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# BIOFORM – Between Imagination and Printmaking Techniques

The Description of the PhD Portfolio of Practice

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Allusions to nature and the use of organic motifs has been and still is present in art at many different levels. This is the inclination within which my search of techniques, themes, and meanings can be situated. The title of my doctoral project, i.e. *Bioform – Between Imagination and Printmaking Techniques* comes directly from my long time creative practice experience based on obtaining impressions and marks form natural surfaces later used as the base for prints. This is precisely the technique used in the series of artworks entitled *"Fantomy"* [Phantoms], *"Metamorfozy"* [Metamorphoses], *"Formy"* [Forms], and *"Obiekty"* [Objects] created between 2014 and 2016. Spots and shapes connoting organic matter were compositional elements in the above-mentioned artworks. Living matter with its dynamic character constitutes the source of a wide spectrum of natural forms and, as such, can be seen as a constant source of creative inspiration. **The main objective for this doctoral project is to present my original creative method which makes use of organic abstraction based on biomorphic forms obtained in the studio as part of my creative experience with artistic printmaking.** I want to show authentic inspiration and describe everyday work in the studio. Inspiration and work combined can be seen as essential elements for creation and discovery. The description of the creative process is accompanied by the analysis and my own reflections on the said process. The conclusions I present have a personal character and constitute a reference to the issue of the artist's sensitivity; a quality that, without a doubt, plays a very important role in art and culture[1].

Through the profiles of selected artists (who were the most prolific in the second part of the 20th century), I try to characterise the phenomenon of organic abstraction, and describe the ways of depicting thoughts and feelings contained within this style. The issues related to technology, which stand for the second part of the title of the project, are discussed in the chapter entitled 'Techniques and Imagination'. The chapter discusses the areas of creation that are the most important to me. On the one hand, techniques, on the other, imagination. Sometimes, the former and the latter reciprocally

[1] Elaine N. Aron, *Wysoko wrażliwi*, Wydawnictwo Feeria, Łódź, 2017, p.49.

drive each other. From time to time, they stop each other acting as mutual barriers. Naturally, these barriers have to be broken. One should get to know them anew. Or else – if there is no solution at a given time – one should accept some of the limitations.

In the designing process and then in the creative process, I rely on my archived materials. I replenish these materials and store them to be used at later stages. Very often, these materials comprise projects that were ditched in the past, and never finished. Sometimes, they include the results of experiments in the search of right textures. This is a sort of a ritual of drawing on the past and experience. This is the ritual of revisiting forgotten patterns that fulfil their destination in a new role. As rightly pointed out by Socrates in the dialogue with Theaetetus:

*"Let us suppose that every man has in his mind a block of wax of various qualities (...) and on this he receives the seal or stamp of those sensations and perceptions which he wishes to remember. That which he succeeds in stamping is remembered and known by him as long as the impression lasts (...)"*[23]

Through imagination and memory that occupy our minds, the creative process is – in my opinion – something more than just a simple product of perception. Not only is it the effect of processing the world around us, but creative process is also a result of insights into our inner world.

The conclusions related to the above-mentioned areas of interest constitute the effect of the work and research taken up as part of this doctoral project.

[2] Platon, *Parmenides. Teajtet*, ANTYK, Kęty, 2002, pp.165, 191.

[3] **Translator's Note** [abbreviated **TN**]: Translation by B. Jowett, Cf. Plato. 1874. *Theaetetus*. In Vol. 3 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. London: Oxford University Press, 301—420.

## 2. ART IN CONTEXT

The use of organic forms in modern art is nothing new. Let us take, for instance, the style of Bioart, where artists use various forms of life thanks to the methods employed in modern biology and biotechnology. It is a known fact that bacteria and fungi introduced onto specific objects and surfaces form art installations of various sorts. In the exhibition entitled *Body Worlds*, created by the inventor of plastination, Dr. Gunther von Hagens, one may see the entire anatomy of the human body, the effects of diseases on the human body and human tissues, and also the development of the human embryo and the human foetus, or the development of the human nervous system. The exhibition, without a doubt, gives an opportunity to satisfy curiosity in terms of the morphology of the human body.

At one stage in the project, my preliminary charcoal drawings and monotypes started to resemble ultrasound images (Ultrasonography). Obviously, this was only an idea that crossed my mind, but I associated it with this sort of a subconscious tendency that moves us towards biological forms. As I wanted to evoke living forms in my work, I focused on what cannot be seen with the unaided, naked eye. I began to study various materials related to ultrasound imaging, taking into consideration issues related to pathomorphology[4]. Obviously, I did not want to recreate this imagery directly. When I came across images taken with an electron microscope, they became yet another source of inspiration. These images closely resembled my previous drawings and works that affected later prints. It was then, when I strengthened my conviction that I should not produce literal depictions of reality, but I should carry on following the "expressionist" path of spontaneous compositions that leave space for individual interpretation.

The images seen under the electron microscope gave me the opportunity to have a look into the world of the microcosm. The word *microcosm* itself has a particular meaning, i.e. the physical world at the micro level, but it also has very precise connotations closely

[4] TN: According to the online version of *the Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary*, *pathomorphology* is defined as „[the] morphology of abnormal conditions".

related to its etymology[5]. The idea behind the word 'microcosm' can be traced back to Greek cosmology. According to the said idea, the elements at a lower, micro level are reflections of a higher, macro level. Consequently, in the image of Man one finds a reflection of the image of the Cosmos. I believe that this phenomenon can be experienced and felt directly. One only has to listen very carefully to the inner Self. This is a way to discover biological processes. Electrical and chemical signals passed from neuron to neuron in the brain at the onset of information processing have been one of the many themes inspiring some of my works. Abstract form inspired by our microcosm had gradually started to develop into the macrocosm, transitioning from the physical to the spiritual sphere, creating a balance between violence and serenity. The body seen as a microcosm is a representation of a miniature living universe animated by its soul. The presumed analogy between the whole and its parts was instrumental not only in the development of cosmology, but it was also fundamental in astrology and other fields within which the belief in the metaphysical relationship between Man and nature was promoted[6]. The general assumptions behind the concept of the microcosm are based on the idea that the world finds its epitome in Man; what is more, the world's sole existence depends on the existence of Man. The construction of the universe corresponds to the construction of the human body; the parts of the body and the universe correspond to one another, so much so that one can draw close correlations between them. This idea can be found in the writings of Hildegard of Bingen, who touches upon the issue of mutual relations between God, Man, and the Universe. She believes that the entire universe was created for humans. In her visions, St. Hildegard, very often referred to the metaphor of nature. She had visions about the geocentric and concentric structure of the universe, within which the visible world is composed of the four elements, i.e. water, fire, air, and earth. According to her, Man as a mirror image of the universe is also composed of the same elements of which the most important organs, i.e. the brain, the heart, the lungs, and the liver are their counterparts. She advocated the view that humans should live in harmony with nature,

[5] TN: According to *the Online Etymology Dictionary*, the noun *microcosm* comes from "late 12c., *mycrocossmos* (modern form from early 15c.) 'human nature, man viewed as the epitome of creation,' literally 'miniature world,' from Medieval Latin *microcosmus*, from Greek *mikros* 'small' [...] + *kosmos* 'world' […]".

[6] https://www.britannica.com/topic/microcosm

as we are an integral part of nature. She also points to the dual nature of Man; the influence of spiritual and bodily elements is reciprocal[7].

The Medieval mystic describes the timeless problem that is also significant for modern Man. The eternal questions about the human nature and our condition take various forms; yet, the crux of the problem stays the same. From the beginning, Art – due to its nature – has always been the battleground for the dilemmas and problems most fundamental to humanity. In modern times, Hans Belting in his book entitled *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, while referring to the relation between depictions and the physicality of the work of art, points out that "the antithesis of form and matter, which has become a law in art, is rooted in the difference between image and medium"[8] [9]. Hans Belting highlights that an image is a symbolic act and requires from us, the audience, a kind of perception, response that is also a symbolic act. Images are examined in a more abstract way; an act of metamorphosis occurs when the images seen become the images remembered (mental images). The exchange between the medium (the matter) of the image and our body takes place. It is thanks to images that we can become free; that we can distance ourselves from the matter. Abstraction gives us the opportunity to abandon the realistic vision of the world. Consequently, one can reach a much deeper understanding of reality. Thanks to what is known to us and through our imagination, a particular process occurs in which images of a specific intensity emerge[10]. Art that does not rely on the depictions of external, physical reality constitutes a separate reality. Such tendencies have always been present in art. It was only in the 20th century that abstract art became one of the major artistic trends.

One of the forerunners of non-figurative painting in Poland was **Alfred Lenica** (1899-1977). Lenica was an eminent Polish abstractionist artist alluding to surrealism. Lenica thought of himself as a surrealist, whereas – in fact – his painting is an expression of emotional states and leans towards expressionist abstraction, which is mainly

[7] Człowiek jako mikrokosmos w ujęciu Hildegardy z Bingen, [In] Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum XIX(1), Wydawnictwo Akademii Ignatianum, Kraków 2013, pp.87-116
[8] TN: Translated by T. Dunlap, Cf. Belting, Hans, An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body. Transl. Thomas Dunlap, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 13.
[9] Hans Belting, Antropologia obrazu, Universitas, Kraków 2007, p.22.
[10] Based on Hans Belting, *Antropologia Obrazu*, Universitas, Kraków 2007, pp. 24-32.

an account of sensitivity and creative intuition that makes use of amorphous forms[11]. Influenced by his fascination with Tachisme and action painting, the artist developed his own style of abstract painting around 1955[12]. Experiments with automatism, i.e. frottage, grattage, dripping, and decalcomania, in his works on paper became the point of departure for larger oil compositions that made Lenica the icon of Tachisme in Poland[13].

**Tadeusz Brzozowski** (1918-1987), inspired by surrealism and non-geometric abstraction pursued an equilibrium through saturating his works with colour and then subduing it: "I subdue it [the colour] as our experiences fade. This is how the contrasts of our life arise. The constant image that I have in my mind is that of beautiful people tarnished by dirt"[14]. In the 1960s and the 1970s, Brzozowski worked out his own mechanistic sensual style. He never ventured into the realm of "pure painting". His works depict the living or suffering tissue. They exude "[…] pathos and mockery, grotesque and the tragedy of existence; painting stays true to the human being and his body. Even abstraction is animate, made of flesh and bone, biological, frayed tissue, corporeal forms trapped in the web of sharp lines, exposed to painful tensions and tears. This is a metaphor of the defectiveness of human condition"[15].

