

A Bestiary of Wild Flowers

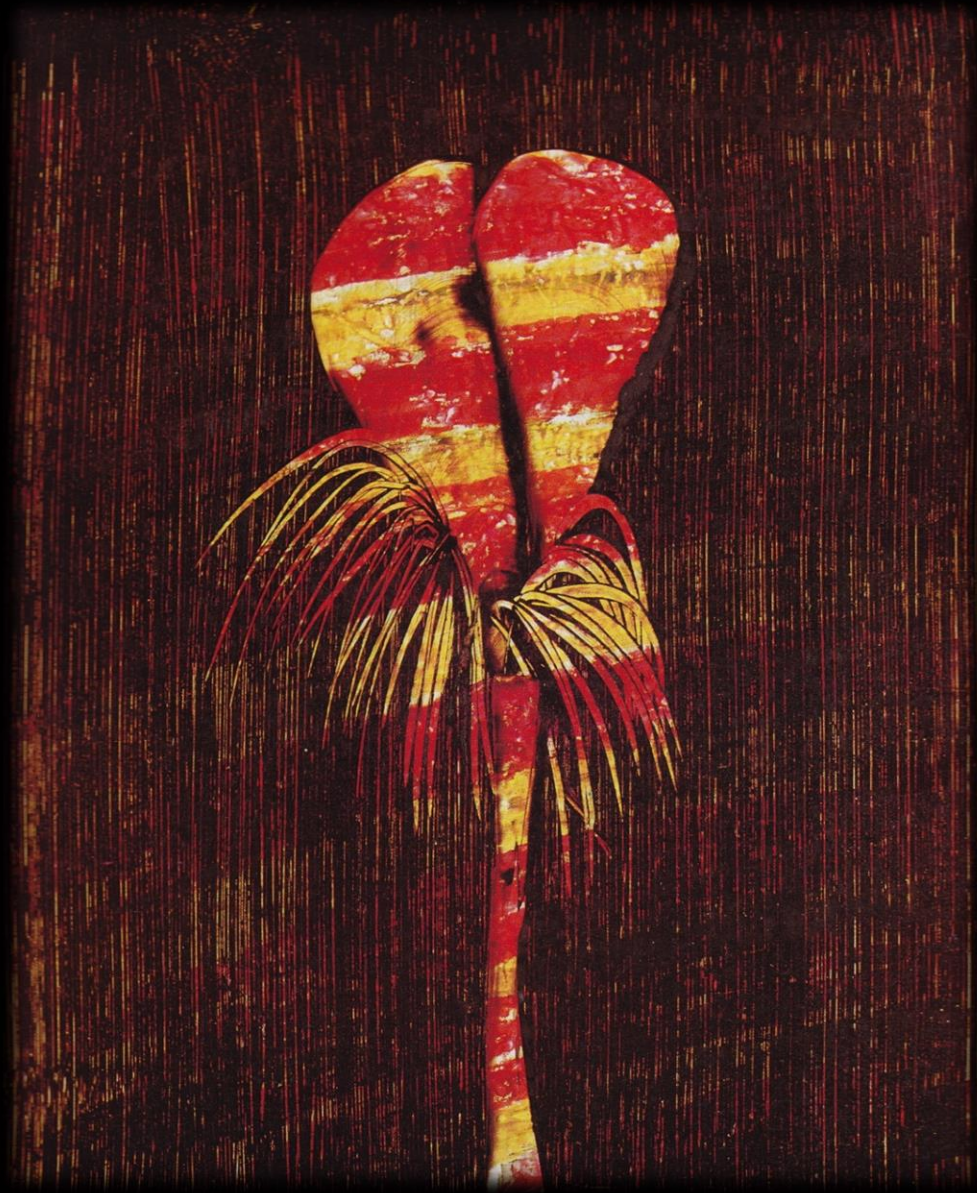
A response to Sidney Nolan's *Paradise Garden* series

All images from:

Sidney Nolan, *Paradise Garden*

London: R Alistair McAlpine Publishing, 1971

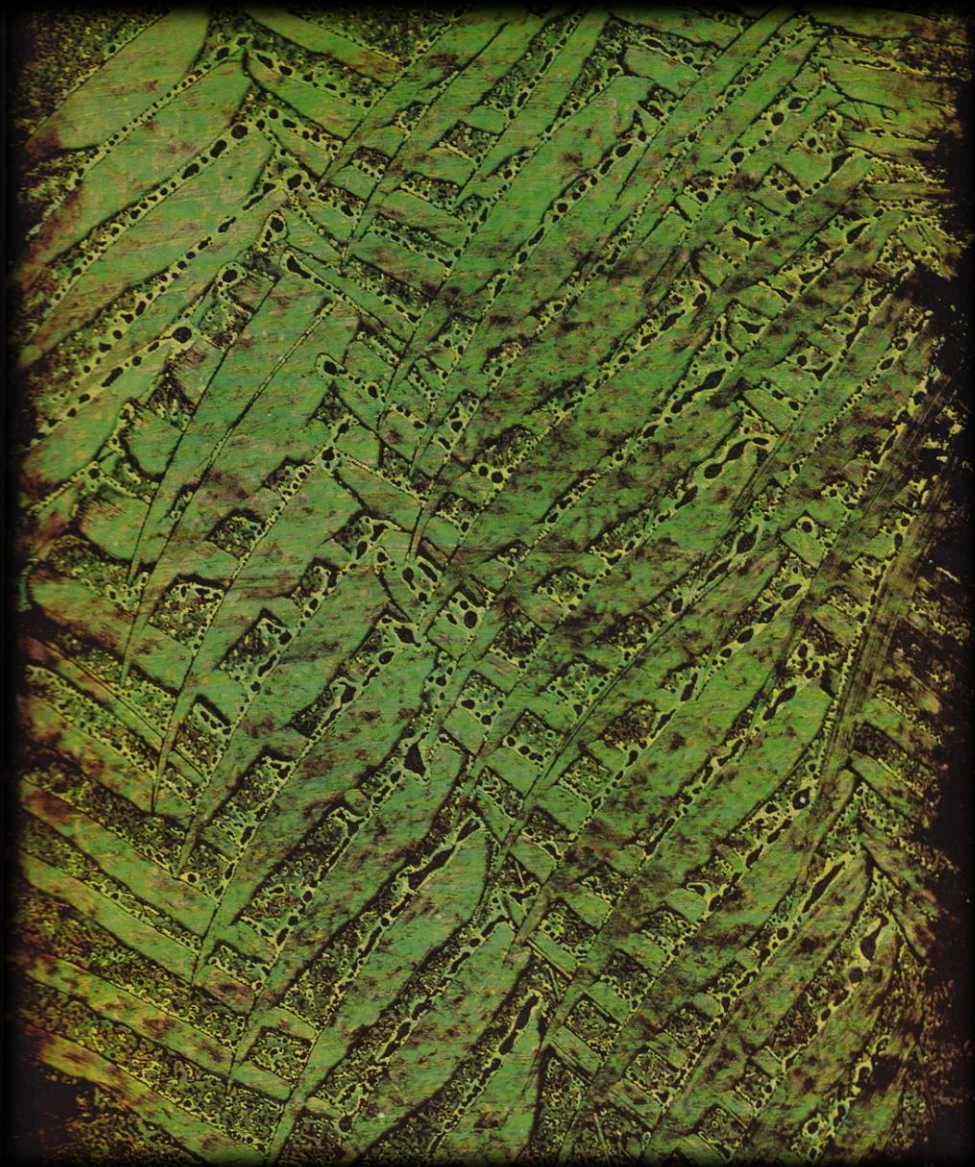
PART I word seeds



balga

its slow-growing stalk
ascends to arid heavens
carrying breath prints

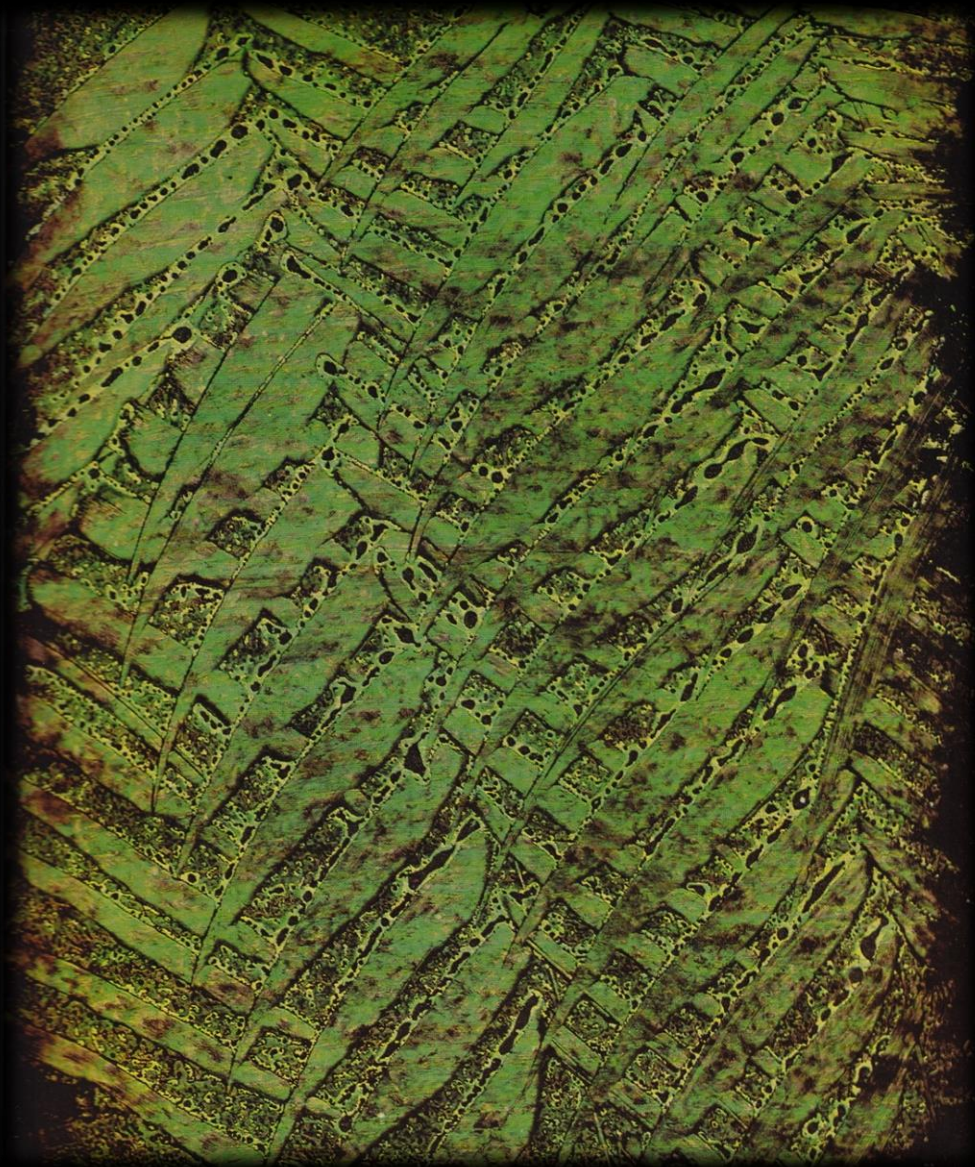




fern drops

metallic water

poised like gutter rain blocked up
to burst on mind thatch





giant kelp

in Tassie waters

seaweed waves of pale purple

the ocean breathes out

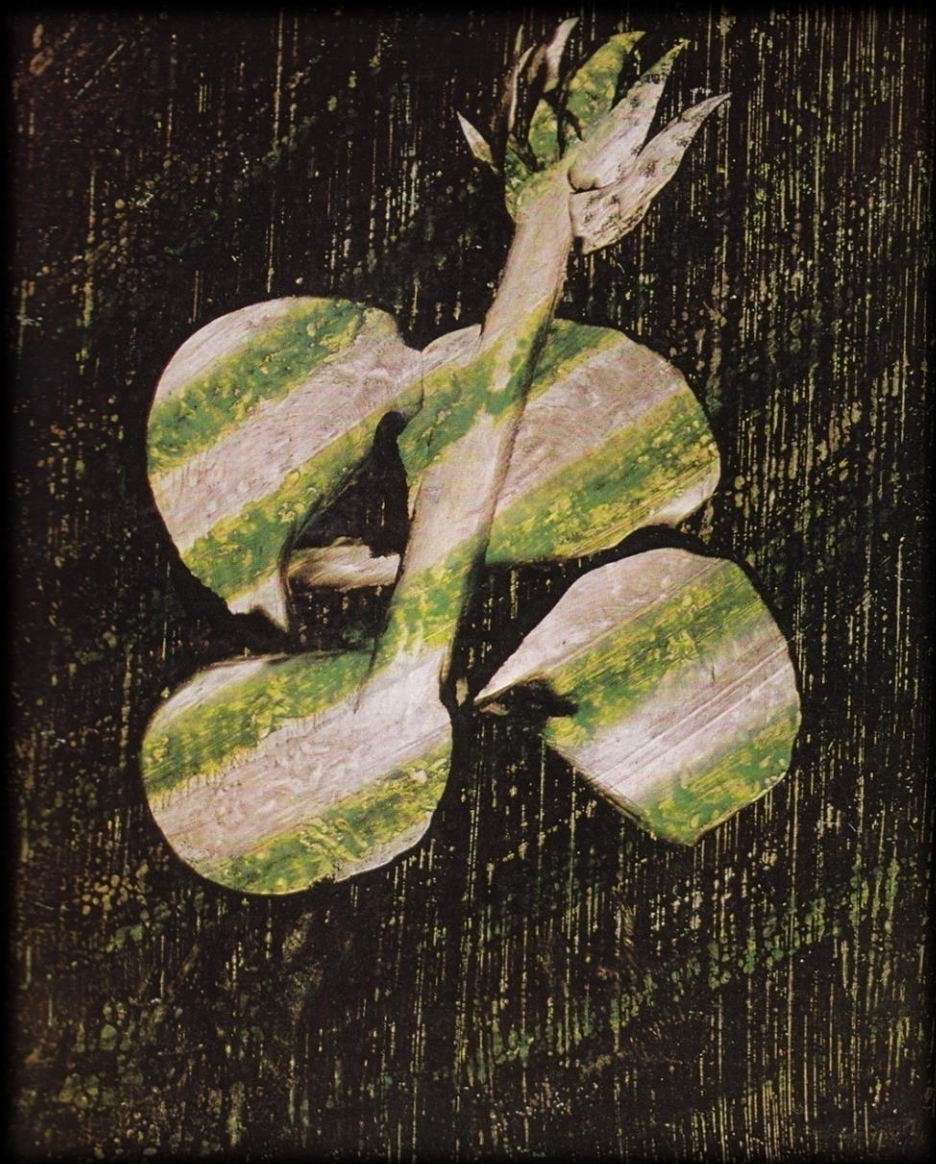




reticence

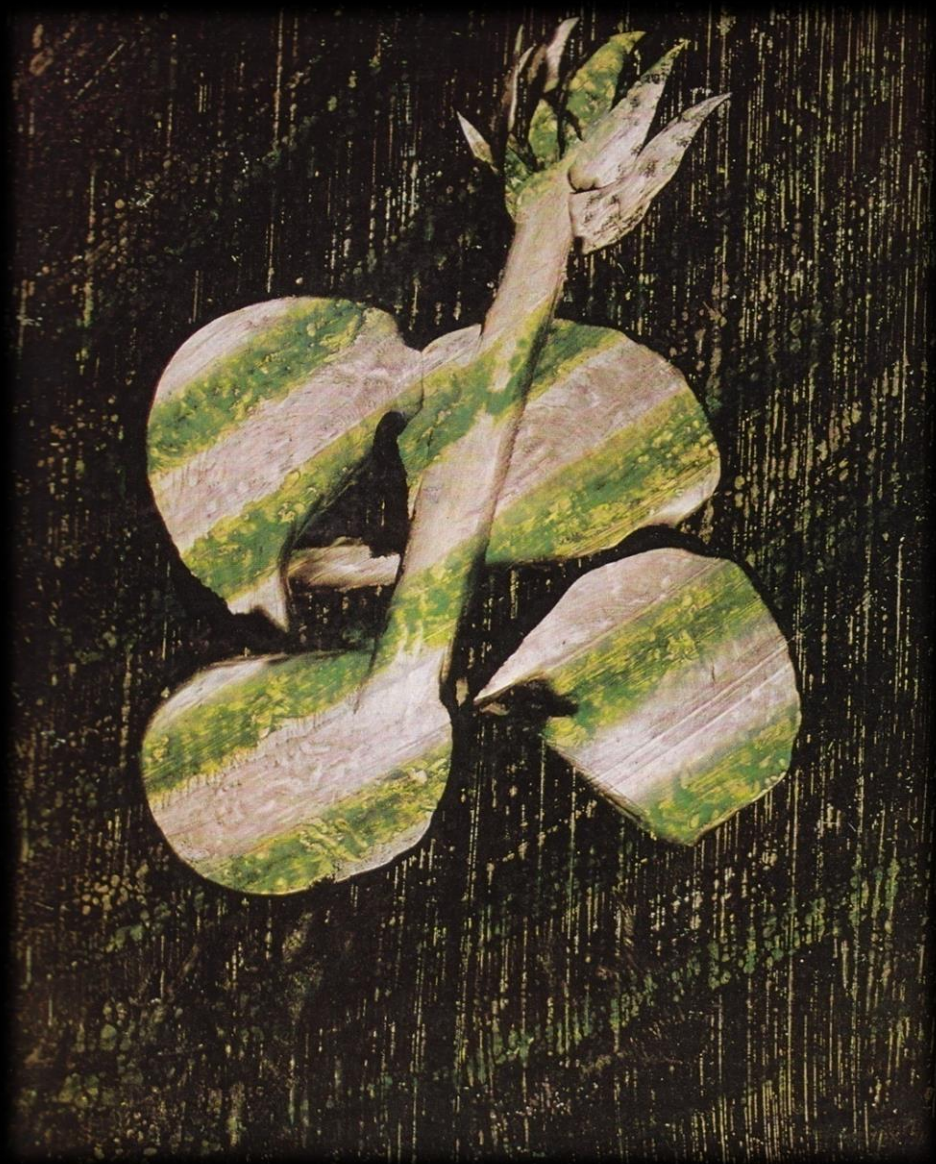
vased kangaroo paws
greatly emboldened to red
by draughts of water





olfaction

the garden fragrant?
nay, I detect bitter notes
of rubbish and bleach!



