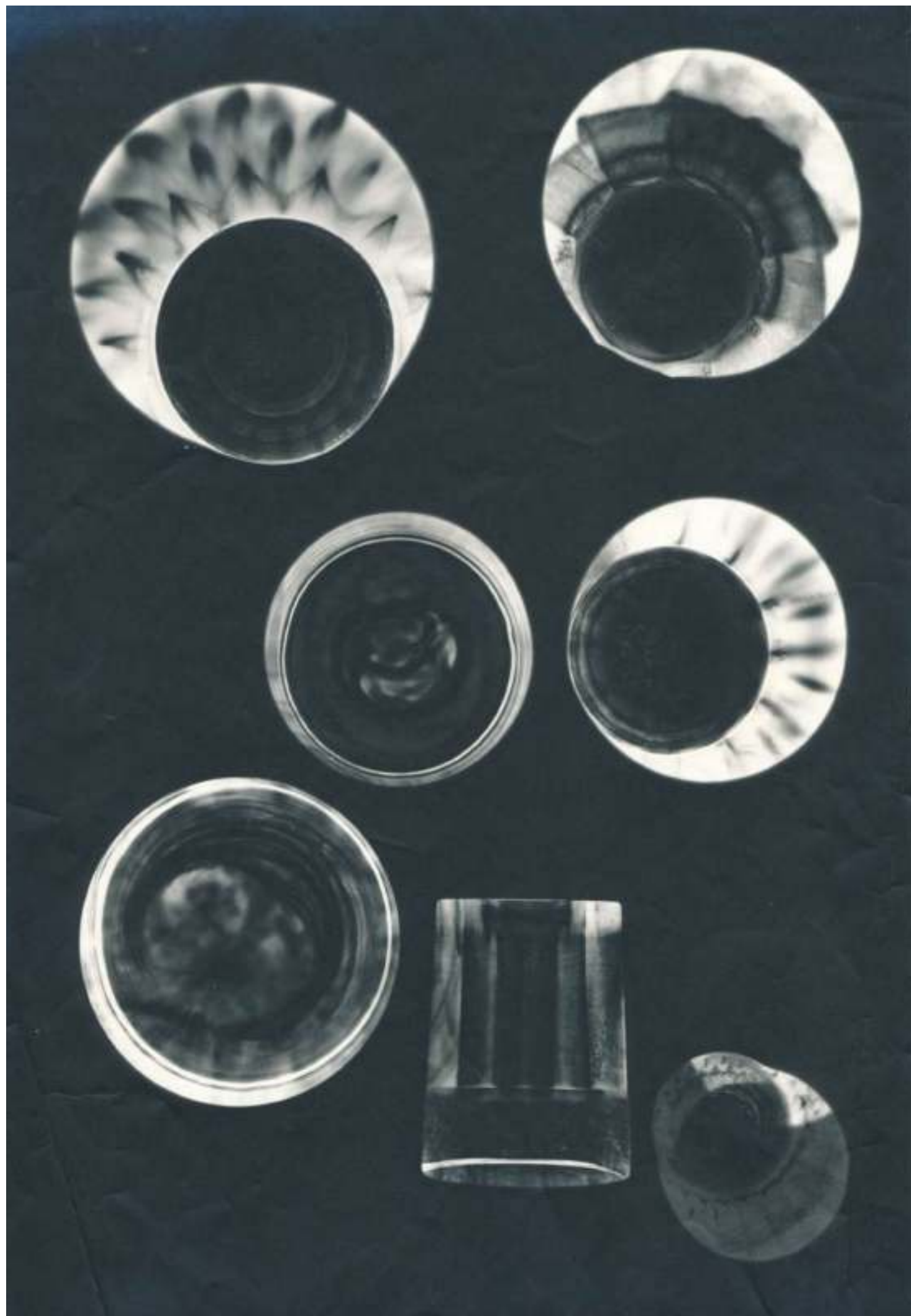


# Katalin Nádor & Máté Dobokay

## UNSEEN 2023



Katalin NÁDOR: *Transparences*, exhibition view, acb Gallery, Budapest, 2023



KN.01



MD.01

For the *Past/Present* section of Unseen, acb Gallery presents a visual dialogue between two Hungarian photographers of different generations, Katalin Nádor (1938-2018) and Máté Dobokay (b. 1988), both originating from the southern city of Pécs. Known as the cradle of Hungarian Bauhaus, Pécs offers to this day a fertile artistic ground where the artistic and architectural, geometric and constructivist legacy, the Op art tendencies as well as the spirit of the Bauhaus which was open and supportive of versatility, remains tangible.

KN.01 *Untitled*, c. 1970, gelatin silver print mounted on Docubrom paper, 29.4 x 20.7 cm

