

EMII ALRAI

/ISAAC CLARKE

COLE DENYER

JILL MCKNIGHT

/ILYA McMILLAN ROSS

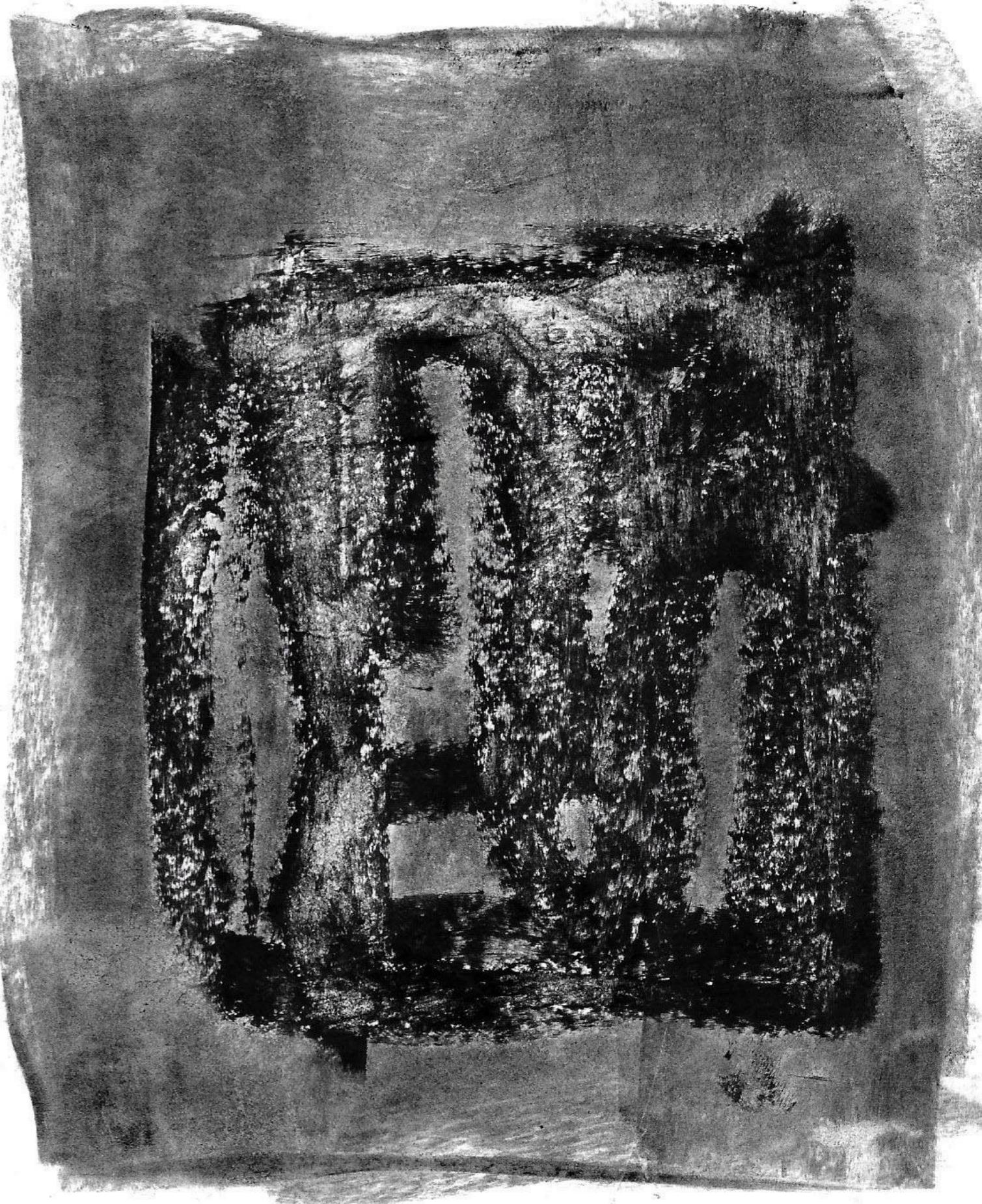
JESSICA MOORE

