize. I select them either using the lasso tool or the magic wand tool. I create a new layer and fill in the selection with color. I change the layer properties to multiply, overlay, burn or any other option until I find something interesting. I change the layer order, play with opacities, change colors, add layers, and hide others. I invert the colors of the original drawing or any of the layers. I save the image as something else whenever I arrive at something esthetically pleasing. Sometimes I flatten the image and select certain colors and modify them. Sometimes I invert the image. I may bring another image or part of it if it is necessary. This is a simplified recipe for what I do. A lot of decision-making goes into the mix.

There is one additional step for the designs that are to become tunnel books. The areas to be cut out are designated by blocks of white. I usually use printmaking papers for printing. The tunnel books and single-leaf prints are printed on the 110-pound index paper while the blinds are usually printed on Rives heavyweight papers.

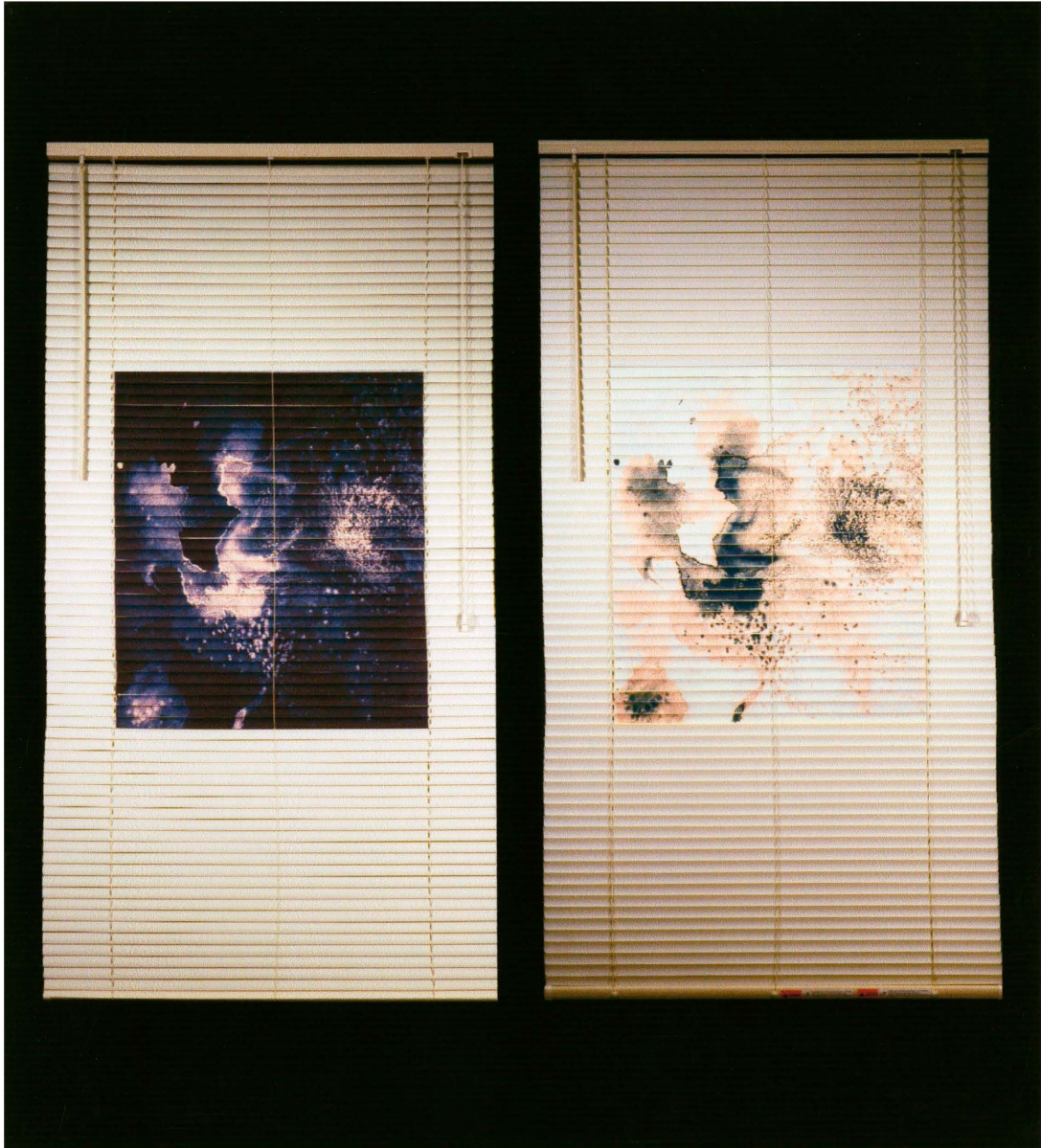
Then the process differs. The single leaf prints are run through a printmaking press with an intaglio plate containing the image printed. The tunnel books are cut and assembled. This gives the print a depth and texture. For blinds, I cut the paper into inch-wide strips, number them and use spray adhesive to fix them to the surface of the blind. The images that I pair up on an individual blind always go together one way or the other. Sometimes one is the inversed version of the next. Colors may vary subtly and be subdued or they may change radically and scream at the viewer.

Conclusion

Dialogs brings some of the human touch back into computer-aided design. I take the mistake, the irregularity of lithographs and drawings, and translate it to the computer form. I use programs and their features in a way in which they were not intended, bringing randomness and chance into the equation. I use my intuition to make visual choices.

Dialogs allows for active participation. The titles only suggest and are open to interpretation. They help direct the thought process. The viewer's own experiences are interpreted into an individual understanding of the image. I believe that the thinking, feeling and meditation provoked by my pieces is essential in today's instant society that gives solutions and answers before one even gets a chance to ask questions.

Although the works in *Dialogs* are personal statements, they serve as reminders of something universal, something everyone knows well but cannot pinpoint precisely. It is as if one sees a familiar person and cannot remember where they have met. My abstractions are like that. I urge you to give them a chance. Listen to what they have to say, listen even though they may speak a language you do not completely understand.



Side A

Side B

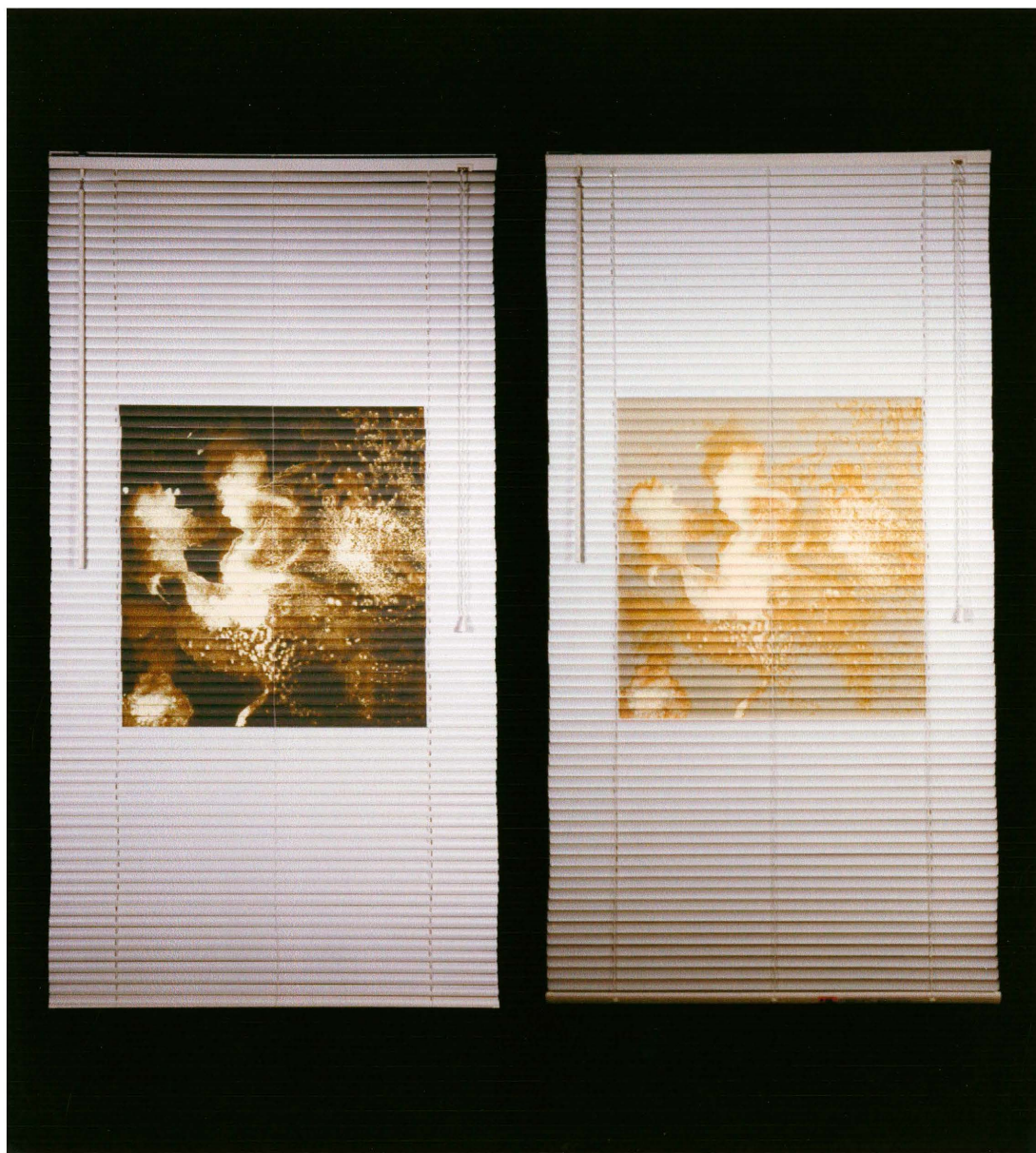
Plate 1. *Transformations I*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2004.



