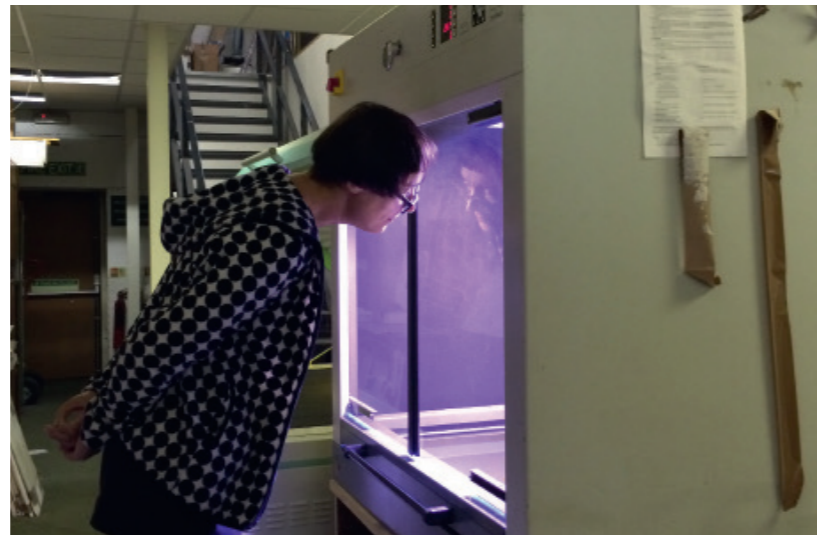


Cornelia Parker

**One Day This Glass Will Break**

Alan Cristea Gallery



## Conversation between Cornelia Parker, Pete Kosowicz and Helen Waters, 13 August 2015

**HW** This is the first time the two of you have worked together – how has it been?

**PK** Fantastic!

**CP** Great, we love it, we're like two kids in a playground.

**HW** Pete, how do you find working with artists such as Cornelia? Do they ever surprise you, shock you or inspire you?

**PK** Always. Definitely inspire and surprise. It takes quite a lot to shock me, but there's still time!

**HW** Do you ever learn anything?

**PK** Yes, always. You might often nurture some kind of preconceived idea of what an artist will do before they come and that rarely happens. They always decide to do something else. Once you get over the initial disappointment that your idea isn't going to be realised, you see that the artist has come up with a much more interesting solution, or a way to find a relationship with the medium, and that's where it's very exciting.

**HW** Cornelia – you have developed two new bodies of work here at Thumbprint. I'd like to talk about them in turn, discussing the subject matter, the technique, and how you feel it relates to your wider practice. The first series is the photogravures of the found objects.

**CP** I use the found object in my work all the time, so that is where I decided to start with the printing process. For some years I've been trying to take the recognisable, very familiar everyday object and push it to a point of abstraction. Looking through my collection of stuff I found this skull and crossbones concertina paper decoration, leftover from my daughter's Halloween party. It had been lying around my studio and I'd been contemplating using it for a while. It's a white paper foldout streamer, and a 2D object, but also 3D object at the same time. I took the streamer and placed it directly onto a prepared polymer plate and unfolded the concertina, so the two skull and crossbones sat directly on the plate and the concertina was slightly unfolded in the air. My first desire was to squash it, because my first desire is always to squash everything, but Pete and I had this dialogue about whether it should be squashed or not, as there's usually a glass plate that gets clamped over the top...



Henry Fox Talbot  
**Articles of Glass**  
1844

**PK** Yes, you usually place the glass on the top to get a good contact. We use it for photo-etching to get a crisp, hard edge.

**HW** So you didn't use the glass plate?

**CP** We decided not to use it realising in the end that what I liked was the wonderful three-dimensional effect you get with the shadows, so at each end the skull and crossbones are in focus where they are in contact with the plate, and in between it's blurred and shadowy like an x-ray... (cat. 52)

**PK** It's because the light can bleed underneath the raised object where it isn't in contact with the plate – the light can get in underneath it, soften all the edges. It's basically casting a shadow from the overhead lights.

**CP** It's a sort of shadowy positive of itself. In the past I had made photograms of a light bulb on a piece of photographic paper, and that has a reverse effect, it's mostly black but white where the bulb has stopped out light from the paper. With this series, I had these two beautiful spent light bulbs, giant theatre lights which I brought back in my suitcase from Leipzig years ago, and they've been hanging around waiting to be used ever since. So we placed one of these directly on the photogravure plate, and exposed it to UV light, this was the first object we tried and it came out beautifully (cat. 25). It has detail where it sits nearest the plate and the rest of it has this abstract floating quality. And because the object is sitting

at a slight angle on the plate it has this dynamism. Then I got excited about the idea of experimenting with lots of different transparent objects. I went back home and dug out my well-thumbed book on Henry Fox Talbot, who made early photogravures by laying bits of lace, leaves, flat objects onto sensitised plates. He really struggled to try and capture images of three-dimensional objects using a camera obscura, which led to him discovering a way to make photographic negatives. I love his photographs of still lifes, particularly his *Articles of Glass*. Way back in 1993 at the Grassi Museum in Leipzig I made a work in homage to him entitled *Another Matter* where I installed glass shelves in the windows on either side of a large room and filled them with a collection of glass vessels, bottles and glasses. The objects were filled with red wine on the topmost shelves, becoming gradually watered down until the bottom shelf where they were only filled with water. So for this series of prints I found myself inspired to collect glass objects again, coming into Pete's studio every day with a new jug or wine decanter, saying look at this!



**Another Matter**  
1993  
Water, wine, glass vessels, glass shelves  
Installation in 20 windows,  
Grassi Museum, Leipzig

**PK** It was quite a collection, all laid out there on the table for a while.

**CP** I had found a cut glass lemonade jug and had this idea of putting ice in it. We put the jug on its side and the ice spilled out and it slid all over the plate. It went everywhere but we went ahead and exposed it anyway. Because the exposure of UV light over the object takes approximately five minutes, you get these amazing gradating black marks left by the ice cubes. When printed the plate shows them melting – you get the rings of the melt (cat. 30).

**PK** Because the polymer is water soluble until it is exposed to the UV light. So in this case the plate was dissolving as the light was hardening it. Both things were going on at the same time.

**HW** So it's a kind of experiment with time.

**CP** It's capturing the passage of time as the ice melts, and as the plate erodes.

**HW** So are you going to do more experimentation with liquids?

**CP** Definitely! I've bought a glass bottle in the shape of a gun, which is meant to house tequila. I want to lay this glass gun on the plate with one shot of tequila in it and remove the stopper so it dribbles out. So we get a 'shot', slowly leaving the gun, a kind of perverse pun (cat. 37). Somehow I've seemed to have made a lot of work using guns and bullets over the years...

