

VANITA GUPTA

BIOGRAPHY

Vanita Gupta (b.1971). Studied G.D/ Fine Arts, L.S. Raheja School of Art, Mumbai. Solo Exhibitions: Mumbai (2004); Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai (2002, 1998, 1994). Select Exhibitions: Palam, Delhi (2005); 'Abstract Show', Gallery Beyond, Mumbai (2005); Gallery Threshold, New Delhi (2005, 2004), NGMA, Mumbai (2004); National Exhibition of Art, Lalit Kala Akademi, Kerala (2004); 'Art for All', Bowrings, Mumbai (2003); Kala Ghoda Festival, Mumbai (2001); 'Art Jumbori', Lakeeren Art Centre, Mumbai (2000). The artist will exhibit at ArtSingapore, 2006. She has participated in artist camps and her work is in private and public collections. The artist lives and works in Mumbai.

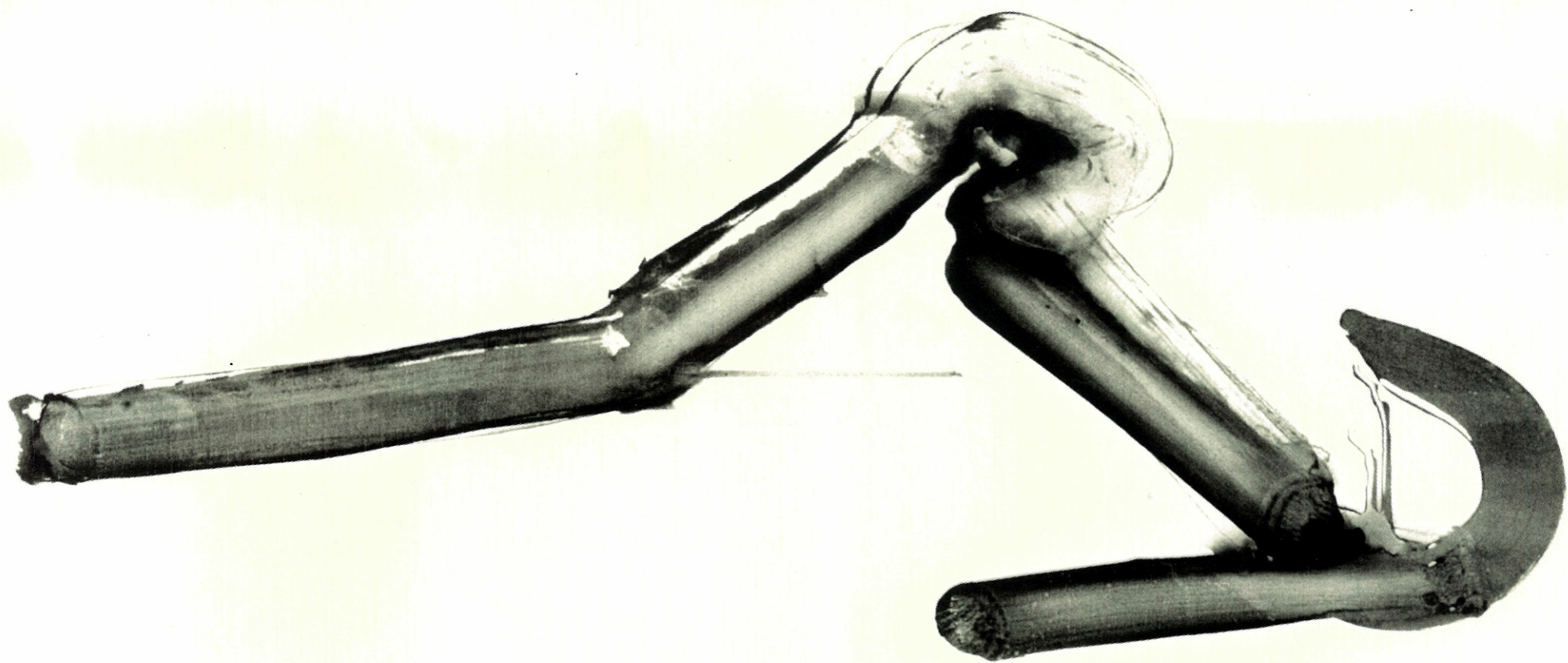
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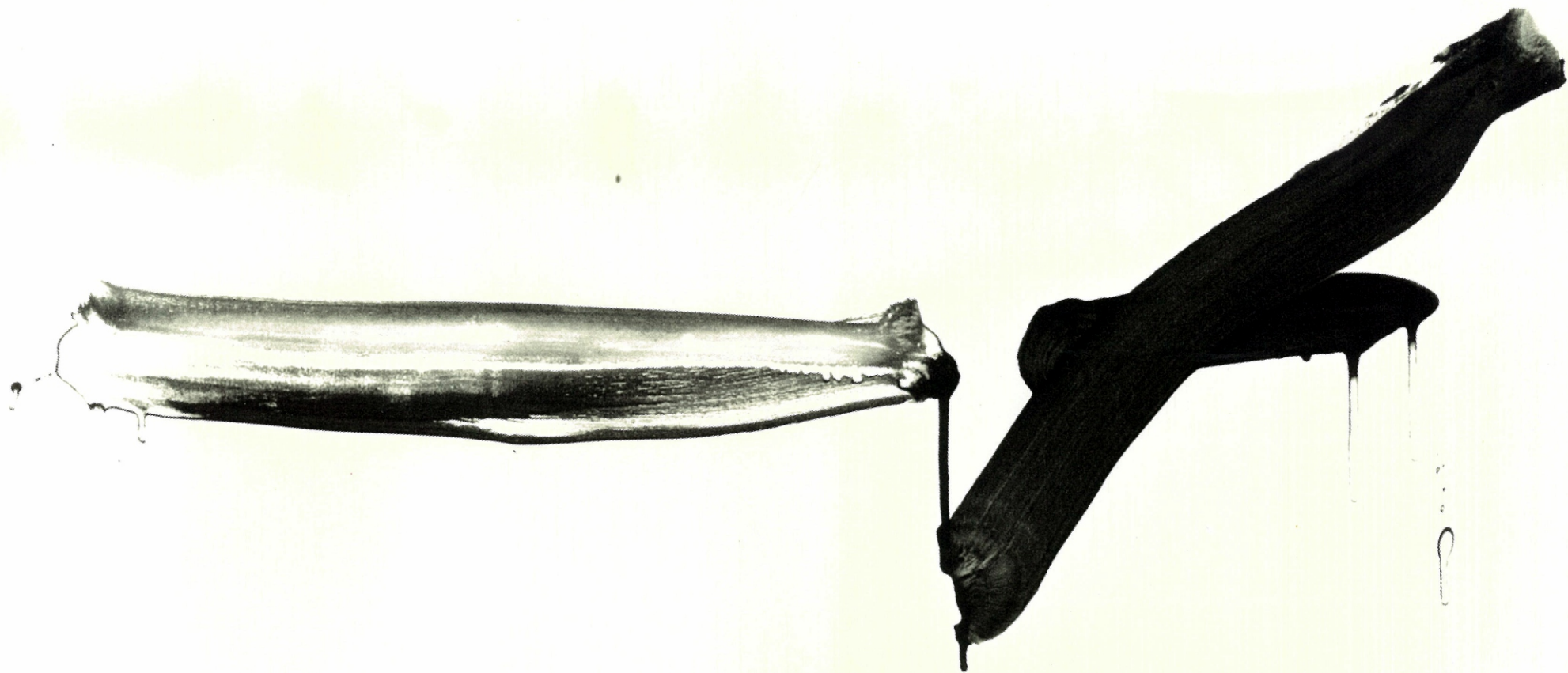
SINGAPORE ART FAIR
28 September - 2nd October, 2006
Suntec Singapore, Level 6, Hall 602



NEW DELHI
8th September - 15 September, 2006
Galerie Romain Rolland, Alliance Francaise, 72 Lodhi Estate



acrylic on canvas 37" X 51"



