

Untitled/Anonymous

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Library of Congress Catalogue No: 80-70359

Untitled/Anonymous

Paintings

Colo

El Museo del Barrio

November 1980

There is an ambiguousness to the definition of these painting/drawings. Although they are linearly constructed on a flat, unmounted piece of canvas that is installed directly on the surface of the wall, they are nevertheless painterly in effect. As one medium begins to assume the functions of another medium, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the boundaries of definitions. The paintings in this exhibition are rich in their references to drawing, sculpture and woodcut.

Untitled/Anonymous

The three series of paintings presented here all emphasize an insistence on the stroke, the image and the use of black. Since 1975, Colo has been increasingly abandoning the use of color in his work and, since 1978, committing himself to working almost exclusively with black. *Untitled/Anonymous* confronts the ambiguous character of black - at once visible and invisible. Black has the power to conceal, to make anonymous, since what is not directly perceivable cannot be known. Alternatively, black is the strongest color, the most obvious and the most demanding.

All the paintings in this exhibition are executed in black oilstick. The stick is a hard, hand-held material. It is not splashed or brushed on but rather ground into the surface of the canvas. The strokes are a translation into image of the physical gestures of the artist. Each series here is an experiment in which the medium used becomes the protagonist. The image is not more important than the material used but equal to it, often dependent on it. The medium and the image interact in suggestive and subversive ways, playing the idea of the work against its execution.

The works in the first series are clear in their associations to Abstract Expressionism because of the stroke and to Minimalism for the use of only one color, but the medium of the oilstick redefines these expressions. The reductive tendency illustrated by the use of black is defied by the expressive nature of the mark. The stroke, as defined by the oilstick becomes the object of the work. Subject is reduced to the color black and to the nature of the stroke. The gestures of the artist in applying the oilstick are quite different than those used with a brush and paints. The strokes imply a more instinctive and aggressive use of the medium, an almost brutal assault of the canvas emphasizing the flatness of the surface. For this artist, these acts are a more direct and primal reference to movement.

The ambiguous depth of these paintings, which at first seems to defy the picture space, is created by the repetition of the stroke, by the working over of the surface of the canvas. Reapplication of the oilstick after the previous coat has dried actually creates different layers of black. The image is a consequence of the accumulation of the marks. The execution of the work is its substance, the process and not only the form transmits the meaning of the work.

In the second series of paintings we encounter the idea of the first series but a re-interpretation of that idea. The paintings are simultaneously art and reflections on art. Images give form to intelligence. We can detect the domination of the medium by the artist in the more methodical approach of constructing the image and in the close relationship between the paintings and drawings. Unlike the first series, where the stroke as defined by the oilstick is the subject of the work, here the subject/content is the image: the Roman Numeral. The image determines the stroke.

The pressure of the gesture/action of the artist defines the grayness of the black, a more subtle gradation of color than the brutal differentiations of the black of the first series. The shading allows us to see the movement of the work and implies a more subtle understanding of the medium.

The Roman Numerals are symbols of power and strength, signs of an imperial society. They evoke the quality of monumental structures. The three-dimensionality of the images embodies strong sculptural forms, a reflection of an architectural sensibility. These works become ambiguous as paintings because of their associations and references to sculptures - they are drawings in relief.

The viewer is only permitted a strange perspective. It is as though, straining to look up at the top of a building one glimpses only a fragment of a much larger structure. Within this series, we follow the meticulous evolution of the image from that of the Roman Numeral, to that of a fragment of that image and then finally into enigmatic combinations of those fragments - metaphors for the Roman Numeral.

The drawings in this series are an economic expression of the artist's poetics, visual references of his ideology. We can see the artist's method of working, a closely monitored situation where a series of drawings have become the basis for a series of paintings.

In the third series we are assaulted by images that have become offensive, intruding, almost sinister in their evocativeness. The pulse is electric quick, violent, as if the artist had spit out the image and the hand imitated the gesture. These works are paintings as woodcuts - 'drawcuts'. The gouged-out quality of the stroke is related to the strong tradition of woodcuts in Puerto Rico, a tradition which is part of the artist's cultural experience and which is presented here in a re-interpretation of that medium. The image and the background are produced with the same stroke, blackness and intensity, breaking down the superiority of the image and equalizing it with the background.

