Pati Hill

AIR DE PARIS

Pati Hill

Pati Hill naît en 1921 aux États-Unis. Elle est d'abord mannequin pour des journaux féminins et certains magazines destinés aux adolescents dans lesquels elle rédige une chronique d'aménagement intérieur, « Home Talent ». Elle voyage régulièrement en France, en Bourgogne et à Paris, où elle fréquente le cercle d'écrivains rassemblés autour de la Paris Review de George Plimpton. Elle y publie ses premières nouvelles avant que son premier livre, The Pit and the Century Plant, ne paraisse en 1955. Elle écrit ensuite jusqu'en 1962 trois autres romans, un recueil de poésie et une dizaine de nouvelles qui lui accordent une véritable reconnaissance. Leurs héroïnes y font souvent face à l'impossibilité de faire correspondre leur vie matérielle aux schémas idéologiques de l'époque.

En 1962, après s'être mariée à Paul Bianchini, un galeriste français installé à New York, et avoir donné naissance à leur fille, Paola, Pati Hill quitte New York pour s'installer entre Paris et Stonington, dans le Connecticut. Elle affirme alors « abandonner l'écriture pour se consacrer aux tâches ménagères ». Elle ne publie plus rien pendant treize ans mais continue de travailler : elle élève sa fille, ouvre une boutique d'antiquités, rénove un corps de ferme en Bourgogne, collectionne des publicités et des modes d'emploi qui nourriront son oeuvre ; elle entame enfin l'écriture d'un journal jamais publié dans lequel elle décrit sa difficile adaptation à la vie de mère et d'épouse. Ce n'est qu'en 1974 qu'elle publie à nouveau. Un recueil au titre implacable, Slave Days où chaque poème repose sur la description d'un objet domestique dont la xérocopie est reproduite en regard.

Ces xérocopies sont parmi les premières oeuvres que Pati Hill réalise au début des années 1970, dans un copy top de Stonington – pour conserver une trace, dit-elle, de certains objets dont elle voulait se séparer. Elles témoignent de l'élaboration d'une syntaxe formelle et d'un usage singulier du copieur qu'elle continuera de perfectionner jusqu'à sa mort en France en 2014, à Sens, où elle s'était installée trente ans auparavant. Son oeuvre, très peu montrée après le début des années 1980, est pour la plus grande partie conservée à l'université Arcadia aux Etats-Unis. Elle comprend des milliers de xérocopies, divers projets d'écritures, des dessins, et des livres d'artistes. Une somme dont elle espérait qu'elle correspondrait à sa propre trajectoire : autodidacte, indéfinissable et sinueuse. Une forme au croisement de la littérature, des arts et de la science.

Pati Hill

Pati Hill (1921, Ashland, Kentucky – 2014, Sens, France) left behind an artistic output spanning roughly 60 years and encompassing various disciplines. Untrained as an artist, she began to use the photocopier as an artistic tool in the early 1970s and continued to do so until her death, leaving behind an extensive oeuvre that explores the relationship between image and text. In addition to this comprehensive body of xerographic work, she published four novels, a memoir, several short stories, artists books, and poetry. Drawing also became an essential part of her practice.

By using the copier—a machine that was stereotypically linked to secretarial work and thus to feminized labor—to trace everyday objects such as a comb, a carefully folded pair of men's trousers, or a child's toy, Hill developed an artistic practice that programmatically translated invisible domestic labor into a visual and public language. Through her use of this reproductive apparatus, she created a model of artistic production that critically opposes the convention of individual expression as well as the supposed neutrality of technologically produced images.

Untitled (portrait)
xérocopie/xerograph
26,4 x 20,3 cm
Unique
© photo DR

Pati Hill est âgée de cinquante-quatre ans lorsqu'elle publie en 1975 Slave Days, un recueil de trente-et-un poèmes et vingt-neuf photocopies qui dépeignent le regard cruel, drôle et détaché que porte sur son existence une femme au foyer. C'est le premier livre qu'elle écrit après treize années qu'elle résume laconiquement par ces mots : « housewife, mother ». C'est aussi la première fois qu'apparaissent les xérocopies qu'elle commence à réaliser quelques années plus tôt, au début des années 1970, introduisant une œuvre considérable rassemblant des milliers de travaux sur copieur, des textes et des centaines de dessins. Cette exposition – la première qui lui soit consacrée en France depuis sa mort en 2014 – saura, je l'espère, rendre visible l'attention si particulière que Pati Hill porte à ses sujets, délicate sans être romantique, et à la fois sombre, légère et cruelle.

Pati Hill naît en 1921 à Ashland, dans le Kentucky, où elle est rapidement élevée seule par sa mère. Le divorce que cette dernière obtient en 1928 la pousse à vivre dans une relative pauvreté, mais il lui permet d'expérimenter une indépendance peu commune aux femmes de cette époque. C'est elle qui enseigne le goût de l'écriture à sa fille, comme un moyen de réfléchir à son émancipation, la possibilité de « vivre des vies nouvelles, des vies différentes, comme on vit dans plusieurs livres[1] ». Après avoir entamé de courtes études à l'université, Pati Hill quitte sa mère remariée depuis peu pour s'installer à New York. Elle y débute à l'âge de vingt ans une carrière de mannequin qui lui accorde l'indépendance dont elle rêvait. Une indépendance toutefois nuancée par la découverte d'une « perception particulière de la réalité », celle peut-être, dit-elle, d'un « objet[2] ». On lui demande d'incarner une adolescente de province qu'on imagine fraîchement arrivée en ville et dont la spontanéité n'entache jamais les bonnes manières. Elle est, en somme, la jeune femme idéale rêvée par les Américains. La vigilance qu'elle exprime très tôt vis-à-vis des mythologies sociales et des discours idéologiques qui les structurent, son goût pour l'autonomie et son refus de se « construire personnellement, son image et son opinion, dans une forme permanente[3] » sont quelques-unes des raisons qui la poussent à écrire dès le milieu des années 1940. Elle commence par rédiger une chronique pour Seventeen à la même époque où Audre Lorde y publie ses premiers poèmes. Démontrant un sens pratique aiguisé, elle y célèbre avec légèreté l'art de l'aménagement intérieur, expliquant comment faire de sa chambre (le magazine s'adresse à des adolescents) le juste reflet de sa personnalité. Ces textes, nous y reviendrons, doivent être considérés avec attention, car c'est précisément contre l'image qu'ils génèrent – celle d'une domesticité harmonieuse, constante, infaillible et autoritaire – que se construira son œuvre. Elle écrit entre 1953 et 1962 trois romans, un journal, un premier recueil de poésie et une dizaine de nouvelles qui lui valent d'être reconnue par un cercle d'écrivains rassemblés autour de la Paris Review de George Plimpton. Elle préfère pourtant se présenter comme « une journaliste dont aucun article n'aurait été encore publié[4] », que comme une romancière, et s'éloigne délibérément de la vision romantique de la création défendue par les artistes qu'elle côtoie. Pati Hill écrit de la manière qu'elle fera plus tard des œuvres, engagée dans une pratique quotidienne, expérimentale et industrieuse. Elle pressent toutefois très tôt que le plaisir qu'elle trouve dans la description de catastrophes personnelles lui permettra de décrire « son propre fardeau, et le fardeau des femmes en général[5] ».

En 1960, Pati Hill épouse son troisième mari, Paul Bianchini, un jeune homme français qui vient d'ouvrir à New York une galerie où il expose notamment les œuvres de Roy Lichtenstein, Lee Lozano, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Ryman et Sturtevant. Issu d'une famille d'industriels lyonnais, elle découvre avec lui la grande bourgeoisie française qu'elle décrit avec un mélange de fascination et de dégoût comme « un gigantesque mammifère marin tapi au fond des océans, là où la pression et l'absence de nutritions ordinaires le préservent de la fréquentation des autres poissons. Une race, une strate, qui se perpétue sans heurts de génération en génération sans se préoccuper du calendrier humain .[6] » Elle donne naissance à son unique enfant, une fille, deux ans plus tard, en 1962. Elle qui avait toujours essayé de rendre la peau des clichés plus douce, raconte à cette époque son difficile ajustement à la vie de femme au foyer, et exprime les complications qu'elle rencontre lorsqu'elle tente de renégocier l'idée qu'elle se fait de son travail et de son indépendance. Alors que les cercles littéraires auxquels elle appartenait jusqu'ici, constitués majoritairement d'hommes blancs mariés, interprètent son mariage et sa vie de mère comme un renoncement et une désertion à sa vocation d'artiste, elle quitte New York et s'installe dans le Connecticut, à Stonington, rejointe régulièrement par son mari. Comme cadeau de bienvenue, le poète James Merrill – un ami de longue date récemment devenu son voisin – lui offre un chat, lui faisant remarquer qu'elle est désormais en droit de profiter des « petits luxes qui accompagnent sa nouvelle vie de prisonnière[7] ». Elle ne publie plus aucun texte entre 1962 et 1974, mais continue d'écrire et de travailler. Elle ouvre son propre magasin d'antiquités à Mystic, dans le Connecticut, et rénove une propriété près de Paris, aux Massons. Son mari ferme sa galerie au début des années 1970 après avoir accumulé pendant plusieurs années d'importantes dettes. Pati Hill, elle, continue de travailler à l'organisation de la vie domestique familiale, un travail qui comme le dit Frances Stark, « ne porte aucune preuve de productivité – excepté le fait que la maison ne tombe pas en ruine[8] », mais dont elle mesure sans mal

1 Entretien non publié de Pati Hill et Avis Berman, le 26 septembre 2010, p. 7. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University.
2 Pati Hill, Letters to Jill, New York, Kornblee Gallery, 1979, p. 100.
3 Pati Hill, The Pit and the Century Plant, Londres, Victor Gollancz, 1956, p. 185.
4 Pati Hill, The History of Dressmaking, manuscrit non publié, 1962-1997, p. 169. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University.
5 Pati Hill, Family History, manuscrit non publié, s.d., p. 18. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University
6 Pati Hill, History of Dressmaking, op.cit., p. 110.
7 Pati Hill, Family History, op.cit., p. 14.
8 Frances Stark, The Architect & the Housewife, Londres, Book Works, 1999, p. 12.

la réalité.

Treize années s'écoulent entre la parution de son troisième roman, One Thing I Know, et celle de son second recueil de poèmes, Slave Days, en 1975, qui raconte l'incarnation inconfortable d'une femme au foyer. Celle, en somme, qu'elle décrit dans son journal, The History of Dressmaking lorsqu'elle y affirme : « J'aimerais ne pas me sentir aussi irréprochable. Si seulement je me sentais fautive, je pourrais modifier le cours de nos vies en me remettant en question, mais j'ai été une si bonne mère, une cuisinière, une chauffeuse de taxi, une nourricière pour chiens, et une de ses épouses vénérables dépeintes par les mythologies américaines[9] . » Chaque poème est une digression écrite à partir de l'observation d'un objet que Pati Hill a photocopié et reproduit dans le livre. Quelques années plus tôt, elle commençait à rassembler des objets dans un panier à linge avant d'en copier certains sur une machine IBM. Pour en conserver une trace, dit-elle. Les premières photocopies qu'elle publie dans Slave Days et expose la même année à New York, ont pour la plupart des sujets ordinaires (Alphabet of the Common Objects est le titre d'une série d'œuvres emblématiques qu'elle réalise à la fin des années 1970 et dont plusieurs exemples sont présentés dans l'exposition) – des fleurs, des outils, des vêtements, des documents. Il serait tentant de les faire apparaître comme l'expression d'un don, généralement attribué perversement aux femmes pour justifier leur dépendance à la domesticité – celui de pouvoir faire ressortir de leur contact intime à la matière une certaine « poésie du quotidien ». Mais les œuvres de Pati Hill disent bien tout le contraire. Si elles témoignent sûrement d'un de ces « petits luxes qui accompagnent la vie de prisonnière », celui d'aiguiser une attention particulière aux choses, à leur présence, cette attention est moins délicate que critique. Photocopiées à leur échelle réelle, plus leur reproduction semble résider sur une objectivité infaillible, plus leurs contours sont nets, plus l'image des objets se soustraira à une définition évidente. La machine rendant à l'œil ce qu'elle écrase comme des formes à la fois familières et étranges, vivantes et momifiées ; une succession de sculptures autonomes, dures et impénétrables, qui résistent à leur appréhension immédiate. Présentées près des exemplaires de Slave Days, les xérographies accrochées apparaissent ainsi comme une réponse implacable aux récits de la domesticité reposant sur la prétendue fascination des femmes pour les objets, leur capacité à créer des arrangements intérieurs équilibrés et harmonieux. Elles exposent au contraire des formes ne portant aucune signification préétablie ni ne coïncidant jamais au désir auquel ils sont censés correspondre. Au regard on ne peut plus objectif de la machine se superpose alors un mélange indissociable de tendresse et de naïveté, une forme de détachement, qui donne l'impression d'assister au déroulement d'un petit conte cruel ou celui d'un règlement de compte méthodique.

En 1960, Pati Hill entame la collection de publicités, manuels d'instructions et modes d'emploi dont elle affirme à cette époque qu'ils sont la forme d'art dont elle se sent la plus proche. Elle en fait le sujet de plusieurs séries de photocopies dans lesquelles elle observe de quelle manière, supposée permettre la transmission d'une information spécifique à l'aide de slogans et de symboles, l'accumulation de signaux dans ces images commerciales finit par créer un effet inverse de soustraction, produisant de la confusion, des malentendus, et des prétextes à la projection fantasmatique. C'est une des choses qui apparaît immédiatement lorsque l'on prend connaissance de la collection considérable, près de six cents documents, que Pati Hill rassemblera du début des années 1960 jusqu'au commencement des années 2000, ayant tous pour sujet les aspirateurs. Beaucoup d'incertitudes entourent encore le statut de cette collection conservée avec les archives de l'artiste à l'université Arcadia, Glenside. Nous savons néanmoins qu'elle affirma en faire un livre en 1996, dont le titre « Women & Vacuum Cleaner » renvoie à une série emblématique de xérocopies qu'elle réalisa en 1979 à partir d'images publicitaires de la Compagnie des wagons-lits de Paris, Men & Women in Sleeping Cars. Un premier brouillon de cet ouvrage est présenté dans une vitrine, accompagné par un court texte sur l'histoire de la machine. Alors qu'à compter des années 1980, le travail de Pati Hill sur photocopieur s'éloignera volontairement de son rapport à la domesticité quand elle décidera de photocopier Versailles, cet ensemble de documents constitue le prolongement sur près de cinquante ans du récit entamé par Slave Days. Le sabotage organisé d'une mythologie sociale que le titre de l'unique livre de poche qui y est conservé suffirait à rendre évident : « Le musée de l'homme. Le fabuleux déclin de l'empire masculin ». La diversité et la profusion de documents qui y sont regroupés (s'étalant des premières publicités pour aspirateurs du début du XXème siècle aux doubles pages de Paris Match), laissant apparaître avec un mélange d'humour et d'amertume, la permanence d'une iconographie centenaire prétendant défendre l'autonomie des femmes (« l'art de ménager ses forces, son temps, son argent » ; « l'aspirateur supprime l'effort et la fatigue » ; « pour quatre dollars par jour vous pourrez enfin disposer d'une femme de chambre fiable ! ») tout en les reléguant à la vie domestique.

Rassemblant à la fois des coupures de journaux et de magazines et leurs multiples traitements par la photocopieuse, elle rappelle, comme le film que Claude Torey réalise en 1983, Toreador, dans lequel Pati Hill apparaît dans son atelier, que son travail avec la photocopieuse n'a rien de délicat : il écrase, se fait dans la vitesse et aveuglément. Elle doit également être lue au regard des livres d'artistes que Pati Hill réalisa tout au long de sa vie. Reliés à la main pour regrouper une centaine de photocopies, ils étaient certainement pour elle un moyen de conserver de tirages épars. Je crois qu'ils doivent aussi être considérés comme des oeuvres à part entière (à l'image de cette collection), qui disent l'importance de lire son travail sans chercher à en dissimuler la profusion au profit d'une forme de fétichisme. Contrairement aux séries emblématiques que Pati Hill réalisa de son vivant (la

9 Pati Hill, History of Dressmaking, op. cit., p. 292.

plupart exposées entre 1975 et 1983), présentant un ensemble de variations autour d'un même motif, ses livres répondent à une logique plus narrative, bien que chaotique et entièrement elliptique, exigeant de leur lecteur qu'il accepte l'abondance des images et leur libre association. Cette collection dit également quelque chose de l'idée que Pati Hill se faisait de l'édition, qui devait pour elle « être aussi simple que d'apporter ses vêtements au Lavomatic[10] . » Un moyen de faire circuler des textes et des images, pour laisser leur sens s'altérer au fur et à mesure de leurs différentes apparitions, dans le recyclage bordélique incontrôlable d'associations formelles et de fantasmes. L'aspirateur devenant à la fois pleinement ce qu'il est et autre chose, un nourrisson, une bonne, un instrument sexuel, une forme non humaine. En relisant les textes de Pati Hill pour préparer cette exposition j'ai souvent repensé à certains films de Vincente Minelli. À leur manière de décrire des personnages en prise avec un romantisme mortifère. La plupart des héroïnes de Pati Hill expérimentent ce même conflit lorsqu'elles font face à leur impossibilité de faire coïncider l'image fantasmée de leur existence et sa réalité matérielle. C'est précisément le sujet du dernier livre qu'elle publie en 1976, Impossible Dreams, qui dépeint le trouble de Geneviève, une jeune mère au foyer, lorsqu'elle pense tomber amoureuse de sa voisine Dolly. Dans un sursaut de léger désespoir, elle se demande : « Must we always live in our boxes like hamsters[11] ?». C'est, je crois (et en simplifiant), comme une réponse à la fois rationnelle et rassurante à cette question, que peut se comprendre toute l'œuvre de Pati Hill. Le copieur devenant moins entre ses mains un outil divinatoire supposé dévoiler « l'essence » dissimulée des choses, que celui, au contraire, de rendre compte de leur irrégularité et de leur contingence. Ce qu'elle décrit comme la philosophie « yes/no » de la photocopieuse, sa capacité « à accomplir quelque chose peu importe quand ou comment on appuie sur ces machines[12] .», transformant l'instrument bureaucratique, infaillible et misogyne par excellence, en un outil qui crée de l'incertitude, des erreurs, pour produire une image de la réalité et de l'existence fluide, toujours renégociable, faite de ruptures à la fois radicales et imperceptibles. Autrement dit, le moyen de « se réveiller et de se confronter à sa vie réelle, quelle qu'elle soit, en marchant au bord du précipice[13] », pour se tenir « prête à glisser vers une nouvelle incarnation aussi facilement qu'une anguille d'une assiette en porcelaine chinoise[14] . »

*L'ensemble de la collection « Women and Vacuum Cleaner » sera conservée à la galerie le temps de l'exposition. Elle sera consultable tous les samedis après-midi de 14 à 18 heures. Le film de Claude Torey, Toreador (1983) sera projeté à l'occasion de l'ouverture de cette exposition, les 12 et 13 septembre. Cent-cinquante copies originales du livre de Pati Hill, Slave Days, qu'elle publia en 1975, seront vendues exceptionnellement à la galerie et à la librairie After 8 au prix de 10 euros. Je tiens à remercier Nicole Huard. Elle fut l'assistante de Pati Hill les huit dernières années de sa vie et a conservé chez elle une collection dont sont extraites toutes les œuvres exposées. La confiance de Richard Torchia, qui dirige la collection Pati Hill à l'université d'Arcadia, Glenside, a été tout aussi indispensable à la réalisation de cette exposition. Je tiens également à remercier toute l'équipe de la galerie : Florence, Ana, Audrey, Géraldine, Jérémie, Lily et Léo pour leur aide précieuse. Alice, Clément, Florian, Martin et Sibylle pour la même chose et tout le reste. Cette exposition a été rendue disponible grâce à l'aide à la recherche en théorie et critique des arts du Centre national des arts plastiques.

Baptiste Pinteaux

Baptiste Pinteaux est éditeur et commissaire d'exposition. Il co-dirige la revue octopus notes et la maison d'édition éponyme avec laquelle il rééditera cet automne le troisième roman de Pati Hill, One Thing I Know [1962]. Il prépare actuellement une seconde exposition de l'artiste américaine chez Treize, Paris, qui ouvrira en janvier 2021.

10 Pati Hill, Letters to Jill, op. cit., p. 122.

11 Pati Hill, Impossible Dreams, Cambridge, MA, Alice James Books, 1976, p. 110.

12 Pati Hill, Letters to Jill, op. cit., p. 123.

13 Pati Hill, History of Dressmaking, op. cit., p. 295

14 Pati Hill, « Alex and Wonder Land », 4 Excerpts from a Memoir by Pati Hill, manuscrit inédit, 2009, p. 18. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University

Pati Hill was fifty-four in 1975 when she published *Slave Days*, a collection of thirty-one poems and twenty-nine photocopies showing the biting, sardonically detached gaze of a housewife contemplating her existence. This was her first book after thirteen years, which she laconically summed up with the words «housewife, mother». It was also the first appearance of the xerographs she had began making a few years before and the introduction to a considerable oeuvre encompassing texts, hundreds of drawings and thousands of xerographs. This exhibition – the first in France since her death in 2014 – will, I hope, reveal her work's distinctive brand of attentiveness to its subjects: delicate but never romantic and at the same time dark-hued, subtle and cruel.

Pati Hill was born in 1921 in Ashland, Kentucky, and was soon being raised single-handed by her mother. With the divorce of 1928 came a relative poverty, which nonetheless left her free to test out an independence rare among women of that time, while inculcating in her daughter a taste for writing as a means of considering her own emancipation. She will say later as an adult: «My idea was to live lives, different lives. . . I suppose I got that from the idea of being different books, or living in different books.»[1] After a brief spell at university, Pati left her newly remarried mother and moved to New York. There, at the age of twenty, she began a career as a model which gave her the independence she had been dreaming of – but one qualified by the discovery of a «peculiar feeling of 'reality'". "The reality of an object, *maybe*"[2] she says. She was required to embody the provincial teenager freshly arrived in town, whose spontaneity never overstepped the bounds of good manners – in short, the ideal girl of American fantasy. The mistrust she expressed very early on regarding social mythologies and their underlying ideological rhetoric, together with her taste for autonomy and her inability «to make [herself] and [her] image and [her] opinion take on any kind of permanent relationship,»[3] were some of the reasons behind her urge to write in the mid-1940s. She began with a column for *Seventeen* just at the time when Audre Lorde was publishing her first poems. With a shrewdly pragmatic lightness of touch, Pati Hill celebrated the art of interior design, explaining to her teenage readers how to make your room a true reflection of your personality. I'll return to these pieces later, but they merit our attention in that it was in opposition to the image they advocated – a domesticity at once harmonious, placid and unfailingly authoritarian – that her own work would take shape. Between 1953 and 1962 she published three novels, a memoir, a collection of poetry and ten short stories, earning the respect of a circle of writers grouped around George Plimpton's *Paris Review*. Rather than a novelist, however, she preferred to describe herself as «more a journalist, maybe, with nothin journaled yet[4]», and deliberately kept her distance from the romantic creative vision of her writer friends. Already committed to a hard-working daily experimental output, she nonetheless sensed early on that the pleasure she found in describing personal disasters would be the key to writing about «[her] own plight and the plight of women in general.»[5]

In 1960 she married her third husband, Paul Bianchini, a young Frenchman who had just opened a gallery in New York, notably exhibiting Roy Lichtenstein, Lee Lozano, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Ryman and Sturtevant. Bianchini came from a family of Lyon industrialists and through him she discovered France's haute bourgeoisie, which she describes with a mix of fascination and disgust as "huge watery mammals that live deep in the ocean where the pressure and the lack of ordinary nourishments keeps other fish from venturing. […] A race, a strata, tranquilly passing on their ways from generation to generation, hardly aware of calendar time.»[6] Two years later, in 1962, she gave birth to her only child, a girl. She who had always tried to smooth over the rough edges recounts the difficulty of adjusting to the life of a housewife and the complications she encountered when trying to renegotiate her notion of her independence and her work. The literary circles she had been moving in up until then, mainly made up of married white men, considered her marriage and her life as a mother as a betrayal, a desertion of her vocation as an artist. She left New York for Stonington, Connecticut, where there were regular visits from her husband. As a welcome gift, the poet James Merrill – a long-time friend and now her neighbour – gave her a cat, pointing out to her that she «might as well have all the little luxuries that went with being a prisoner.»[7] She published nothing between 1963 and 1974, but kept on writing – and working: she opened her own antique shop in Mystic, Connecticut and renovated a property at Les Massons, near Paris. Having built up substantial debts over the years, her husband closed his gallery early in the 1970s, while it fell to her to continue organising the family's domestic life – a job which, American writer-artist Frances Stark commented, «bears no evidence of productivity – save for the fact that the home isn't falling apart.»[8] Its realities were not lost on her.

Thirteen years went by between the publication of her third novel, *One Thing I Know*, and her second collection of poems, *Slave Days* (1975), with its insider's account of the discomfiting experience of being a housewife. In short, the experience described in her memoir *The History of Dressmaking* where she wrote: «I wish I did not feel so blameless. If I were at fault I could change our destinies by changing myself, but I have been such a good mother, cook, taxi driver, dog feeder etc. according to the American myth.»[9] Each poem is a digression based on the observation of an object Hill photocopied and reproduced in the book. A few years earlier she began keeping various objects in a laundry basket and reproducing some of them, using an IBM Copier II. To keep a record, she said. The first xerographs that she published in *Slave Days* and exhibited the same year in New York mostly depict ordinary subjects such as flowers, tools, clothes and documents. (*Alphabet of Common Objects* is the title of an emblematic series dating from the late 1970s, some of whose images are included in the exhibition.) It would be tempting to make them appear as the expression of a gift, generally – and perversely – attributed to women to justify their dependence on domesticity: the gift of being able to turn their intimate contact with matter into a certain «poetry of the everyday». But Pati Hill's works say the direct opposite. True, they may signify one of those «little luxuries that went with being a prisoner»: that of a more finely honed attentiveness to things and their presence, but this attentiveness is not so much sensitive as critical. When things are photocopied life-size, the more their reproduction seems to reside in

1 Pati Hill and Avis Berman, unpublished interview, 26 September 2010, p. 7. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University.
2 Pati Hill, Letters to Jill, New York, Kornblee Gallery, 1979, p. 100
3 Pati Hill, The Pit and the Century Plant, London, Victor Gollancz, 1956, p. 185
4 Pati Hill, The History of Dressmaking, unpublished manuscript, 1962–1997, p. 169. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University.
5 Pati Hill, Family History, unpublished manuscript, undated., p. 18. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University.
6 Pati Hill, History of Dressmaking, op. cit., p. 110.
7 Pati Hill, Family History, op. cit., p. 14.
8 Frances Stark, The Architect & the Housewife, London, Book Works, 1999, p. 12
9 Pati Hill, History of Dressmaking, op. cit., p. 292.

some infallible objectivity; and the sharper their contours, the more their images will elude clear definition. The machine offers the eye what it flattens, as shapes at once familiar and strange, living and mummified: a succession of hard, autonomous, impenetrable sculptures that defy immediate understanding.

Displayed alongside the copies of *Slave Days*, the xerographs thus seem like an implacable response to stories of domesticity based on women's alleged fascination with objects and their ability to create balanced and harmonious interiors. But on the contrary, they present shapes with no pre-established meaning and which never coincide with the desire they are supposed to satisfy. The machine's utterly objective gaze is then overlaid with an inseparable mixture of tenderness and naivety, a form of detachment which gives one the impression of watching a cruel little tale unfold or a methodical settling of scores.

In 1960, Pati Hill began collecting the advertisements, instruction manuals and users' guides she claimed were the art form she felt closest to. She made them the subject of several series of xerographs in which she observes how, while supposedly allowing specific information to be conveyed by means of slogans and symbols, the accumulation of informational signals in these commercial images ultimately generates an inverse subtraction effect, the upshot being confusion, misunderstandings and pretexts for the projection of fantasies. This is one of the things that strike you immediately when you're confronted with the considerable collection – some six hundred images, all of them of vacuum cleaners – that Hill built up from the early 1960s to the early 2000s.

A great deal of uncertainty still surrounds the status of this collection, currently held with the artist's archives at Arcadia University. We do know, however, that in 1996 she claimed to be using it for a book whose title, *Women and Vacuum Cleaner*, alludes to *Men and Women in Sleeping Cars*, an emblematic series of xerographs she made in 1979 from advertising images for the Compagnie des wagons-lits. A draft of this work is presented in a showcase, accompanied by a short text on the history of the machine. While Hill's work on the photocopier began a deliberate move away from her relationship with domesticity in the 1980s, when she decided to photocopy Versailles, this set of documents constitutes the continuation over nearly fifty years of the story begun by *Slave Days*.

The title of the only paperback book in the collection: «The Museum of Man. The fabulous decline of the masculine empire» suffices to make obvious the organised sabotage of a social mythology. The diversity and profusion of documents too, ranging from the first ads for vacuum cleaners early in the 20th century to the double-page spreads in *Paris Match*, revealing with a mixture of humour and bitterness, the immutability of a century-old iconography supposedly defending women's autonomy – «the art of sparing one's strength, time and money»; «the vacuum cleaner eliminates effort and fatigue»; «for four dollars a day you can finally have a reliable maid!» – while actually relegating them to the domestic existence.

Bringing together newspaper and magazine cuttings and their multiple copying avatars, the collection reminds us – like Claude Torey's film *Toreador* (1983), where we see Hill in her studio – that there's nothing delicate about her work with the photocopier: it's crushing, it's fast and blind. Then there are the artist's books she made throughout her life. Hand-bound and holding a hundred or so photocopies, for her they were certainly a way of saving scattered prints; but I believe that, like this collection, they should also be considered fully fledged artworks expressing the importance of interpreting her work, without seeking to write off its profusion as a form of fetishism.

Unlike the emblematic series that Hill produced during her lifetime (most of which were exhibited between 1975 and 1983), with their sets of variations around the same motifs, her books respond to a more narrative logic, albeit chaotic, elliptical, and requiring the reader to accept the profusion of motifs and their free association. The collection also tells us something about her notion of publishing, which for her «should be like taking your clothes to the laundromat.»[10] – a means of circulating texts and images, allowing their meaning to be altered as they appear, in the uncontrollable recycling of formal associations and fantasies. The vacuum cleaner becomes both fully what it is and something else – an infant, a maid, a sexual instrument, a non-human figure.