MD.01 *Silver on Glass*, 2019, silver, glass, 12 cm, Ø 9 cm



Máté DOBOKAY: *Révélation(s)*, exhibition view, Bigaignon Gallery, Paris, 2022

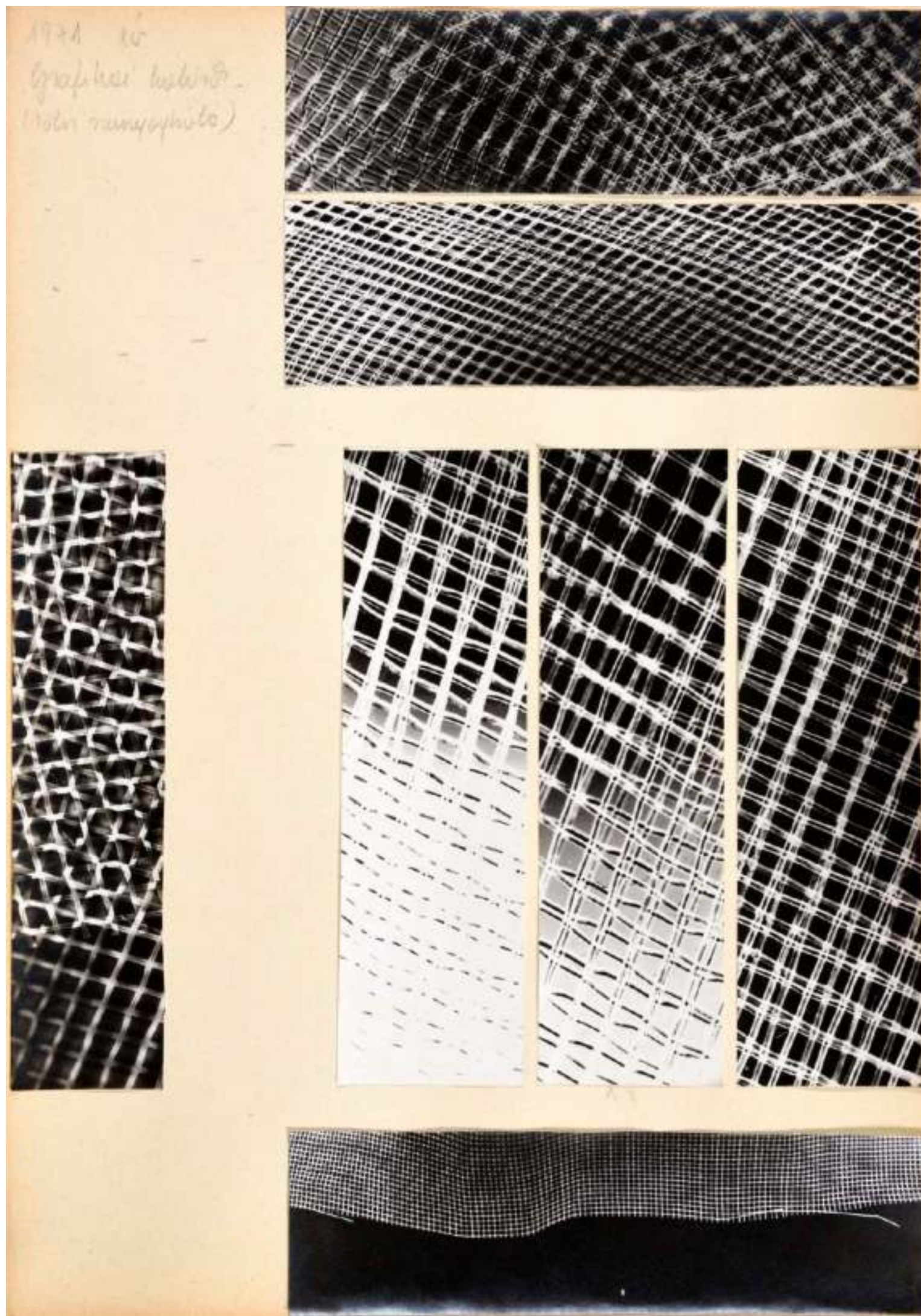
Katalin Nádor  
(1938-2018)



## Katalin Nádor

(1938-2018) was known for decades as the photographer of the Janus Pannonius Museum in Pécs where she worked on documenting artworks. Her name was also associated with the documentation of performances and exhibitions realized by the Pécs Workshop - an artist collective experimenting with new-media, conceptual photography and performance during the 1970s. The independent, lyrical abstract photographic work she had simultaneously developed in the course of the sixties and seventies did not receive any professional attention, albeit rooted in the visual heritage of György Kepes' and László Moholy-Nagy's photography, and reflecting on the contemporary, new constructivist, geometric artistic endeavours of the Pécs art scene. Her photograms, graphical still life analyses reveal a sensitive, singular artistic perspective that examines the aesthetic relation and reciprocity between nature and architecture, landscape and object through the lens of abstract photography.

In her experimental practice unfolding from 1963 to the end of the 1970s, and resulting in both geometric and organic abstraction, Katalin Nádor pursued the avant-garde photographic traditions represented by György Kepes and László Moholy-Nagy, the theories of bio-romanticism developed by Ernő Kállai, but also reflected on the contemporary, new constructivist, geometric artistic endeavours of the Pécs art scene. Her photograms, graphical still life analyses reveal an unwavering intention to highlight the unity of the world through its details; a sensitive, singular artistic perspective that examines the aesthetical relation and reciprocity between nature and architecture, landscape and object through the lens of abstract photography.