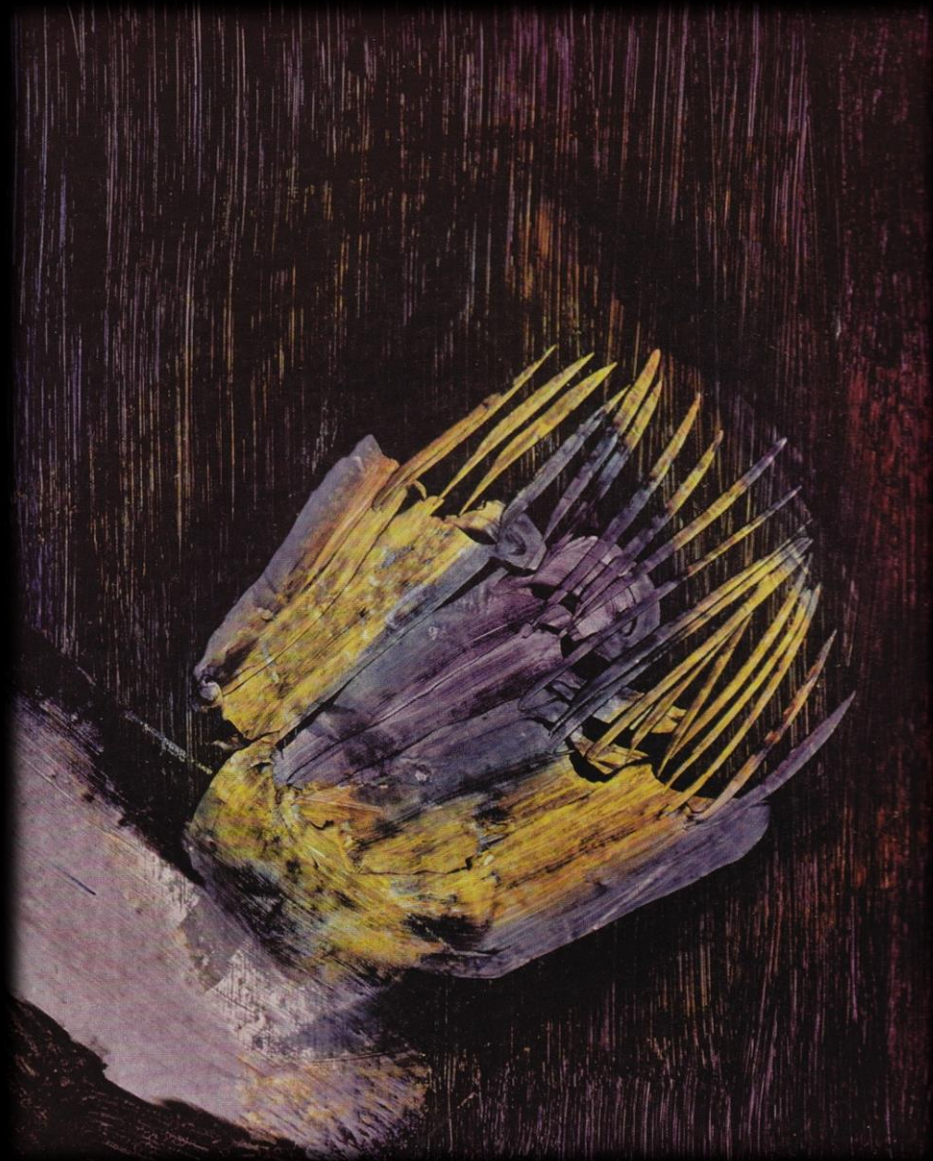


lumen

oracular blooms

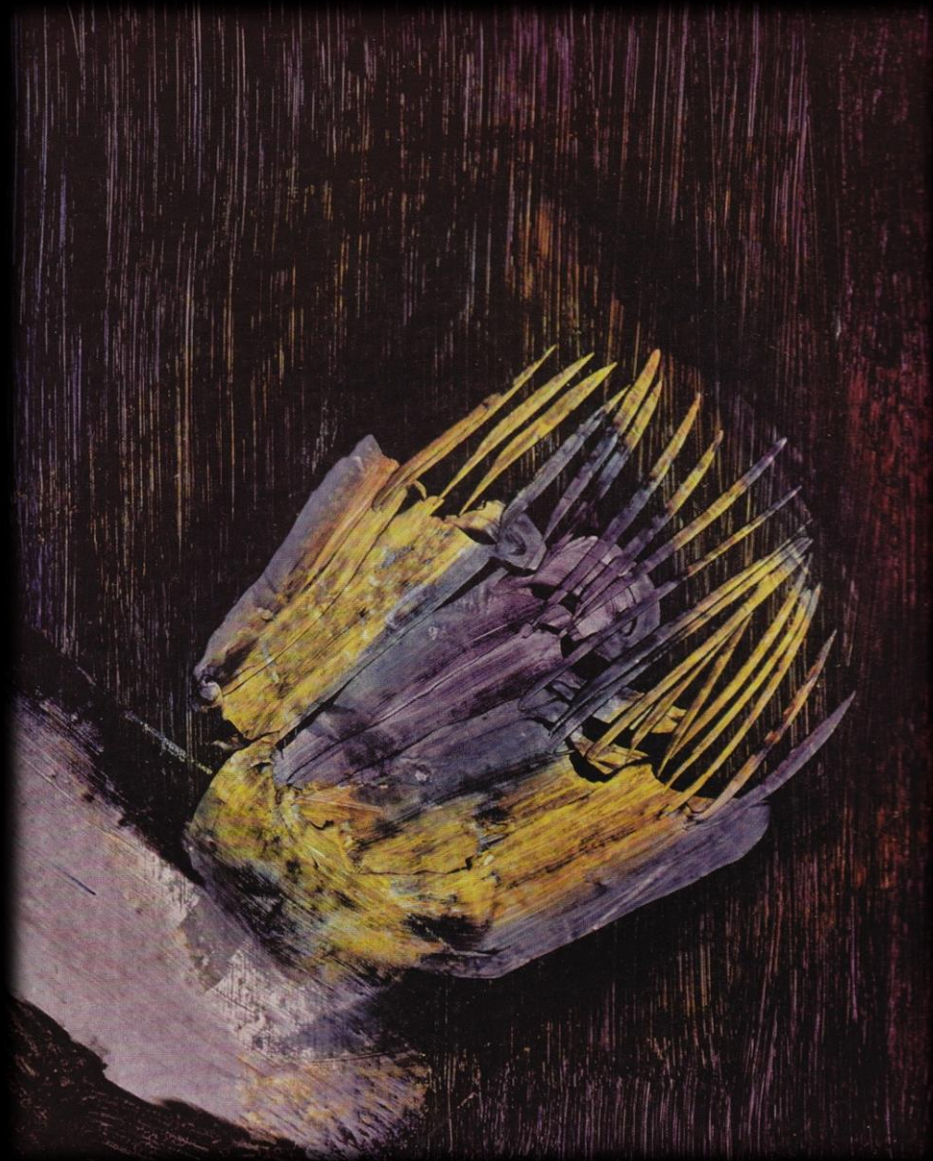
index the pitch, pull and pulse
of the desert moon





when his heart broke

honeypot flowers
gathered up the pieces and
salved his sore sutures





bruise

is this a hip bone,
a bruise to give, to bemoan
a tomahawk thrown?





first

new faint yellow tufts
under trident banksia
were dandelions





landing

someone has fallen
outside five thresholds to grace
leaning like treestones





making sense of plant form

calamari tube

a lighthouse at head of land

stick caught in a flume?





beastuary

lemon snail parade

anthers dazzled in storm light

leaning left—cackle!





morphologies of water

watermill

angular blades pump
this purple and burnt lemon
hue through my heartworks

water strider

bilateral twitch

propels forward through ocean

crimson with harvest

water tree

Kimberley boab
such stout trunk, elephant bark—
bassoon of the night

water chemistry

these sparks sent aloft
by the sure force of water
the machine consumed!