**HW** The second series you are thinking of relates to your piece *Thirty Pieces of Silver*.

**CP** Silver is a material I have been involved with for a long time ever since I made an large installation called *Thirty Pieces of Silver* way back in 1988–89. Over the years I've made various pieces using squashed silver plate; I killed off the silver robbing it of its function, then resurrected it. About 20 odd years ago, on an expedition down Brick Lane Sunday market, I came across these amazing 10" x 12" glass photographic negatives of silverware that had been taken in the 60s for a Spink's auction catalogue. I never really knew what to do with them and the boxes of plates were just languishing in the studio gathering dust. Here's me squashing silver and there they are, the negatives, another kind of flattened silver sitting dormant in their glassine sleeves. Then when I started focusing on glass objects, and thinking more and more about Fox Talbot, I remembered them. They were found objects too, so rather than using them as a photographic glass plate to print from, I focussed on the physicality of the actual plate itself. With photogravure we are using a technique where you get a positive image of the negative, so they still remain negative and you get them encased in their glassine bags with all their wrinkles, tears and moirés. They also bear the scribbled notes the photographer made about what their exposure should be. There are three layers of time in the prints, the age of the antique objects, the 1960s when the photographic negatives were taken, and

the present, when they are being made into photogravures (cats. 1–21). Some of the glass negatives are broken which leads to double exposures.

**PK** We've just done one, haven't we? Where they overlap you get the double thickness of the image, but it's still kept the detail of the lowest piece which is against the plate and I think it looks really interesting...

**CP** It's nice because you've got a photograph of something, a silver object, but it's now a glass object, and it's been snapped and it's in a glassine bag, which in turn gets etched into the surface of a polymer plate, which gets inked and printed. So somehow it has changed medium a few times.

**HW** A lot of your work is quite transformative, isn't it?

**CP** Yes, it often goes from one state to another, there's an element of transubstantiation where one material becomes another material, metaphorically or actually. I quite like that my white paper fold out concertina streamer has now become a black inky object.

**HW** You're making an image of an image of an object.

**CP** ...which then becomes an object in its own right. It's a kind of circular process.

**PK** The glass plate is actually being used as a means of reproduction so they would have been made as part of a printmaking process...

**CP** Also I think they were made into one to one photographic prints – contacts, really highly detailed contacts, and that would have been the size they were in the catalogue; they weren't enlarged. This relates to everything I am doing at the moment in print – everything is the size it is – the scale hasn't been altered. It is what it is; it's not a depiction of something.

**PK** We're using printmaking processes to create something directly from an object.

**CP** When I first came to work with Pete, I was trying to get my head around the techniques of printmaking – we were trying to do things that were somehow at one remove, using a photographic negative and then enlarging it, and it just wasn't working. I wanted to do something in printmaking that wasn't achievable in any other medium. Like capturing ice melting on a plate; you could take a photograph of it, but it would be very different.

**PK** You couldn't capture this image in any other way.

**CP** So what we are doing is recording the chemical effects of the water on the plate – ice cubes cause the plate to react in this way. It's an image of ice cubes and yet it doesn't look

like ice cubes, because ice cubes are normally transparent rather than black. All those images look a bit odd, don't they? You're not sure exactly what you are looking at.

**PK** Yes, especially the real objects as opposed to the glass slides – they're like a dream of something – you get little bits of details and then the rest is quite fuzzy...

**HW** Because of the blurriness they do look quite ghostlike – and you have mentioned that a running theme which has developed in these series is one of mortality...

**CP** These images for some reason seem to have become a kind of vanitas, about mortality, whether it's ice cubes melting, or a candle that's gone out, or delicately balanced glasses, or broken glass... A curious series of still lifes is emerging, only they are rather animated. These themes develop when you're making the work rather than being pre-determined. I always want to be led by my intuition and the process itself, rather than the other way round. There is a little nod to Fox Talbot in the choice of objects that I am using, but they are part of a vocabulary that I had already. The ice cubes are the most exciting in a way – they are familiar objects that everyone has access to, I like the idea that you can make a print out of water!

**PK** The water is being used as an object (and a subject).

**HW** The 'spitting' pieces for me do seem to relate quite strongly to earlier work that you've made...

**CP** I'm always attracted to the seemingly random, not being someone who sits down and literally draws. I am drawn to things in life that are made by accident or not too consciously, those that you can't have too much control over. This is what's so great about ice slipping across a plate – you can't control how the ice is going to behave. My intention got the ice to be there in the first place, but once it's there it's allowed to do what it wants. Spitting's very much like that – so I have been spitting shots of tequila onto a plate (cats. 49–51).

**PK** Spit bite is an etching term, I think that is what you said inspired you. If you paint a sugar lift design on plate, once it dries you cover the whole thing in a spirit-based varnish, then once that's dry you can put the plate into a bath of warm water and the original drawing will dissolve, lift up the varnish and expose the copper there. The spitting series is the same thing – it's just the method of application that is different!

**HW** Yes, slightly different! Does the saliva help?

**PK** Well spit bite did used to contain saliva originally and it helped the acid congeal and coagulate. People usually just painted acid neatly onto a plate but the spit did affect the way the acid bit into the plate.

**CP** I'd rather spit tequila!

**PK** Now you're talking... you're not allowed to drink it though!

**CP** I like the idea of spitting alcohol, a few gobs, a noble punk technique. The result looks great, very gestural, like abstract expressionist mark making. What is curious is over the time of the five minute exposure of the plate the tequila has evaporated at different rates giving a wonderful tonal range, and such great blacks.

**HW** Curiously when I looked at it, it reminded me of your work *Red Abstract* and *White Abstract*...

**CP** ...when I'd been dropping pigment onto glass. It's a similar thing – but this has got a bit more speed behind it. I like that velocity – it's like an outburst of anger or something. So, we have the beautiful quiet still life quality of the glass objects, and then you get to these prints; they're a bit spikier, more explosive – like sulphur.

**HW** Talking of sulphur, will there be any colour in the show?

**CP** Using transparent glass objects and black and white negatives don't naturally lend themselves to be in colour, its use at this point seems a bit gratuitous to me and I'm not sure it would add anything. What you really want to see is all the detail in glorious monochrome.

**HW** Your work often calls for collaboration with different people, such as soldiers, prisoners or scientists. Is working in a print studio any different?

**CP** If I am asking the army to blow something up for me or asking the Nobel physicist Kostya Novoselov to make graphene out of an old master drawing, then I am calling upon expertise that I don't have myself. Together we do something that we couldn't do apart. And that's the same working with Pete. I've got ideas, and Pete's got the skills, and we are combining our knowledge to see what's possible. All the collaborations are very different.

**PK** This is using science in a way too, and technology... it's like the recording of a thing...

**CP** We were talking the other day about me taking plates to the Houses of Parliament and finding a leak in a pipe and doing a series using direct leaks from inside government!

**PK** There's been a leak!

**CP** There's been an incident inside government and we're going over there today to record it with our etching plate. I quite like those silly linguistic games.

**HW** Yes, your titles are quite important to you aren't they?

**CP** They are like a diptych to the work. I've been thinking of calling this exhibition *One Day This Glass Will Break*, which is a title of a work I made years ago which took the form of a tower of glasses with the words of the title engraved on them. They were stacked really high so were more likely to fall and break. I like this as the title for the show as I am predominately using glass to explore this underlying theme of mortality and consequences.