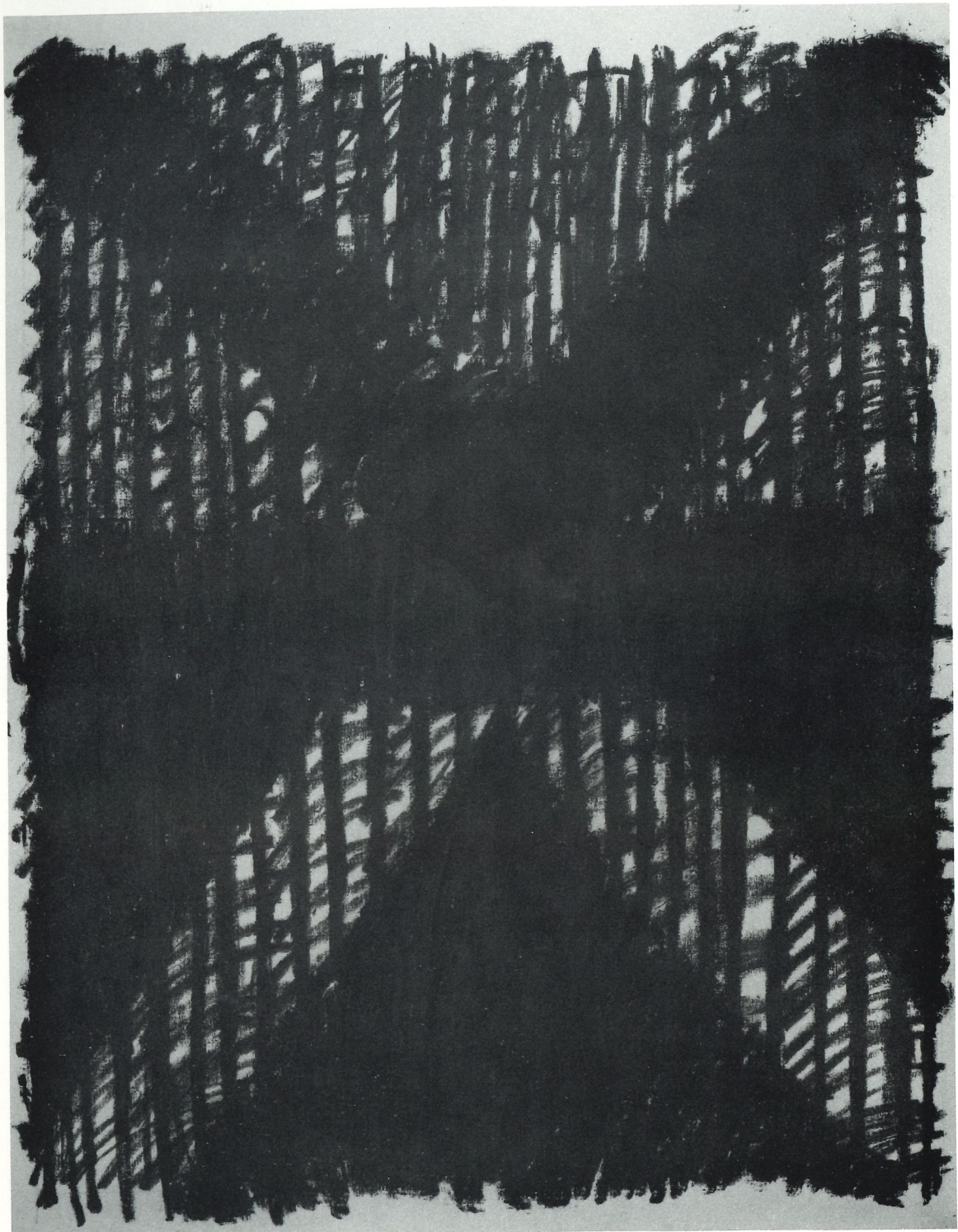
Untitled/Anonymous, the title given to this exhibition by the artist is also a two word poem which deals with the problem of the artist's identity in our society, a society in which who an artist is often determines the visibility of his work and how it is perceived. For Colo, the artist is not someone who makes objects but rather who acts. In this way, works of art become documents of his philosophy. The approach to the medium defines the artist's metaphysics and is a translation of the immediate culture.

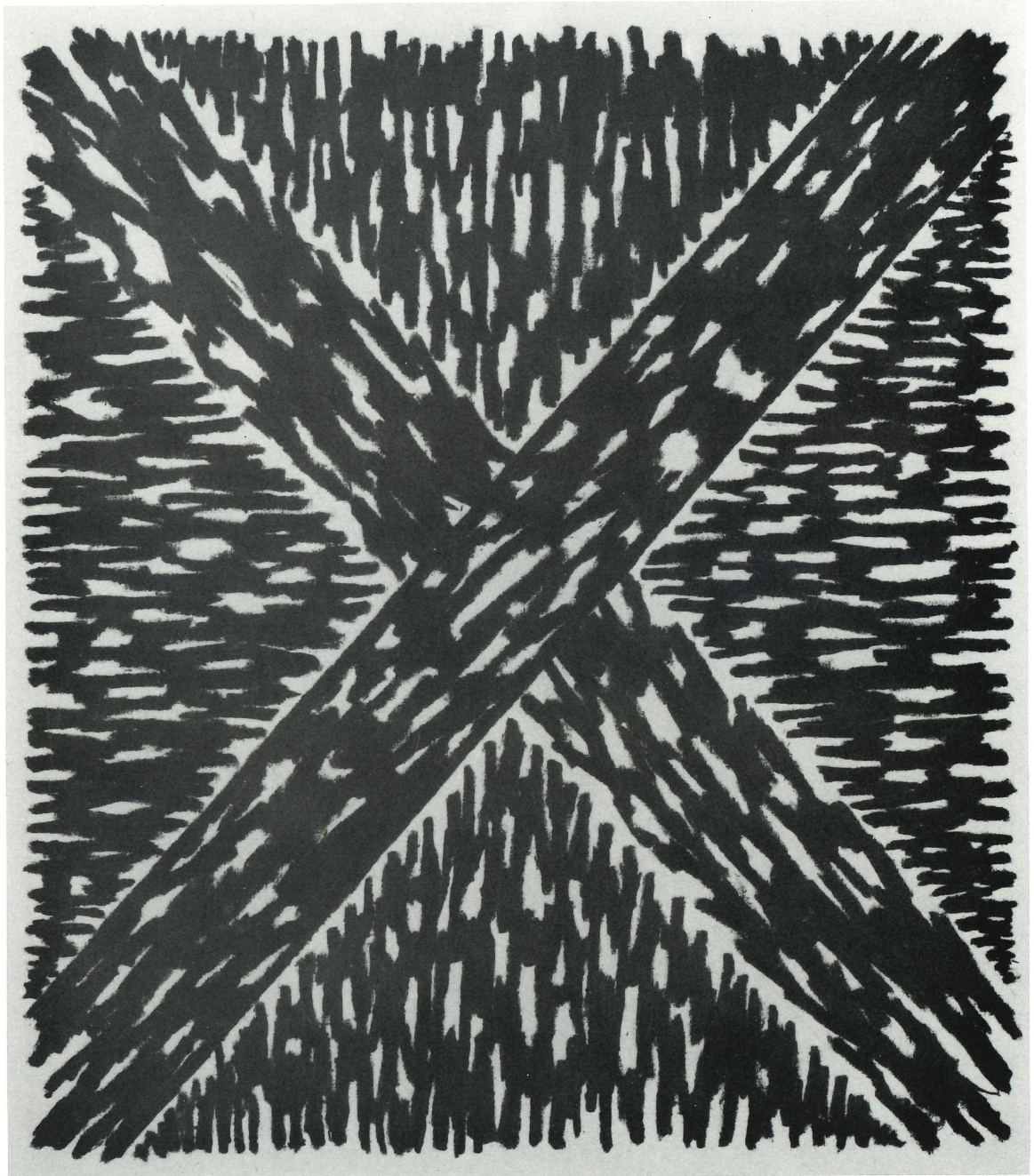
JEANETTE INGBERMAN
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Paintings 1st Series