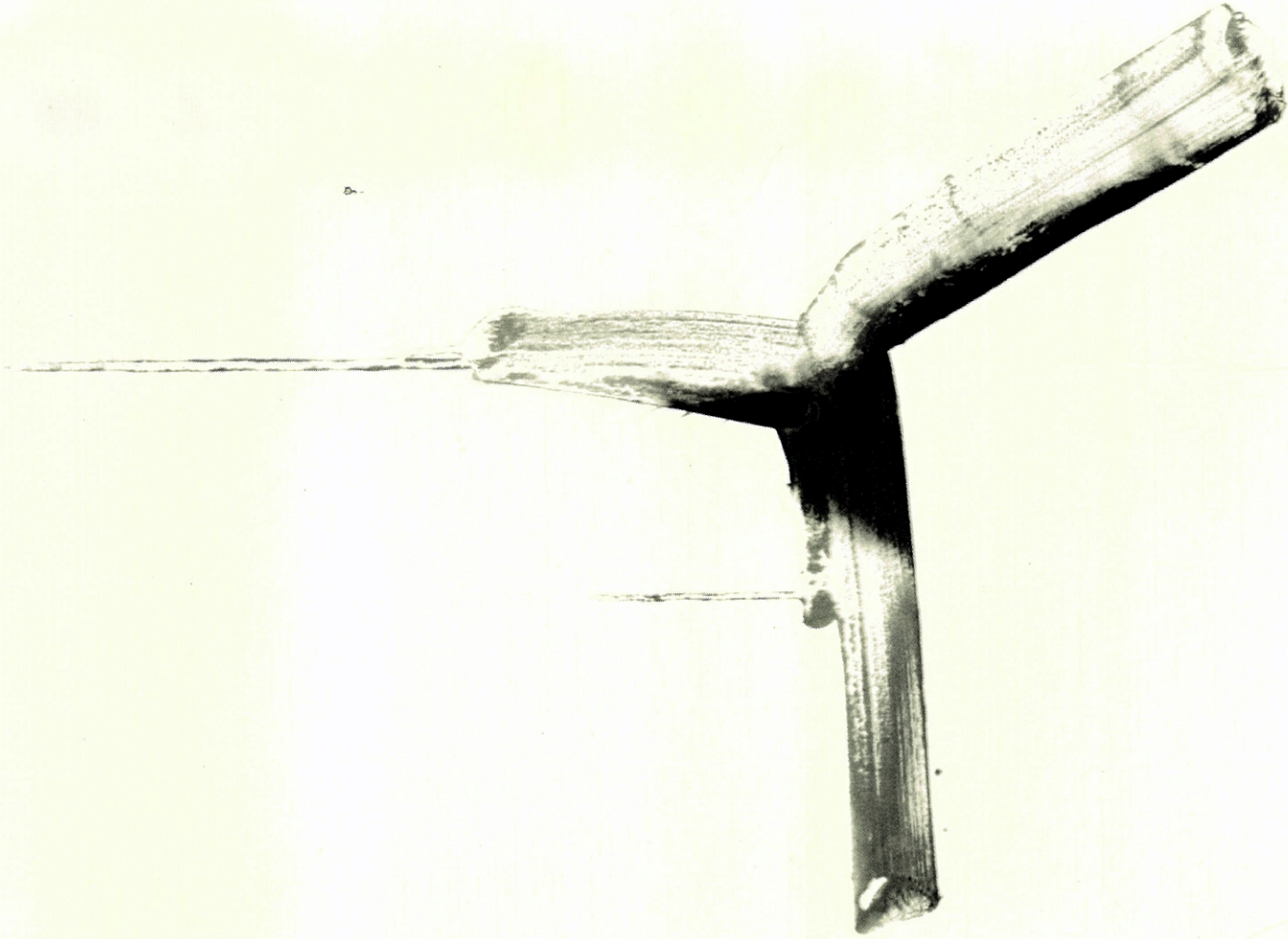
acrylic on canvas 37" X 51"



acrylic on canvas 36" X 36"



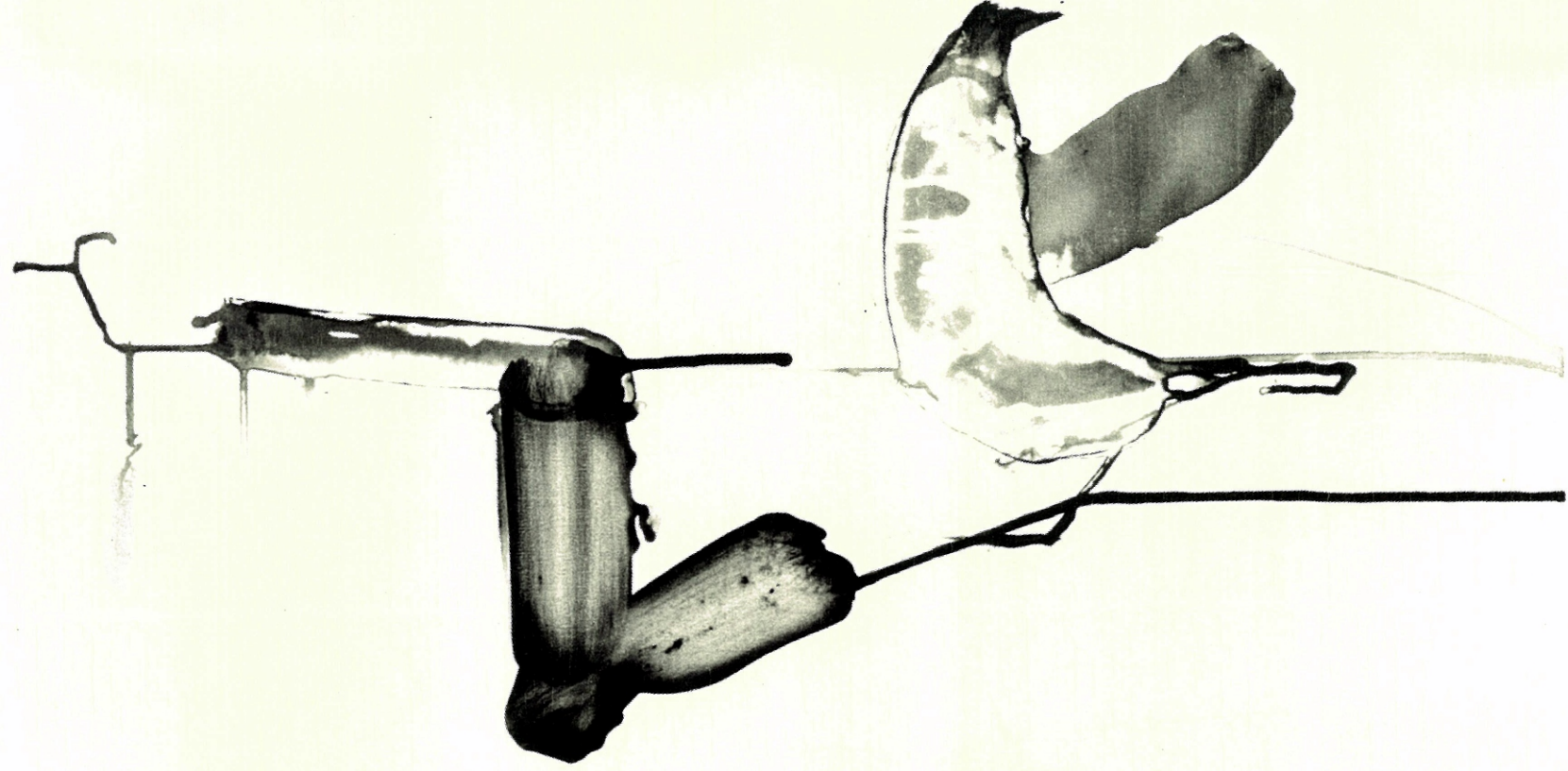
acrylic on canvas 70" X 55"