Side A

Side B

Plate 2. *Transformations II*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 3. *Transformations III*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

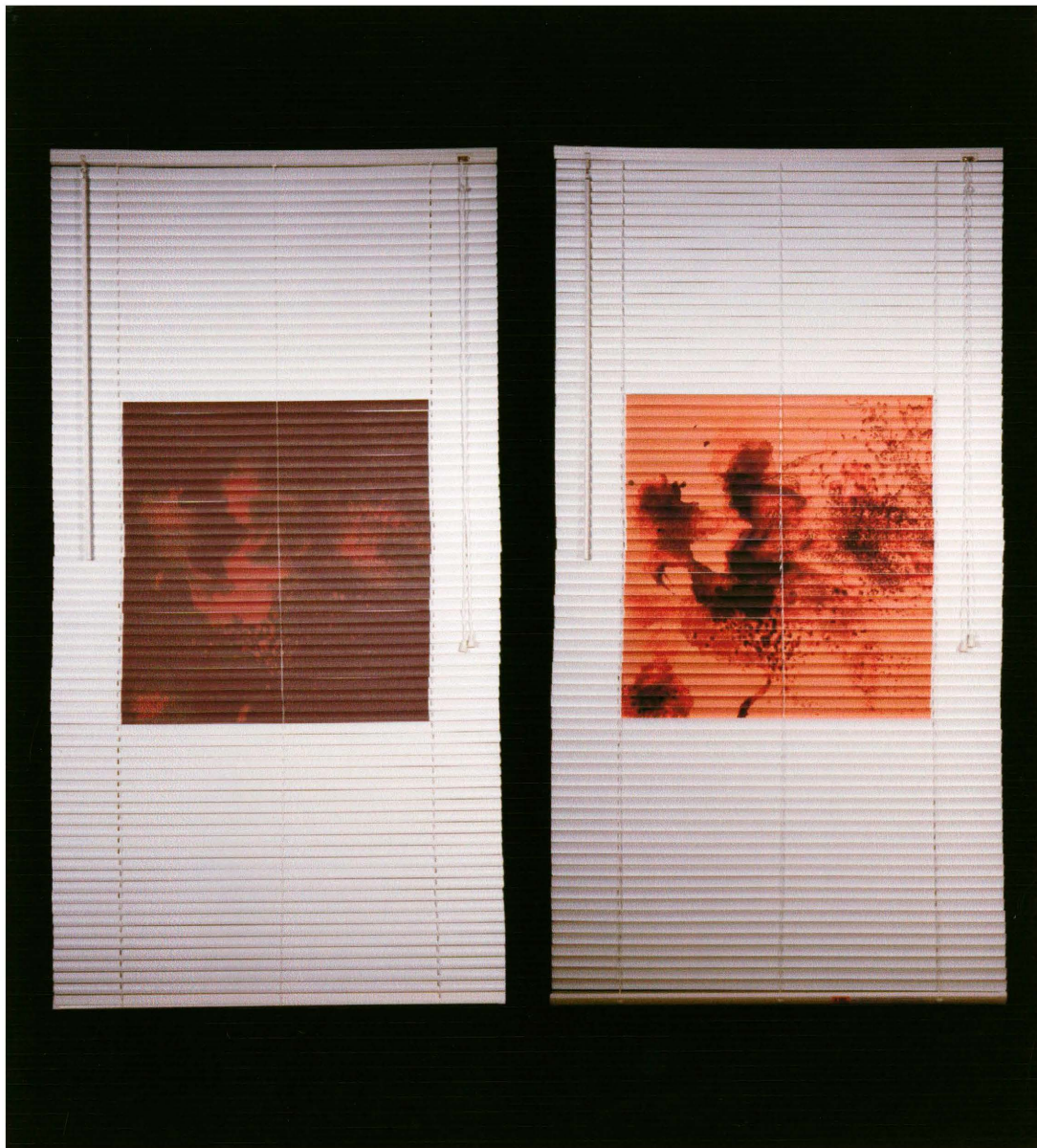
Plate 4. *Transformations IV*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 5. *Transformations V*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 6. *Transformations VI*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 7. *Transformations VII*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

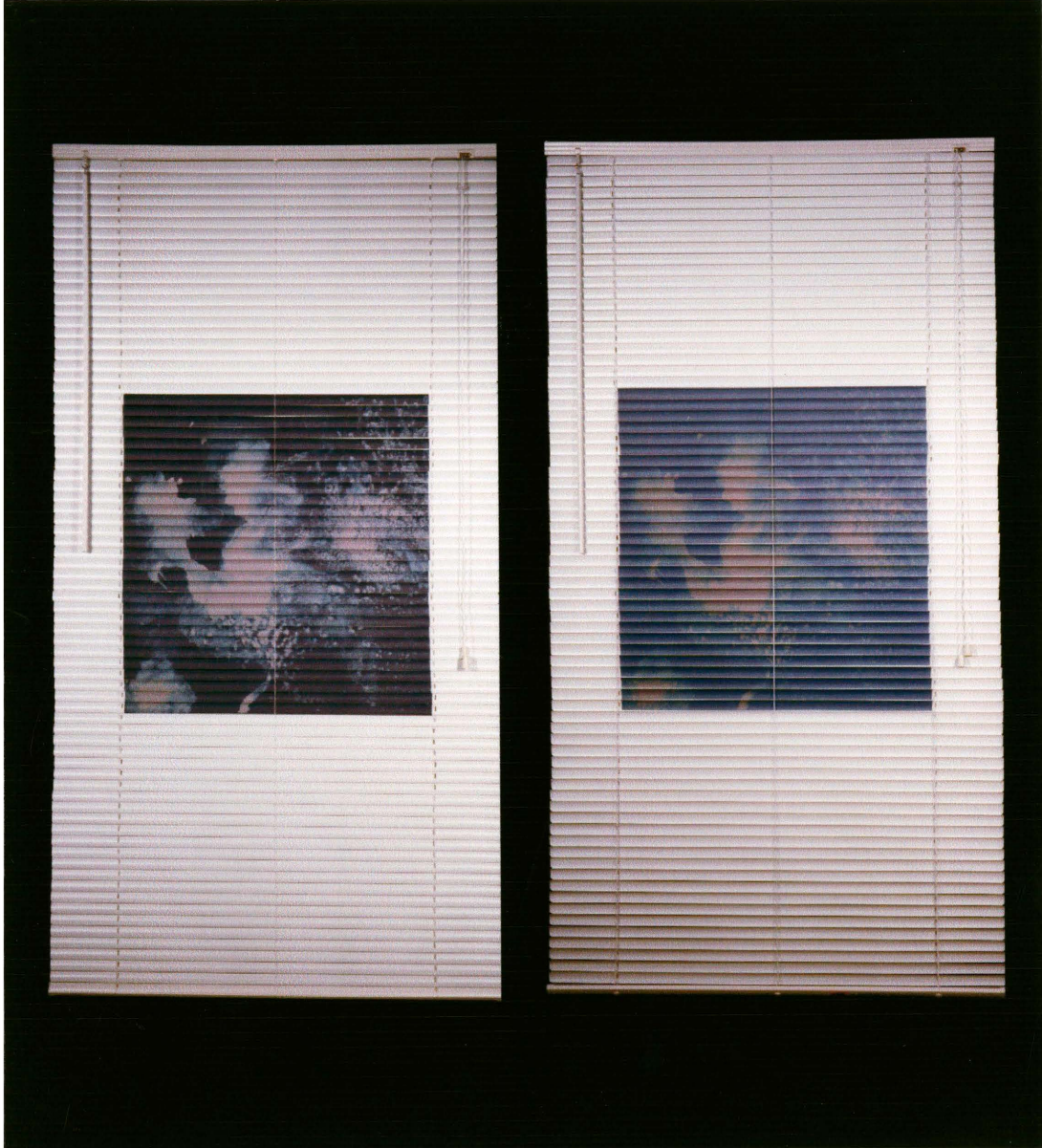
Plate 8. *Transformations VIII*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

