

**MONOLITHIC**

# **MONOLITHIC**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT ON MONOLITHIC LANDSCAPE  
AND ARCHITECTURE MARCUS TRIMBLE**

FUNDED BY THE BYERA  
HADLEY TRAVELLING  
SCHOLARSHIP ADMINISTERED  
BY THE NSW ARCHITECTS  
REGISTRATION BOARD.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	
ITINERARY	
COMPARATIVE SCALE	
ESSAY	
EXHIBITION	
DRAWINGS	
RENDERINGS	
PHOTOGRAPHS	
INDEX	

## INTRODUCTION

This study looks at the immensity of monolithic landscapes and architecture. It consists of the documentation of ten sites visited in Australia, North America, Europe and Africa in early 2010 and comprises of drawings, photographs and renderings. In November 2011 this documentation was exhibited at Customs House, Sydney during the Sydney Architecture Festival.

Sites visited and included in this report are; Uluru, The Luxor Casino in Las Vegas, Monument Valley, The Lightning Fields, Donald Judd's large scale site specific artworks in Texas, the then under construction September 11 Memorial in New York, The Stanley Kubrick Archives, the Bruder Klaus Chapel, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the Great Pyramid of Cheops.



Each represent aspects of the monolithic, Uluru is literally monolithic by virtue of being one homogenous rock formation, and it is immense. The Lightning Fields and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe are monolithic in their relentless repetition, and are unable to be comprehended without traversing their entirety. The Great Pyramid of Cheops in Giza, is made of many individual pieces but massive in its consistent texture, and its interior spaces are dwarfed by the mass of stone that encloses them. The Bruder Klaus Chapel in Metternich was poured in solid concrete, half a metre per day for twenty four days before the small interior space was burnt away.

In this report we hope to convey the idea of the monolithic, encompassing the ancient, the heavy, the singular, and the sublime.



Luxor Pyramid  
31/05/2010

Monument Valley  
1-2/06/2010

Lightning Fields  
6-7/-6/2010

Untitled Works in Concrete  
09/06/2010

September 11 Memorial  
14/06/2010



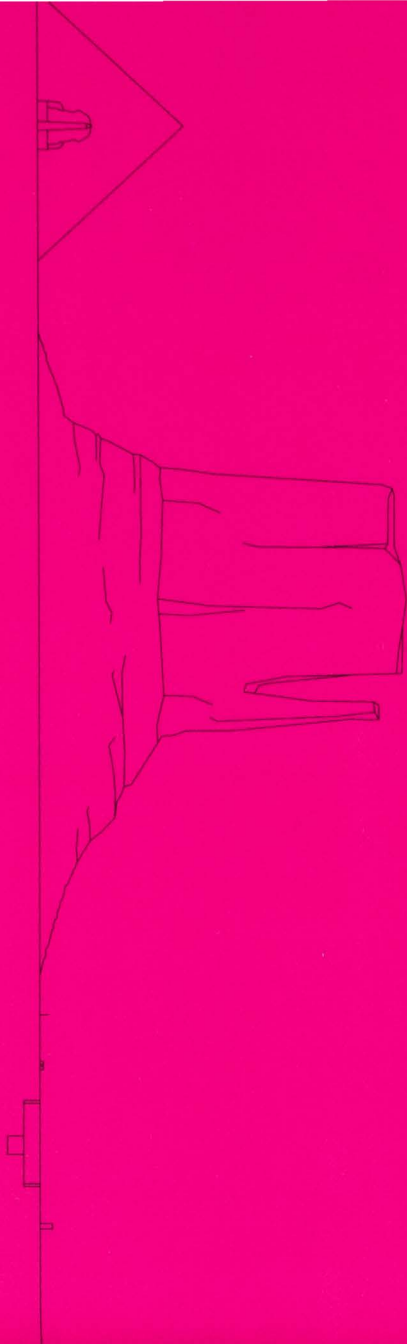
Stanley Kubrick Archives  
17-18/06/2010

Bruder Klaus Chapel  
22/06/2010

Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe  
25/06/2010

Great Pyramid of Cheops  
27/06/2010

Uluru  
05/04/2010



Luxor Pyramid  
106m

Monument Valley  
270m

Lightning Fields  
6m

Untitled Works in Concrete  
2.25m

September 11 Memorial  
-24m

TMA-1  
9m

Bruder Klaus Chapel  
11m

Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe  
0-6m

Great Pyramid of Cheops  
144m

Uluru  
80m

COMPARATIVE SCALE



## Megaexterior

*Initially published in Volume Archis 2010 #3*

It is 1996 and on the moon's great walled plain of Mare Crisius—the Sea of Crises—a selenologist is pan frying sausages for breakfast when in the distance a flicker from the top of a mountain in the Oceanus Procellarum catches his eye. With fellow scientists, he sets out to investigate the source of this 'metallic glimmer' in this otherwise mute landscape. The team ascends the 12,000ft tall mountain range, the lunar gravity rendering the climb a relatively easy afternoon's trek, and on reaching the summit discover a flattened peak, and on this dusty plateau sits a pyramid. The pyramid is perfectly smooth, seamless and without detail. It is surrounded by an invisible force field and all attempts to discover its interior, its purpose, fail. As is the method in such circumstances, an atomic explosion is eventually called upon to crack the thing open, revealing that it is some kind of machine comprised of an unfamiliar, alien technology. Our narrator speculates that the pyramid is a sentinel left by an extra terrestrial intelligent species to act as a beacon to signal humankind's evolution from the earthbound.

This unpublished story by Arthur C. Clarke—"The Sentinel"—along with another, "Encounters at the End of the

World” caught the attention of film maker Stanley Kubrick, who had been in contact with Clarke about his desire to make “the proverbial ‘really good’ science fiction movie”.<sup>1</sup> The result of this collaboration is the 1968 film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

The film concerns the evolution of the human race through the intervention of a rectangular monolith. Like the sentinel from Clarke’s short story, the monolith is a mute, seamless object seemingly without purpose or intention. Its appearance triggers evolutionary leaps for those that come in contact with it, famously from ape to human, and from human to being of pure thought. This is the transformation of a species through the direct intervention of a discrete object, an idea that bares closer attention.

Fortunately Kubrick was a hoarder of his own research and kept an extensive archive on his estate of this material within boxes he notoriously had specially fabricated so that the lid fit snug; just so. This archive is now based at the University of Arts at Elephant and Castle in London and contains a substantial collection of material relating to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, however little relating specifically to the monolith, its design or meaning. There are many slides of pre-production artwork for the third monolith circling Jupiter and the archaeological dig on the moon, a single unannotated photograph of a monolith hanging from a crane



in the English countryside, sketches of the proposed lighting rig for the monolith, and most interestingly animation plates used in the sequences of the third monolith orbiting Jupiter-V, a moonlet of Jupiter towards the end of the film. During this sequence, the monolith floats in space, scaleless, and barely visible against the vacuum of space, its surface only apparent when the faint light of the sun illuminates its face, before astronaut Dave Bowman having escaped the psychotic computer HAL floats into its surface, and through the stargate. The animation plates are comprised of torn pieces of black and grey cardboard sticky-taped to a board and covered with a black matte. These rudimentary collages, when expertly lit and filmed are transformed from two dimensional cutouts to perhaps the most solid objects in the history of cinema.

Beyond these production artefacts, the best clue to the film makers' intentions regarding the monoliths may be found in the drafts of the screenplays where we find a series of changing references to the monolith; from tetrahedron similar to that of *The Sentinel*, to completely transparent crystal cube, to the black rectangular form with the proportion of 1, 4, 9 (the square of the first three prime numbers) that we find in the finished film. While the form of the monolith changes—albeit within a rather limited palette of primitive solids—a consistency may be found in its qual-



ity as a seamless, impenetrable object without reflection or surface detail. The characteristic is one of a kind of intense exteriority. It has no interior and yet as Dave Bowman discovers in the fourth act, is all interior (“The thing’s hollow - it goes on forever - and - oh my god, it’s full of stars!”<sup>3</sup>).

The monolith shares this quality of intense exterior and infinite interior with the current bias in portable electronic devices. Apple’s current range of MacBookPro and iPad computers, constructed of milled aluminium form seamless, impenetrable enclosures that for the user have no moving parts or interior space yet like all networked devices contain an infinitely permeable interior.

In Giza, the Great Pyramid of Cheops has perhaps the most enigmatic interior of all buildings. It has been sitting in the desert with the extent of its internal reaches unknown for 4500 years. This chastity is infuriating for humans. If a thing has an interior it must be explored and assessed. In order to do so, specialist devices will be developed with ever decreasing diameters that may travel the narrowest of shafts and when these reach their limits, new devices are developed, now weaponised in the hope that they may break through these defences. Consumer electronics again bare this out, one of the immediate exercises performed on the release of a new Apple product is the tear-down; an electro-autopsy where impenetrable objects have

their innards exposed, laid out and photographed under the flattering indirect light

A team from Leeds University is currently preparing a new robot to be sent into the Cheops Pyramid in an attempt to delve farther than the previous robot that came to an impasse at a limestone door. This new robot, equipped with drills, will cut its way through the doors and make its way further into the weight of the pyramid, and will uncover, more shafts, fantastic chambers, doors, or not. And if it too reaches an impasse and its successors after it, presumably at some point, like Clarke's lunar Sentinel the mystery too great to leave unanswered will require something beyond the gently gently approach and the kind of weaponised exploration involving the splitting of atoms will be called upon.

The monolith's mute calm mixed with its agenda of aggressive social and neurological manipulation (it is referred to in the production notes as the "teaching tableaux"<sup>6</sup>, and its visitation of the group of apes as the "lesson") is its inherent contradiction. It is at once passive and instructive, intensely exterior and infinitely interior. Beguiling and infuriating, it is representative of the idea that an object, a discrete thing, may be transformative purely through its presence.



EXHIBITION OF DRAWINGS,  
RENDERINGS AND  
PHOTOGRAPHS AT CUSTOMS  
HOUSE, SYDNEY FROM  
19/10/2011 - 20/11/2011

The exhibition is a celebration of the University of Sydney's 150th anniversary and a celebration of the contributions of the students of the University of Sydney to the world of design, architecture and rendering.

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# Monolithic

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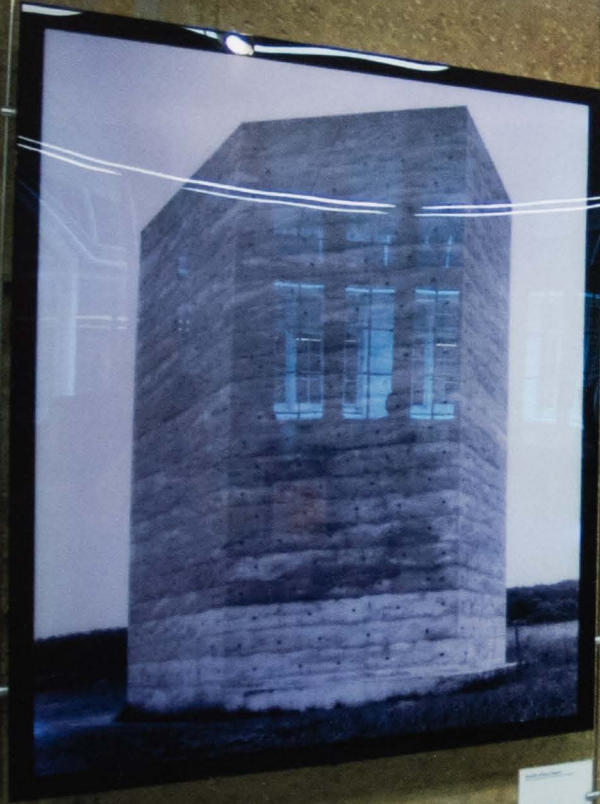


The exhibition is a celebration of the University of Sydney's 150th anniversary and a celebration of the contributions of the students of the University of Sydney to the world of design, architecture and rendering.