**PK** And there will probably be some broken glasses in it.

**CP** There will definitely be some broken glasses in it. We just broke one on purpose didn't we (cat. 24)! But also I'm playing with ideas of encapsulating time, collapsing volume, transubstantiation and mutability.

**HW** I just want to finish by discussing printmaking as a medium. I like working with prints and editions as I feel they are somehow a democratic way of working with art – their very nature means there are multiples of them that can be distributed around the world. What appeals to you both about working with prints, specifically?

**PK** Well what you say about it being a democratic process is quite fundamental to me, especially when I was young and starting to do it and the tie-ins with mass media; the big world of printing. It's also got so many possibilities inherent in it, there are so many ways you can use the medium, it's full of facets to do with the timing of the effect of materials and solvents – all that kind of thing that you get a feel for, it's just constantly fascinating and interesting and it's great to work with artists that always bring something new to the debate. There is always something to be learned from it – and learning is one of the greatest joys in being alive.

**CP** I think the main attraction to printmaking is to do with the solvents myself! But seriously, I love the idea of etching and bite as an idea, acid on copper; there are some beautiful processes and friction. There's something about weight and embedding the paper into the plate itself, everything about it is really exciting and satisfying. And I too love the democracy of it, and the idea that the plate only has a certain life; that after a certain number of pulls it starts to deteriorate.

**HW** Recently you've been doing a lot of work about negatives and double negatives and I suppose there's something about printmaking that does relate to that in some way.

**CP** Like an offset? Yes, you have to think in reverse in a way, back to front. The idea of the double negative, the different layers. With these objects I'm only dealing with one plate, the layers are within the objects themselves, but there is that thing about possibly working on

different plates, or doing two or three different spits on the same plate at different times – you are collecting time and playing with time. Alchemy is probably a dirty word...

**PK** Well there's lots of chemistry in it and metalworking...

**CP** When you think about great artists like Hogarth, Blake or Dürer and their working with metal and wood. There's a physicality about prints that I really enjoy. Sculptors always like making prints. And I am attracted to metals in a big way.

**HW** And you mentioned that you are looking to do something here in this studio with printmaking that you can't achieve in any other medium.

**CP** Yes, I don't have an obvious approach to things. For example I will take the lead from a bullet drawn into wire and sew it into paper – and that's my version of drawing. I am always trying to defy gravity, to capture something elusive, ephemeral (like ice melting). There are loads of things that I want to do with print that I haven't got to yet... grinding up objects to make my own carborundum, making my own pigments for example. The more I know, the more I see the potential in print, there are so many more different ways and wherefores to explore. This show is just a glimpse.