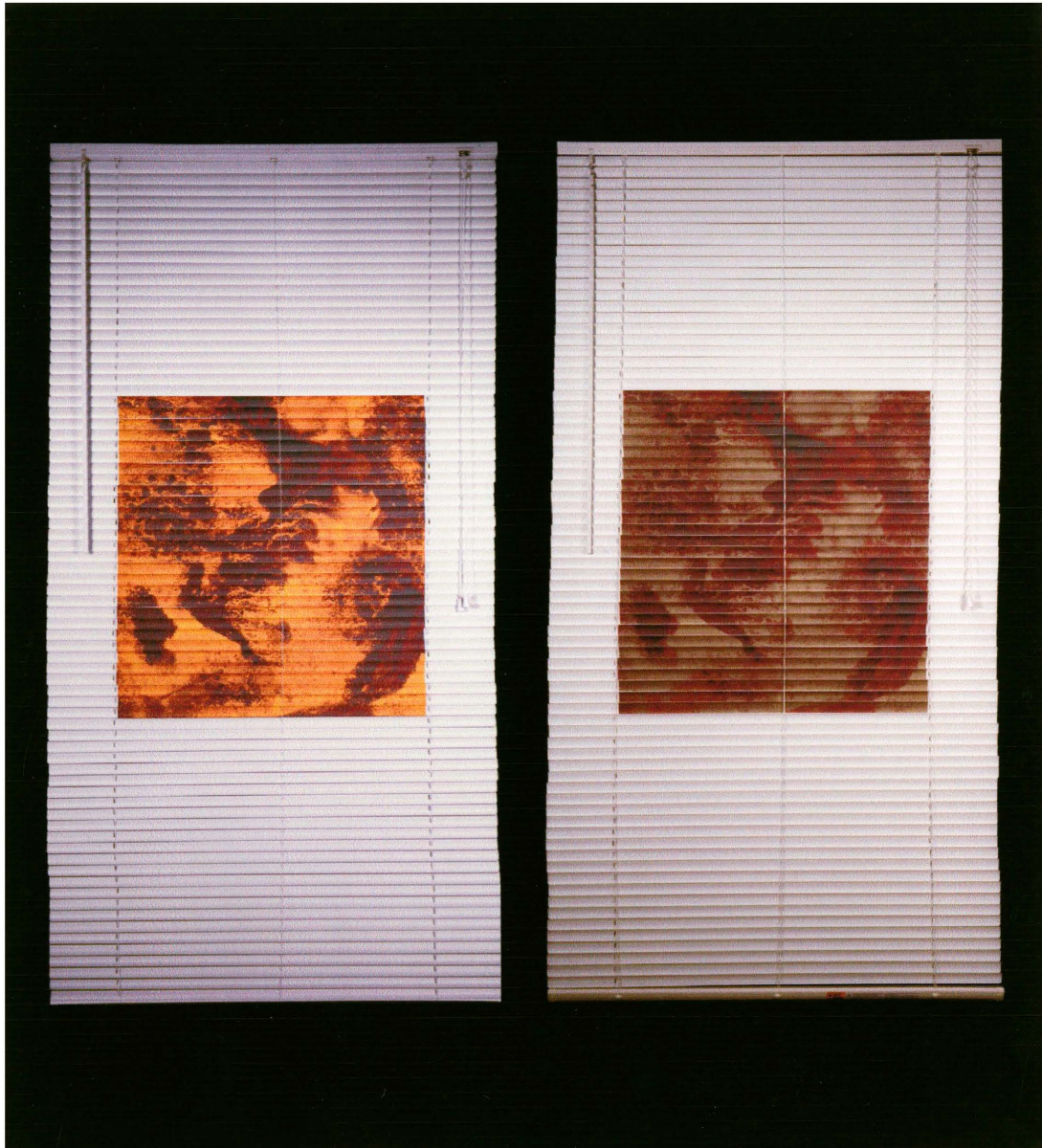
Plate 9. *Transformations IX*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

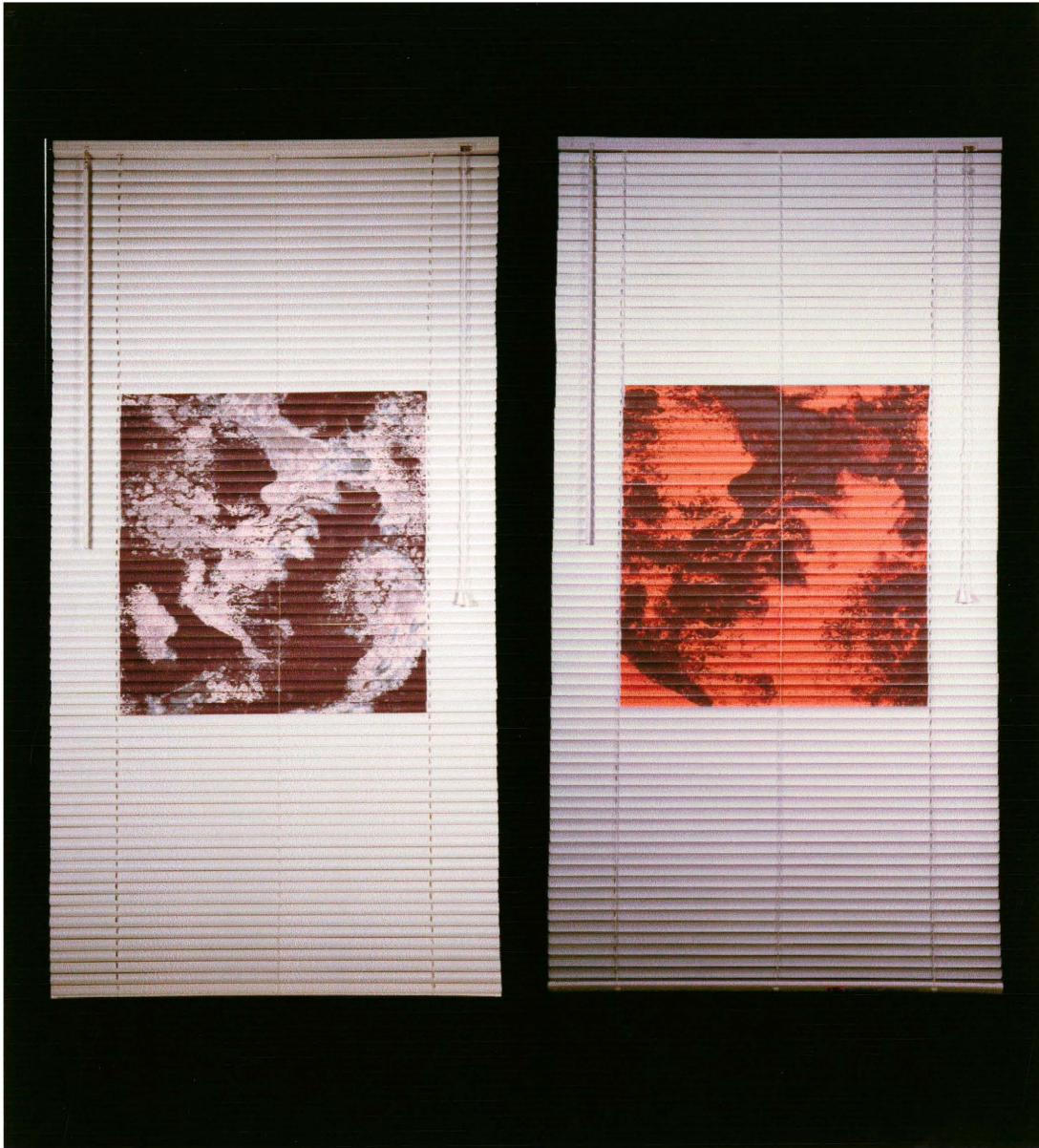
Plate 10. *Transformations X*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