Rereading Pati Hill during the preparations for this exhibition, I often thought back to some of the films of Vincente Minelli and their way of describing characters caught up in a deadly romanticism. Pati Hill's heroines often experience this same conflict when faced with their inability to make the fantasised image of their existence coincide with its material reality. This is precisely the subject of her last book, *Impossible Dreams*, published in 1976, which describes the disquiet felt by Genevieve, a young housewife who thinks she is falling in love with her neighbour, Dolly. In a moment of disheartenment she wonders: «Must we always live in our boxes like hamsters?»[11]

To simplify somewhat, I believe that the whole of Pati Hill's oeuvre can be understood as a rational, reassuring answer to this question. In her hands the copier becomes less of a divinatory instrument, supposedly with the power to reveal the hidden «essence» of things, and more of an instrument for accounting for their irregularity and contingency. What she describes as the copier's «yes/no» machines[12]», its ability to accomplish anything no matter when or how you press these machines ,transforming the bureaucratic, infallible and misogynistic instrument par excellence into a means of creating uncertainty and error, of producing a fluid, always renegotiable image of reality and existence, one made of radical but imperceptible ruptures. In other words, a way to «wake up and get on with [one's] real life, whatever that might be" by «walking along the precipice;»[13] a way of being always ready «before slipping away to my next incarnation, as easily as an eel off a china plate.»[14]

*The entire *Women and Vacuum Cleaner* collection will be at the gallery for the duration of the exhibition. It can be consulted every Saturday between 2 and 6 pm. Claude Torey's film Toreador (1983) will be screened to mark the opening of the exhibition on 12 and 13 September. During the exhibition 100 original copies of Pati Hill's book Slave Days will be on sale at the gallery and the After 8 bookshop. Price: 10 €

I would like to thank Nicole Huard, who was Pati Hill's assistant for the last eight years of her life and whose personal collection is the source of all the works on show. The trust of Richard Torchia, Director of the Pati Hill

10 Pati Hill, Letters to Jill, op. cit., p. 122

11 Pati Hill, Impossible Dreams, Cambridge, MA, Alice James Books, 1976, p. 110.

12 Pati Hill, Letters to Jill, op. cit., p. 123.

13 Pati Hill, History of Dressmaking, op. cit., p. 295

14 Pati Hill, «Alex and Wonder Land», 4 Excerpts from a Memoir by Pati Hill, unpublished manuscript, 2009, p. 18. Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University

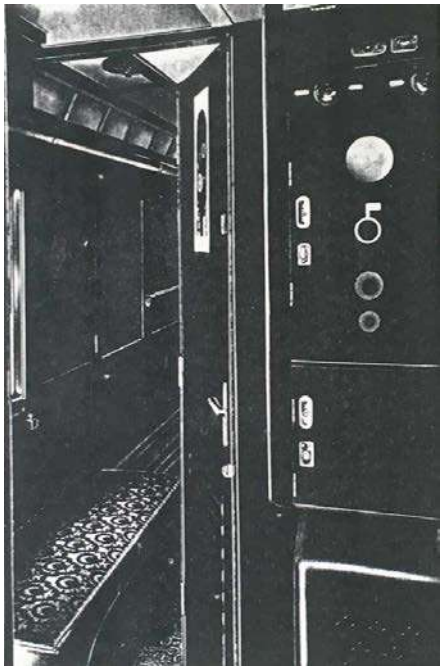
Collection at Arcadia University, Glenside, and his consent for the presentation of the archive collection were equally indispensable for this exhibition. My thanks also go to the gallery team: Florence, Ana, Audrey, Géraldine, Jérémie, Lily and Léo for their invaluable help. Alice, Clément, Florian, Martin and Sibylle for the same thing and all the rest.

Funding for the research involved was made available by the Centre National des Arts Plastiques.

Baptiste Pinteaux

Pati Hill, c. 1980s.
Courtesy Nicole Huard

Pati Hill
In Waking Life



July, 2020
Ampersand
Lisbon

Pati Hill (1921-2014) started making art with copy machines in the early 1970s. By this time she was in her fifties and had already navigated several lives. First known in the early 1940s as a model posing for *Elle* and *Harper's Bazaar*, she started writing small columns for teenagers' magazines, before beginning to live the life of a writer a few years later when her first texts were published in literary magazines like the *Paris Review* or *Carolina Quarterly.* Her first book came out in 1955 and four would follow over the next seven years affording her a small success. She was forty-two in 1962 when, while living in Stonington, Connecticut, she claimed to "quit writing in favor of housekeeping". She had just published her fifth book and given birth to a daughter she had with her third husband (the only one she didn't divorce), Paul Bianchini – a young French art dealer who had just opened his gallery in New York. She would not publish for the next twelve years but that doesn't mean she wasn't doing anything. She kept a journal, ran her own small antique store and travelled to France every summer where she renovated a house in a small countryside village close to Paris, Les Massons. She also was granted writing residencies at places like Yaddo and MacDowell, and started collected clippings, advertisements and instruction manuals that mirrored her domestic life. From collecting what she called "informational art" she started to collect objects. She kept them in a laundry hamper for a while and eventually recorded the ones that still intrigued her, before she got rid of them, through the use of a nearby copy shop that happened to have an IBM Copier II, which became the machine she preferred most. That's roughly how she described her meeting with the xerography in the early 1970s, as both an accidental and intuitive path.

Formally untrained as an artist she committed from then on to experimentation with the photocopier. She made art without romanticism but with the strong certainty she was doing something that mattered. In 1979, only four years after the first exhibition of her xerographs, she wrote herself a kind of retrospective catalog, *Letters to Jill*, to help clarify her feelings towards her practice. She talked about her desire to use the copier in a "straight" way so as to experience its intrinsic qualities: its "yes/no philosophy, multiplicity, limitlessness and instantaneousness". She kept working from this statement until her death forty years later, creating step by step, as a meticulous and discrete engineer, a complex and extensive oeuvre encompassing thousands of xerographs, drawings, texts and multiple editions: artist's books, writings and pamphlets.

This exhibition at Ampersand is the first part of a trilogy that will continue at Treize (Paris), and Air de Paris (Romainville) next winter. It will navigate through Pati Hill's production from her early photocopies of the 1970s to the last ones she made in the early 2010s, but also through her texts, artist's books, drawings and some other specific projects she made (namely a symbol language, a self-publishing residency project, and a collection of magazine advertisements). Her executors have recently given her archives to Arcadia University, Glenside, Pennsylvania; and a lot of this considerable collection has not yet been inventoried or subject to detailed study. These exhibitions will testify to research still in progress and assume a subjective and partial point of view from where this work can start to be seen. Gaps, blurriness and irregularity of narrative will not be hidden. On the contrary, this fragmented perspective (rather than an overall point of view) is induced by the way Hill considered her work herself. Most of the time she worked alone (she didn't want to belong to any movements) and without any models for her work (she rarely spoke directly about other artists but may have been exposed to works by Lee Lozano, Sturtevant, Robert Ryman and Lichtenstein that her husband showed in his gallery). She wanted to be comparable to no one but herself and identified as neither an artist neither nor a writer. She rather liked negotiating with a practice encompassing a huge range of formats, without a precise idea of what shape it could take or what kind of status she could claim from it.

*

She had already exhibited her xerographs twice at the Kornblee Gallery, New York, when she presented her *Dreams Objects Moments* series for the first time, in 1976. She wanted to make an exhibition conveying her feelings about copier work without requiring the use of a copier, and for this opportunity displayed about a hundred typewritten texts copied onto sheets of colored paper. Each of them offered a literal description of a dream, an object or a moment, in texts from two lines to several pages. The paper's color related the texts to three categories, each displayed on different walls: green for *Dreams*, pink for *Objects*, yellow for *Moments*.

Some texts resemble poems whilst others could be short stories, but they all share the same illustrative and concise quality; the same humor – cynical, detached and tender towards the characters and situations they depict; as well as the same peculiar way of highlighting an unexpected trouble found in ordinary situations, univocal dreams or common objects. Navigating these series you will observe how each of her feelings, memories or observations – whether lived or dreamed – are thought of as a fleeting and specific occasion to negotiate her perception of herself and of reality. She says about these texts: "They have a queer effect when you read them successively. I mean if you think you are reading a dream and you are reading an object, then the most ordinary object seems really weird. […] Moments and objects interchange all the time like bathroom tiles used to look when you looked at them too long." Reading them also gives the feeling of watching a hazy subjectivity negotiate and formulate its shifting shape, experimenting with and mirroring Hill's own taste for transformation. This is something important to understand in her work. How it doesn't care to distinguish between a dream or material life. How it always tries to create stereoscopic vision out of simultaneous and contradictory points of view. For Hill, it may have been a way of keeping herself on a razor's edge whilst considering several possible doors that might allow an exit from one's narrative and its ideological strictures – specifically as a woman, a mother and a housewife who doesn't want to be part of any inextricable system of power, dependency and status.

While working on this project, Pati Hill planned to publish a book in which xerographs of "common objects" would face small written descriptions of the same. By doubling her perception of things, she settles on a principle essential to the comprehension of her work: the more precise you get in your description the more open and non-arbitrary might be its reading. That's maybe the main goal of her peculiar work combining words and pictures: to produce works "in which the two elements fuse to become something other than either". Already while collecting "informational art", Hill was mostly interested in observing how these commercial pictures, which are supposed to convey specific meanings – thanks to the clarity of the illustrations, the use of common references, fantasy, metaphor and metonymy – might fail in their goal; how their information can get lost on its way to bring to the reader unexpected meanings.

In one of the drafts she wrote for the *Dreams Objects Moments* series, talking about her copier practice, she states how she fears being "dangerous to the thing [she is] describing […]". How she fears she might "deform [her] subject by [her] exploration of it, to cripple or kill it so no further exploration could be made, the way we destroy dreams by choosing wrong words for them, or memories we destroy by the repeated insertion of modifications or lies thinking that we can keep an unexpurgated version of ourselves." The selection of works exhibited here show how she constantly negotiated with this initial fear by creating pictures in which subjects are never exactly what you would expect, so that the reassuring aspect of her work – clear and graphic – is actually a way to constantly create misunderstanding.

About the *Dream Objects Moments* series Hill said something that could also be applied to all of her work: "I like mistakes. When you are reading a book and your eyes make a mistake it is sometimes the best thing you read. You may really have to reach for it to make any sense or the sky may open and you dive right through the hole. Either way it's exciting".

In the same decade, inspired by her daughter's trouble with grammar that pushed her to write in hieroglyphs (due to being raised speaking French and English), Hill started to create a language composed of symbols. She worked on it for several years, using some resources from her collection of informational art and instruction manuals. A teacher in a Connecticut school taught this language to children for some months until (as Hill tells it) their parents started to complain because their children would refuse to write in the "proper way". What you see here is pages from a proposal for this language she sent to Charles Eames, a designer working for IBM, in 1978, shortly after having met him on a transatlantic flight. She told him at that time about her recent work with the copier and they started a short but dense correspondence until his death. He was certainly one of the most important interlocutors she had in those decisive early years of her exploration with the copier – less by his responses (less regular than Hill's letters) or by the model he could represent to her (she acknowledged having a poor idea of his work) than by his practical help (he facilitated the loan of an IBM copier for her home) and the occasion he offered to her to situate herself in a story in the margins of art history. Unsatisfied both by a community of writers she finds not progressive enough, and by the contemporary art that she knows at that time, she clarified in her correspondence with Eames the way she pictured herself as a kind of engineer who has to deal with technique, language and visual information as a whole. This symbol or pictographic language must be considered as fully part of her artistic work, rather than in tandem with it. It says something important about her attempts to enounce contradictory feelings through univocal symbols, of her interest in creating and observing things that are both easy to read and absolutely opaque. It also says something about her idea of science and technique being ways of creating mystery as much as clarity.

The last fragment of this exhibition documents and presents a book selected from the dozens she herself made from her photocopies. These books testify to late advancements in Hill's work with the copier – her use of colored toner, accidents, and superimpositions. They say something decisive about the way she thought of xerographs in profuse series, full of loss and counterpoint in their appearance, never fixed merely by the thing being recorded, but rather subject to the tools of their representation. They are reminders that one should always look at this work with humor and agility, avoiding the temptation to hide its profuse and irregular aspect.

Thanks to Nicole Huard for letting me show a part of her collection; to Richard Torchia, curator of the Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University, for his decisive support and his precious knowledge; to Alice, Martin, Justin, Jeanne, Théo, Anna, Sylvie & Anafaia

by
Baptiste
Pinteaux

DEAR JILL

You ask, Is it a print?

Actually I don't know. The best answer is to describe how I make a picture.

So here finally goes with me upstairs on Grand Street and it's a perfect day, which is a mercy because it allows me to leave the windows open to let out the fumes I make by putting too much black powder in the till and the machine is humming or grumbling or whatever it does when it isn't asking me to Call Key Operator or Add Paper or Lift Cover or complaining it's Not Ready – it makes me feel like some brute with an unhappy lummox in bed – and it's too bad things can't go on like this forever – it humming and taking up space and me letting it – but I want to get this demonstration done before any *more* questions come up.

I reach into my box marked Common Objects and take out a clam shell. Because a clam shell will touch the copying surface at most points, making a clean white line, and the inside of the shell will fall away pretty fast but not too fast for some delicate shading, and there is a nice hollow at the side where the two halves of the clam were once joined and the shell is not dusty, sticky, perishable or red, a color that doesn't copy well.

Now since I want this picture to be showy, I think I'll make it very dark and try for some stars – holes, they are really – so I open the powdered ink till and shovel in the black at about a dollar a spoonful, being careful not to let any drop on the

newspaper I have spread out below because it is bad to clean up even when it doesn't get on the floor, and close the trap and close the door and clap the shell on the copying surface and press "Press" and out comes a picture of a clam shell looking about the way I thought it would.

That is, the flaw on the rim *is* a little too important and the shading *might* have been better if the moving light had hit from left to right, still it's a more or less creditable copy of a clam shell with that touch of mystery copied things need and I'd be satisfied if the powder was not insufficiently mixed so streaked in one place, so I press the button a few more times (an act that automatically mixes the powder) and reverse the shell to be lit the other way, while I'm at it and the black evens out gradually and there *are* stars – something that even now I am not always able to achieve – and I think, Why not make several of these, I rarely have anything to give to friends, so I do, but as it turns out, I don't have any extra ones in this series, either, having used up the peak of blackness in mixing.

Also a hair seems to have crept in.

I don't like flaws like that, and I don't like retouching because it seems silly to retouch something as haphazardly made (presumably) as a copy, and anyway copies are not easy to retouch.

Well, making a clam shell is not a big deal, really, in spite of all these words; it hasn't lost petals or melted or changed color and it is still early in the day – the neighbors won't complain of

Letters to Jill, a catalogue and some notes on copying, publié par Kunstverrein München et Mousse Publishing, 2020
re-publication de l'édition de 1979, publiée par Kornblee

Letters to Jill, a catalogue and some notes on copying, published par Kunstverrein München and Mousse Publishing, 2020
re-publication of the 1979 edition, published by Kornblee

the noise - so I repeat everything, including reversing the subject and forgetting to mix the powder well enough and having two more goes at that, and the result is 7 quite good pictures of quite remarkably even quality and Whew! I am congratulating myself as I file them under "Clam shells - series of 7", but as I start cleaning away the unsatisfactory copies from the floor, my attention is drawn to a certain reject.

Well, to be perfectly honest, the *first* reject. And in spite of the streaks and the too visible crack (or maybe *because* of them for all I know), I see that that clam shell is *the* clam shell .

Now some days, with time and energy to burn, I just might try again if I thought I could successfully analyze what made this particular clam shell so compelling, but today I store it hastily in the filing cabinet next to the series of 7 labeled "Clam shell - one of a kind" - a meaningless designation; the floor is still littered with one-of-a-kinds that are not worth looking at, and a series is harder to make than any "original" because even if the hand didn't have a tendency to waver and the black didn't change, it is really hard to recognize anything worthwhile in time to repeat it and the one thing a copier can't do is copy its own picture. But what do you call these felicitous accidents taken by a blind person and affixed to paper by an idiot ?

I cut off the switch and go out to dinner.

In spite of this, the limitations of the copier are

no greater than the limitations of say, a thousand pounds of granite at the bottom of a quarry in Siberia.

Only that there *are* sculptors, and over the centuries they have learned to cope with their material.

There *are* painters and they have been extracting colors and inventing things to put them on from cave-father to cave-offspring.

The copier is a found instrument - a saxaphone without directions. A curiosity dropped from the skyscrapers of Xerox and IBM.

It has to show *us*, and its words are limited to those of its manual and its Add-Paper-Lift-Cover-Not-Ready signals.

Which brings us to the next question. Or the one I should probably have started with, What *Is* A Copier?

1. The copier weighs from about 200 to 800 pounds and is, therefore, mainly fixed in place.
2. The copying surface of most copiers is 8 × 11 inches maximum.
3. The image produced by the copier is lifesize.
4. The copier costs a relatively high sum to rent and a low one to make individual pictures on.
5. The copier is unmessily instantaneous.
6. The copier reproduces line details with greater accuracy than the camera or the human hand, though painting sometimes gives the illusion of this kind of clarity.
7. The depth perception of the copier is shallow.
8. Your object is your negative.

9. It is the side of your subject that you do *not* see that is reproduced.
10. The copier works on a yes-no principle.
11. There is no side of the picture that is "up" in a copier picture except the side you designate as up.
12. When you use a copier for art, you are using a machine that was not designed for the purpose you are using it for, as mentioned earlier.

Generally speaking, artists are using copiers in three ways:
1. As glue (to unite collages, remake portions of their drawings etc.).
2. As social comment. (To express life's seriality, expendability, grunginess etc.).
3. As a base or starting point for painting or drawing or as an extension of painting or drawing.

A few artists, like myself, are using the product of copy machines straight.

I do not think this brings us closer to being "copy artists". It is going to take doing everything you can do on a copier for a "copier artist" to emerge, but because the principles on which the copier works - yes/no, multiplicity, instantaneousness - are those that govern much of modern life, letting the copier impose rather than imposing on it may reveal something about our times and what is in store for us in the near future.

It took fifty years to know what the camera was good for, and we are still learning.

It is crazy to think we can know what copy art is in a few years.

Moreover, the copier may evolve more rapidly than the camera, turning into something we do not even recognize as the copier of today. Then what we will have learned from the present day copier may lead us to an entirely different art in which the copier, as such, no longer even plays a part.

It is hard for me to imagine being a non-instantaneous artist.

This doesn't mean I don't *want* to weave my own clothes or paint.

I just feel I don't have much time and so it would be like deciding to fetch water in an oaken bucket; I would spend so much time fetching that I would not have any left over for washing.

It is easy for me to understand why people hesitate to buy copier work.

When you are used to paying a few cents for a copy, it does not seem reasonable to pay dollars.

Also some copies fade.

Pictures made on an IBM or Xerox do not fade and they will last as long as the paper they are printed on but, so far as I know, no chemical-free roll paper is made for the copier.

I would prefer that the original of my work have no value.

That the opening of an exhibition be the moment when I gave or threw away the first prints and started selling my work as cards or books.

I did not choose to make my first pictures on an

IBM Copier; it was simply the copier that was nearby, but if it had not been the case, I might not have continued using a copier, because the Copier 2 gave me the distancing I needed by the design of its print screen and its shallow and dramatic depth perception stirred my imagination by making subjects seem to be floating in space.

However, the Copier 2 is an expensive machine made for rapidity and heavy duty, qualities the average artist does not need and can't pay for.

In my work I am mainly concerned with finding new ways to ally words and images to produce new effects.

For much of this I could get along without a copier, but the copier's ability to simplify and reproduce quickly make me think that, even if I lose my taste for the *look* of copier work, I will never again be able to work without a copying machine.

DREAMS, OBJECTIVES AND THE RIGHT MOMENT

No writer who is willing to change his text to accommodate visual work is really a writer.

No visual artist who will modify, mutilate or purposefully reduce the strength of his visual work to extend or alter the meaning of words is really a visual artist.

I still write without pictures sometimes or with pictures that add to my text without changing it.

Most of the exhibitions I have made so far would do ok without words.

I am increasingly interested in work that is interdependant, though. *Work in which the two elements fuse to become something other than either.*

There has never been an age that offered such picture-making facility, or employed pictures so extensively, both as themselves and as symbols.

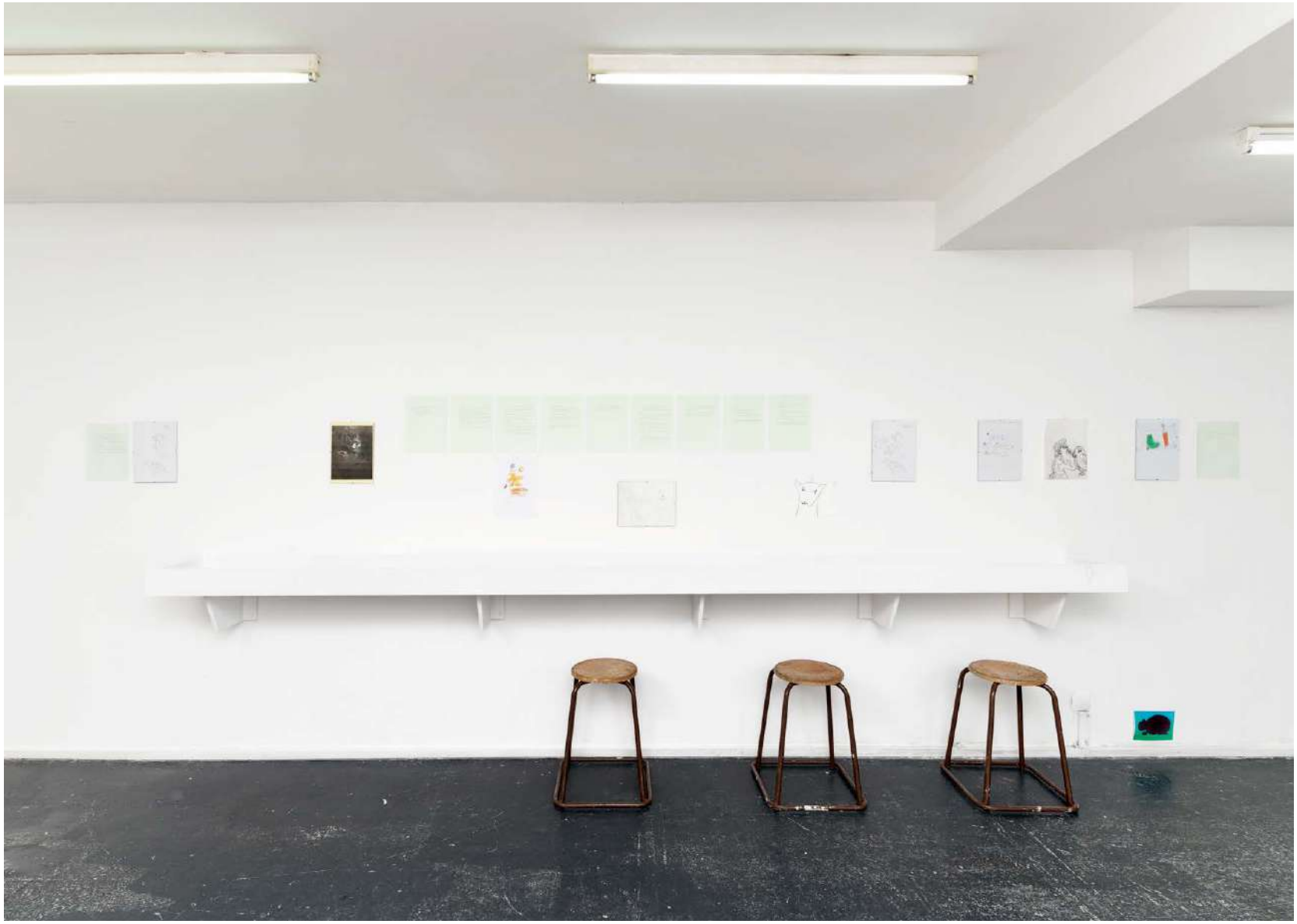
What artists and writers will become as a result is another thing again!

My inability to separate my credits in the present world has possibly cost me grants I saw no way to apply for.

It has surely cost me one residency.

"Informational Art" is a term I apply to the picture directions you find on many boxes in the

Pati Hill, Mrs. Beazle, Treize, Paris, Cur. Baptiste Pinteaux, 13.02.2021 - 05.03.2021



Pati Hill, Mrs. Beazle, Treize, Paris, Cur. Baptiste Pinteaux, 13.02.2021 - 05.03.2021
© Aurélien Mole

Symbol language

SYMBOL LANGUAGE

My daughter, a bi-lingual child, had trouble with grammar in both English and French when she was in the lower grades but wrote beautiful heiroglyphics from the time she could hold a pencil.*

Over the years I collected a lot of her work and I planned to combine it with some excerpts from my "informational art" collection to make my fourth exhibition.

Instead I started inventing a symbol language of my own.

This language has been exhibited at Franklin Furnace in New York, at Hallwalls in Buffalo and at L'Artiglio in Boulogne, Italy.

It is also taught by talented teacher, Betty Henry, at Dean's Mill School in Connecticut.

I don't think of it as a practical language, though.

A sign language that could really solve our international language problems would have to grow on its own, but I think my language will help point out the value of standardizing our public signs and giving them some kind of "verbs".

*See page 20 for an example.

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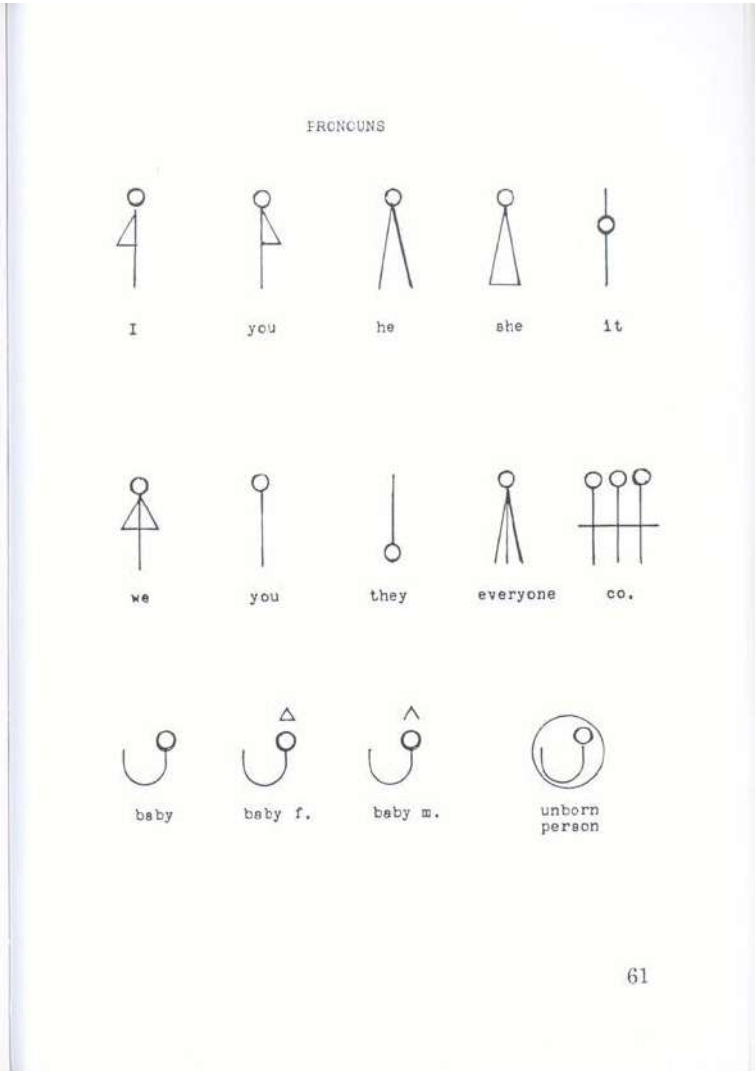
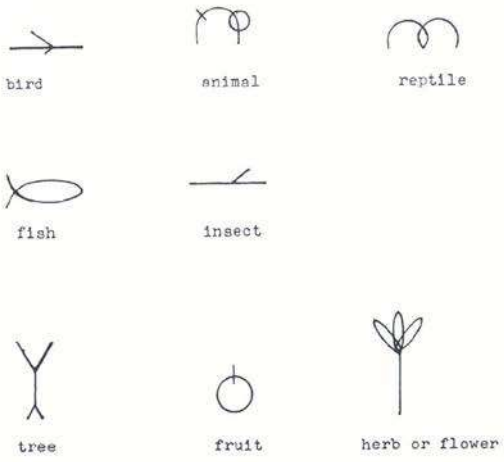


61

Letters to Jill, a catalogue and some notes on copying

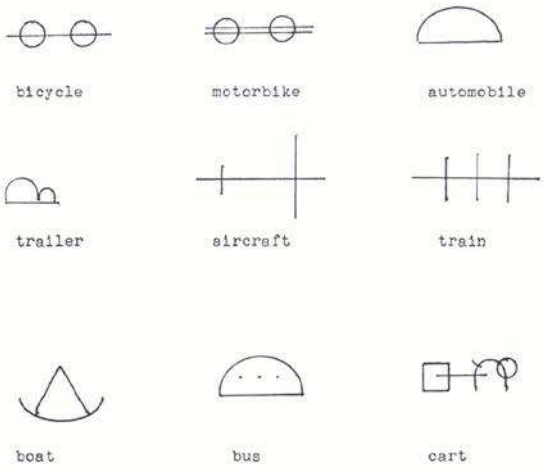
AIR DE PARIS

SOME NOUNS

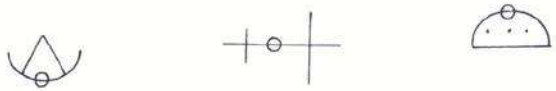


A line drawn beneath one of these symbols indicates that it is cultivated or domesticated or in edible form.

CONVEYANCES



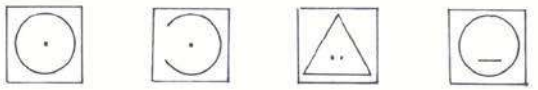
Shown below are small or privately owned craft, as opposed to public or commercial transportation.



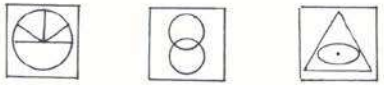
DAYS OF THE WEEK

Not everyone has seven day weeks and "weekends", but the ones of us who carry on the most commerce do so likely we will all have these weeks in the future.

Would it be reasonable to name them after the five senses plus Telepathy and Meditation (or Understanding and Prayer or Communication and Vision or whatever we want to call these two non-physical means by which we experience our existences)?



Mon. Tue. Wed. Thurs.



Fri. Sat. Sun.

MONTHS

It would be pleasant to make a calendar based on the changing seasons, but the falling leaves that seemed so apt to the Belgian would surely surprise the African.