**CUSTOMS HOUSE** **CITY OF SYDNEY**







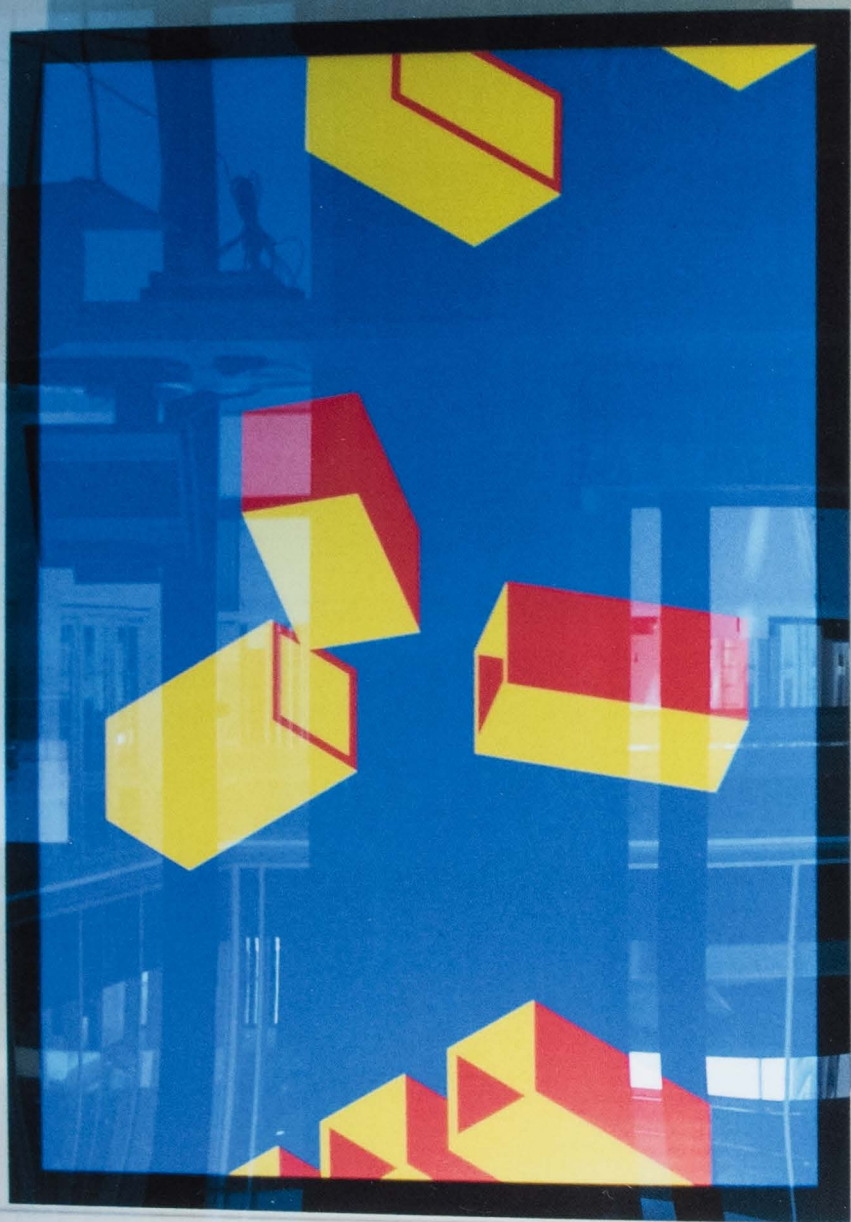
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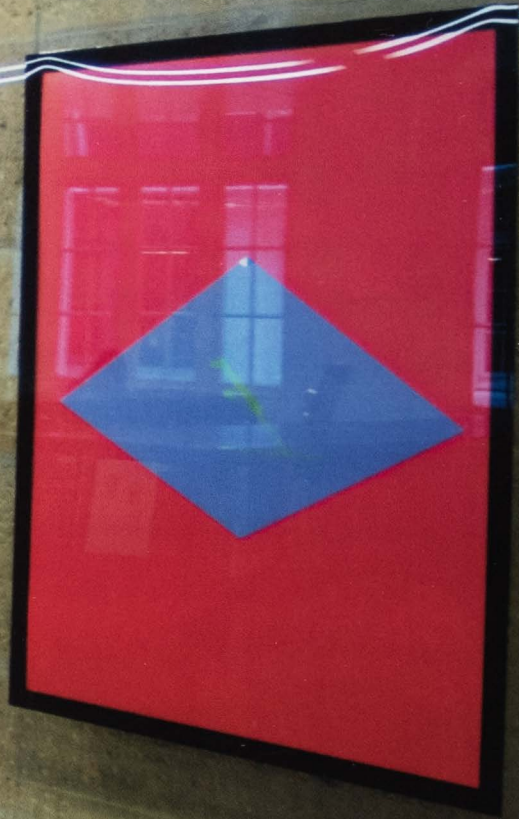


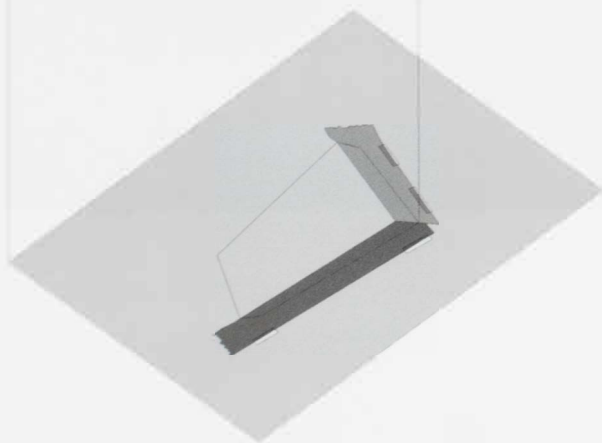
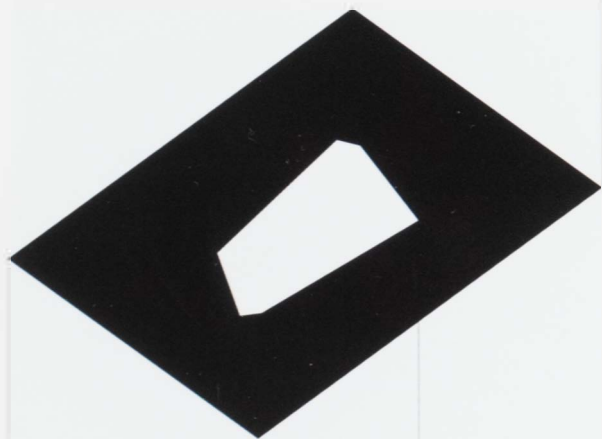
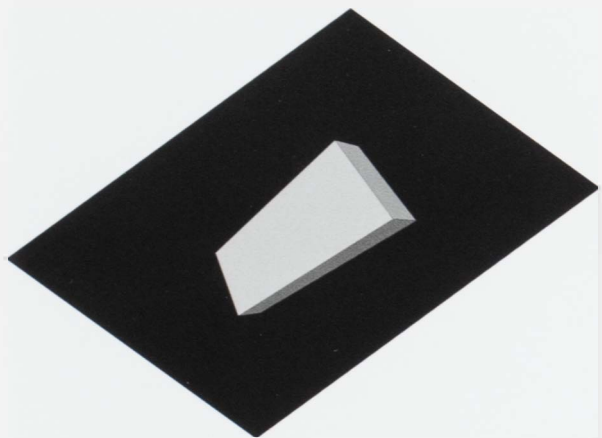








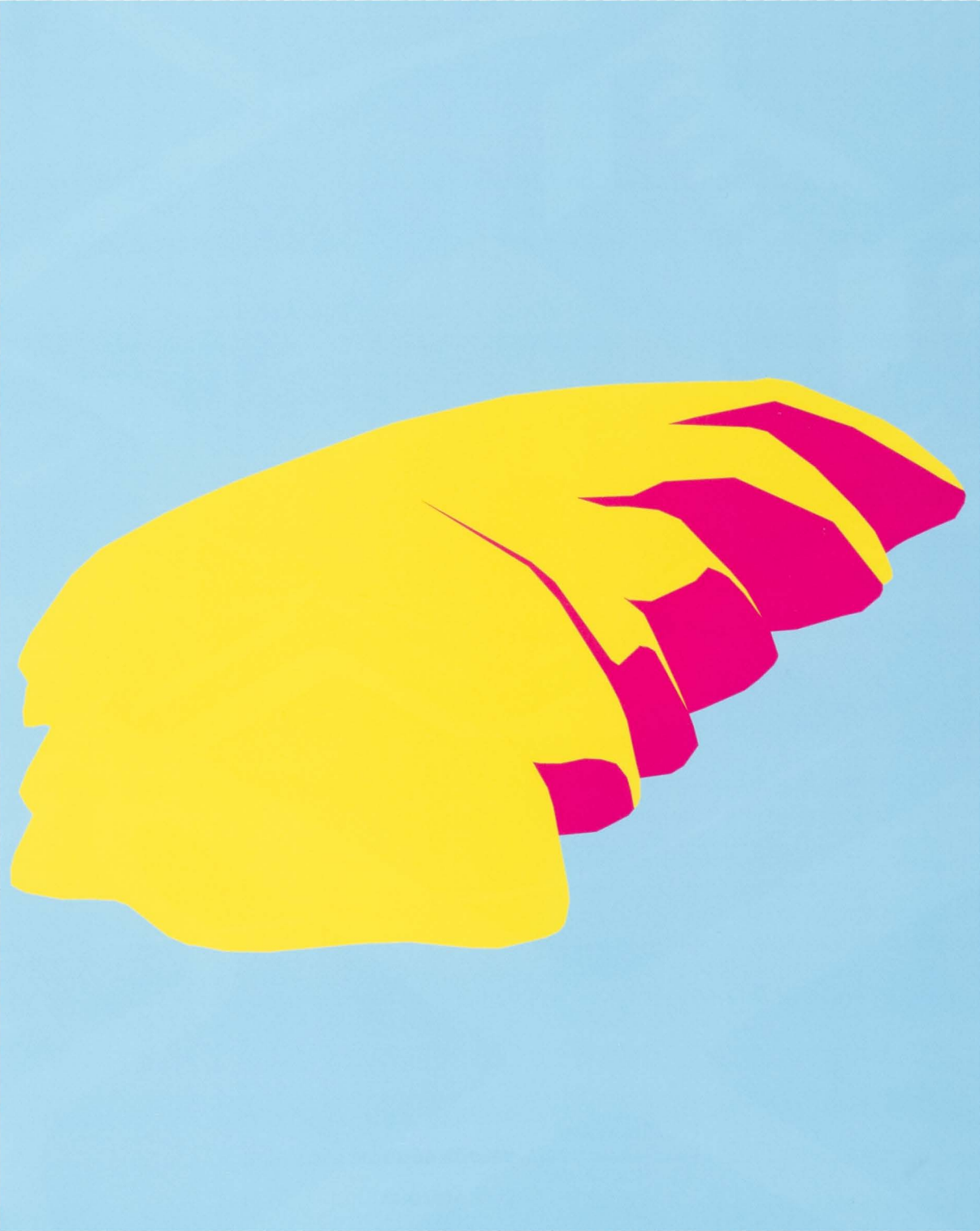




The monoliths in *2001: A Space Odyssey* are the quintessential monolithic objects; silent, seamless and without scale. The Stanley Kubrick Archives housed at the University of Arts in London has the animation plates used to film the third monolith that Dave Bowman discovers orbiting one of Jupiter's moons. The plates are comprised of torn pieces of black and grey cardboard sticky-taped to a board and covered with a black matte. These rudimentary collages, when expertly lit and filmed are transformed from two dimensional cutouts to perhaps the most solid objects in the history of cinema.

The two-colour drawings in this exhibition reference this method by depicting three dimensional forms from flat overlaid colour plates.