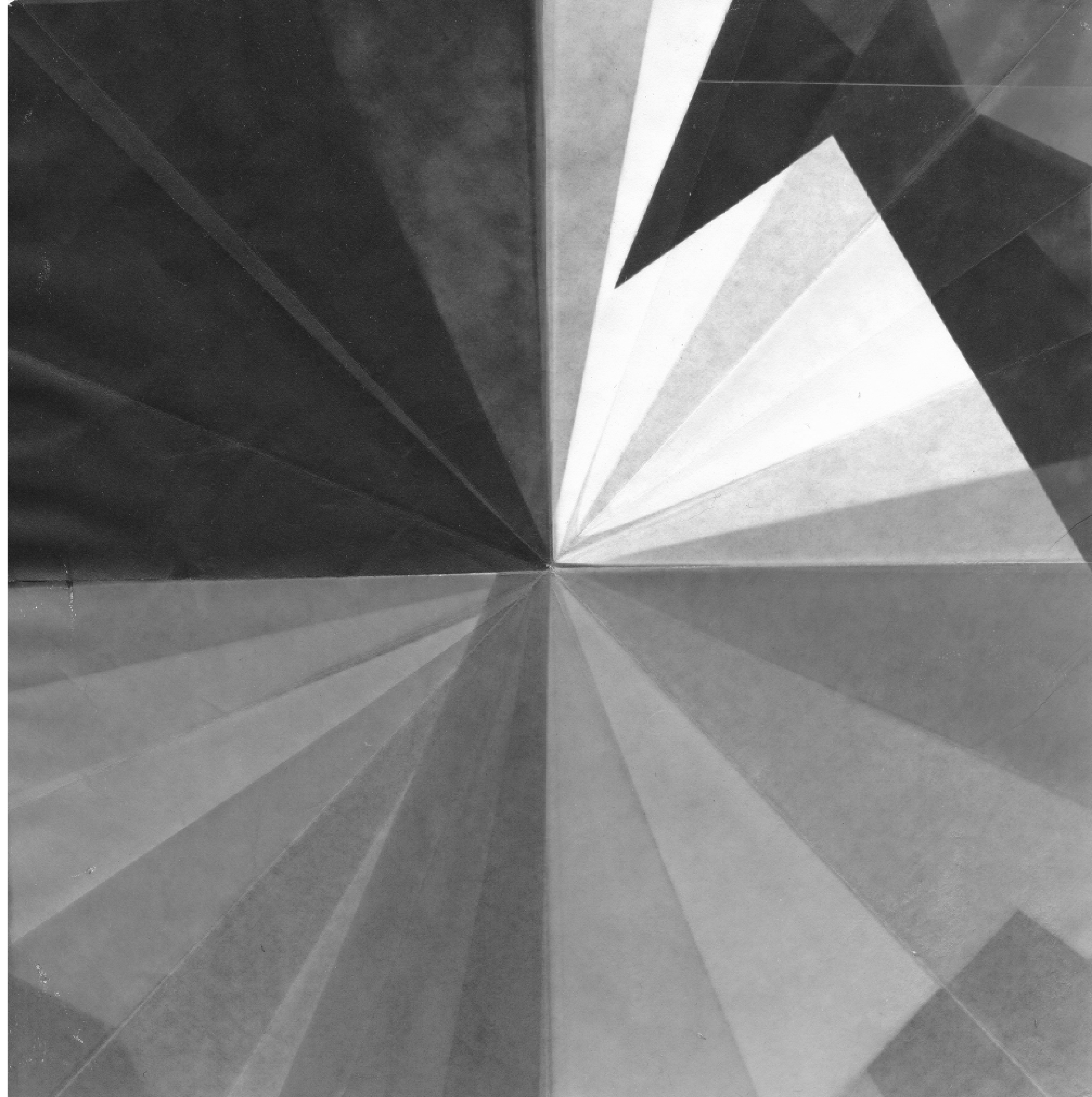


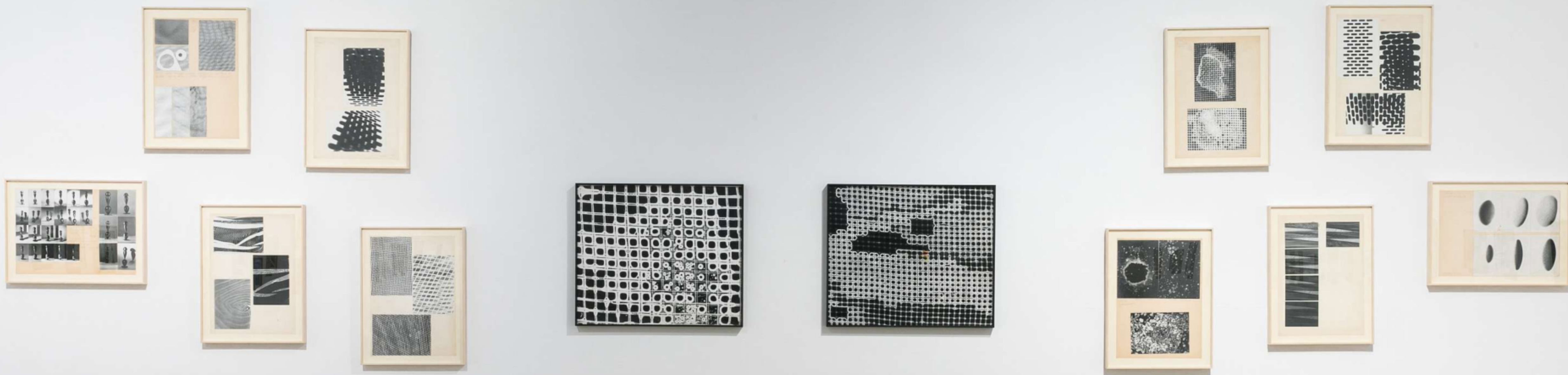
02

02 *Graphical Effects*, 1971, gelatin silver print mounted on cardboard, 43 x 30.4 cm