I suggest a calender that glorifies:

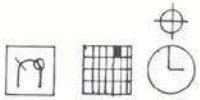
SUN MOON AIR FIRE WATER EARTH FLOWERS

TREES FISH REPTILE BIRD ANIMALS

A month

This month

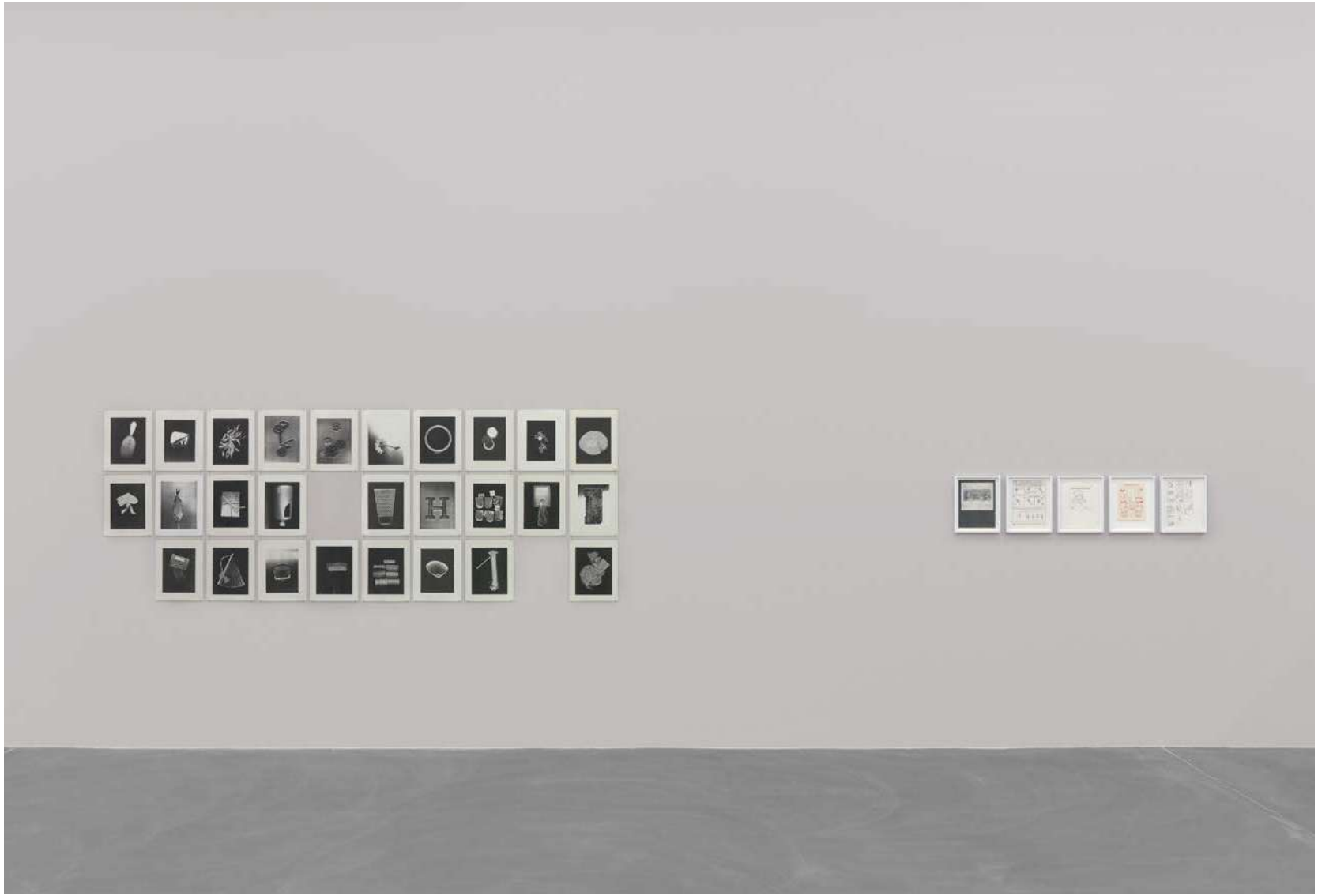
The 12th day of the month



December 5 at 3AM

exposition collective/group show **Old Love / New Love,** Cur. Robin Waart, Rong Wrong, Amsterdam, 19.06.21 - 03.07.21
© Photo Shinji Otani

Pati Hill: Something other than either, Kunsthalle Zürich, 12.12.20 - 02.05.21
© Photo Annik Wetter
Courtesy Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University.



Pati Hill: Something other than either, Kunsthalle Zürich, 12.12.20 - 02.05.21
© Photo Annik Wetter
Courtesy Pati Hill Collection, Arcadia University.

Heaven's door is open to us like a big vacuum cleaner
O help
O clouds of dust
o choir of hairpins, (cur. Baptiste Pinteaux), Air de Paris, Romainville, 12.09.20 - 17.10.20

Heaven's door is open to us like a big vacuum cleaner
O help
O clouds of dust
o choir of hairpins, (cur. Baptiste Pinteaux), Air de Paris, Romainville, 12.09.20 - 17.10.20

Heaven's door is open to us like a big vacuum cleaner
O help
O clouds of dust
o choir of hairpins, (cur. Baptiste Pinteaux), Air de Paris, Romainville, 12.09.20 - 17.10.20

Slave Days

I published a book of poems illustrated with photocopies with support from James Merrill. I was flattered, but I can hardly believe it was because of the poems. They are too ridiculous. I think he liked the combinations of the two.... It was my first attempt to make something more than illustrations and some of them worked out and some of them didn't because I didn't know much about getting printers to do what I wanted then.[1] Pati Hill

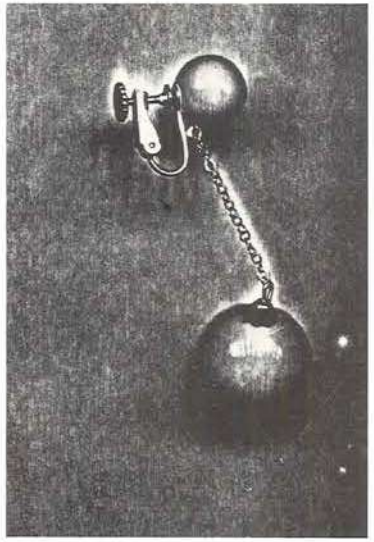
Published by Kornblee Gallery with funding from the poet James Merrill (a fellow resident of Stonington, Connecticut), *Slave Days* was the first of Hill's many ventures into the publication of her photocopies through offset reproduction. Alongside twenty-nine poems "about being a housewife"[2] are thirty-one copier prints of small, domestic items. On the cover is an image of an earring that can be read as a ball and chain (p. 179). United by their diminutive scale, many of the items represented are more highly personalized than other recorded objects that Hill later paired with text.

[1]Hill, NEA grant application, 1981; letter to Charles Eames, July 4, 1977.
[2]Hill, quoted in *Ars + Machina I*, 94.

Pati Hill Photocopier. A Survey of Prints and Books (1974-83), 2017. Arcadia University Art Gallery English

AIR DE PARIS

SLAVE DAYS



29 POEMS

31 PHOTOCOPIED OBJECTS

BY

PATI HILL

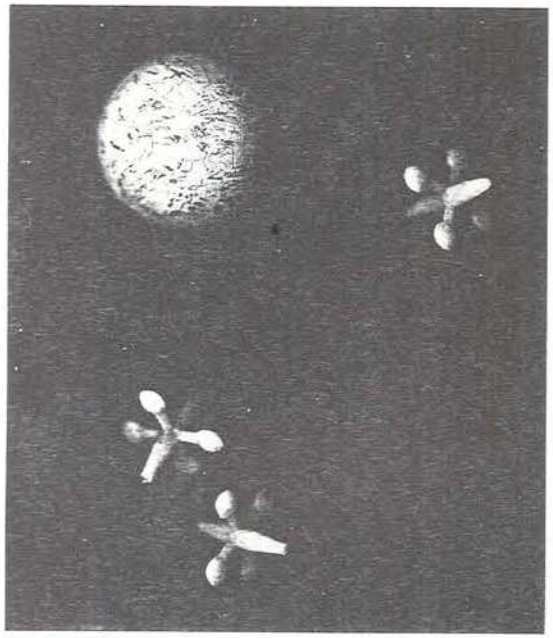
2.75

PHOTO: INGER McCABE

KORNBLEE

20 West 57th Street New York 10019

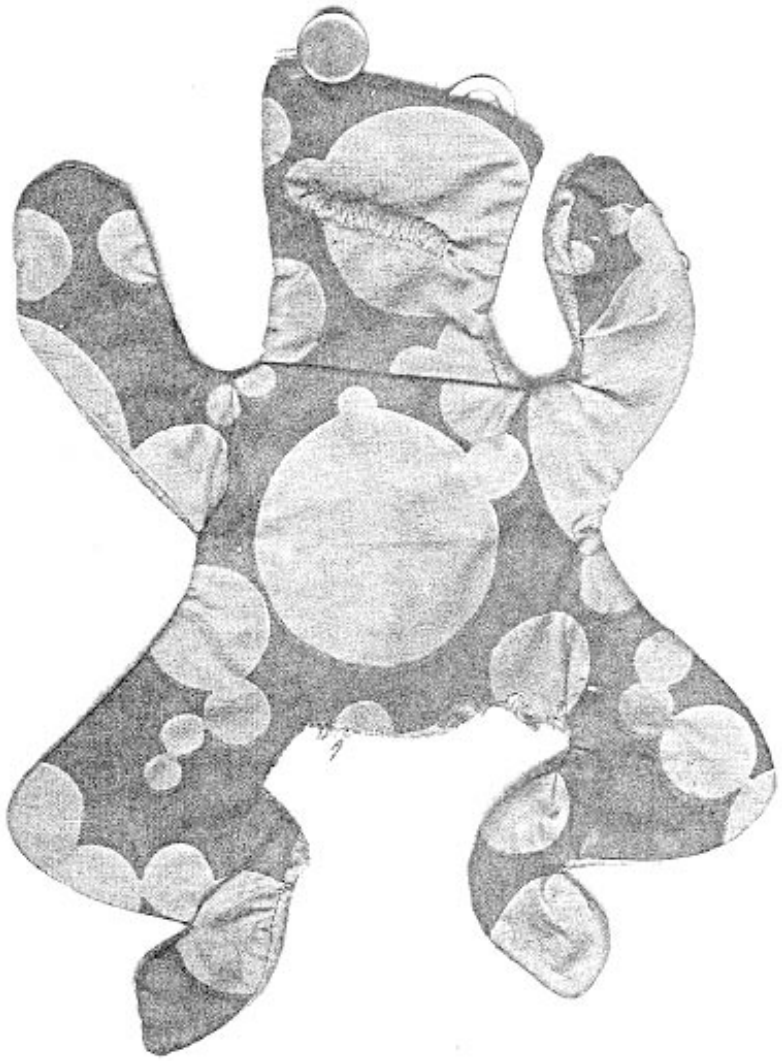
Slave Days, 1975
Impression offset noir & blanc (60 pages)
offset print black & white (60 pages)
publié par Kornblee, New York
published by Kornblee, New York



Noah wallowing
on the flood
dreamed of earth
and sent up a dove

The earth
adrift in space
sent up a dog
then a monkey
then Neil Armstrong who managed to dock
grab a handful of rocks
and thereby win the Moon Race

Slave Days, 1975
Impression offset noir & blanc (60 pages)
offset print black & white (60 pages)
publié par Kornblee, New York
published by Kornblee, New York



Two lovers sitting on a tomb
peeled an orange and ate the rind

Three lovers in a cosy room
slept with arms and legs entwined

Four lovers on a dusty road
looked for God and found a toad

One lover in a rented flat
wrote his name and that was that

How many lovers does it take
to weave a sweater from a snake!

Slave Days, 1975
Impression offset noir & blanc (60 pages)
offset print black & white (60 pages)
publié par Kornblee, New York
published by Kornblee, New York

Garments

GARMENTS

In 1976 Kornblee gave a second exhibition of my copier work.

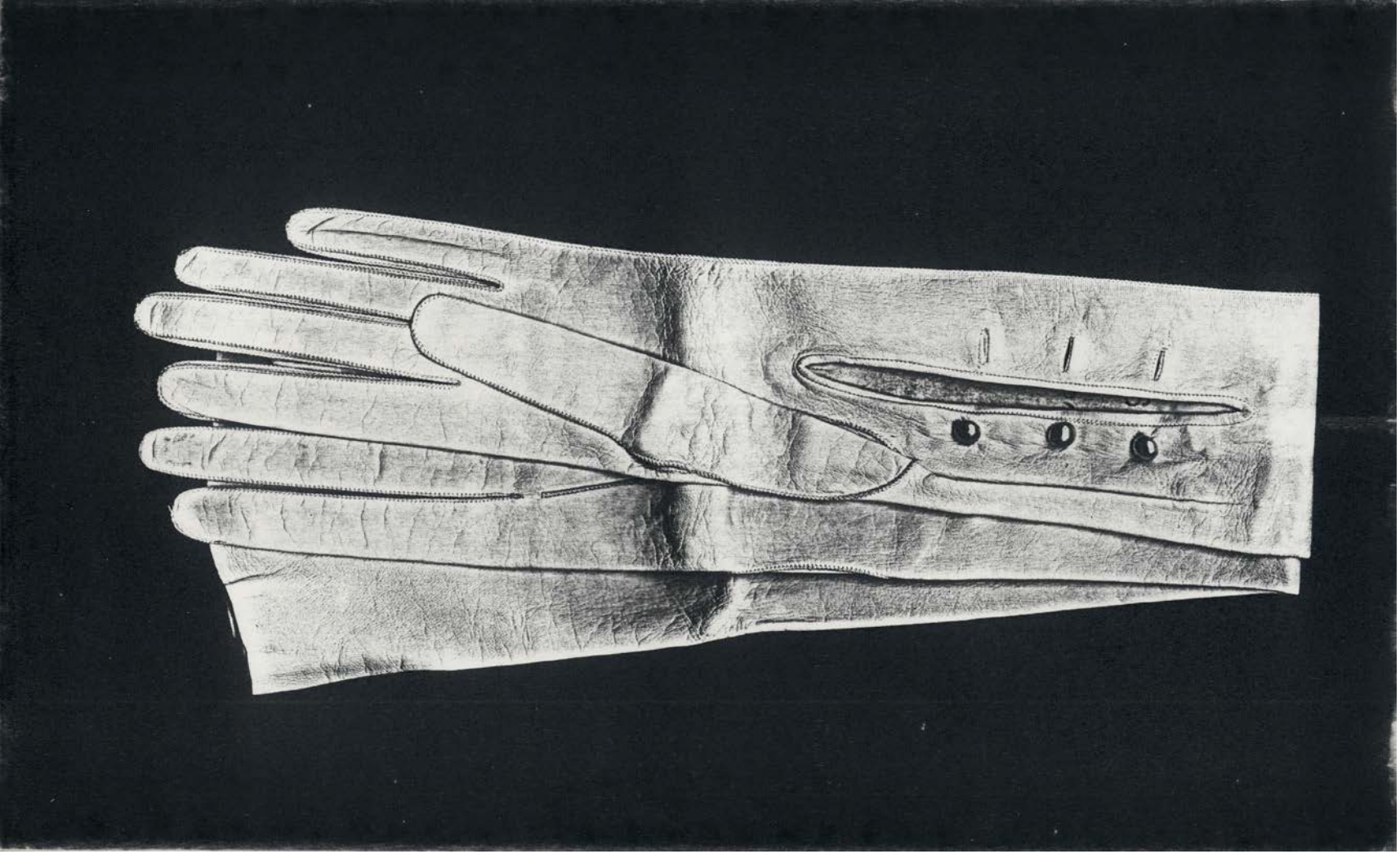
This time I used *Garments* as my subject on account of the striking way seams, lace, buttonholes and zippers reproduced.

I had some trouble finishing this exhibition because, for one thing, people started hanging around asking questions like, Does the copier do pressing, too?

For another, my excessive use of dark materials caused me to "strip" the beads in the powdered ink so the owners of the copier asked me to stop using it except for commercial work.

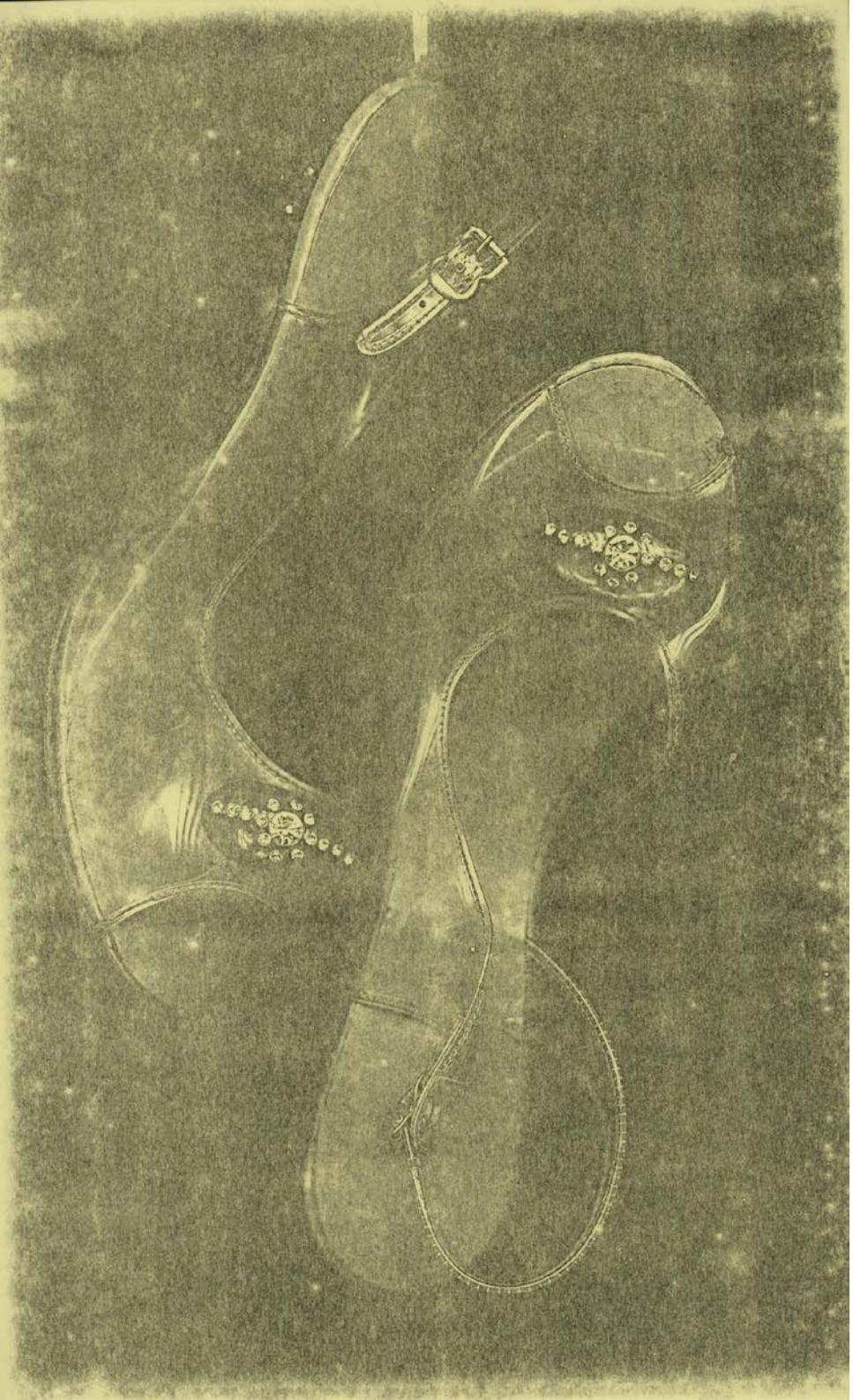
I managed to finish by getting myself locked into a large office building in New York over a weekend and using their copiers.

Six excerpts from this exhibition were printed by New Letters accompanied by my texts.

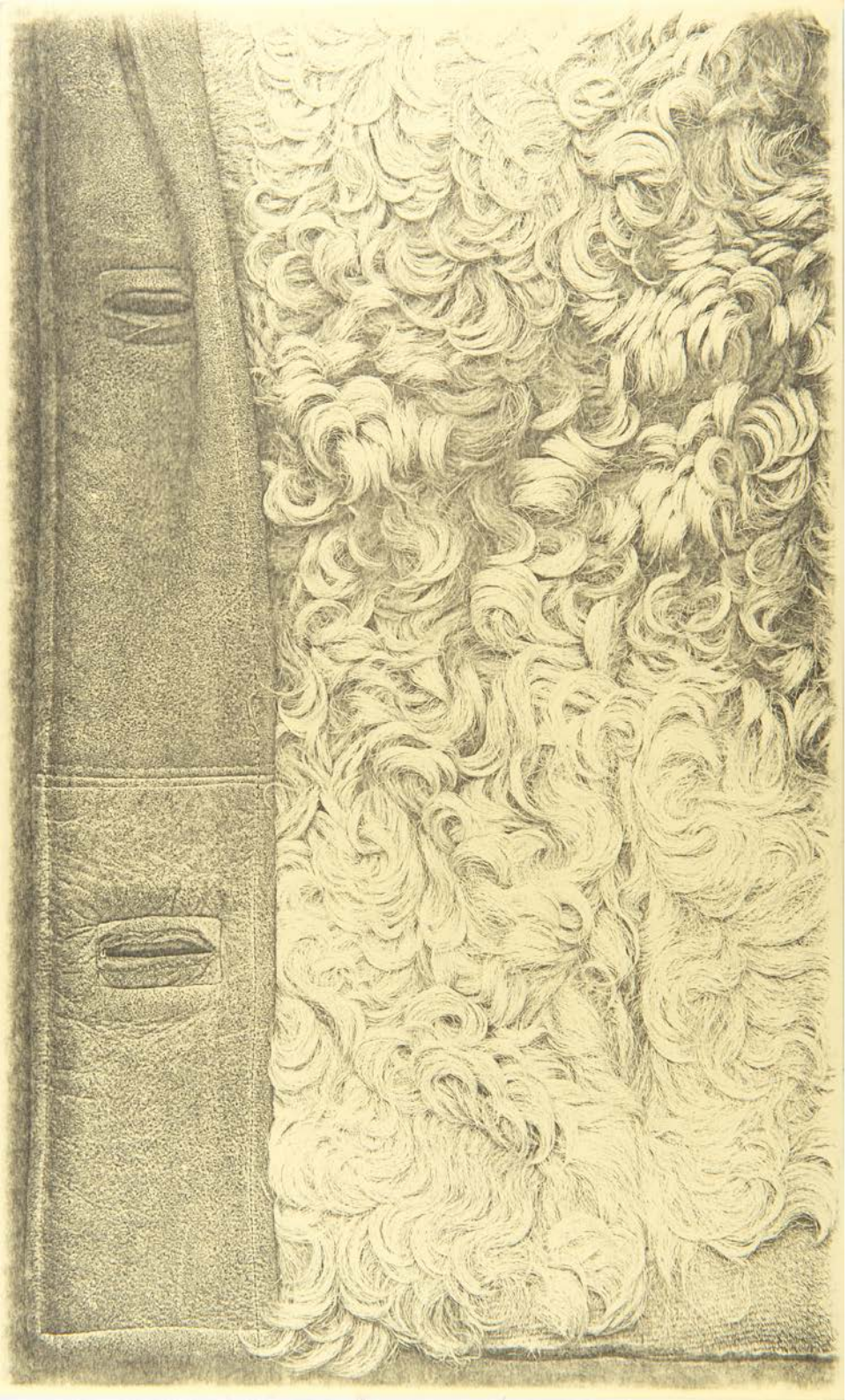


Untitled (white gloves), 1976
(série/series "Garments")
xérocopie
xerograph
21,6 x 35,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 22,9 x 36,8 cm
Unique
© photo DR

Garments marks Hill's first foray into both copying subjects that were larger than the copier platen and printing on colored paper. More importantly, this series also reflects the results of Hill's undisturbed access to the machine. P
ati Hill: Photocopier A Survey of Prints and Books

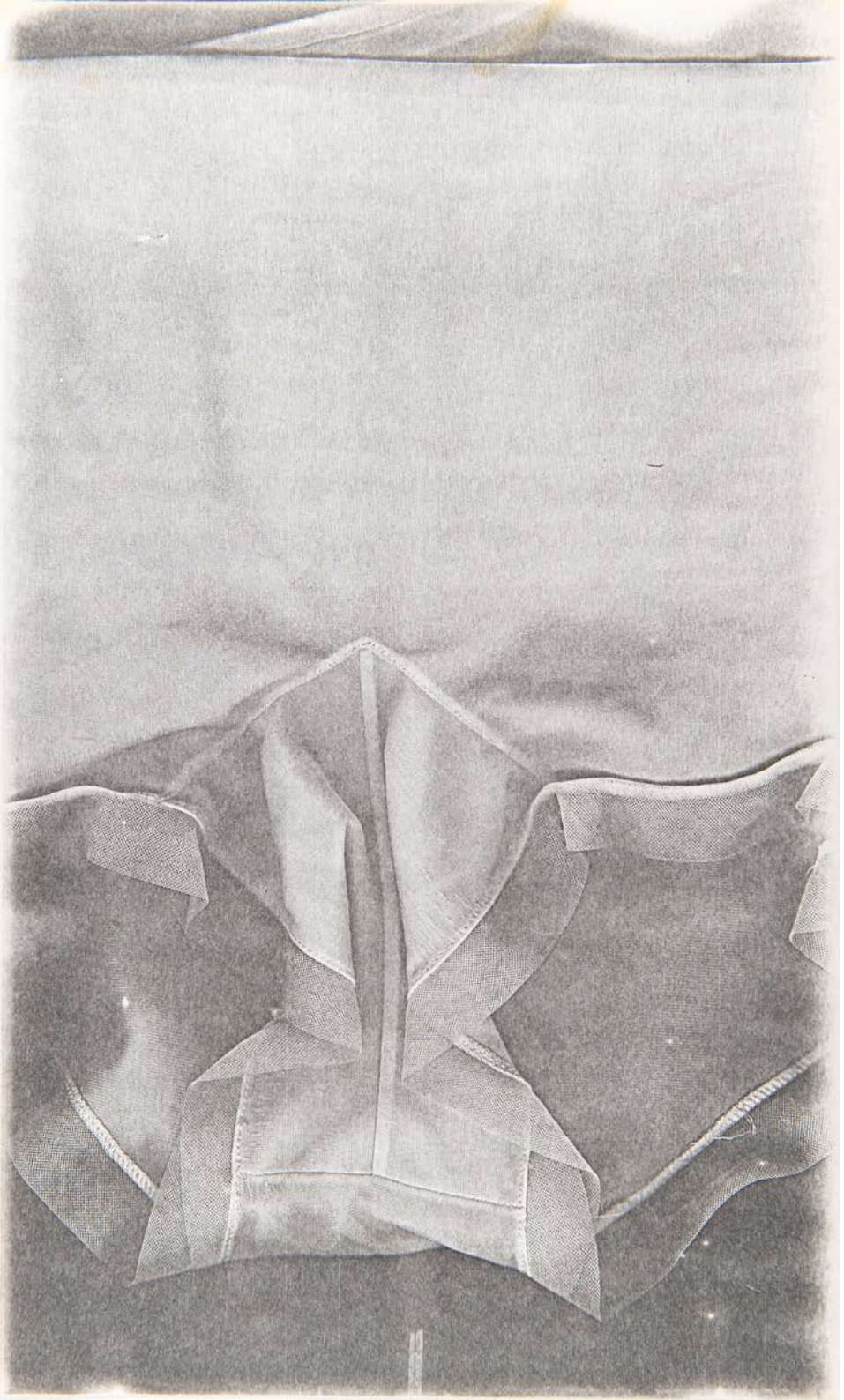


Untitled (ladie's shoes), c. 1976
(série/series "Garments")
xérocopie/xerograph
21,5 x 35,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 36,8 x 22,9 cm
Unique



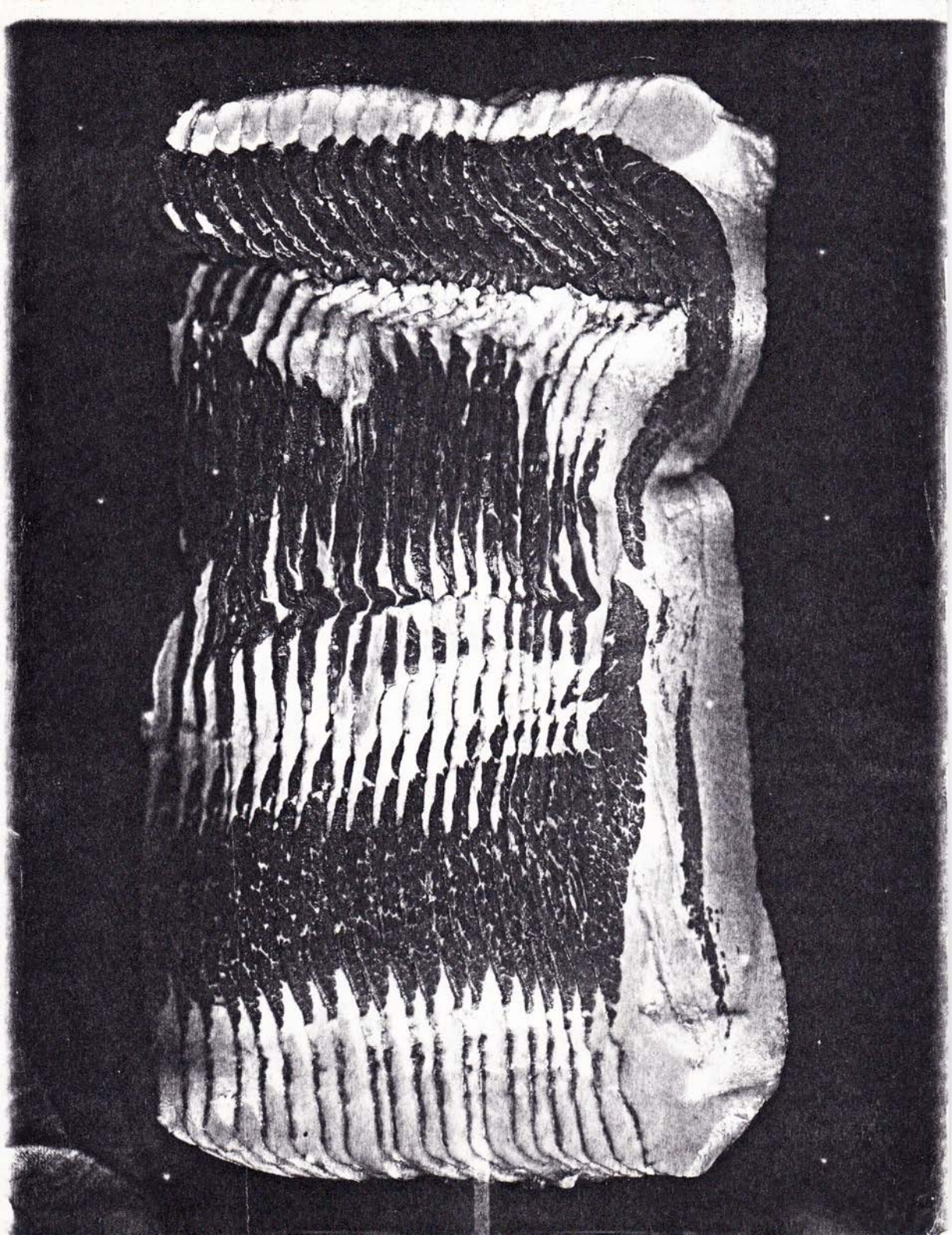
Untitled (fur coat), 1976
(série/series "Garments")
xérocopie/xerograph
35,5 x 21,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 36,8 x 22,9 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