**THIS PAGE**  
**LUXOR HOTEL, VELDON SIMPSON, LAS VEGAS**  
**NEXT PAGE**  
**MONUMENT VALLEY, ARIZONA**



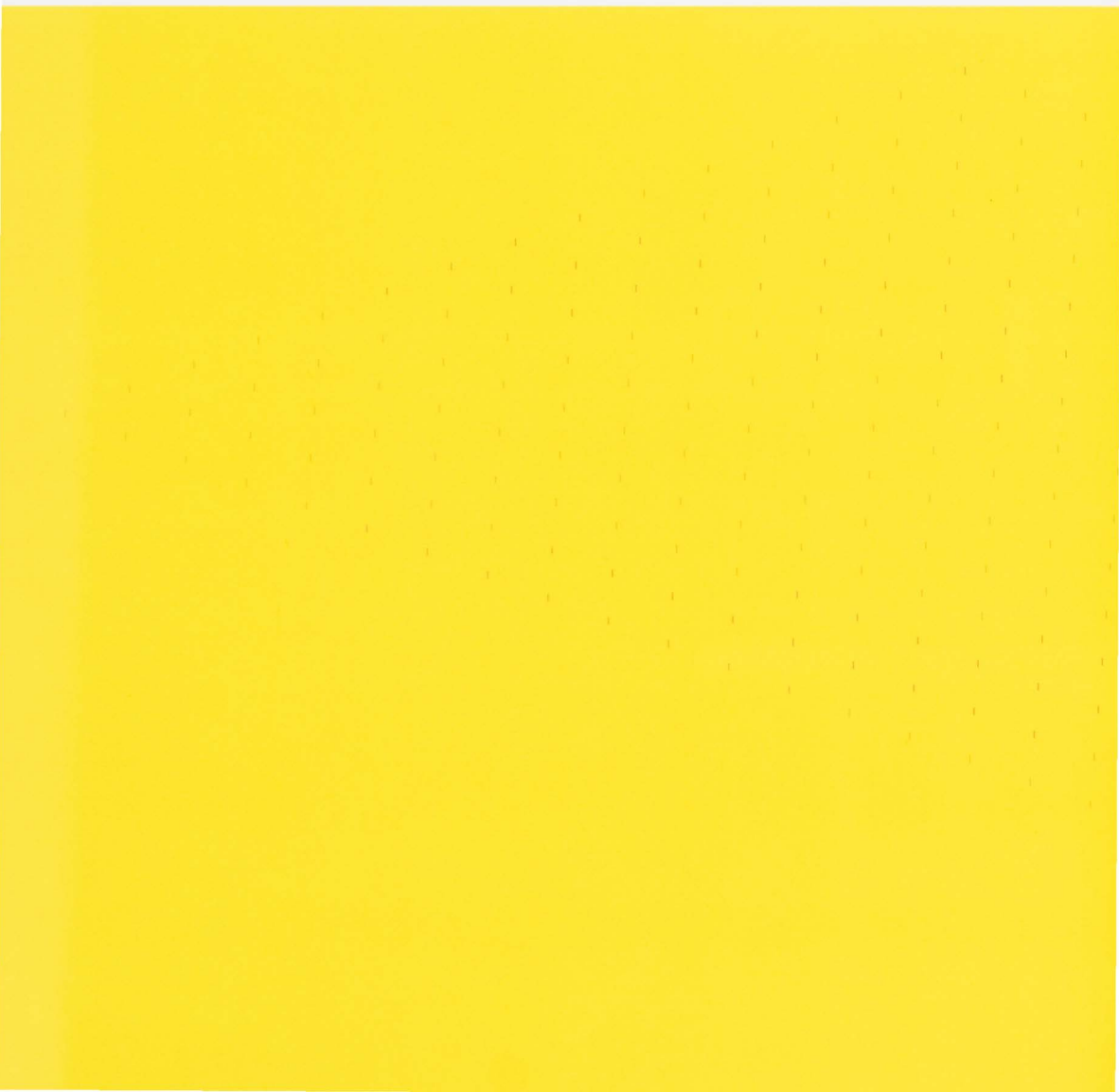








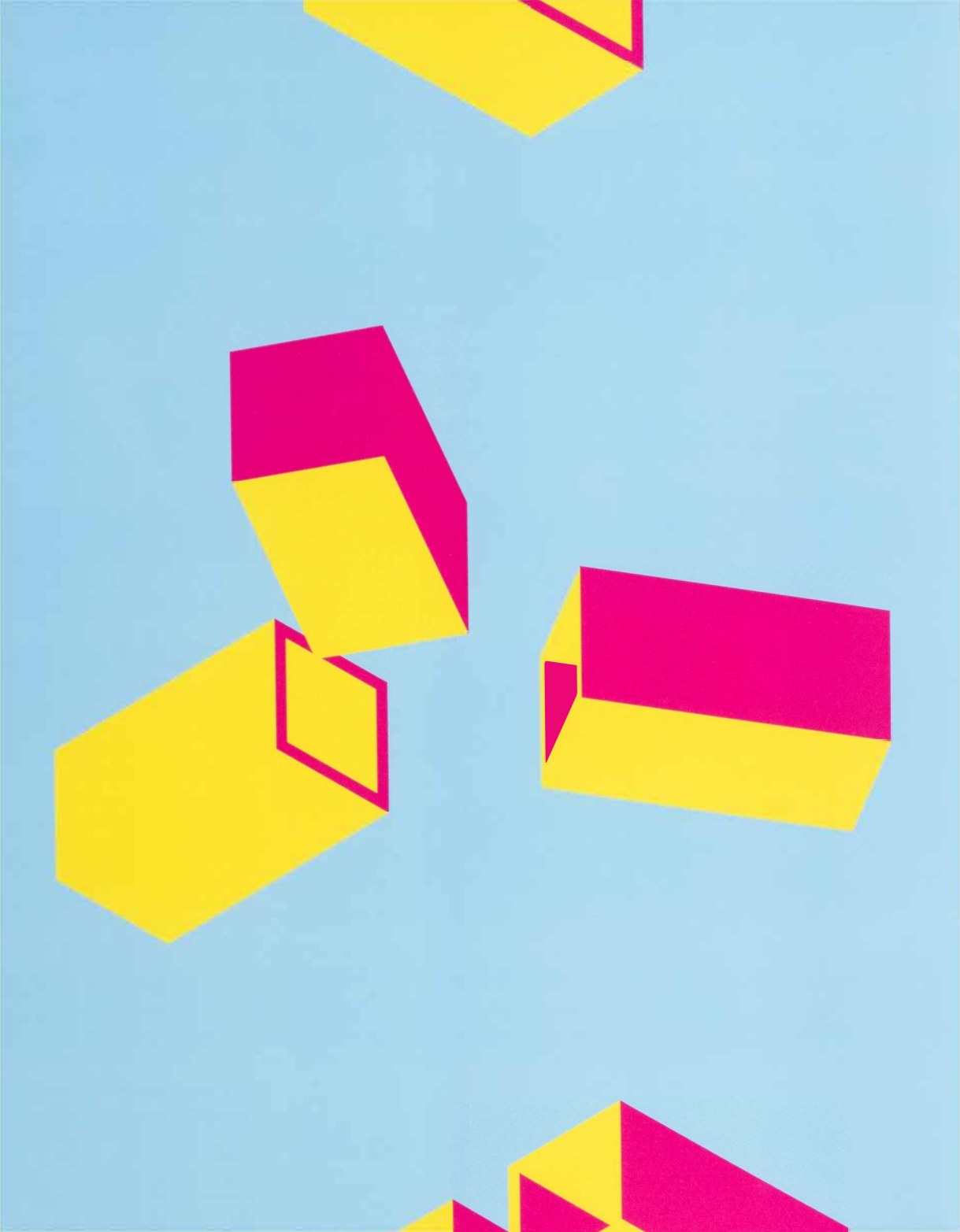
LIGHTNING FIELDS, WALTER  
DE MARIA, NEW MEXICO





1971-1972  
1973-1974

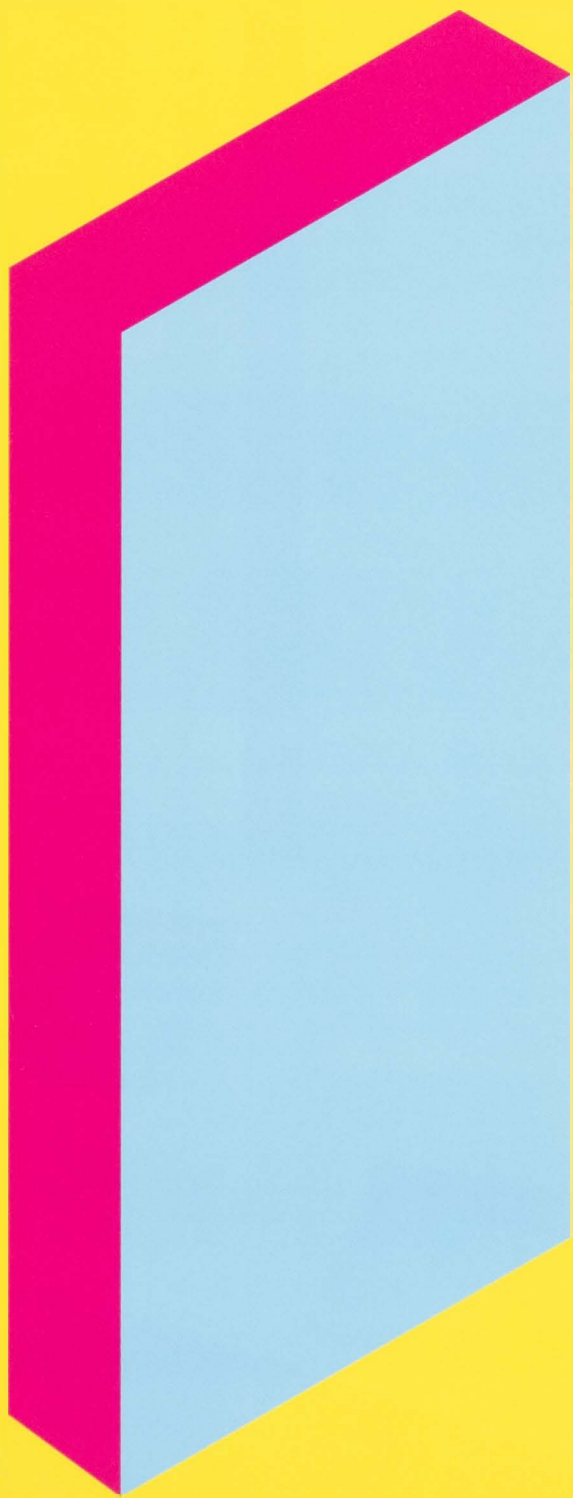
UNTITLED WORKS IN  
CONCRETE, DONALD JUDD,  
TEXAS



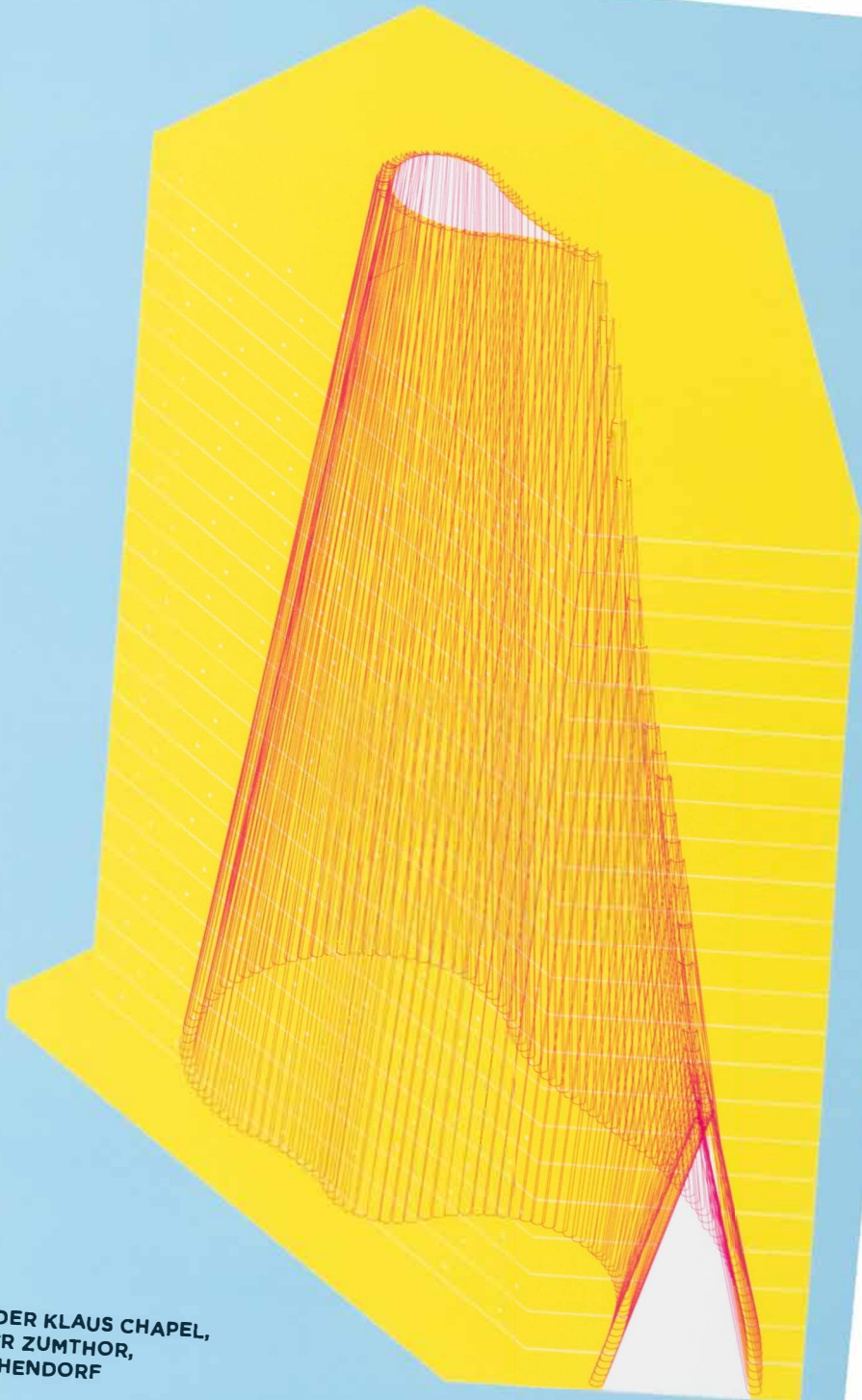
**SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL,  
MICHAEL ARAD NEW YORK**



TMA-1

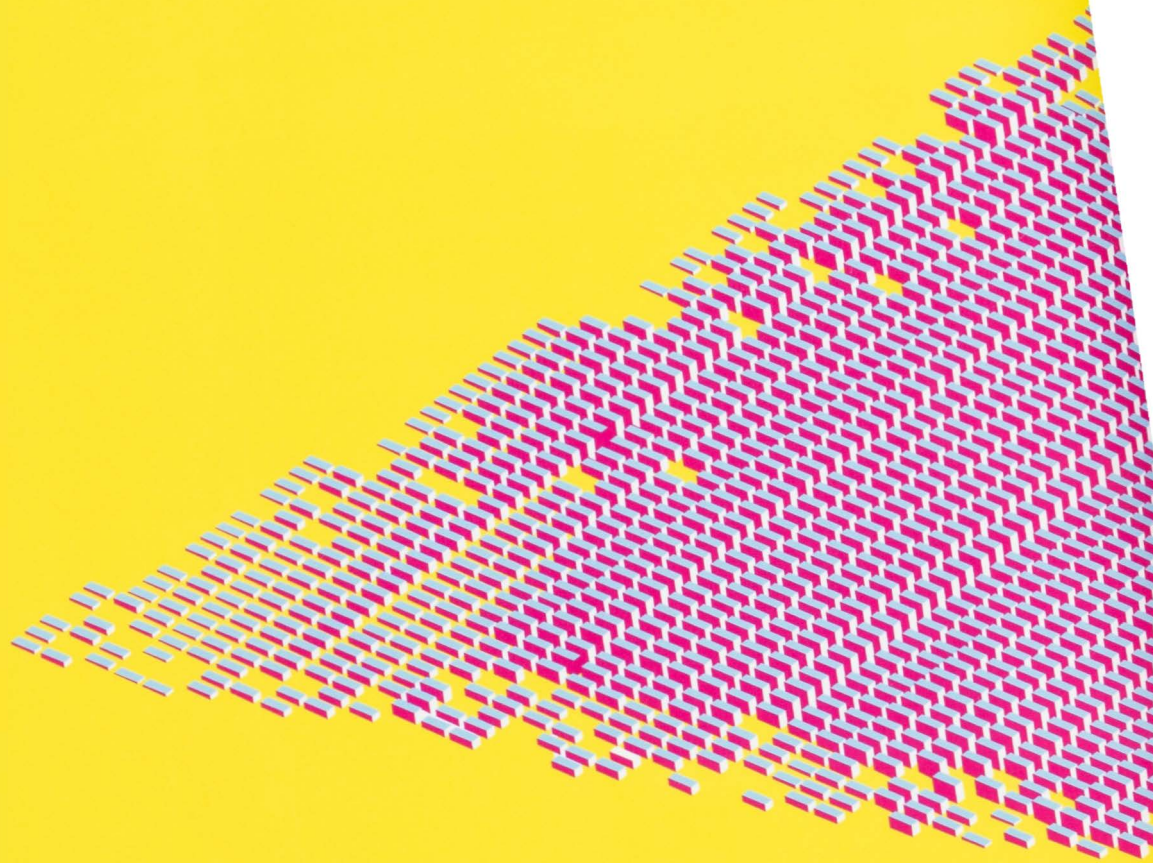






**BRUDER KLAUS CHAPEL,  
PETER ZUMTHOR,  
WACHENDORF**

MONUMENT TO THE  
MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE,  
BY JOSEF BEUYS, BERLIN