03 *Untitled*, c. 1970, gelatin silver print on Docubrom paper, 20.5 x 21 cm

03



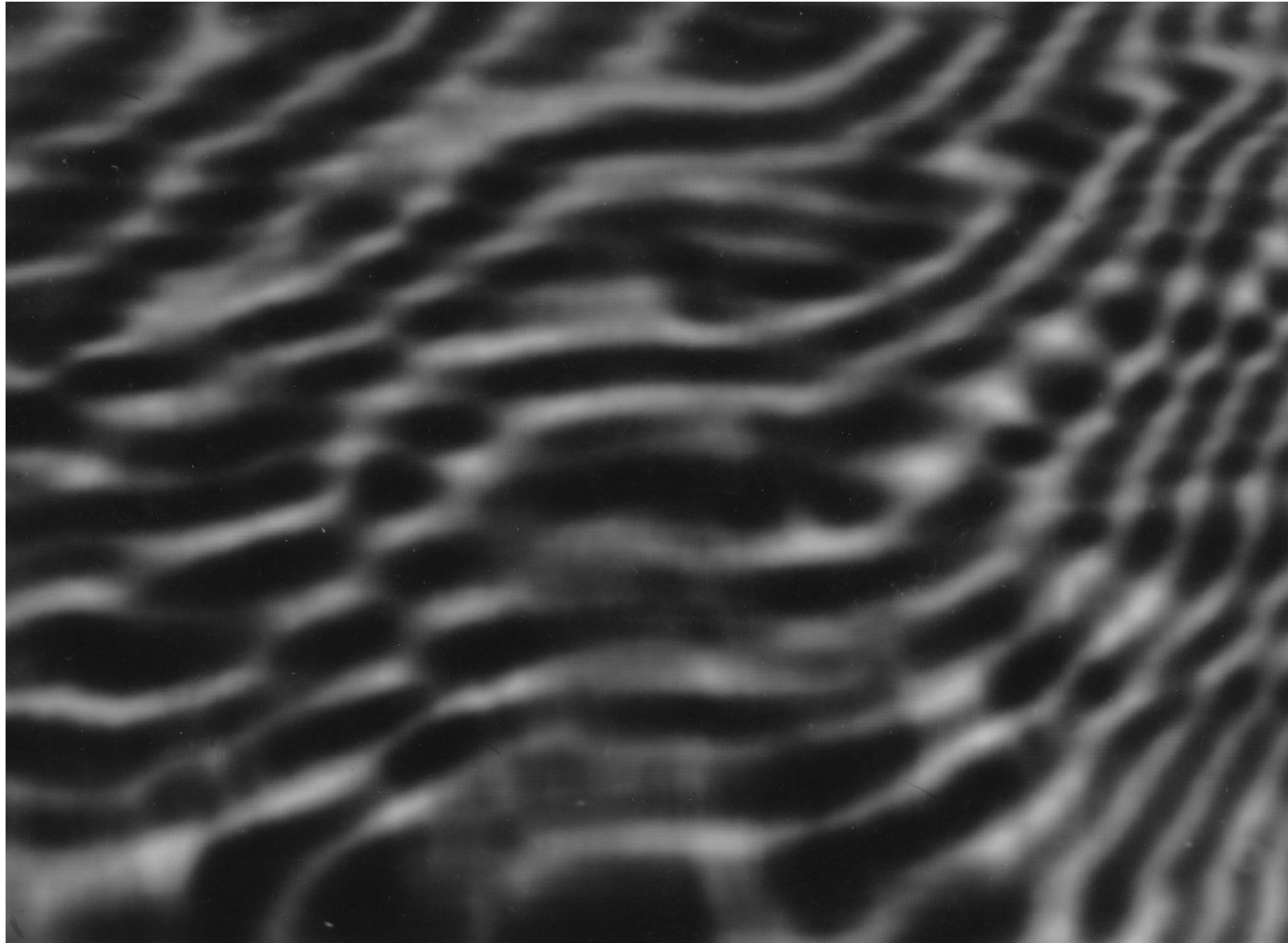


Katalin NÁDOR: *Surface and Shape*, exhibition view, Capa Centre, Budapest, 2019

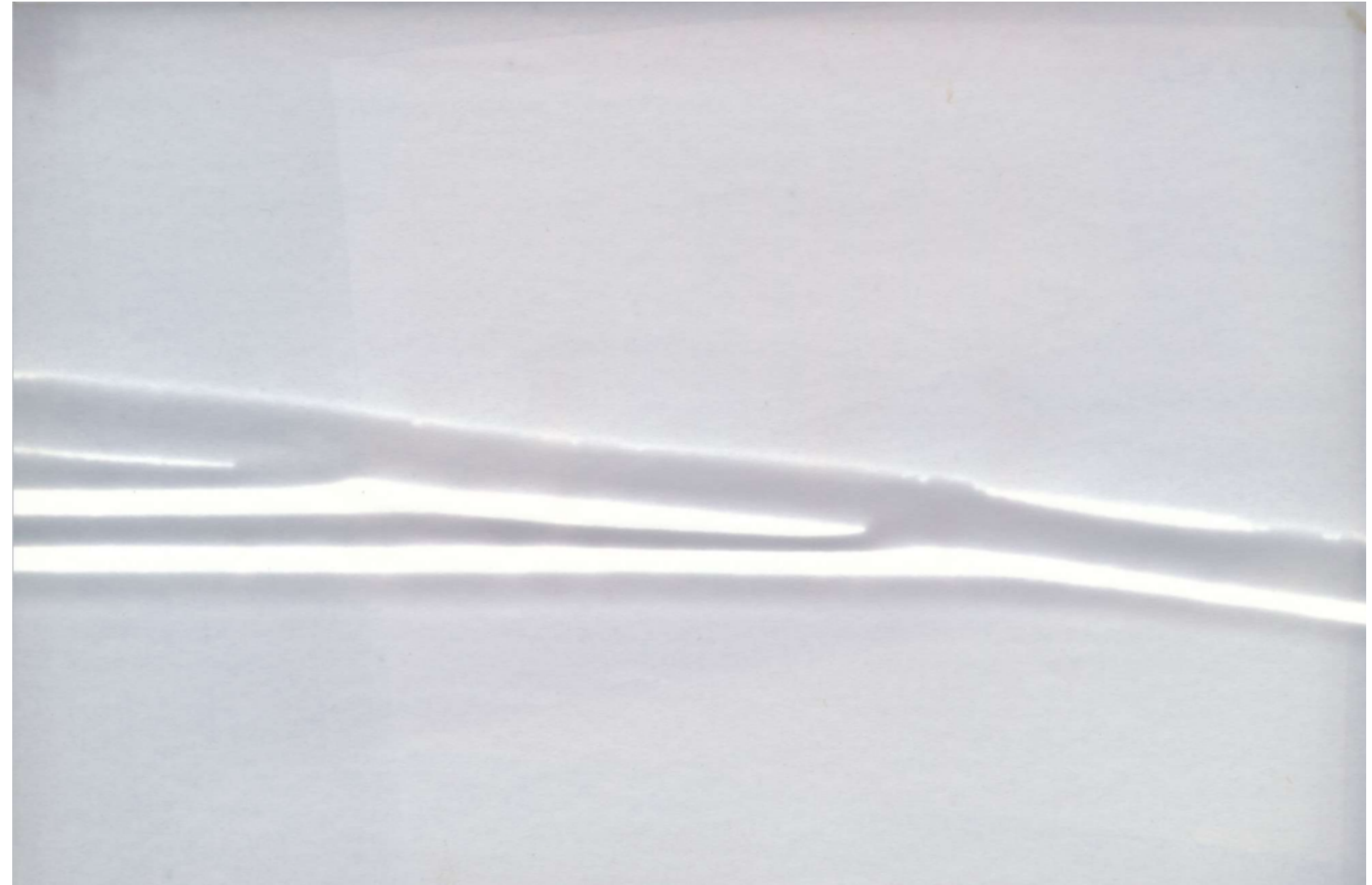




Nádor's secret artistic life reflected the fate of creative women working in countryside Hungary during the years of Socialism: her work as an artist evolved quietly, without any attention or acknowledgment from the professional scene, despite the experimental quality of her photographs. Her recent discovery unfolded in her solo exhibitions at acb Gallery and the Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center (2019, co-curated by Gabriella Csizek from the institution's side and acb art historian Róna Kopeczky), and resulted in a publication contextualizing her work and further international publications as well as exhibitions in preparation.