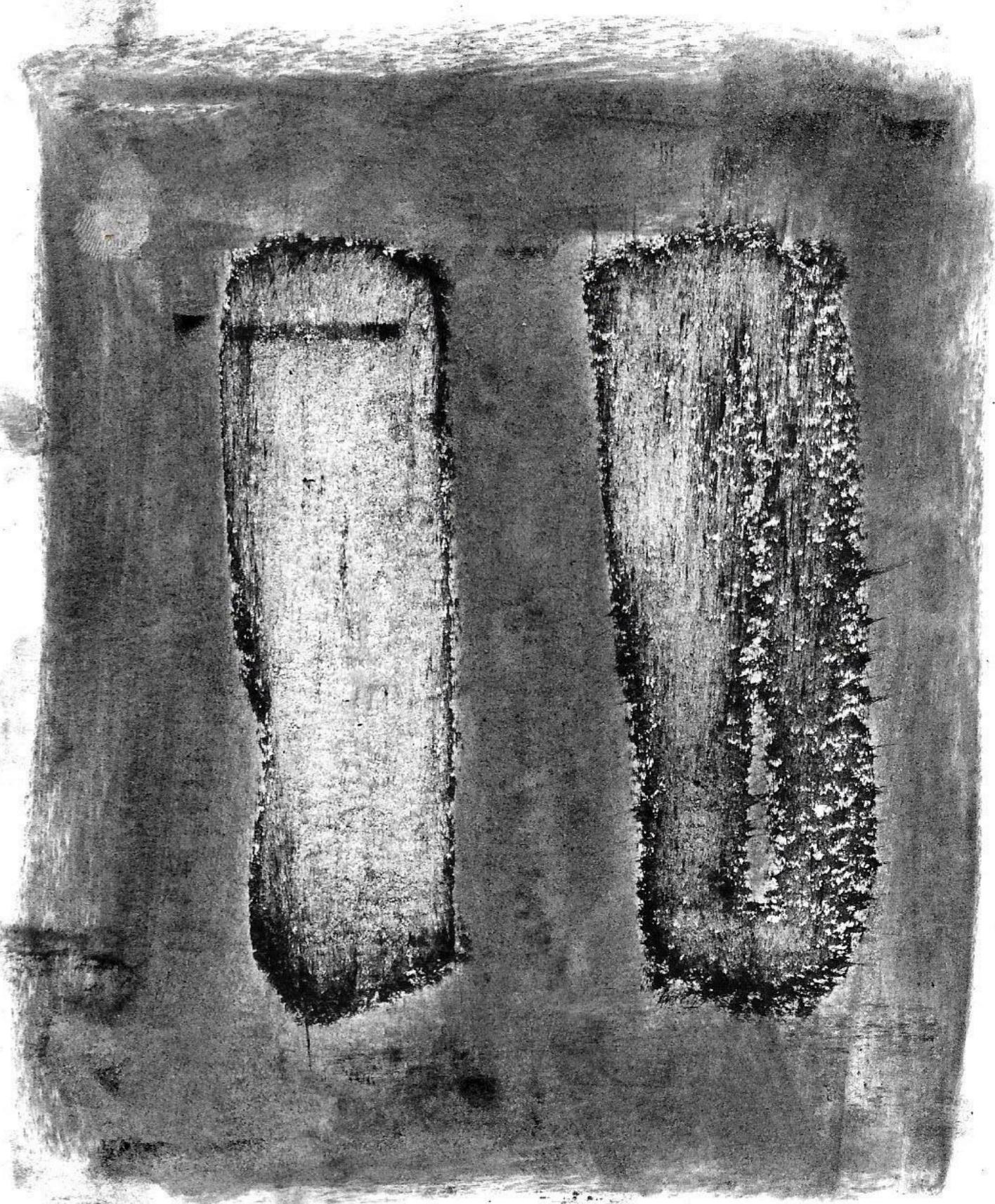
PETER SIMPSON

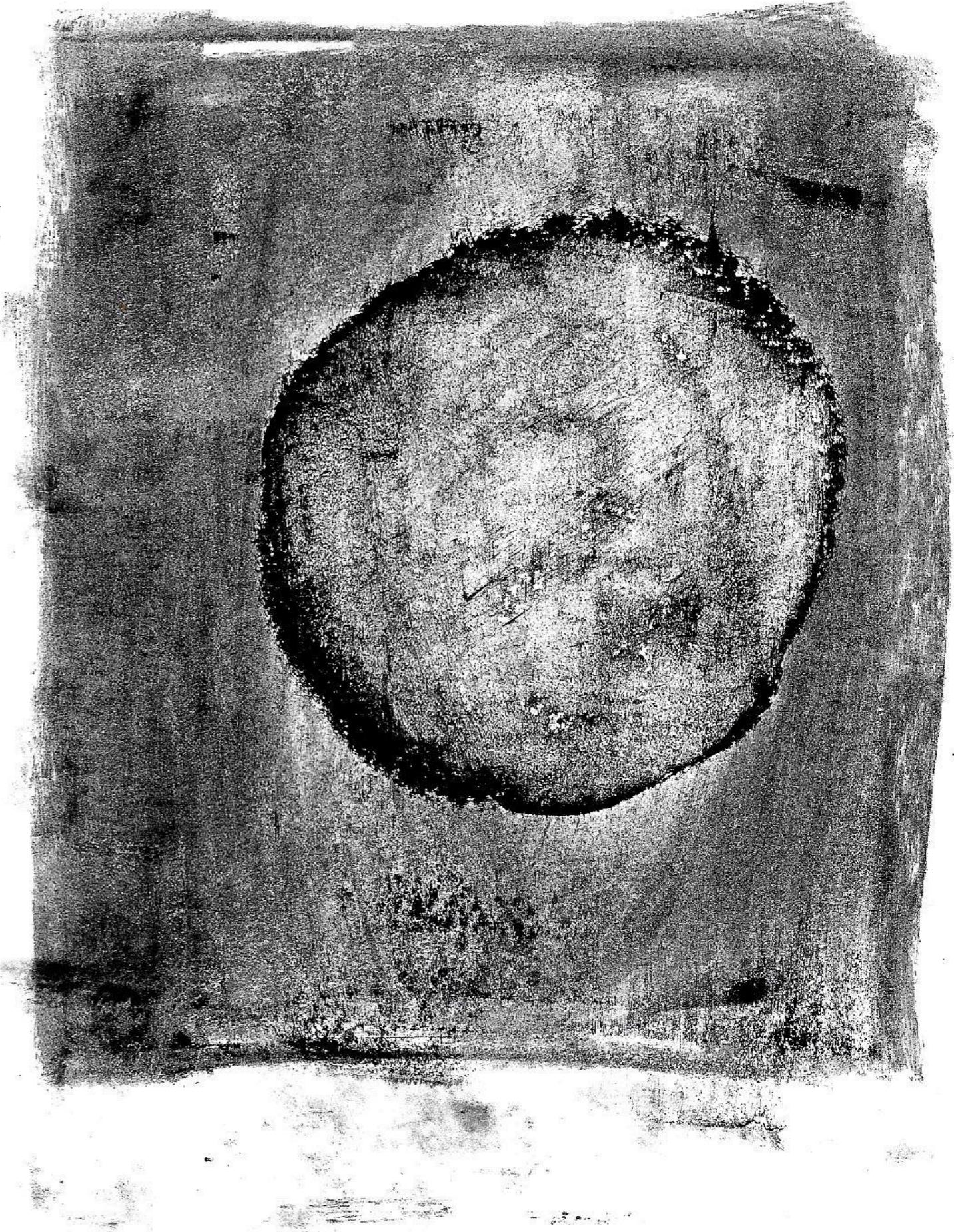