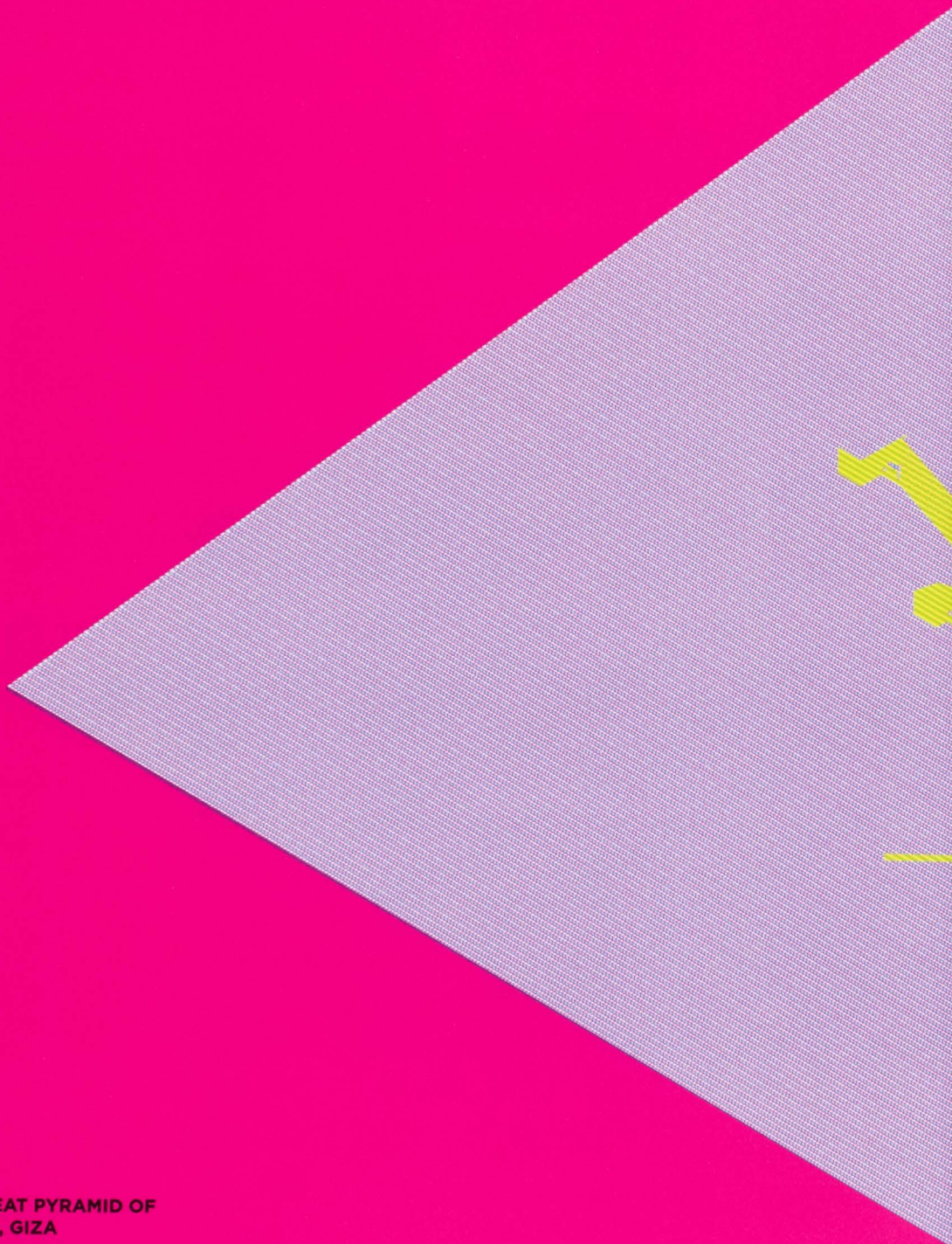






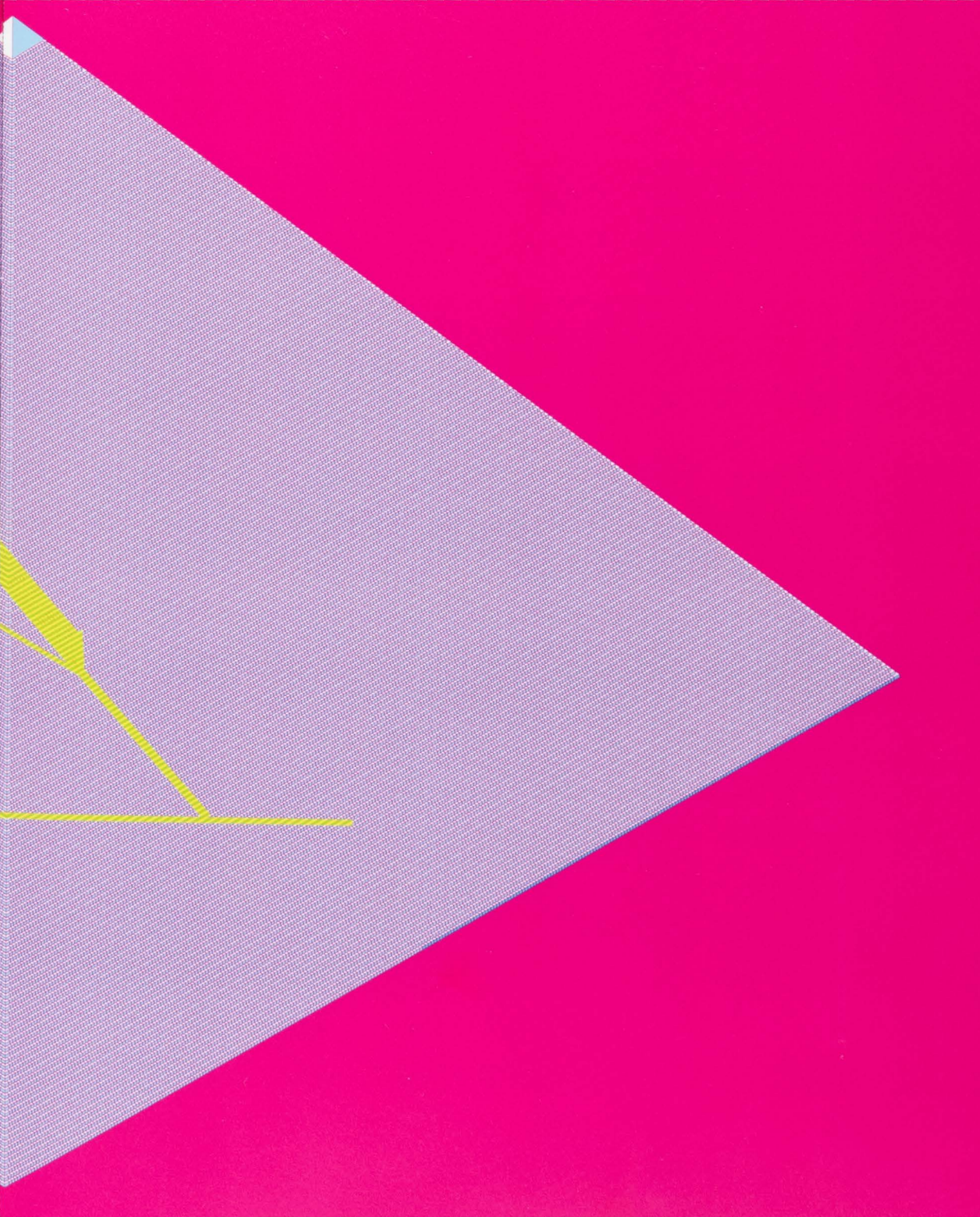


**THE GREAT PYRAMID OF GIZA**  
GIZA, EGYPT

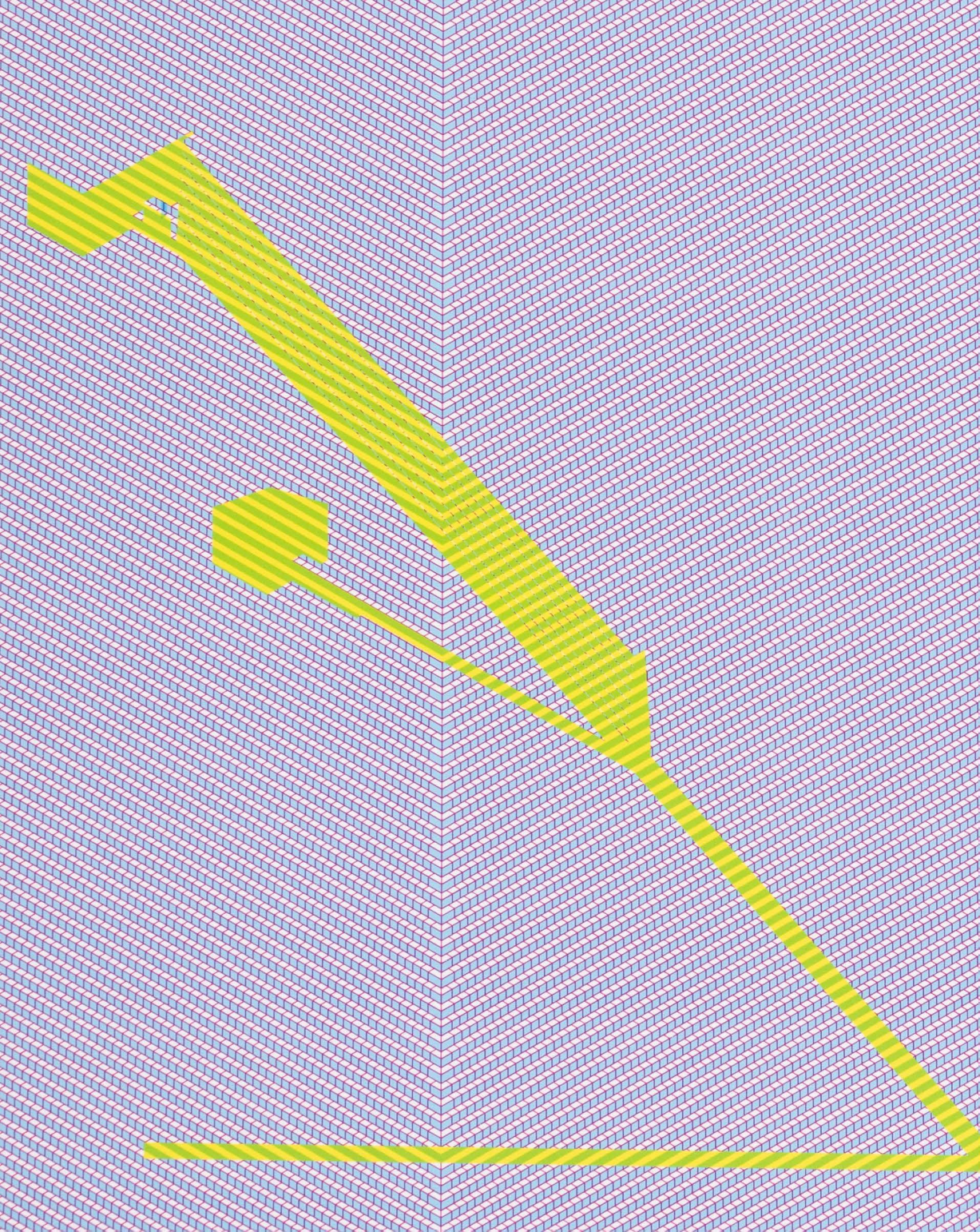


**THE GREAT PYRAMID OF  
CHEOPS, GIZA**















## RENDERINGS

1. *View of the building from the street, showing the entrance and the surrounding area.*

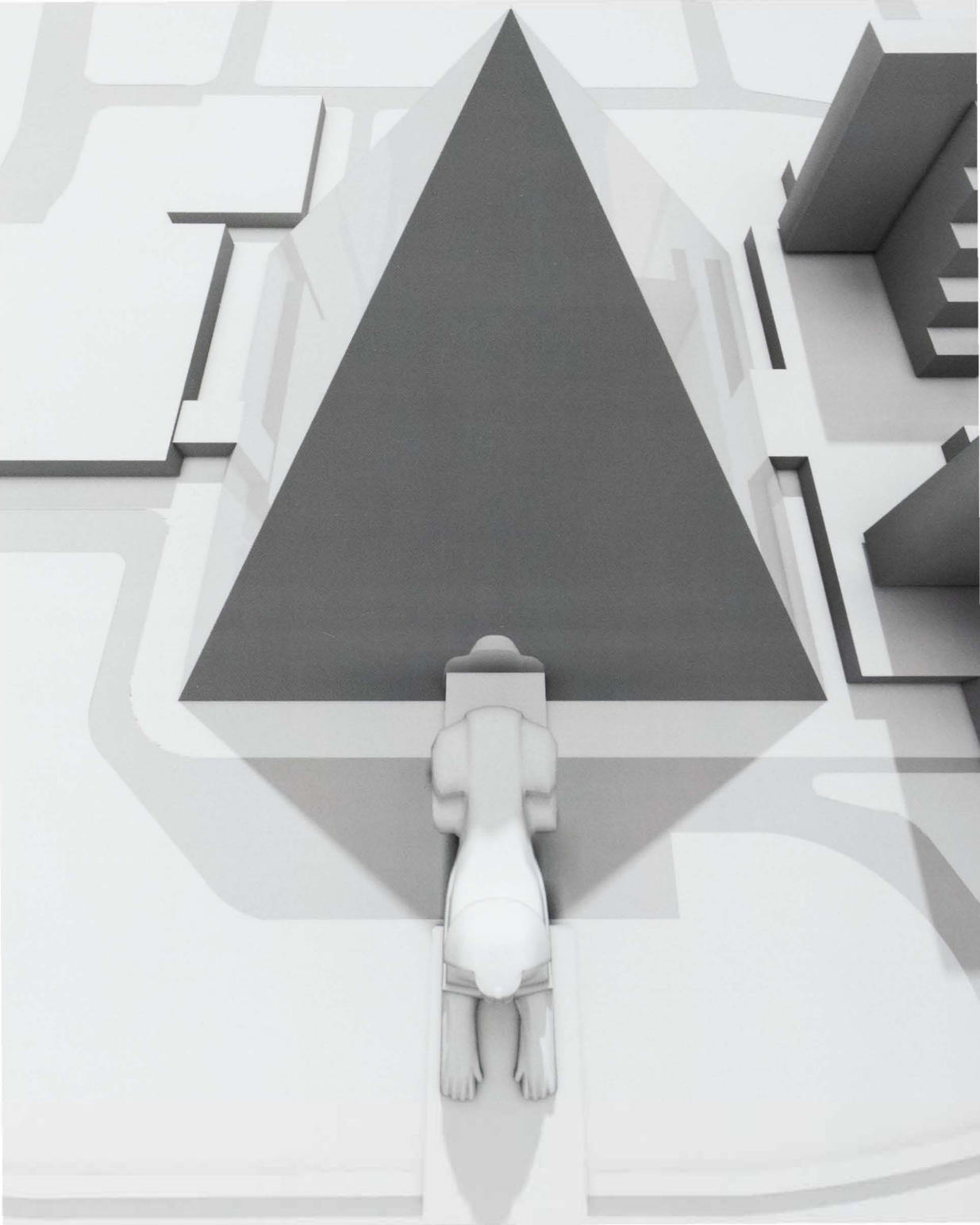
2. *View of the building from the street, showing the entrance and the surrounding area.*