**One Day This Glass  
Will Break**  
1997  
Six etched glasses (stacked)

**Thirty Pieces of Silver (Exposed)**



1 **Four Silver Candlesticks** 2015









4 **Silver Jug** 2015











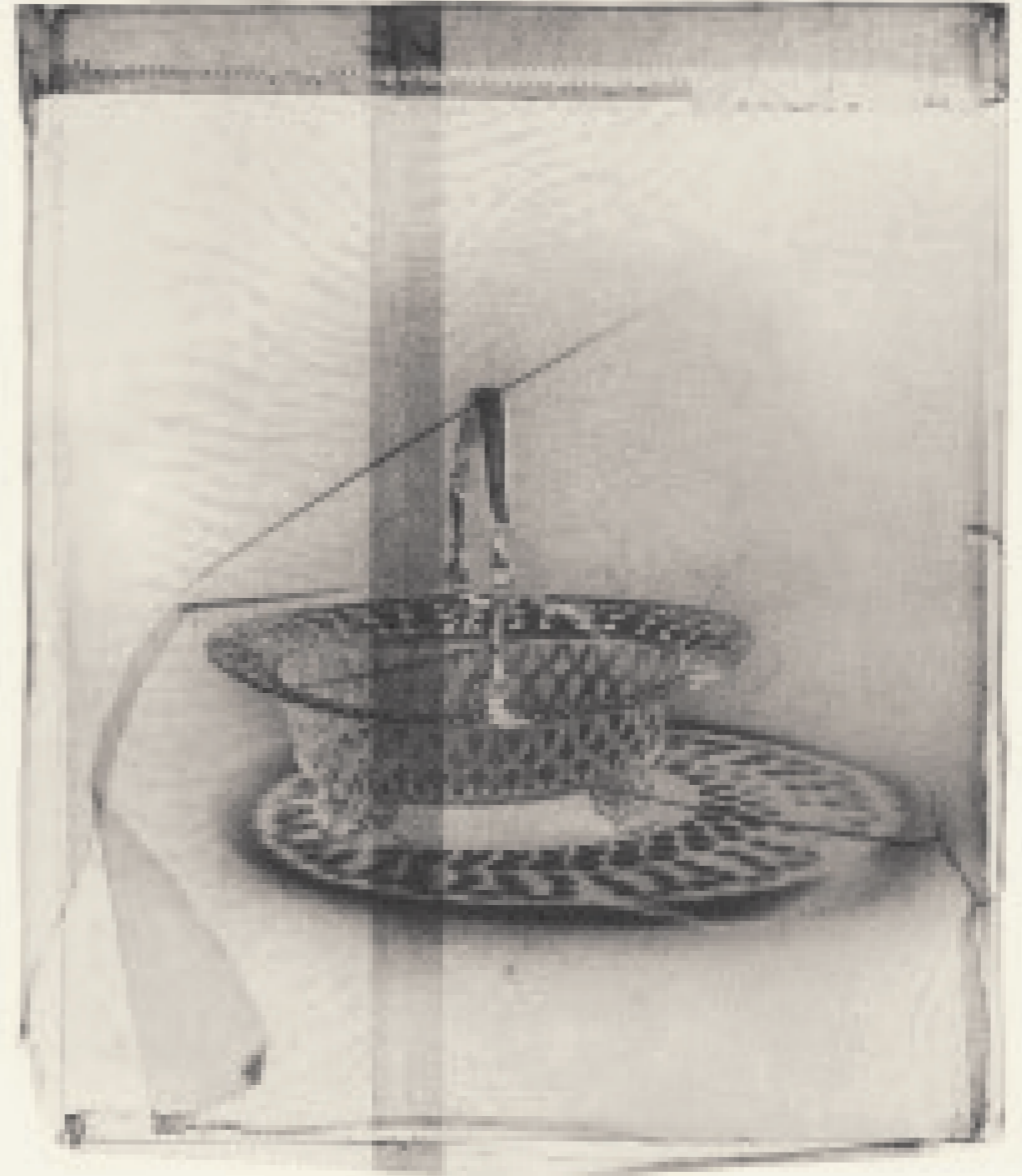


