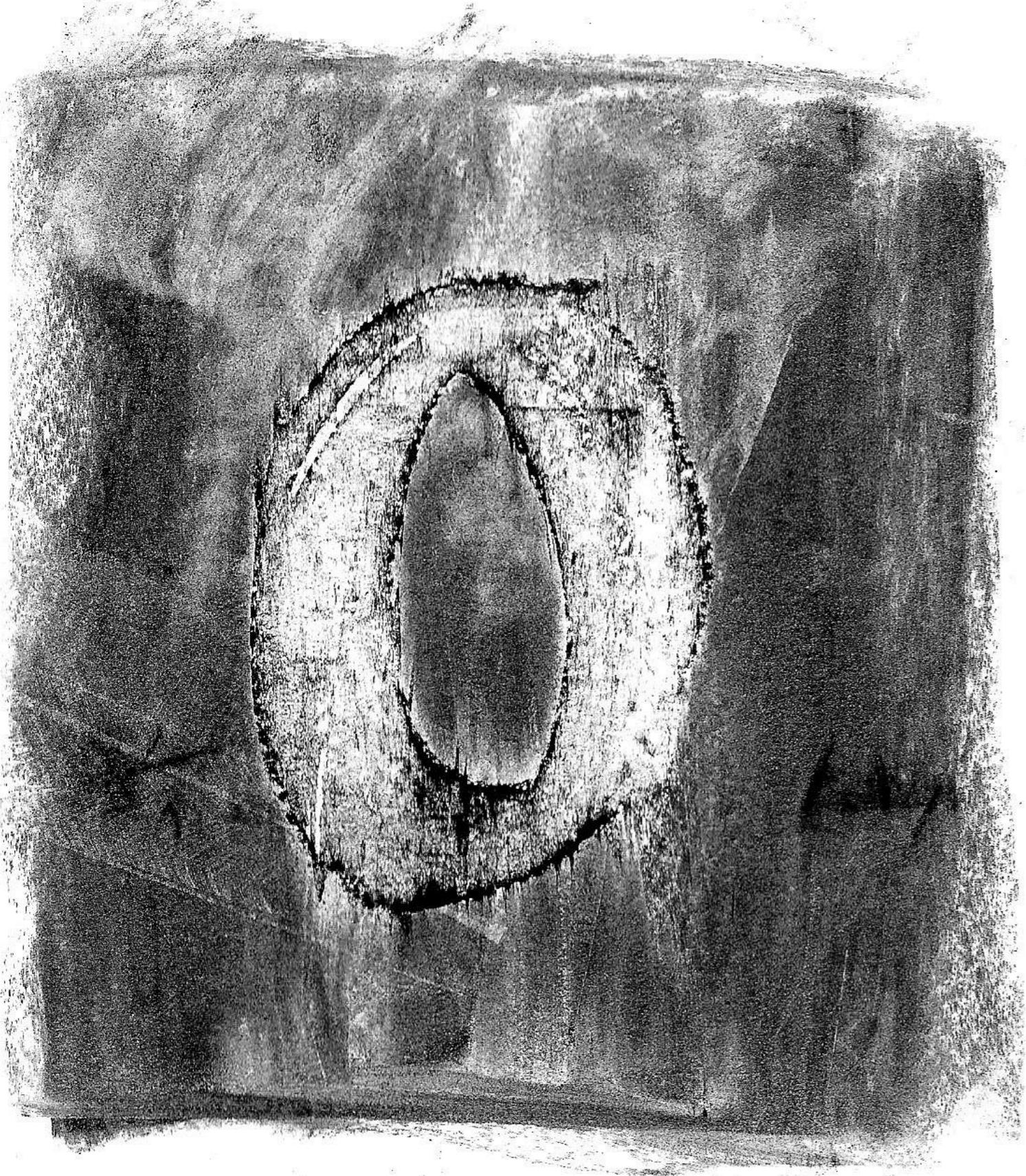
RUBY SMITH FERNANDEZ