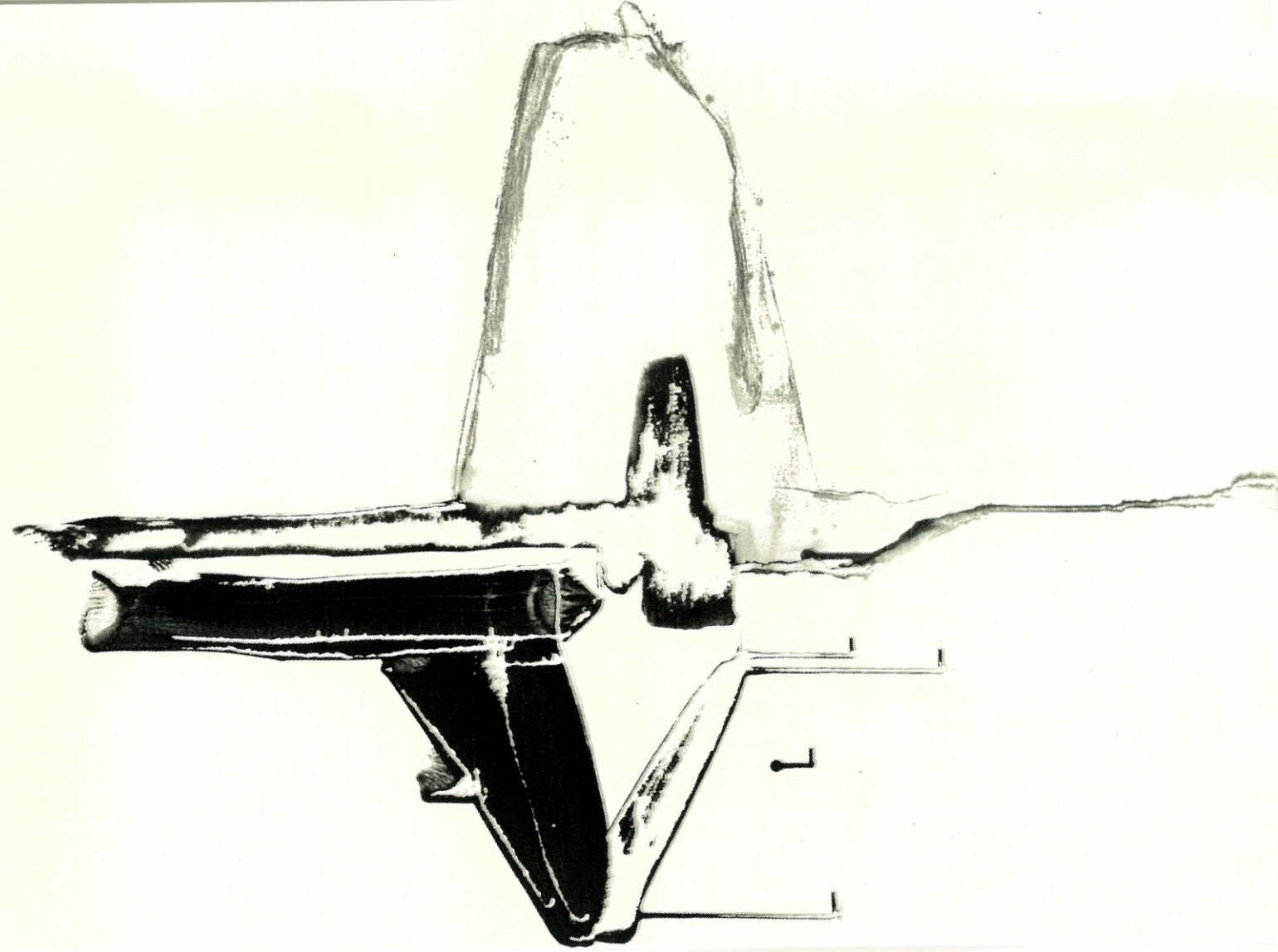
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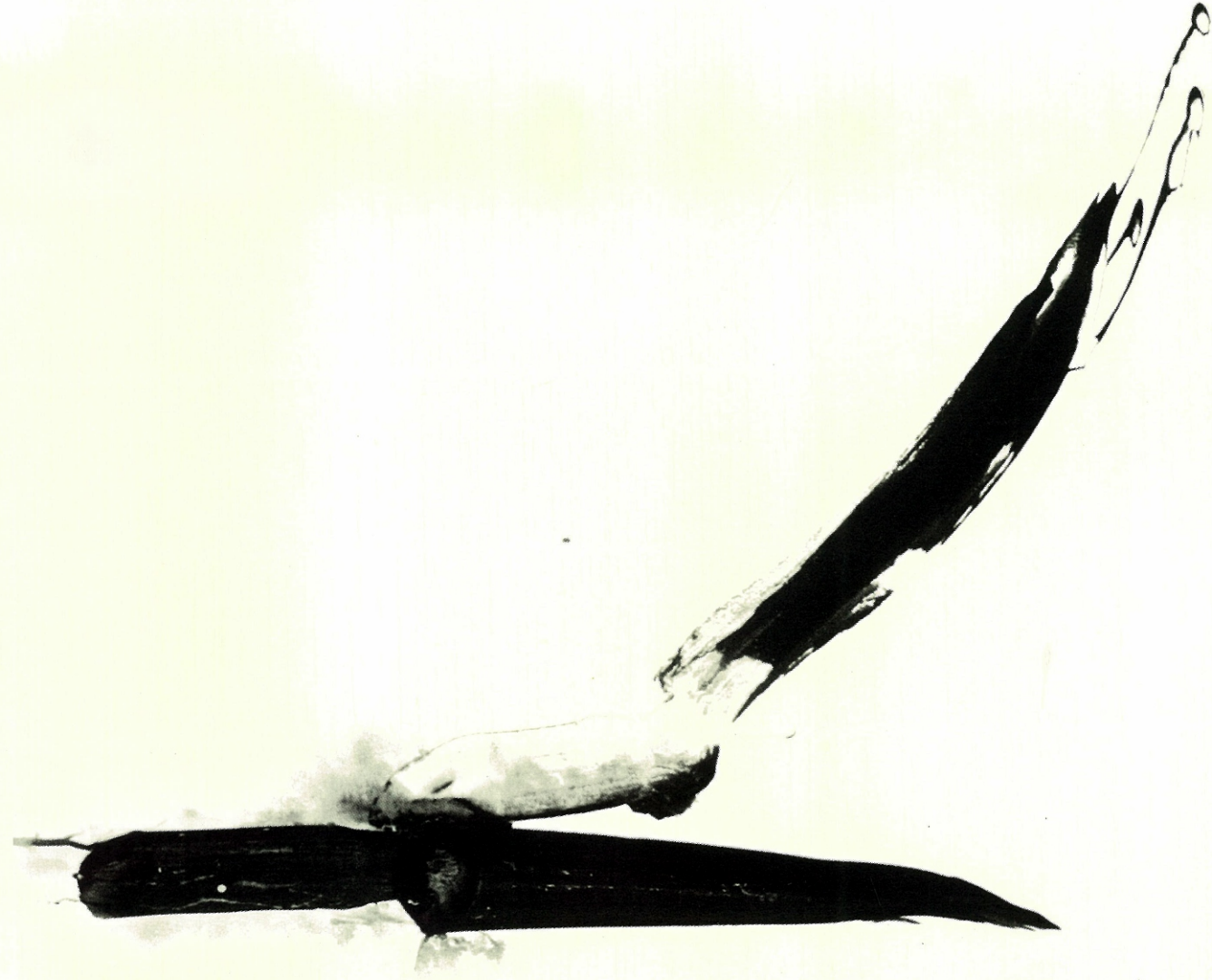
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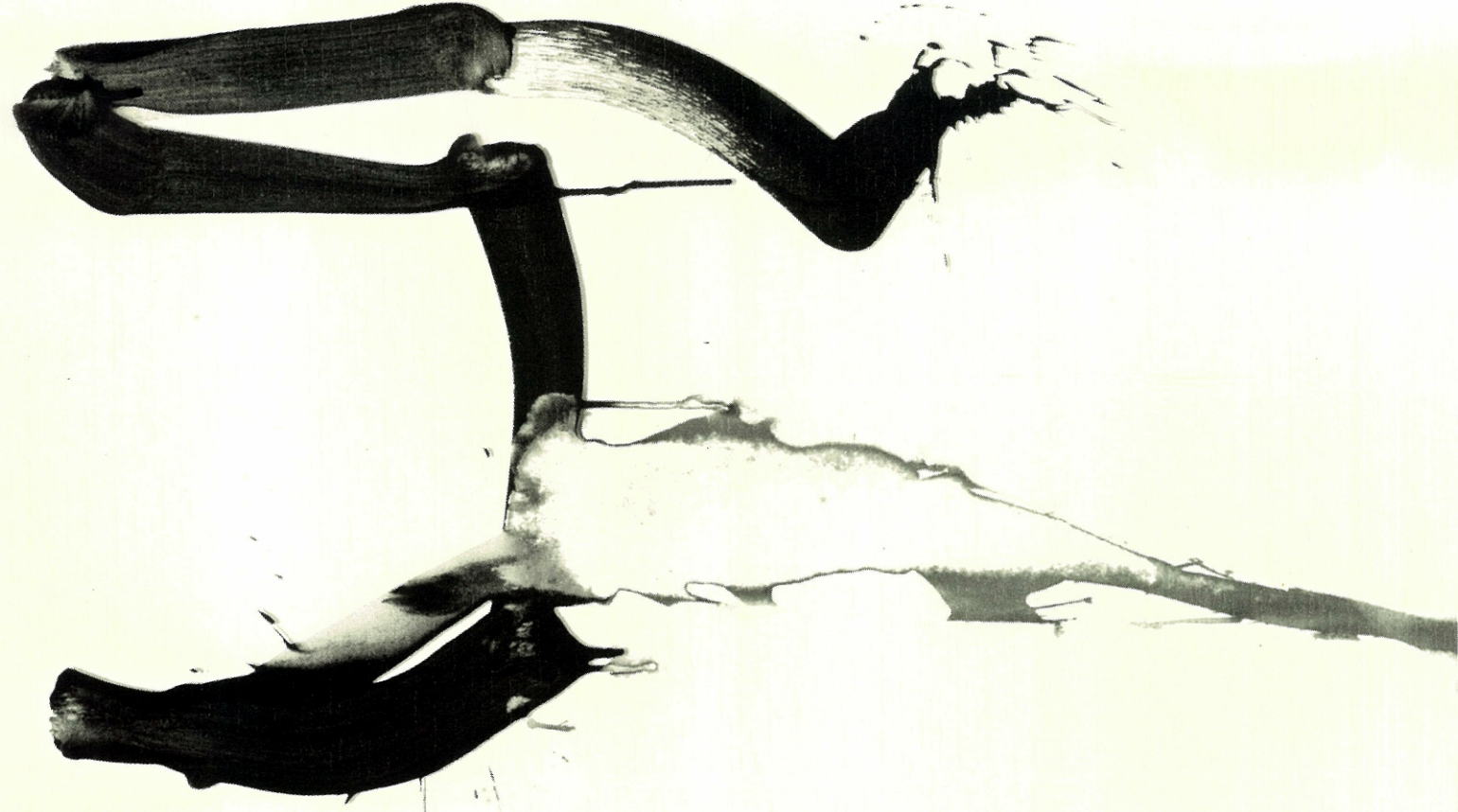
acrylic on canvas 30" X 40"



acrylic on canvas 44" X 58"



acrylic on canvas 37" X 51"



acrylic on canvas 37" X 51"

'Aki, tell me what is this? asked Anshi,

'It's a curtain, 'Aki answered

'And what?'