My old fur coat doesn't know me.
It lies on my back, a few limp cousins stitched together in my shape.
What a rush of grateful recognition I feel as I make my way towards it across a crowded room or in a restaurant.
Moths like it, too.
There's no saying you can't be well off in another's skin! *Pati Hill, Letters to Jill*



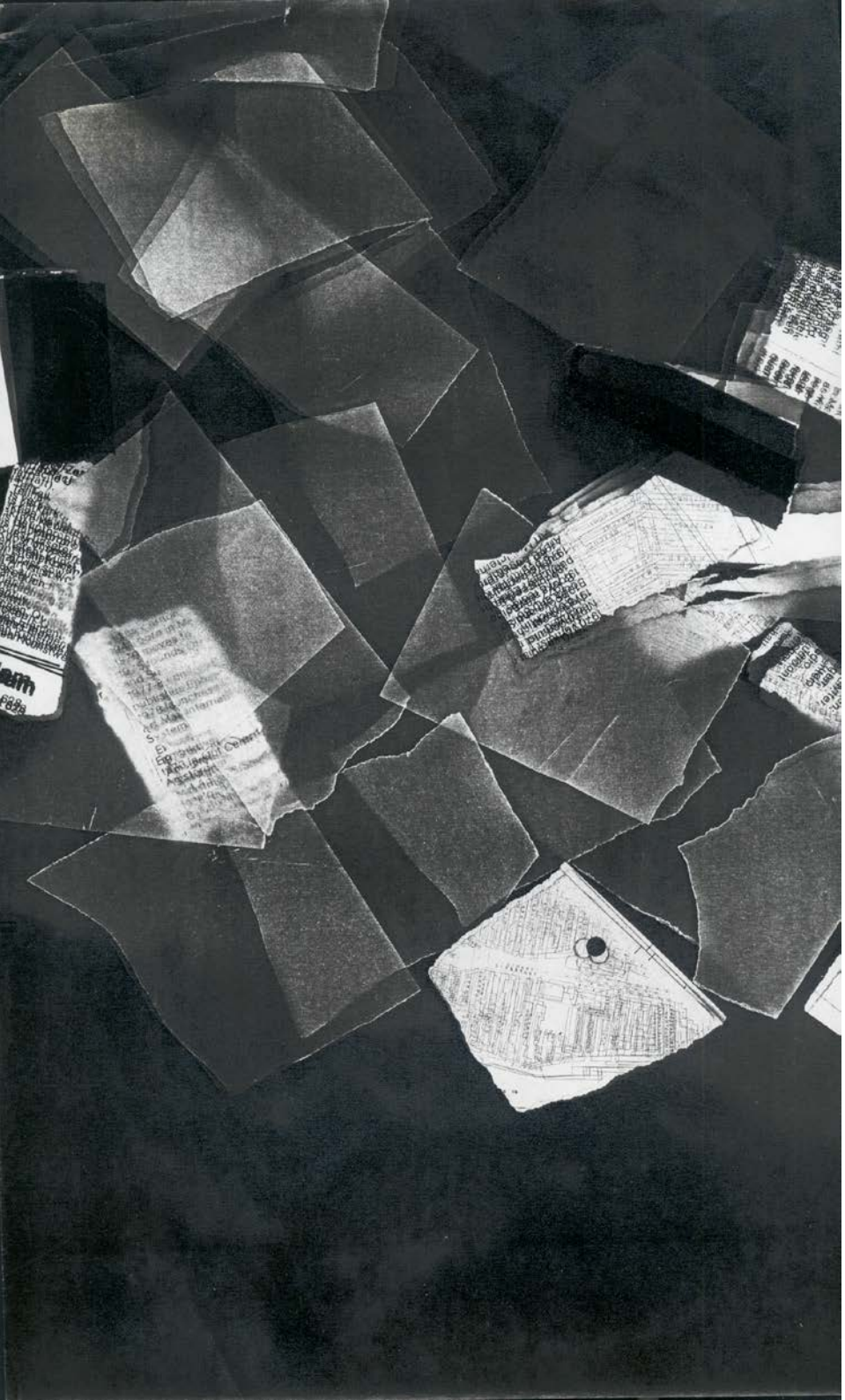
Untitled (panties), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Garments")
xérocopie/xerograph
35,7 x 21,6 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

Untitled (lab coat), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Garments")
xérocopie/xerograph
35,5 x 21,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 36,8 x 22,9 cm
Unique



Untitled (bacon), c.1976-79
xérocopie/xerograph, signée et datée 1976 au verso/signed and dated 1976 on the back
28 x 21,5 cm ; avec cadre/framed 29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique

Untitled (asparagus), c. 1977-79
xérocopie/xerograph
28 x 21,6 cm ; avec cadre/framed 29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage



Untitled (paper scraps), c. 1976
xérocopie/xerograph
35,5 x 21,5 cm
Unique
© photo DR

Such a lot of things are round or square (or oval or rectangular), even if they don't need to be. Pati Hill

Untitled (ribbons), c. 1976
xérocopie/xerograph
35,6 x 21,5 cm
Unique

Common objects

COMMON OBJECTS AND COMMON ALPHABET

In 1977 I met designer Charles Eames on an airplane and showed him some of my work.
With his help I at last realized my dream of the loan of a Copier 2 from IBM.
I had the copier delivered to Stonington, Connecticut and began work on a new series of objects, all about the size of a page but widely varying in texture, shape and use and representing the animal, vegetable and mineral worlds.

The main difference between this new series of objects and my previous exhibition of objects, besides their rather grandiose plan of interaction, was their absence of "personality".
In other words, it was a kind of de-Freudianized series of symbols that suggested language.

I gave fifty of these objects to IBM in heartfelt gratitude for the wonderful opportunity they had offered me to work freely on a copier for the first time.
I would like to see them assembled one day as a mosaic honoring shapes, machines, man's inventiveness and what have you.
I called the exhibition *Common Objects.*

With 30 left-over pictures I assembled another exhibition which I called *Common Alphabet #1.*
Common Alphabet #1 has been exhibited at Franklin Furnace,Center de l'Art Culturel, Flaine, France and at L'Artiglio in Boulogne.

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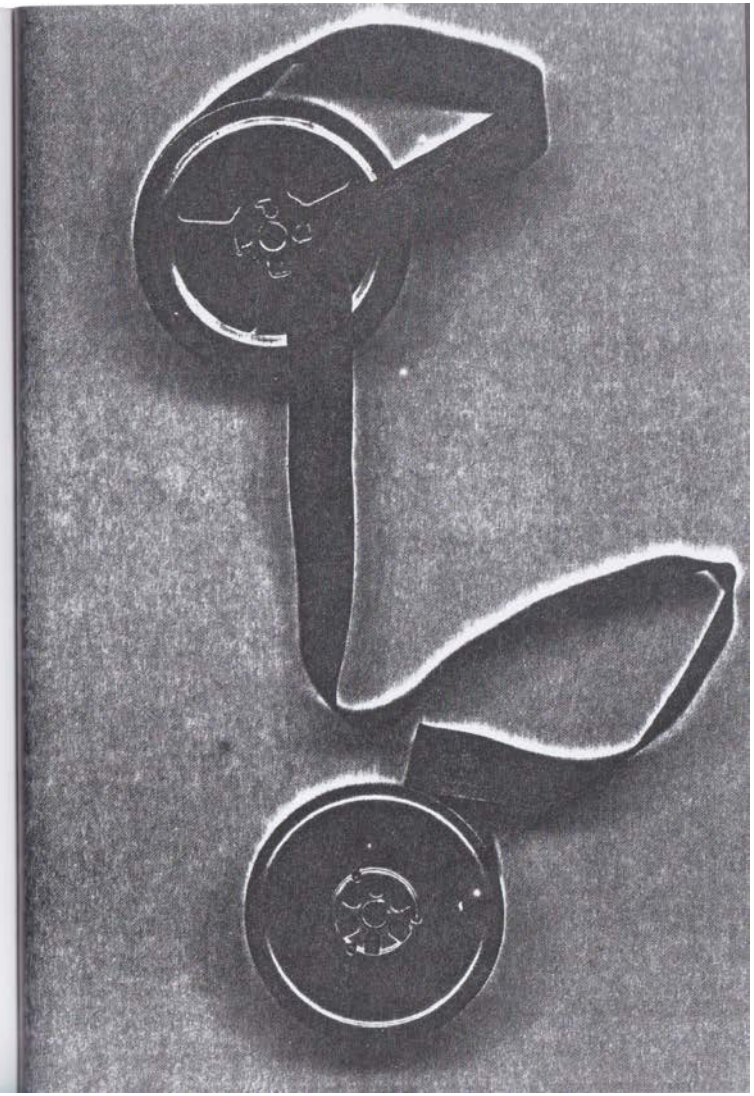
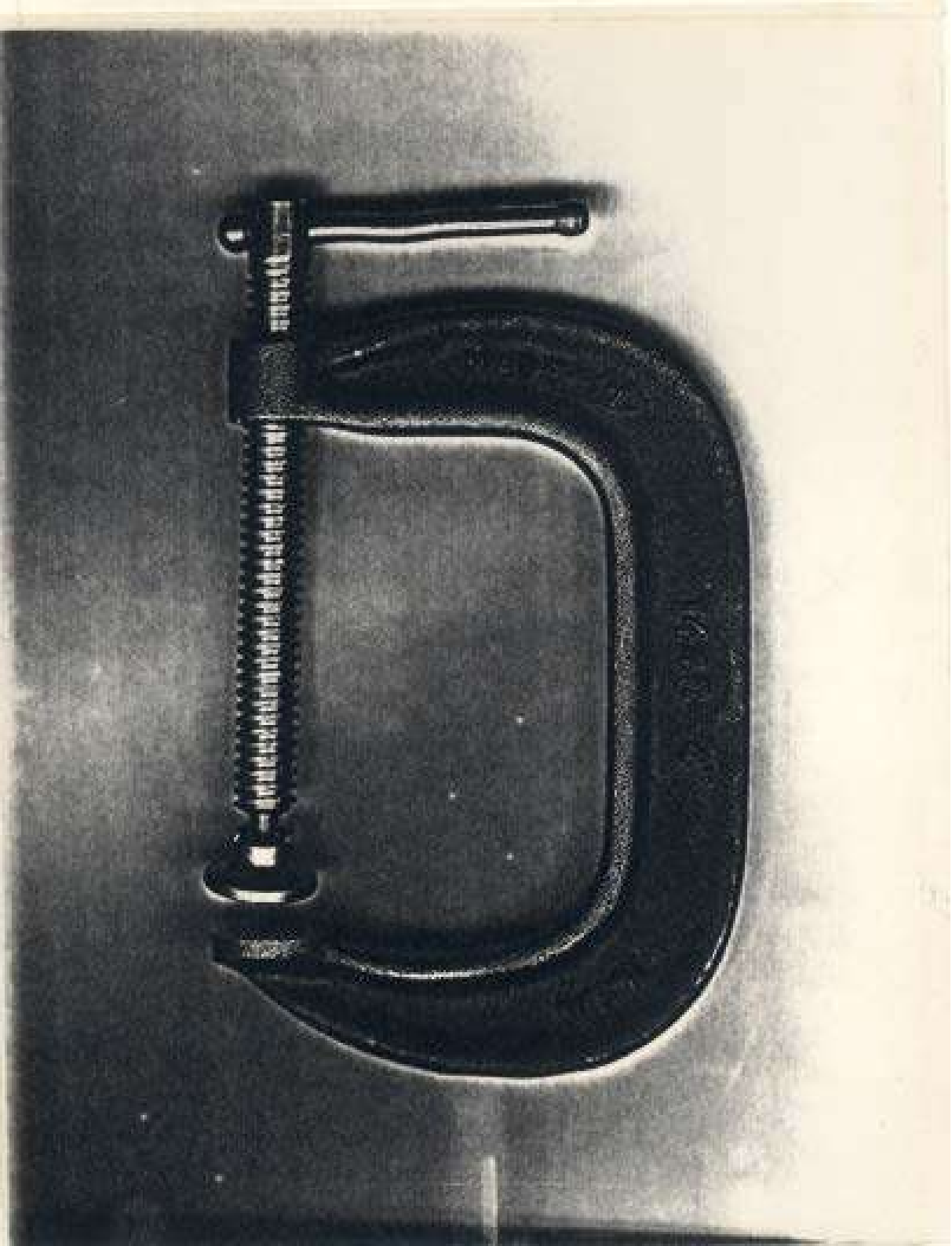


Letters to Jill, a catalogue and some notes on copying

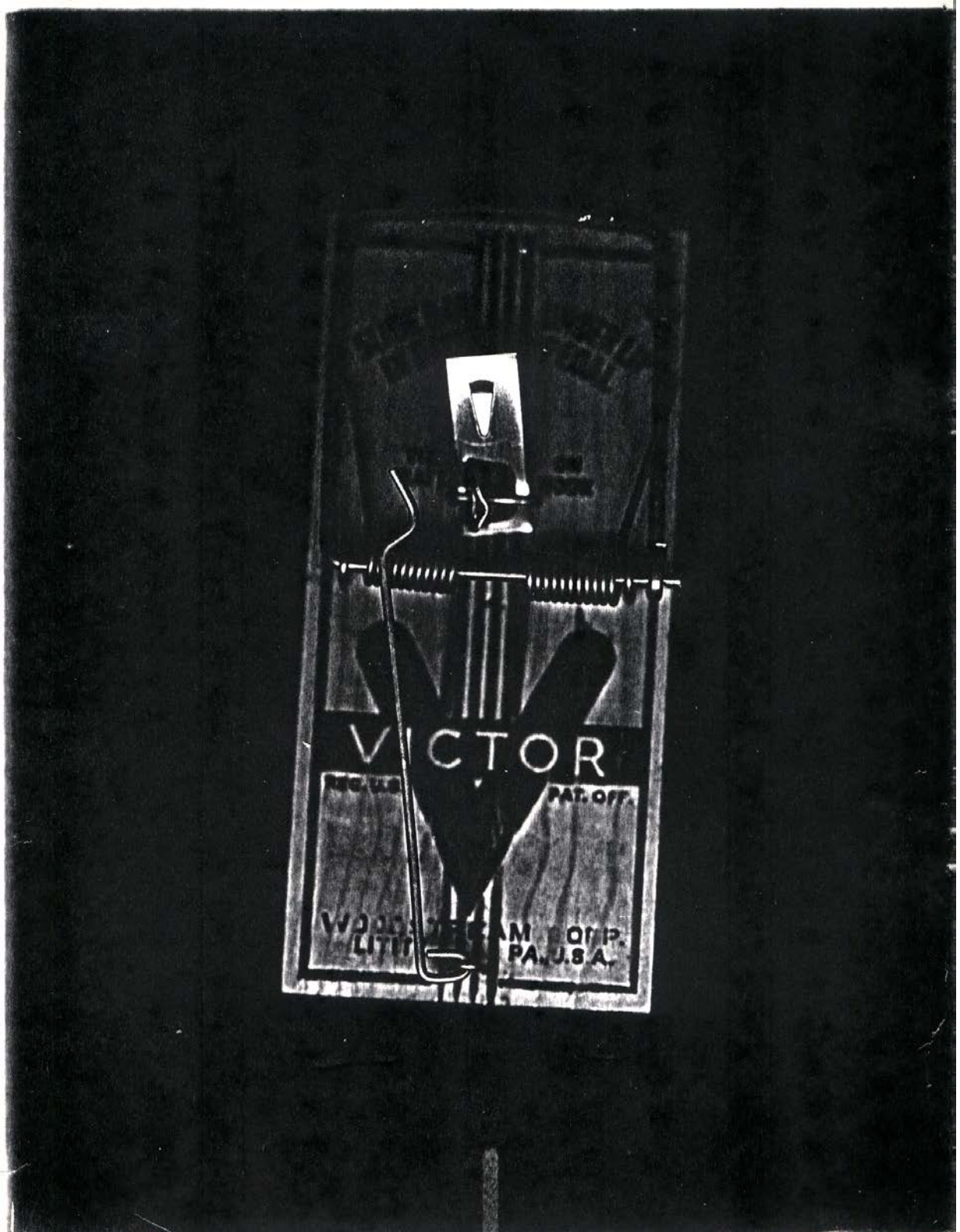
AIR DE PARIS

Untitled (Nine Common Objects part II), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
9 xérocopies, annotations au verso, signé au verso de l'image n°8
9 xerographs, annotated on the back, signed on the back of image n°8
9 x (28,1 x 21,5 cm)
97,9 x 78,4 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage



Untitled (C-clamp), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
xérocopie, signé au verso/xerograph, signed on the back
28 x 21,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique
© photo DR

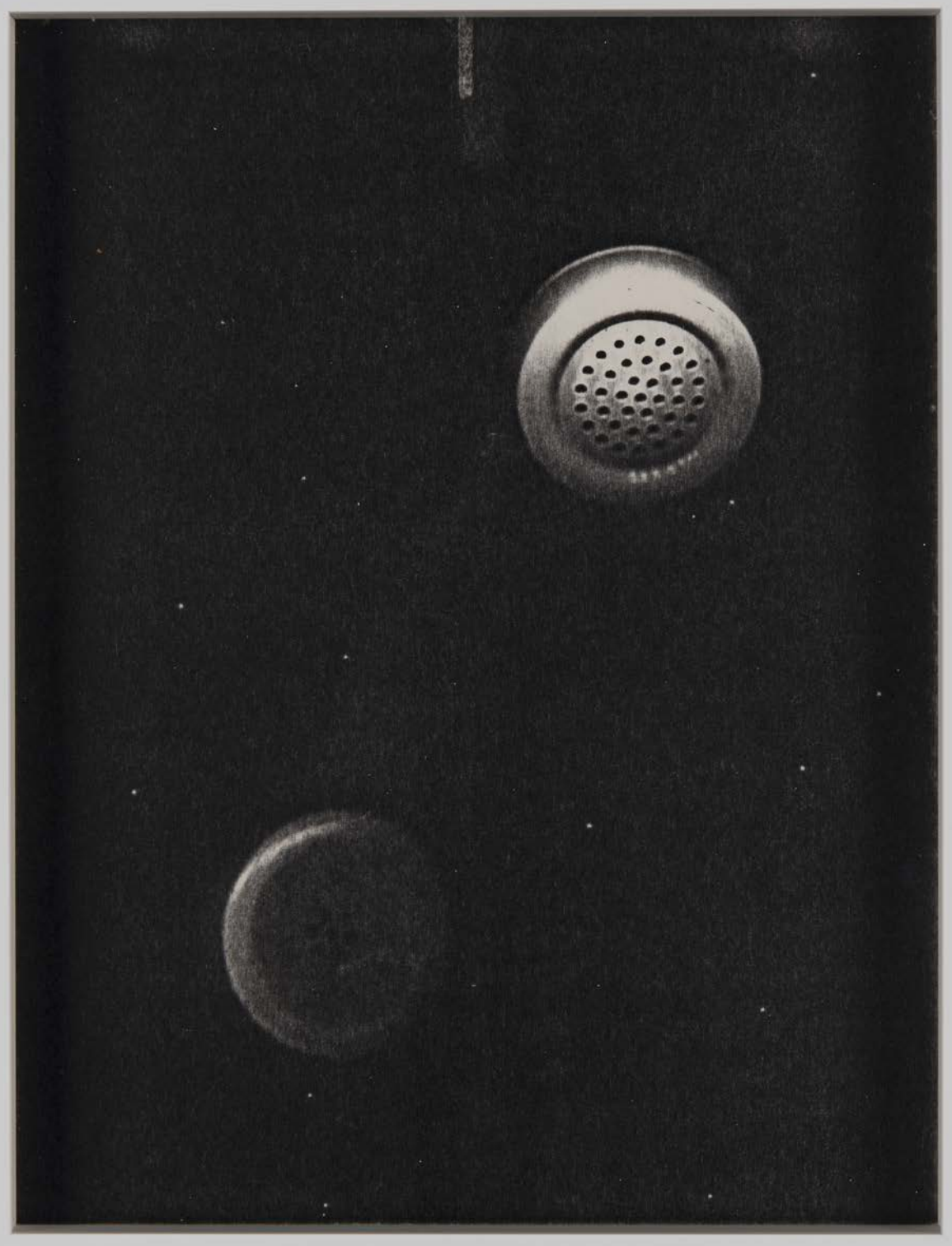
"Pati Hill's photocopy work attempt to expose and arrest the flux of everyday experience and meaning, not in an effort to essentialize or stabilize those things but rather as way of interrogating the very concepts of the universal and the common." *Matthew J. Rigilano, Pati Hill, Photocopier*



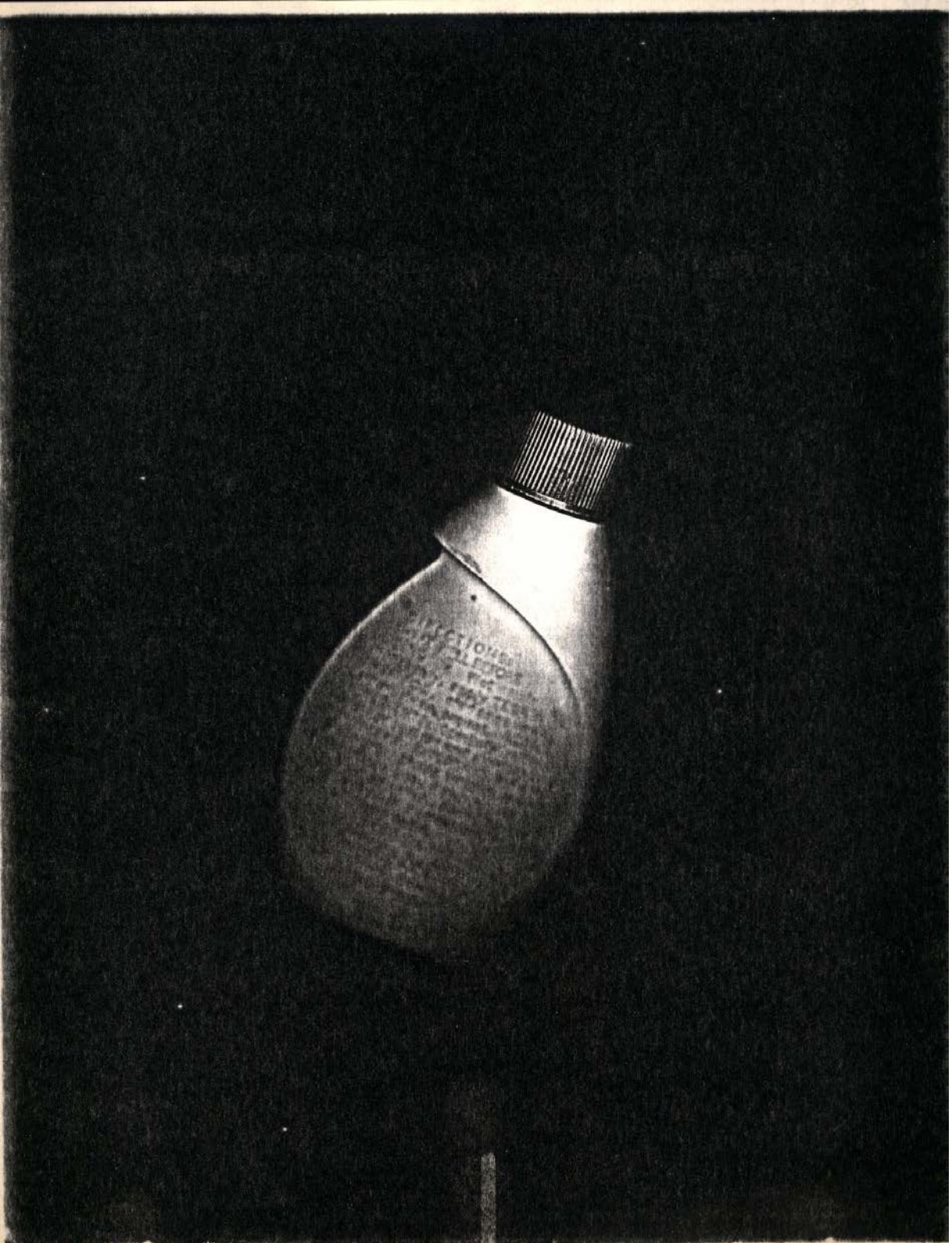
Untitled (mousetrap), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
xérocopie/xerograph
28 x 21,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique

Untitled (carnation), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
xérocopie/xerograph
28 x 21,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique

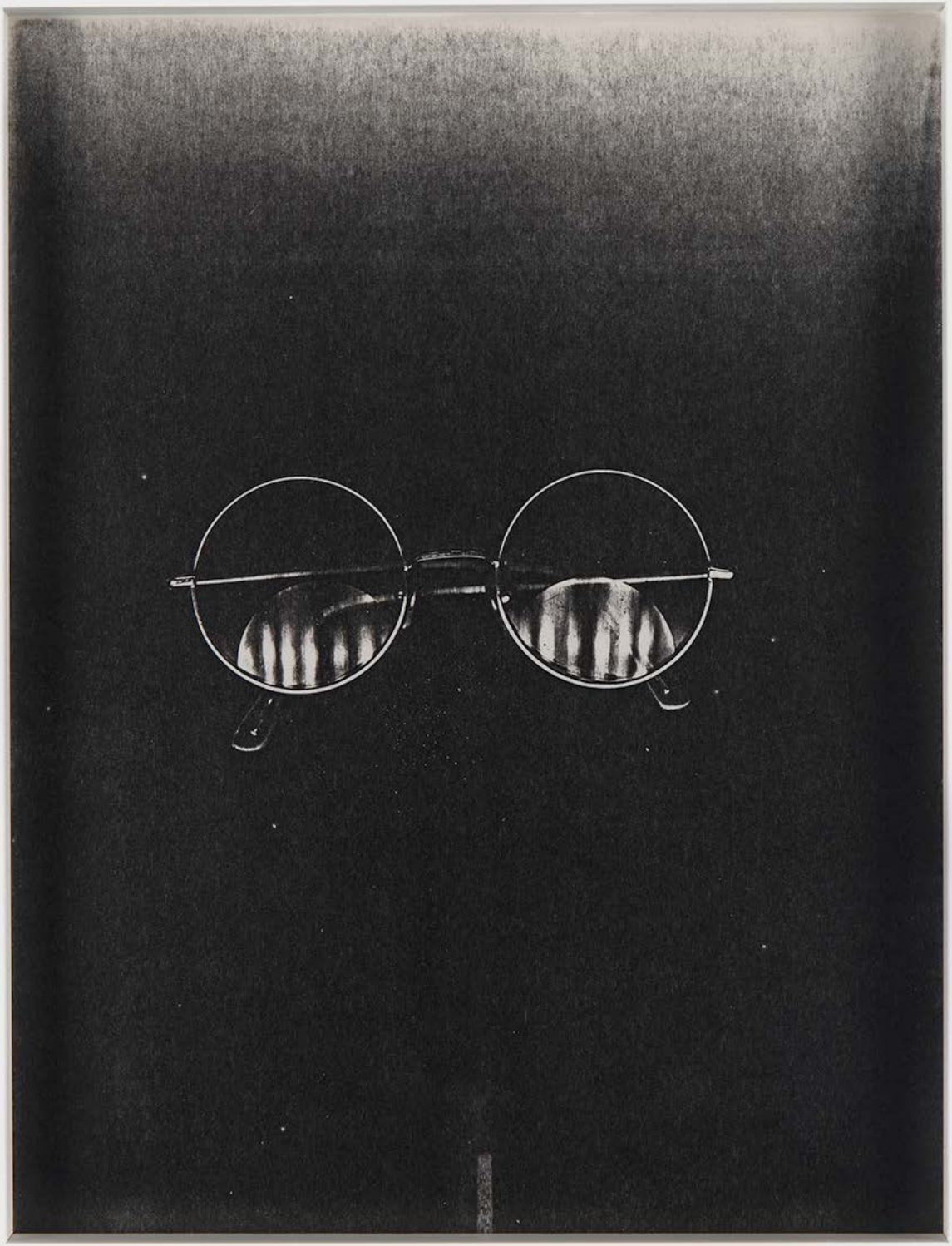
Untitled (scissors), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
xérocopie/xerograph
28 x 21,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique



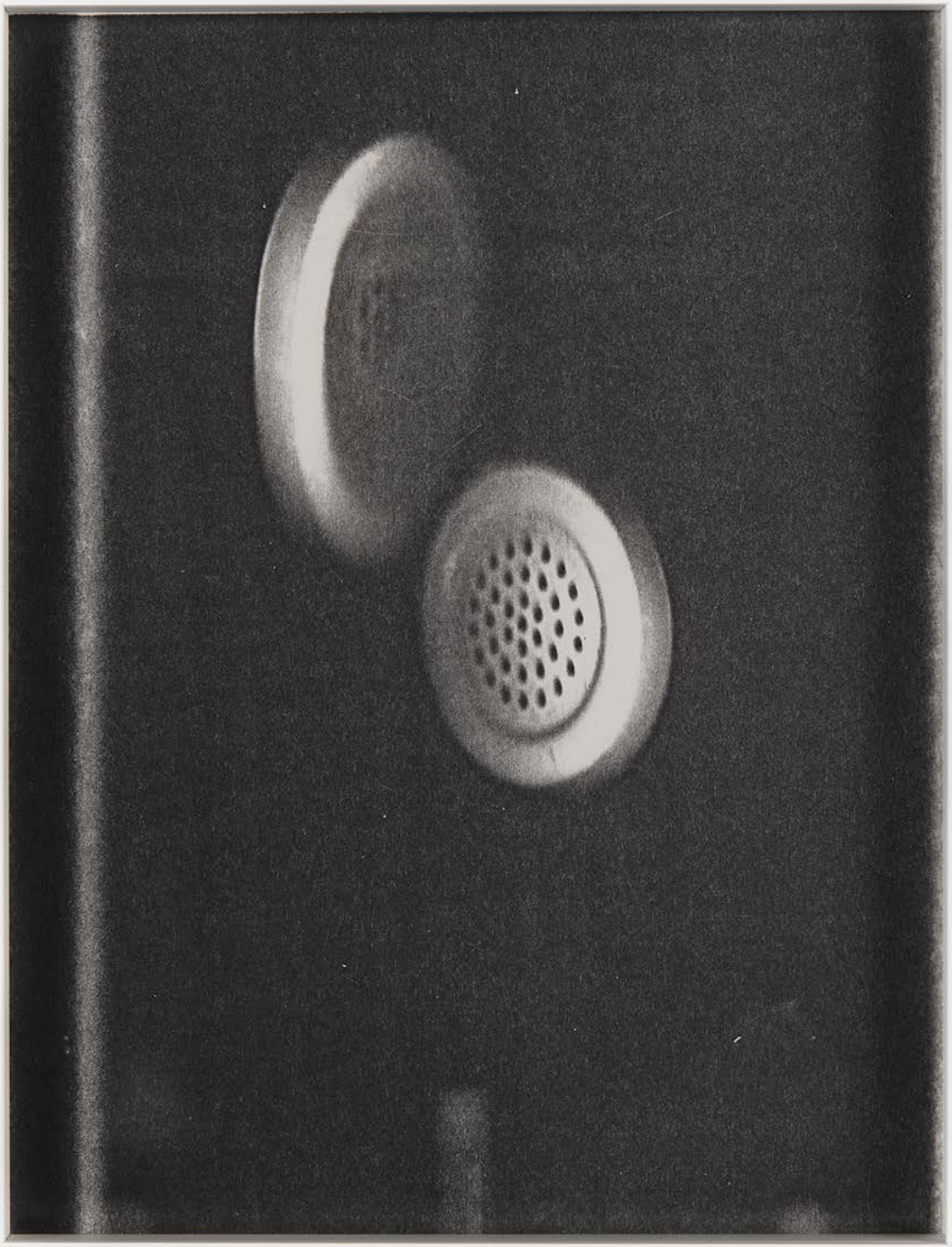
Untitled (téléphone), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
xérocopie, signé au verso/xerograph, signed on the back
28 x 21,5 cm
avec cadre/framed 29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique



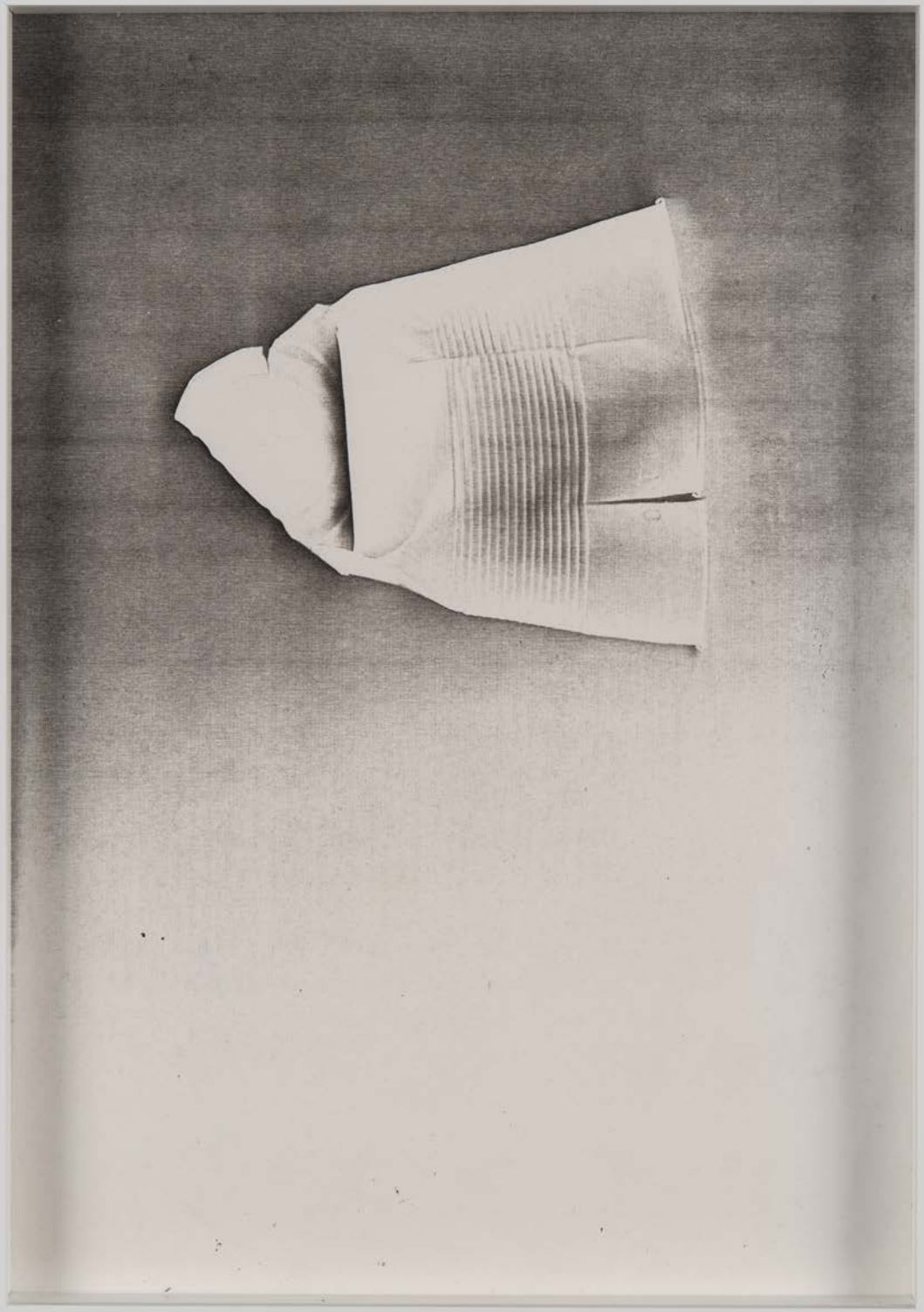
Untitled (plastic bottle), c. 1977-79
(série "Common Objects")
xérocopie/xerograph
28 x 21,5 cm
29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique



Untitled (glasses), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
xérocopie/xerograph
28 x 21,5 cm
29,3 x 22,8 cm
Unique

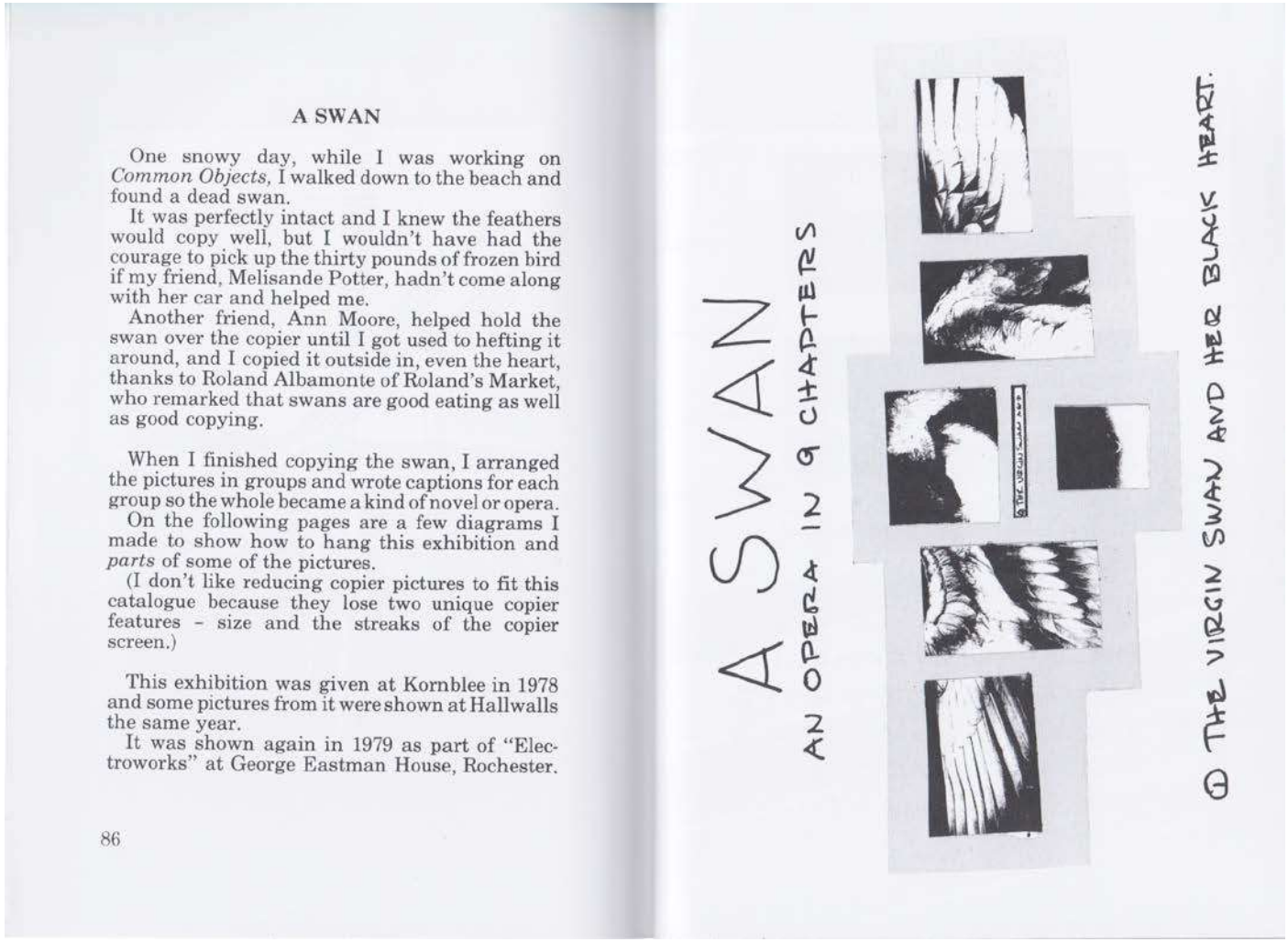


Untitled (telephone), c. 1977-79
(série/series "Common Objects")
xérocopie/xerograph
28 x 21,5 cm
Unique



Untitled (plastic cup), c. 1980
xérocopie/xerograph
29,7 x 21 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

A Swan (An Opera in nine chapters), 1978



A SWAN

One snowy day, while I was working on *Common Objects*, I walked down to the beach and found a dead swan.

It was perfectly intact and I knew the feathers would copy well, but I wouldn't have had the courage to pick up the thirty pounds of frozen bird if my friend, Melisande Potter, hadn't come along with her car and helped me.

Another friend, Ann Moore, helped hold the swan over the copier until I got used to hefting it around, and I copied it outside in, even the heart, thanks to Roland Albamonte of Roland's Market, who remarked that swans are good eating as well as good copying.

When I finished copying the swan, I arranged the pictures in groups and wrote captions for each group so the whole became a kind of novel or opera.

On the following pages are a few diagrams I made to show how to hang this exhibition and *parts* of some of the pictures.

(I don't like reducing copier pictures to fit this catalogue because they lose two unique copier features - size and the streaks of the copier screen.)

This exhibition was given at Kornblee in 1978 and some pictures from it were shown at Hallwalls the same year.

It was shown again in 1979 as part of "Electroworks" at George Eastman House, Rochester.

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Letters to Jill, a catalogue and some notes on copying

AIR DE PARIS

DEAR CHARLES,

THERE ARE 2 COMPLETE SETS OF A SWAN.

EACH IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT AS IT IS HARD TO MAKE 2 SIMILAR PICTURES.

I THINK OF A SWAN AS AN EXHIBITION, BUT CAN IMAGINE IT AS POSTERS.

IT WOULD BE CHEAP LIKE WALLPAPER SO YOUNG PEOPLE COULD COVER THEIR WALLS IN SWAN FOR A FEW WEEKS THEN MOVE OFF OR THROW THE SWAN AWAY AND PUT UP SOMETHING ELSE.

A KIND OF BOOK.

IBM HASN'T SEEN THE SWAN.
I FIGURE IT WOULD BE IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS THE OBJECTS SO WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW AT IBM AND WILL TAKE IT TO IBM PARIS.

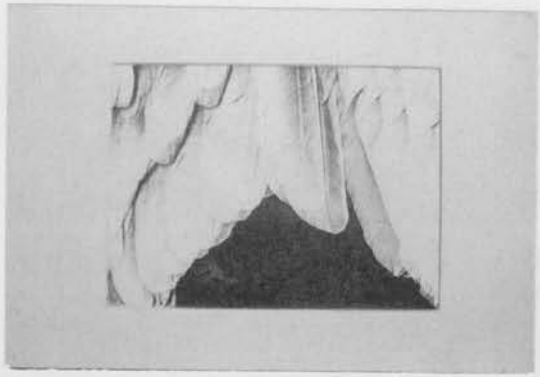
Love

A SWAN

AN OPERA IN NINE CHAPTERS

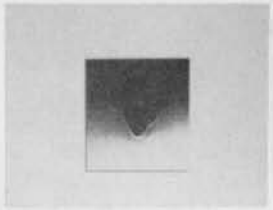
BY

PATI HILL



THE CURTAIN RISES

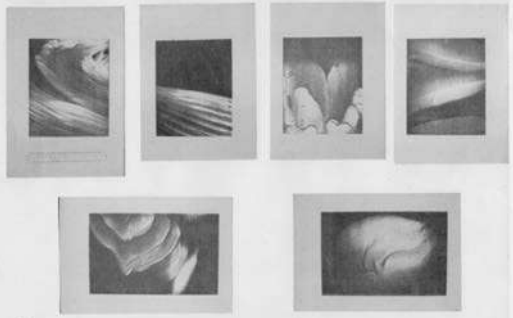
NOTE: THE PICTURES ARE PHOTOCOPY SIZE. MATS ARE 16" X 20" OR 16" X 16". THE BIRD SHAPES ARE BECAUSE OF THE FILM SIZE. THE ORIGINAL ARE INSET INTO ONE FRAME IN EACH SERIES & SHOULD BE ITEM PRINTED.



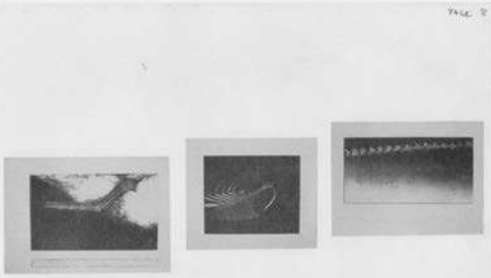
① THE VIRGIN SWAN AND HER BLACK HEART.

⑤ CHILDREN OF THE SWAN.

④ THE SWAN TAKES A MISTRESS OF IMPURE BLOOD AND KNOWS ECSTACY AT LAST, BUT SHE DRIVES HIM MAD WITH HER JEALOUS RAGE AND ENDS BY LEAVING HIM FLAT.



⑥ IN ADVANCED AGE THE SWAN BECOMES A MYSTIC AND IS DEEPLY MYSTIFIED.

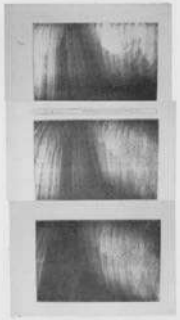


⑦ THE SWAN RETURNS TO ITS OLD FLOATY BODY AND SWIMS DIRECTLY INTO ITS SKELETON, WHICH TURNS OUT TO LOOK REMARKABLY LIKE THE FAMILIAR KOOTCOAT ON THE RIVER STYX.

⑧ THE SWAN IS ASSUMED INTO SPACE IN THREE PHASES, LEAVING BEHIND A GIANT FEATHER.

⑨ THIS FEATHER IS SO IMPRESSIVE THAT AT FIRST IT IS THOUGHT TO BE A MESSAGE FROM THE MEDIA. BUT UPON CAREFUL INSPECTION BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE IT IS DECLARED TO BE A PERFECT PHOTOCOPY, THE ORIGINAL HAVING MEANWHILE DISAPPEARED.

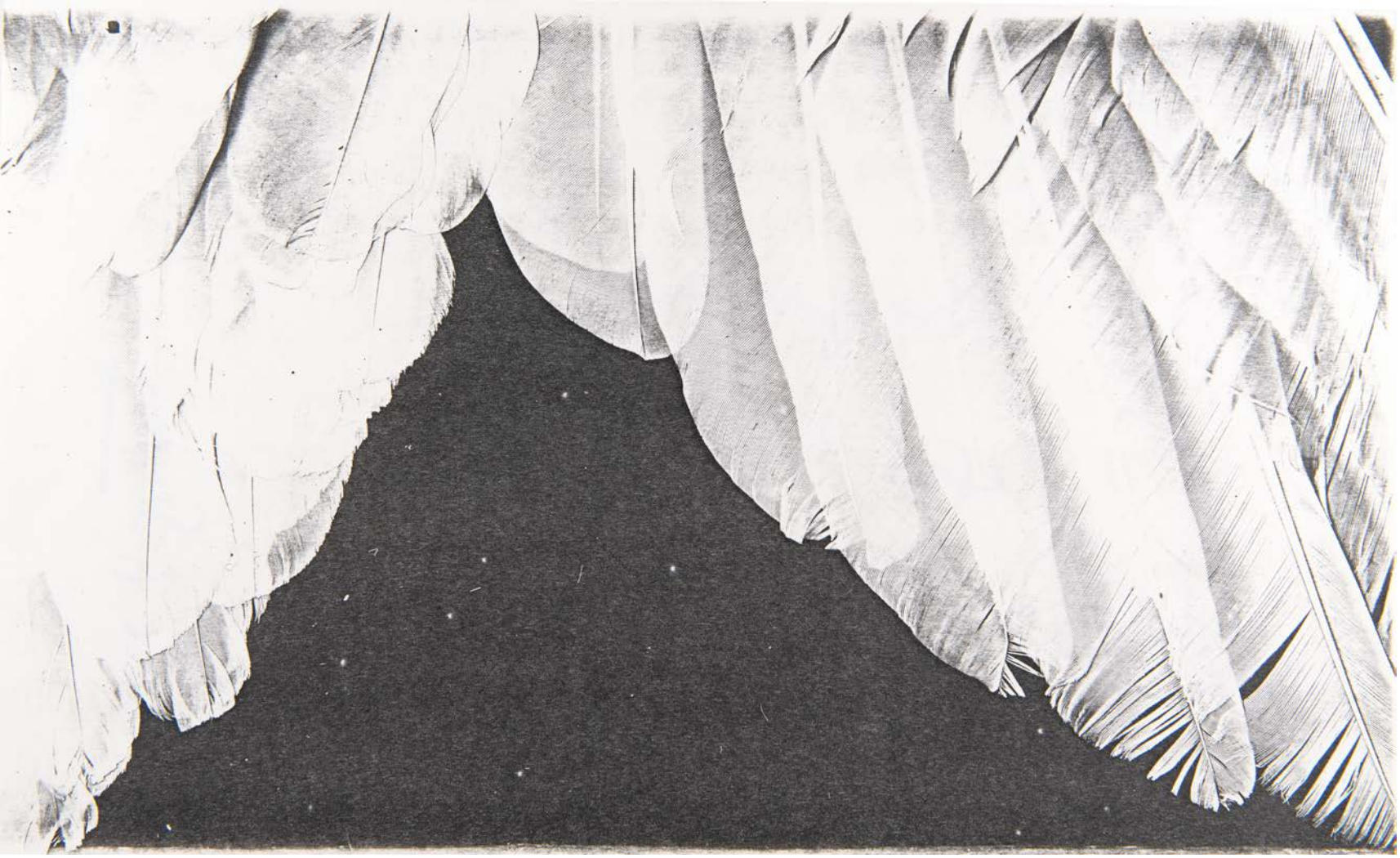
THE CURTAIN FALLS



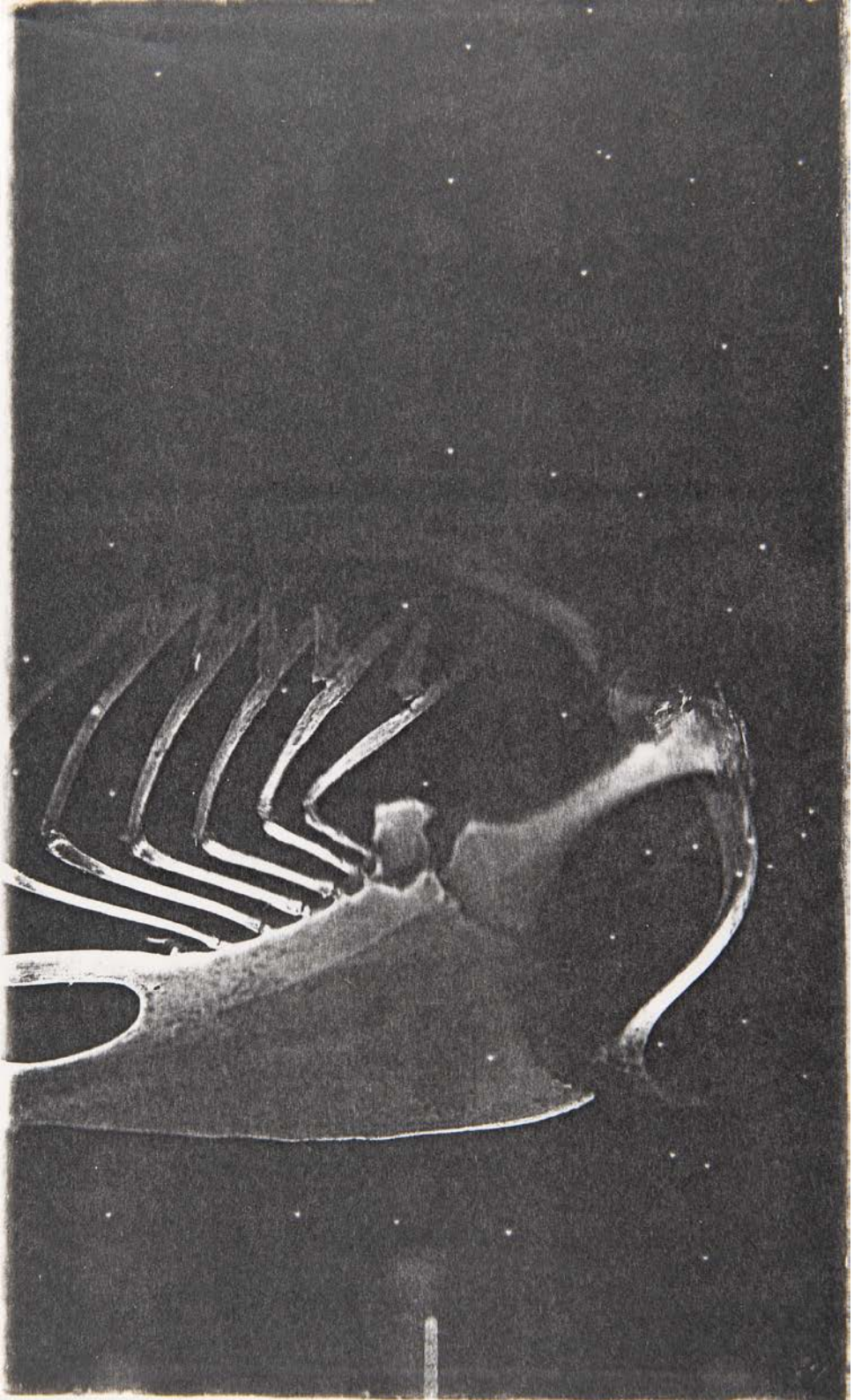
② THE MYSTERIOUS REGION OF UNDERWING.

③ THE SWAN BECOMES A CAPTAIN IN THE LUFTWAFFE AND MAKES A PERFECT MARRIAGE BUT IS NOT SATISFIED.

Untitled (Swan's wing), 1978
(série/series «A Swan: An Opera in Nine Chapters»)
xérocopie, signé au verso/xerograph, signed on the back
21,5 x 35,4 cm
avec cadre/framed 22,9 x 36,8 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage



Untitled (Swan's wing), 1978
(série/series «A Swan: An Opera in Nine Chapters»)
xérocopie, annoté, signé et daté au verso/xerograph, annotated, signed and dated on the back
21,6 x 35,3 cm
avec cadre/framed 22,9 x 36,8 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage



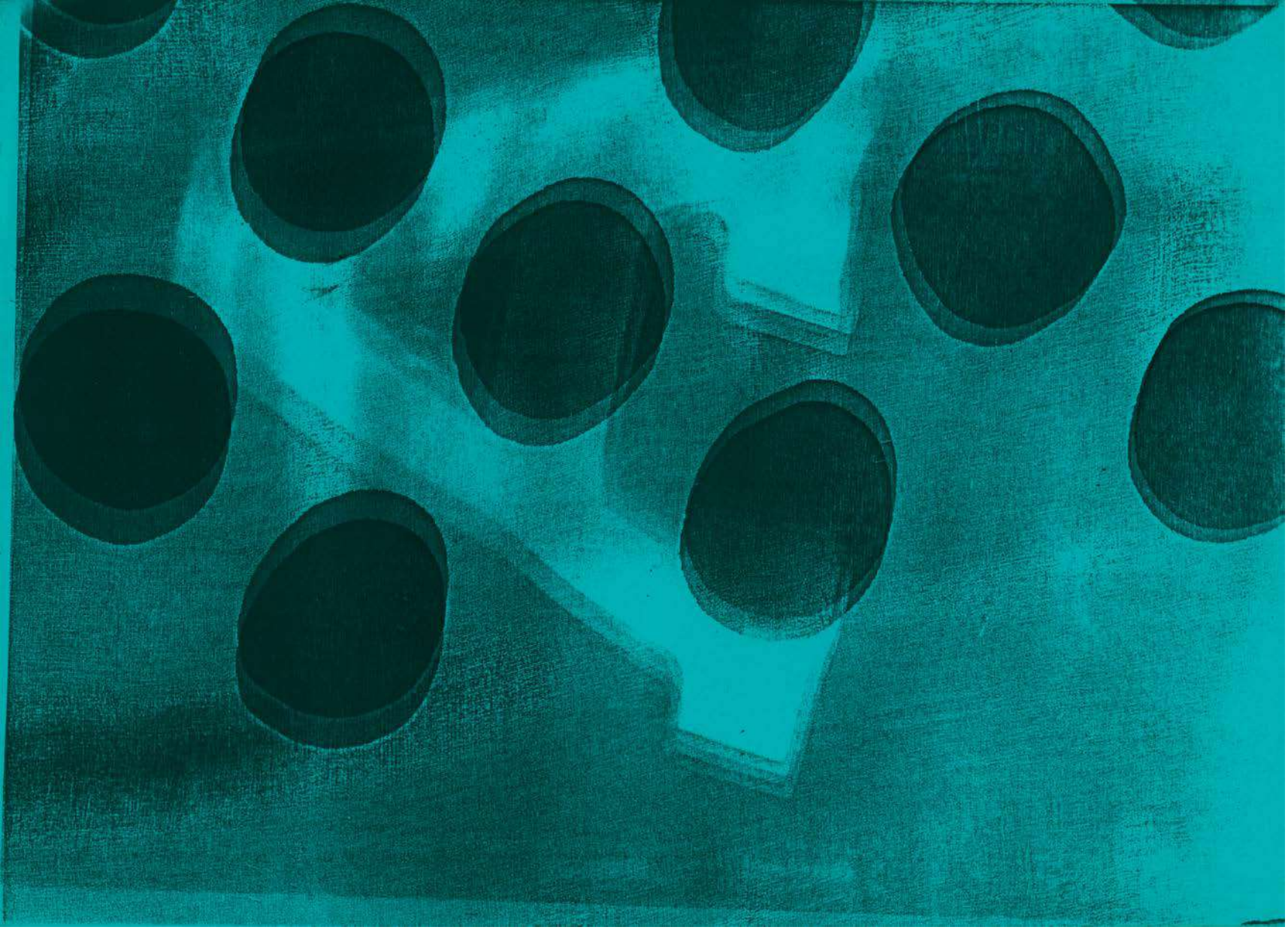
Untitled (Swan's bone), 1978
xérocopie, annoté, signé et daté au verso
xerograph, annotated, signed and dated on the back
21,6 x 35,4 cm
avec cadre/framed 36,8 x 22,9 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

Untitled (Swan's wing), 1978
xérocopie, annoté, signé et daté au verso
xerograph, annotated, signed and dated on the back
21,6 x 35,2 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

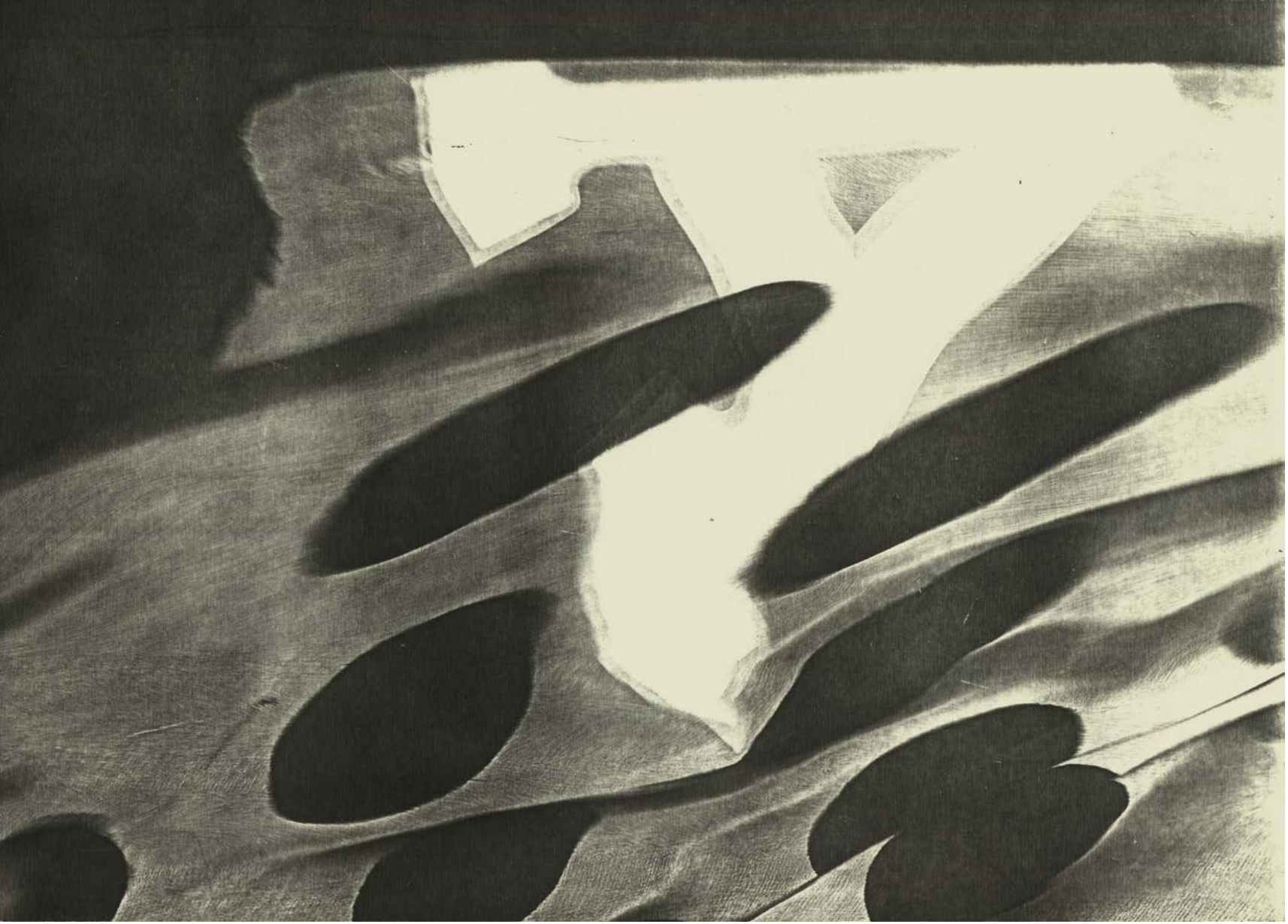
A Frolicking

Untitled, c. 1980
(série/series «A Frolicking»)
xérocopie/xerograph
29,6 x 21 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