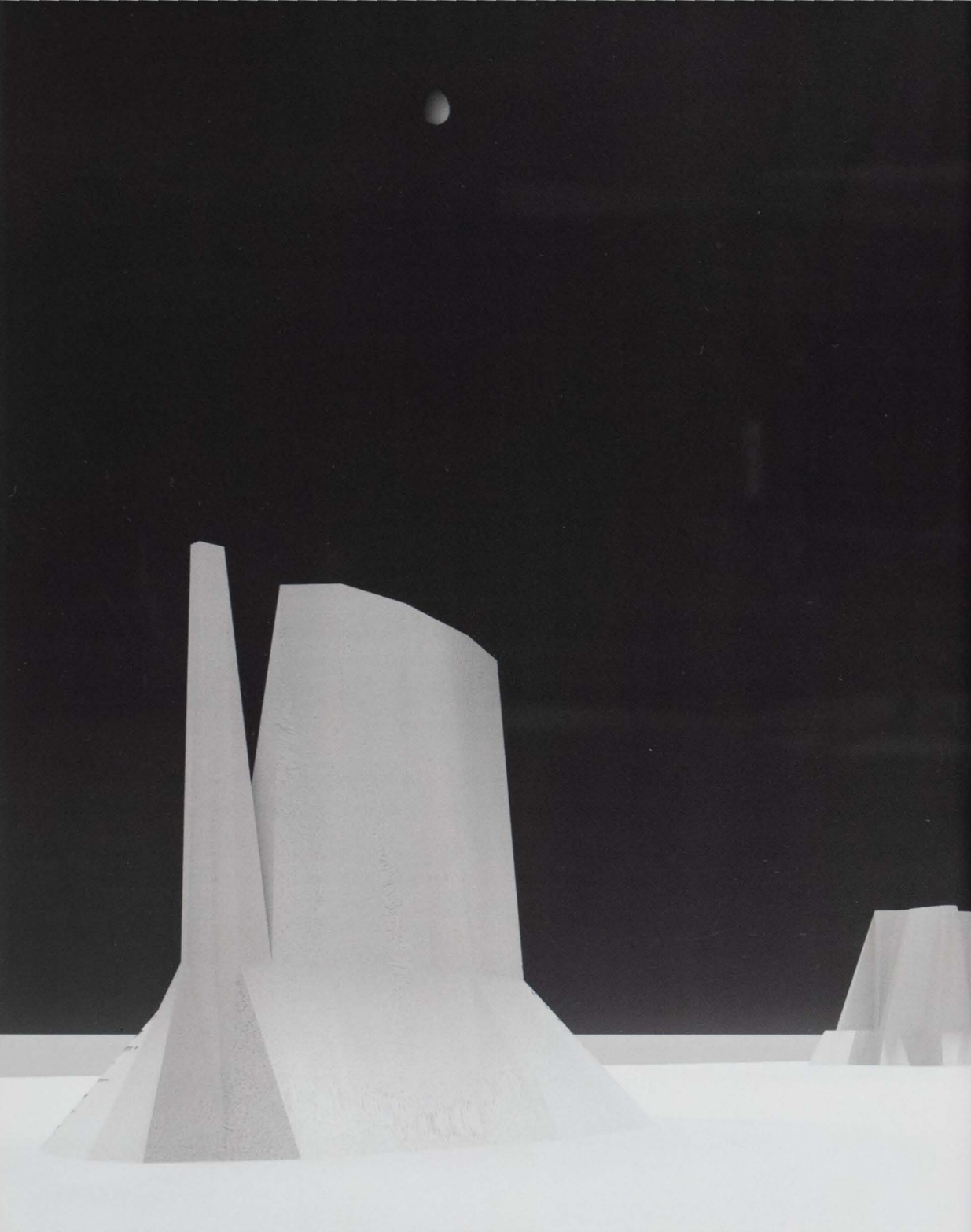
3. *View of the building from the street, showing the entrance and the surrounding area.*

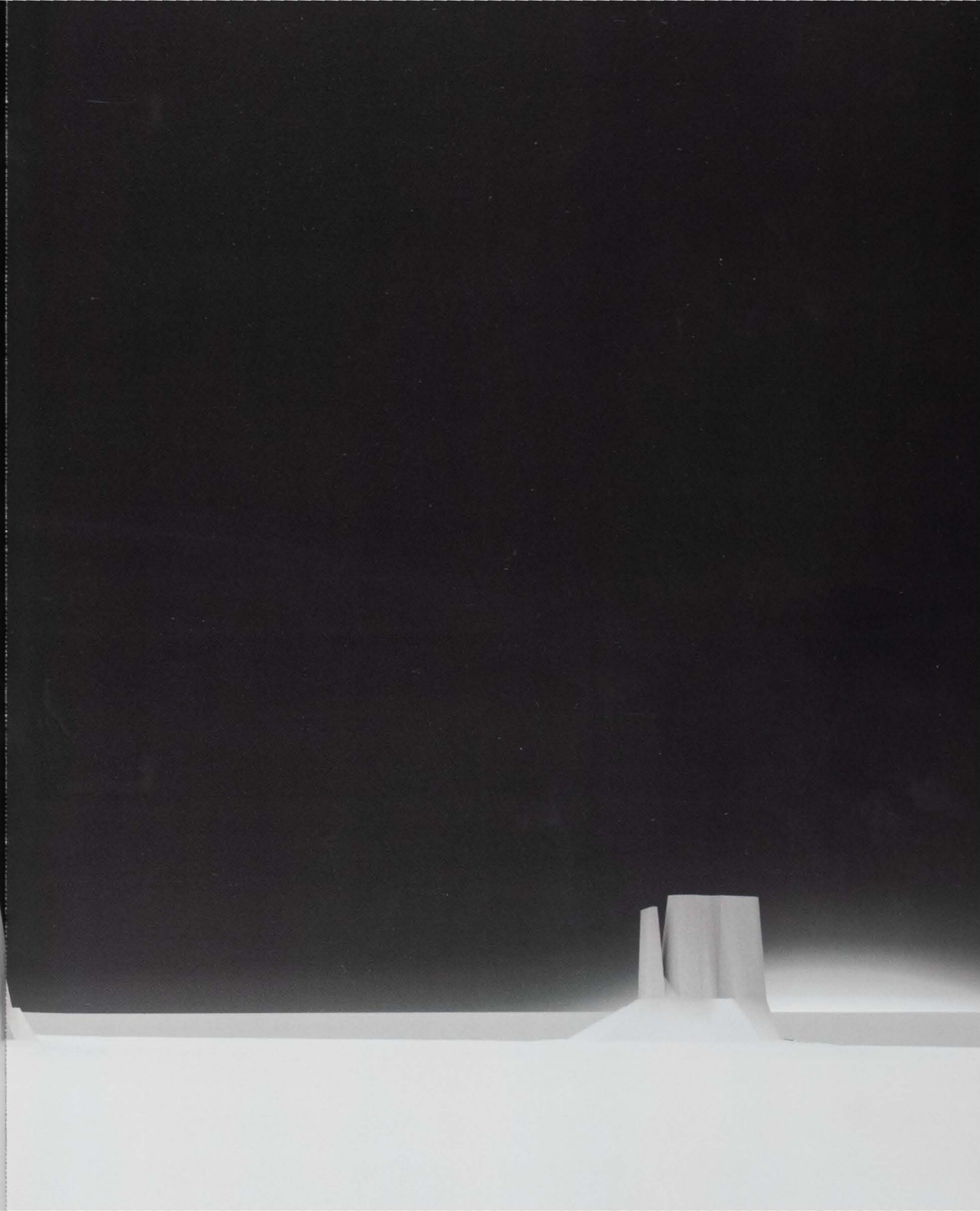
4. *View of the building from the street, showing the entrance and the surrounding area.*

5. *View of the building from the street, showing the entrance and the surrounding area.*