'It's red in colour.

'And?'

'And what Anshi, I don't know.'

Oh Aki, It's a fabric, which is the result of the wrap and weft of innumerable threads and these threads are woven out of cotton. Cotton is the raw material here. Curtain is the cultivated form of cotton. This transformation is so fascinating that we don't even think of its origin.'

Does the origin of a painting exist only in the objective and the apparent?

Excerpts translated from Hindi by Vanita Gupta from her forthcoming novel *Anshi*.

Through this dialogue Vanita outlines the foundation of abstraction in her work. While the paper pulp sculptures she has made in the past might be construed as representative of an idea or form, with her black and white paintings Vanita eludes material references. Her art encourages visceral reactions that are often delayed in their conscious realization. They remain in visual memory as wisps and after a period of gestation surface in the realization of the multiple approaches to comprehension and knowledge.

Construction and Un-construction

While the proper antonym here is destruction I am aiming of a slightly different reading of Vanita's paintings. I propose that while her work may seem to lack structure, in fact these paintings are highly controlled creations encouraging the experience of uncontrolled and powerful emotions brought about by free associations. Creation of form which leads to the dissolution of the expected and paves the path for a greater structure of knowledge I propose is at the core of the artists work.

Her paintings have a beginning and an end and are constructed to represent that which lies beyond the built structure to its ethos, the un-constructed and fluid meanings and emotions. I see Vanita's paintings as creating and manipulating tempo. Like a conductor she raises the heartbeat, maintains it to illicit excitement, suddenly trips it to cause exhilaration and ends with a finale both soothing and satisfying in its simplicity.

Vanita Gupta's paintings create a sense of the eternal which belies the first impression that the artist works hurriedly. Perhaps the beginning of a canvas is the most daunting; the planning of the structure the space will take. This is possibly harder when the artist intends to occupy a limited space leaving the rest of the paper blank and the drawing unhinged, letting it assert itself almost randomly. This is abstract in its most severe form. By not beginning with a form of reference or allowing the viewer to hinge the painting on the visual and material world, through her paintings Vanita goes to the heart of the aesthetic experience, pure intuitive reaction.

The Artistic Process

Since her first solo in 1994, Vanita has worked with complex simplicity, exploring the intricacies and multiplicity with which paint may be applied on paper. Her early works, watercolours on rough edged paper, investigated memory through colour and texture. The painting grew from multiple washes of subtle colour, grey, blue, brown and ochre, the colours of archeology and geology, history and fantasy. A white background, on which these paintings are mounted, has remained constant in her work. This is another manner by which the artist painstakingly belies a referential framework, any clues with which to read her paintings.

From 2000 the artist created paper sculptures. Her involvement with paper has been intense; she has ironed it, pulped it, torn it, glued it, knotted, twisted and creased it in her attempt to push the limits of the physical engagement with material and thus the meanings it lends to the finished work. She has combined paper, paint and gauze creating installations which might be recognized as paintings, sculptures or textiles.

For the past few years Vanita has developed grandiose and powerful paintings (this suite of works falls within this last development) employing the limited tools of black ink, handmade paper, water, sponge and brushes. The lyrical virtuosity glimpsed in her earlier works has achieved a climatic moment. With simplicity and silence Vanita plumbs the depths of the abstract idiom.

Vanita works with a limited palette making simple yet forceful works. Employing a form of the wash technique her paintings have graphic quality in their rigorousness, somber boldness and quick movement. Her strokes range from thick and black to tentative and erased.

Minimalism emphasizes the materiality and shape of the image and denies any sense of personal touch in the work's execution. Such strategies are evident in Vanita's paintings. She explores the potential of abstract lines, brush marks, colours, tones and texture to create expressionist visual poetry. To me the non-representational drama that arises when the painterly elements meet and interact on the canvas becomes a stand-in for the contemporary human experience.

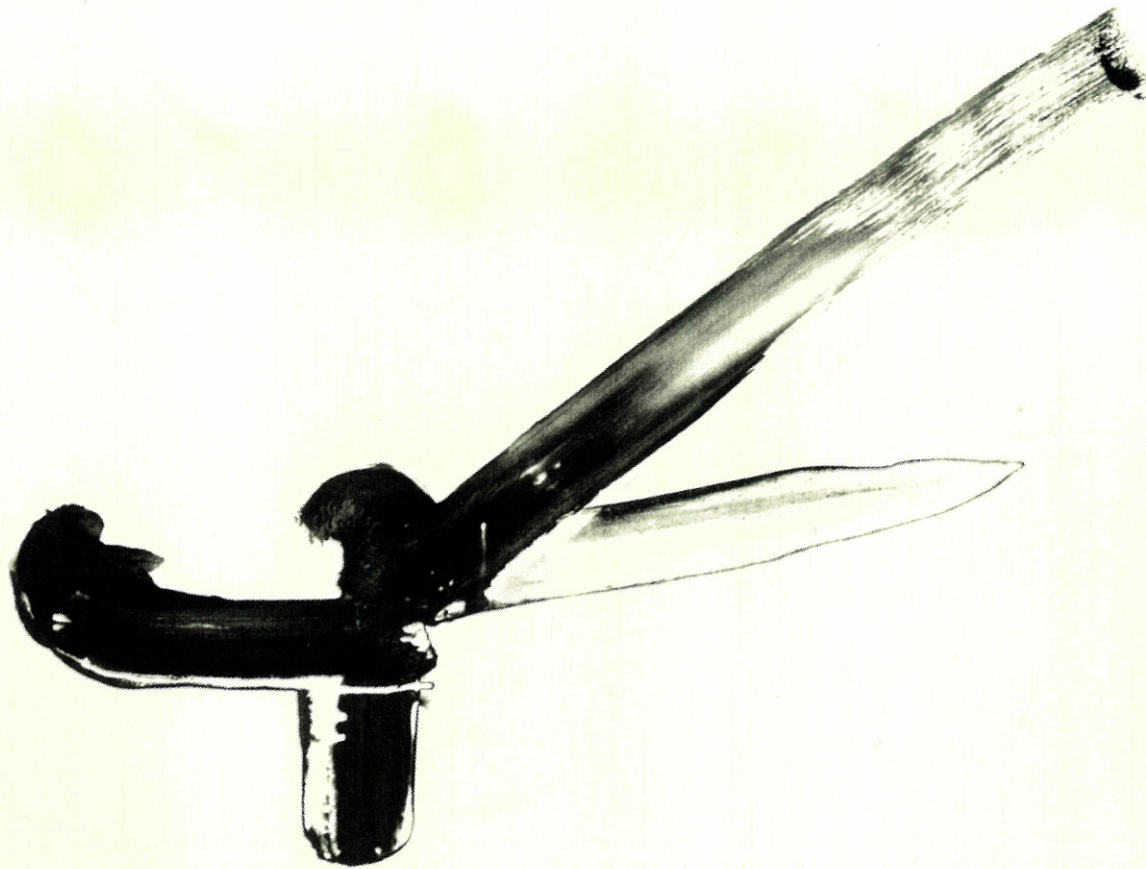
In the Larger Context: Non-Objective Defined

With its decisive rejection of recognizable imagery in favor of felt experience, abstraction, unlike all other styles and movements, has transcended transitory and local interests, serving as a viable choice to international artists in the modern period. Evolving after photography, which has the ability to capture appearances and produce exact replicas/ reproductions, abstract painting and sculpture convey what cannot be viewed through a lens. Abstractionists have challenged themselves to depict the un-seeable rhythms of nature, the ineffable qualities of life, the heroic capacities of individuals and society, or the vast if vague regions of the soul. In this sense, abstractionists neither discard the desire to communicate content to the viewer nor reject the connection of their highly expressive art form to life. But the non-referentiality of abstract art requires the viewer to plumb new emotional reservoirs in order to absorb and to be touched by it. Various explosive, serene, intense, or contemplative, abstraction offers the kinds of beauty unimaginable in earlier art.