17 **Coffee Pot Hit by a Hammer** 2015











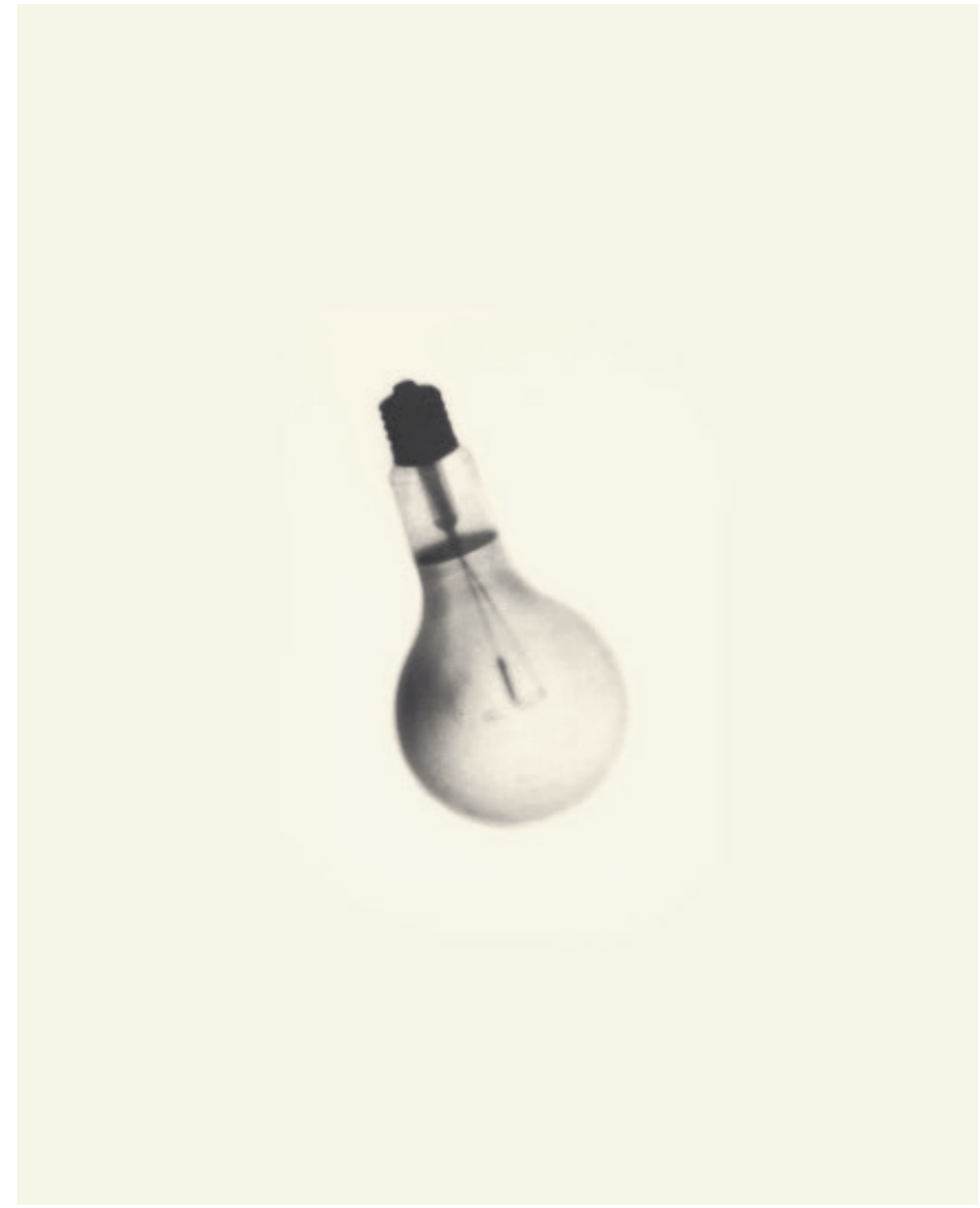
**One Day This Glass Will Break**

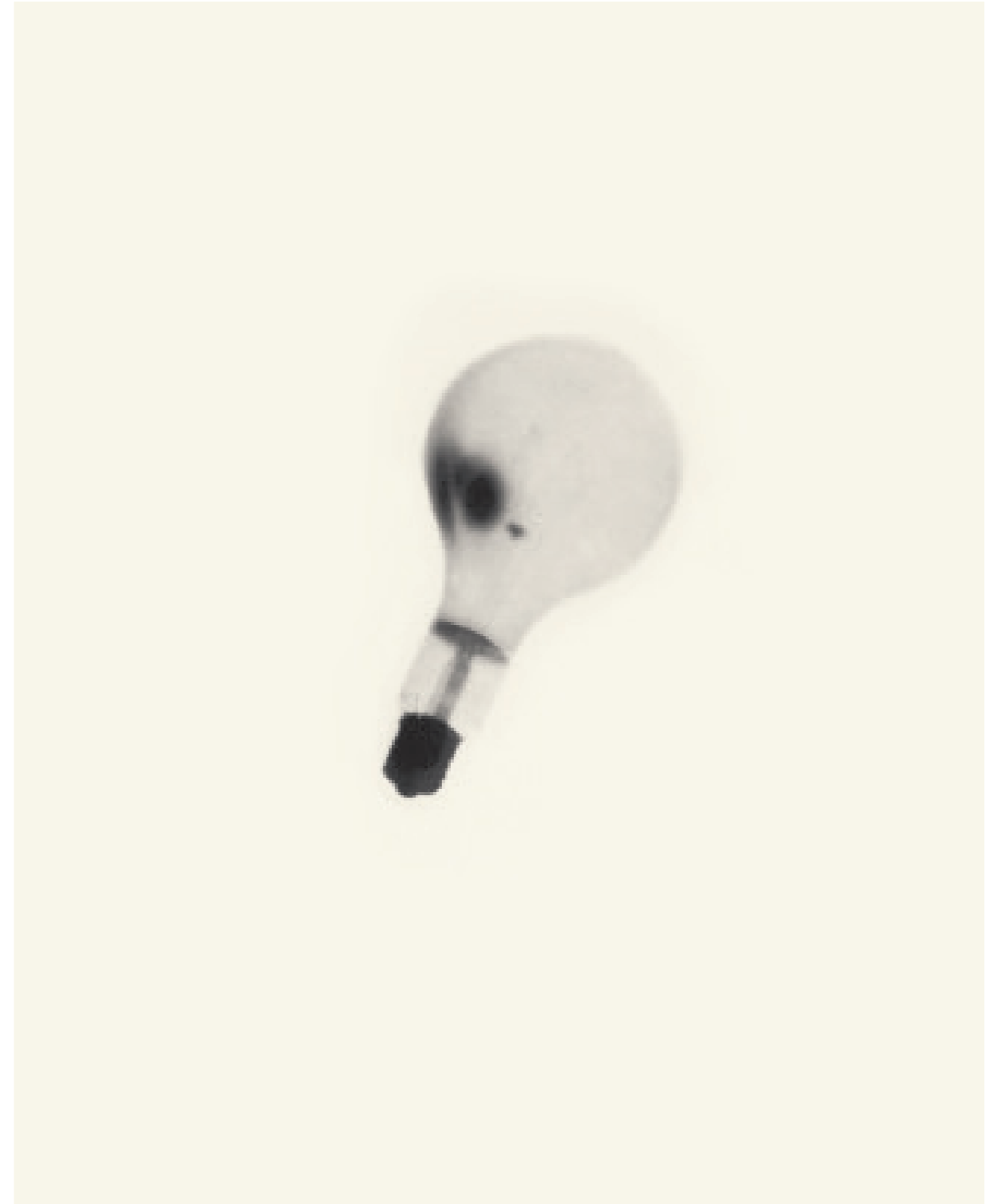
