AIR DE PARIS

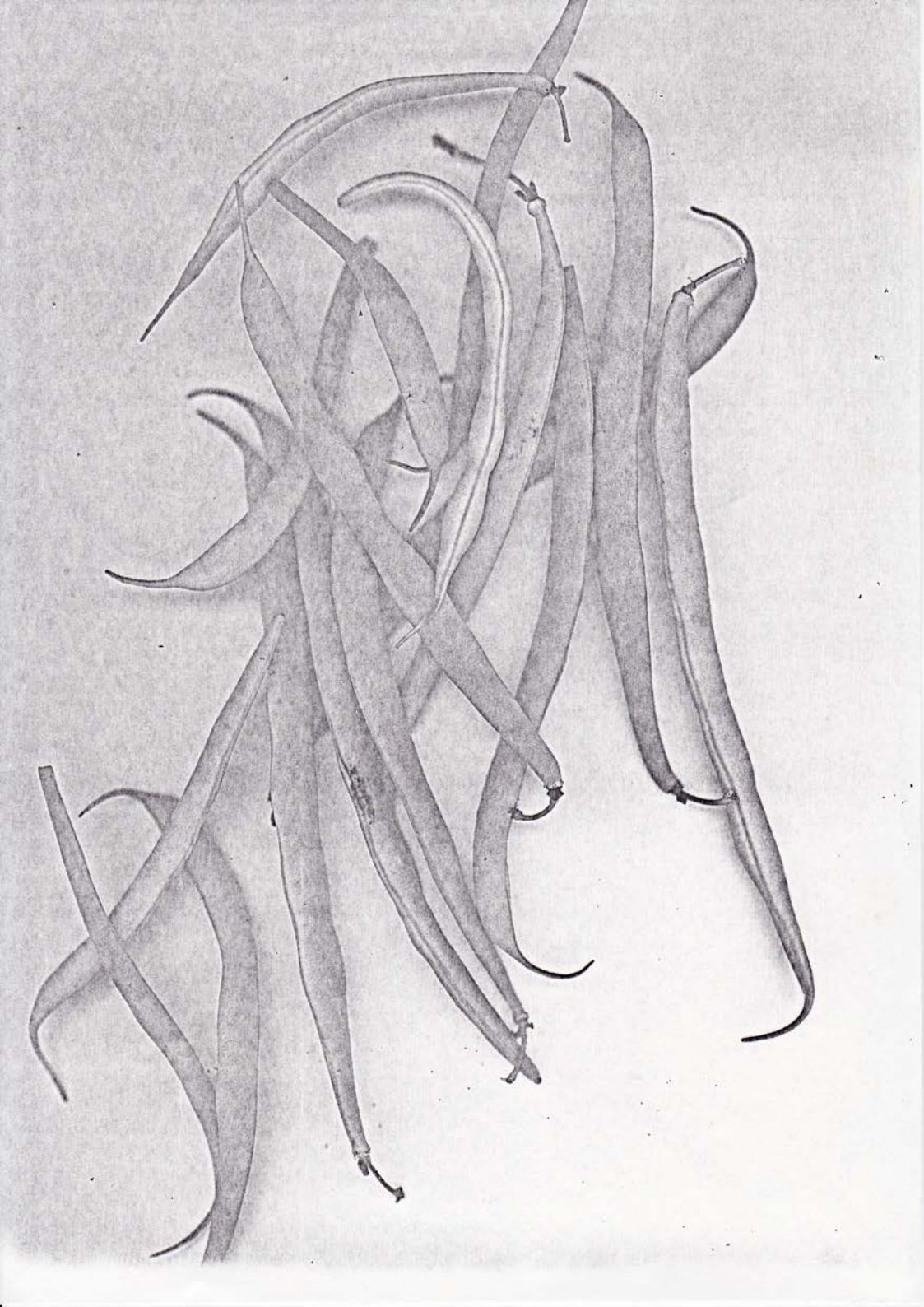


Untitled, c. 1980
(série/series «A Frolicking»)
xérocopie/xerograph
Unique
© photo DR

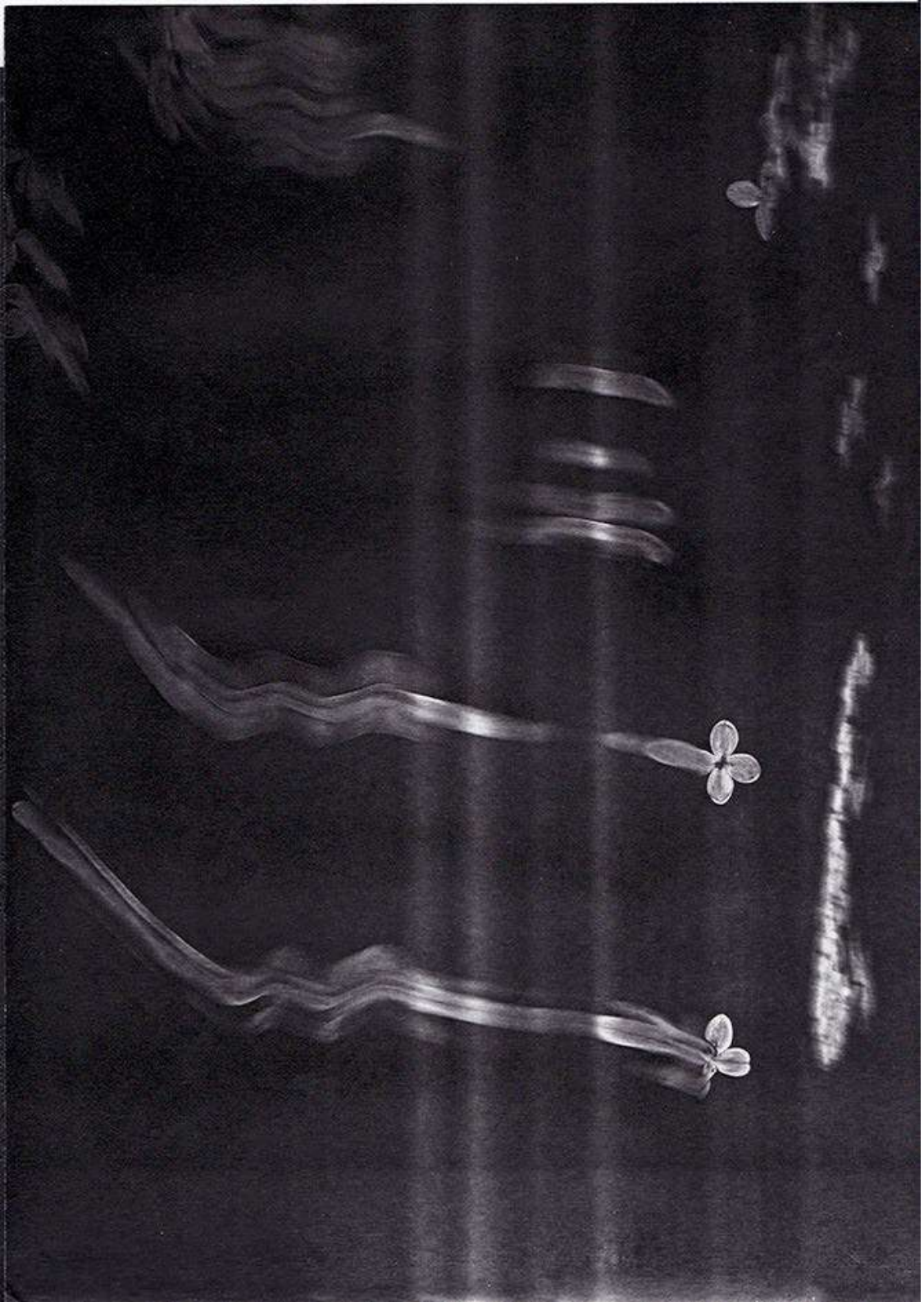


Untitled, c. 1980
(série/series «A Frolicking»)
xérocopie, annoté au verso/
xerograph, annotated on the back
21 x 29,7 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

Untitled, c. 1980
(série/series A Frolicking), xérocopie/xerograph
29,7 x 21 cm
avec cadre/framed 30,9 x 22,2 cm
Unique



Untitled (beans), c. 1980
xérocopie/xerograph
29,7 x 21 cm
avec cadre/framed 30,9 x 22,2 cm
Unique



Untitled (lilac petals), c. 1980
xérocopie/xerograph
29,7 x 21 cm
avec cadre/framed 30,9 x 22,2 cm
Unique

Untitled (lilac), c. 1980
xérocopie/xerograph
29,7 x 21 cm ; avec cadre/framed 30,9 x 22,2 cm
Unique
© photo DR

Scarves

I noticed that you could move things slowly from one side of the copier surface to the other and thus make a better picture of movement than the camera usually made. I decided to make a series of pictures in which the movement itself was the point of the picture. After that I made some pictures of progression in the way that How-To-Do-It instructions were illustrated in those days. This led to a long period during which I believed in chance.[1] Pati Hill

Hill's arrangement of the scarf prints into grids or sequences marks both an extension of her pictographic and narrative ordering of images and a new emphasis on movement. *Understanding Your Chinese Scarf,* a grid of fifteen copier prints, is a lexicon of forms derived from a single original. Conversely, *An Interval* (from a series titled "The Adventures of a Spotted Scarf") suggests a form of calligraphy across multiple frames through the maneuvering of a single translucent scarf with ink-like black trim and large spots. Hill remarked that she used "many different copier techniques"[2] in the series, including pulling the material across the platen during the scanning process and overprinting the resulting original prints onto themselves by running the same 12" x 16" sheets of paper through the copier a second time. The resulting mis-registration adds to the sense of motion and the intensity of the blacks.Hill observed, "Some of these reprints were so hard to make I never made but one or two."[3]

[1] "Movement," (unpublished notes, n.d.), Pati Hill Archive, Estate of Pati Hill.

[2] "The Adventures of a Spotted Scarf," (unpublished notes, c.1980s), print, Pati Hill Archive, Estate of Pati Hill.

[3] Hill, quoted in *Ars + Machina I*, 94.

Pati Hill Photocopier. A Survey of Prints and Books (1974-83), 2017. Arcadia University Art Gallery English

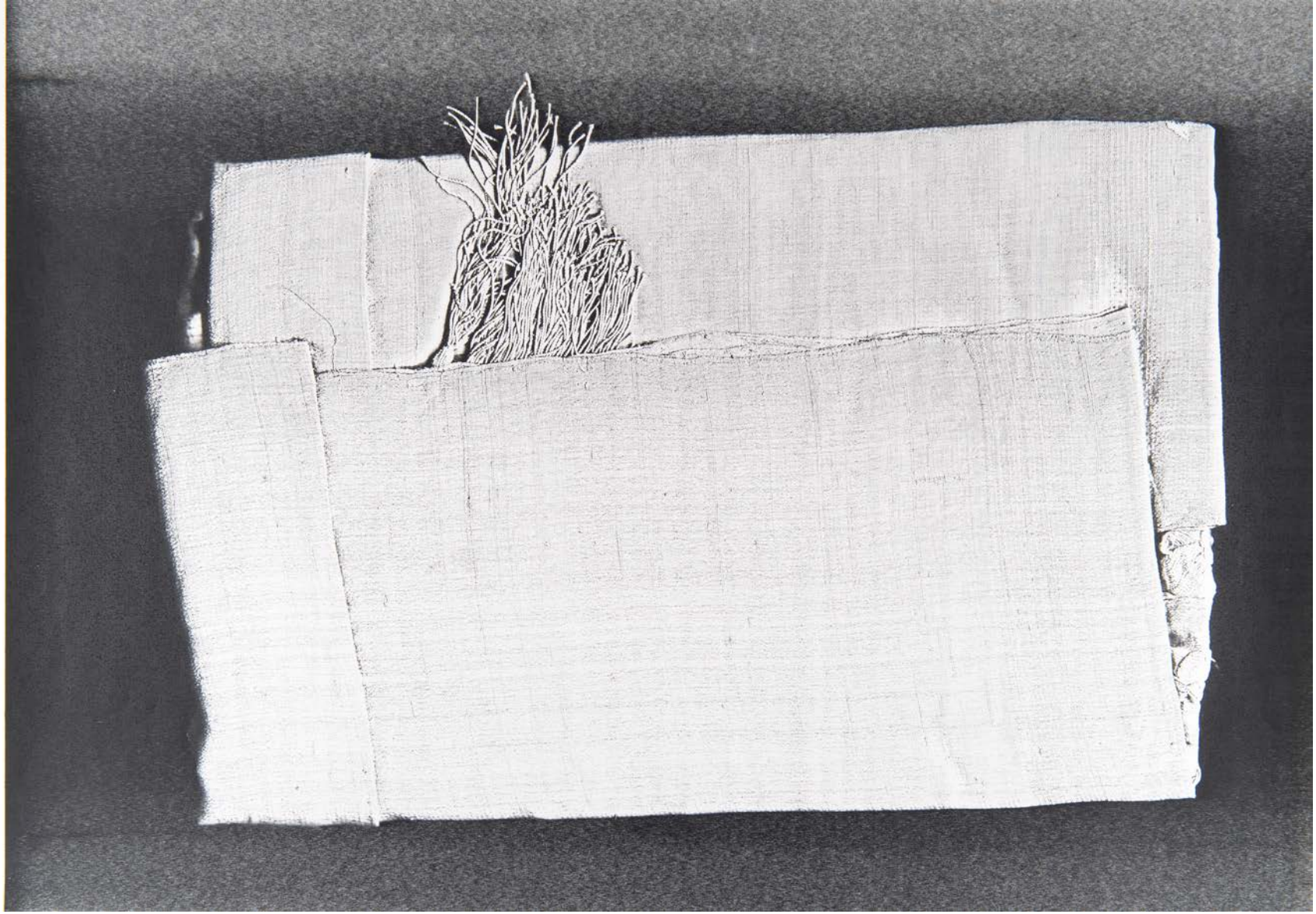
Lien vidéo d'un extrait de "Toreador" de Claude Torey, 1983 (produit par le Centre Simone de Beauvoir avec le soutien du Ministère de la Culture) dans lequel on voit Pati Hill au travail sur sa série Scarves
Video link on an extract of «Toreador» by Claude OTrey, 1993 (produced by the Centre Simone de Beauvoir with support of the Minister of Culture) in which we can see Pati Hill at work on her Scarves series :

https://vimeo.com/513306310/2d9167b045

Untitled (scarf), 1983
xérocopie/xerograph
42 x 29,7 cm
avec cadre/framed 43,3 x 31 cm
Unique

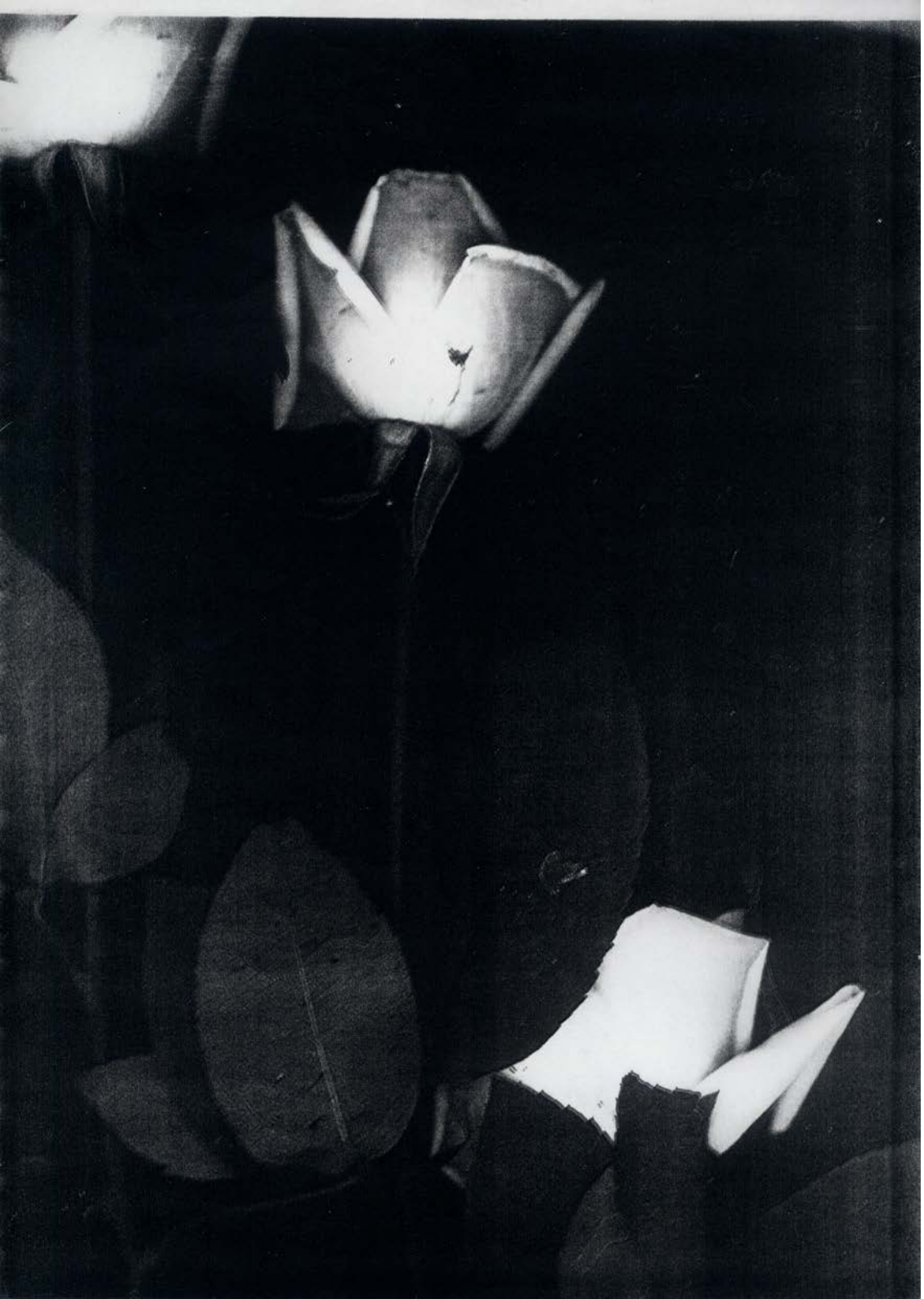
Untitled (scarf), 1983
xérocopie/xerograph
29,7 x 21 cm
avec cadre/framed 30,9 x 22,2 cm
Unique
© photo DR

Untitled (scarf), 1983
xérocopie /xerograph
42 x 29,7 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage



Untitled (scarf), 1983
xérocopie/xerograph
29,7 x 42 cm
avec cadre/framed 31 x 43,3 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

Untitled (broken glass and dragonflies), c. 1990
xérocopie /xerograph
42 x 29,7 cm
avec cadre/framed 43,3 x 31 cm
Unique



Untitled (roses), c. 1990
xérocopie/xerograph
42 x 29,7 cm
avec cadre/framed 43,3 x 31 cm
Unique
© photo DR

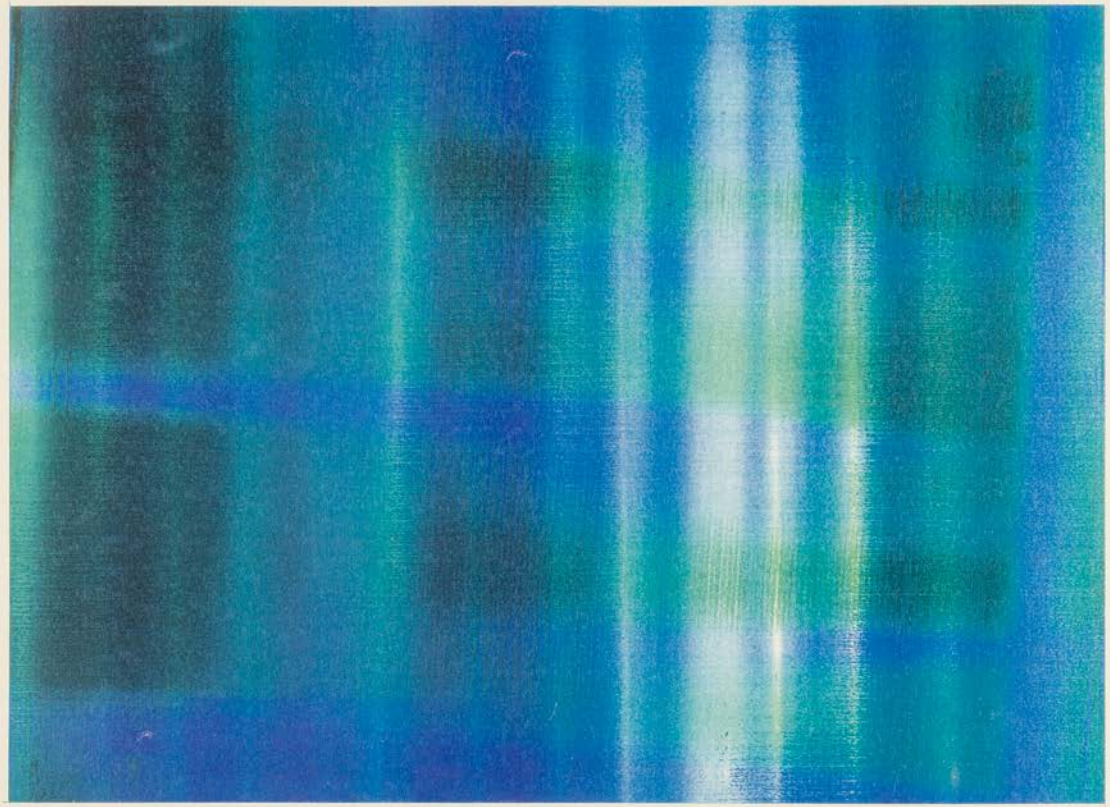
Flowers are the hardest subject for me. They always come out looking like people or parts of people. *Pati Hill, Letters to Jill*

Untitled (roses), c. 1990
xérocopie couleur/colored xerograph
42 x 29,7 cm
avec cadre/framed 43,3 x 31 cm
Unique

Untitled (red petals), c. 1990
xérocopie avec toner rouge/xerograph with red toner
27,9 x 19,9 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

Untitled (red and white petals), c. 1990
xérocopie avec toner rouge/xerograph with red toner
28,3 x 19,9 cm
Unique
© photo Marc Domage

Untitled, c. 1990
(série/series "Paysages")
xérocopie, numéroté et signé au recto/xerograph, numbered and signed on the back
41,9 x 29,5 cm
Edition de 30/Edition of 30
© photo DR



6/30

Untitled, c. 1990
(série/series "Paysages")
xérocopie, numéroté et signé au recto/xerograph, numbered and signed on the back
29,6 x 41,9 cm
Edition de 30/Edition of 30

The odd couple. Michelle Cotton

Photocopier
This stocky, unrevealing box stands 3 ft. high without stockings or feet and lights like a Xmas tree no matter what I show it. / It repeats my words perfectly as many times as I ask it to, but when I show it a hair curler it hands me back a space ship, and when I show it the insides of a straw hat it describes the eerie joys of a descent into a volcano. – Pati Hill[1]

The first automated copier, the Xerox 914 was manufactured in 1960 at a production cost of over 2,00 dollars for each machine.[2] Designed to copy originals measuring up to nine by fourteen inches, it was advertised as capable of producing up to six copies per minute at a cost of one cent per page.[3] It changed office culture, creating its own demand. An article by John Brooks published in the New Yorker in 1967 estimated that the United States made 9.5 billion copies in 1964 and 14 billion in 1966, "not to mention billions more in Europe, Asia and Latin America." Each machine was assigned a "key operator", a person from the office who would be trained by Xerox to fan paper, remove staples and paper clips, clear paper jams, and so on. Brooks described this role:

> *Apart from malfunctions, the machine requires a good deal of regular attention from its operator, who is almost invariably a woman... Its supply of copying paper and black electrostatic powder, called 'toner', must be replenished regularly, while its most crucial part, thee selenium drum, must be cleaned regularly with a special non-scratchy cotton, and waxed every so often. I spent a couple of afternoons with one 914 and its operator, and observed what seemed to be the closest relationship between a woman and a piece of office equipment that I had ever seen.*[4]

Brooks continued to claim that 914 "had distinct animal traits." There is perhaps even a sexual edge to this prose: "It has to be fed and curried; it is intimidating but can be tamed; it is subject to unpredictable bursts of misbehavior and generally speaking, it responds in kind to its treatment."[5]

By the mid-1960s, artists were using the copier, which became a means of making original images as well as mass-producing art to be disseminated via the postal system as Mail Art. The Italian designer Bruno Munari produced a series of unique photocopies entitled *Xerografie Originali (Original Xerographies)* in 1964 in which he copied images and objects such as cloth, netting, and fur. His "experiments" employed different paper stocks and involved varying the concentration of toner to achieve different effects. He also distorted photographic imagery by "jerking," "dragging," and "rotating" materials on the glass plate – something "utterly forbidden" in conventional copying.[6] "Rank Xerox machines can help anyone express himself," stated Munari.[7] In 1969, Alighiero Boetti also made a series of copier works on a Xerox 3600, which he used to "draws from life." Several images record two live chicks running about and pecking at the copier glass, while other works include *Autoritratto Xerox (Self-portrait Xerox)* and *Nove Xerox AnneMarie (Nine Xerox AnneMarie)*. The works also hold an association with writing and drawing, the latter two involving a sign language that the artist performed using his hands and face to spell out the word "*autoristratto*" and the name of his wife for the machine that "can see but can't hear."[8]

However, it was probably Mel Bochner's 1966 exhibition "Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art" that inaugurated the copier's role within Conceptual art. The exhibition, at the School of Visual Arts in New York, included contributions from Dan Flavin, Dan Graham, Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, Robert Smithson, and Sol LeWitt that were reproduced as four copies, filed in four identical binders, and arranged on pedestals. The exhibition encapsulated the idea further developed in subsequent years that the copier was an instrument for mechanized seriality. It could also dematerialize an object, dispelling the "aura" of an original note or drawing so that it became a document that simply contained information. Yet the technology was not perfect, ad, upon closer inspection, no two copies were exactly the same.[9]

By the late 1970s, there were "copy artists" working primarily or exclusively with these machines. Pati Hill was one such artist. Her first exhibition, "Objects," presented in different forms in New York at the Kornblee Gallery in 1975 and at Franklin furnace in 1978, combined text and image. Her texts are full of personal memories and associations and are often poetic or surreal in their pairings. For instance, she describes bacon that "look like television" and an egg slicer as an "Aeolian harp."[10] Hill later writes that the "common objects" documented for the exhibition were amassed in a "laundry hamper until it overflowed I would take them to a copier in a nearby town and record the ones that still intrigued me, then throw the originals away or put them back into circulation."[11]

The images, when viewed together, render their subjects as a lexicon of forms. Abstracted from their domestic or prosaic contexts, they become connected to each other by the uniformity of the copies. It is their format and composition – the way in which the objects float within the page or the grain of the print, the sharp contrasts, the glare of the whites and the depth of the blacks – that fix associations. Hill told the New Yorker, "Copies are an international visual language, which talks to people in Los Angeles and people in Prague the same way. Making copied is very near to speaking."[12]

In December 1977, an IBM Copier II was installed in Hill's home in Stonington, Connecticut. She describes her working process in the 1979 publication Letters to Jill:

> *It's a perfect day which is a mercy because it allows me to leave the windows open to let out the fumes I make by putting too much black powder in the till and the machine is humming or grumbling or whatever it does when it isn't asking me to Call Key operator or Add Paper or Lift Cover or complaining it's Not Ready – it makes me feel like some brute with an unhappy lummox in bed and it's too bad things can't go on like this forever – it humming and taking up space and me letting it.*[13]

Hill's own words recall the image that Brooks gave some eleven years earlier of the female "key operators" coaxing their machines into action. There is a sexual edge to her prose, too. The short, poetic text that announced Hill's exhibition at Franklin Furnace in the winter of 1978 develops this charming somewhat comical image of an odd couple. It pictures the writer and former model at her "stocky" machine, engaged in a playful, mute exchange? There is a sense of a relationship that is at once maternal and romantic.[14] The copier "lights up" at her interaction and "repeats" her words, but also provides a new way of looking at the world, which is both exciting and compelling for Hill. As such, the most ordinary things, such as a hair curler or a straw hat – the "common objects" as she called them – are transformed into the most exotic, fantastical images.

