

WEIGHT OF LIGHT
RENATO D'AGOSTIN

MODULNOVA
ART PROJECT

MAP

The path of Modulnova has found a natural affinity with that of Renato D'Agostin's.

In the dance of hands.
In the passion that becomes healing.
In the details that reveal meaning.
In the beauty that enchants the soul.
In the freedom of being.

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By Claudio Composti

ACT I – ORIGIN IN THE DARKNESS

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", wrote the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu. And just as life's journey starts in darkness and silence, so too does the world of Renato D'Agostin begin: in the darkness of the darkroom and in the silence that precedes every creative act, in that suspended interval where thought is charged with vision. It is from an attentive gaze and a profound listening that his pictures take shape, even before they appear on paper. Photography, for him, is not a search but a revelation. It is writing with light – photo-graphy – that surfaces from an existential urgency: to inhabit that darkness, to cross through it, and emerge with a clear vision. Opening this journey in pictures is a symbolic phrase, as powerful as a warning: "I have a dream". It is not just a historical icon, but a personal exhortation, almost a declaration of poetics. It is the fire from which everything began: a spark that still reignites every time D'Agostin holds his camera. That dream pushed him – as a very young man – to cross the ocean to New York with an absolute faith: to take photographs. This requires a certain blindness, one that makes space for the eyes of the soul. It is precisely in this suspended dimension that the printing ritual takes place: in the darkness of the darkroom, the image comes to light. In an ontological oxymoron, that which is born from the black becomes visible, transforming into a foundational element of his art. Printing thus becomes a meditative gesture, a silent, almost sacred rite: a moment of total concentration, where time, light, and matter merge. In this process, D'Agostin's work reveals itself for what it is: an intimate journey that starts from a fragment of reality, bends to intuition, and transforms into a mental landscape. This first act reminds us that seeing is always a choice. Who we are is the result of what we have experienced. Lived emotions take shape – on paper and in pictures – designing a new reality. In absolute black and dazzling white that capture the gaze, those images become a mirror for the viewer, resonating within each person with their own voice, in a reality that doesn't explain, but reveals.

ACT II – BECOMING LIGHT

A tyre skids violently in the middle of a Demolition Derby. D'Agostin once again uses it as both pretext and symbol: photography is not just vision, but body, gesture, and action. For him, printing in the darkroom is a truly physical and performative act that involves and overwhelms every sense. The pictures are born from sweat, from movement, from tension. The photographer acts, labours, moves his hands with skill to write with light: the vision becomes muscle, transforming into craft and necessity. He himself is that running wheel, skidding, seeking purchase and simultaneously denying it. For D'Agostin, photography is an obsession that fearlessly traverses reality. When the world slows down, he observes. No one sees, but he keeps looking, in that apparent stillness. It is there that his thought takes shape: an instant suspended between what still inhabits the darkness of the mind and what is finally about to become light. D'Agostin captures it, gives it body, and makes it a picture.

ACT III – THE WEIGHT OF LIGHT

It is in light that everything is accomplished, and it is in light that this journey concludes: a young diver, almost dissolved in the dazzling reflections on the sea. Time is stretched. The flight is not the end, but a goal toward "higher conquests", suspended in an instant. His body seems to become a cross, an evanescence, an echo, a vision. Renato D'Agostin's photography, now more than ever, does not describe the real: it reinvents it. Every picture is a fissure in the visible, a passage through which reality is transfigured and becomes vision. They are fragments of reality that turn into narrative and projections of possible memories. And only those who have truly known the darkness – the interior kind, and that of the darkroom – can intuit what it means to perceive the weight of light. His black and white, sharp and profound, is an ancient language, made of intuitions and revelations, where the visible becomes elemental and dissolves into poetry. He has learned the value of subtraction, the power of silence. He has allowed the light to "be his guide" and the "darkness to accompany him" in his way of seeing the world, as John Berger says ["Every image embodies a way of seeing. Light doesn't reveal an absolute truth but rather guides our perspective"]. And, without realising it, he has become a master of light, who must love and frequent the dark, because he knows that every authentic image is born there: in the blind spot.