water pressure

unleashed on forests
as the dénouement of black
cloud arrangements

water snake

flicks a tongue
testing billabong palette,
its belly swelling





supernova

the brittle bud burst
apart leaving only these
petals of glass shards



PART II *memory nectar*



wedge acres

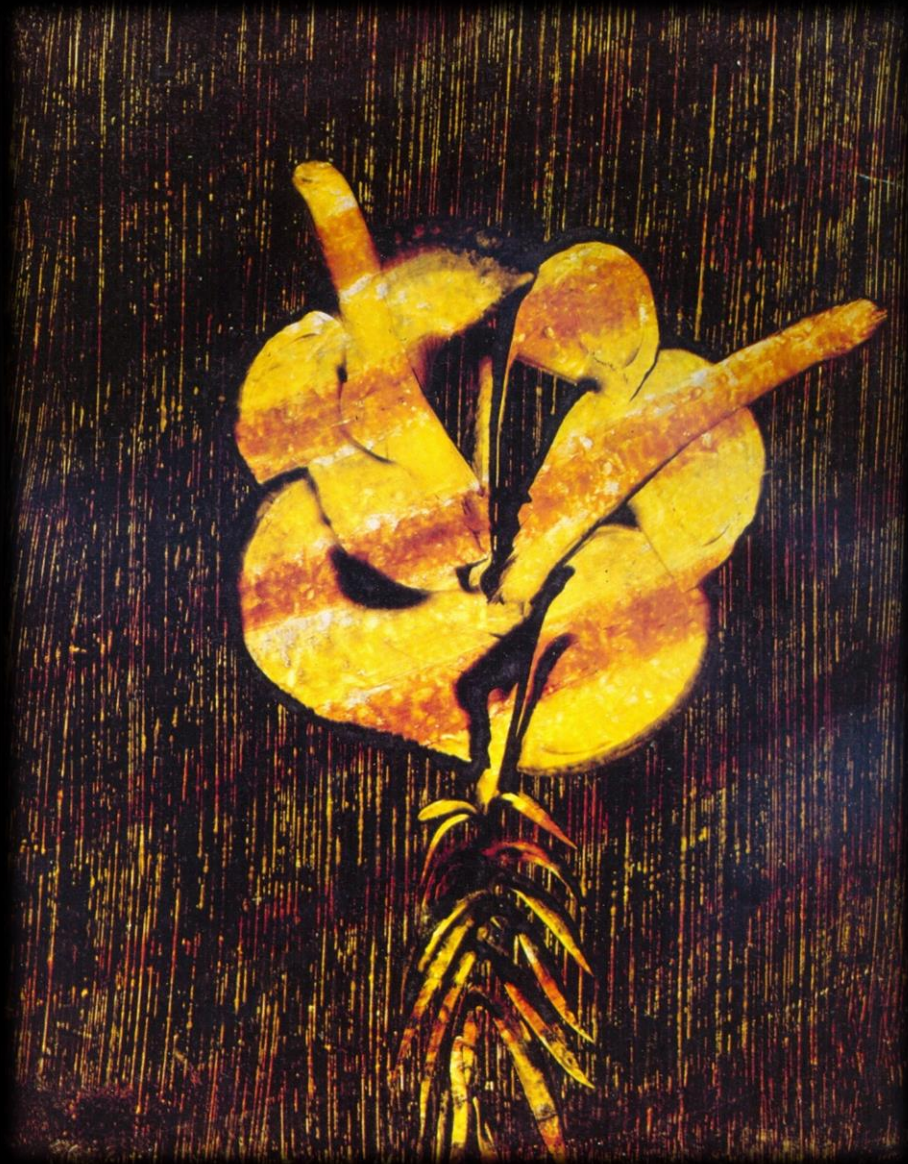
in the long claggy days
of summer my father
cleared oaks and pines
from the triangle of sand
that on a shellacked sign
under the front lamppost
he decreed *Wedge Acres*

sweat and dust caked
blue jeans as he wrestled
into Archimedean alignments
a series of pulleys and winches

I sat on the splintering
rim of a newly cut stump,
its concentric twirls burnished
by the hot steel blade;
time-rings gnashed
into a sawdust pile

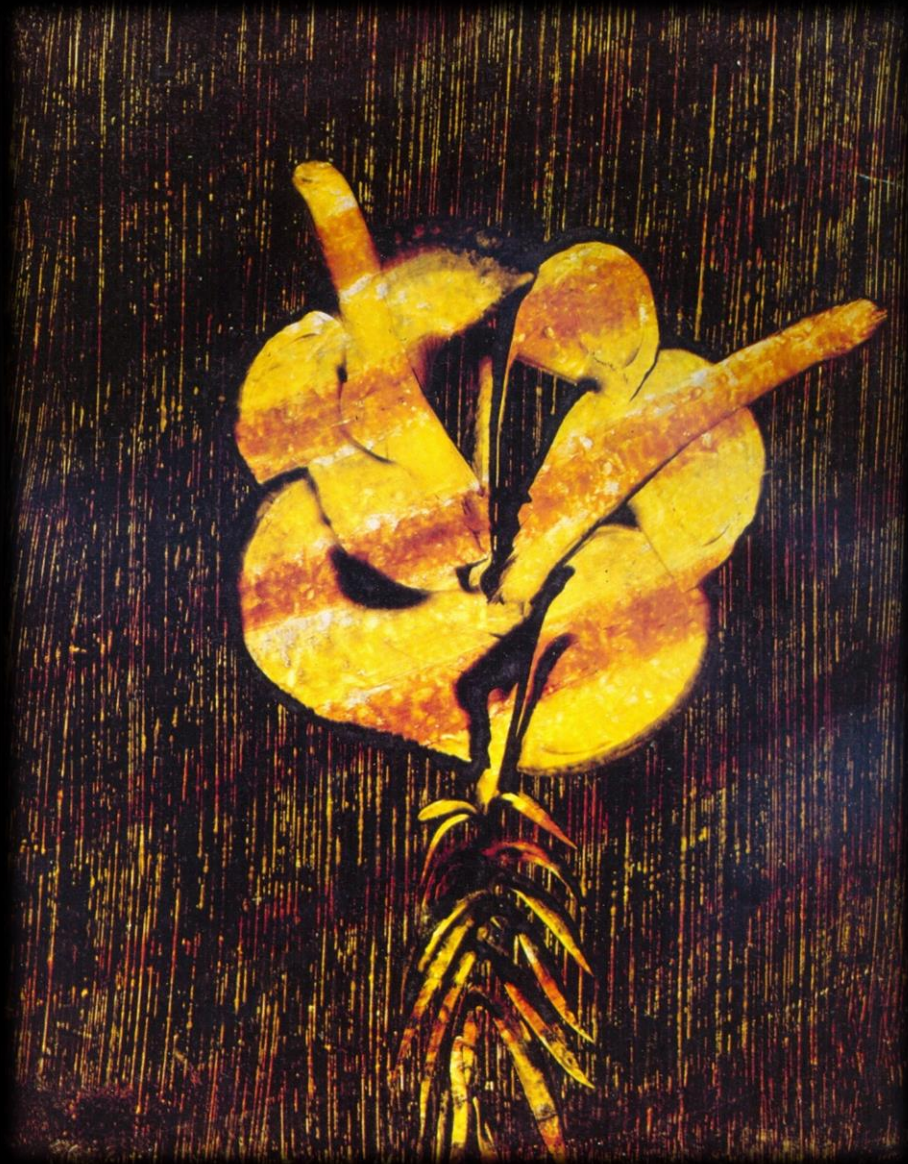
cerise with chain grease.





amnesia/amnio-

foetus in the flower
blood racing golden and
ochre in vertical streaks
of yet; in scintillating
dark, the unborn steps
wonky on jelly legs, careens
forward, collapses with arms
outspread, tumbles
into an amniotic chamber,
returns again to sleep
supine on a bed of wisps.





leadlight

as an infant, I would pore
over the coloured fluttering
ornaments dangling
above my crib

shadows sashayed
through the riffling glass,
which could be why I now wait
on this membrane of lake
for gobbets of sun

behind opaque petals
another child tosses
fitfully with feverish
becoming.