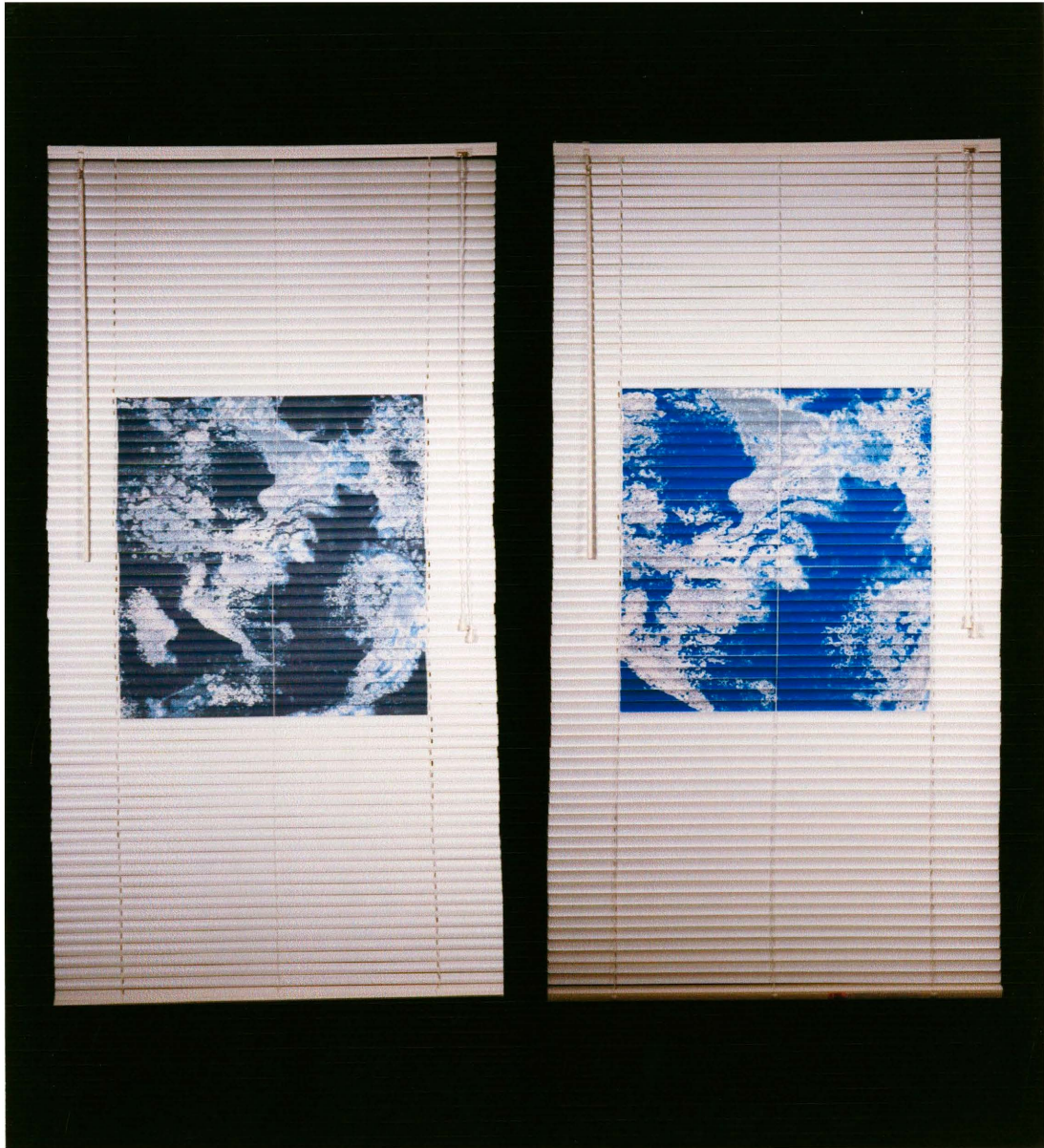
Plate 11. *Zoom I*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 12. *Zoom II*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 13. *Zoom III*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 14. *Zoom IV* digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Side A

Side B

Plate 15. *Zoom V*, digital media, paper, mini blind, 2005.



Plate 16. *Cave I*, digital media, paper, 2005.

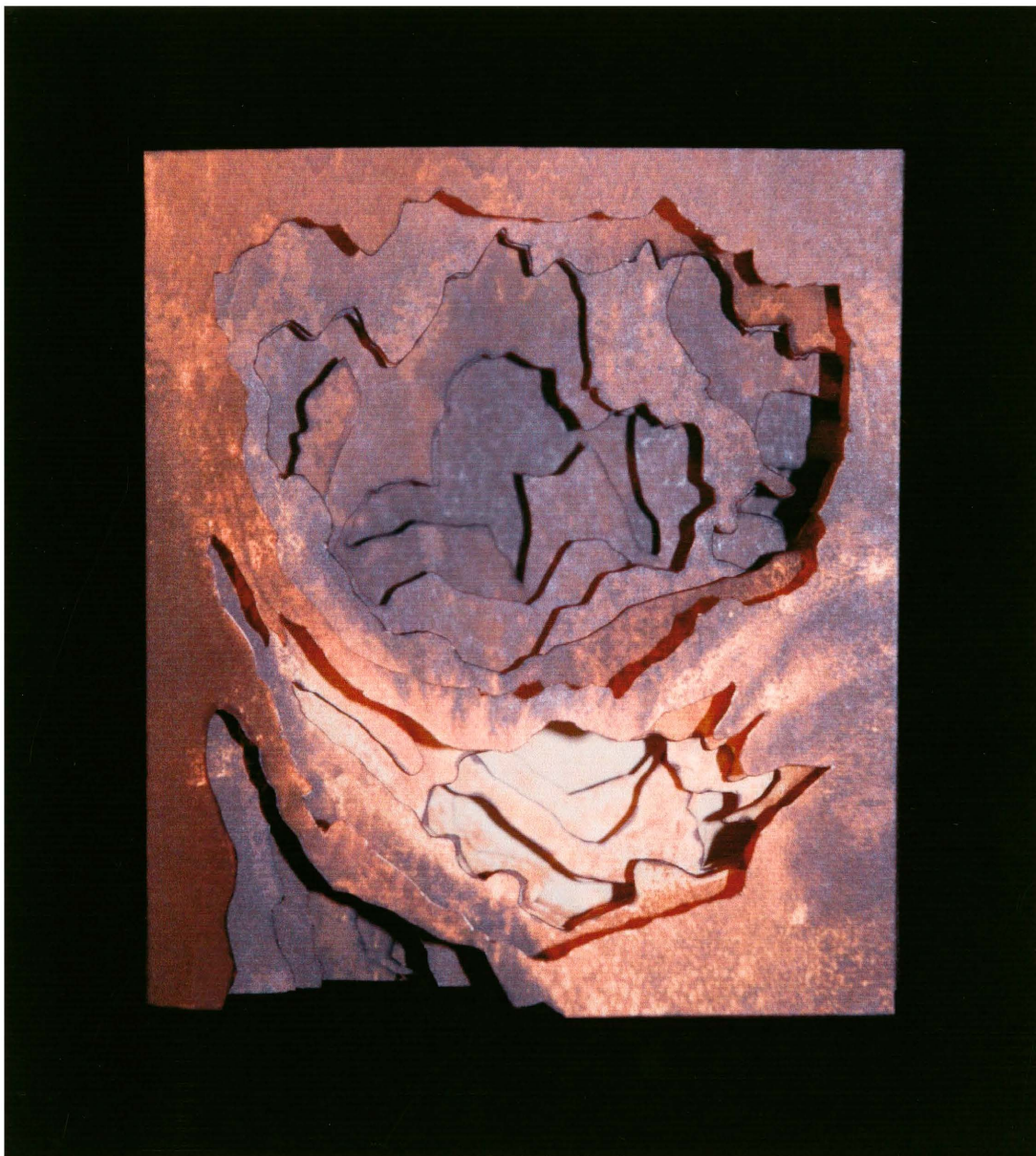


Plate 17. *Cave II*, digital media, paper, 2005.