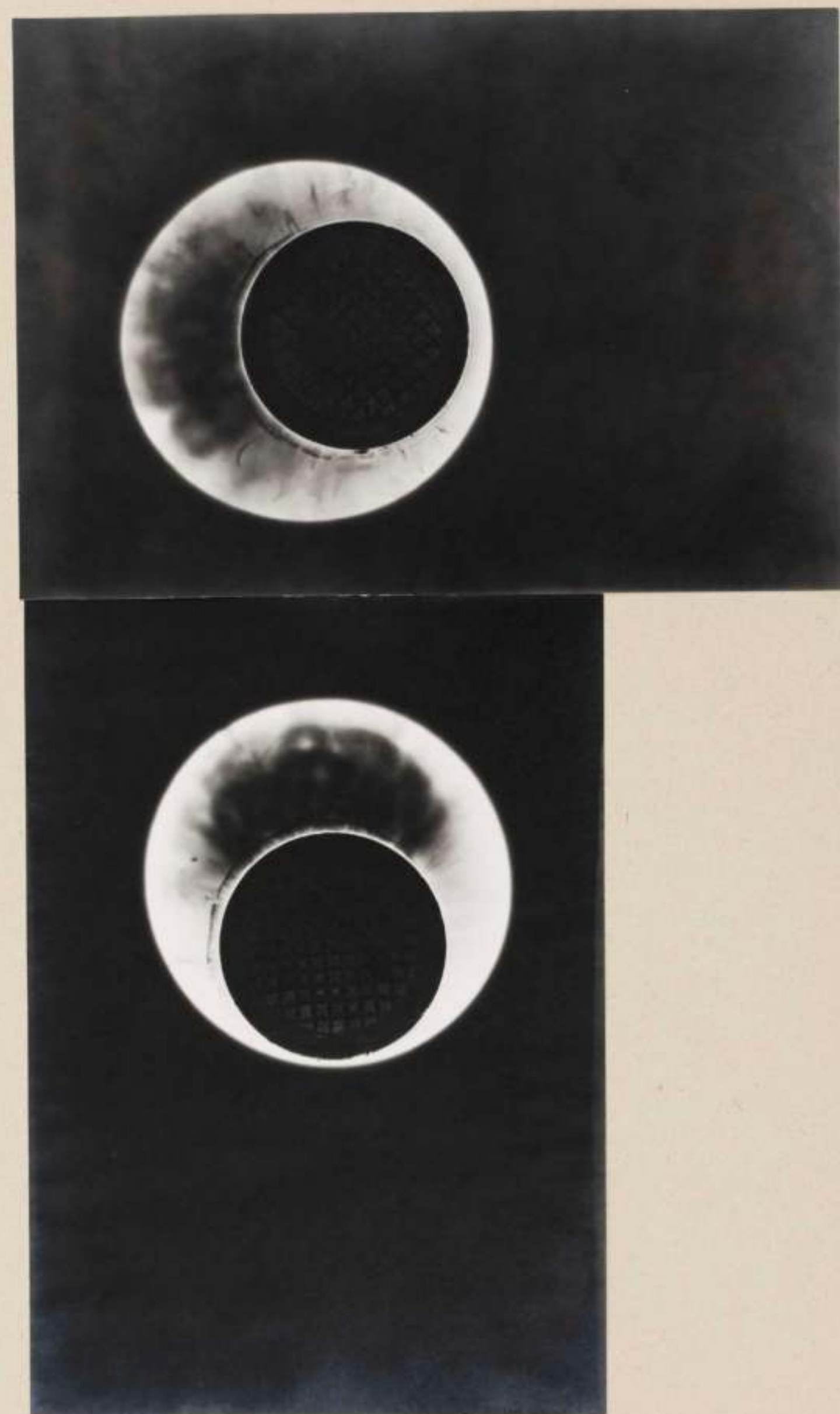
05



06

05 *Untitled*, c. 1970, gelatin silver print on Docubrom paper, 13 x 18 cm

06 *Untitled*, c. 1970, gelatin silver print on Docubrom paper, 14.7 x 20.9 cm



„[Making abstract photos] was during the Pécs Workshop period, primarily under their influence. And of course my experiences with photographing museum objects also prompted me to experiment in that direction, when I had the time – which was usually after work, in the late afternoon or evening. I woke up at dawn, I went shopping, then, at noon, I went home to take care of my mother and Jutka, and then, afterwards, I had unlimited time. I had also taken detail photos and made enlargements before my time with the Pécs Workshop, which depicted abstract and geometric motifs or even strangely shaped objects.