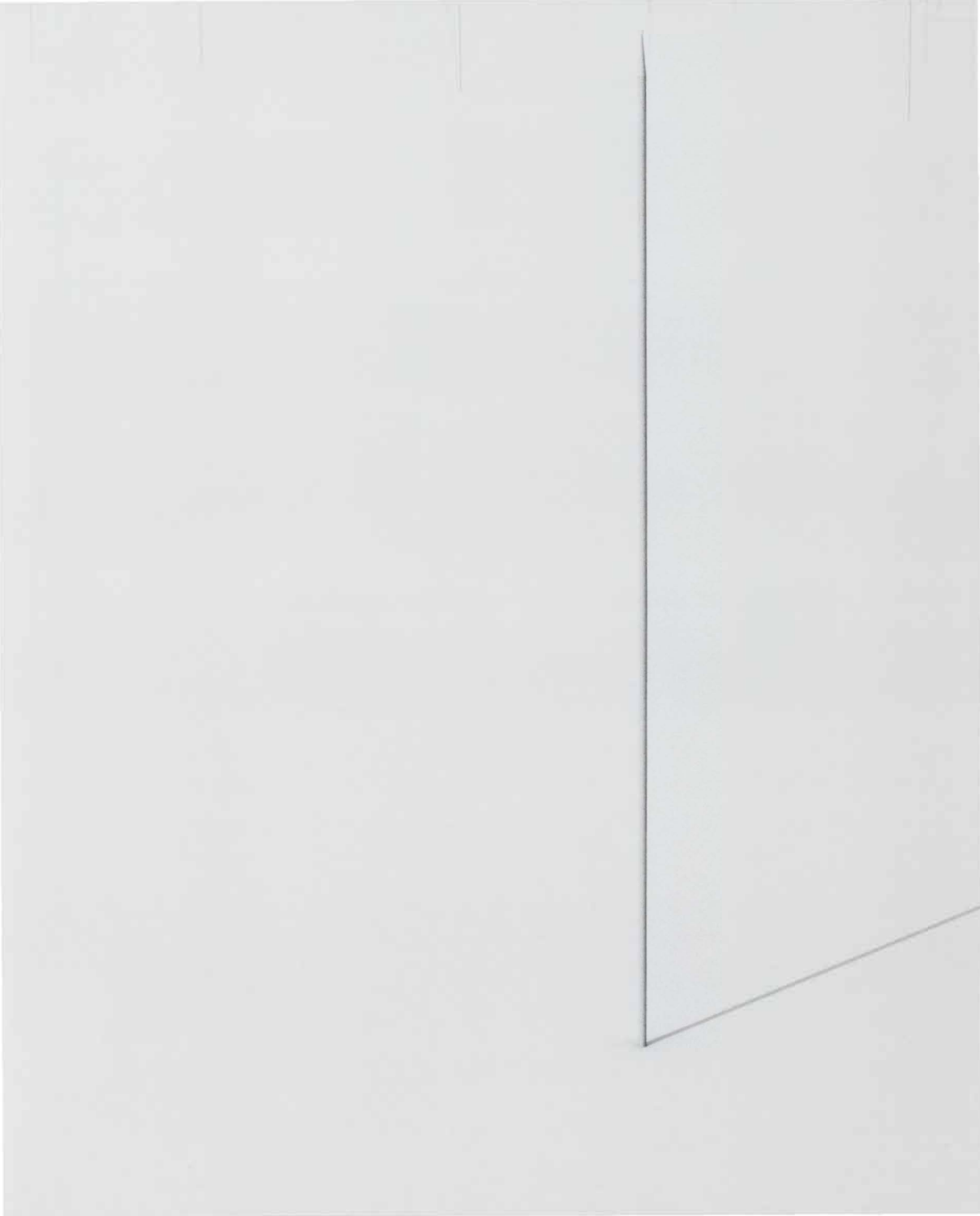




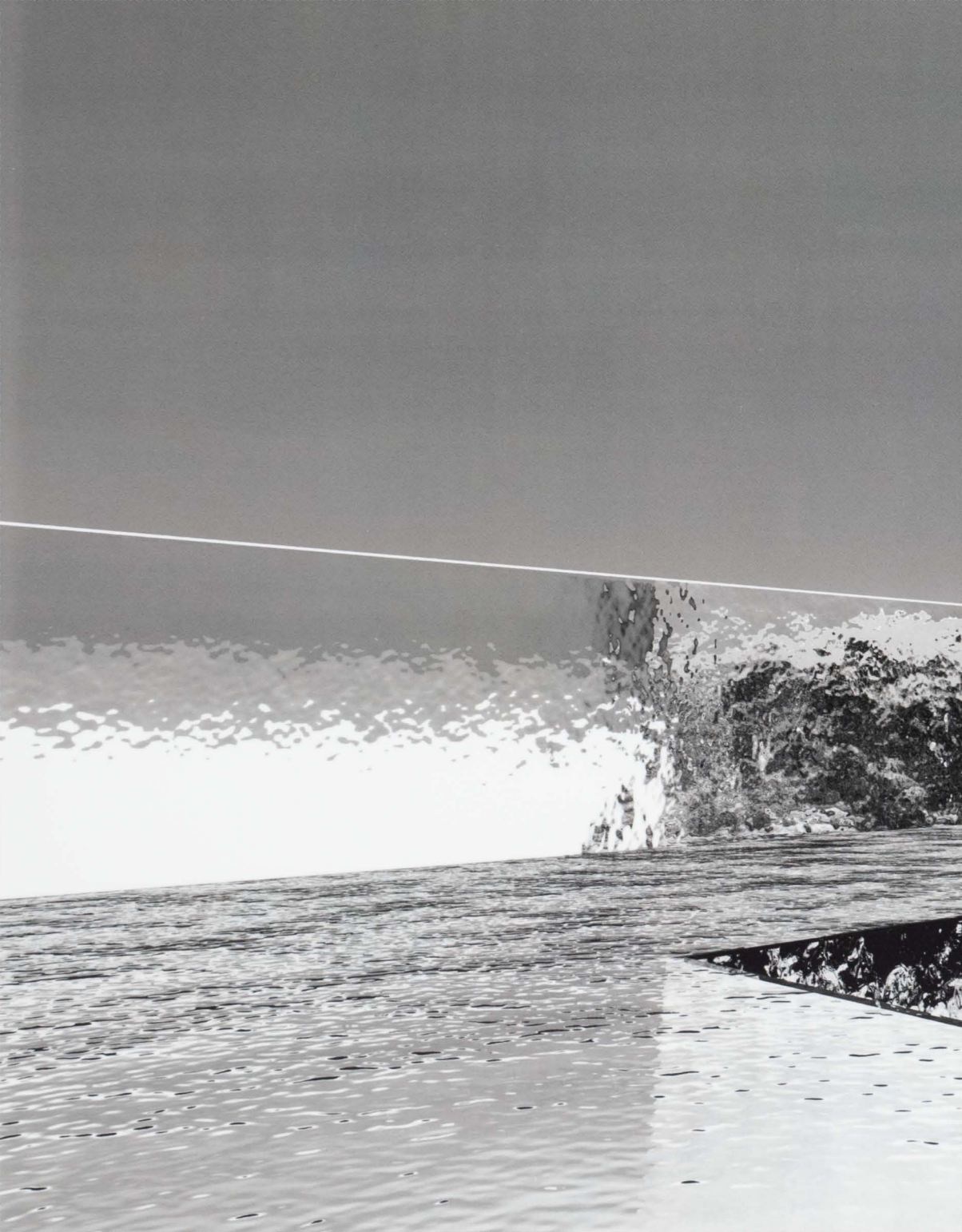


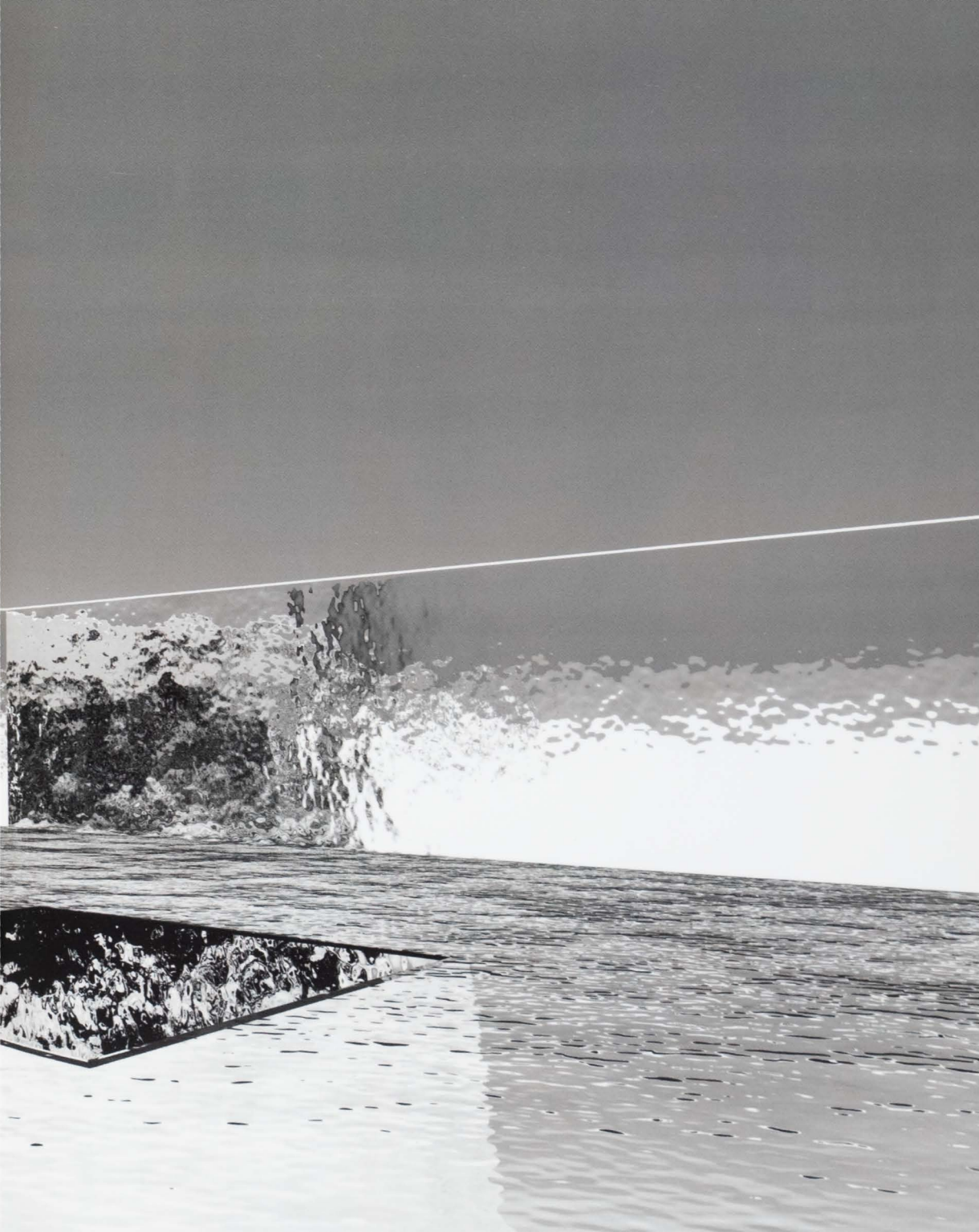




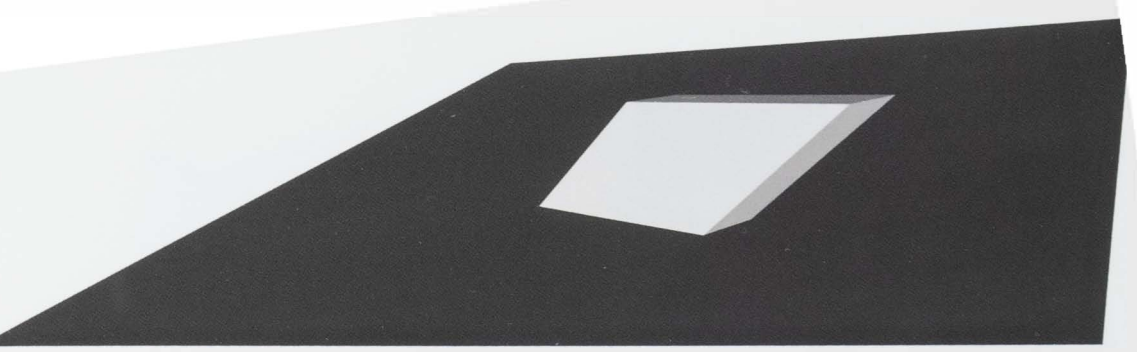






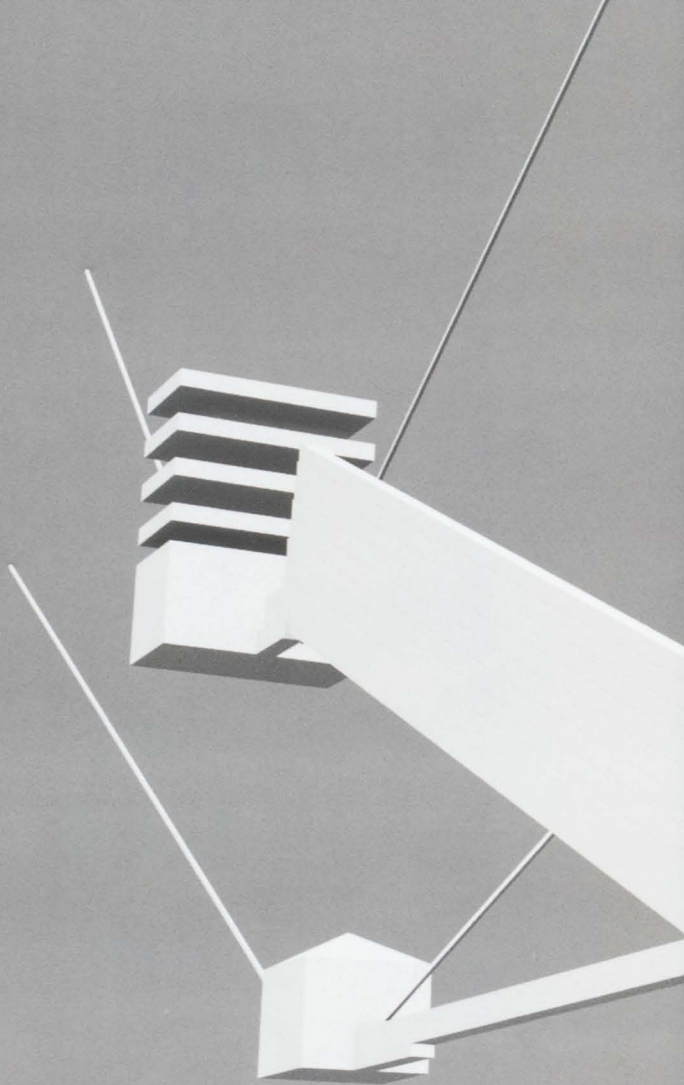


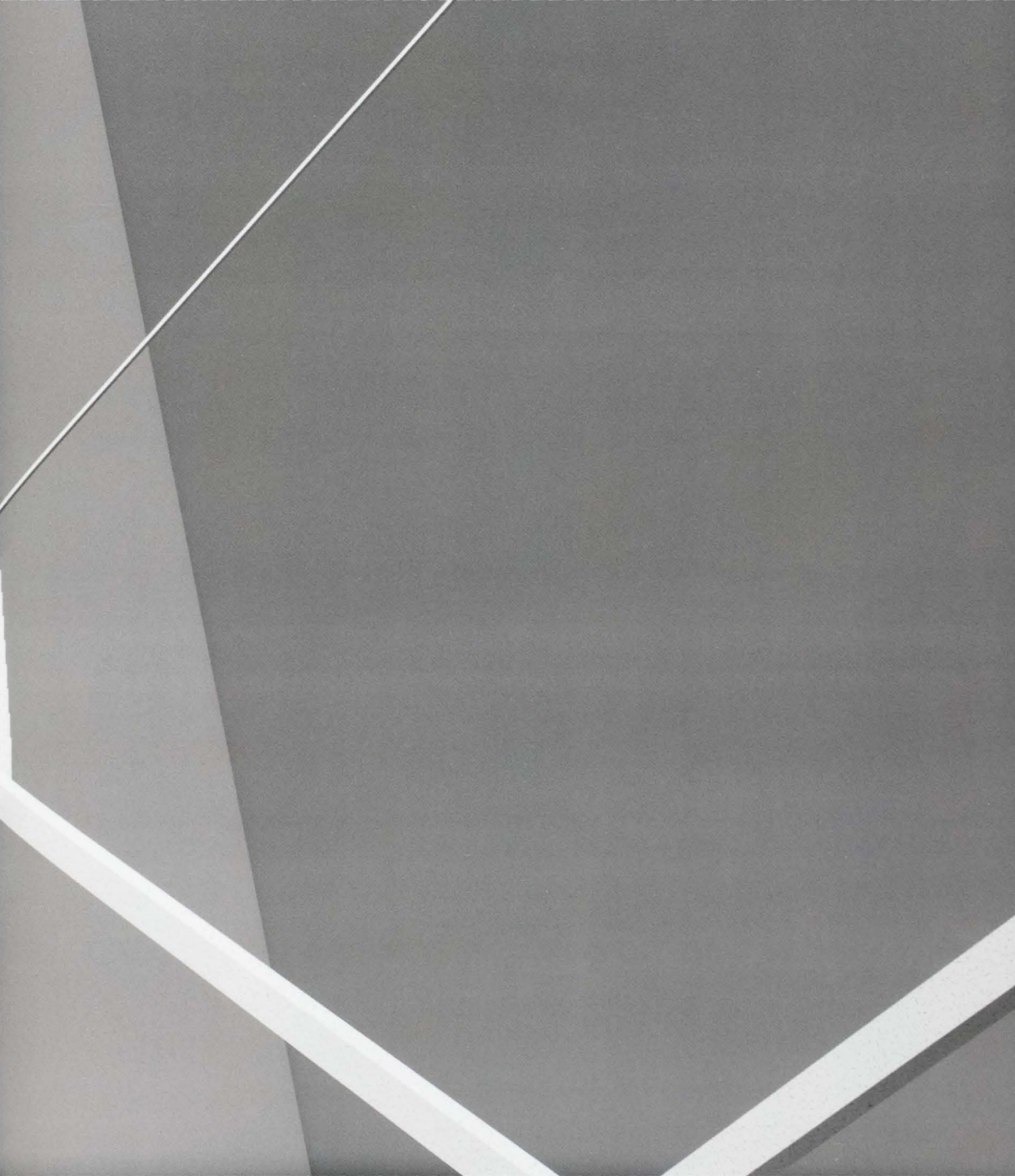






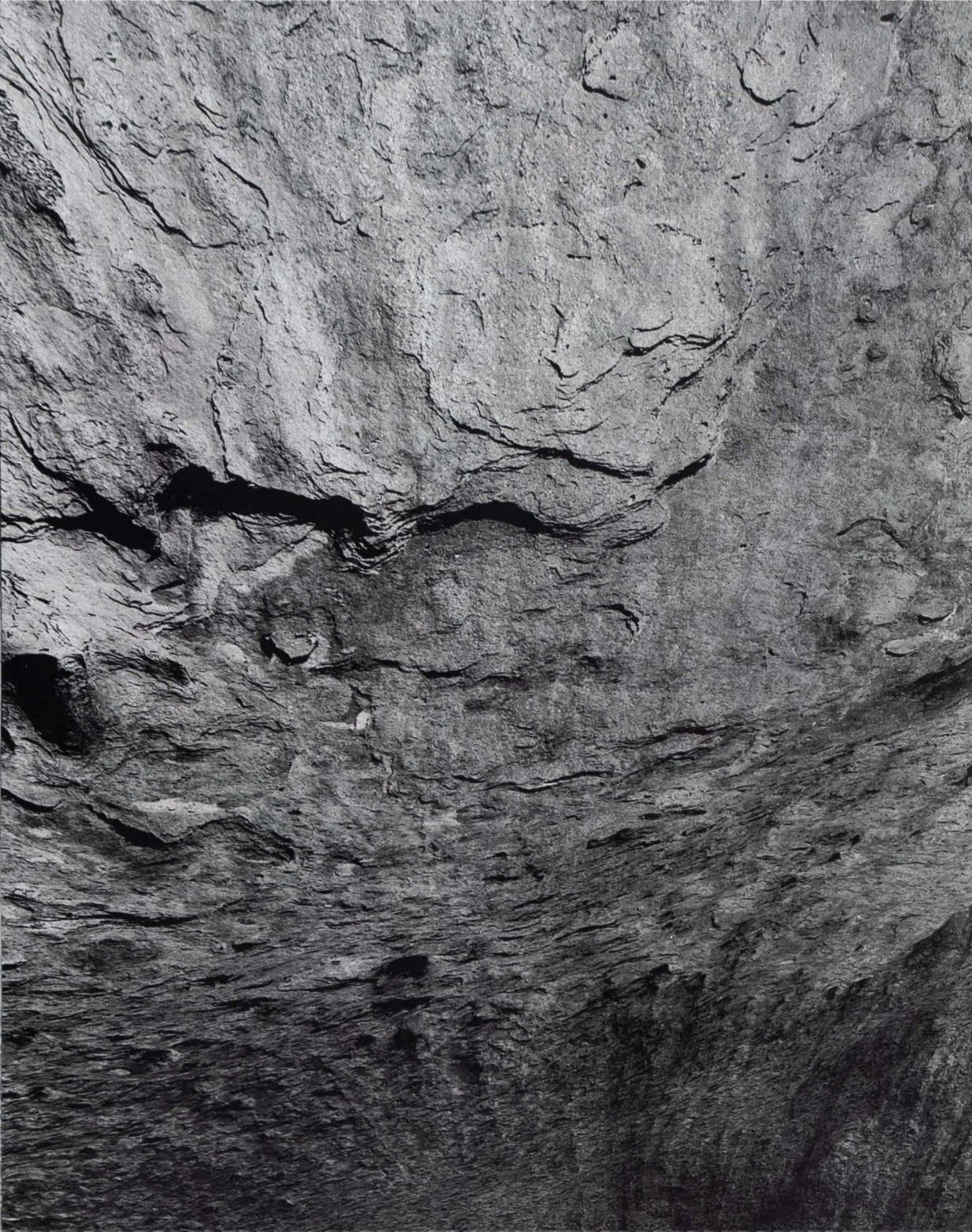




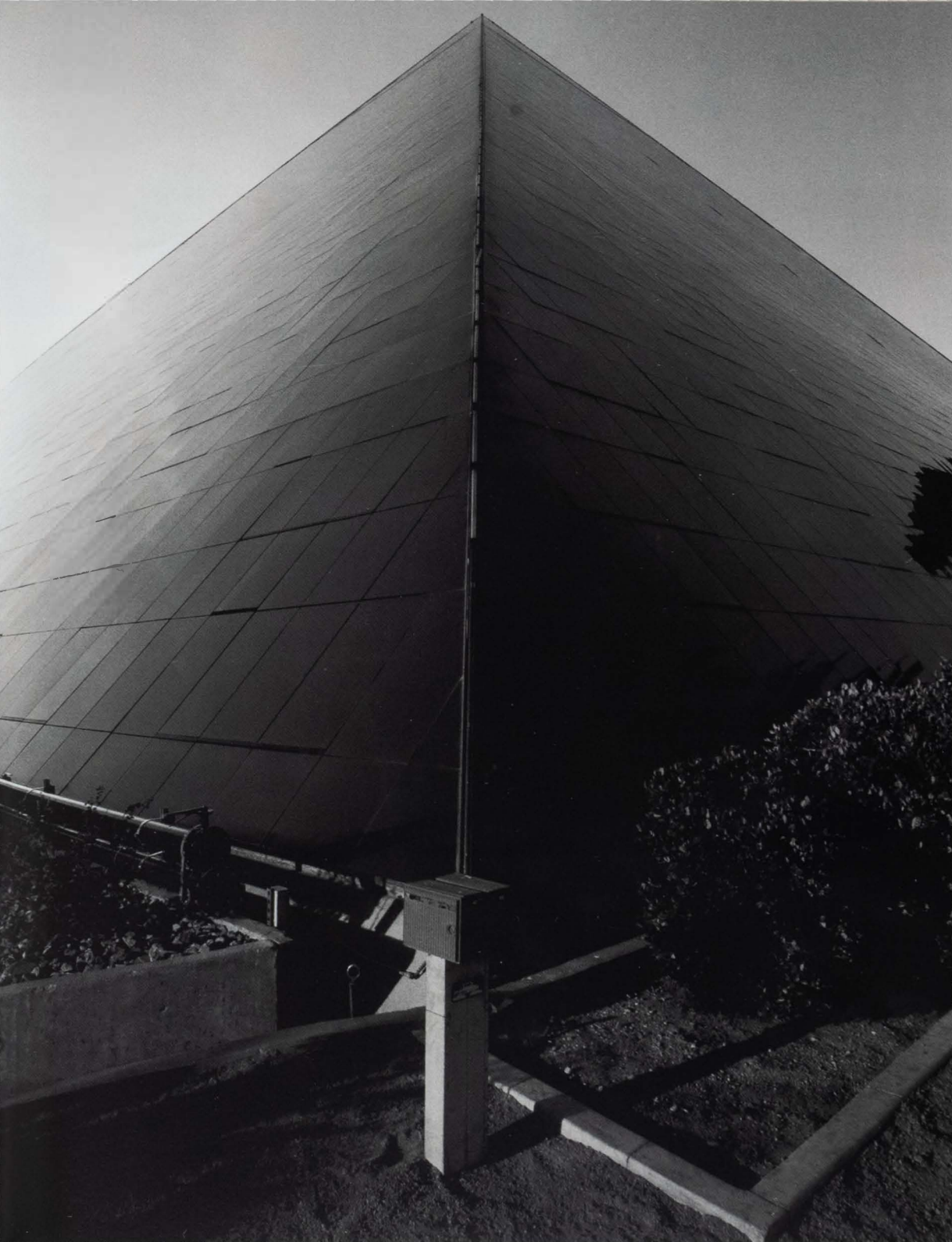


## PHOTOGRAPHS







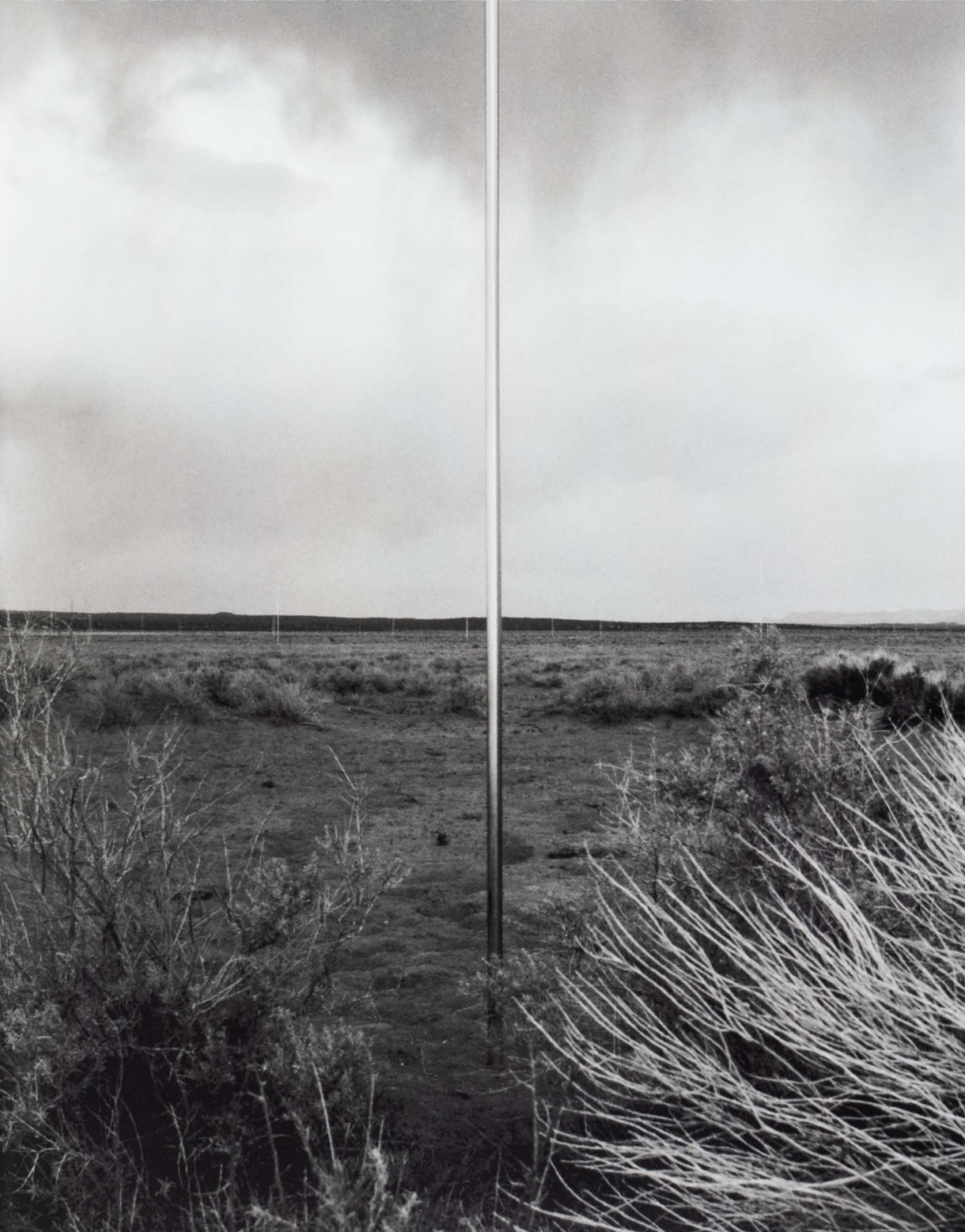


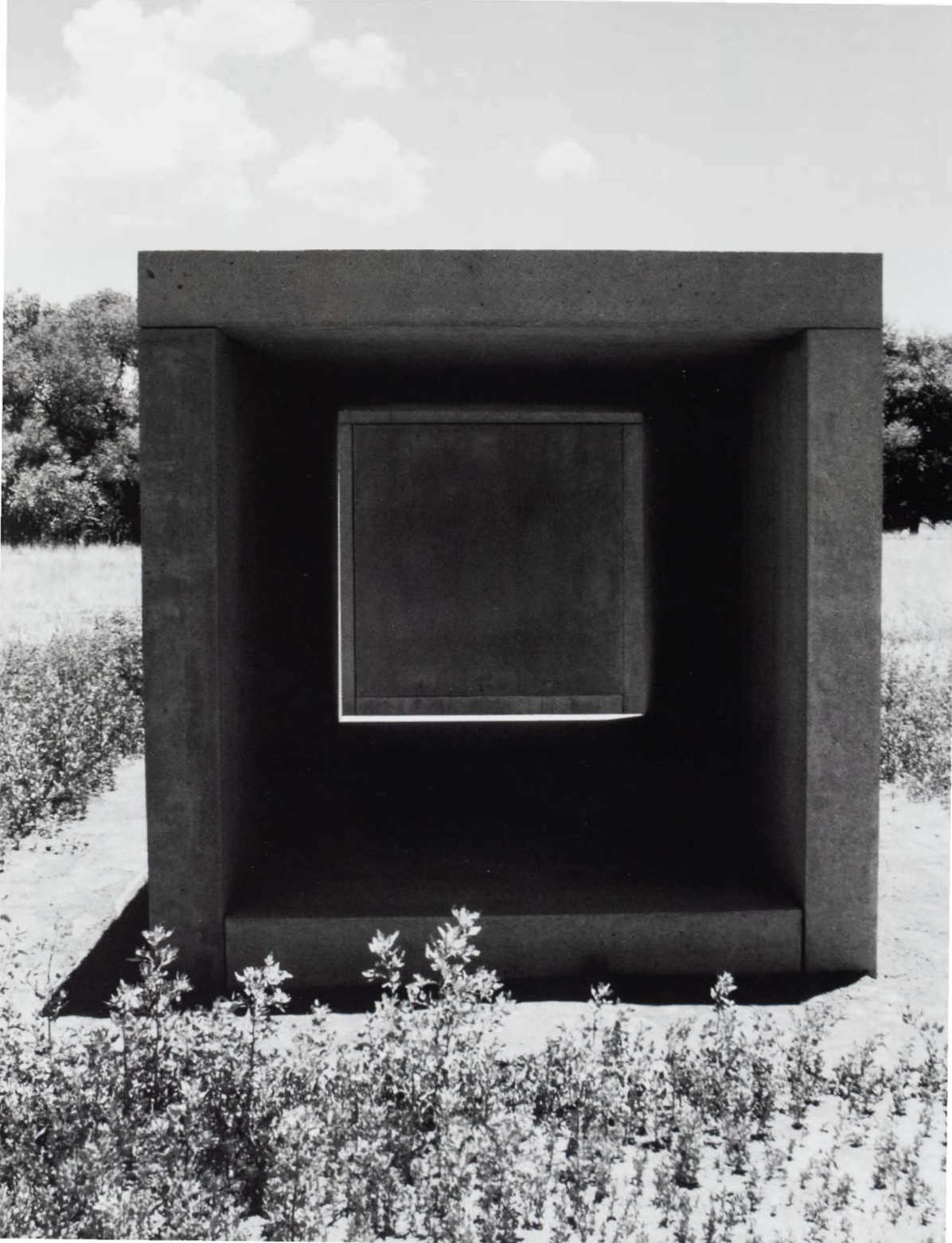




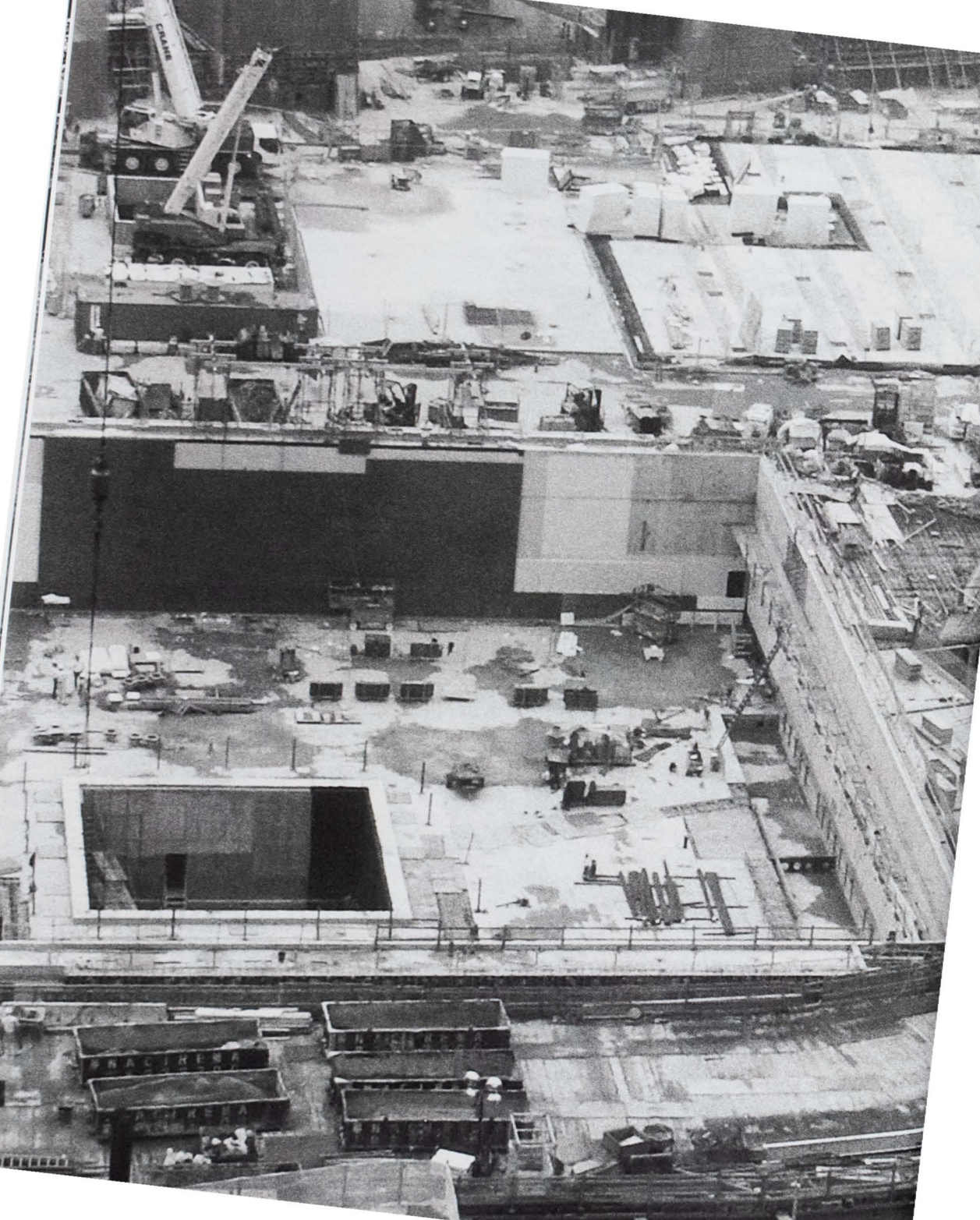




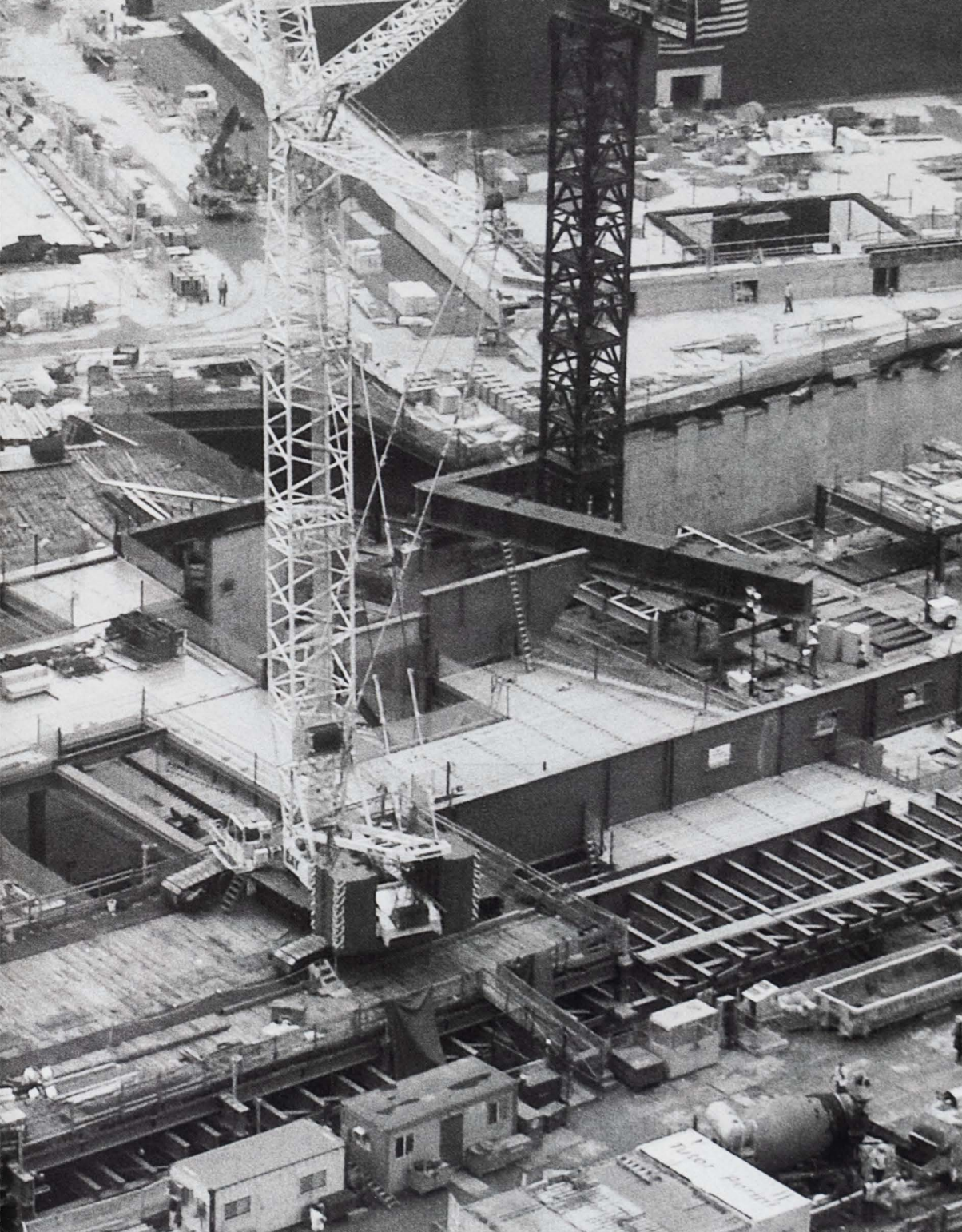
