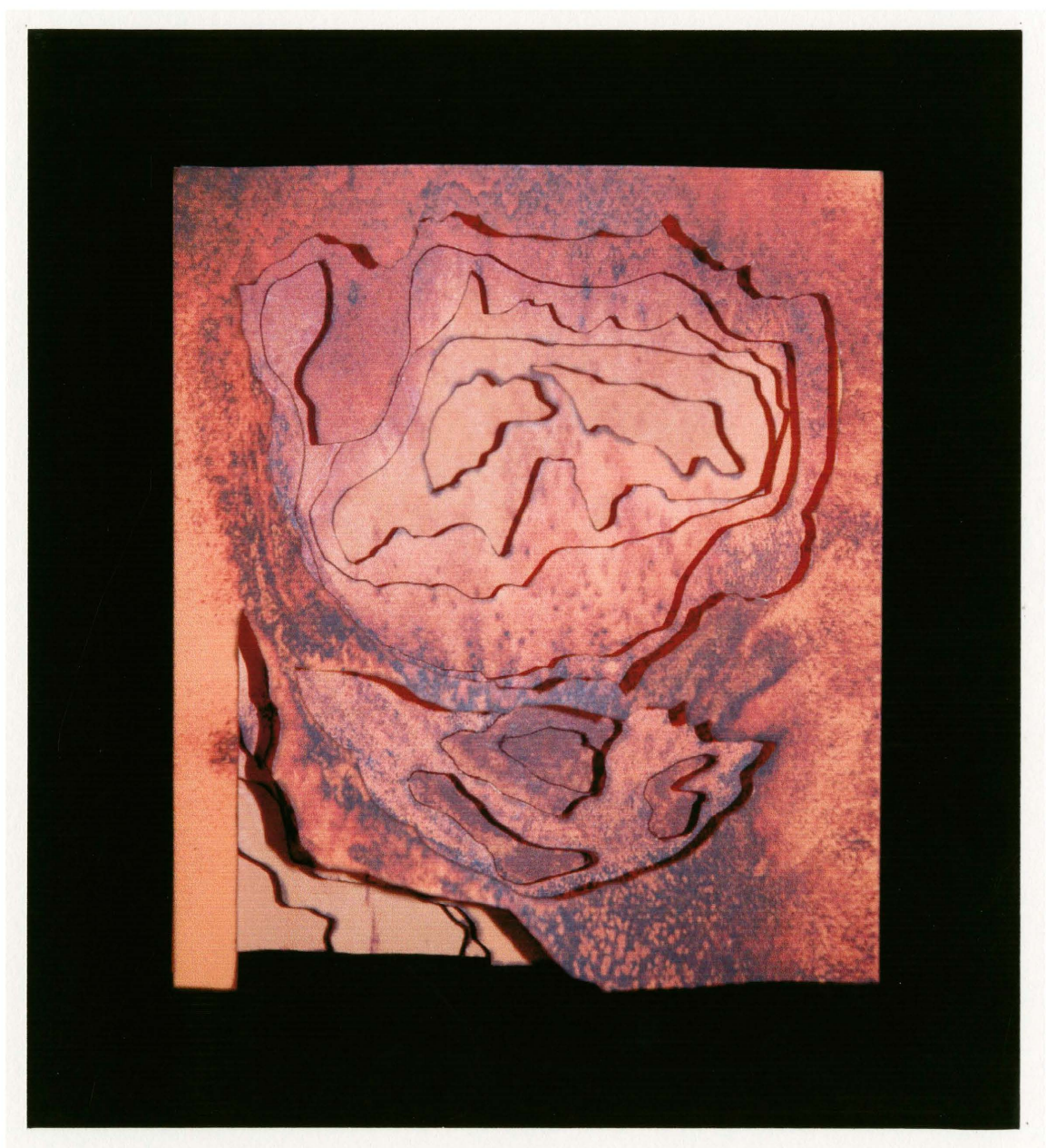


Plate 18. *Cave III*, digital media, paper, 2005.

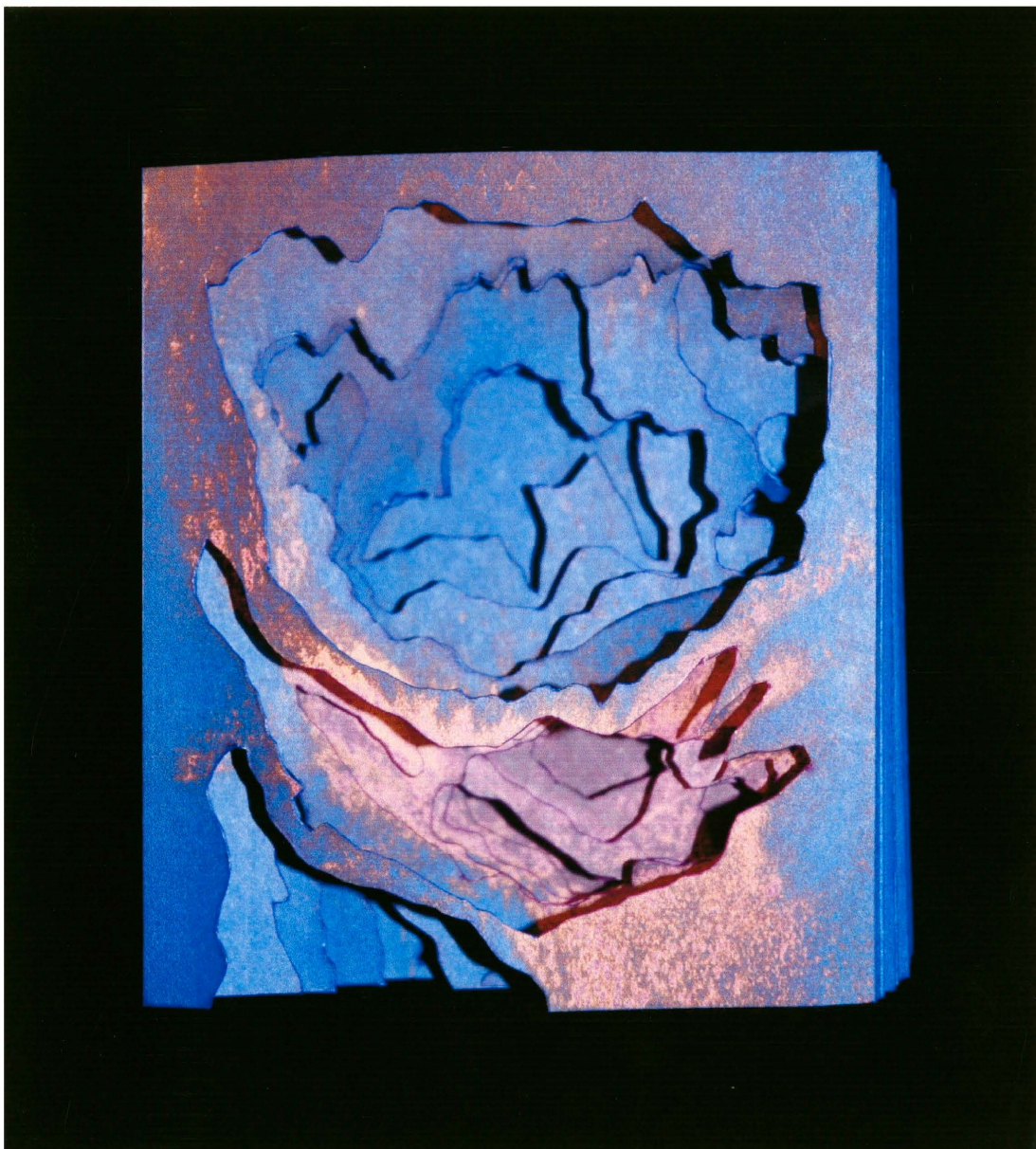


Plate 19. *Cave IV*, digital media, paper, 2005.