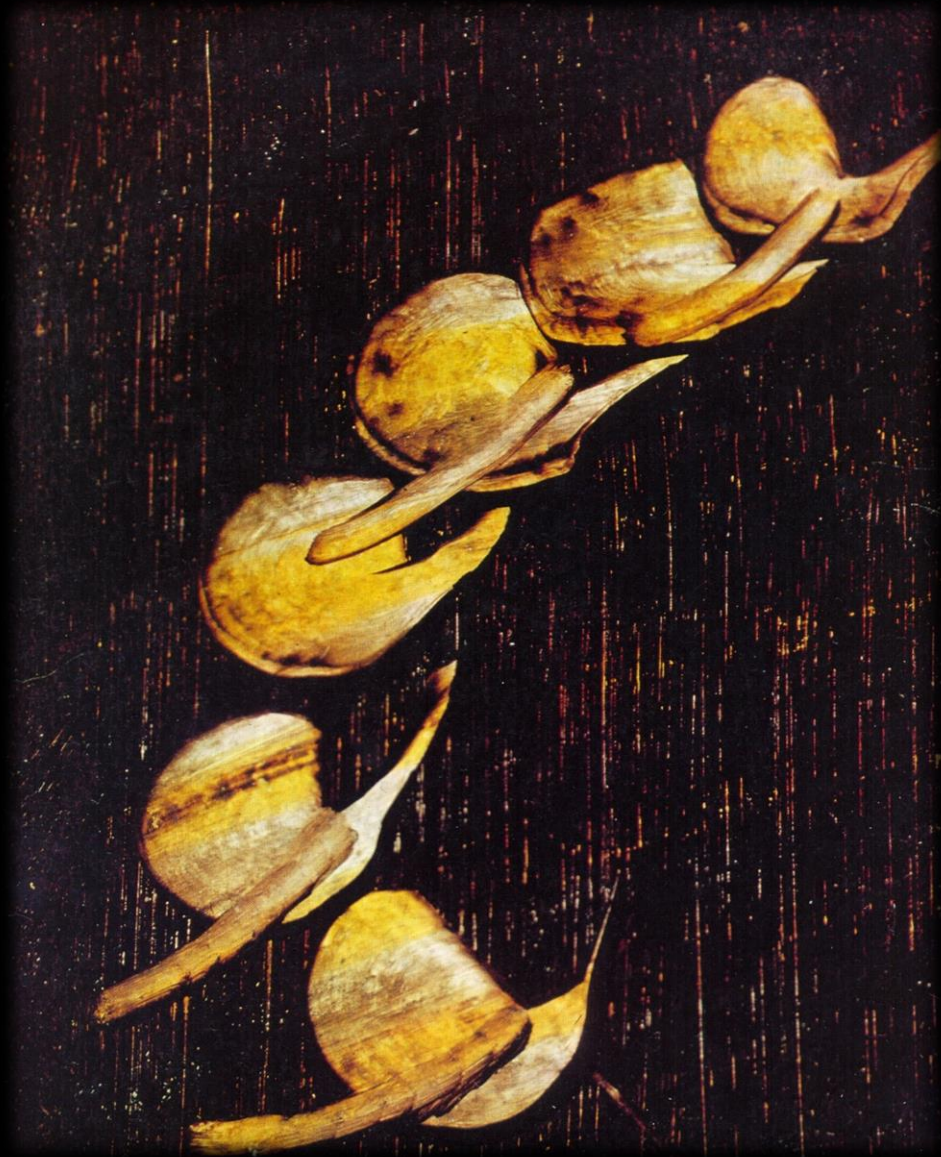




minaret/memoria

on each fontanel
you might plant a kiss
down this minaret
of tousled air singing
like a dulcimer
through the dim horn
of sea as surf
strikes and stirs
all the fossils of birth.



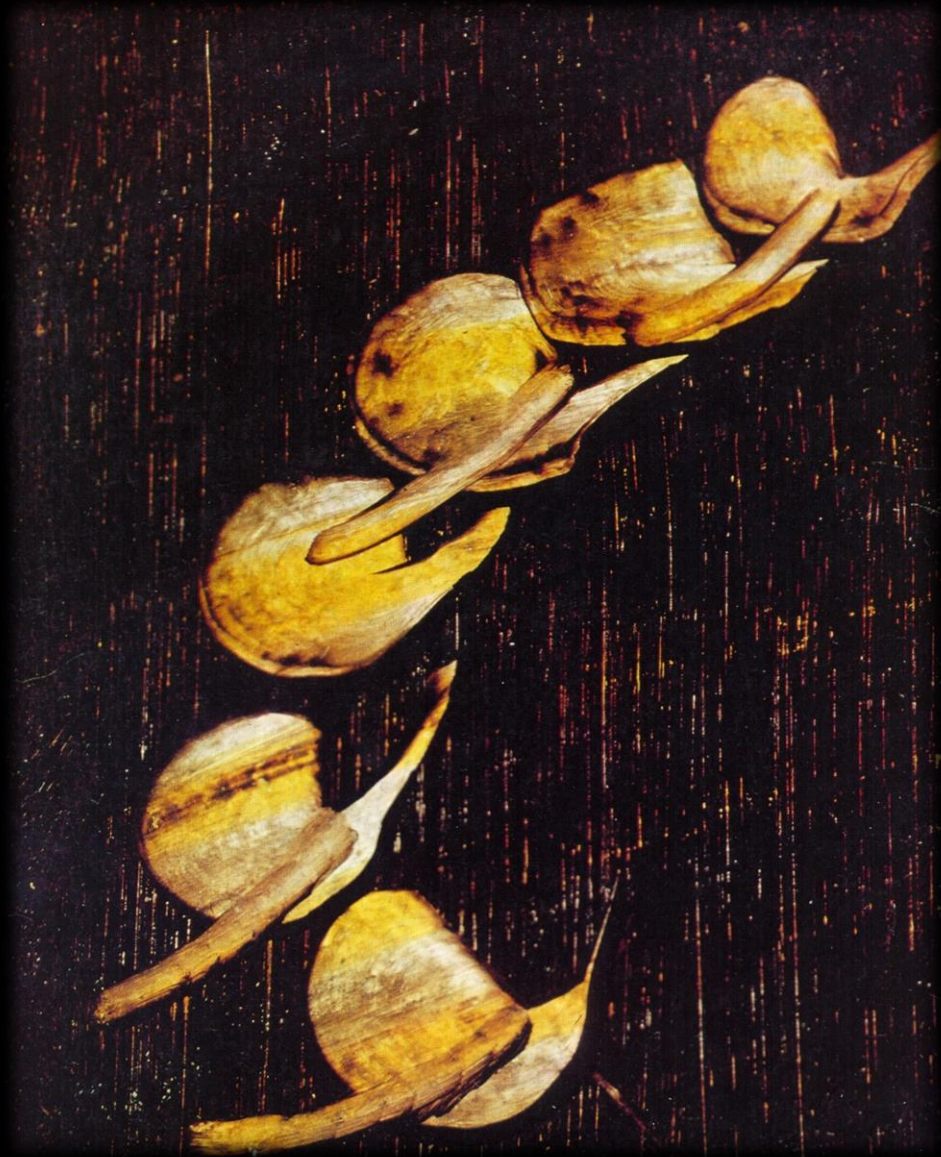


scything grass

in these six blades that clasp
the air with a coordinated arc
I recall a mother and daughter
scything canary grass for straw
while the Restigouche River
glistened the adder's tongue
between Quebec and New Brunswick

quicksilver edges, impositions
of sound and flight on flesh—

she walked the twelve miles
or hitchhiked to town to get
everything the family couldn't grow
or churn; her daughter trampled
a peace glyph in pillowy snow
for Cessnas to ponder below; I see
them sweeping tawny waves to reap
the fodder and feed their sheep.