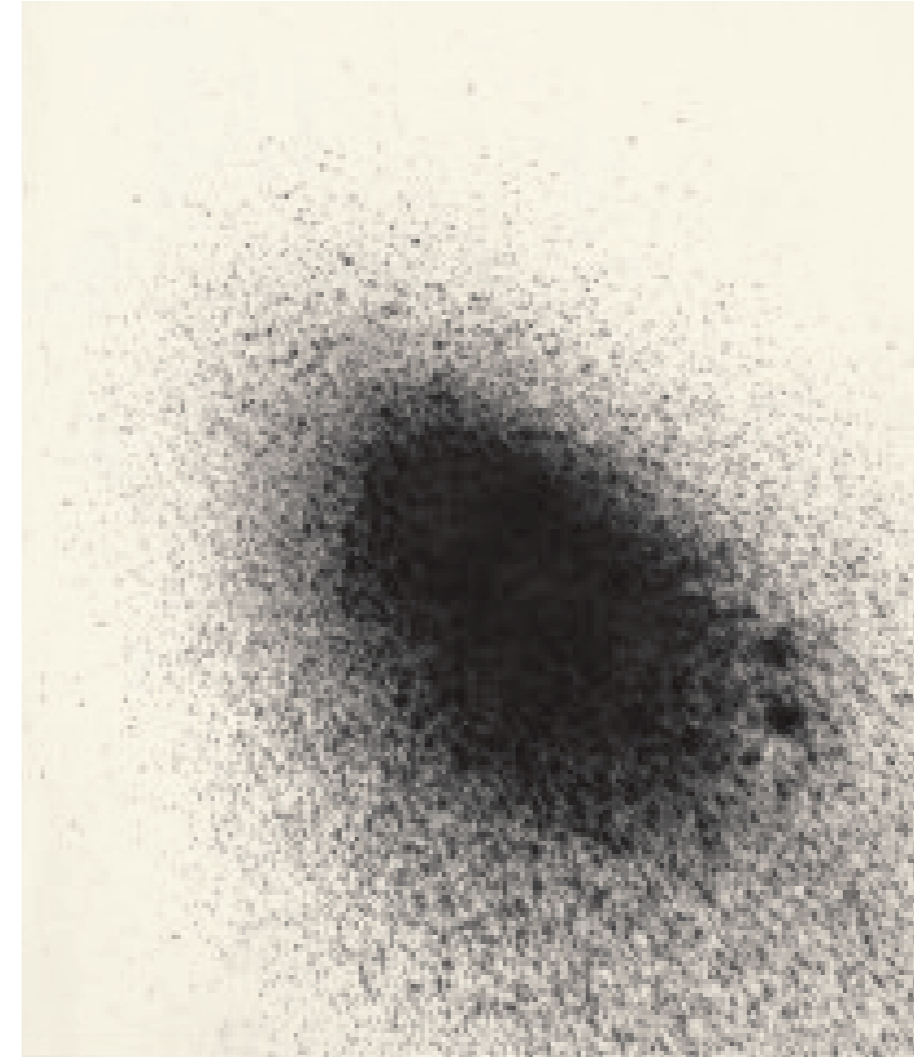


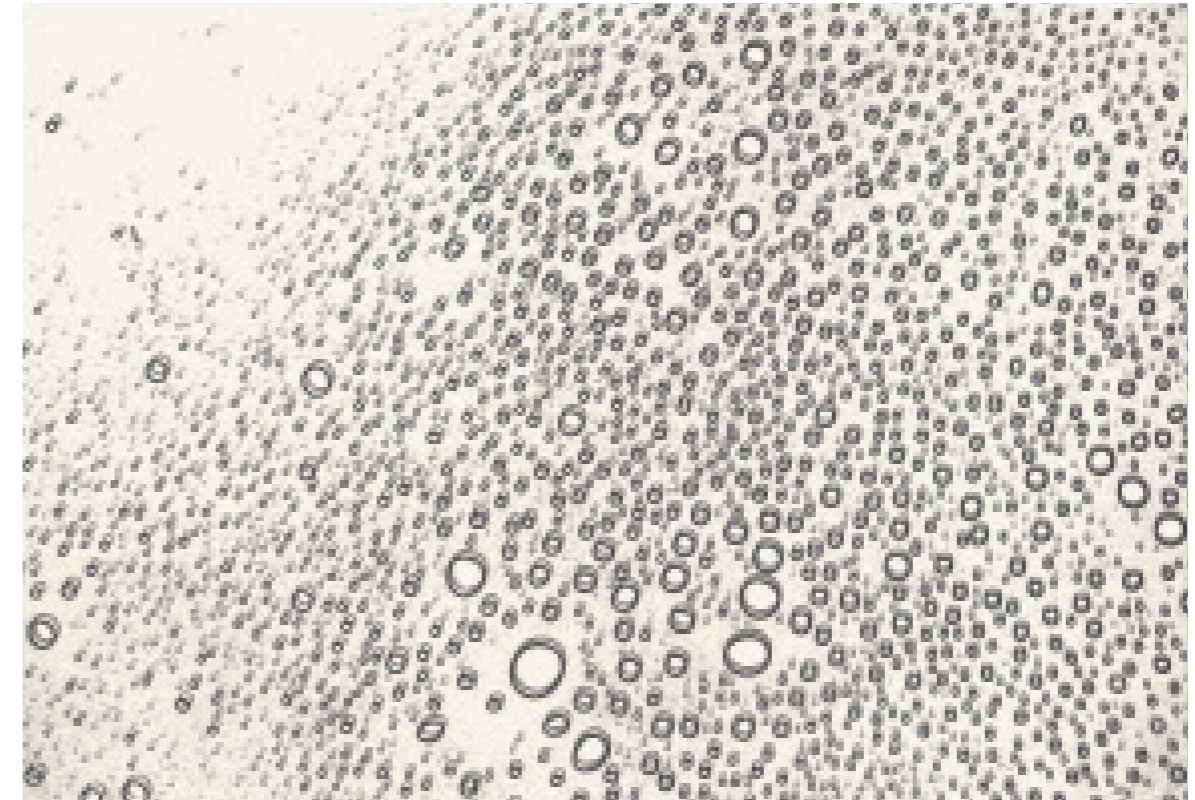


































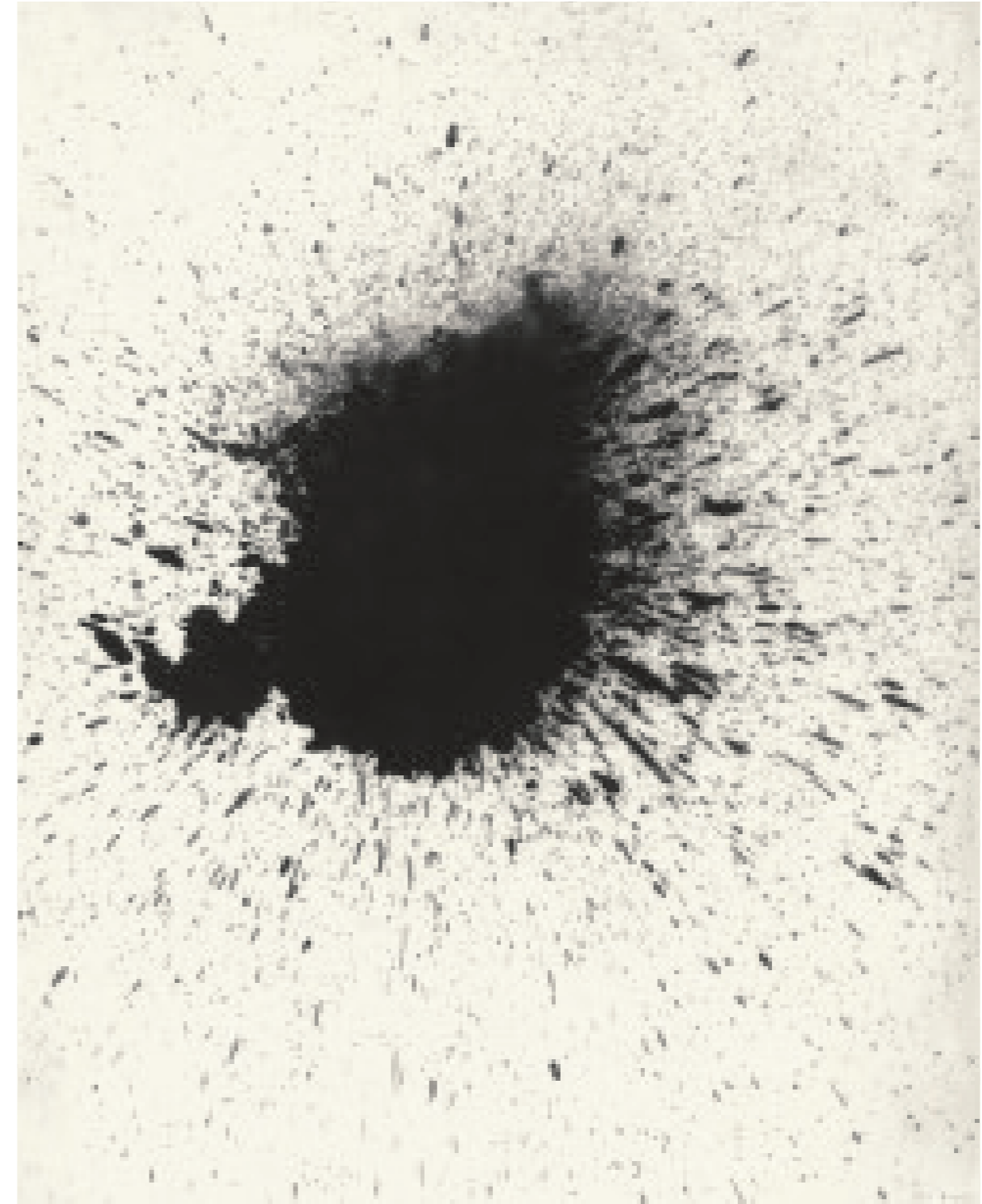


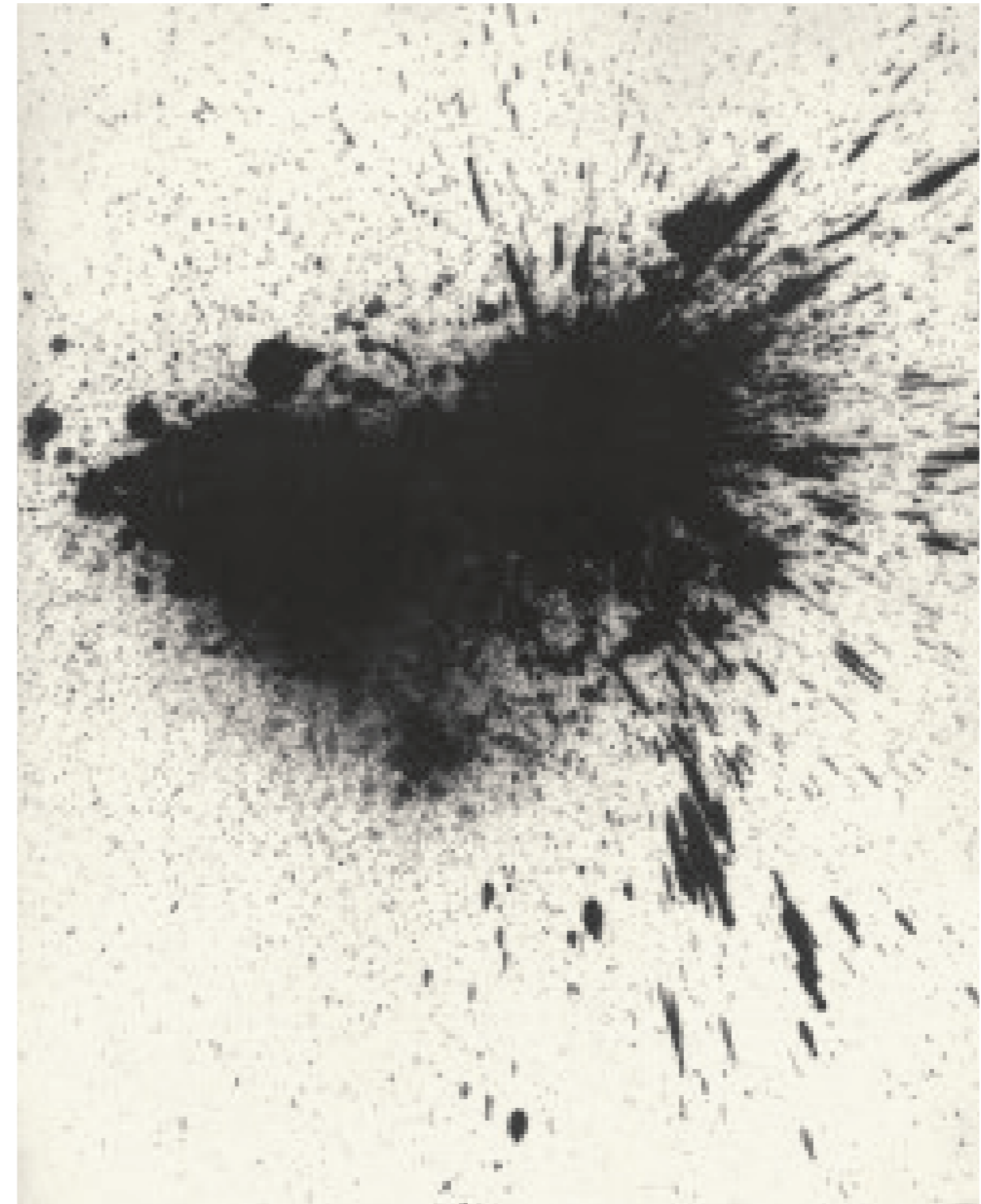


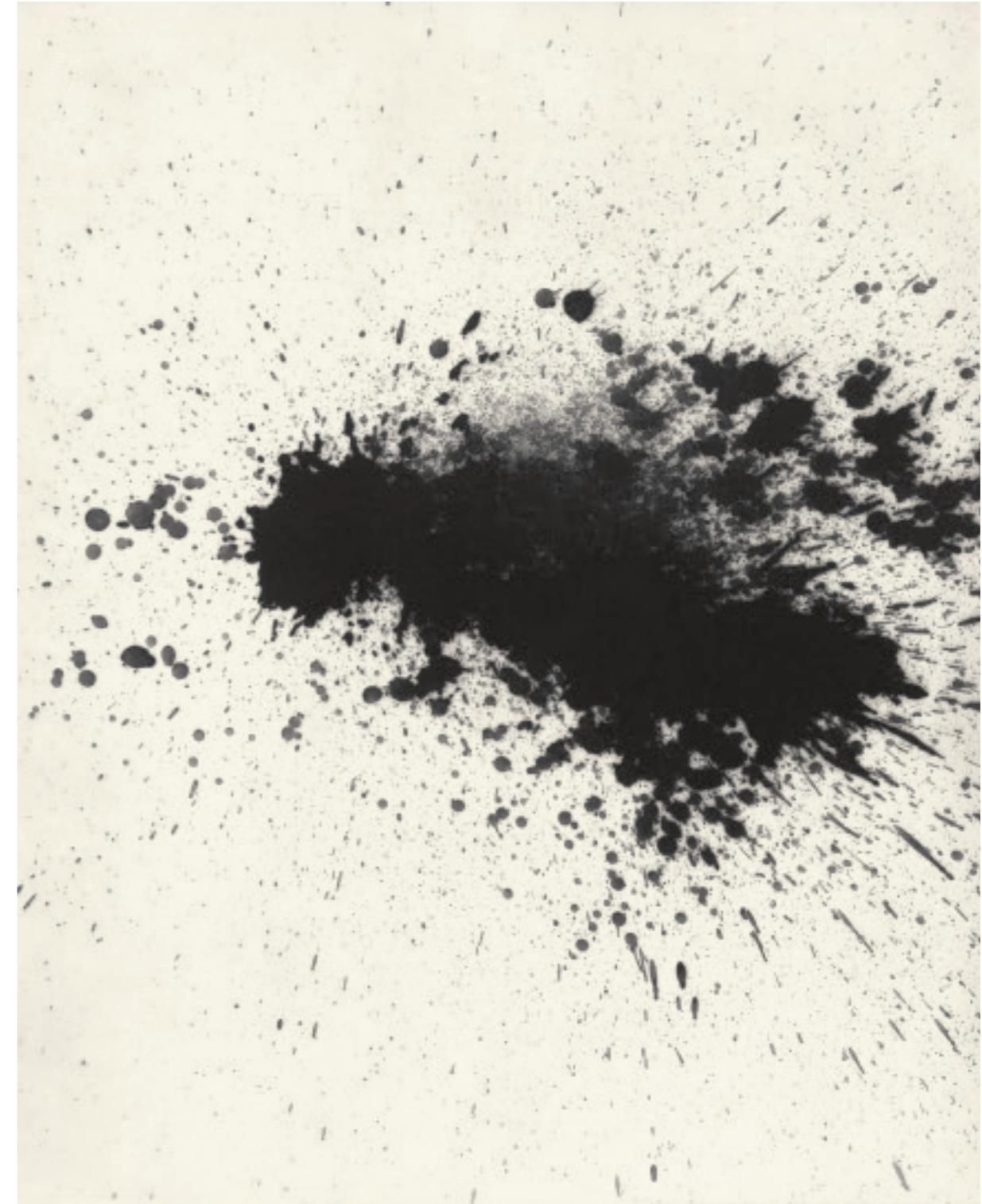