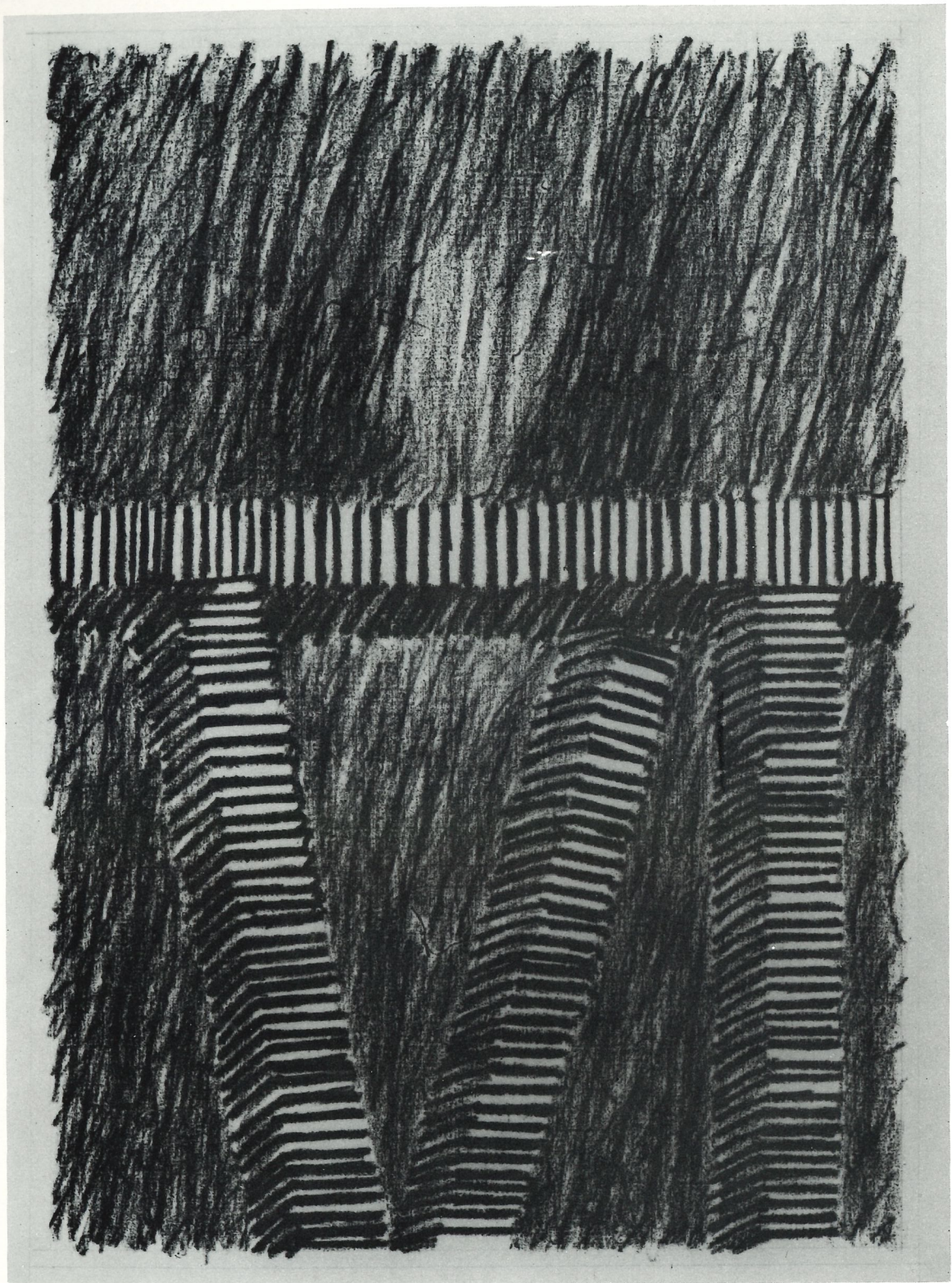


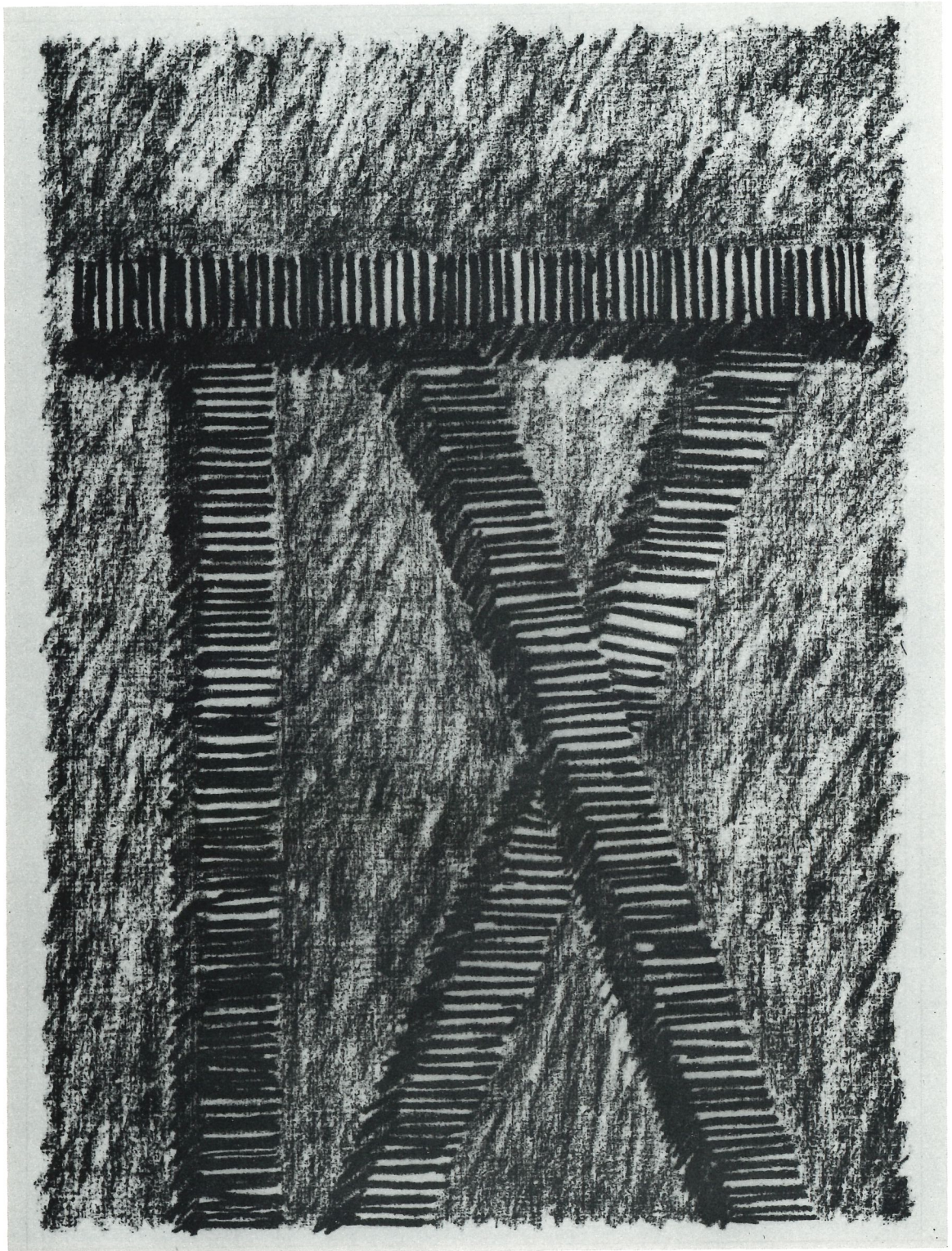


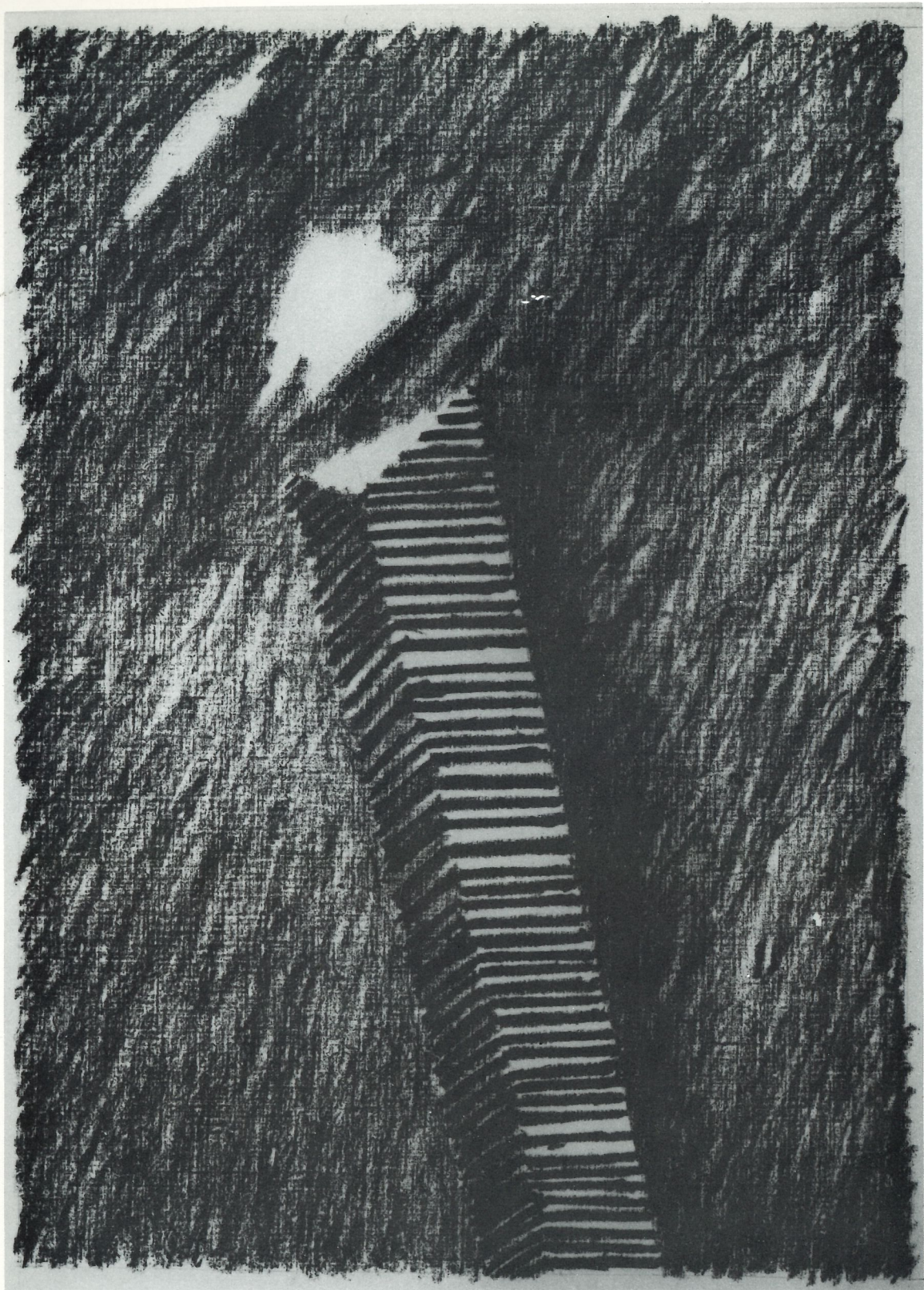


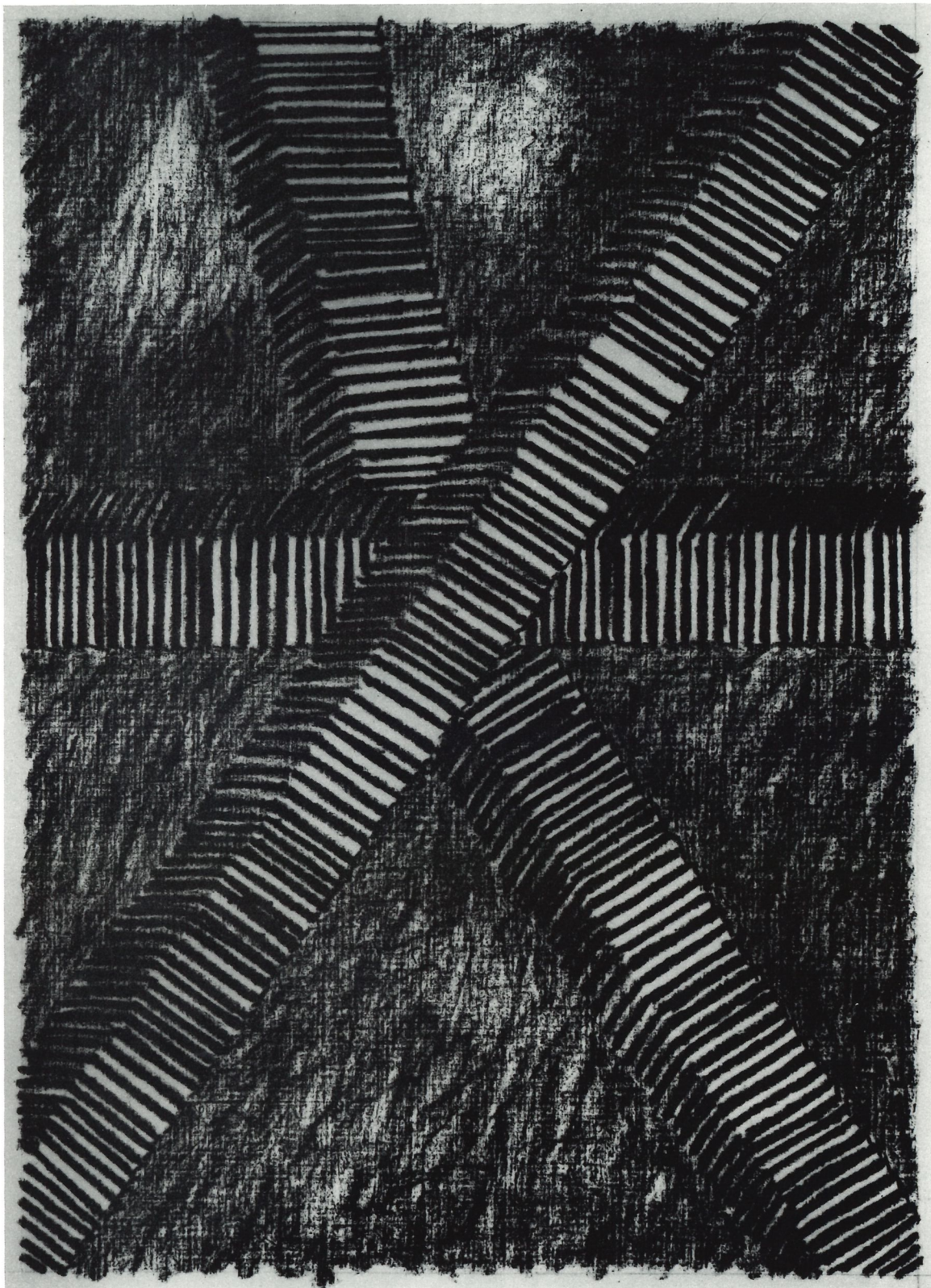


Paintings 2nd Series



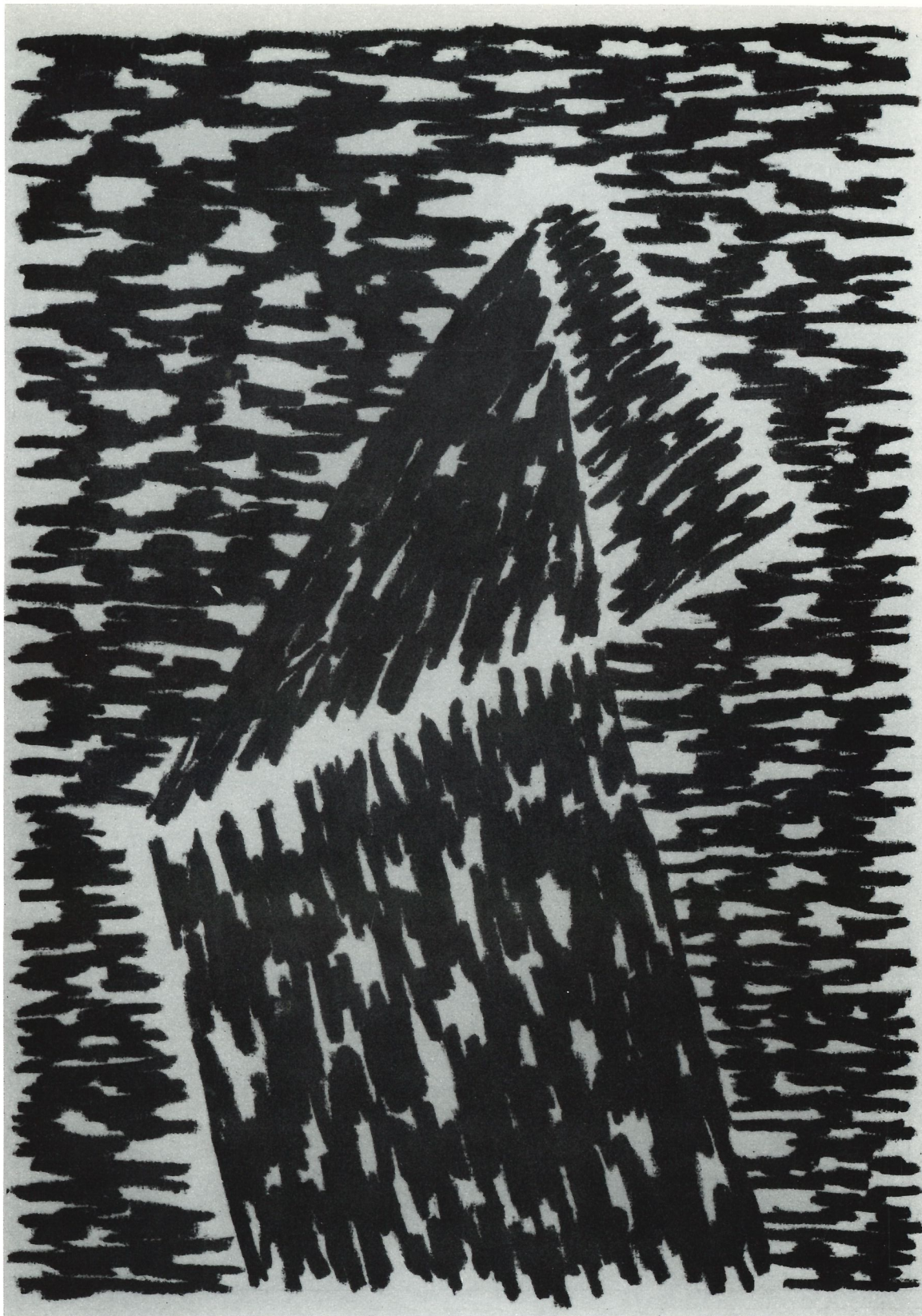




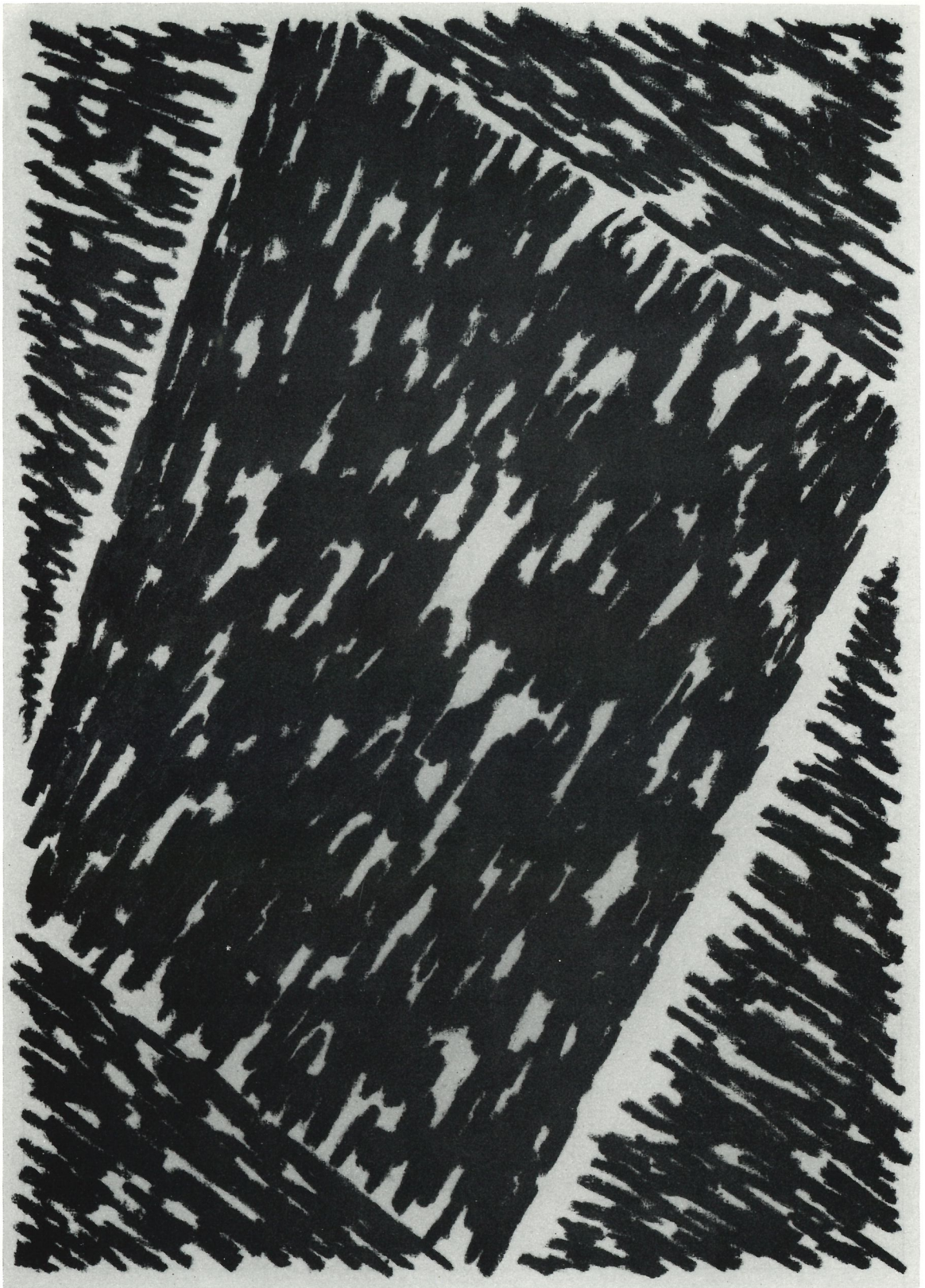


Paintings 3rd Series

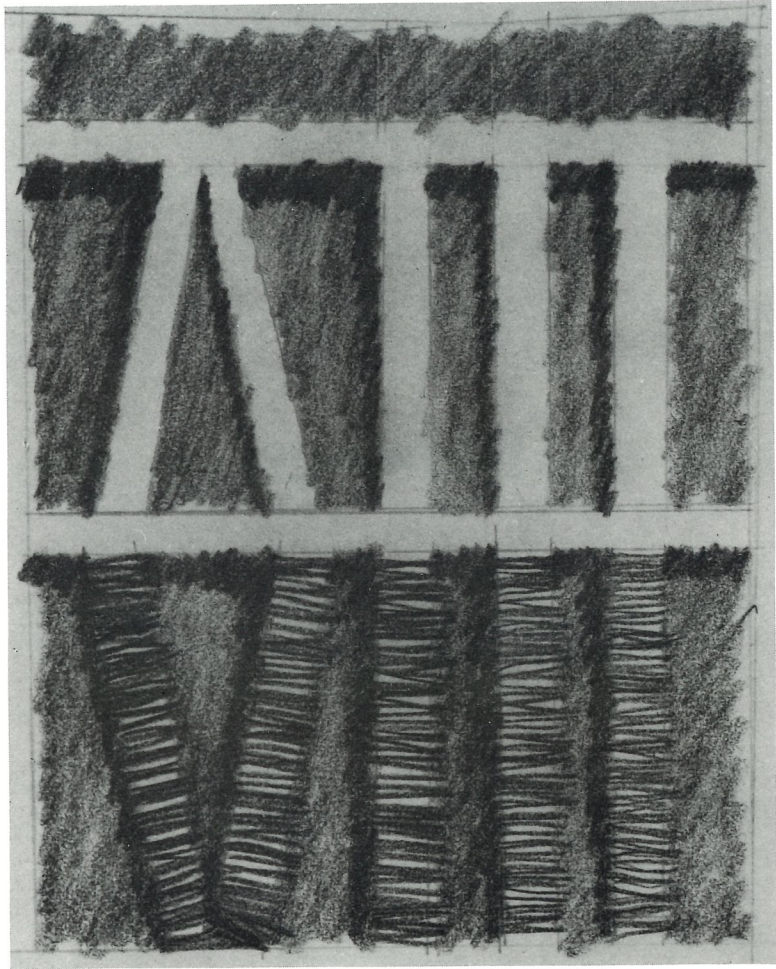


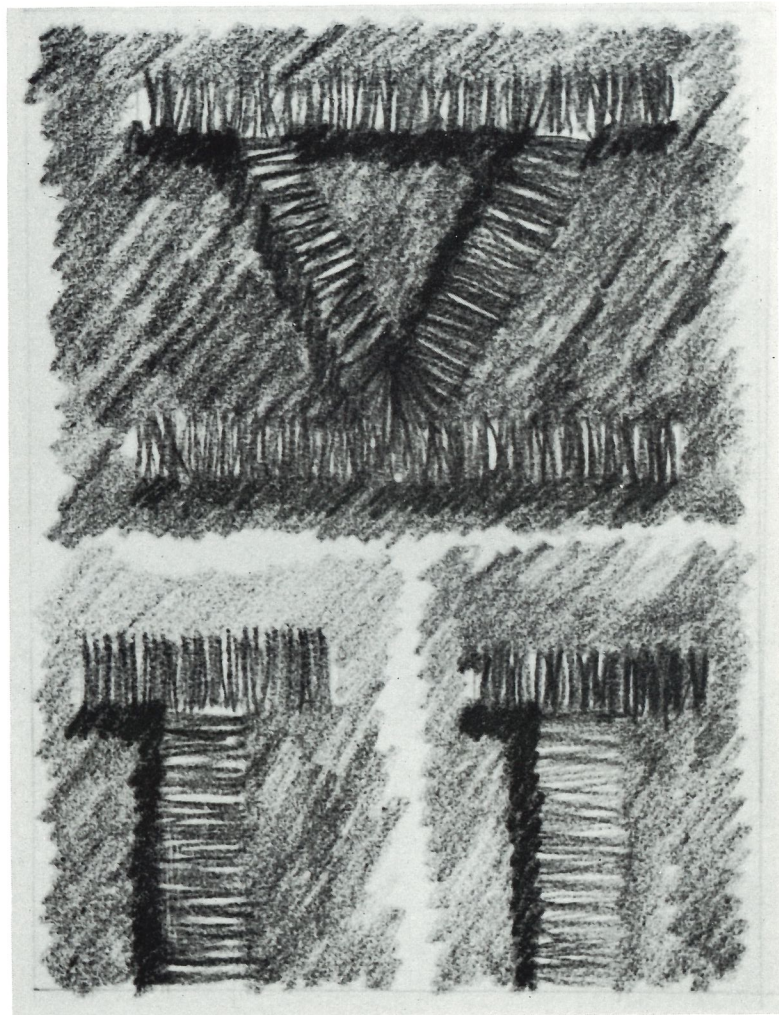


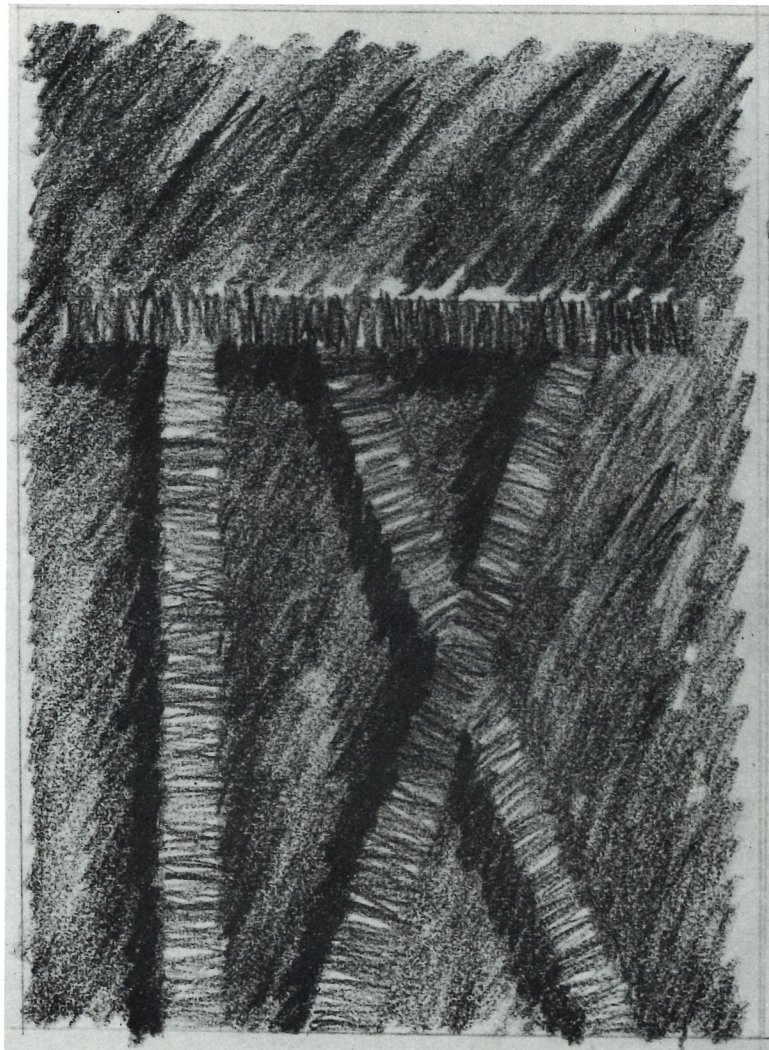


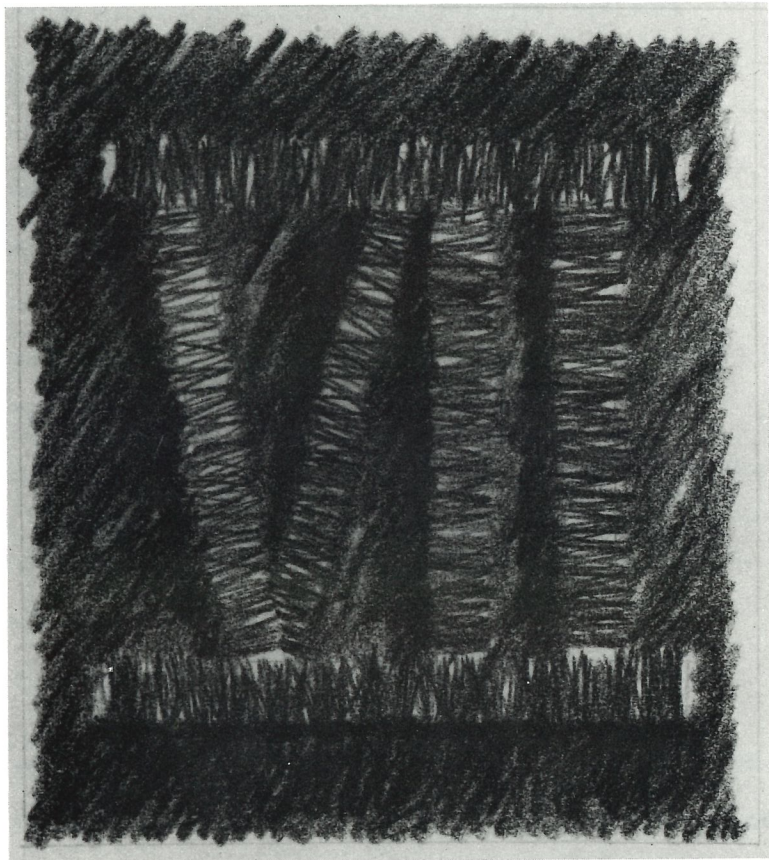


Drawings









Works in the Exhibition

1st Series