Plate 20. *Blind Book I*, silkscreen, lithocoal, paper, hemp, wood, 2004.



Plate 21. *Blind Book I (detail)*, silkscreen, lithocoal, paper, hemp, wood, 2004.

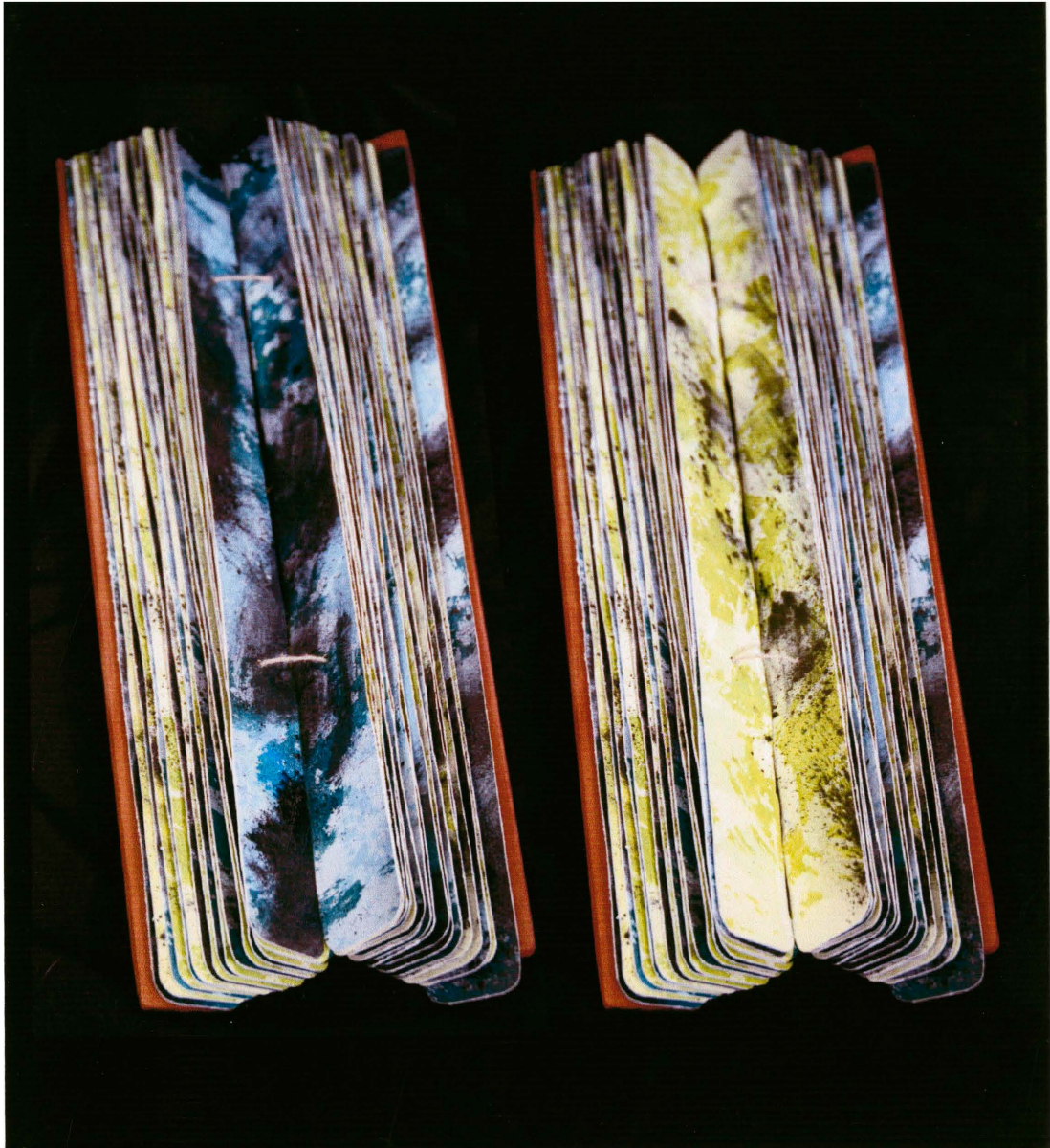


Plate 22. *Blind Book II*, silkscreen, lithocolor, paper, hemp, wood, 2004.

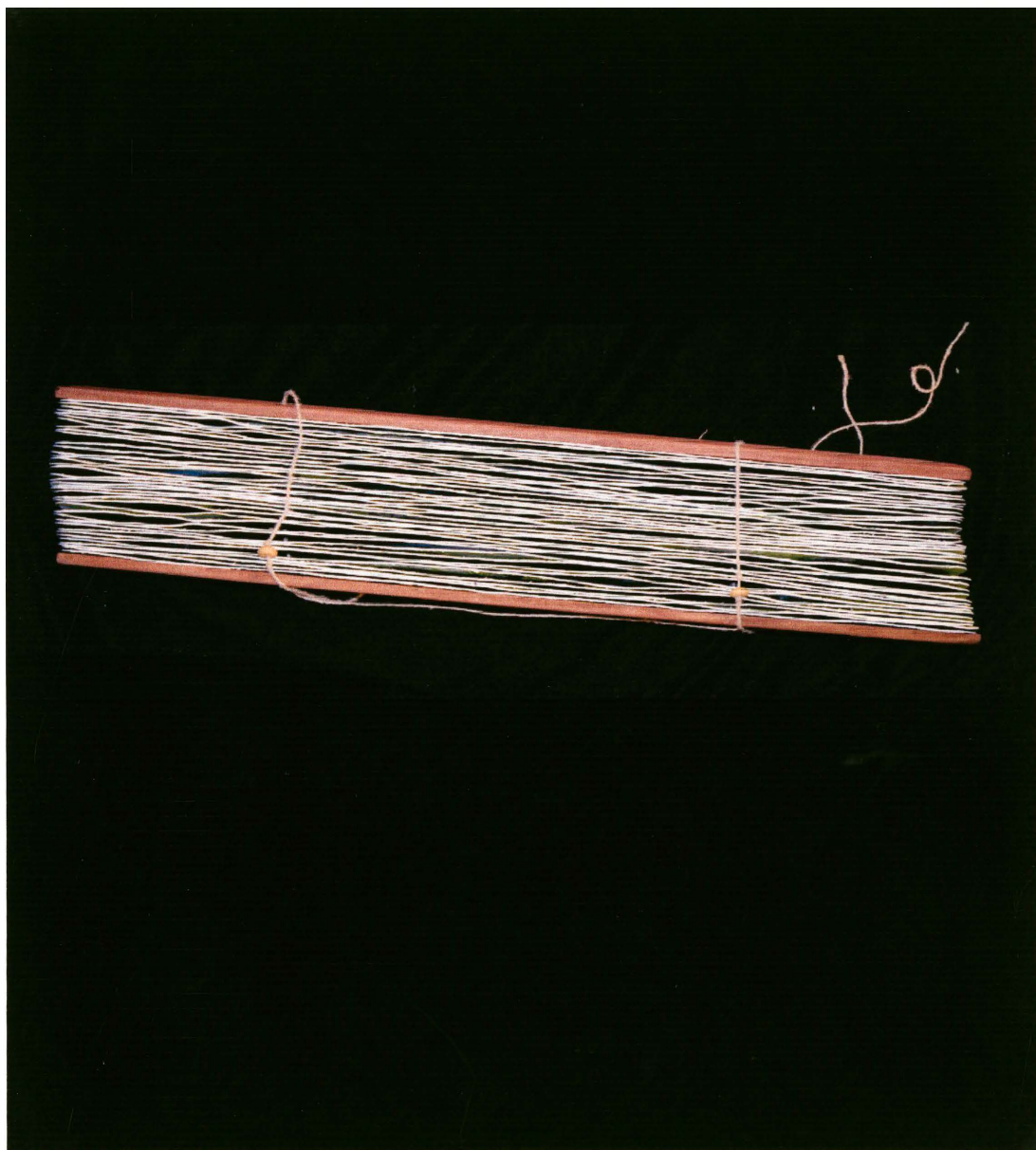


Plate 23. *Blind Book II*, silkscreen, lithocoal, paper, hemp, wood, 2004.