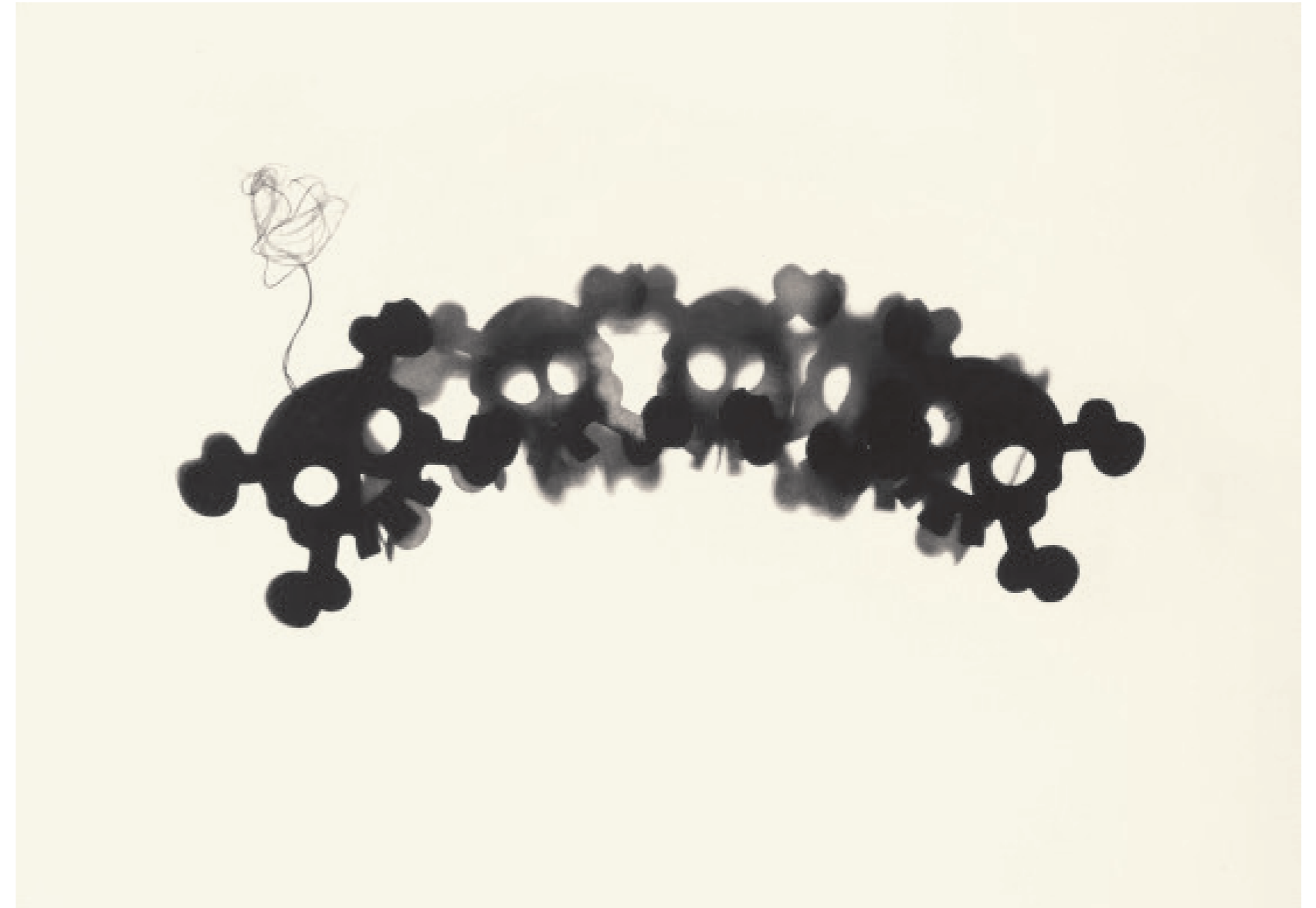












## Thirty Pieces of Silver (Exposed)

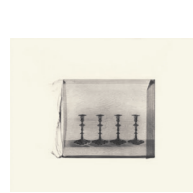
A series of 21 polymer photogravure etchings on Fabriano Tiepolo Bianco 290 gsm paper