This was the time in European art when organic abstraction became fashionable. The style in question was also an unconventional outlet for depicting the anatomy of psychological states. This can be found in **Jan Lebenstein's** art.

In the case of Lebenstein's works that come from the 1960s and the 1970s, one deals with the evolution of axial figures of an organic-like character, which is part of existential figuration. Some of these figures lose entirely their figure shape. In the case of some of the forms, their figurative shapes disappear entirely. When viewing them, one gets an impression that they appear to look like a sort of a skinned incorporeal animal. These paintings intimidate and build up suspense. Later, his work transformed into a peculiar organic bestiary; a catalogue of human and animal qualities: antediluvian

[11] Słownik terminologii sztuk pięknych, wydawnictwo naukowe PWN. Warszawa 2004.
[12] J. Chrzanowska-Pieńkos. Andrzej Pieńkos. Leksykon sztuki polskiej XX wieku, Poznań 1996, p. 124.
[13] http://www.fejkielgallery.com/zapraszamy-na-wystawe-sens-i-zmysly,356.html
[14] http://www.artinfo.pl/aukcje/tadeusz-brzozowski/komandor-ok-19607 / [Accessed: 16.06.2019]
[15] Tadeusz Brzozowski, an audio-visual presentation created under the supervison of Ewa Zajdel https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECTkZ92ODF8/ [Accessed: 16.06.2019].

creatures, imaginary invertebrates indicating the ridiculousness and fragility of all existence, with an emphasis on the animalistic nature of man.

Most of the works within the style of organic abstraction can be depressing. However, there are works within this aggregate of art that have positive accents where one would least expect them. This is characteristic of works created by **Henryk Musiałowicz**. His art is "a search for human unity, an attempt to cast off the apathy; it is a modern perception of good and evil, in which the sacred neighbours the profane"[16]. His art hold some sort of mysticism; his paintings are like ikons that depict incomplete human figures, not saints, but ordinary human beings. Consequently, in his search for an answer to the question who we are and what our role in this world is, the artist touches upon the existential problem. One deals, in this case, with an attempt to organise events, to restore the order, to find the rhythm, and to determine the aim. In the second half of the 20th century, Musiałowicz was experimenting with lithography. Some of the miscellaneous variations of lithographic prints were used by him as sketches, or experiments with drawing and painting, which were then utilised in his later paintings or collages. Musiałowicz wanted his art, which is a metaphor for human fate, to provoke reflection and to give hope[17].

A perfect example of an artist with a unique style whose works touch upon similar issues is **Józef Gielniak** (1932-1972). In spite of his short life, Gielniak left his everlasting mark on the history of Polish graphic arts. Using organic, closely interwoven shapes, he wanted to express universal themes, e.g. the feeling of unity with the universe. Some of his linocuts from the collection entitled *Sanatorium* have a composition based on symmetry. However, the symmetry in question does not introduce harmony. On the contrary, it amplifies anxiety evoking a sense of dread. The world created by the artist resembles a living organism: immensely diverse in the multitude of components forming it, this world constitutes a homogenous and intact whole[18]. The key to interpreting Gielniak's work is most definitely his life path. One can learn a lot about his art and find multiple hints on the genesis of his works and creative inspirations in letters written to his acquaintances and friends. The author explains that his art is more about the reality of internal experiences. For example, in his letter to Witz,

[16] http://kwartalnik.exit.art.pl/article.php?edition=37&id=650&lang=pl
[17] http://rynekisztuka.pl/2015/02/27/zegnamy-henryka-musialowicza/
[18] https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/jozef-gielniak

Gielniak describes his piece entitled *Sanatorium VIII* (1967) in the following way: "*[...] as if blended into the grand movement of nature – organically joined with it – which changes its meaning. (...) My vision of the world deepened and broadened, so that I somehow had to express it in a new way. It obviously goes without saying that Sanatorium is just a metaphor – my microcosm – it can be substituted by any other gathering of people, society, or civilisation!"*[19]

The two remaining series of his works, i.e. *Improwizacje* [Improvisations] (1958-1963) and *Improwizacje dla Grażyki* [Improvisations for Grażynka] (1963-1971) marked a new direction. Nature undergoes constant changes, which is the reason why *Improwizacje* are characterised by the elusiveness and fluidity of forms. This is an open world that lacks a clear closure of composition. This world seems to exist outside the delimited framework[20]. In *Improwizacje,* the artist attempts to grasp the structure and character of matter. Whirling and fleecy particles, a quasi proto-form of shape emerge from chaos[21]. The series entitled *Improwizacje dla Grażynki* was intended for his wife (Daniela Mańke[22]) and for posterity. The artist knew that death was near. This is the reason why his works express not only a personal attitude to love and life, but they also convey hope. They depict the world as perceived from a cosmic vantage point, which is related to the use of sky scenery for the purpose of conveying wide reflections on the fate of our planet ant its inhabitants. "Only through the vantage point of the cosmos can you assess the reality correctly"[23]. Gielniak's prints concern the permanence of the biological laws of development, constant changes, and the cycle of death and birth that every form of life undergoes[24].

In the works of **Jerzy Tchórzewski** (1928-1999), one can find cosmic themes, strongly accentuated independent of the technique in which they were created. They have a strong symbolic character, interpreted as the projection of the proto-form, the symbol of the genesis of the Universe[25]. He created different versions of the same, fantastic world. Tchórzewski's artworks usually depict phantasmagorical landscapes, or the cosmos, in which constant, spectacular explosions and planetary collisions

[19] *J. Gielniak do Witza*, jw., 23.07.1967, [in] Akcent, literatura i sztuka, kwartalnik 4 (46) 1991, p.178.
[20] Ibidem.
[21] https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/jozef-gielniak
[22] TN: Gielniak nicknamed his wife 'Grażynka'.
[23] *J. Gielniak do Witza,…* Op. cit., p.179.
[24] Akcent, literatura i sztuka, kwartalnik 4 (46) 1991, p.179.
[25] Jolanta Chrzanowska-Pieńkos. Andrzej Pieńkos. Leksykon sztuki polskiej XX wieku, Poznań 1996.

occur[26]. Along with painting, from the end of the 1940s, Tchórzewski started creating monotypes. In the second part of the 1950s, he started painting abstract pieces bringing to mind cosmic cataclysms and eruptions of matter, brightened with jagged lines of lightnings.

Cosmic and organic themes also run through the art of **Leszek Wyczółkowski** (b. 1950). Wyczółkowski is an artist who is highly skilled in graphic techniques. His artworks are heavily inspired by nature and have a strong symbolic and metaphysical character. Like many artists, Wyczółkowski creates an aura of contemplation indispensable for the understanding of the Self in relation to the world. His works do not provide an unequivocal answer. Wyczółkowski's art constitutes another example of an invitation for a discussion with the audience. However, there is peace and harmony in these works. They are free from negative emotions, so much so that through his art, one can calm down, relax, and become one with nature. His art is built on logic and balance. Wyczółkowski's artworks have a sort of nobility and purity of form in them. The artist, himself, sees his art as a balance between two worlds:
*"The first [world] is the world of intellect, geometry, and order. It is held together by strong craftsmanship. This other, second world, is soft, organic, full of emotions and instincts. The blending of these two worlds constitutes the foundation of my art, whose final effect is a point of departure for triggering the audience's imagination"*[27].

[26] https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/jerzy-tchorzewski
[27] From the introduction to Leszek Wyczółkowski's exhibition entitled *Kod natury*, [The Code of Nature] 10.05.2017 – 30.05.2017. *Międzynarodowe Centrum Sztuk Graficznych – Galeria Centrum* [International Centre for Graphic Arts - Experiment Gallery], Kraków, http://www.triennial.cracow.pl.

## 3. TECHNIQUES AND IMAGINATION

The techniques of planographic printing played an important role in the 19th and 20th centuries. The search for more economical techniques of reproduction of images and texts had first resulted in the invention of screen printing, and then, at the end of the 1930s, triggered experiments concerning the introduction of photocopying[28]. Initially, these techniques met with a sceptical reception in the art world. They were seen as commercial and intended for the mass public. However, the next generations of artists were implementing them in their practice. The artworks created with the use of these techniques were in no way artistically substandard; on the contrary, they introduced a breath of fresh air. Similar objections accompanied the expansion of digital printing in the 20th century, as the works created with the use of this technique were increasingly entering art galleries, and became accepted at graphic exhibitions. Currently, exploration, experiment, and evolution have become permanent elements of artistic printmaking. The themes of blending different printmaking techniques, or of using unconventional technical means of expression, including the unique or digital ones have appeared[29]. This is immensely interesting; to follow apparently the same way in terms of the use of the printmaking equipment with its rich array of presses and graphic machines in creating artworks, and have, at the same time, the opportunity to use modern, digital and virtual technologies. The technological revolution has still been ongoing since the times of the artistic avant-garde of the 20th century – the period in which the form of collage and montage had its beginning. With the advance of digital technology, these methods have evolved.

I started my experiments with printmaking techniques with monotype. Monotyping is a kind of artistic printmaking technique that is a hybrid of painting, drawing, and printmaking. When looking at my first attempts at creating monoprints, in which the effects attained included unintentional smudges and spots, one could perceive something intriguing. This unnamed thing let my imagination spin out of control,

[28] *Wielość w jedności, Litografia i techniki druku płaskiego w Polsce po 1900 r.*, Bydgoszcz 2015, p.44.
[29] Ibidem., p. 27.