In taking photographs, it was not the camera and technology that captured my imagination. After a while I was interested not in the camera, but in lights and spatial effects. And at that point, everything becomes a blur. I always say I am not a photographer, but someone who works with light. And if that is what I say, then the photo as a tool can be categorized under anything, and it becomes acceptable to regard it as artwork. This is how I experienced the whole process of photography; as the possibilities in this medium are varied and multifaceted, a photo can be a piece of art just like a graphic work can.”

– Katalin Nádor

Máté Dobokay

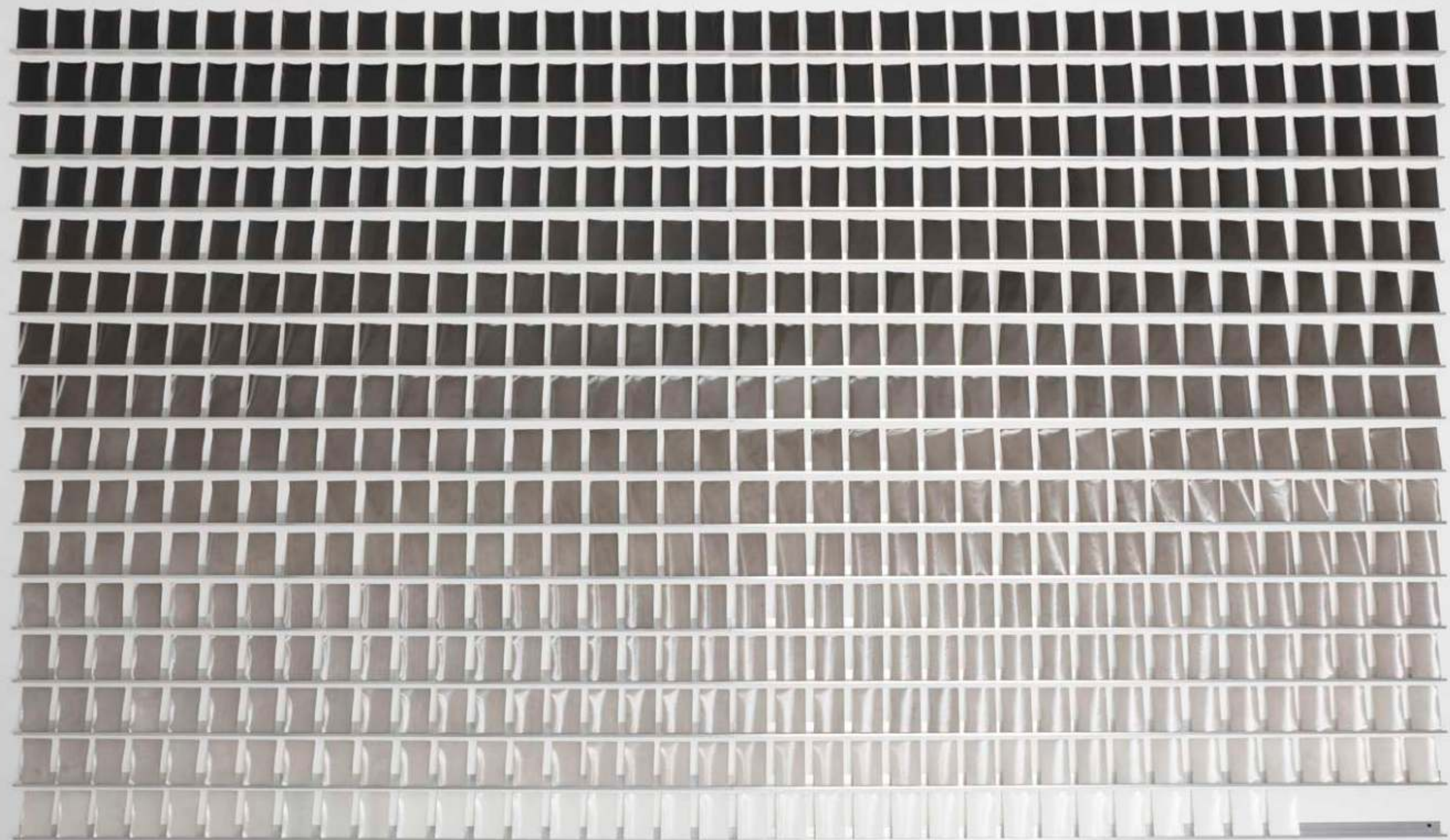
(b. 1988)