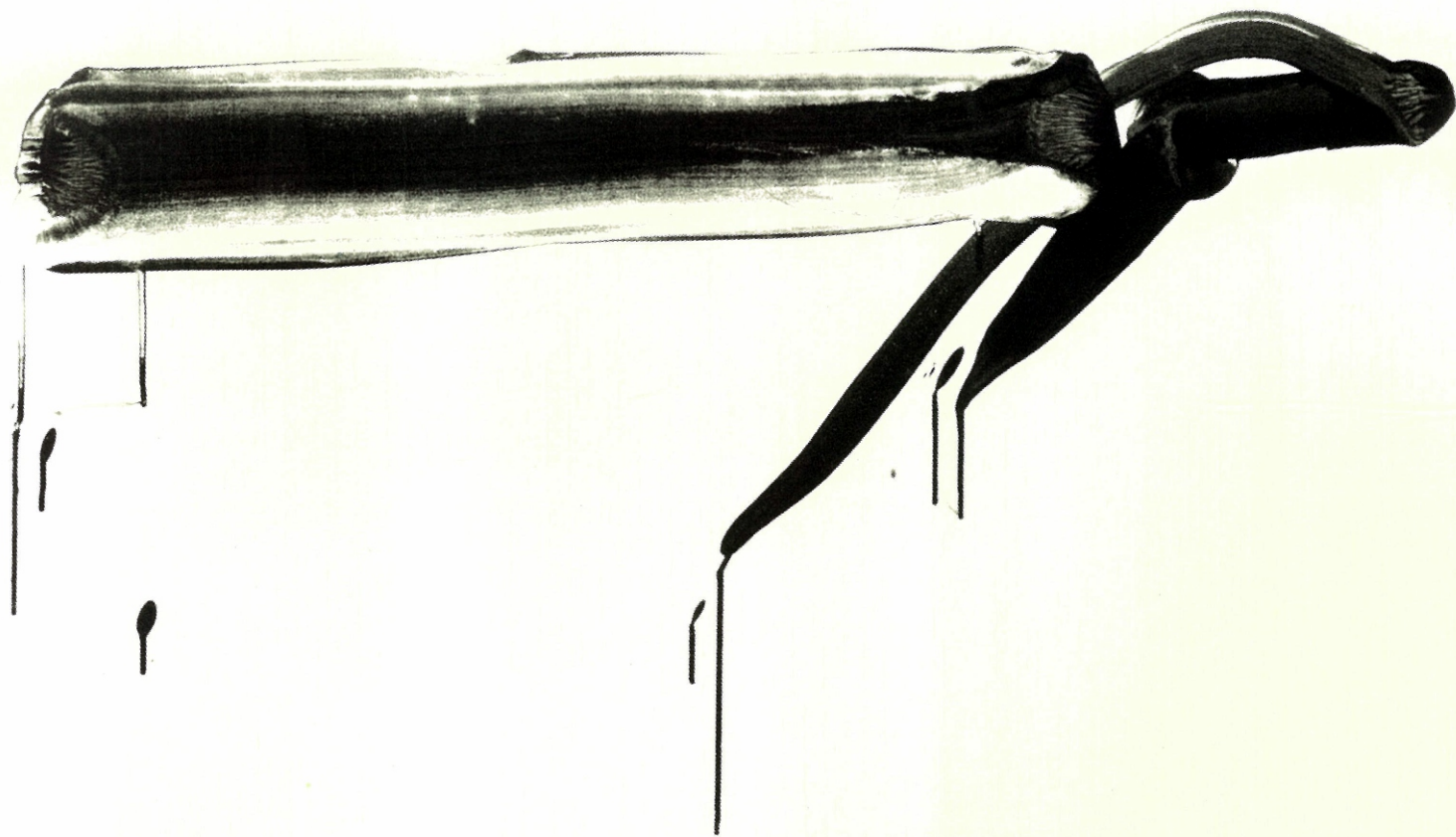
The term "non-objective" is a very free (and misleading) translation of the German word *gegenstandslos*. Although "without objects" or "objectless" is a more accurate translation, "non-objective" has been used in the West and particularly in the United States of America as a synonym for abstract art since its introduction and popularization. Kandinsky and other pioneering abstract painters such as Piet Mondrian did not like this translation of *gegenstandslos*. They felt it evoked the negative connotation of philosophical subjectivity, whereas they wanted to emphasize the universal and international aspects of their work.

Though the term has now fallen out of favour, I would like to apply it to Vanita's paintings, sans the negative readings. Her paintings are not without objective. She uses no objects and yet there are lessons we may learn from her art which may be carried forth into the material world. While encouraging us to look beyond the canvas, this furthering of the conscious looking may, in my opinion, be applied to our lives and our environment. From a blinkered existence we must acknowledge the honesty of experience and the truth of our lives and accept that which we approve of and reject and change that which is wrong. This is of particular relevance to us, living in a period of suspicion and doubt. While Vanita may be encouraging us to reject the accepted norm in painting, there is perhaps a need to apply this learning beyond.