*Pic.1 In search of organic imagery, the monotyping technique*

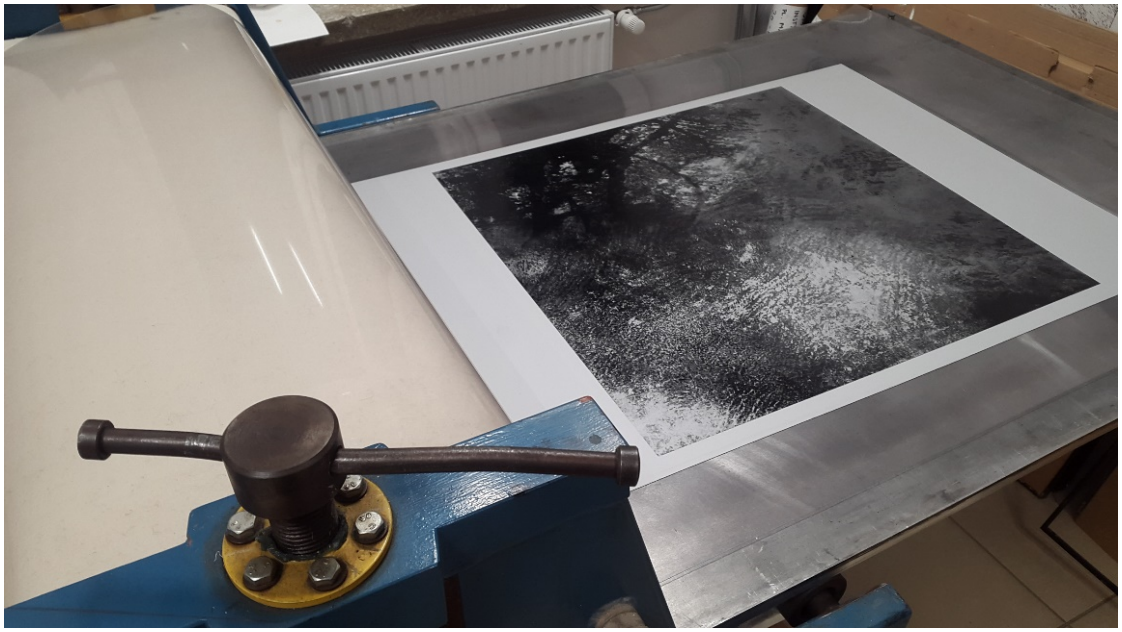
providing a vent for creativity. Using paint and solvents was significant in creating the chiaroscuro effect. Applying paint with the use of matrices made of silicone allowed for creating compositions much more organic in their nature. Rubbery materials were ideal for applying structures onto the working surface. In order to produce a suitable stamp, I formed a model made of plasticine. Later, I poured silicone over the model. Sometimes, I removed the silicone before it fully dried. This was one of the ways to make new tools for creating textures. Learning on my own mistakes, I started to organize the effects of these experiments. I used the experience from monotype in traditional etching techniques using copper sulphate and iron chloride to etch zinc plates through paint. I later experimented with etching through a specially prepared laser printer toner-based ink. I also used materials created in the process of collagraphy (a primer applied to a PVC plate), and on polymer plates (film exposed to light). All of these experiments were done in small formats (up to the A3 size). The pieces done in these methods expanded my knowledge of printmaking techniques. However, the need for presenting my works in larger formats in various gallery settings resulted in my

decision to choose the offset technique. I chose this specific technique in order to reproduce individual effects and further modify them. The tendency to collect working materials needed for future work coincided with and was a direct result of my discovery of the technology of offset printing. I first came across this particular technique in 2009, during printmaking workshops in Falun, Sweden. In 2018, during another workshop in Falun, I had the opportunity to experiment with polymers. All the materials I wanted to work on were digitally documented. This was directly related to the system of preparation for designing I had established, in which the 'old' elements are revived as new versions.

Building compositions with already collected materials was another stage. Sufficient digital documentation allowed for further stages of my creative process with the use of graphics editors (i.e. Photoshop and Illustrator). Thanks to the offset technology, already created digital images were introduced on the surface of the printing plate (the CTP technology)[30]. The technology in question allows for transferring an image onto paper using offset photopolymer printing plates. The plate after being exposed to light acquires lithographic qualities (photolithography). Printing from matrices was done directly, using a classic printing press. The design had to be developed from a mirror image.

In modern artistic printmaking, the digital form of an image seems to be indispensable in transferring the design onto the printing form in a way that it is as precise as possible. The chemical transfer of the toner powder, anastatic printing, the machine printing with the use of acid-resistant paint – all of this requires prior xero-copying or scanning in order to produce a transfer material. Light exposures allow for a precise transfer of the design onto the matrix; however, there are limitations related to the further processing of the matrix in the case of the photopolymer surface, as well as difficulties related to the application of paint (the possibility of losing details due to excessive pressure applied). However, thanks to the fact that I had experience in this matter, and as I wanted to reproduce the results I had previously attained in my experiments, I decided to choose this particular option and prepare my graphic designs for light exposure. In the process of digital editing of my image, the composition is being built symmetrically, the initial background with a graphic motif is created, which is then

[30] TN: The abbreviation stands for *computer-to-plate*.



*Pic. 2 and 3. Photolithographic plates during the process of impression.*

copied and inverted horizontally. Next, elements are added to break up the symmetry. The elements are replicated, they undergo a transformation. When the piece begins to take shape, the contrasts between light and dark are highlighted through the options of blending layers and styles.

The artworks look heavy and raw. However, light appears; the beams of light break through the entangled dark surfaces of structures introducing a surreal, phantasmagorical world, which fills the viewer with fear and excitement. I deprive my works of literalness. Initially, I create symmetrical compositions, to later break the symmetry in an attempt to draw the viewer into potential imaginary worlds, giving the opportunity to escape the banal reality, which gives him a chance to listen to the inner Self.

Graphic designs I create are built in stages. Because they are digitally edited, and later transferred onto the plate by exposing it to light to develop the image they cannot be counted as classic engravings. Nevertheless, they belong to modern artistic printmaking, in which the sole act of applying paint and impressing, the direct involvement of the artist in the process, as well as preparing materials for further work strongly accentuate the origin in artistic printmaking.

I have been asked multiple times why I reject colour in my works; why do I use black and white only? The perception of colour is a subjective impression; it has a huge importance in an image, similarly to the texture. Paradoxically, by choosing planographic printing, I reject colour as well as texture. Operating with black and white only adds to a sort of seriousness, grandeur, and mysteriousness. The colour black has something of a pursuit of isolation in it; it is disquieting, but also refined. By using it, I aim at attaining the feeling of inner silence. I introduce light, which unveils that which is kept in the dark. This is unsettling, but, at the same time, intriguing, which makes it easier to get accustomed to the image. This device facilitates understanding it. Without light, we cannot see anything, as if we were blind who were additionally deprived of the sense of touch. The rays of light breaking through not only usher us into this world, but they also give us a chance to notice that which is unattainable. Some time ago, during one of those philosophical conversations, I heard that life is grey, sometimes darker, sometimes lighter (with reference to the repetitiveness of everyday life in which certain actions are repeated without enjoyment), and any positive moments are seen as these bright glimmers of light, even the tiniest ones, which stand out despite the overwhelming blackness.

By juxtaposing white and black, I navigate around the area of the eternal symbolism of light and darkness, venturing in imagination into the realm of symbolic references

and values. This is one of the reasons why I avoid the use of colour in my works, playing more with the light that emerges from the darker areas of my images. Through the use of light, I reveal what was hidden. This is really important in the designing process. I have, at my disposal, the two forces that give sense to each other, striving for balance and never attaining it, while continuously fighting for domination. One cannot exist without the other. In the heat of mental processes and awakened imagination, I find thematic connections from the past, i.e. the themes of the elements, the micro- and macrocosm, philosophical deliberations, uniting or contrasting the opposites. Sometimes a dissonance arises, while other times everything seems to create a coherent story. An artwork comes to life. In order to understand what I do and thereby to be sincere with the audience, I have decided to concentrate on the thought that is close, in some sense, to Horace's philosophy of life. That is, the search of the golden mean, and the idea contained in his aphorism, i.e. *carpe diem* [or seize the day]. My approach raises the themes of death and passing; yet, without pessimistic overtones. What is important, is appreciating the meaning of life, the rejection of material things and the acceptance of metaphysical/spiritual values and getting close to nature.

Symmetry is also an important element in my artworks. This symmetry defines a certain order, a harmony. Symmetry has a fundamental importance in nature. It constitutes the basic rule of the world, in which *the laws of nature follow from symmetry, and not the other way round*[31]. Our current universe is not symmetrical; and yet, it can be perfectly described by the symmetrical laws of nature. The present shape of the world around us is the result of the processes of spontaneous symmetry breaking[32]. The first asymmetry in the history of the universe made it possible for matter to arise, thanks to another one, life appeared. Symmetry is broken in nature around us, we are asymmetrical not only from the macroscopic perspective, but also from the molecular point of view[33]. Andrzej Białas wonders how to reconcile the fact that the laws of symmetry exist along with the constant breaking of symmetry in the universe. Białas states that the source of the breaking of symmetry is the space in which we exist[34]. Due to their meaning – not only in terms of composition -- symmetry, and also

[31] From the reviev by Andrzej Koleżyński: Leon M. Lederman and Christopher T. Hill, *Symmetry and the Beautiful Universe*", [In] Zagadnienia Filozoficzne w Nauce nr 40, p.135-141.
[32] https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/dzieci-zlamanej-symetrii-157008
[33] *Po naszej stronie lustra. Tajemnice życia. Złamana symetria Wszechświata*, Zdzisław Głowacki, Oficyna Wydawnicza „TUTOR", Toruń 2016.
[34] Natura boi się próżni, Wiedza i Życie, nr 12 (1993) p.29.

asymmetry have become an interesting artistic theme to me. I find a constant reference to the Big Bang theory, and also to the world of nature in the notion of symmetry. The creative process is not symmetrical. I combine graphic themes with their mirror images in my organic abstract works. In the designing process, I still make use of symmetry, but at later stages, I aim at deforming it in such a way to attain the effect of "breaking" it. This produces interesting graphic solutions, which have a lot in common with the psychological Rorschach test (a projective test that makes use of inkblots), which is pretty often mentioned in the interpretations of my works. In such a way, I aim at evoking the effect whereby my works are seen as incorporeal, as I want to depict a condition of the soul rather than a physical state.

Art is not something self-evident; it has enormous force. It can give an answer to any question, make the world beautiful, it may be annoyingly sincere, or it can be dishonest. Art can calm you down, it can give hope. Nothing is impossible for art. Sometimes, an artwork does not require an explanation; it shows something as directly and as plainly as possible. However, in my view, the most important issue is that a piece of art should encourage reflection in order to be remembered.