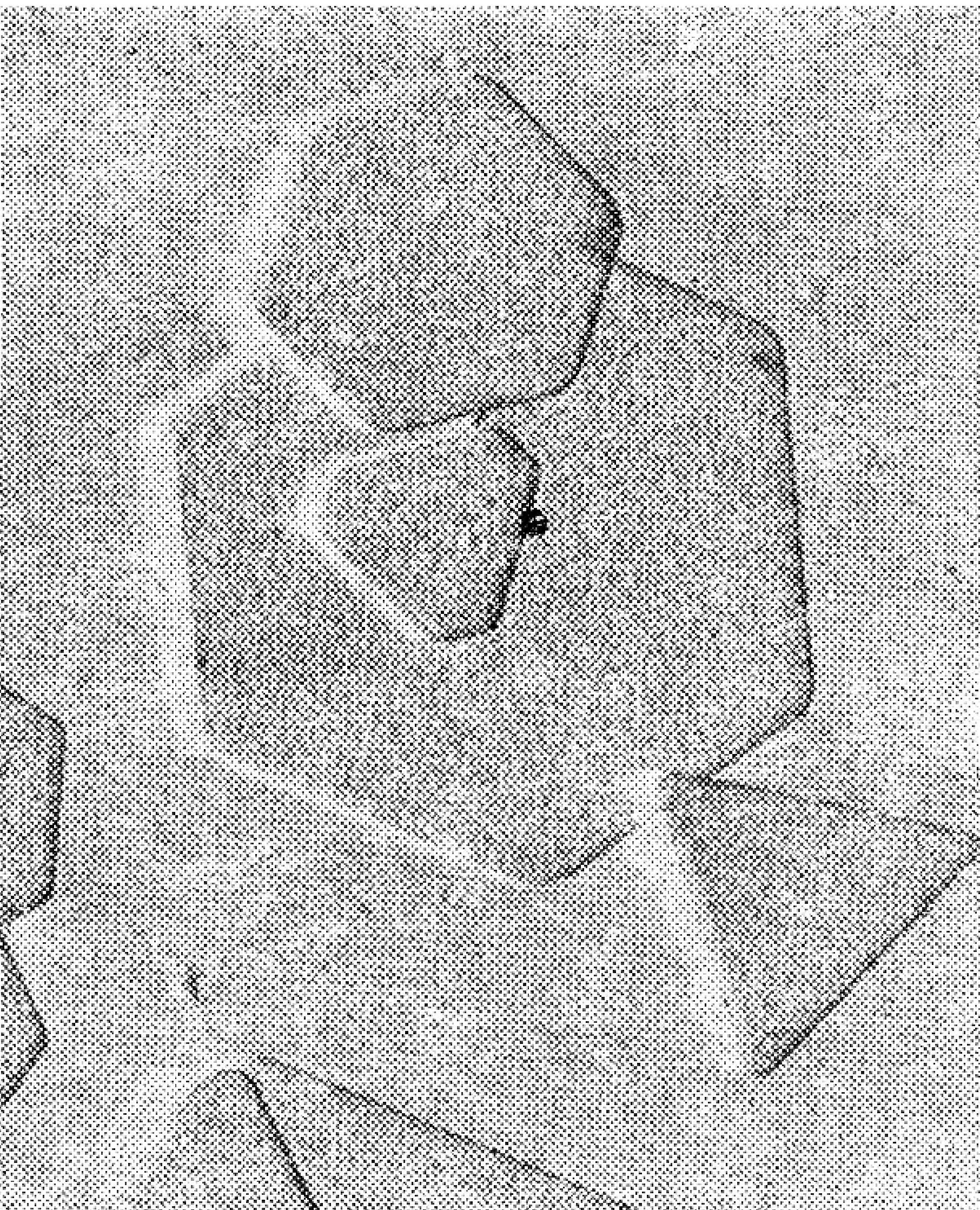
**Máté Dobokay**'s body of conceptual artworks pushes the boundaries of photography: they uncover the inner structures, raw materials, chemical and physical components of photography, often without a camera and as a result of lengthy research experimentation. In his analytical pieces that bear close connection with the history of painting, the paper, the photographic substances, as well as the chemical reactions all serve as means of artistic examination and of exploration of the medium itself.

Dissolution of silver from used fixer solution, deterioration, erosion and fading physical or chemical memory of the matter, fragile, almost ghostly marks and patterns left by silver residues on glass, zinc or paper, or imprints of chemicals seeping into the creases of the photo paper: Dobokay's chemigrams and photograms write a peculiar poetry of the raw components of photography.

Máté Dobokay (b. 1988, Pécs) studied at the University of Pécs and at the Photography BA Program of the University of Kaposvár. His works have earned him numerous awards and scholarships: in 2015-2016. He received the Fellowship of the Republic, was a semi-finalist of the 2015 Leopold Bloom Art Award and, in 2017, of the Esterházy Art Award. In 2014, he was a member of the winning team of OFF\_Festival of Bratislava and was also nominated for the Lucien & Rodolf Hervé Prize. In 2018, he was one of the two artists to win the first MODEM Prize in Debrecen. Since 2012, he has regularly exhibited at such venues as the Ludwig Museum, the Vasarely Museum, the MODEM, and the New Budapest Gallery. He has also participated in numerous European shows. He debuted as the youngest artist at the exhibition IMPACT: Abstraction & Experiment in Hungarian Photography in New York (2016). Between 2014 and 2017, he was a member, and from 2015-2017 an executive member of the Studio of Young Photographers (FFS). Since 2015, he has been a member of the Studio of Young Artists Association (FKSE). Most recently, he has shown a selection of works reflecting on the topic of his exhibition at acb at the Finnish Museum of Photography (Impression Remains – Helsinki Darkroom Festival, 2022).



Máté DOBOKAY: *Leftovers*, exhibition view, FKSE Studio of Young Artists' Association, Budapest, 2023