Nine paintings 48 x 32ins oilstick on canvas. Untitled

2nd Series

Nine paintings 48 x 32ins oilstick on canvas. Untitled

3rd Series

Eleven paintings 48 x 32ins oilstick on canvas. Untitled

Drawings

Sixteen drawings 12 x 9ins pencil on paper. Untitled

One painting 144 x 54ins oilstick on canvas untitled

Height precedes width

Born in Puerta de Tierra, Puerto Rico, 1946

One Person Exhibitions

- 1971 House of the Architect, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 1975 Friends of Puerto Rico, New York, New York
- 1976 Casablanca Gallery, New York, New York
- “Idea and Execution”, Act of Sculpture, West Broadway, New York
- Cayman Gallery, New York, New York
- 1977 “Armas Blancas”, Mec-Mec Gallery, Barcelona, Spain
- Sculpture Installation, Artyard, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York
- “Contradictions”, Spanish Institute, New York, New York
- “Low Clouds”, Installation, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

- 1978 “Cimarron”, Forma Gallery, Miami, Florida
- “American Apart Art”, Mail Art Piece, New York, New York

- 1979 “Documentos Falsos”, Galeria Ciento, Barcelona, Spain

Group Exhibitions

- 1975 Annual Avant Garde Festival of New York
- First International Encounter of Video, Center of Art and Communication, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 1976 “Iman”, Center for Inter-American Relations, New York, New York
- Travels to Instituto de Cultura, San Juan, Puerto Rico and to Ponce Museum, Ponce, Puerto Rico
- Fordham University, New York, New York
- “Nam”, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York
- 1977 “Roots and Visions”, Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, Arizona
- Travels to Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., and to the Everson Museum of Art, New York
- “International Encounter of Video”, Fundacion Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Caracas, Venezuela
- “VII International Open Encounter on Video, Fundacion Joan Miro, Barcelona, Spain
- 1978 “Resurgimiento”, El Museo del Barrio, New York, New York
- “Variations on Latin Themes in New York”, Center for Inter-American Relations, New York, New York
- 1979 “Private Icons”, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, New York
- 1980 Amnesty International, Barcelona, Spain
- “Marking Black”, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, New York

Staff of El Museo

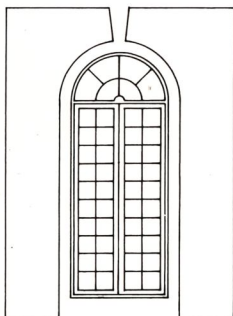
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Richard Barr
Jacqueline Biaggi
William Bowles
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Eva de La O
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This exhibition made possible in part by support from the
National Endowment for the Arts & New York State Council
on the Arts.