## INDEX

### ULURU

*Northern Territory*

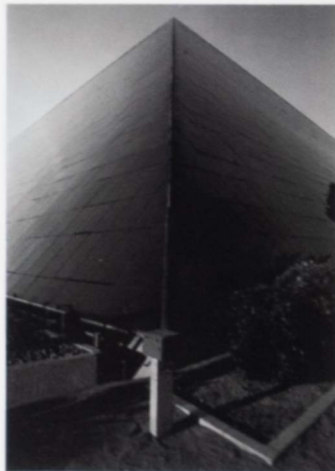
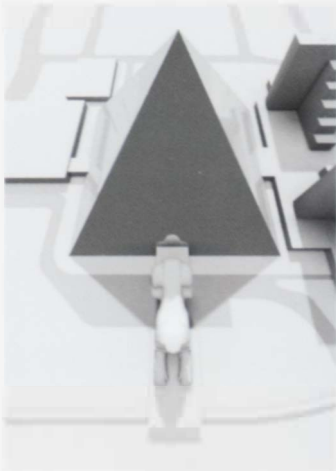


### LUXOR PYRAMID

*Las Vegas, USA*

Veldon Simpson

1993



**MONUMENT VALLEY**

*Arizona, USA*

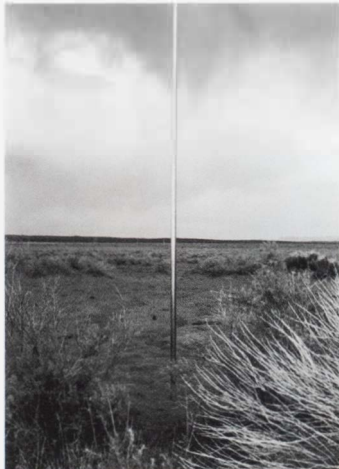


**LIGHTNING FIELDS**

*New Mexico USA*

Walter de Maria

1977



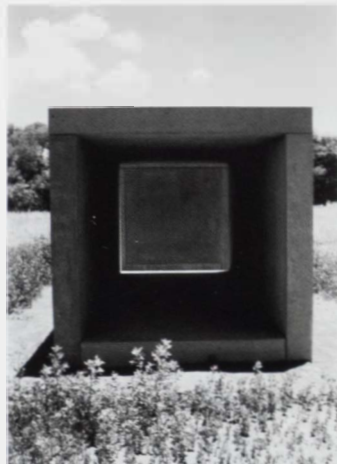
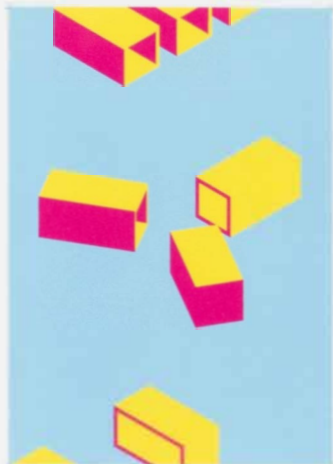


**UNTITLED WORKS IN CONCRETE**

*Marfa, Texas, USA*

Donald Judd

1980-1984

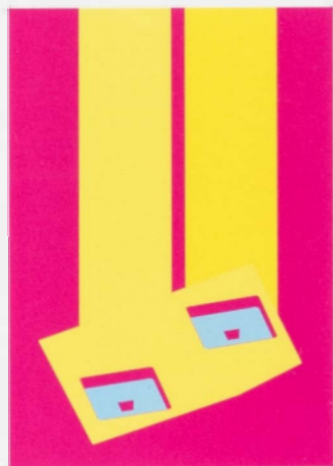


**SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL**

*New York, USA*