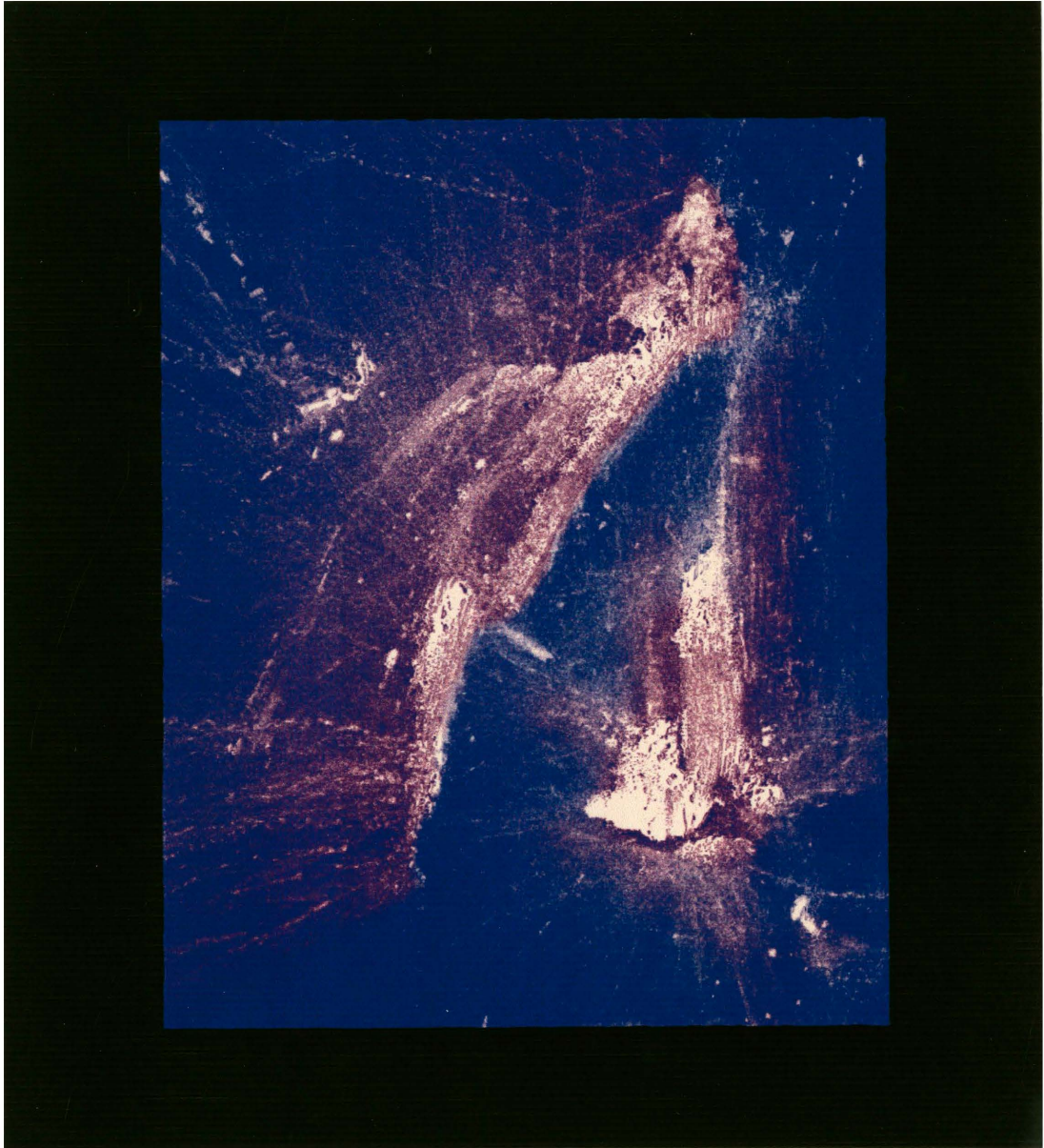


Plate 24. *Attraction II*, digital media, paper, 2004.

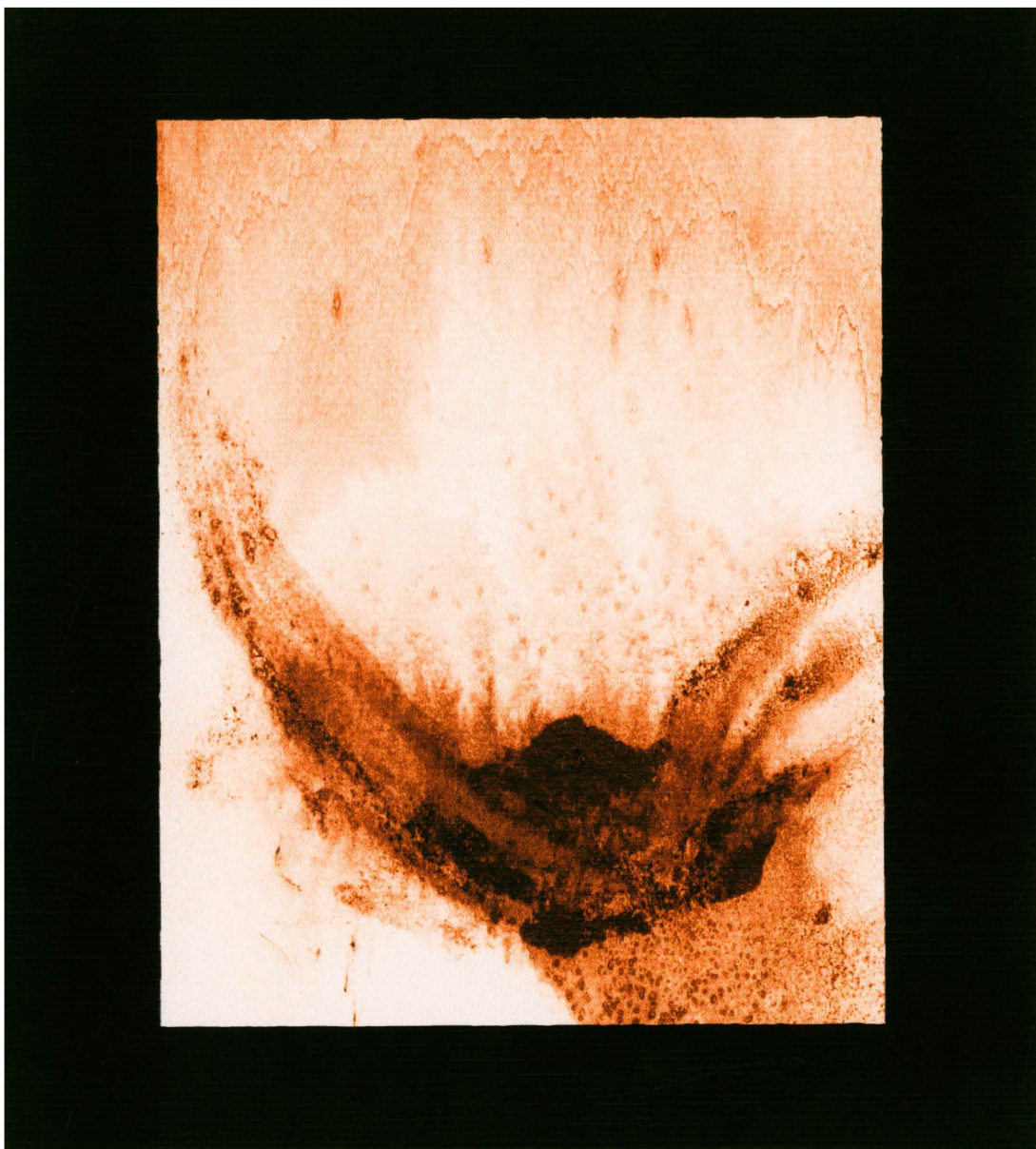


Plate 25. *Macro Micro I*, digital media, paper, 2004.