Stimuli are important for individuals who are sensitive, they inspire, they facilitate our development. Sometimes, when there are too many stimuli, they can have a negative impact on us, so it is indispensable to calm down. Personally, I believe that art should be sincere and natural. If the author is unaware of this fact and relies on pure coincidence, the consequence is that the audience may feel disoriented. Sources of inspiration, on the other hand, are key, even if we draw from something that has already happened. It is through our emotions, sensitivity, and experience that are one of a kind that the artist's creation becomes unique. It is easy to lose one's own artistic identity in the pursuit of originality. Withdrawal additionally deepens this when it comes to presenting the artwork, which is a chance for confrontation when the artist can hear criticism aimed at his work. There is also a feeling of loss and disorientation when the artwork is finished. I admitted, multiple times, to the lack of attachment to my works, pointing to the fact that the most important moment is the beginning of the creative process. Nevertheless, I appreciate the fact that I can return to the previous, already closed cycles to draw new ideas from them, or to think about new interpretations.

New works often constitute a continuation of previous artwork. They contain a molecule of previous productions. This is the expression of my desire to maintain constant development; to pursue my defined goal. I expand my creative search on subsequent fragments of my previous works that become a novel source of inspiration for my new projects. This may be likened to the journey of the soul from one body to another body, and to the idea of rebirth. Taking this path, one may think of reincarnation – the journey of the soul in which the Absolut is the end of the journey. Such an idea is so intriguing that it unlocks and stimulates my imagination, thanks to which it is capable of triggering another cycle of creation. Who is the artist as a creator? What should be his aims? What is the role of the artist in today's world? This is a life of wandering in search of new forms, creating new solutions, as well as developing the ones already discovered; this is my way of getting answers to the above mentioned questions.

## 4. BIOFORM

> **For a long time now (…) we have read more or less inaccurate and truth-obscuring clichés concerning the form.**[35]

Form, as a concept, signifying a visible shape of specific content has its history, of which the most interesting period is the time it gained autonomy and later dominance in some art styles. Form, shape, and morphism are terms that have always referred to the construction and external characteristics.

Bioform, for me, is a key-word that is not only the beginning but also the summary of my artistic search. It is an attempt to listen in to the inner Self, but also an attempt to show metaphysical structures based on visions, recollections evoked by stimulate I take in and process from the outside world. Such an approach can be found in many other artists. It is a similar level of sensitivity, a common language allowing for the dialogue and development. With respect to my audience, I always allow for a subjective interpretation of my works with the hope that the sole process will result in deeper reflection and that it will awaken those reserves of sensitivity that are most often hidden.

Bioform is my own path, which – at the beginning seemed cleared off a long time ago – in fact turned out to be *terra incognita*. Throughout the years, I have had a chance to define it for my own purposes, creating infinite versions and interpretations. I have had to face many doubts along the way; however, thanks to my being consequent and persistent, the reason for further work has never truly left me.

The doctoral project, i.e. *BIOFORM − Between Imagination and Printmaking Techniques*, has been created in the offset technique directly, the prints were made on the Canson 300 g graphic paper. The artwork comprises 24, 70 x 70 cm squares, which – when put together – create three monumental, 140 x 280 cm pieces comprising

[35] St. Ignacy Witkiewicz, *Nowe formy w malarstwie. Szkice estetyczne*, PIW, Warszawa 2020, p.231.

eight elements each. Each square was put into a separate black aluminium frame, which – as such – became a part of the artwork introducing a kind of division ordering and contrasting the dynamic forms within the individual pieces. Three modular elements depict the three stages of a biological character, microcosmic or macrocosmic: the beginning, the culmination, and the downtime. They have a form of a cosmic panorama, which, through the use of the square modules is not a closed narrative. The cycle can transform like a living organism, and the audience becomes its integral part through the illusion of participating in it. Some of the individual elements, or certain arrangements have a chance to become autonomous entities. However, only when they are put together, do they acquire the power, giving the work its metaphysical dimension. The sole square has a character of a stable and at the same time symbolic element. In Buddhist mandalas, the square stands for an internal sphere related to Man and the Earth. The number of the squares making up the complete artwork also has a symbolic character, as number 8 stands for perfection and infinity.

The division into components allowed for organizing the whole artwork, as well as it gives the opportunity to reconfigure and expand through the addition of new elements. I take into consideration other configurations depending on the exhibition area of a given art gallery. There is a huge potential for a change of the initial configurations in a doctoral project designed this way. This can be done through the switching of the position of individual elements. This is, in the language of combinatorics, the permutation without repetition. The notion in question refers to how many different sets of n-elements can be formed[36]. The number of compositional arrangements possible only within one 8-element module equals to 8!, which means 40 320 possible combinations. In order to calculate how many different 8-element orderings can be formed, given 24 elements of the artwork in question (a permutation without repetition), one can use a combinatorics calculator[37]. The result of these calculations is 29 654 190 720 possible orderings.

[36] TN: According to Hankin, *et al*. „[a] permutation of a set of n items is one of the possible orderings of these items. A **permutation without repetition** is one of the possible ordered selections of n items from an original set of n items. Thus, two such permutations of a set of items are distinct if the items are arranged in a different order. For example, with a set of two items, $[a_1, a_2]$, the permutations $(a_1, a_2)$ and $(a_2, a_1)$ are distinct. By the multiplication principle, the total number of distinct permutations without repetition of a set of n items, $P_{(n)}$, is $P_{(n)} = n(n-1)(n-2) \ldots 2x1 = n!$"; Cf. Hankin, D. G. *et al*. *Sampling Theory: For the Ecological and natural Sciences*. Oxford: OUP, 2019, p. 296.
[37] https://www.naukowiec.org/kalkulatory/kombinatoryka.html

Given the enormous number mentioned above, the formula of the systemic creation, called by me Bioform, withstands the comparison with biological processes that proliferate in the same unrestrained way.

When looking for the aesthetic and symbolic meaning and the aim in organic forms, I create a system of actions that are aimed at developing a certain constant rule. I deeply believe that in nature, in the wealth of biological beings there is a fundamental certainty of the basic rules of being contained. Building on these constant bases in everyday artistic practice made it possible for me to develop my own individualized creative process. Direct involvement with physical substance as a material, and building references to biological forms, have become my everyday research study. Bioform is not something banal for me; its not a theoretical notion, but rather a coherent system for the quest, actions and quantifiable effects that refers to and has influence on other spheres of life.

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Translation Z. P. Janiak, PhD

# REPRODUCTIONS OF GRAPHICS

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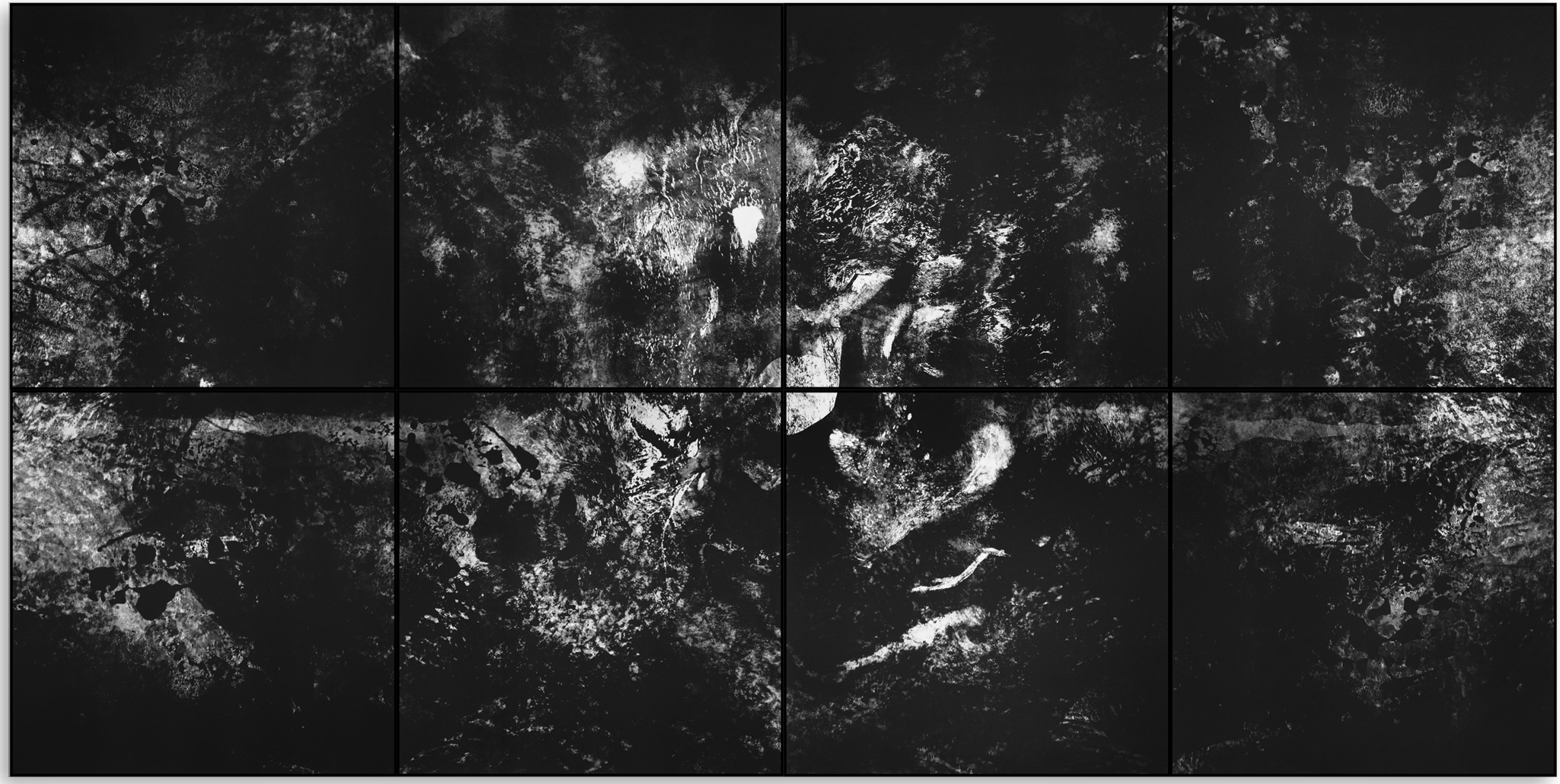
**Bioform 1, 2, 3,** photolithographic, all series, 2020