RENATO D'AGOSTIN

Renato D'Agostin (Venice, 1983) began his career as a photographer in Venice, captivated by the city's atmosphere, which fuelled and magnified his curiosity for capturing particular, almost surreal, life situations. In 2005, he attended the Fine Print course at the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York, and in 2006, he became the assistant to the legendary American photographer Ralph Gibson. In 2007, he showcased his first project, Metropolis, at the Leica Gallery in Soho, New York. Further exhibitions presented his projects in the following years across the United States, Europe, and Asia.

Over the years, his works have been acquired by numerous public collections, including The Phillips Collection and the Library of Congress (Washington D.C.), Maison Européenne de la Photographie and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris), the International Center of Photography (New York), and LACMA (Los Angeles). In 2016, at the Condé Nast Gallery in the Freedom Tower, New York, he presented 7439, a photographic series captured during a 7,439-mile journey across the United States on his 1983 BMW motorbike.

In 2017, Carnegie Hall in New York hosted an exhibition of his series The Beautiful Cliché – Venice, a project where D'Agostin challenges the typical imagery associated with the lagoon city, offering a fresh interpretation of the place that first made him discover the magic of photography. By removing subjects from their immediate reality, Renato D'Agostin describes his perception of the space around him, the relationship between architecture and the human being, offering a new portal into the viewer's imagination.

After a 13-year career operating out of his Brooklyn studio in New York, D'Agostin chose to return to Italy in 2018 for his new project, Harmony of Chaos. He established his studio in a warehouse in the Venetian countryside, allowing him to create a darkroom capable of producing gelatin silver prints up to two metres in size.



“In my photographs, I will speak to you of what, through my eyes, is seduction – a concept that, for me, derives from the verb phainô, the ancient Greek meaning of which is ‘to show’, ‘to manifest’.

I will show you the breathing of that subtle and elusive body I call Light, which I delicately make dance upon the photographic paper, leveraging my primitive sensitivity and manual skill.

As a demiurge of myself, I live by breathing the red light of the darkroom, which envelops me as I strive to represent my intimate distance. I journey within the grandeur of the reality of proportions.

I have crossed the ocean to lose myself and find myself again, between the white of the White Sands and the black of the asphalt beneath the wheels of my motorbike.”