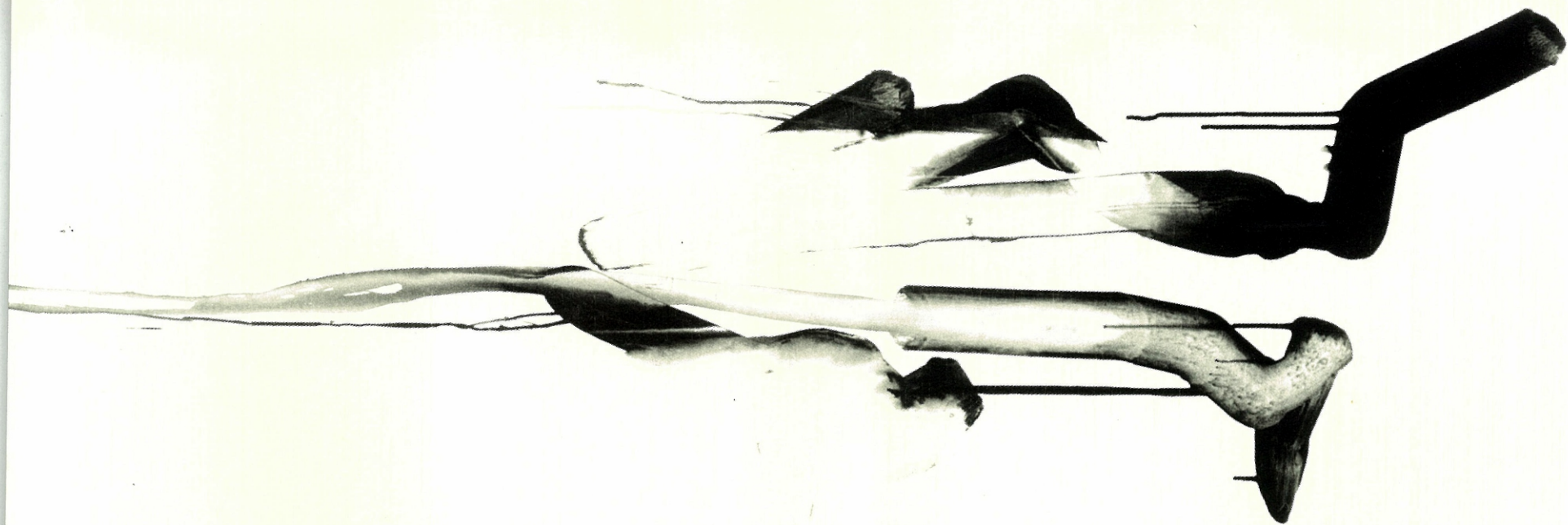
- Deeksha Nath
Art Historian



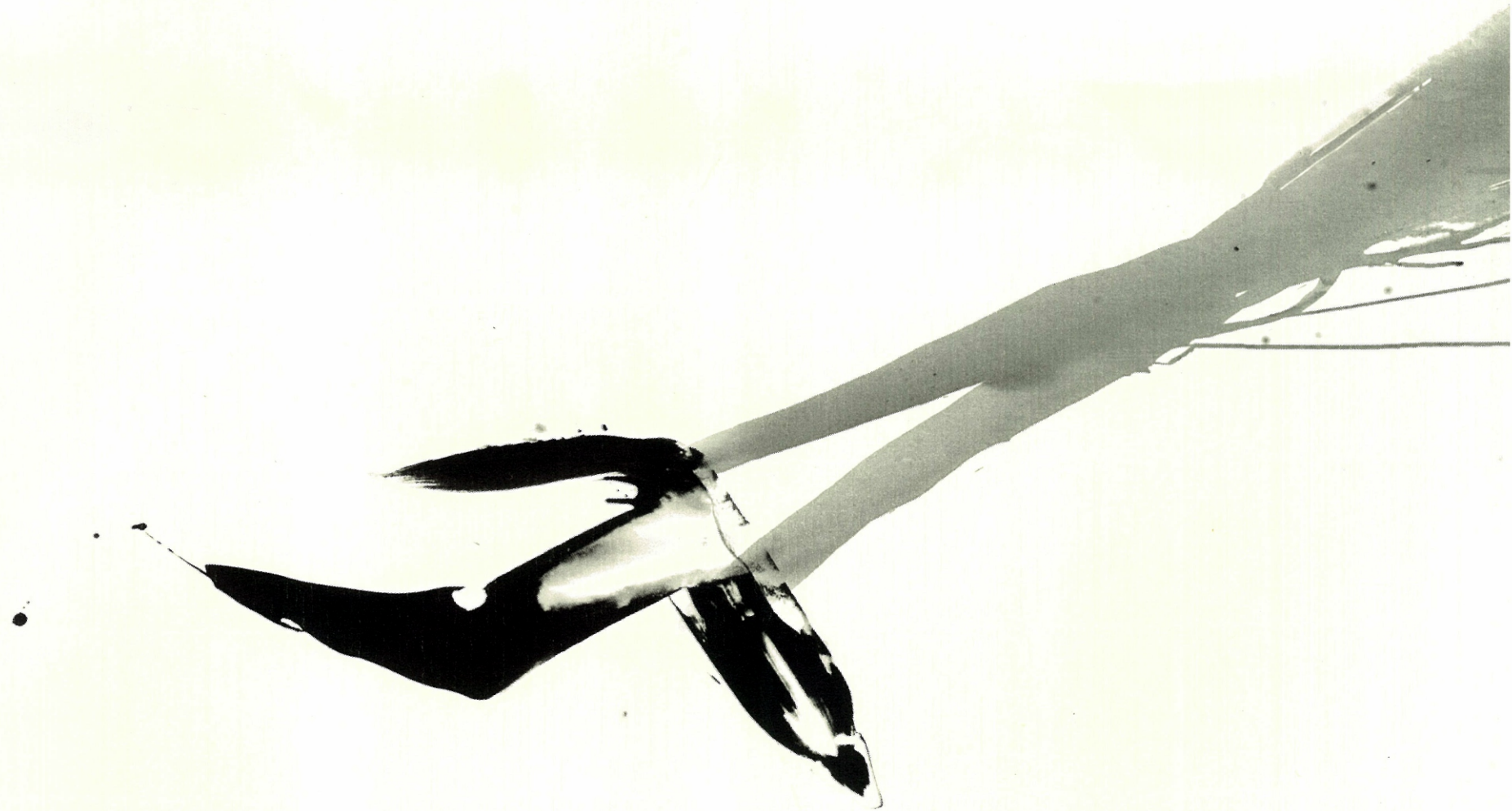
acrylic on canvas 37" X 51"