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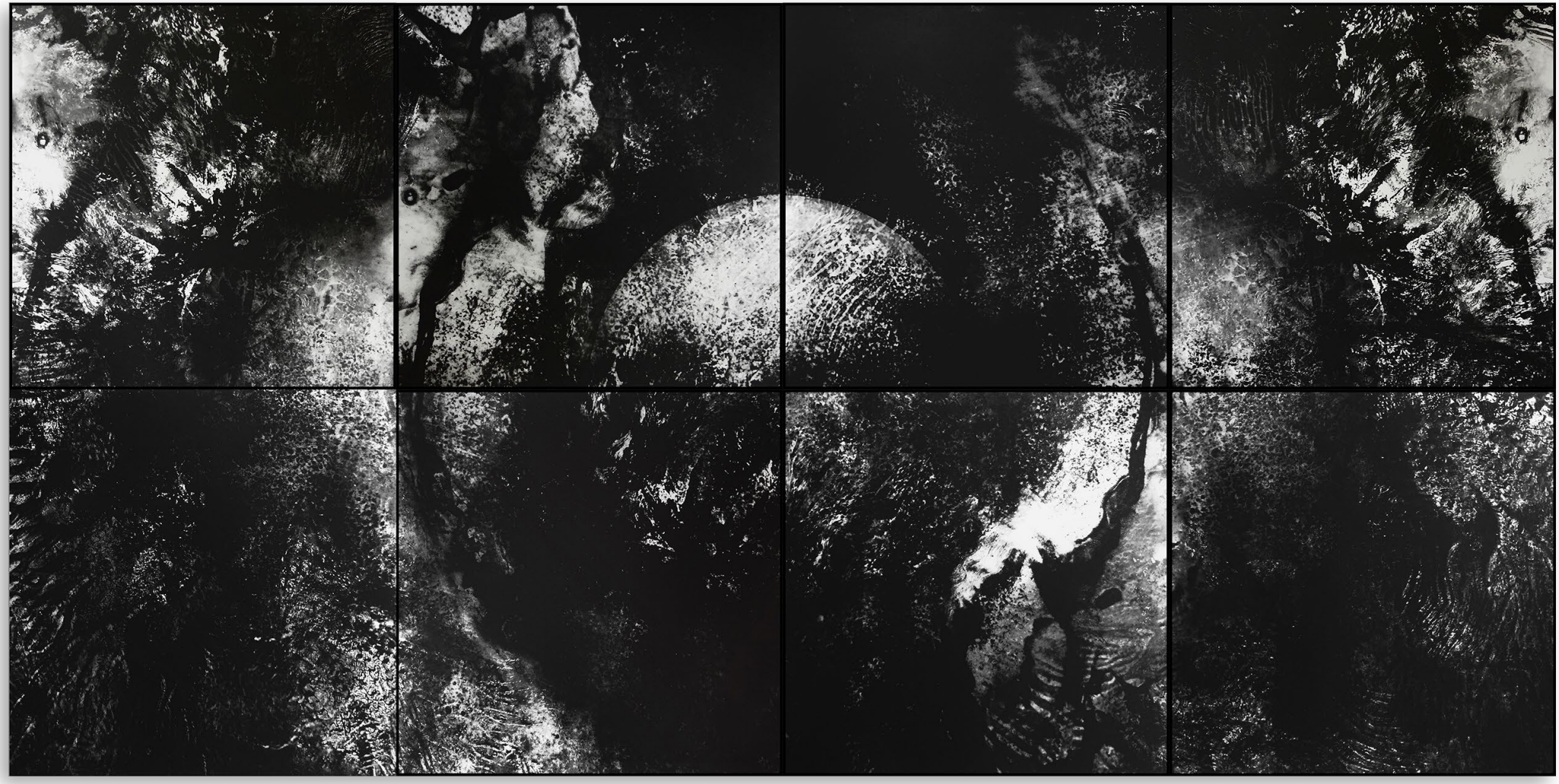

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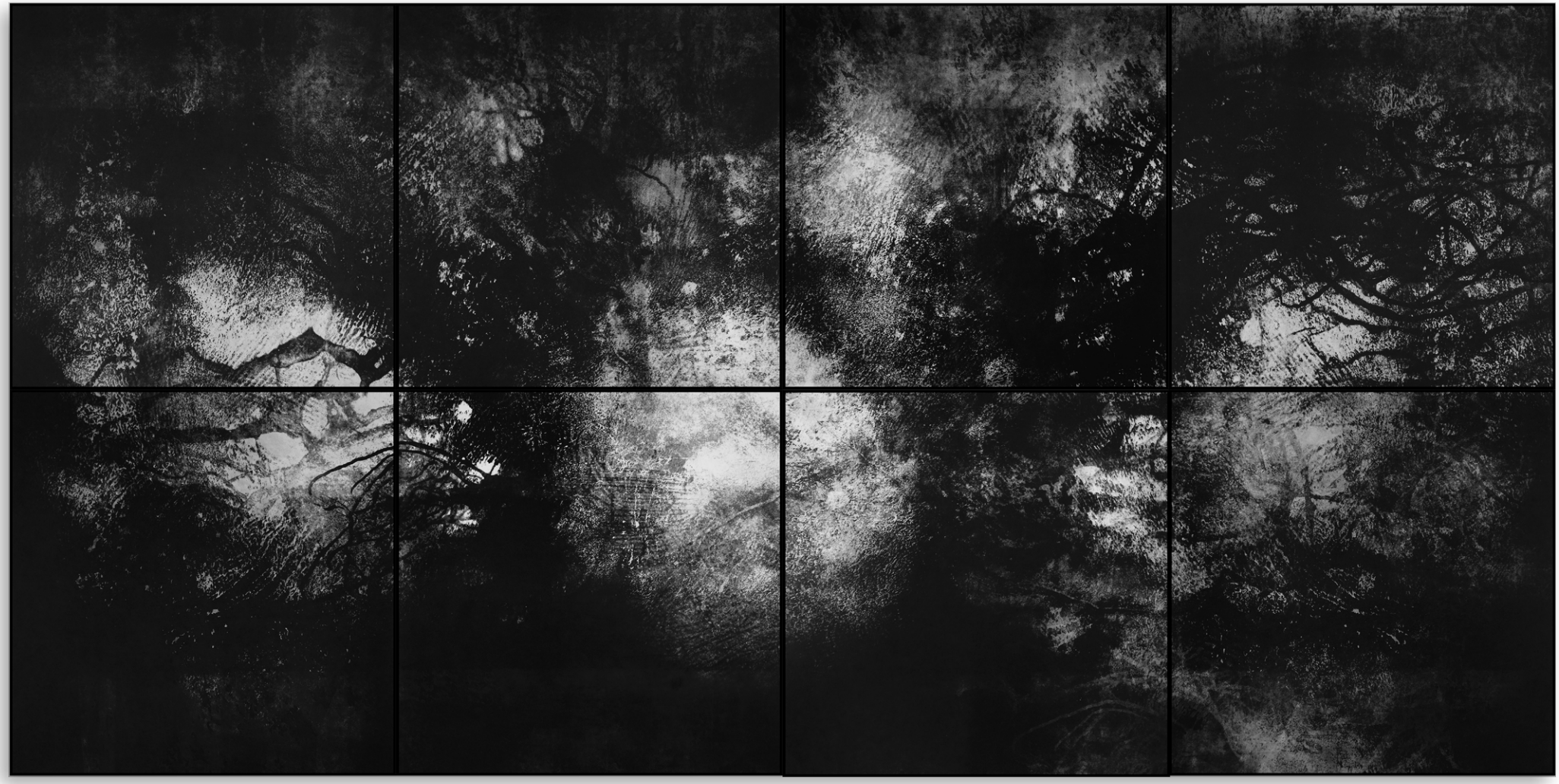

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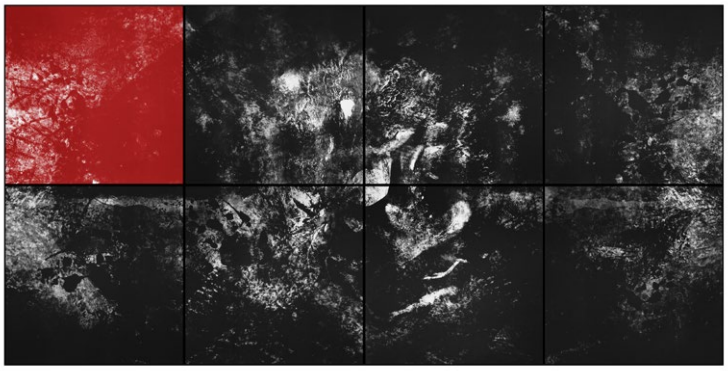

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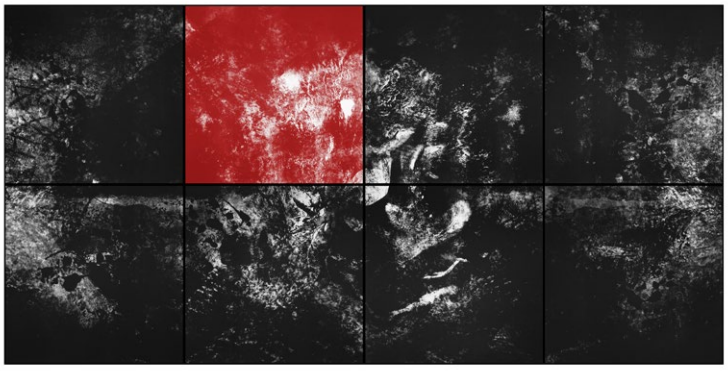

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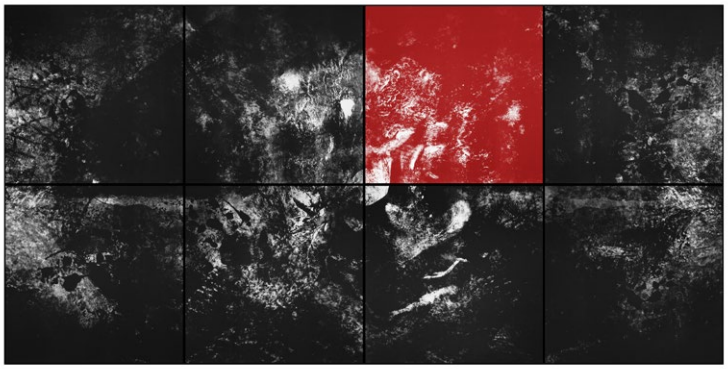