PART III form and filaments



six movements in the garden

bristles tickle skin
and his lungs, being green fronds,
lip the dewy air

yawing and sidling,
head loosened, losing himself
in the clasping leaves

three avian shapes
stoop and streak, scatter their wake—
contrails of shadows

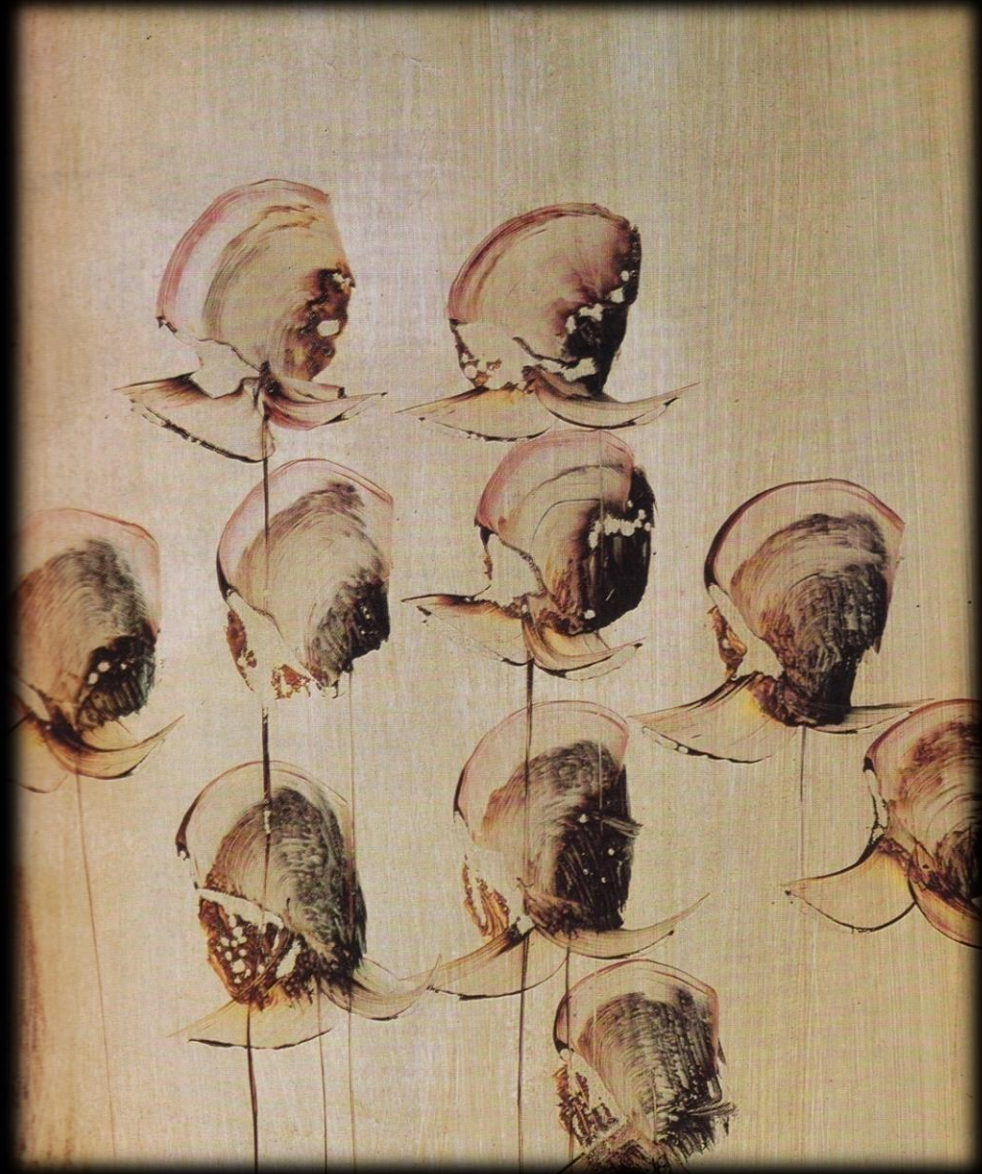
lithe torso naked bicep
flex, that furrow between
breast muscle and shoulder—
convergence of strange intimacies

unplumbed yet close on the tongue;
he clutches gossamer foliage,
covering himself bashfully
in the garden

when in the garden
with his beloved other,
a joyous embrace

at last! their eyes and
sleek taut lips announce to us—
the flower birthed thought



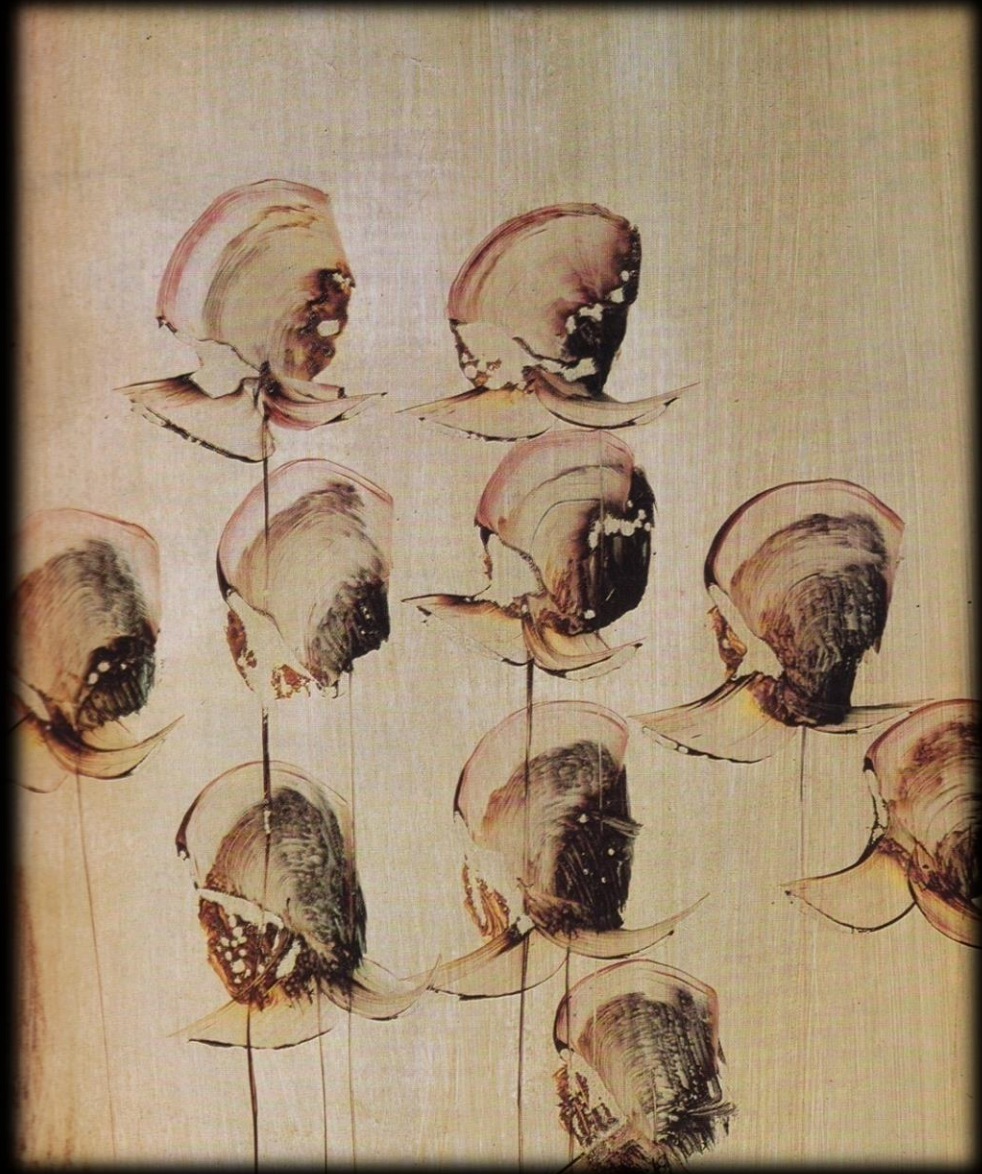


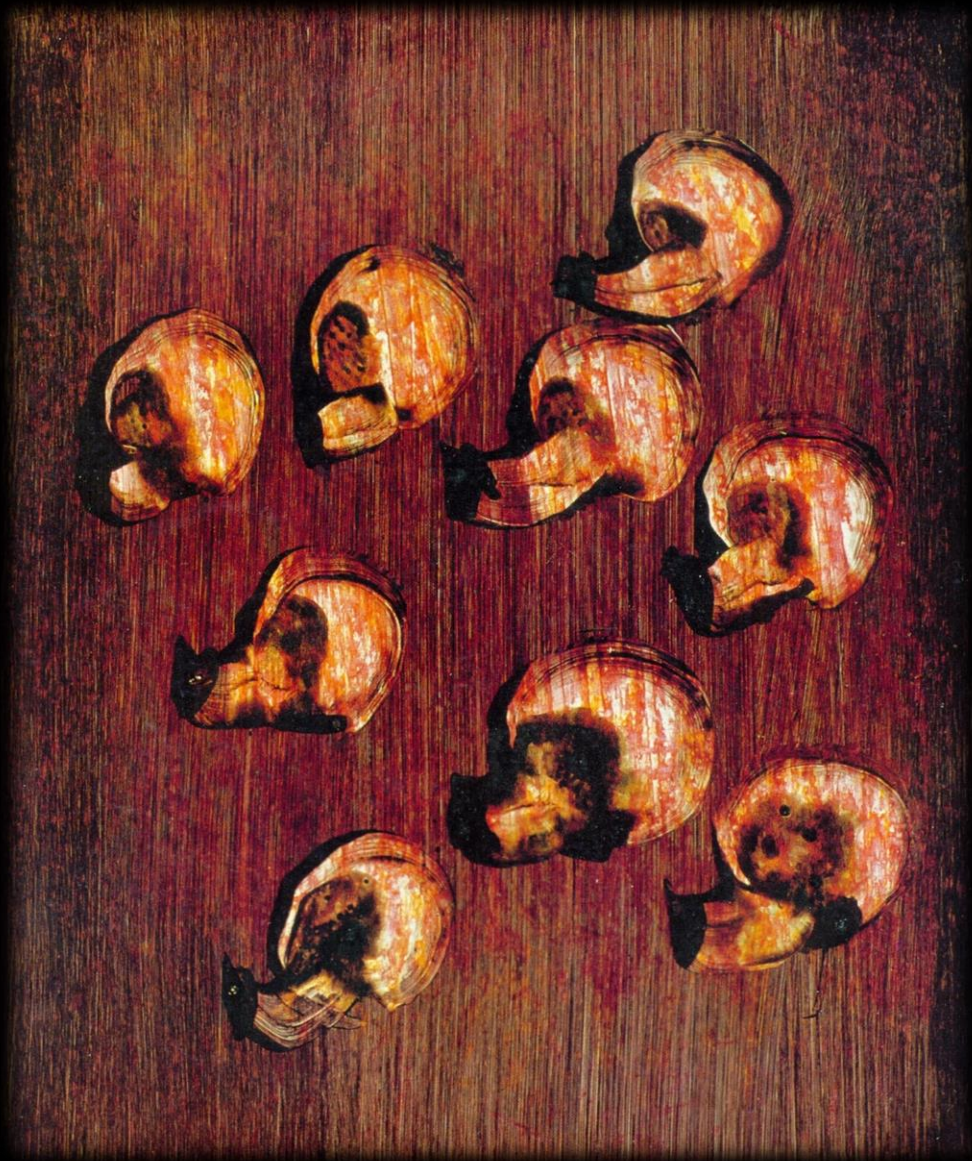
the study of skulls

concavities where the eyes sparkled,
jaw that once yawned with daybreak,
cheek bones that deflected the hiss

we are this underneath
and the frame of us
will linger long after

the inspiriting skin has gone, supple
mosaic muscle over-girding bone,
a whirligig wind-thrown into the unknown.