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[1] Pati Hill, announcement card for her exhibition "Common Alphabet #1, text/photocopies," Franklin Furnace, New York, November 21, 1978
[2] David Owens, Copies in Seconds (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). The 914 was introduced via a live television broadcast in September 1959. Later that year, a series of machines were installed at companies and institutions as part of a preproduction field test. The first 914 ordered by a paying customer left the factory in March 1960. The New Yorker claims that Haoid's expenditure on research in xerography from 1947 to 1960 totaled seventy)-five million dollars. John Brooks, "Xerox Xerox Xerox Xerox," New Yorker, April 1, 1967, 46-47
[3] « Xerox Copying Equipment, » commercial brochure, c.1960. Courtesy of Xerox Historical Archive
[4] Brooks, "Xerox Xerox Xerox Xerox"
[5] Ibid.,57.
[6] Bruno Munari, Original Xerographies (Mantova : Corrani, 2007), 4-5
[7] Bruno Munari, « Xerox » *Studio International* 180 no. 926 (October 1970). The article was published alongside Munari's exhibition in the Central Pavilion of the XXXV Venice Biennale, where he had installed a copier for public use.
[8] Annemarie Sauzeau, "AB A4", in *Boetti* A4 (Ravenna; Edizioni Essgi, 2012)
[9] The *Xerox Books* of the conceptual artist Ian Burn derive from this fact. Each has a "structure": *Xerox Book #1* begins with a blank sheet of paper that was placed on the glass to be copied, each copy was used to make the next, producing a book of 100 pages in which the pages are progressively darkened with toner as the machine searched for something to reproduce.
[10] Pati Hill, "Possible Texts for a Book of Objects," (unpublished, c.1975), Pati Hill Archive, Estate of Pati Hilll.
[11] Pati Hill, *Letters to Jill* (New York: Kornblee Gallery, 1979), 22.
[12] Pati Hill, quoted in Anthony Bailey, "Copies", *New Yorke*r, (August 4, 1980): 23-24. In this publication (p.19).
[13] Hill, *Letters to Jill,* 114
[14] In another description of the copier, Hill states, "A copying machine remoinds me of a big baby in a crib." Michael Zwerin, "Copier Art: The Age of 'Electroworks' Has Arrived on the Office Duplicator," *International Herald Tribune*, August 14, 1980

Hilll was not the first female artist to live with a copier in her home. In 1965? Barbara T. Smith rented a Xerox 914 and had it installed in the dining room of her residence in Pasadena, California. Over the course of the next eight months, she produced images of herself and her family – both from photographs and from life – photocopying foodstuffs and flowers, scattering paper stars, and so on:

> *[The images] poured out obsessively in various ways from my machine… my overall interest had to do with light, identity, the erotic body and the passage of time… My dining room was completely taken over. Obvious to me, just bursting with my new and desire to "come out" as a full active erotic being, was to put my face and body on the machine and print it.*

Unlike Hill, who avoided using the copier for self-portraiture, Smith "had fantasies of making very erotic imagery" with her husband: "Although we could not simultaneously get on the glass plate, we could take turns and have our genitals transferred as image to paper, by running the papers through twice… I was pushing the edge of the culturally permissible and certainly the edge between my husband and myself." However, when she asked him, he would have no part in it. Smith "continued alone," floating "in masturbatory and narcissistic isolation."[15]

Hill and Smith were both included in the copy art exhibition "Electroworks" in 1979, but it is not clear if Hill was aware of smith's work.[16] Despite their common interests, Hill's work has its own character and is technically distinct. The two artists used different generations of machines manufactured by different companies. The paper used by each artist is also different: Smith's work is peppered with colored stock, while Hill's is predominantly done on white paper, perhaps to optimize the contrast to the rich blacks she achieved with her IBM copiers.[17] If Smith's use of color appears instinctive, Hill took a more structured or theoretical approach to her use of colored papers: "I thought an apple of one color could mean a whole apple and an apple of another could mean a bought or eaten one. Or you could apply color to a more philosophical side of your work.3 She referred to the language of contemporary advertising and the way in which "colors have become codes."[18] Smith – who would subsequently be known as a performance artist – was using the Xerox 914 like a camera, making one copy after another, often capturing an intervention or action performed on the machine's glass plate. The works, which are largely composed of multiple copies, reflect the seriality that is integral to the technology and celebrated in many of the exhibitions, artworks, and books that conceptual artistes produced with the copier in the following years.[19] Yet Hill would make several copies of the same object only to "reject" some as "unsatisfactory."[20]

What is interesting to compare is the way in which these two women brought the copier into their domestic environment and used it to produce images of their immediate situation. Their environment provided the material for their images, but it also made it possible for them to produce an extremely personal body of work that may have been difficult to make in a more public situation, such as a copy shop. Hill writes that "working in a confined space with very circumscribed objects" gave her "an immense feeling of freedom and childlike irresponsibility."[21] *Letters to Jill* culminates in a selection of flower studies entitled Hot Roses. Hill describes it as "a pornographic series, which I combined with one of my attempts to write pornographic literature," adding, "I don't know that either pictures or text would be a sell-out in a sex shop."[22]

In the privacy of their own homes, they copied the objects that were part of their daily lives, the garments and groceries that filled up the cupboards and drawers, as well as the things that held special memories or significance, such as family photos or keepsakes. They also pushed "at the edge of the culturally permissible," Smith by copying an "erotic body," Hilll in her photocopied images of a dead swan.[23] Each body of work is charged, in its own way, with moments of frustration, loss and desire. Each gives a sense of an interior life "pouring out" or being laid bare and something approaching what Hélène Cixious has described as jouissance in their sense of liberation at discovering this mode of self-expression.[24]

> *What to think ?*
> *Most thought less secretaries.*
> *Writers thought no more waiting to submit.*
> *On new jobs repairing the things.*
> *A woman I met while I was photocopying a pair of pants thought,*
> *I could maybe press her husband's.*[25]

"I would like to photocopy the Concord when I finish railroads and boats," Hill states in her letter to Kornblee. "Then I would like to copy Versailles."[26] The "railroads" to which her letter refers are probably the works produced for her 1979 exhibition at the Kornblee Gallery, *Men and Women in Sleeping Cars*. These reproduced a series of images taken "by professional photographers between 1890 and 1950 to advertise the convenience and rapidity of the Wagon-Lits of Europe."[27] Many of the images feature male and female models posing in nightwear and reclining in these railway sleeping cars with slippers at the foot of their bed and books or magazines in their hands. Several others focus on the design of the cars themselves, showing just their empty interior or an exterior view of the rolling stock. Hill's letter to Kornblee, explaining the projects, pays tribute to "cars that once slept a multitude" and which "are now sleeping themselves… The epoch of the great trains has gone."[28]

It seems that part of their appeal for Hill was the artifice of the photographs, and this perhaps resonated with her own experience of modeling for magazines in her youth. She describes one lady "reading with her hand sort of supporting her chin only you can see she is really not leaning on her hand, and she is smiling a really silly smile for the camera and pretending to read."[29]

Rendered as photocopies, occasionally on electric blue or fluorescent yellow papers, the photographs are refashioned for another era. Richly colored, busy, plush, upholstered interiors are described with the same velvety blacks as their sooty undercarriage. It is their compact design, the clean lines of the wood ad metal, the gleam of porcelain, brass, and mahogany that stand out.[30] Hill's appropriation draws attention to the primness of the original image, using the copier to quote imagery in much the same style as contemporary fanzines, posters, and flyers. In doing so, they become strangely aligned with the DIY aesthetic of punk rock rather than their own fin-de-siècle moment.[31]

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[15] Barbara T. Smith, "Xerox Prints 1965-1966," unpublished text, 2012. Courtesy of the author.
[16] See the essay by Marilyn McCray, the curator of the "Electroworks" exhibition, in this publication, (pp.20-25).
[17] International Business Machines Corporation, "Copier Serves as Palette for Artist," *Word Processing* (January/February 1978). Hill worked on an IBM Copier II. "I discovered that the IBM copier had slight depth perception that the other copiers didn't drrm to have and the quality pf the black, when the toner was newly replenished was dramatic and beautiful, something like an ething." Pati Hill, "The Artist and the IDM Copier II" (unpublished draft, 1977), submitted as the basis for "copier Serves as Palette for Artist."
[18] Pati Hill, "Copier Preface" (unpublished draft, n.d.), Pati Hill Archive, Estate of Pati Hill.
[19] I discuss this more fully in "10.-22.-38 Astoria," in Xerography (Colchester: Firstsite, 2012).
[20] Hill, *Letters to Jill*, 116
[21] Ibid., 84.
[22] Ibid., 110.
[23] Ibid., 86-93/
[24] Cixous describes this form of female pleasure as a source of creative power and characterizes it as an "explosion, diffusion, effervescence." Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 90-91
[25] Hill, "Copier Preface."
[26] Hill, *Letters to Jill*, 122
[27] Pati Hill, "Foreword" for Men and Women in Sleeping Cars (unpublished draft, n.d.), Pati Hill Archive, Estate of Pati Hill. In a letter to Gerald van der Kemp dated February 8, 1980, she explains that the images were "loaned" to her by "the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits" who had sold or rented their cars in 1971. Pati Hill, letter to Gerald van der Kemp, February 8, 1980, Pati Hill archive, Estate of Pati Hill.
[28] Hill, "Foreword."
[29] Thomas McGonigle, transcription of exhibition images, 1979.
[30] Hill suggests that she used the copier to darken the image to create "effects" such as "night" or create interference in the image, thus giving the impression of "rapidity." Hill, *Letters to Jill*, 94
[31] The color Xerox works of the British copy artist Laurie-Rae Chamberlain in the late 1970s and early 1980s link the technology directly to influential figures from popular culture, music, and fashion in particular. Chamberlain appropriated copied images and text from newspapers and magazines to make works, including portraits of David Bowie, Adam Ant, John Lydon (Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols), and the SEX boutique (run by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood) assistant Pamela Rooke, also known as Jordan. Chamberlain said that he liked the "primitive" qualities of the photocopied image.

They are recast within her "narrative," as she later described it. According to Hill, they are "a series of 'novellas' based on pictorial material."[32] She explained that she "tried to give an idea of how one thing leads to another… how the doorknob leads back again to the plush wing-chair and the sniffer? Which leads to Venice and the Bosperous and, God willing, home gain safe and sound."[33]

Collectively, *Men and Women in Sleeping Cars* operates as a tableau addressing the strange collision of public and private activities for which these spaces are designed. Perhaps an interior life is also being described here, or rather a fictional narrative is developed through these interiors. But there is also a sense of refinement, luxury, elegance, and perhaps even glamour reflected in these images and the aspirations they convey. This is consistent with Hill's choice of objects and her attention to the details of materials, texture and line. The copies that variously describe a single feather, shell, silk-scarf, or pork chop convey a satisfaction with these objects, an idea of beauty in ordinary things.[34]

Hill used the copier to reveal, quote, and perhaps also preserve or cherish things, from her Six Photocopied Garments to the lost "epoch of the great trains."[35] Objects appear displaced and suspended against a black field of toner, and images are redescribed. It is as if everything is scrutinized by the machine and recorded so that it is not lost.[36]

Hill's most extraordinary and ambitious project was an attempt to copy the Palace of Versailles. Undaunted by the scale of the project, she wrote in a letter to Pierre Lemoine: "There is no doubt that Versailles is vast and the copier is small. Yet items like bedspread of Marie Antoinette, book in the library and certain small pieces of furniture give me hope."[37] She planned to copy "certain structural details of the Chateau and some the objects and documents related to its life from earliest times to the present day, with the idea of creating an exhibition – or a series of exhibitions." In doing so, she imagined that the exhibition would develop as "groups of pictures rather than single works." She listed a series of possible subjects to include: "Marie Antoinette's toilet articles, cobblestones, chandeliers, curtains and bedspreads, books, gardening tools, flowers and fruits, dishes and silver, clothing, jewelry…postcards, boiserie, documents, wigs, statuary," but also, somewhat anachronistically, "chewing gum papers."[38]

Hill spent five years copying the palace, replicating a three-dimensional fossil of French nobility in two-dimensional form. Apart from the sheer scale of the project and its logistical challenges, her application of this technology to a historical subject sets her apart from her peers working in the same media. Interestingly, Hill's Versailles project is more aligned with contemporary applications of 3D scanning and printing technologies, such as Oliver Laric's *Lincoln 3D Scans* indeed, from the outset, Hill believed that there would be "a feeling of actuality and availability throughout because nothing is more actual than copy art." In her written proposal to the palace, she ventured that "Louis XIV would have admired the copier and had the best one money could buy."[39] (2012_14), which made 360-degree images of artifacts in a public collection that is available online.[40]

- **The Odd Couple,** Michelle Cotton in *Pati Hill Photocopier*. A Survey of Prints and *Books* (1974-83) 2017. Arcadia University Art Gallery English

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[32] Hill, letter to Gerald van der Kemp.
[33] Hill, "Foreword."
[34] Zachary See's essay in this publication (pp.26-33) references Hill's finding the beautiful in the quotidian in *The Pit and the Century Plat*.
[35] Hill, "Foreword." Hill's *Six Photocopied Garments* appeared in *New Letters 43*, no. 1 (Fall 1976): 40.
[36] Hill often stressed the durability of the medium: "Pictures made on IBM or Xerox do not fade and they will last as long as the paper they are printed on but, so far as I know, no chemical-free roll paper is made for the copier." Hill, *Letters to Jill*, 119
[37] Pati Hill, letter to Pierre Lemoine, February 19, 1980, Pati Hill Archive, Estate Pati Hill/
[38] Pati Hill, "Photocopying Versailles" (unpublished manuscript, c. 1980-2000), Pati Hill Archive, Estate Pati Hill
[39] Oliver Laric and The Collection, Lincolnshire, UK, Lincoln 3D Scans, 2012-, lincoln3dscans.co.uk
[40] Pati Hill, "Photovopying Versailles."

Colloque
18 ET 19
NOVEMBRE 2021

Institut national
d'histoire de l'art

Horaires
18 NOVEMBRE
09H15 - 16H00
19 NOVEMBRE
09H45 - 19H00

Accès

Institut national
d'histoire de l'art

Galerie Colbert
2, rue vivienne ou
6 rue des Petits-
Champs 75002 Paris

Métro
Ligne 3 : Bourse
Lignes 1 et 7: Palais
Royal - Musée du
Louvre
Lignes 7 et 14:
Pyramides

Xérographie – Artistes femmes, 1965-1990

Ce colloque entend offrir un état de l'art sur l'utilisation de la xérographie par les artistes femmes, une pratique qui, à ce jour, n'a fait l'objet d'aucune étude approfondie. Apparue dans le champ de l'art au début des années 1960, la xérographie (du grec *xeros*, sec, et *graphein*, écrire) apparaît comme une pratique de l'entre-deux bordée en amont par la photographie et en aval par l'avènement de l'image numérique. Si des artistes masculins l'explorèrent à travers leurs œuvres – en témoigne de manière paradigmatique le *Xerox Book* coordonné par Seth Siegelaub – l'émergence de ce phénomène et son développement, en particulier sur le sol américain, furent essentiellement le fait d'artistes femmes. Souvent considérées comme de simples suiveuses, voire comme de vraies copistes, il n'est pas surprenant que ces dernières aient investi la nouvelle technologie dans un contexte artistique et culturel qui érigeait en valeur suprême le principe d'originalité. Succédant aux grandes œuvres – souvent masculines – de l'expressionnisme abstrait, les images xérographiques résultaient du détournement de l'usage bureautique de la photocopieuse en vue de produire des compositions inédites qui venaient jeter un trouble sur la distinction par trop simpliste entre l'œuvre originale et sa copie. Tandis que les années 1970-1980 furent celles de l'apogée du féminisme caractérisé par un activisme contestataire, une autre histoire se profilait dans l'obscurité des ateliers de reprographie des écoles d'art et des *copy shops,* la xérographie comme théâtre d'une critique sociale qui, sans être ostentatoire, n'en était pas moins effective, ce pourquoi elle fut naturellement associée à la notion de « contre-culture » qui privilégiait des moyens de diffusion alternatifs comme l'affiche, le fanzine, l'art postal, la performance ou encore le livre d'artiste. Pratique intermédiale par excellence mettant à mal la notion de spécificité par la production d'une image mécanique infiniment reproductible, la xérographie fut vécue comme une forme de menace à laquelle répondit la montée en puissance de la question du médium qui devait dominer durablement les débats de la critique d'art. En faisant dialoguer historiens de l'art, critiques, conservateurs, commissaires d'exposition et artistes, cet événement scientifique entend combler une lacune historiographique sensible, en portant un nouvel éclairage sur la scène artistique des années 1960 à 1980, à laquelle la xérographie participa, sourdement certes, mais activement et sur le plan mondial.

Organisatrices
Judith Delfiner (Université Paris Nanterre) et Zanna Gilbert (Getty Research Institute)

A Archives
W A of Women Artists
R Research
E & Exhibitions

Centre Pompidou

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Xerography: Women Artists, 1965-1990

This symposium offers a state of the field reflection on women artists' use of xerography, a practice that, to date, has not been the subject of any in-depth study. Appearing in the artistic field during the 1960s, xerography (from the Greek *xeros*, 'dry' and *graphein* 'to write') appears as an in-between practice bordered upstream by photography and downstream by the advent of the digital image. While male artists did explore the new technology in their work—mostly notably in the *Xerox Book* coordinated by Seth Siegelaub—the emergence of this phenomenon and its development, particularly on American soil, were essentially the work of female artists. Often considered as mere followers, even as true copyists, women artists investigated the new technology in an artistic and cultural context in which the principle of originality was a supreme value. In contrast to the celebrated, and often masculine works of abstract expressionism, xerographic images diverted the photocopier's office use in order to produce compositions that challenged the simplistic distinction between the original work and its copy. The years 1970-1980 were the apogee of a feminism characterized by protest activism. In the reprographic workshops of art schools and copy shops, xerography became part of the staging of a social critique. This artistic production had much in common with the broader counter-culture which favored alternative means of distribution such as posters, zines, mail art, performance or artists' books. Xerography was an Intermedial practice par excellence; it challenged the notion of medium specificity by the production of an infinitely reproducible mechanical image and was thus experienced as a threat to the dominant doctrine of medium specificity. By bringing together art historians, critics, curators, and artists, this event aims to fill a historiographical gap, bringing new perspectives to the art scenes of the 1960s-1980s, in which xerography participated actively and globally.

PATI HILL

1921 - 2014
Born 1921 in Ashland, Kentucky – Dies 2014 in her home in Sens, France
Pati Hill was a writer and photocopy artist best known for her observational style of prose and her work with the IBM photocopier.

http://airdeparis.com/portfolio/PatiHill

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2021
Pati Hill, Mrs. Beazle, Treize, Paris, France
2020
Pati Hill, Kunsthalle, Zurich Heaven's door is open to us / like a big vacuum cleaner / O help / O clouds of dust / O choir of hairpins, Air de Paris, Paris, France
Something other than either, Kunstverein, München, Germany
2018
How Something Can Have Been At One Time And In One Place And Nowhere Else Ever Again, Essex Street, New York, USA
2017
Pati Hill: Photocopier, Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, CT, USA
2016
Pati Hill: Photocopier, Arcadia University, Glenside, PA, USA
2012
Toner ! Toner !, Médiathèque de Sens, France Rose Marilyn," Musée de Sens, France
2005
Vers Versailles, Musée Lambinet, Versailles
2003
Vers Versailles, L'Orangerie des Musées de Sens, France
2000
Wall Papers, Bayly Art Museum, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
1998
Vers Versailles, extraits de Vers Versailles, Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
1993
Excerpts from "Versailles Eye to Eye" (etchings and textiles), Première Vision, Paris
1992
Excerpts from "Versailles Eye to Eye and Rose Marilyn" (etchings), SAGA, Grand Palais, Paris
1990
Versailles Eye to Eye and Rose Marilyn, Cinq Rue Jules Verne, Sens
1983
Scarves, Galerie Texbraun, Paris Xerographies, Galerie Texbraun, Paris
1982
Italian Darns, Gallery Modena, Bologna
1979
Men and Women in Sleeping Cars, Kornblee Gallery, New York Objects, Galleria D'Arte "L'Artiglio," Bologna
1978
Common Alphabet 1, Franklin Furnace, New York; Centre Culturel de Flaine, France
A Swan: An Opera in Nine Chapters, Kornblee Gallery, New York
1977
Dreams Objects Moments, Kornblee Gallery, New York
1976
Concrete Poems, Centre Culturel de Flaine, France
Garments, Kornblee Gallery, New York
1975
Photocopied Objects, Kornblee Gallery, New York; Centre Culturel de Flaine, France

GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2021
L'image et son double, Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR
Copy This ! Xeros et Copy Art de 1960 à nos jours, Le BAL, Paris, FR
Old Love / New Love - Robin Waart, Rong Wrong, Amsterdam
Pictogrammes, signes de vie, émojis : Une société des signes, Museum für Neue Kunst, Freibourg, Allemagne
Top Stories, Anne Turyn, Kunstverein, Amsterdam
Nothing is so humble : Prints from everyday objects, Whitney Museum of Art, USA
2020
«Fuck You Be Nice», Air de Paris, Romainville, France
Fanchon, Hill, Laborde & Supico, Ampersand, Lisboa, Portugal
2018
Artist's books, Le CDLA (Le Centre des livres d'artiste), St Yrieux La Perche, FR
2018
Making Innovation : Artists, Engineers, And the Sarnoff Collection, TCJN (The College of New Jersey) Art Gallery, Ewing, NJ, USA
2017
Making/Breaking the Binary : Women, Art, & Technology, 1968-1985 Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, USA
2017
A still life by Chardin, Lisson Gallery, London, UK (organized by Maxwell Graham)
2016
Ortega, Gasset Projects, (Repeat, Pressure Until) Brooklyn, NY, USA 2016 Société d'Electricité, Bruxelles, Belgium
1994
La Disparation de l'Alphabet, Galerie Toner—Paul Bianchini, Paris Artist's Books Created on Copiers, Galerie Toner—Paul Bianchini, Paris
1993
Big Furniture, Galerie Toner—Paul Bianchini, Paris The Last Supper, Galerie Toner—Paul Bianchini, Paris
1991
Exposition Inaugurale, Galerie Toner—Paul Bianchini, Paris
1990
12 Artists of Sens, Bürgersaal, Konstanz, Germany 1985 Electroworks, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
1984
Electra, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris New Media 2, Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden
1981
Ars+Machina I, Maison de la Culture de Rennes, France Otto Artista Della Jill Kornblee Gallery, Galleria del Cavallino, Venice, Italy
1980
L'Electrographie, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
La Photocopie, Musée d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
1979
Electroworks, George Eastman House, New York; Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York
1977
Dialogue, UNESCO, Paris
1976
Dialogue, UNESCO, Paris

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Frac Île-de-France, Paris, France
Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Whitney Museum, New York, NY, USA
Arcadia University, Glenside, PA, USA

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Short Works
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Hill, Pati. "Ben." Paris Review, no. 15 (1956): 58–75.
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REVIEW OFF TOPIC JUN 08, 2021

X x Pati (X times Pati)

BY ROBIN WAART

Something other than either *at Kunstverein München, March-August 2020 & Kunsthalle Zürich, December 2020-May 2021.*

In Waking Life *at Ampersand (with Sylvie Fanchon, Ana Jotta, Martin Laborde, Anafaya Supico), Lisbon, July 2020.*

Heaven's door is open to us / Like a big vacuum cleaner / O help / O clouds of dust / O choir of hairpins *at Air de Paris, Romainville, September-October 2020.*

Mrs. Beazle *at Treize, Paris, February-March 2021.*

It is not so easy to write about Pati Hill without quoting her, finding a hold in her own words, whether it is from the notes on copying in *Letters to Jill* (1979), from the unpublished reflections in the Hill archive at Arcadia University, or the early novelistic work as an advance notice to what was to come. This year has been the year of Pati, with exhibitions at Kunstverein München continued at Kunsthalle Zürich, followed by the triptych of shows at Ampersand in Lisbon, Air de Paris and Treize in Paris [1] , the gallery's online viewing room at Art Basel this March [2] and *100 Years Pati Hill* organized by the Kunsthalle on April 3 [3] . And in print: with the republication of *Letters to Jill* for the show in Munich, the reprinting of a number of her stories in *Octopus Notes 9* and the forthcoming edition of *One Thing I Know* by Octopus Press.

Pati Hill, Mrs Beazle at Treize, Paris, 13.02.2021-21.03. 2021
Photo by Aurelien Mole

The problem with the words here is one of images. That the only way, basically, of keeping pace with her career path as a writer first, then a photocopier, transforming from model to housewife, gallery owner, and poet to cartoonist, is of finding a device or a machine that does not care if something is text or not — an image, a three-dimensional thing, or something else.

Pati Hill, Something other than either at Kunstverein München, 07.03.2020-16.08.2020
Photo by Sebastian Kissel

If hers is an aesthetic that never came off the ground in the time it came to fruition, the question is what makes Hill's work so attractive now, and the answer (or one of many): that we have been sensitized by a generation of artists that use degradation as a medium to complicate reception and circulation, Lutz Bacher, Marieta Chirulescu, Trisha Donnelly, Wade Guyton, Joëlle Tuerlinckx as the first to come to mind [4], to not just like, but *love* to see this happening.

Pati Hill, Something other than either at Kunstverein München, 07.03.2020-16.08.2020
Photo by Sebastian Kissel

What? The elusive but usually still recognizable, often still timeless objects that she started xeroxing in the early 70s, white after-images of domesticity on a bed of black toner. (Wo)men's shirts, on standard blank or pastel papers. A pork chop peaking out at me like a rat cowering away. Photocopies of a mirror morphed into a flash of dark nothing. The framed and matted Pati, as she had presented herself in the few exhibitions she had during her lifetime: in the combining of text with photocopied photographs (termed 'illustrations') by the likes of Doisneau and Hervé for *Impossible Dreams* published in 1976 and the photostrip-like series of xeroxed press images for the Compagnie des wagon-lits (*Men and Women in Sleeping Cars* of 1979 —the year of Douglas Crimp's expanded version of 'Pictures' for October— that time-warp her copies into the heart of the Pictures Generation. (At Kunstverein München and Kunsthalle Zürich.) The texts of *Dreams Objects Moments* on sheets of "classic office paper in tints of pink, pale green and baby canary" [5] , but now fortuitously in a group context, presented in relationship with the work of Ana Jotta, Martin Laborde, Anafaya Supico and Sylvie Fanchon. (In Lisbon at Ampersand.) And with the stardom of newness (in the fresh Komunuma gallery space of Air de Paris, in Paris): a smaller selection of xeroxed objects, flowers and segments from *A Swan*, outweighed by an installation of a 150 leftover copies of *Slave Days* (1975) and the entirety of Hill's collection of vacuum cleaner advertisements, on the wall, in a vitrine, summarized and redoubled in a video fragment from Claude Torey's *Toreador* (1983): one minute and eleven seconds of Hill herself performing the photocopier, wearing dark sunglasses against the bright artificial light it emits—pulling a scarf through the copier's head to the sound of an unwelcoming electronic swoosh echoing in and out of the galleries, as if a spaceship were about to land and immediately take off again, like a theremin.

Pati Hill, Something other than either at Kunstverein München, 07.03.2020-16.08.2020
Photo by Sebastian Kissel

Hill's works, if anything, are repeated asynchronous steps into the future, even when often this future never happened. As much about technology as technique, when the work is shown, everyone is careful not to frame the pieces as in any way nostalgic. The last exhibition to open, *Mrs. Beazle* at Treize, curated by Baptiste Pinteaux (who also signed for the show at Air de Paris; and, together with Martin Laborde, that at Ampersand; [6] while the exhibitions in Munich, repeated in Zurich, were curated by Maurin Dietrich, and co-curated with Daniel Baumann for the Kunsthalle Zürich), is more than an exemplary sampling. Intended to showcase the loosely bound books of prints and misprints that had also been part of *Something other than either* [7] , but shifting its premise pending covid, to copy pieces, computer prints, film and audio recordings from the estate still in France in the collection of Hill's daughter and Nicole Huard, her friend and last assistant. This limitation has proven felicitous in the double sense of the Latin words *felix* (happy) and *felis* (cat), leading to a version of 'Pati'/Hill

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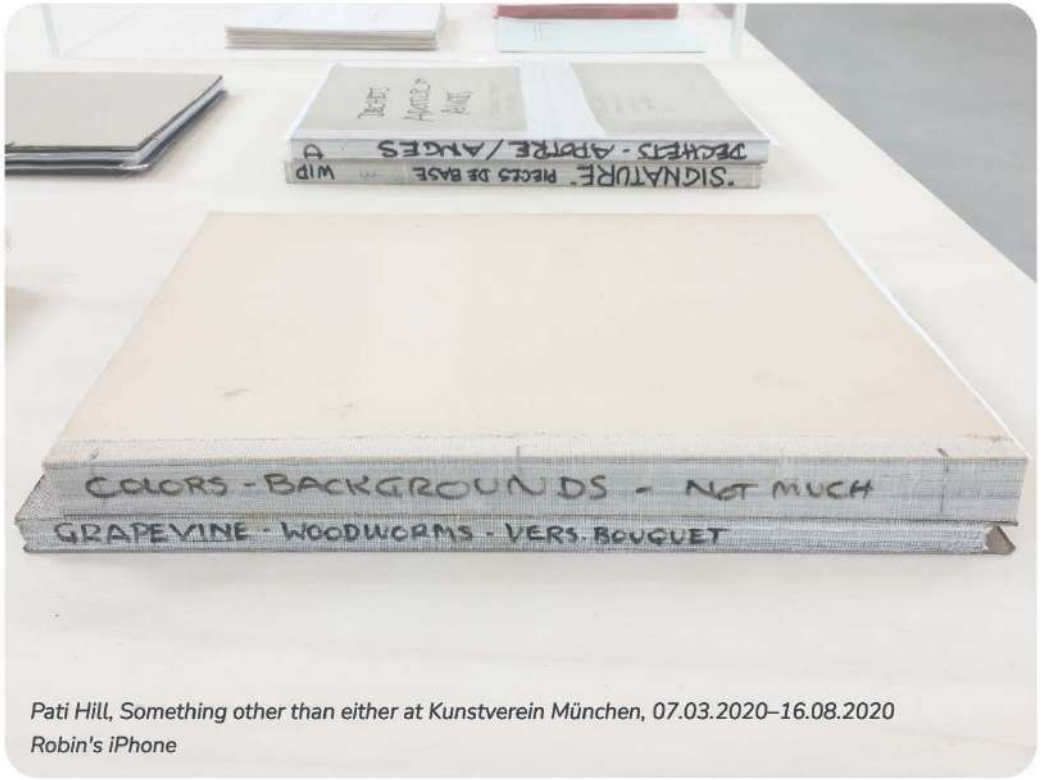
that is as unpredictable as it is unpretentious, and the most faithful introduction into her work and process thus far.