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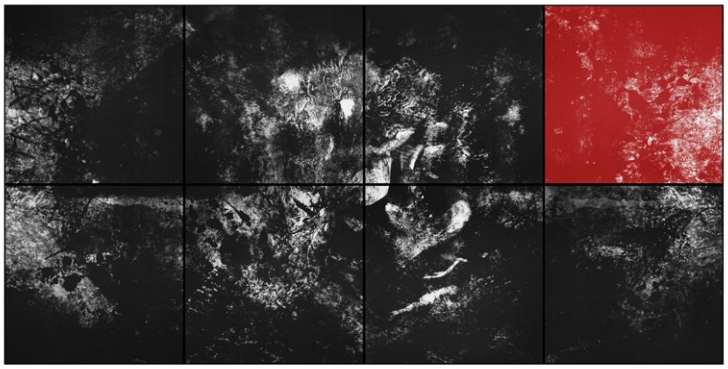

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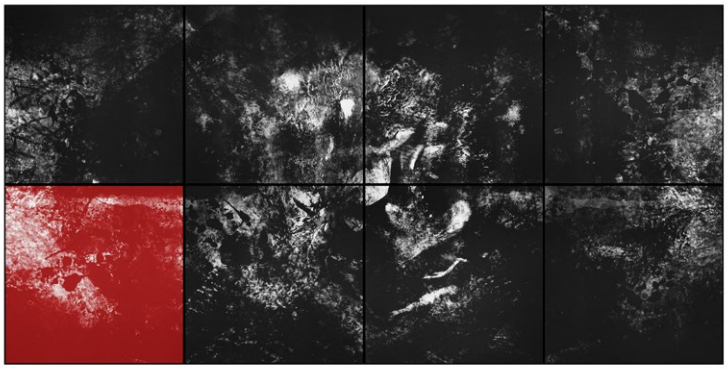

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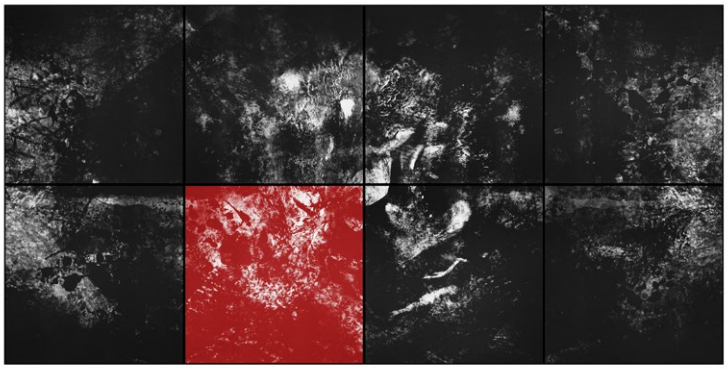

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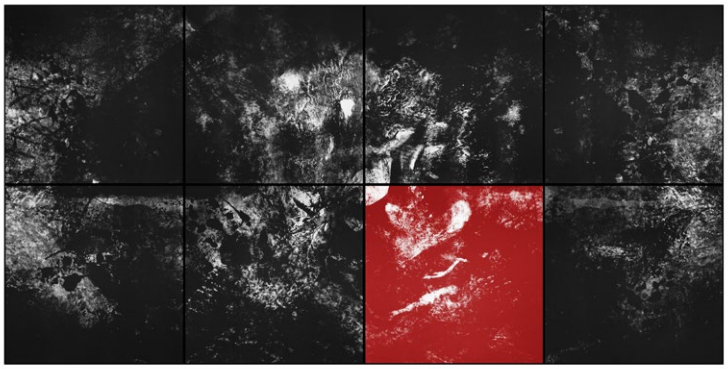

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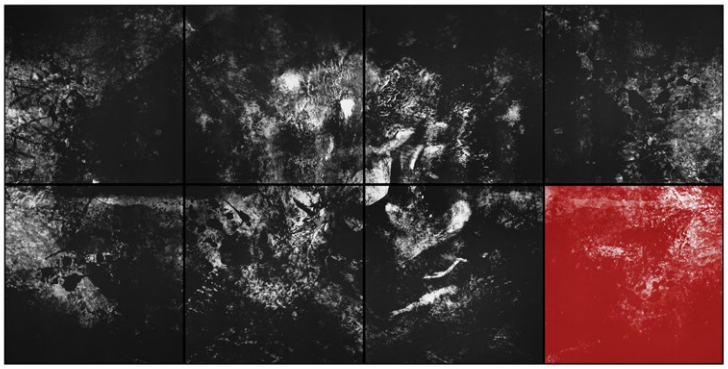

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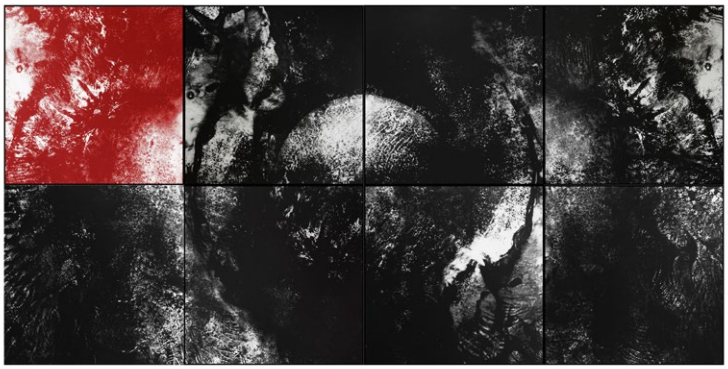

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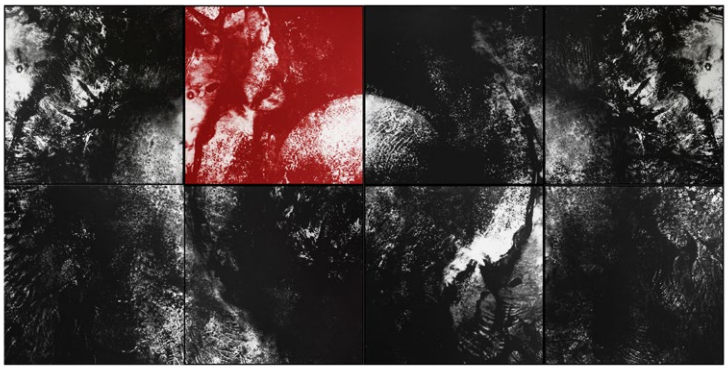

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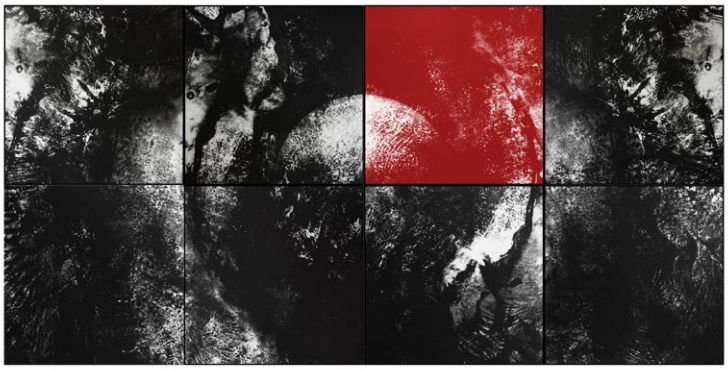

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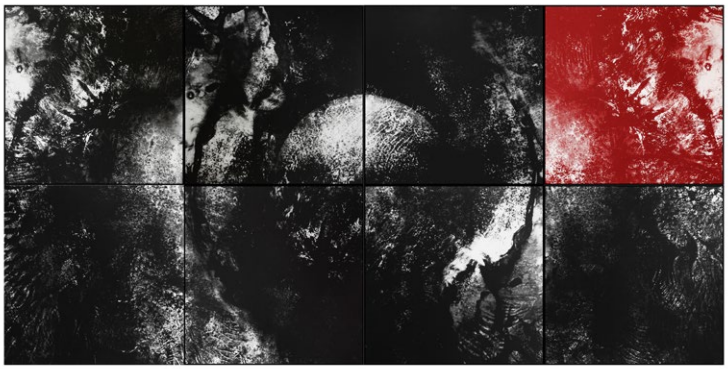

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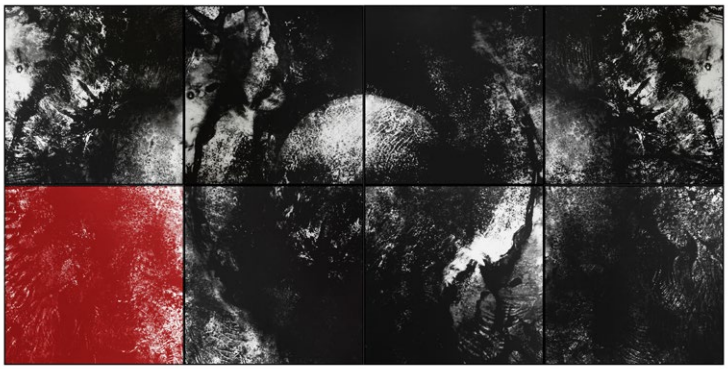

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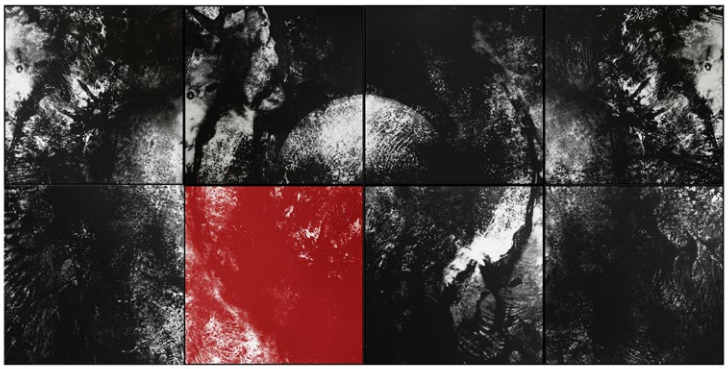