Paper and image: 66.3 × 54.3 cm (some landscape/some portrait format)

Editions of 20 plus 5 artist's proofs and 2 printer's proofs

Published by Alan Cristea Gallery, London, 2015

Printed and proofed at Thumbprint Editions, London



1 **Four Silver  
Candlesticks**



2 **Silver Bullet  
Teapot**



3 **Jug on  
a Table**



4 **Silver Jug**



5 **Silver Sauce  
Tureens**



16 **Shadowy  
Candlesticks**



17 **Coffee Pot Hit  
by a Hammer**



18 **Silver Tankard**



19 **Broken Jug**



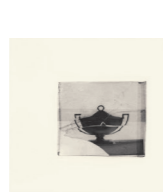
20 **Silver Tray**



6 **Silver Trophy**



7 **Silver Sauce  
Tureen**



8 **Broken Tureen**



9 **Two Silver  
Candlesticks**



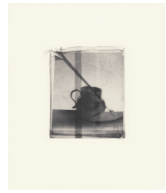
10 **Silver Sugar  
Bowl**



21 **Candlesticks  
with Slanting  
Shadows**



11 **Shadowy Pot**



12 **Broken Pot**



13 **Silver Basket**



14 **Pierced Basket**



15 **Broken Basket**

## One Day This Glass Will Break

A series of polymer photogravure etchings on Fabriano Tiegolo Bianco 290 gsm paper  
Sheet dimensions variable

Editions of 15 plus 3 artist's proofs and 1 printer's proof

Published by Alan Cristea Gallery, London, 2015

Printed and proofed at Thumbprint Editions, London



22 **One Day This  
Glass Will Break**  
72.2 x 55 cm



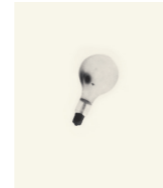
23 **Told You So**  
72.2 x 57 cm



24 **A Broken Glass**  
28.8 x 26.4 cm



25 **Spent Bulb  
Exposed by  
a Live One**  
72.2 x 58 cm



26 **An Idea**  
72.2 x 58 cm



42 **Glass Tower**  
72.2 x 58 cm



43 **Articles of  
Glass**  
79.7 x 56 cm



44 **A Few Glasses**  
47.4 x 47.4 cm



45 **A Few Glasses  
More**  
72.2 x 58 cm



46 **Still Life with  
Levitating  
Grapes**  
72.2 x 54 cm



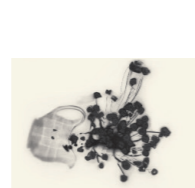
27 **Premeditated  
Act of Violence**  
72.2 x 58 cm



28 **Glass  
Candlestick**  
26 x 19 cm



29 **Black Candle**  
64 x 51 cm



30 **Jug Full of Ice**  
53 x 69 cm



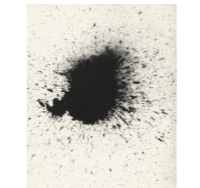
31 **Tumbler with  
Ice**  
72.2 x 58 cm



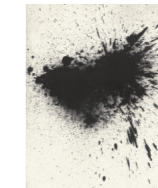
47 **A Bunch of  
Red Roses**  
72.2 x 54.5 cm



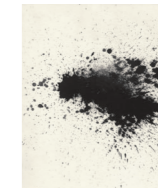
48 **Thistle from  
the North**  
70.0 x 44.5 cm



49 **A Mouthful  
of Tequila**  
72.2 x 58 cm



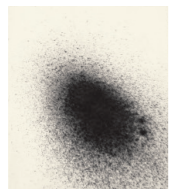
50 **Two Shots  
of Tequila**  
72.2 x 58 cm



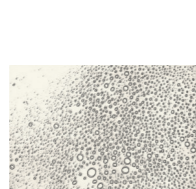
51 **Another Shot  
of Tequila**  
72.2 x 58 cm



32 **Black Ice**  
81.7 x 58 cm



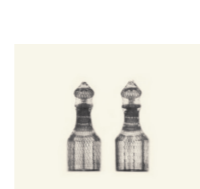
33 **A Short, Sharp  
Shower**  
35 x 30.7 cm



34 **A Few Drops**  
19.1 x 27.8 cm



35 **An Enigma**  
72.2 x 55 cm



36 **The Enigmas**  
51 x 64 cm



52 **The End**  
55.7 x 80 cm



37 **A Shot of  
Tequila**  
58 x 72.2 cm



38 **Tequila Bottle  
(Emptied)**  
54 x 75.2 cm



39 **Composition  
with Flutes**  
34.3 x 44.2 cm



40 **Jugs  
(Water & Wine)**  
58 x 60.1 cm



41 **Under the  
Influence**  
72.2 x 58 cm

## Biography

Cornelia Parker was born in Cheshire in 1956. She studied at the Gloucestershire College of Art & Design and at Wolverhampton Polytechnic before receiving her MA (Fine Arts) from the University of Reading in 1982. Her first major solo exhibition, *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, took place at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham in 1988. In 1997 she was shortlisted for the Turner Prize and in 2010 she was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts and became an OBE.

Cornelia Parker's work is held in numerous collections worldwide including Tate, MoMA, the British Council and the Yale Center for British Art. She has taken part in many exhibitions internationally: she was included in the tenth Gwangju Biennale in South Korea in 2014 and her most recent solo exhibition was at the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester in 2015. Parker was commissioned by Terrace Wires in collaboration with HSI and the Royal Academy of Arts to make *One More Time* for St. Pancras International Station, London in 2015. In the same year she also made *Magna Carta (An Embroidery)*, a commission by the Ruskin School of Art in partnership with the British Library.

Cornelia Parker would like to thank Jeff McMillan, Caroline Smith, Jane Hamlyn, Herman Lelie, Stefania Bonelli, Pete Kosowicz and the team at Thumbprint Editions, and all the team at Alan Cristea Gallery.

Published by Alan Cristea Gallery on the occasion of the exhibition

Cornelia Parker

**One Day This Glass Will Break**

12 October–14 November 2015

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p. 6, *Articles of Glass*, photography by Henry Fox Talbot  
p. 7, *Another Matter*, photography by Cornelia Parker  
p. 13, *One Day This Glass Will Break*, photography by Edward Woodman  
p. 107, *A Few Glasses More* (cat. 45), photography by Prudence Cuming Associates

Cover image: detail of *The End* (cat. 52)

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