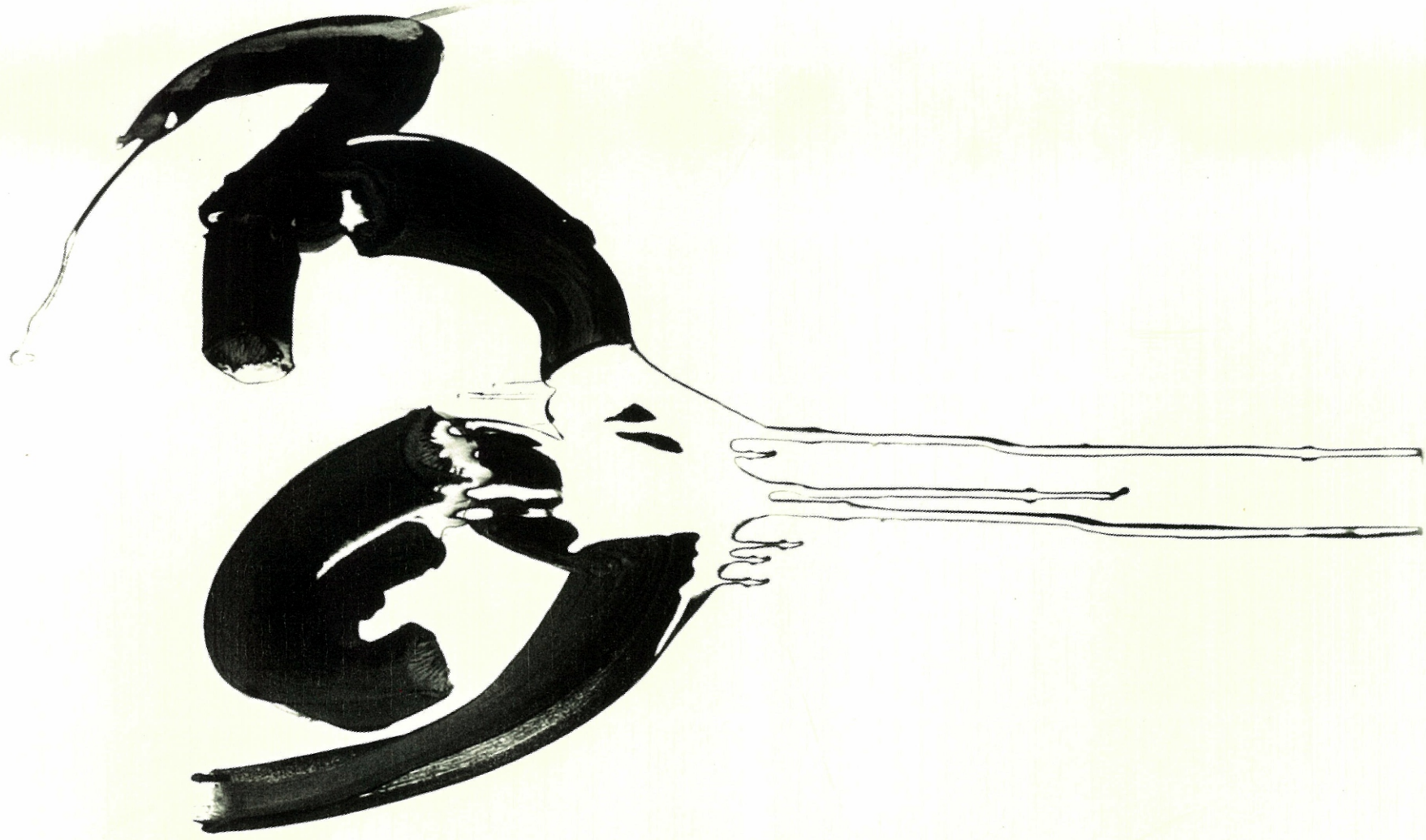
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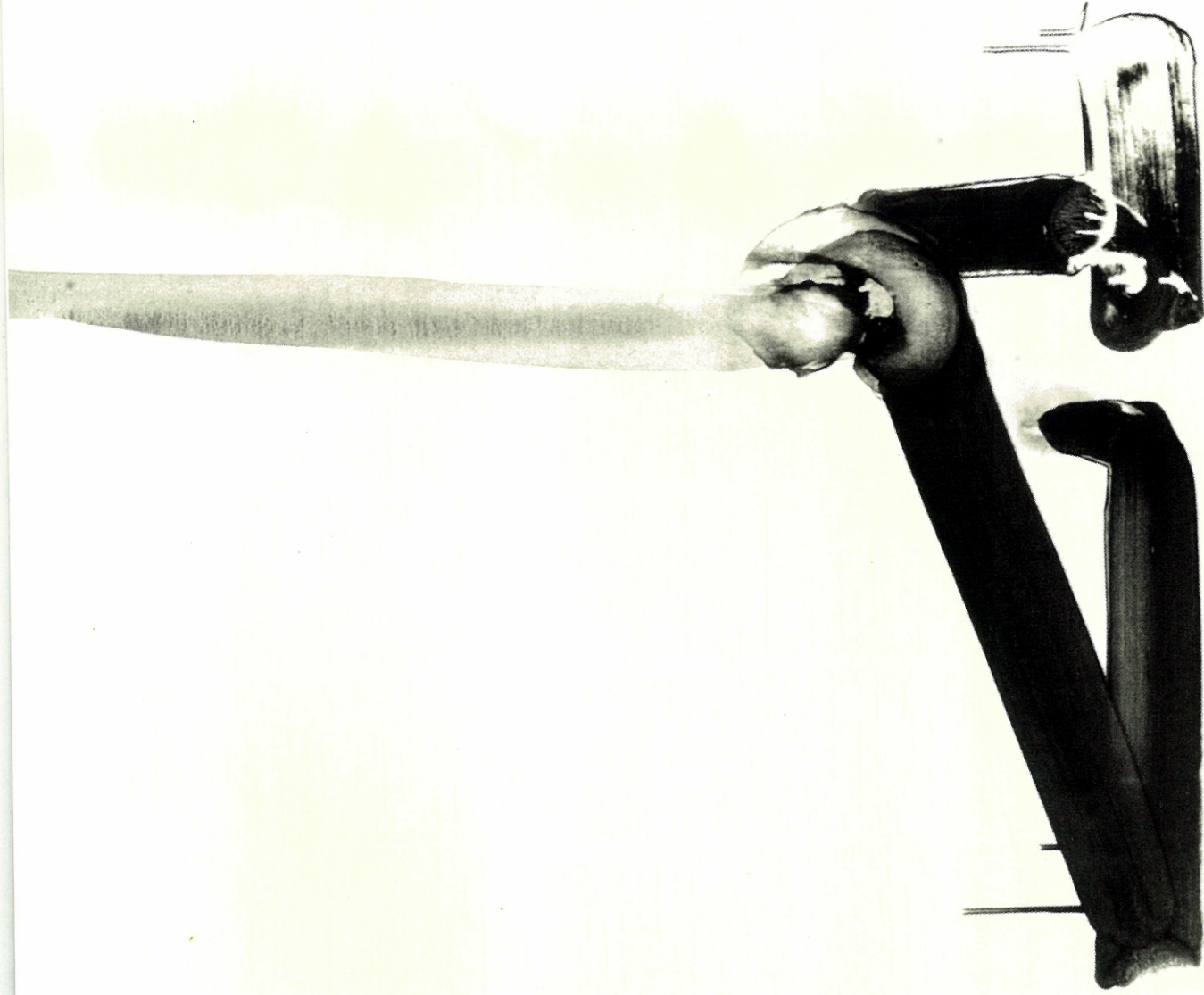
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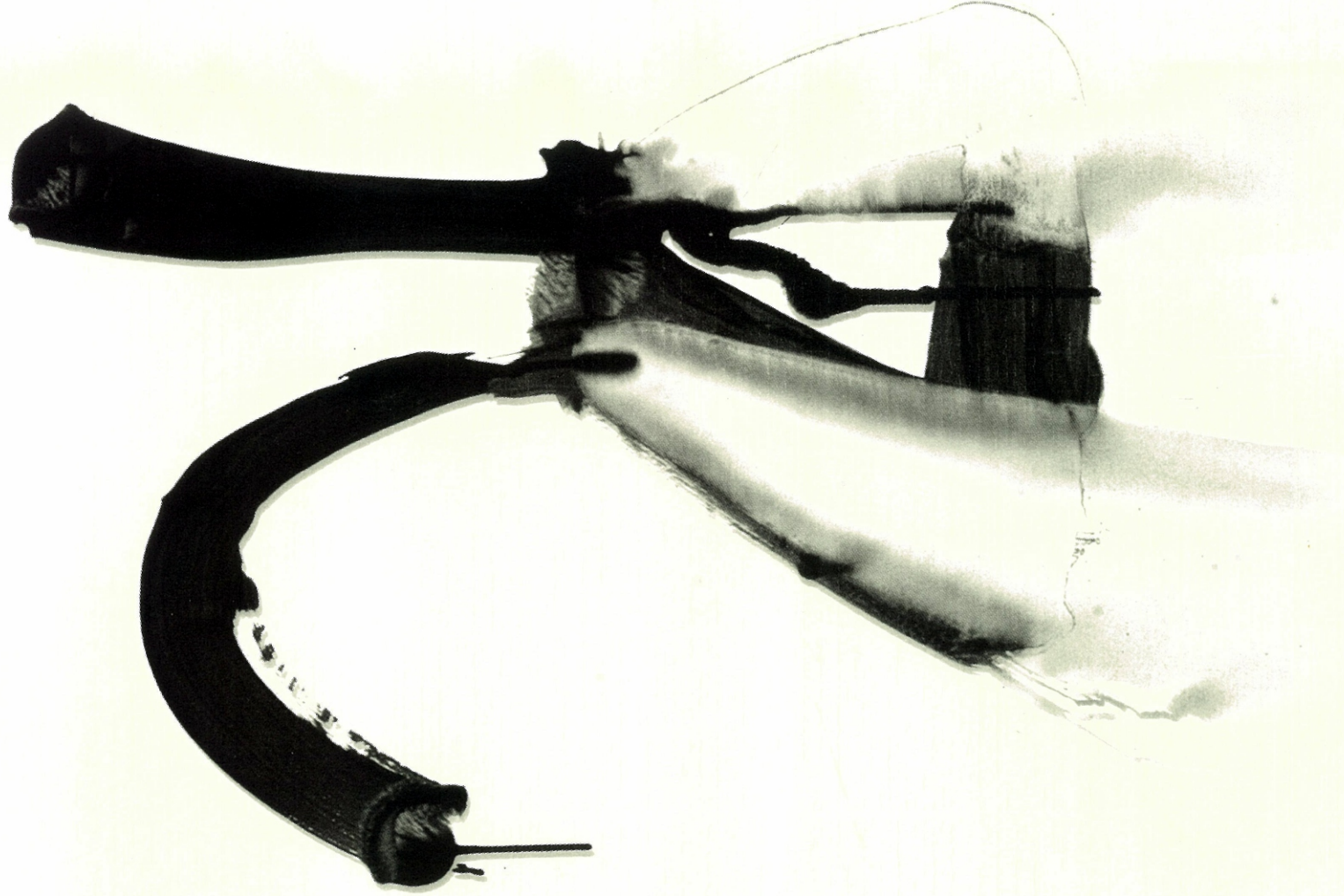
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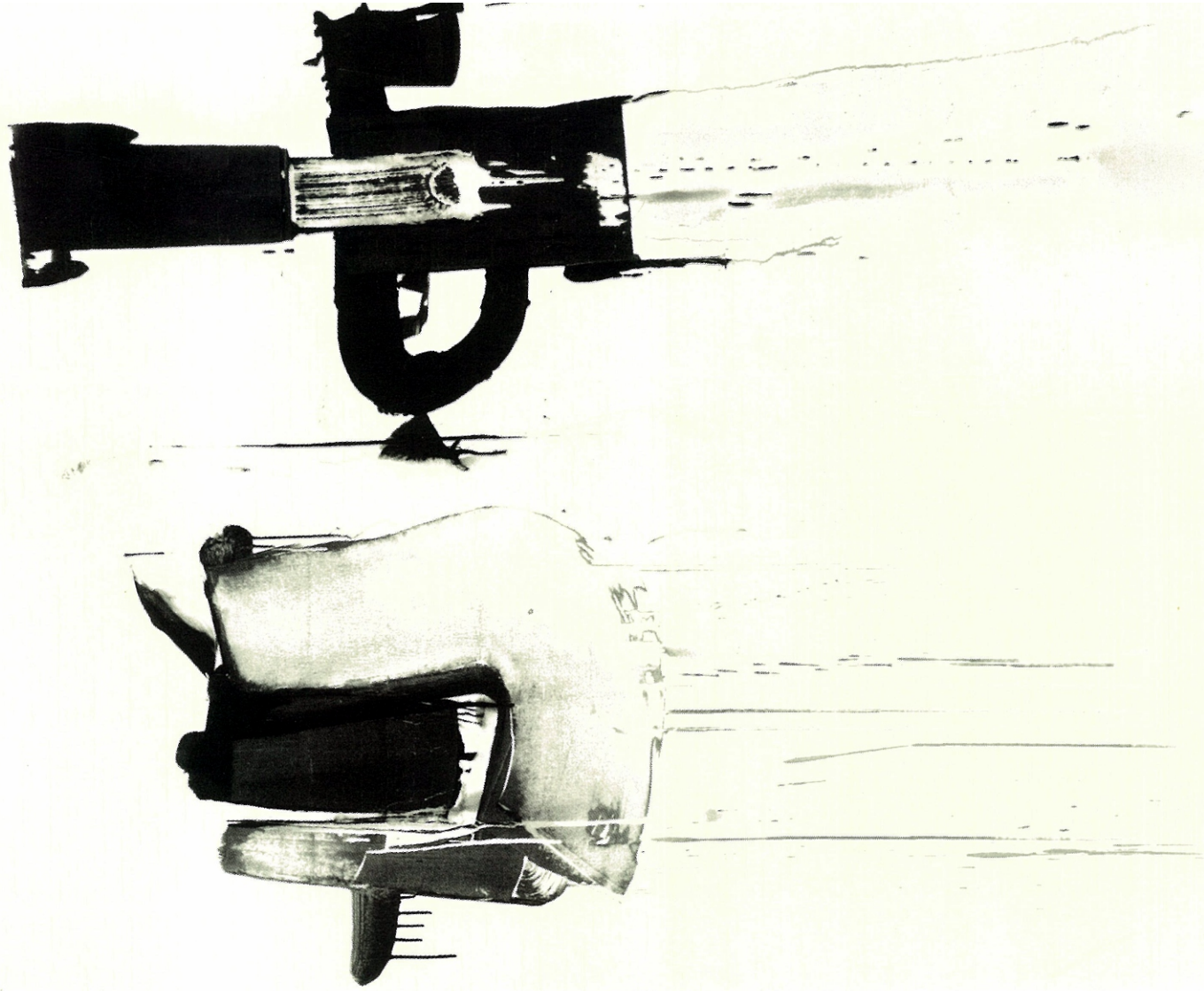