EMILIE SPARK

**conversations on swansong** 2017, the bone cruncher by emii alrai, looming by isaac clarke, e-fits, the national anthems & new silks by cole denyer, anima in effect by jill mcknight, a painting by ilya mcmillan ross,  tract by jessica moore, thicker by peter simpson, i am not frail. #1, MH370, i am not frail. #2 & MAS370 by ruby smith fernandez, X|V.taction by emilie spark.







*Sweet seeds, for Jodo, when he came back from the market. The veins on his hands would be pulsing blue and rising like the Euphrates on the map.*

*In his hands, you said, will be a blue plastic bag, the same colour as his veins. In the bag might be oranges, or sunflower seeds brought from the street vendor, to help our teeth gnaw away at the midday boredom. You told me that Jodo did not eat the seeds, because he preferred to crunch on chicken bones, in his sleep to frighten children who would not sleep.*

*Oh bone cruncher, cruncher of bones! I can't now look at chicken bones without imagining them smashing into a thousand kernels, lodging themselves one by one in the pit of my throat, mocking me for my inability to sleep.*

*We pruned the pomegranates as you spoke in your silken rhythm. You took a handful of the freshly plucked seeds, your arm glistening with the sticky red.*

*Three by three, you fed them in to your mouth, allowing the red trickle to trickle, down your elegant chin - sweet red jewels, fit for only a queen. I watched you, over a well anointed minute, whilst you patted your lips and chin down. I watched as you wiped the iridescent glaze on your cotton dress.*

*The cruncher of bones still buys three pomegranates when they are in season. Still enough for two, when enough for one is too much in the first place. They sit in the plaited reed bowl, waiting for your child hands to pick them up, prune them and give them back as a token of shared time. They are less plump, less vivid and less sweet.*

*When your cotton dress was wrapped around you, lilac, shimmering with the mingled dust and 4 am light, I thought of you as that iridescent glaze, which stuck around your lips for hours after you wiped them. I imagined the sticky sweet molasses would bind your cotton dress down and force you not to leave, force you to yawn and roll over instead of sleep.*

*We bought a chicken, because no one could cook, and we all sat around its carcass on the table. The chicken was perfect and eerily glazed by the inferno machine at Tesco. We slowly gave in to the hunger we had not noticed for the past 9 hours, 17 pairs of feet jostling nervously under the table. When we finished eating, I noticed that all the bones were intact, still in the shape of a chicken, perfect and whole. No one had dared move a single bone, but instead picked off the meat tenderly and meticulously as though the bones were a sacred offering.*

*When we had left the table, I saw a shadow of a hand, wrinkled and mottled, quietly put the bones neatly into a blue plastic bag. The hand disappeared accompanied by the sound like that of feathers shuffling, a bird rearranging to be more comfortable.*