Michael Arad

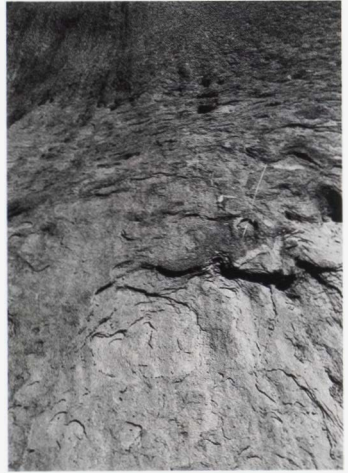
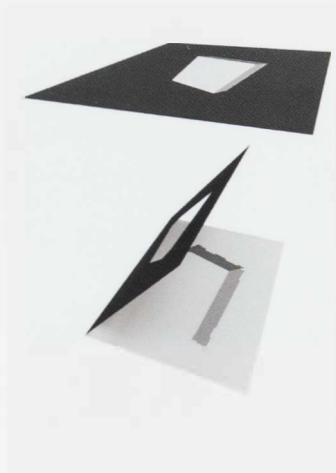
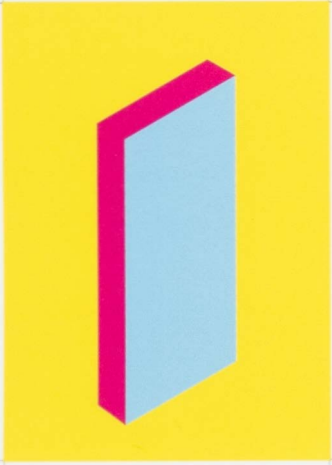
2011





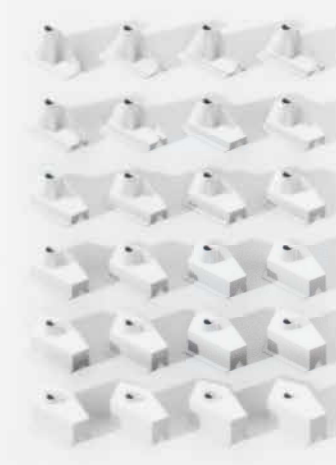
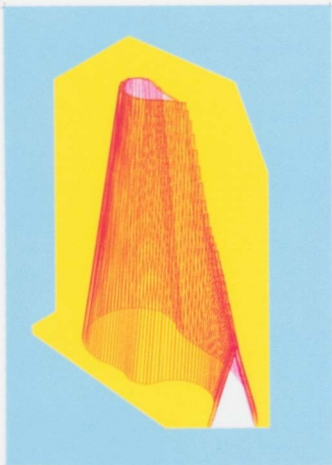
**TMA-1**

2001 *A Space Odyssey*  
Stanley Kubrick  
1968



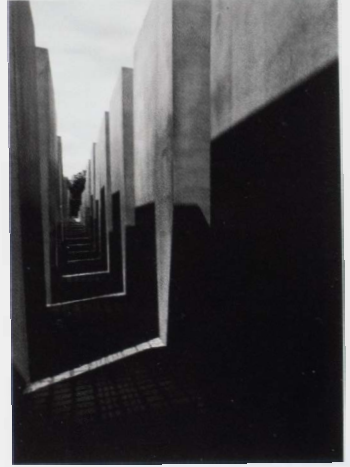
**BRUDER KLAUS CHAPEL**

Wachendorf, Germany  
Peter Zumthor  
2007



**MONUMENT TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE**

Berlin Germany  
Peter Eisenmen  
2004



**GREAT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS**

Giza, Egypt  
2650BC