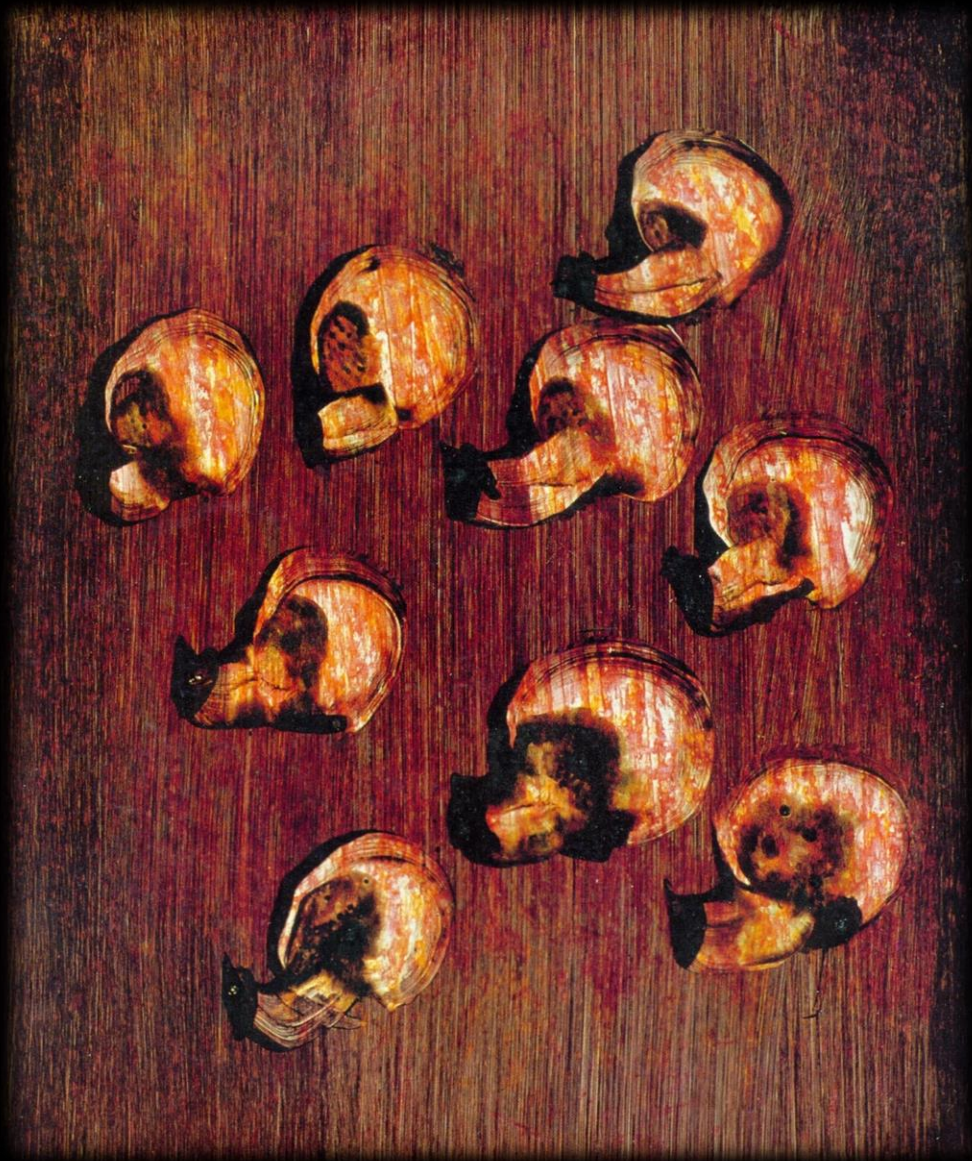
after rain, mushrooms

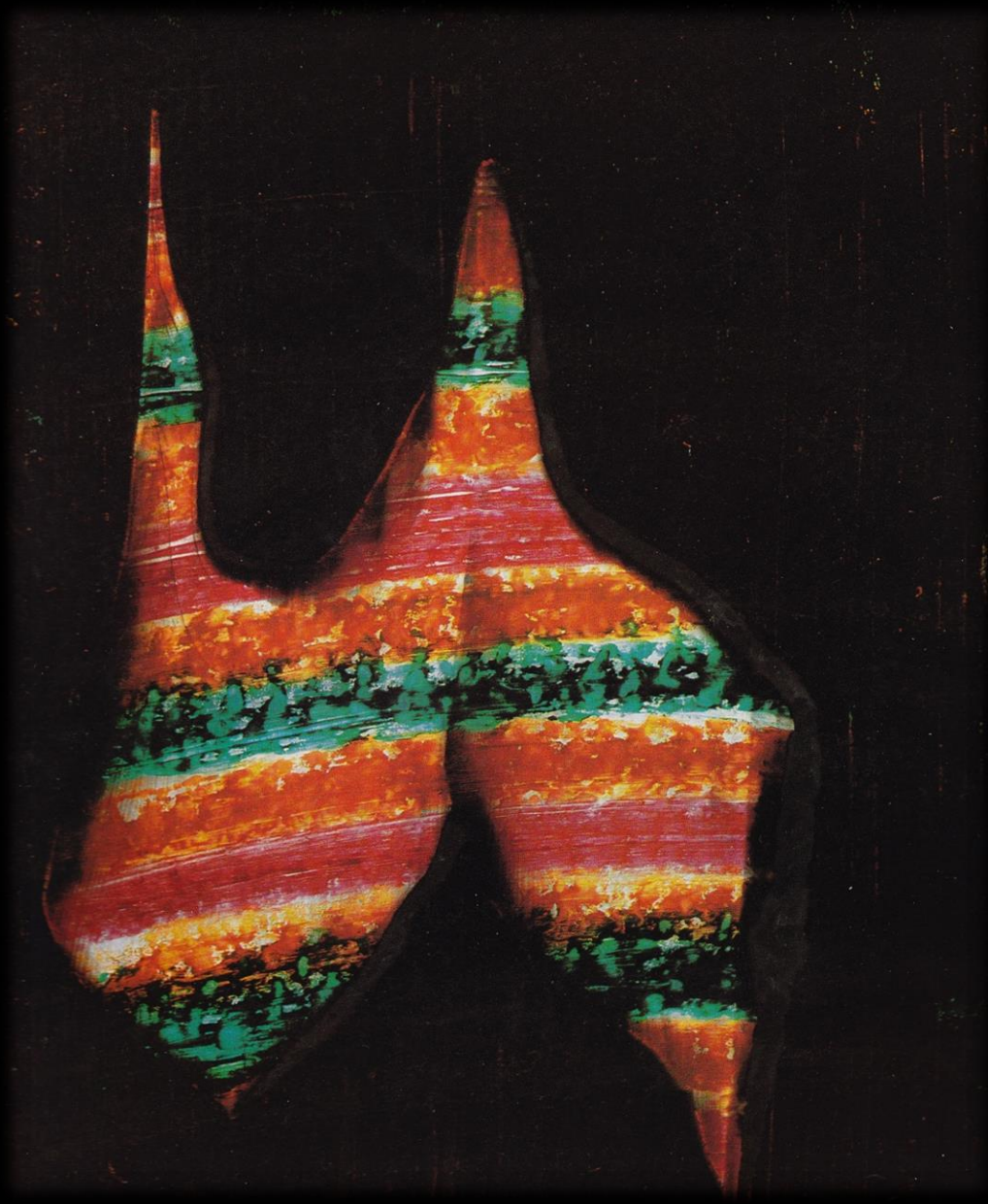
cross-sections of button
mushrooms, groat of earth
clings resolutely to stems,
of musky ground source

and bruises on alabaster
flesh might be CAT scans
of shadowy matter in brains;
or mushrooms after heavy rains

irrupting under lemon trees
in a peripheral instant
forgotten then recalled
ever somewhere else:

what capricious spirits
move you off the frame?





sound = colour

can you hear the lyric flowers?