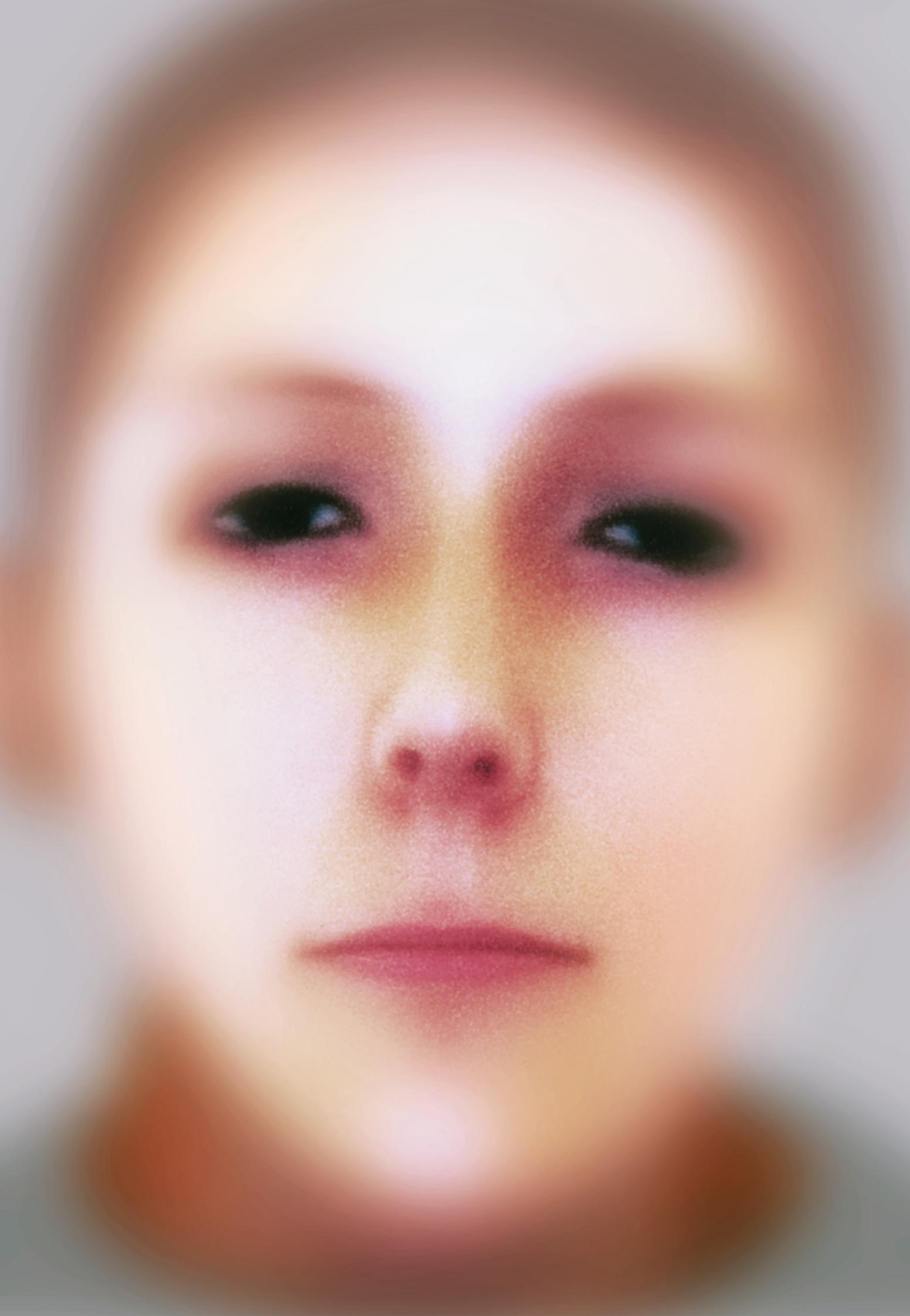
*You were next to me, sitting between the pomegranate tree we picked together when we lived in Jordan.*

*I was 5; my pet chick was bathing in the dirt outside. I wore lime green leggings, dashed with white daisies. You had your legs splayed over the stone steps, under which lived the thousands of fire ants I dreamt about at night.*

*We were pruning pomegranate seeds into the bowl.*

*I went back to see you in your cotton dress, in the glacial room hewn with morning light. The cotton dress, glazed and lilac fluttered. When I brought myself to look at your very gentle face, you greeted me with a large and shocking wink. Frozen to the spot, I stared at your face which looked exactly the same as how we left you before eating the chicken, still and with no trace of a wink. I pressed myself towards the wall to look at the scene in full. As I stood at the wall, I heard next door, through the thin plasterboard, the very faint but distinctive, slow crunching of bones.*









(1/3)