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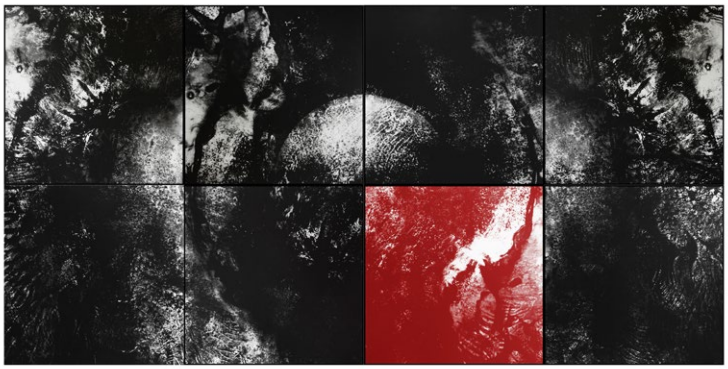

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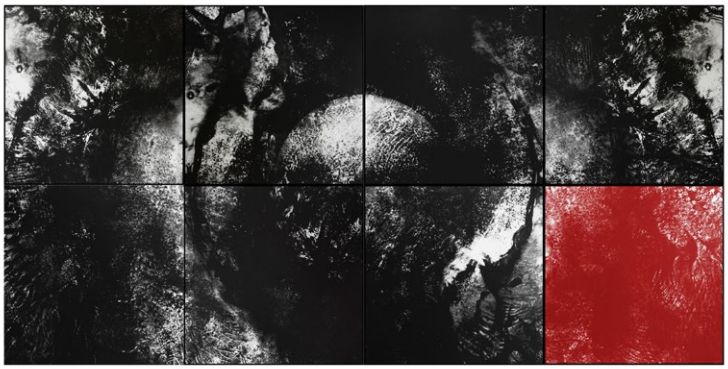

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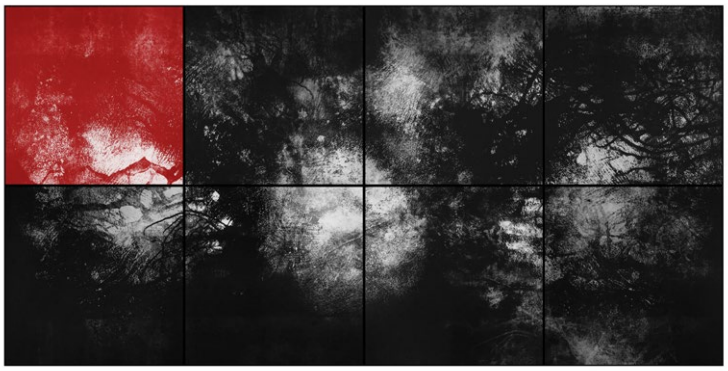

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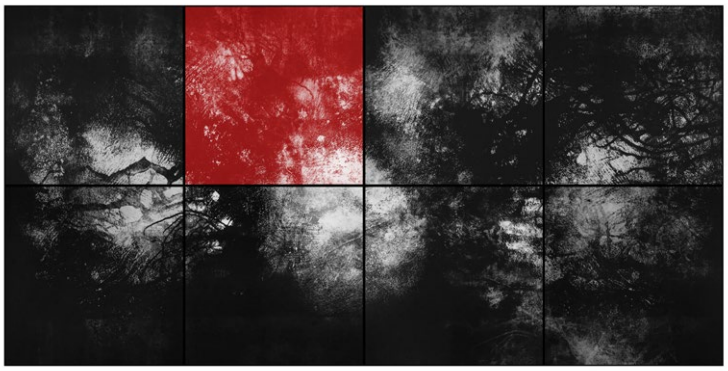

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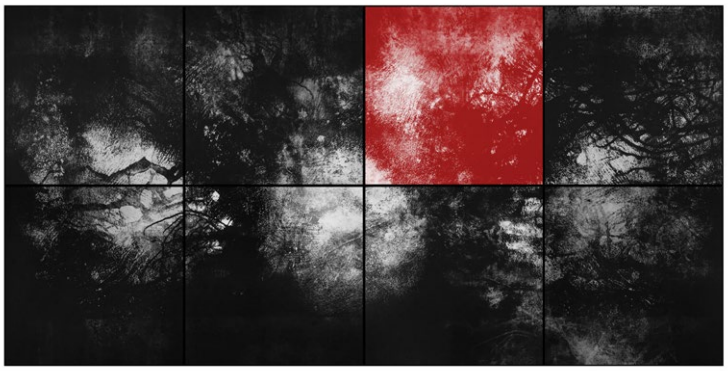

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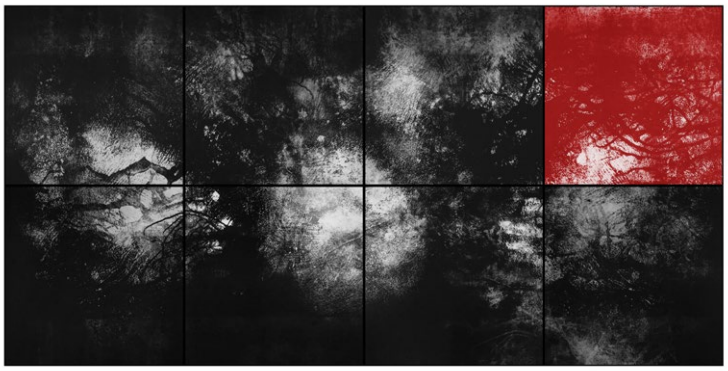

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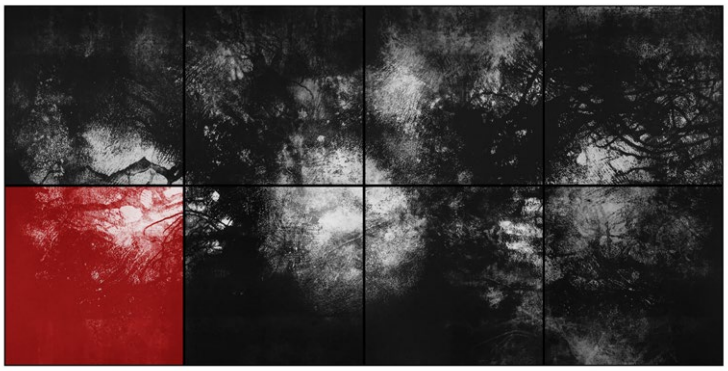

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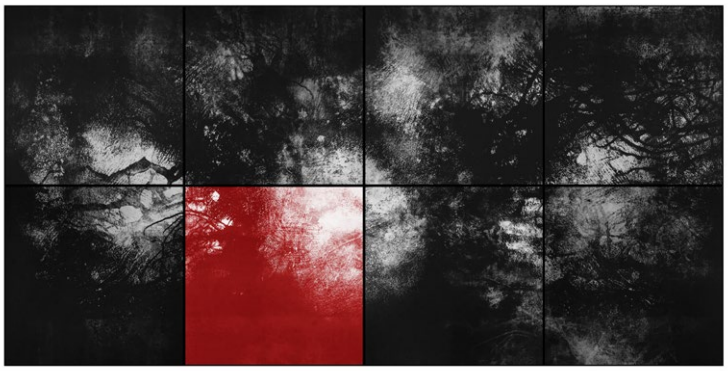

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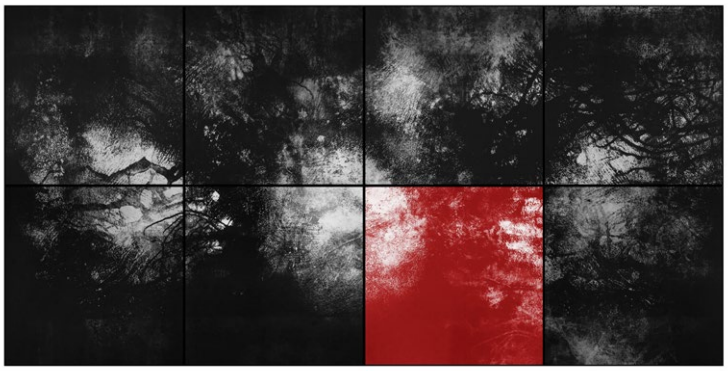