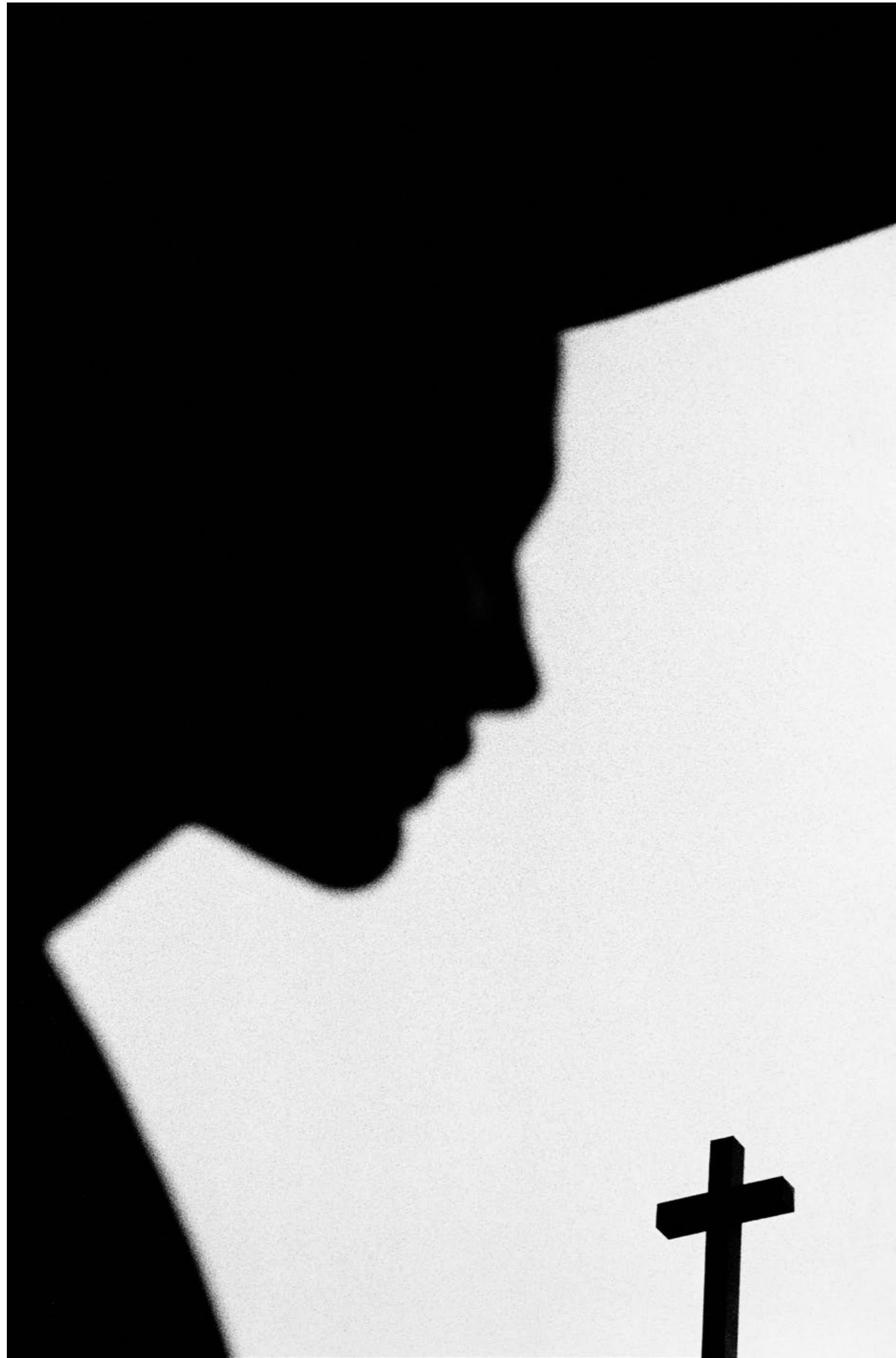
Renato D’Agostin

ACT I

ORIGIN IN THE DARKNESS



HAVE A DREAM.