02



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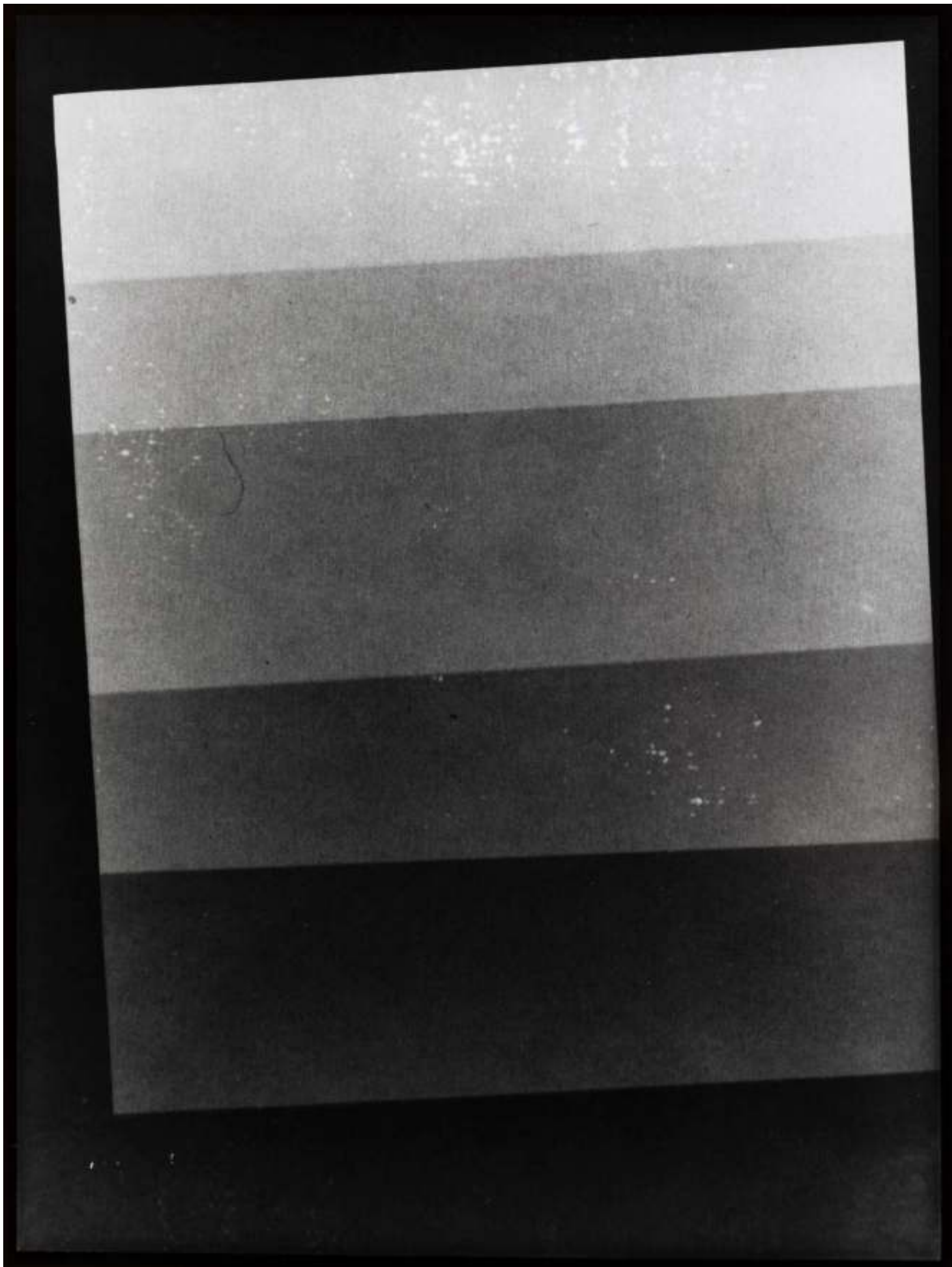


04

02 *Silver Halide Crystals*, 2022, giclée print, 141 x 115 cm

03 *Hommage à Simon Hantai*, 2019, chemigram on Docubrom paper, 100 x 60 cm

04 *Contact*, 2023, gelatin silver print, 23 x 17 cm



The artist – who earlier studied to be an optician and media technologist – approaches the breaking down into atoms of the raw material of a photo, the depositing of silver, and thus its salvaging, with the attitude of an analytical researcher and with the interest of a natural scientist. Gábor Pfisztner described the phenomenon of how the photographic procedure originally was far more closely tied to chemistry than to the free experimentalism of the artistic modes and means. Indeed, it was thanks to the science of chemistry that the demand for pictures could be satisfied. This aspect of technology history was mentioned by Roland Barthes in his work *Camera Lucida*, published in 1980: „It is often said that it was the painters who invented Photography. [...]. I say: no, it was the chemists. [...] And if Photography belonged to a world with some residual sensitivity to myth, we should exult over the richness of the symbol: the loved body is immortalized by the mediation of a precious metal, silver (monument and luxury); to which we might add the notion that this metal, like all the metals of Alchemy, is alive.”





Máté DOBOKAY: *Leftovers*, exhibition view, FKSE Studio of Young Artists' Association, Budapest, 2023

Showing the essence of silver from different perspectives, Dobokay's practice articulates the connection between painting, etching and photography. Presenting silver solutions in various states and on different support surfaces, the works materialize in different ensembles, i.e. from digital prints to pieces on canvas, prints on paper from zinc sheets and titanium zinc sheets with silver. As a visual and conceptual introduction to the physical works, the digital prints, blown up from different historical publications dedicated to photography, are microscopic views showing the basic structures of silver halide crystals and the way they are changing in form, shape and contour after their activation and exposure to light.

In his series entitled *Silver on Titan Zinc*, the artist performed electrolysis to obtain dissolved silver from used fixer solution and then captured the material, tangible essence of the chemical element on titan zinc sheets. The resulting visual effects and textural patterns are reminiscent of macrocosmic currents or microcosmic mineral, organic observations. The ensemble *Silverprint on Paper* consists of monotypes obtained by pressing zinc sheets loaded with dissolved silver on etching paper. The fragile, almost ghostly, disembodied visual effect they convey evokes the deterioration, erosion and fading physical/chemical memory of the matter.







KN.07



MD.03

Beyond formal parallels and correlations such as geometric compositions and organic motifs, lightening and darkening grades or the random play of chemicals on the light-sensitive paper, the dialogue that unfolds between Katalin Nádor's and Máté Dobokay's works roots deep in the essence of photography: it highlights how their respective experimental and playful approach to the photographic medium and its matters unfolds into the abstract realm. The pieces selected for the *Past/Present* section of *Unseen* obscure the subject of the photograph and blur the border distinguishing photograms, chemigrams and photographs. Although they result in seemingly ethereal, almost disembodied images or compositions, they also bear witness of both artists' physical presence: photography is not only a medium for the eye, but also for the mind and the hand.

KN.08 *Untitled*, c. 1970, gelatin silver print on Docubrom paper, 12.6 x 14.8 cm

MD.03 *Hommage à Simon Hantai*, 2019, chemigram on Docubrom paper, 100 x 60 cm

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