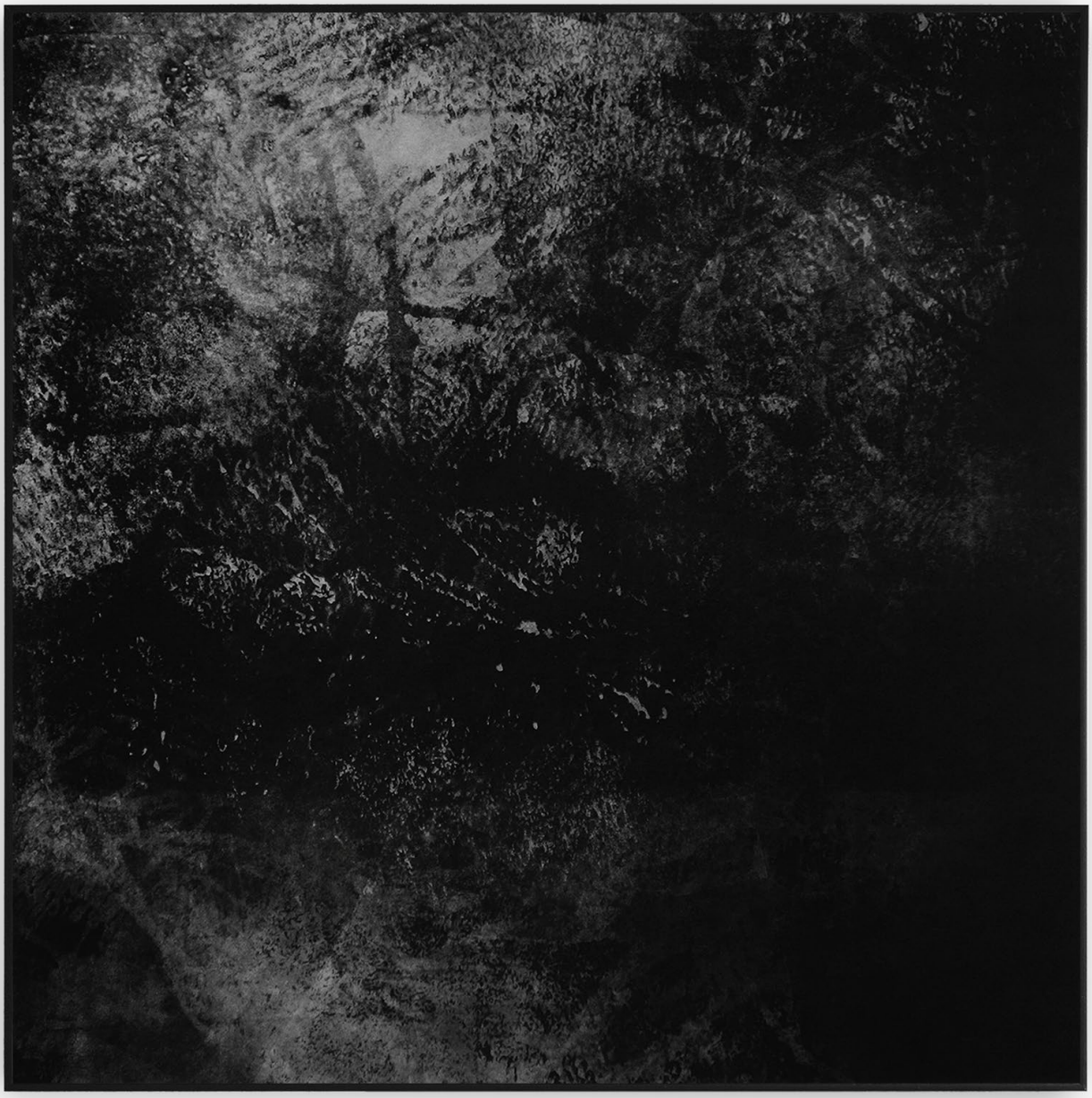
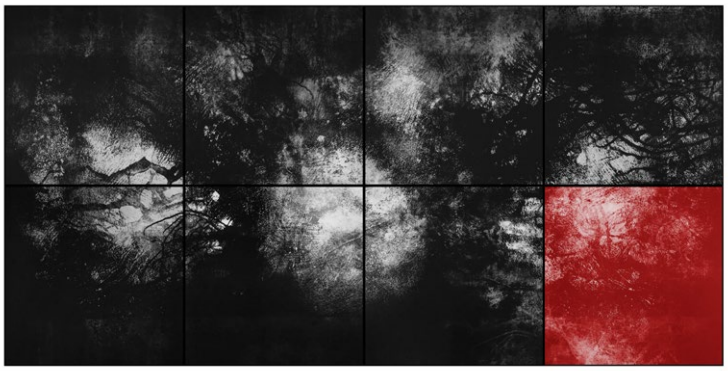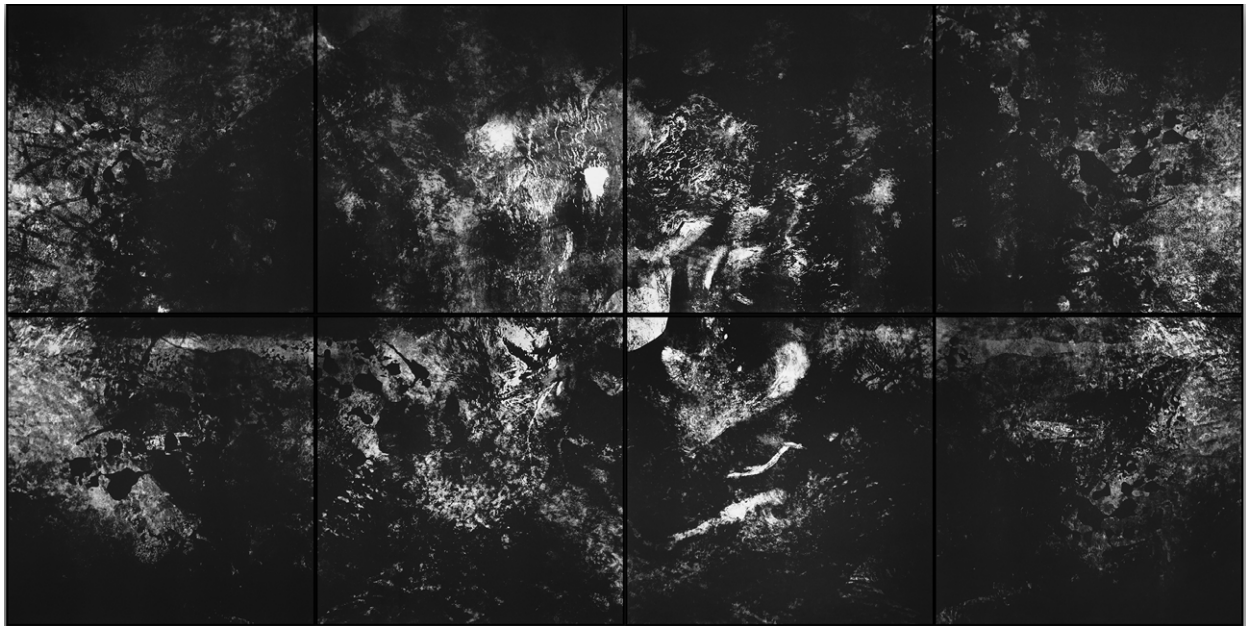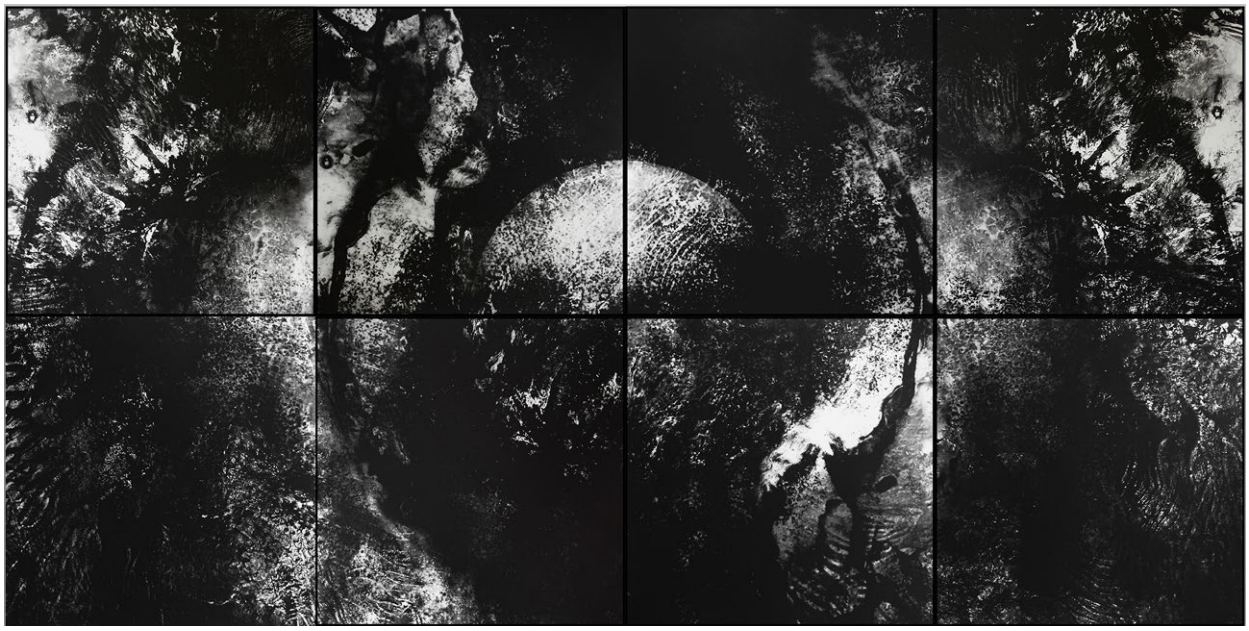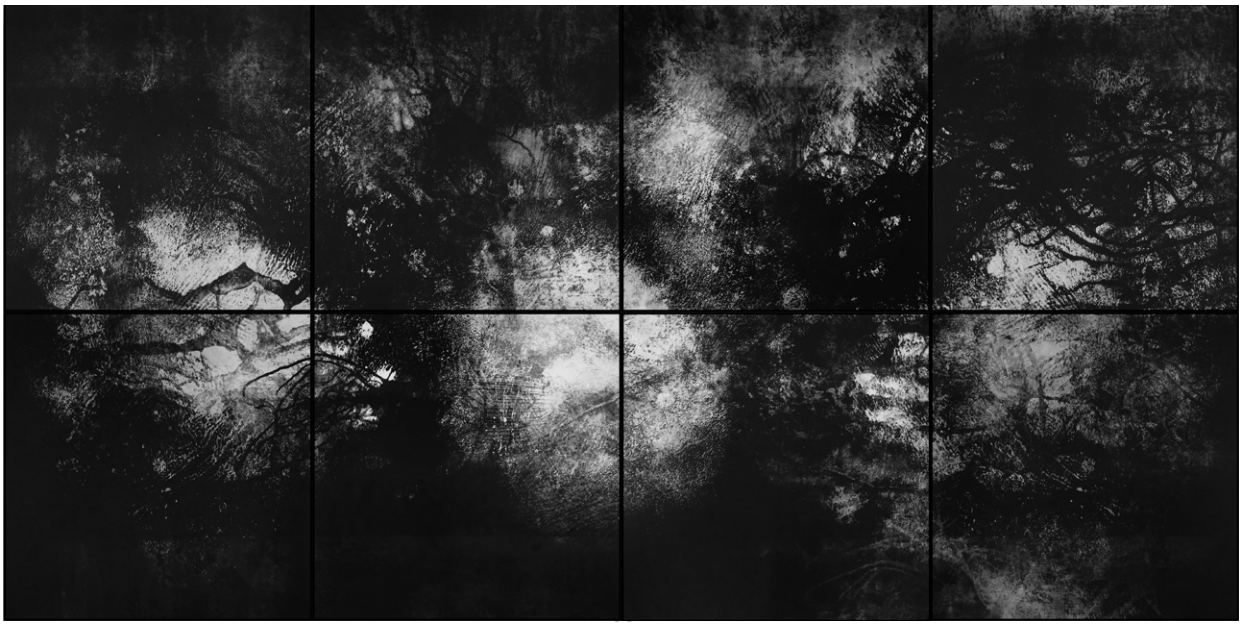
**Bioform 3.8,** photolithographic, 70x70 cm, 2020