Pati Hill, Something other than either at Kunstverein München, 07.03.2020–16.08.2020
Robin's iPhone

On one side (left), the early publications, the books, and the article *Cats* as it was published in the 1955 Summer issue of *The Paris Review*, on a long shelf without glass, for the touching and reading, copies and drawings, on mylar, taped to the wall or in simple clip frames, and some green *Dreams*, leading to 26 pink *Objects*. Then followed by three of the already signature b/w photocopies —in color now, of red petals, some white—, more of the drawings of cats, of their namesake Mrs. Beazle's kind, and the first of the many cartoons that flank the other wall. Yellow *Moments* against the back of the long, rectangular room, where both sides of the work come together. The cartoon of an elephant and possible feline captioned '*Faster* ! and more circussy colors. . .' that reappears toward the entrance of the exhibition, just as the A4-photograph of Hill with one of her cats in the studio, slung around her neck like a living scarf, taped onto the window and repeated indoors, in the back left, making a point of the French spaced punctuation.
[8] That with copies, when repetition is a matter of pressing a button, onceness is not what matters.

Pati Hill, In Waking Life at Ampersand, Lisbon, July 2020 (with Sylvie Fanchon, Ana Jotta, Martin Laborde, Anafaya Supico)
Photo by Bruno Lopes

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The really surprising series is in the eight clip frame pieces on paper, back to the right wall, that have an air of water poured over ink, of animals hiding in blue and purple-pink puddles: drawings of rats, cats, birds, a bear, that like all the others turn out to be copied and recopied drawings, flipped with the color amp on max and mirrored so that in one of them two tailed rats stand looking at each other like divided twins. The lines they are drawn and redrawn with have become angular, scratchy, interrupted, crumpled folds tracing an invisible model. This 'copied' line you see here is not blotted, but *blotched*, even if both (Hill's copied one and the Warholian blot line) come as the result of touch not taking place, not originals, but reconstructions of contact broken, and the copier's blurry colored exaggerations. Like the lines in the palm of a hand, what they reproduce is the messiness of life, where indeed sometimes dreams, objects and moments intersect, are the same. It makes sense to say: A photocopier is the opposite of a vacuum cleaner —which as Hill wrote in her short story *Cats* (1955) [9] can be used equally genre-breaking, simply to scare a bored old tom [10] — a machine that spits out ink dust.

Pati Hill, in Waking Life at Ampersand, Lisbon, July 2020 (with Sylvie Fanchon, Ana Jotta, Martin [illegible])
Photo by Bruno Lopes

In that sense too the take and retake this series are made from is a blueprint for the copy act Hill is getting known for since her first exhibitions at Arcadia University in 2016 [11] and Essex Street in 2018 [12] . It is even better, and more than exemplary, because this selection matches the mismatch Hill's work was to the art world (despite her vicinity to it, through her husband's gallery, the friendship with Diane Arbus), and even why after the early recognition as a promising writer, her work was not picked up in the way it is now. The 24 cartoons signed 'Copyright Patricia Hill Bianchini (PHB)' and dated '200 ' and '2004' on Treize's right wall proved unsalable: the *New Yorker* refusing to print the cartoons she submitted, while Hill on her end was not satisfied with the font used to caption them. The emblem of the cat, then, becomes / has become that of the misfit, that goes her own way, refusing refusal, with eight more lives and chances left.

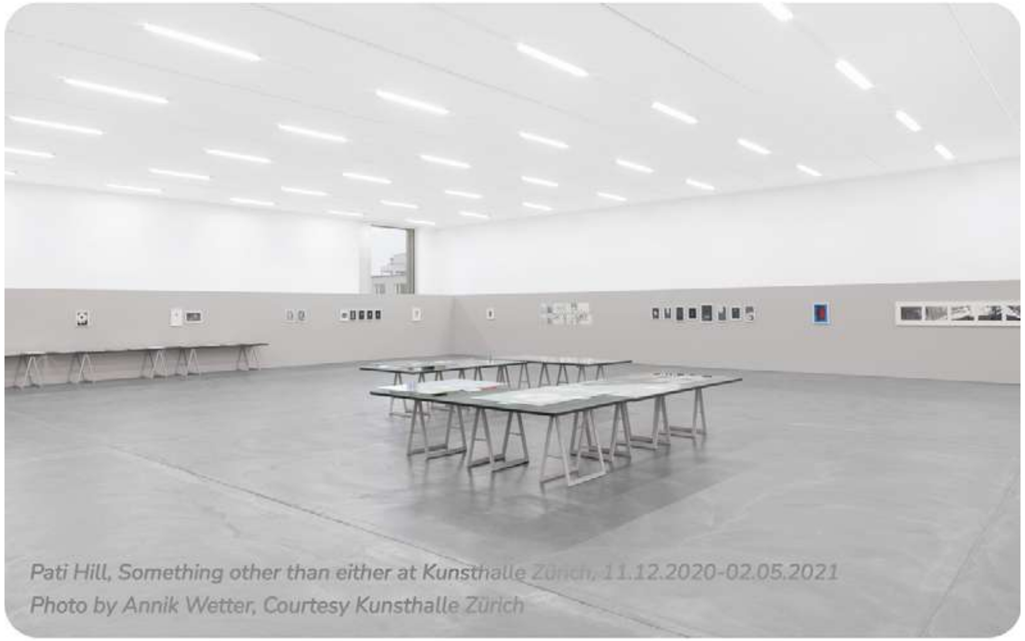
Pati Hill, Heaven's door is open to us / Like a big vacuum cleaner / O help / O clouds of dust / O choir of hairpins at Air de Paris, Romainville, 12.09.2020-17.10.2020
Photo courtesy Air de Paris

Mrs. Beazle is different from the joyous, exuberant presentations that preceded, in a space run by a group of curators that allows for a break with the official rhythmic formality of a survey in the gallery and Kunstverein/Kunsthalle settings — a liberty to choose to show less that is just as needed to provide Hill her placing in art history as its story rewrites itself.

It is this 'other' Pati that speaks here. In the works, in her own voice resounding from the small television screen, on the floor, behind the sofa in the middle of the space, that takes on the position of the viewer, listening to itself. A pensive, somewhat sad and murmuring tone, speaking both to someone specific and nobody in particular, into the camera, the microphone, smiling at other decades, that seems to be looking back but might as well be looking forward to us.

Pati Hill, Heaven's door opens to me / like a big vacuum cleaner / O help / O clouds of dust / O choir of hairpins at Air de Paris, Romainville, 12.09.2020-17.10.2020
Photo courtesy Air de Paris

With all the 'What if?' surrounding the work, and the ambition that just about comes through too, at times, when she turns her photocopies of a found dead Swan into an 'Opera' and that an impossible undertaking as like *Photocopying Versailles* makes so clear, that puts Hill where a lot of artists are who do not have the means or the network to erupt into the career she is ('finally') getting now. *What if* Charles Eames had lived to answer the letter she wrote asking him if he knew people at the Museum of Modern Art and *what if* he had proposed *A Swan* to the MoMA. Maybe it was the not choosing that was not forgiving to her. The move from model to writer to mother and copy artist, from the manuals she amassed to the pictographs she would draw for her daughter, from decades of collecting vacuum cleaner advertisements to the drawn and copied comics at Treize follows a logic, but one that is irregular itself, an approach to the relationship between image and text that was constantly refreshed, and, because of that, has stayed hidden in plain sight.



Pati Hill, Something other than either at Kunsthalle Zürich, 11.12.2020-02.05.2021
Photo by Annik Wetter, Courtesy Kunsthalle Zürich

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While the approximately ten exhibits and events that took place over the year 2020-2021 all aim to reinstate and reintroduce Hill and could often not be visited in person, in real the institutional shows are not as austere as they might appear in documentation. With sometimes overlapping selections, then other exposures, *Something other than either* at the Kunsthalle Zürich maybe included fewer prints —but just a couple— than its counterpart in Munich, and while it had none of Hill's correspondence with Eames, more of the larger copy proofs for *Impossible Dreams* were laid out (filed with repeated 'do not crop' notations to the printers), next to other manuscripts on the tables in the center of the space. Both shows, though, featuring the sketch books of later color photocopy works that seem to have rarely made it out of the archive.

It is in the gaps between, in these books of 'discards', closed but ready to be opened —that gallery attendants will present upon request— in what does not give itself away immediately, that something really happens. Even if it is unclear what their contents are, studies or leftovers, extras, or purely archival material, dated with asyndetic titles in all caps like *Dreams Objects Moments: Versailles Rose Garden Dechet + Alternatives ('97), Dechets Apotre et Anges, Unsigned 'Unresolved' fragments and Leftovers References Ubix ('95) or simply Blue 1989?* — they were carefully glued, bound together and never thrown away.

Pati Hill, Something other than either at Kunsthalle Zürich, 11.12.2020-02.05.2021
Photo by Annik Wetter, Courtesy Kunsthalle Zürich

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One of the images copied and recopied, enlarged and blurred almost endlessly in the folder *Vers. Canal Folio - End Papers Dechet* ('95), seems to reappear not as an indecipherable abstraction of green-blue flowers (an end-paper?) but at last readable as a reference or part of the logo for the 'Espace Jules Verne' in Sens on the invite for Hill's show *Xerographies* of May 1990, prompting visitors to leaf both through Hill's books on 'l'art xérographique et ses romans', on view under the glass of one of the other vitrines.

Pati Hill, Mrs. Beazle at Treize, Paris, 13.02.2021-21.03.2021
Photo by Aurélien Mole

What these exposures, exclusions and inclusions of alternatives, in the books, on the tables, the vitrines and collection of vacuum cleaners at Air de Paris, and the copied drawings on the walls of Treize make exponentially visible, audible, clear is the upside of indecision. You don't repeat something if you already know for sure, if you know what you are looking for, if you've had enough of it. The photocopier, Hill says somewhere toward the end of *Letters to Jill*, is a cropping device, always partial, that reproduces the side "you do not see". [13] It is a machine that does not doubt itself, but produces it. The bound and unbound pages in the Hill archive are what this sustained doubt amounts to, looks like.

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No surprise, the situation she describes in a letter of October 1980 about the impossibility of making copies to give away to friends, because "nothing seems complete enough to bother with actually sending anywhere" [14] — mirroring a remarkably self-reflexive passage in *The Pit and the Century Plant* —her first novel— published 25 years prior in 1955, about the hardships at deciding which of "hundreds of happenings" to write or not write about because "none of them were any more vital than the next one, or any more complete in itself." [15] But there is also the opposite, that comes as a discovery, in *Letters to Jill* again, being confronted with and looking again at a floor strewn with photocopies of a clam shell that Hill had nearly labeled and archived as 'rejects', when she will suddenly "see that that clam shell is *the* clam shell". [16]
A silent performer with a loud machine: the photocopier herself, always already an audience, a witness. [17] Already enough, but not enough either.

1. As well as the group shows *Nothing Is So Humble: Prints from Everyday Objects* at the Whitney in New York and Pictograms *Signs of Life, Emojis: The Society of the Signs* at the Leopold-Hoesch-Museum in Düren and the Museum für Neue Kunst in Freiburg ↩

2. Air de Paris with Pati Hill at Art Basel OVR: Pioneers, 24.03.2021–27.03.2021 with an online discussion between curator and director of Kunsthalle Zürich Daniel Baumann, curator Baptiste Pinteaux and gallerist Florence Bonnefous on March 25 ↩

3. *100 Years Pati Hill – A day of readings live streamed:* http://kunsthallezurich.ch /de/100-years-pati-hill ↩

4. And the ground-breaking exhibitions *(Other) Mechanisms* curated by Anthony Huberman at the Wattis Institute in San Francisco and Secession in Vienna (2017-2018), that it is hard not to be reminded of here, featuring Jay DeFeo's *Untitled* (1987) photocopied series of a tissue box that could have come straight out of Hill's hat (but did not). ↩

5. A description that is impossible not to quote from: Pati Hill, *Letters to Jill.* A catalogue and some notes on copying. Kornblee Gallery, New York (1979). Reprint Kunstverein München and Mousse Publishing (2020), p. 104 ↩

6. Pinteaux and Dusapin run *Octopus Notes* together with Alice Pialoux and Martin Laborde. ↩

7. "Most of the exhibitions I have made so far would do ok without words. I am increasingly interested in work that is interdependant though. *Work in which the two elements fuse to become something other than either.*" Pati Hill, *Letters to Jill*, p. 121 (italics by Hill) ↩

8. The non-breaking space in '. . .' ↩

9. Pati Hill, *Cats*, in *The Paris Review*, issue 9, Summer 1955 ↩

10. "I would run the vacuum cleaner to give him the pleasure of putting his hair on end", Pati Hill, *Cats* in *The Paris Review*, Summer 1955: https://www.theparisreview.org /letters-essays/5021/cats-pati-hill ↩

11. *Pati Hill: Photocopier: A Survey of Prints and Books (1974-83)*, Arcadia University, 25.02.2016–25.04.2016: https://www.arcadia.edu/add-content/page-68 ↩

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12. *How Something Can Have Been At One Time And In One Place And Nowhere Else Ever Again*, Essex Street, New York, 08.09.2016–21.10.2018: https://www.essexstreet.biz/exhibition/122 ↩

13. "It is the side of your subject that you do not see that is reproduced." Pati Hill, *Letters to Jill*, p. 119 ↩

14. Pati Hill, Letter of October 1980 to the writer Thomas McGonigle, reprinted in *Photocopier: A Survey of Prints and Books (1974-83)*. Arcadia University Art Gallery, 2017, p. 37 ↩

15. "And that is how it seems to be with everything, in fact. There were hundreds of happenings that delighted and interested me and were good to think about, but none of them were any more vital than the next one, or any more complete in itself. They were all interdependent and intertwined and interlaced that you could not call any of them a story when you cut it all up and divided it out. Oh it was terrible!", Pati Hill, *The Pit and the Century Plant*. Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York 1955, p. 190 ↩

16. Pati Hill, *Letters to Jill*, p. 116. ↩

17. It makes sense to relate this idea of witnessing to Robert Pfaller's conceptualization of *interpassivity*: on the one hand the photocopier (in both determinations: Hill *and* her machine) as a 'third eye', registering and seeing all of the work they produced for her — but also transposed to the relationship between the keeper and her archive, outlasting her. Indeed, Pfaller often literally refers to the act of photocopying as an example: 'Intellectuals, for example, often photocopy hundreds of pages from books in the library and then go home with a feeling of deep satisfaction. In doing this, they often have never considered that the photocopier might have just 'read' the texts for them.', Robert Pfaller (trans. Lisa Rosenblatt, with Charlotte Eckler and Camilla Nielsen), *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions Without Owners*. Verso, London/New York 2014, p. 29 (originally published in German in 2002). Pfaller's words, emptied of their magical thinking, reappear in Kenneth Goldsmith's reflection on the contemporary storing of pdfs, releasing into a concept of the archived as the future: 'On my laptop, I have hundreds of fully indexable PDFs of e-books. Do I use them? Not in any regular way. I store them for future use. Like those PDFs, all the data that's stored on my hard drive is part of my local textual ecosystem.', Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*. Columbia University Press, New York 2011, p. 29 ↩

Meredith Sellers, The Personal and Poetic of a Female Pioneer of Copier Art. Hyperallergic, April 20, 2020 [web]

HYPERALLERGIC

ART

The Personal and Poetic Prints of a Female Pioneer of Copier Art

Meredith Sellers April 20, 2016

Pati Hill, "Alphabet of Common Objects" (c. 1975–79), 45 black and white copier prints, each 11 x 8.5 inches (image courtesy Estate of Pati Hill)

GLENSIDE, Pa. — Last weekend, I made the short drive from Philadelphia to Arcadia University, about a half-hour outside the city. A friend had highly recommended an exhibition on view at Arcadia University, *Pati Hill: Photocopier, A Survey of Prints and Books (1974–83)*. I was not particularly excited to see a show of copier art. How different could the images of these photocopies be from the actual copies themselves? As I drove out to see it, I could not suppress the clichés of regrettable high school art projects, misconstrued collages, silly zines, and ubiquitous hands, faces, and ass cheeks pushed up onto Xerox machines.

Stepping into the gallery, I gazed at the show, curated by Richard Torchia, as it presented grids, lines, and vitrines bursting full of Pati Hill's delicate, remarkable images, all made on the rather unremarkable IBM Copier II. My cynicism was obliterated. I felt a stunning empathy for these images of daily life, laid bare on the cold, smooth glass of a hulking electronic machine, contextualized by snippets of writing that dipped in and out of memory, metaphor, wit, and the kinds of fleeting thoughts one thinks but never utters aloud.

Installation view of 'Pati Hill: Photocopier, A Survey of Prints and Books (1974–83)' at Arcadia University Art Gallery (image courtesy Greenhouse Media)

The perfect everydayness — the absolute banality of the objects Pati Hill copied — creates its own meaning. Each object glimmers and sinks into the darkness of the black pigment that surrounds it like a drawing in the most luscious charcoal. The sheets are all 8 ½ x11 inches, standard copy paper size, but the fragility of the medium struck me as stubborn, poignant, utterly unpretentious. A successful novelist and model in the 1950s, Hill's artistic production grinded to a halt when she married her third husband, New York gallerist Paul Bianchini, had a child, and became a self-described housewife. As she fell into the role of wife and mother, a 10-year hiatus of her creative practice ensued. In the 1960s, however, she emerged from her hiatus to become a visual artist, in addition to a writer.

According to one much-cited account, Hill became first enamored with the photocopier when she noticed her own fingertips being copied in the margins of her texts, after which she began a long love affair with the machine, acquiring one on long-term loan from IBM and installing the unwieldy machine in her home (she preferred the IBM copier to the more common Xerox copiers because she said they yielded richer blacks).

Pati Hill, 'A Swan: An Opera in Nine Chapters' (detail of Chapter 5) (1978), installation of 32 captioned black and white copier prints, 13.75 x 8.25 inches (image courtesy Estate of Pati Hill) (click to enlarge)

A lightbulb, a shirt sleeve, a pair of glasses, a dandelion, a feather; singular objects are all permeated with light and subsumed into a beautiful inky, tar-like darkness. To achieve that darkness, Hill overloaded the toner on her copier, and embraced its imperfections, such as the white dots that sometimes occur when the pigment doesn't adhere to the paper. The images, staunch in their flat-footed objecthood, are transmuted into something contemplative, abstracted, metaphysical.

Never copying her own body, Hill deftly avoided the obvious tropes of feminist art, and even the subgenre of feminist copier art (forcefully tied in my mind to an utterly diluted iteration on a certain 1998 Tori Amos album cover). Hill said in an interview with writer and art historian Avis Berman:

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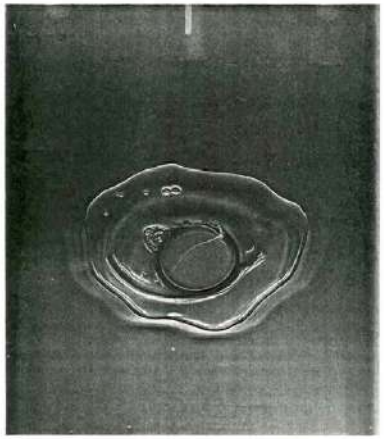
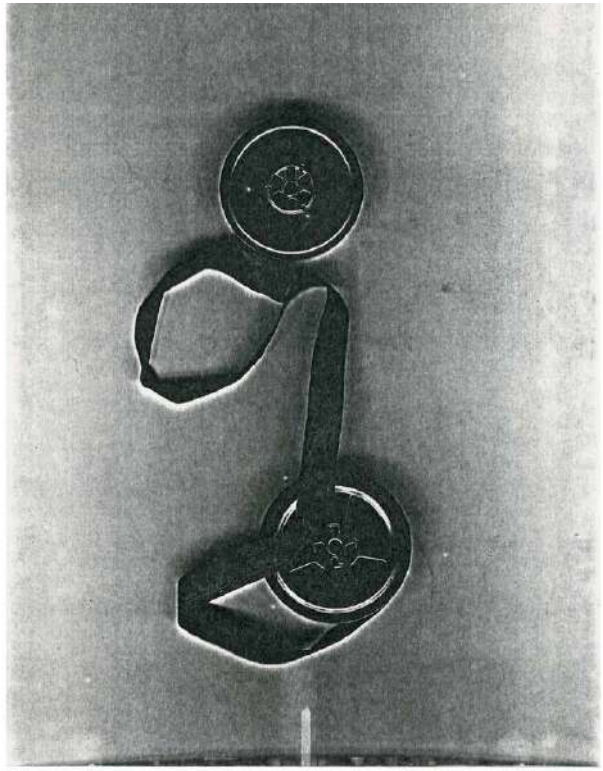
> I wanted to make something that had nothing in it that had anything to do with me, and this is where I started. But I realized, very difficultly, that you couldn't. It took me a long time to know that there was no such thing as that, but this is how I started working on a copier, because I wanted to get as far, as far, as far, as far, as far, and still, to me, be able to say what I wanted to say, but that there be nothing of me in it, and there couldn't be.



Pati Hill, "Common Objects (egg)" (c. 1975), black and white copier print, 11 x 8.5 inches (image courtesy Estate of Pati Hill) (click to enlarge)

In an auxiliary gallery, the exhibition continues with grids of multicolored copier paper in the standard shades of mint green, marigold yellow, and pale pink, presenting short poems that are each multitudes, containing drifting sentences inspired and posed by her images. "The conditions of my life appear to me as three salad bowls marked, respectively, 'Coarse', 'Medium' and 'No Time,'" read one. Many of these texts recall private moments of anger, embarrassment, or beauty that feel particular to femininity, to a woman tethered by social expectations. A line from her book *Slave Days*, which included 29 poems with images of her copier prints, reads, "A local housewife/ aged forty-eight/ sent off for a dream/ and received a plate."

Pati Hill refused labels, working alone with objects culled from her surroundings, making work radical in its simplicity and poeticism, and all on a mundane machine associated with administrative tediousness and boredom, in a medium that some did not even consider to be art. Her process and images find contemporary reference in painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and even net art. Her works are unusual in that they do not perform feminism; they do not present her body, or ask for your gaze, or play on your guilt. They exist, with an extraordinary matter-of-fact poeticism, as documents of the interior life of an irrepressible woman.



Pati Hill, "Alphabet of Common Objects (typewriter ribbon)" (c. 1975), black and white copier print, 11 x 8.5 inches (image courtesy Estate of Pati Hill)

Pati Hill: Photocopier, A Survey of Prints and Books (1974–83) *continues at the Arcadia University Art Gallery (Spruance Art Center, 450 S Easton Rd, Glenside, PA) through April 24.*

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April 2nd, 2020

Pati Hill at Kunstverein München

Artist: Pati Hill

Venue: Kunstverein München

Exhibition Title: Something other than either

Date: March 7 – August 16, 2020

Press Release:

This spring, Kunstverein München presents Pati Hill's first posthumous institutional solo exhibition in Europe. Hill (b. 1921 in Ashland, Kentucky, USA; d. 2014 in Sens, France) left behind an artistic output spanning roughly 60 years and encompassing various disciplines. Untrained as an artist, she began to use the photocopier as an artistic tool in the early 1970s and continued to do so until her death, leaving behind an extensive oeuvre that explores the relationship between image and text. In addition to this comprehensive body of xerographic work, she published four novels, a memoir, several short stories, artist's books, and poetry. Drawing also became an essential part of her practice.

The multidimensionality of Hill's motifs and the stark lighting that seems to emanate from the photocopier's depths distinguish her work from iconographic examples of Pop Art and offer another historical reading of that era. In addition to the primary works that Hill conceived for exhibitions during her lifetime, the presentation at Kunstverein München also encompasses a large portion of works that have never been shown before.

By using the copier—a machine that was stereotypically linked to secretarial work and thus to feminized labor—to trace everyday objects such as a comb, a carefully folded pair of men's trousers, or a child's toy, Hill developed an artistic practice that programmatically translated invisible domestic labor into a visual and public language. Through her use of this reproductive apparatus, she created a model of artistic production that critically opposes the convention of individual expression as well as the supposed neutrality of technologically produced images.

For example, the series *Informational Art* that Hill began in 1962 took printed diagrams and instructions from product packaging as their subject matter. Whether it was through detailed illustrations that showed housewives how to carve meat or instructions about how to make a doll dance, Hill was interested in arranging quasi-narrative sequences and the subsequent juxtapositions and coincidences of text and image that emerged. In 1975, Hill published the book *Slave Days* with financial support from the poet James Merrill. The book is comprised of 29 poems thematizing the partly fictionalized everyday lives of housewives, which were then juxtaposed with 31 xerographs. *Slave Days* was Hill's first work to combine her xerographs with her own texts, which also described the production site of the works with a sinister humor. In one poem she notes that "Heaven's door is open to us like a big vacuum cleaner," thus resignedly outlining the limits of her own spaces of agency. Here, Hill doesn't use the xerographs as material for a collage or the starting point for further production, but rather presents them alongside her texts as independent works. She thus had a sense of production and reception being equally important parts of her practice. Even though she mostly worked outside of an institutional context and exhibited irregularly, she also wrote about the process of publishing: "I have always thought publishing should be like taking your clothes to the laundromat."

In her 1981 book *Women, Race and Class*, American author and civil-rights activist Angela Davis explains how women's labor has been devalued under advanced capitalism. The separation of domestic labor from immediate profit means that women "can seldom produce tangible evidence of their work." Hill's works can certainly be seen in this context. In the series *Garments*, for example, she documents various pieces of clothing, like corsets or riding pants, whose reproduced images are characterized by high-contrast lighting as well as specific interventions with the copying machine, such as adding excess toner. It almost seems as though the glass platen of the copier is actually helping to fold the clothes, thus testifying to this otherwise invisible form of domestic labor. Hill deployed the copier's ability to flatten objects to surprisingly dramatic effect, and thus also made the process of image-making the subject of her work. Hill doesn't try to visualize the invisible as in some of her other works. Instead, she reveals the uncanny aspects of the familiar and questions its everydayness.

Already in the 60s, Hill had conceived of the private sphere as a site of political resistance. Several years before she began working with the copier, she wrote a short novel titled *An Angry French Housewife* that described a series of transgressions against heteronormative relationship models and was later published together with a number of xerographs under the title *Impossible Dreams*. At the same time, she worked on the series *Dreams Objects Moments*. Increasingly frustrated by the lack of access to her copier of choice, the IBM Copier II, she began creating short texts for "[...] an exhibition that conveyed

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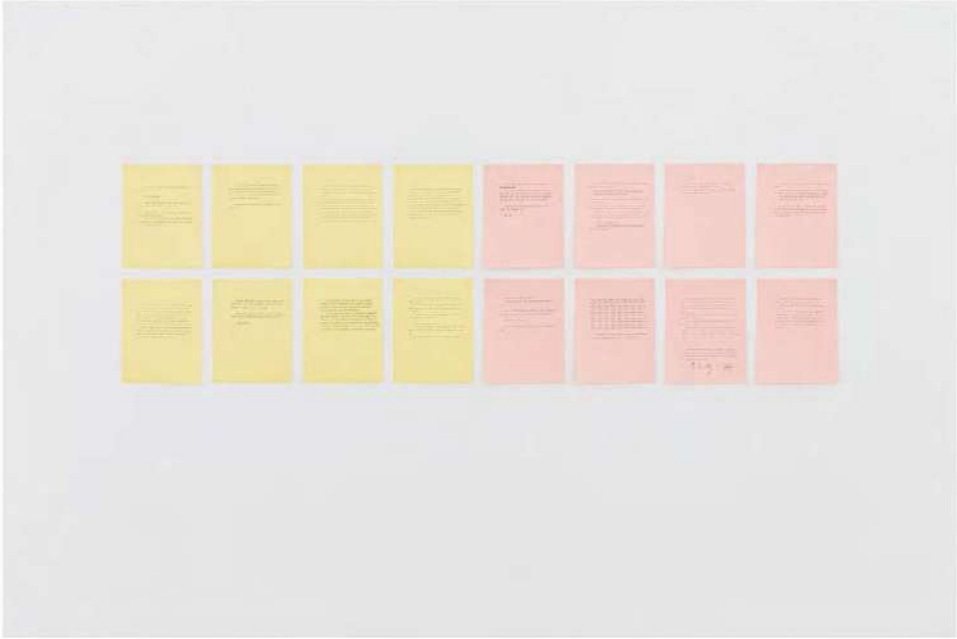
my feelings about copier work without requiring the use of a copier." By using colored paper–green for *Dreams*, pink for *Objects*, and yellow for *Moments*–Hill created elements of what she described as filters of how we receive and classify information by occasionally confusing the respective categories.

In 1977, Pati Hill met the designer and architect Charles Eames on a transatlantic flight. Through his consulting work for the IT company International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), he finally helped Hill access her long-coveted machine of choice. By 1979 she had used it to create two significant series of works, which differ formally but similarly pursue the destabilization of narration. Hill developed drafts for a universal sign language under the title *Proposal for a Universal Language of Symbols*. Shortly thereafter she wrote Eames to share her wish for the symbols to be "returned to their original position amongst us...where things were what they seemed." The second series was *Alphabet of Common Objects*, one of Hill's most important works. Arranged in a grid, the 45 images that comprise this work convey the potential that she attributed to visual communication. Moreover, her classification of the objects as alphabetic implies a "linguistic" quality in these images.

The series *Men and Women in Sleeping Cars*, made in the late 70s, is one of the very few examples that features people in her oeuvre, here sourced from advertising campaigns for the railway industry. Hill never made her own body the subject of her works. She thus stood apart, both formally and thematically, from the dominant tendencies in feminist art production of the 70s and 80s, where the female body was often taken as the starting point in order to extract it from a system of fetishizing and objectifying representations. Through her successful work as a couture model at a young age, Hill was confronted very early on with the dominance of the male gaze, which she negotiated accordingly in her work, only to go beyond this in her later artistic production. In *Letters to Jill. A Catalogue and Some Notes on Copying* from 1979, she writes: "Many copy artists are women and only copy themselves. I don't copy myself, but images were made of me for years, and this gave me a sense of reality. The reality of an object perhaps."

Ironically, the copier was invented by a patent attorney and finally led to a fundamental questioning of the concepts of ownership and authorship as well as the eventual strengthening of copyright law. The discourse around questions of appropriation, original and copy, seriality and authenticity were not only at the heart of Copy Art from the 1970s onwards, but are also inherent to contemporary art. This is, in part, what makes the first comprehensive presentation of Hill's work so relevant today. Though it takes the artist's visual work as the primary starting point, the exhibition also considers her writing, publishing, and editing as practices that both question and accompany the visual work. As a fragmentary, necessarily incomplete index of her engagement with image and text (re-)production, the show includes published novels, poems, sketchbooks, unpublished manuscripts, and letters in addition to the xerographs.

As part of the exhibition, a reprint of her publication *Letters to Jill* will be made available. In this 128-page book, Pati Hill explains the status of the copier and her working process in her own words to her New York gallerist Jill Kornblee, with whom she had a total of five solo exhibitions between 1975 and 1979. These texts shed light on Hill's relationship to excerpts and examples from earlier projects, making this publication a valuable document of her activity as an author, which encompassed both production and reception, a duality that was at the core of her artistic output.



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