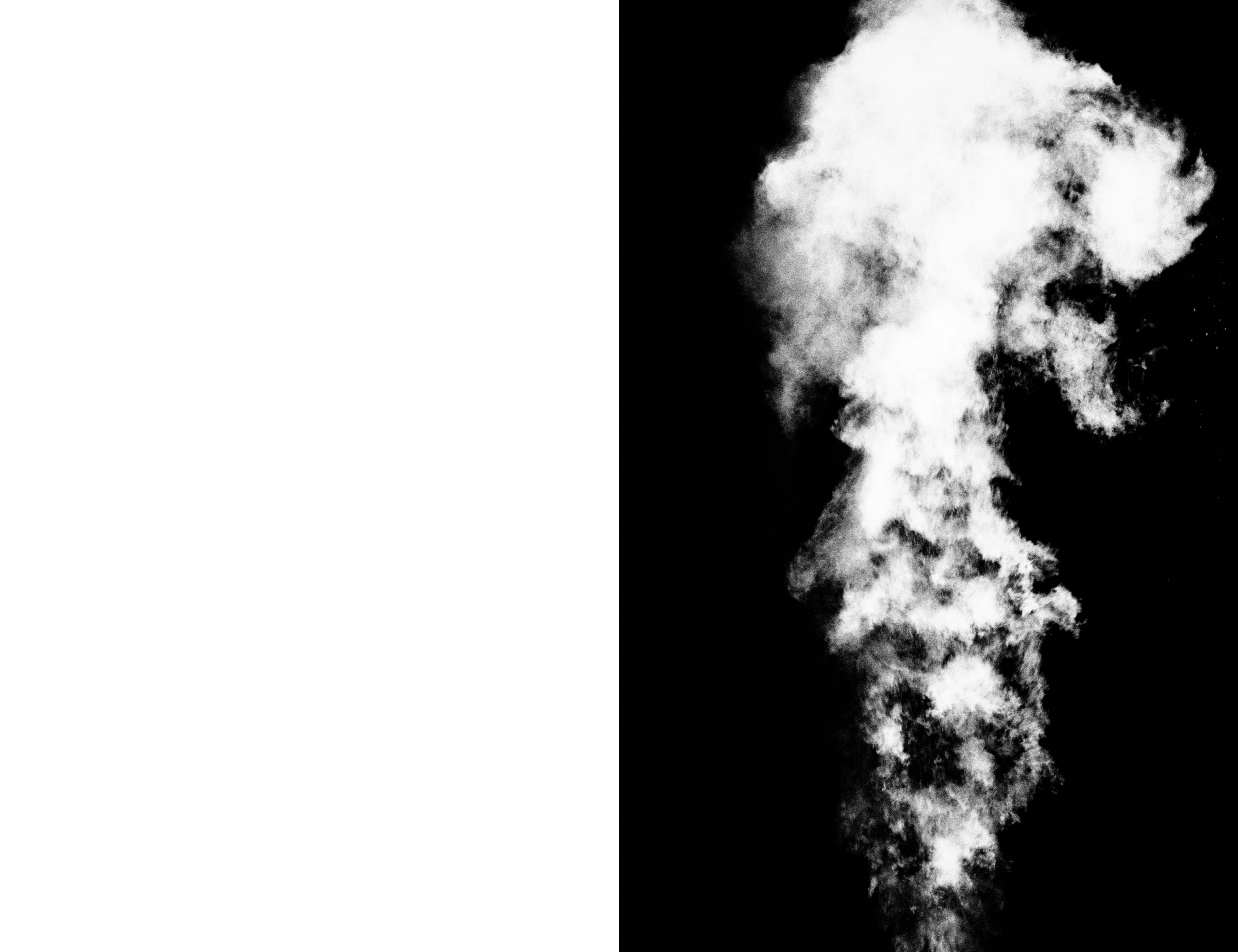


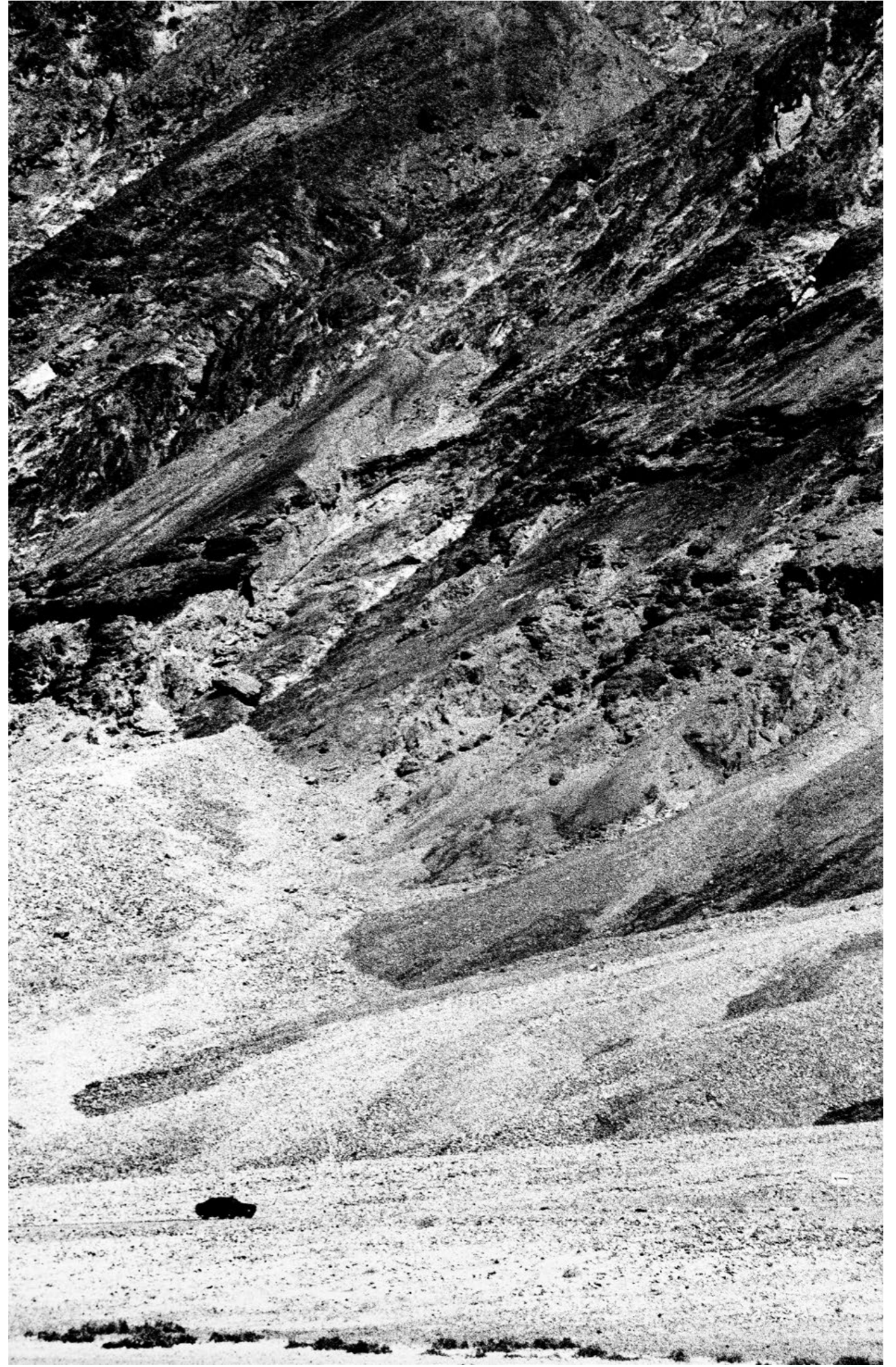
ACT II

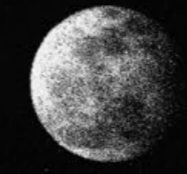
BECOMING LIGHT









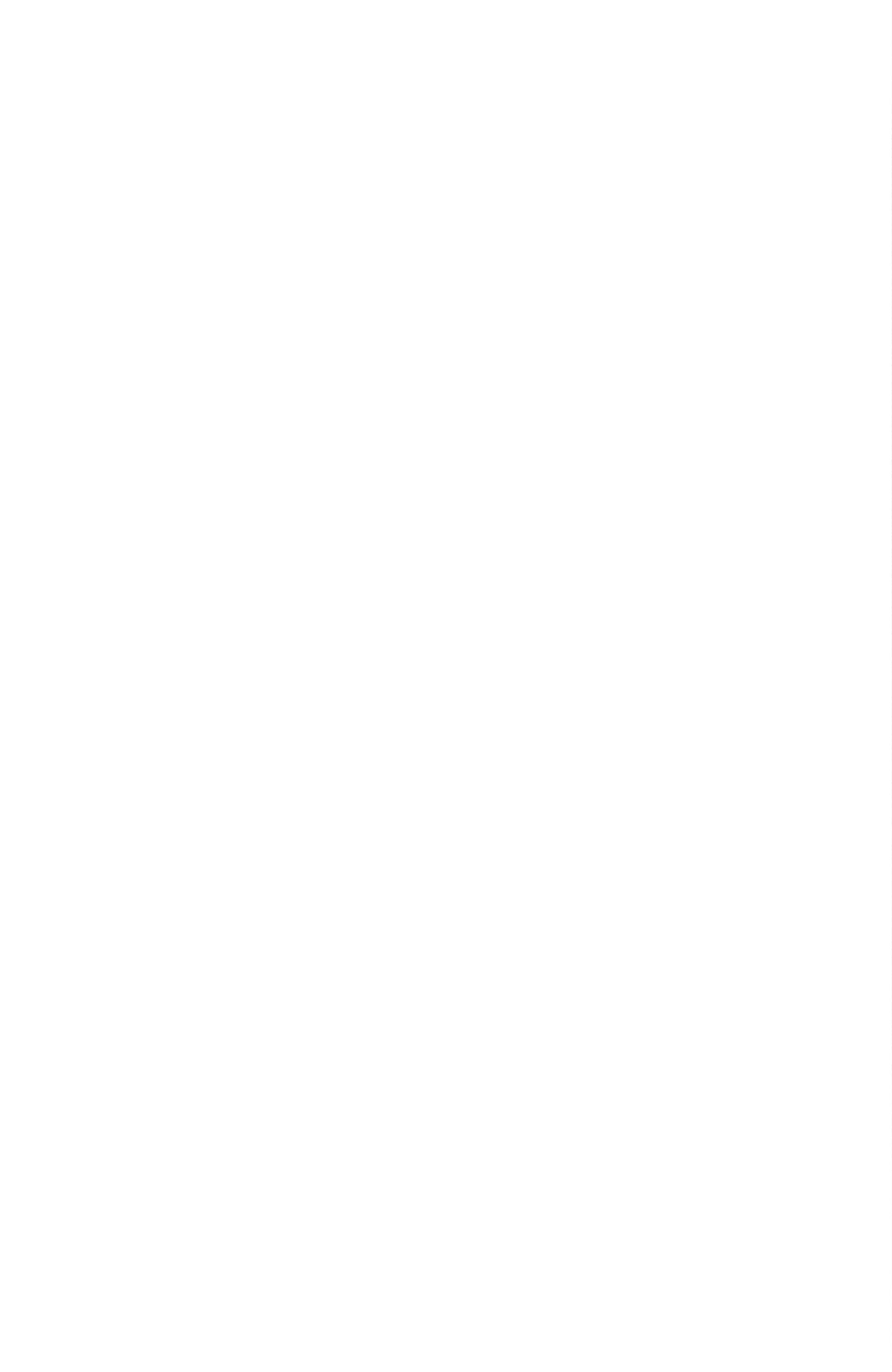


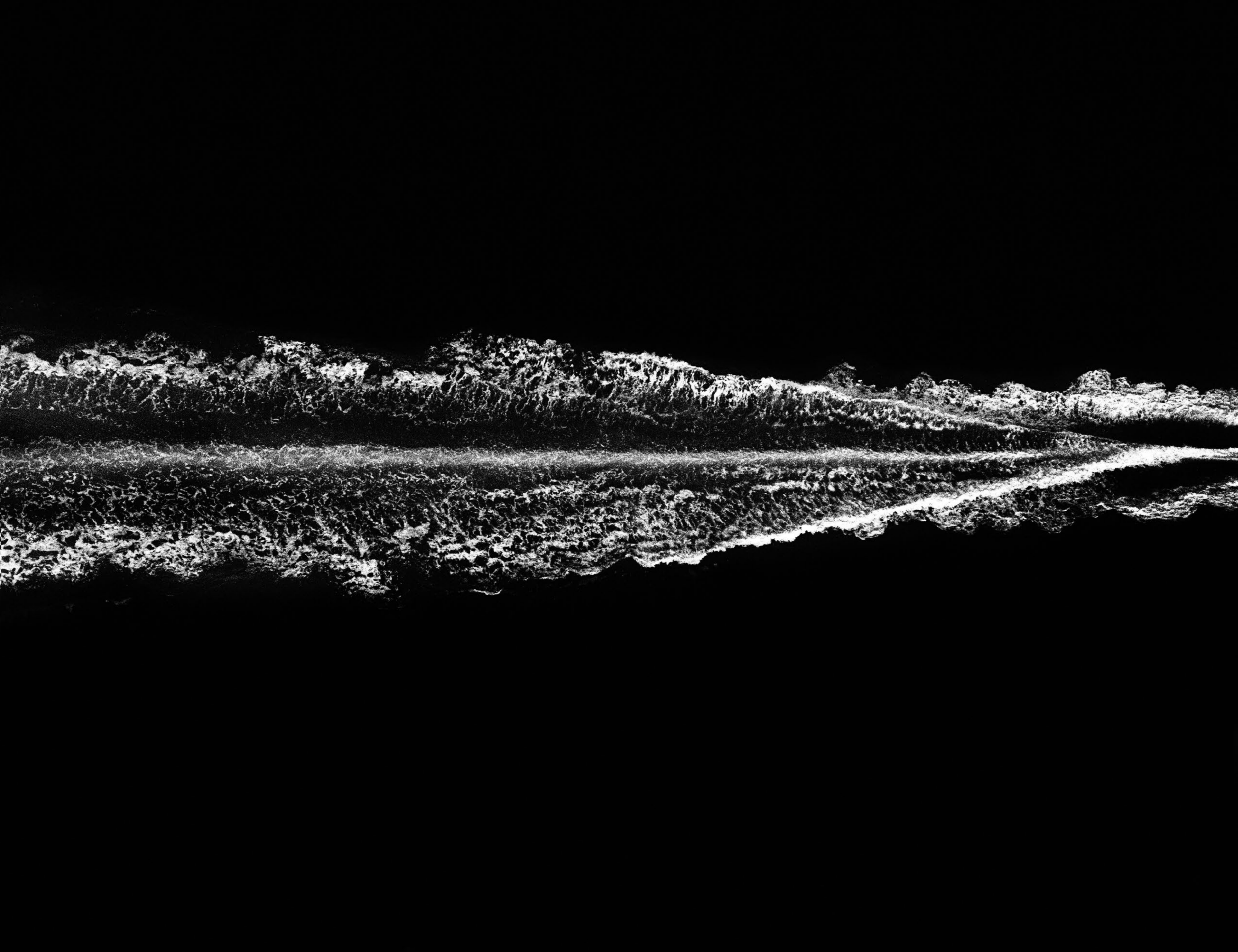
MOTEL

ACT III

THE WEIGHT OF LIGHT













7439