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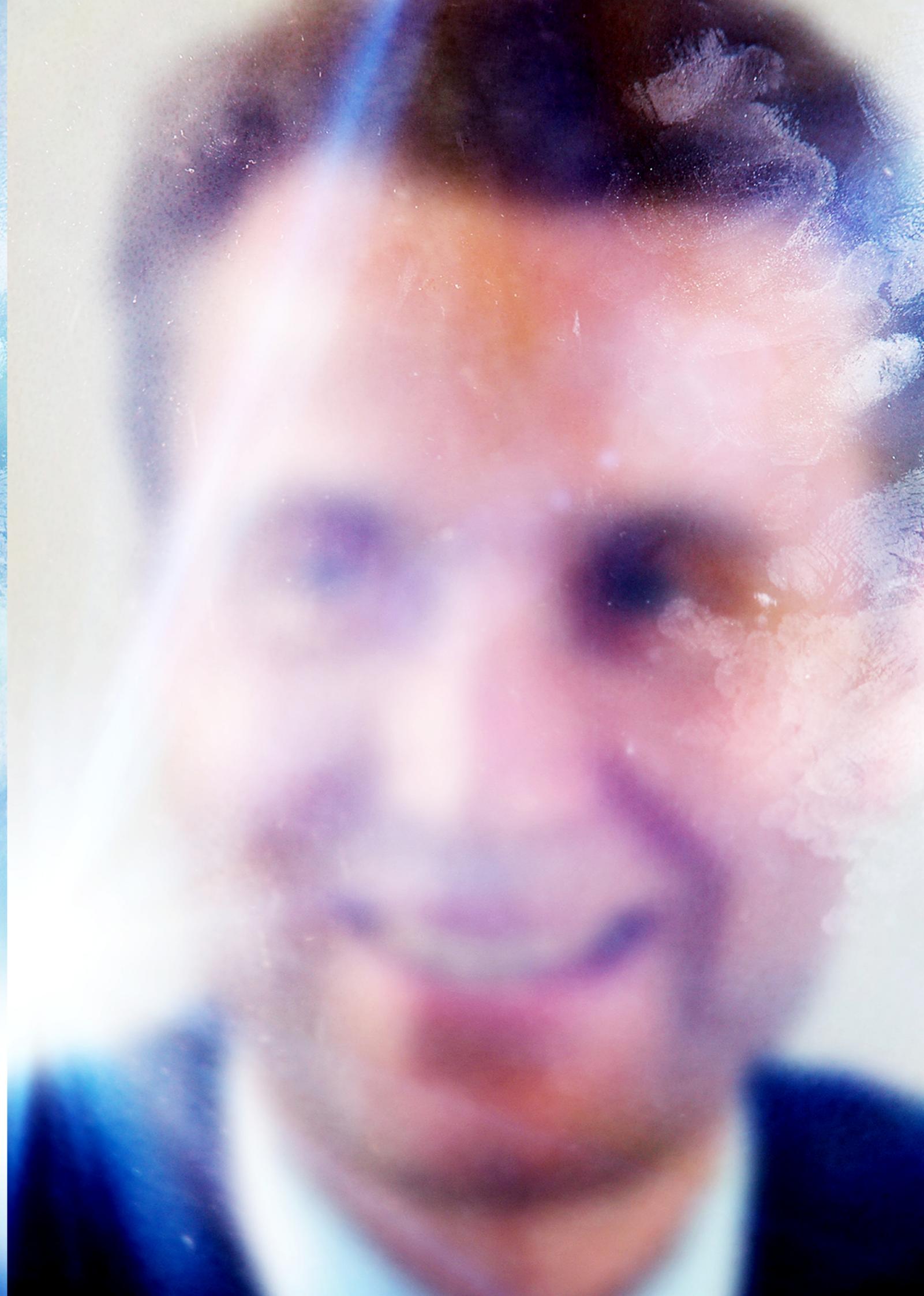
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(3/3)

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on communal stairs to  
break into the  
faces gathered  
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to make things stick  
but what remains is a  
metallic taste, kiss  
the all white-crowns  
the American nights are  
100 times greater  
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*Muffled hearing and tunnel vision, just grey pouring rain and shivering spray. You peer through condensed eyes.*

*In the curl of a conch shell, you know that life dies. But it broadcasts ghosts of calcified crust through a translucent trumpet.*

*Miles out to sea, far beneath and belly up to the waves, a metal christ apes the sky and transmits a heavy message.*

—  
*Weightless under the pull of the great mass, waiting in a gel suspension for the release which never arrives.*

*Every head rises in grave recognition of the sad fact. You will breath through our sighs.*

*The lights dim as the batteries run out, one and each one; one by one. Sleep.*









2017