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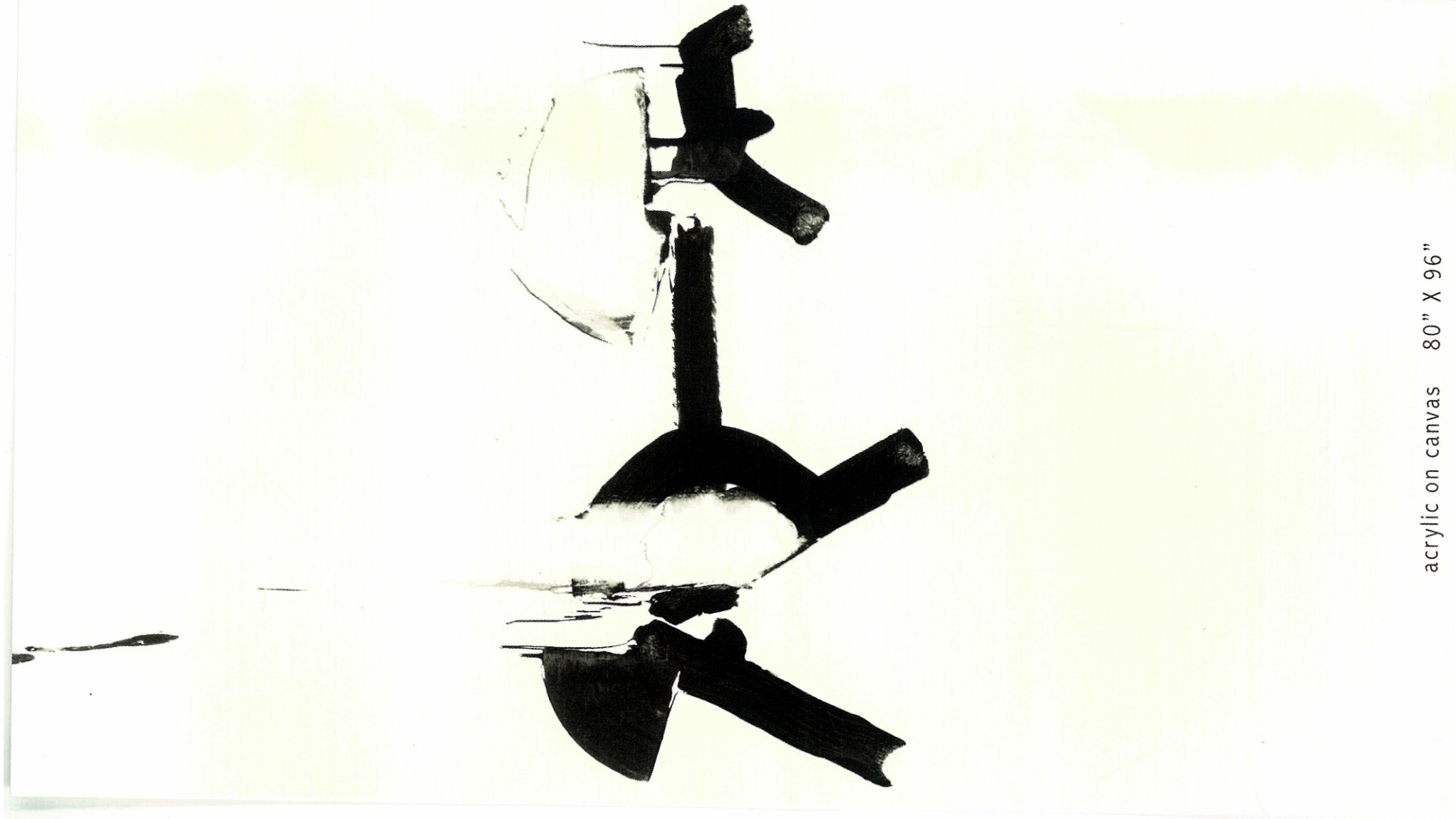
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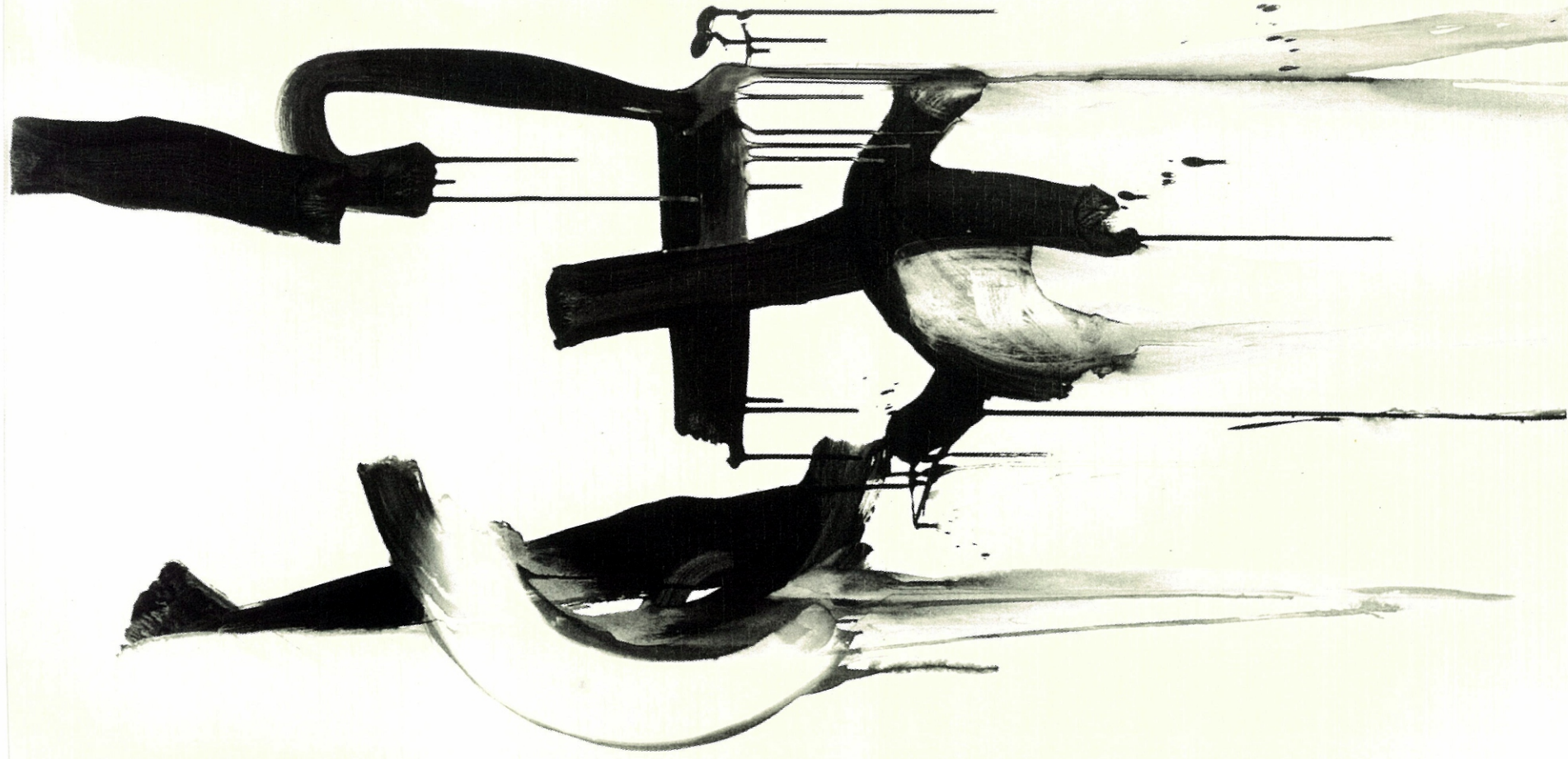
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acrylic on canvas 80" X 96"



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acrylic on canvas 70" X 55"



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