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
Alabama
2015



7439
Houston
Texas
2015



7439
Texas
2015



7439
Monument Valley
Arizona
2015



Archaeologies: Los Angeles
Los Angeles
2013



7439
Orderville
Utah
2015



The Beautiful Cliché
Venezia
2010



7439
Las Vegas
Nevada
2015



7439
Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Indiana
2015



7349
Death Valley
California
2015



Archaeologies: Los Angeles
Los Angeles
2013



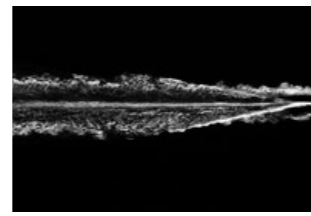
7439
Niagara Falls
New York
2015



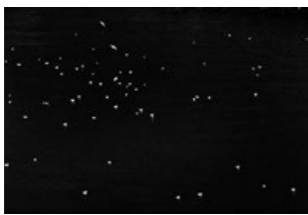
7439
White Sands
New Mexico
2015



The Beautiful Cliché
Venezia
2010



The Beautiful Cliché
Venezia
2010



7439
Niagara Falls
New York
2015



Archaeologies: Istanbul
Istanbul
2013

Curated by Claudio Composti
Contemporary Art Gallery
Artistic Project Direction Serena Cassissa
Photos courtesy of Renato D'Agostin

Design as connection, origin and vision
a culture that expresses a sense of global unity.

MODULNOVA