: polyphonies of dark light

: ensembles of soft tinges

: red imprints in a sharp

: blue swoops in e major

can you see their hymnals sung?

: raining confetti of scales

: roulade of pigment strata

: fermata of rolled edges

: crescendo of woven hues

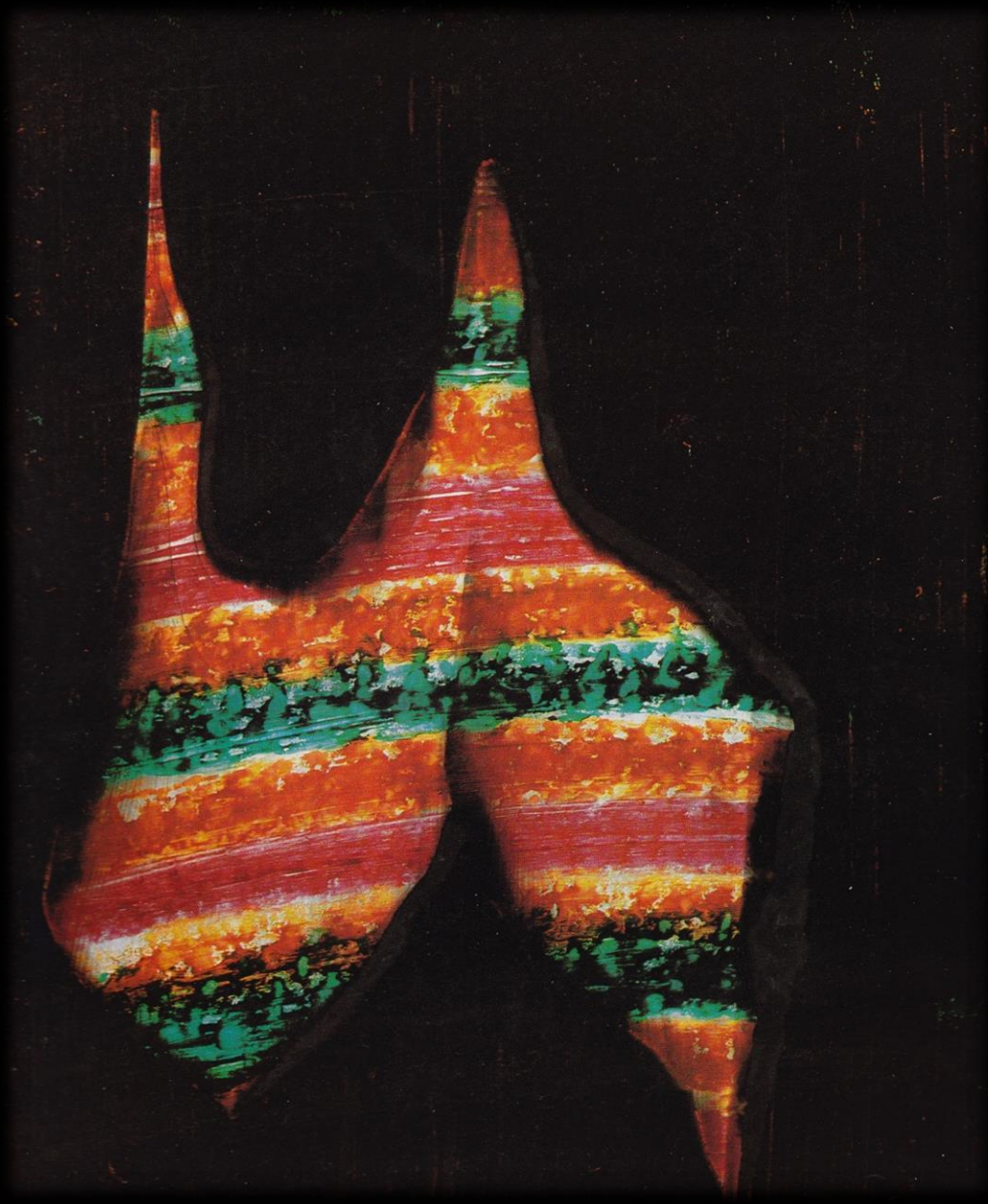
look and listen for their sighs

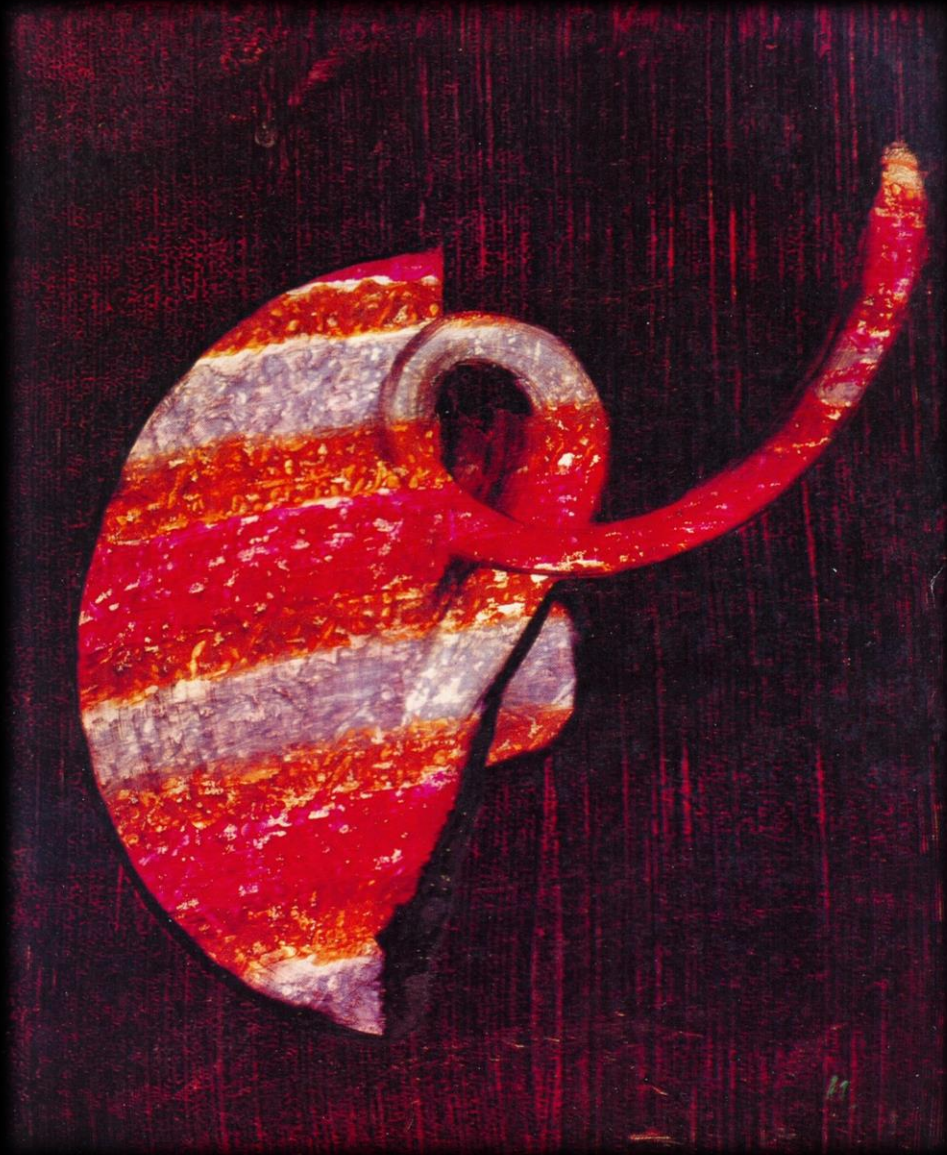
: chroma in c minor

: syllable swirls of restless colour

: scratching through the fields

: of a continent of sound





physis

what a curlicue!
an earthworm nose
testing textures,
tasting tones, as
the sharp escallop
scrapes off tiers
of dusky cover,
unfurling a body
of breathing colour.





*hematography: the artist writes his
blood*

he writes burgundy light
in swirls of iron taste
in tendons interlaced,
bursting out with flight

his eyelid, a bud sheath
one and two and three
then ten scattered seeds
refracting in clouds beneath

springing from where lain
his certain craft of air sway
his tightly ambling red way
of brush in guts of grain

take me in as sap, as lore
as long wave of gentle shock
as heat, as time before the clock
when primordial amour

of goosh and scratch of wax
one and two and three
then a thousand speckled seeds
in the idle painted tracks.





distention

I witnessed my eye
like a tendril
before me
read a poem
writ on vellum
of the seed.





two birds collide

this volatile moment
in mid-air, this rumpus
of feathers splayed
and blood-striped,
this fire ball lifting
and tilting, bursting
through silence, clawing
its way into space.



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