Plate 26. *Macro Micro II*, digital media, paper, 2004.

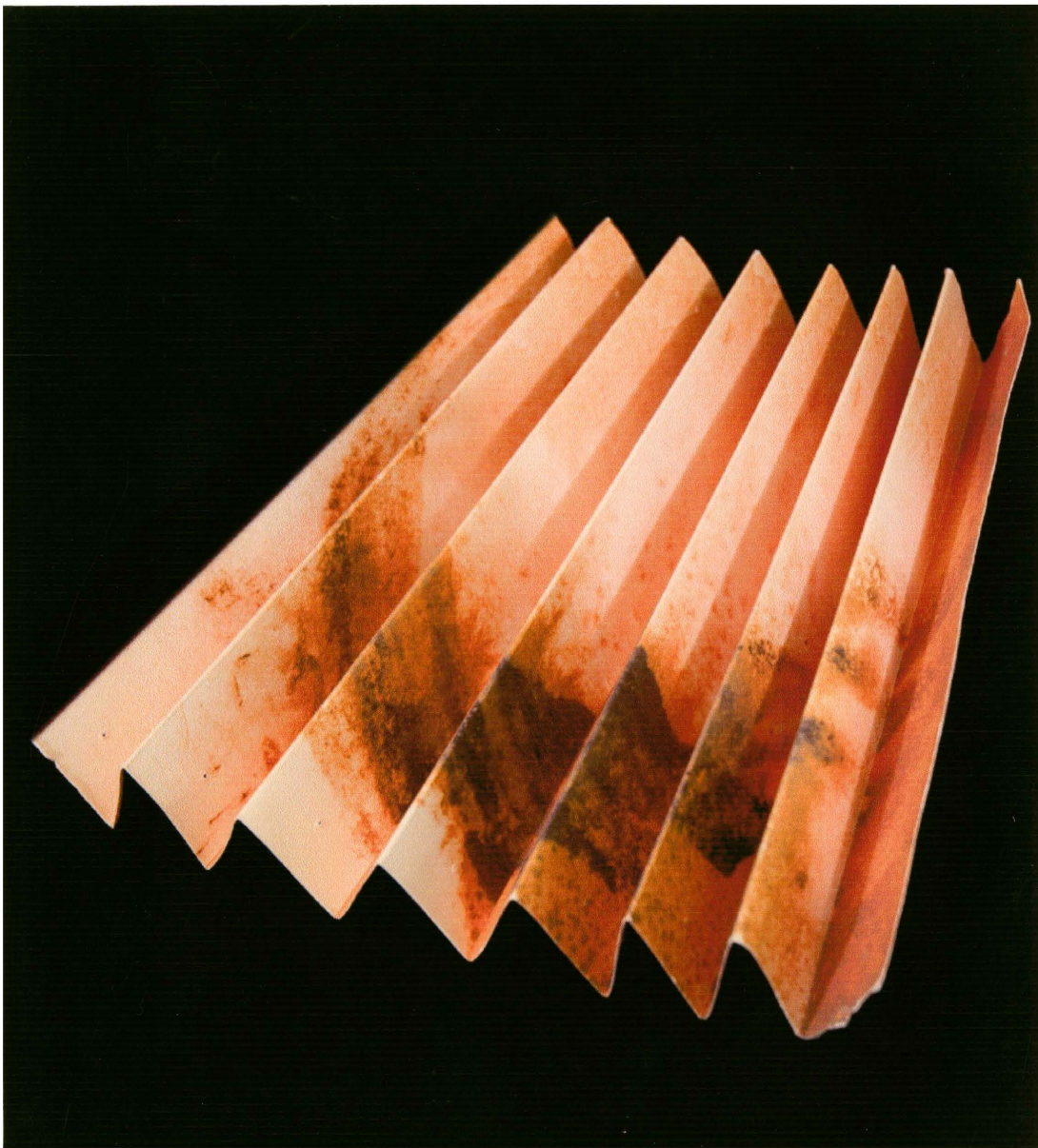


Plate 27. *Transformations: Accordion (side A)*, digital media, paper, 2004.

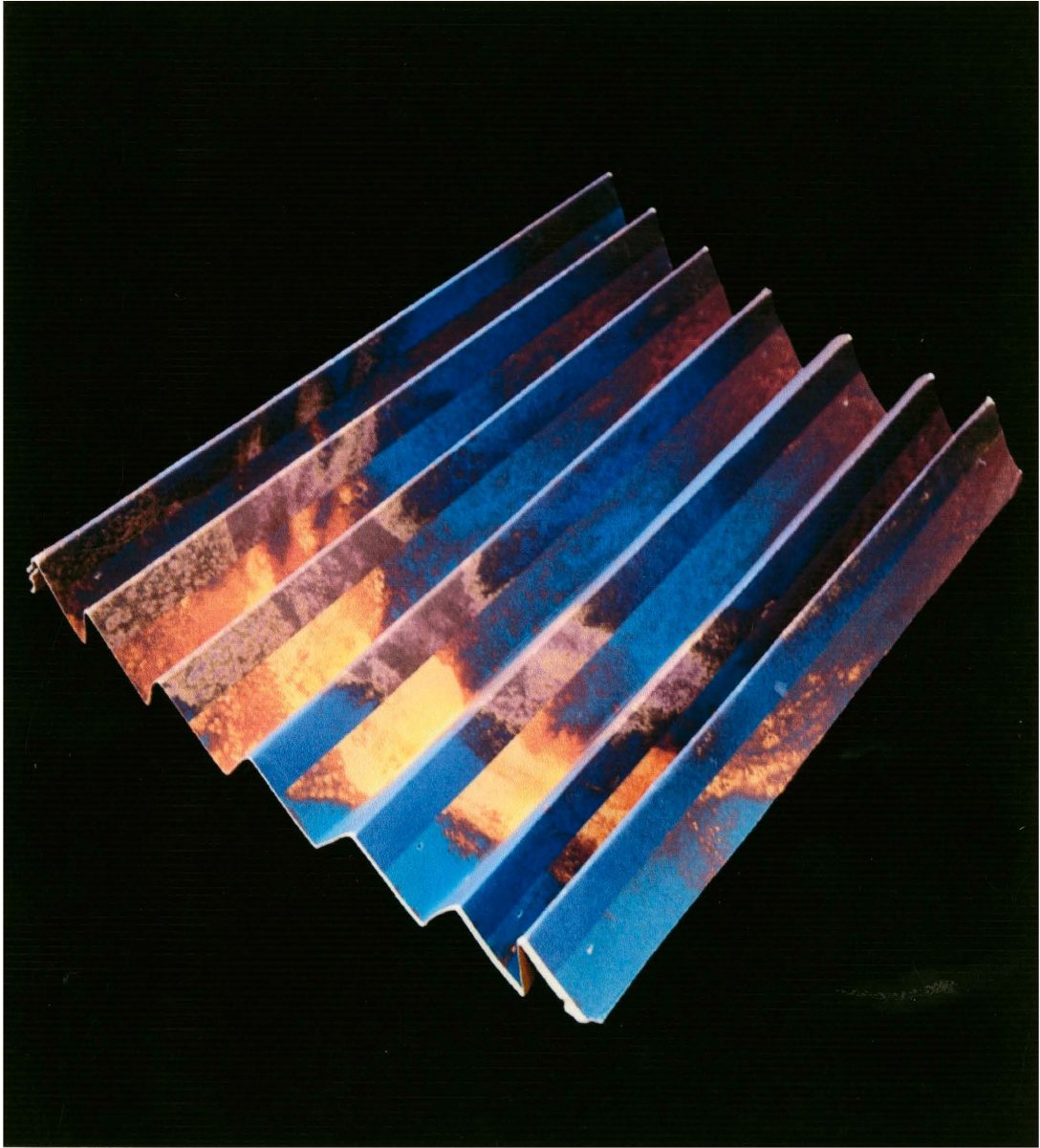


Plate 27. *Transformations: Accordion (side B)*, digital media, paper, 2004.

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