

Hiding in Plain Sight

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Silence waited for me,
Listening before I speak.
Folding my feelings.
Hiding my voice.
Holding storms,
I should not have weathered.

I vanished before existing
was allowed.

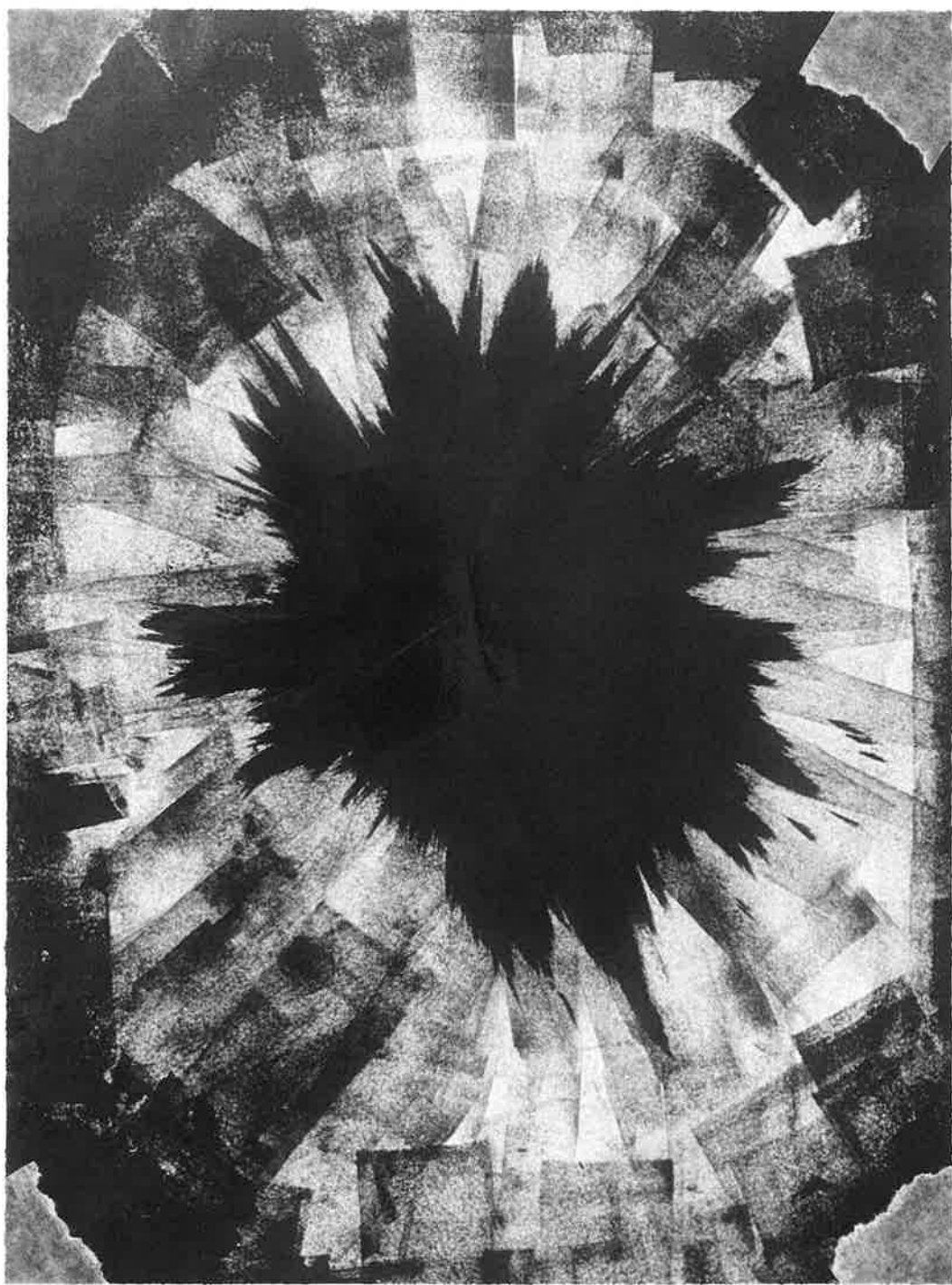
MISSING CHILDHOOD

My headline read
Fear as guidance
Responsibility as play
And silence as survival

I disappeared holding my breath,
I grew faster than I should.
Became older than I had
a right to be

Now the world trembles
Childhood lost ...
And still, the silence lurks

Around that child that was never me.



My work this year has become about translating feelings that stem from childhood trauma into something that can be witnessed in the form of painting, sculpture and materiality. I grew up as a child of divorce

[REDACTED]

in a constant state of unease and vigilance.

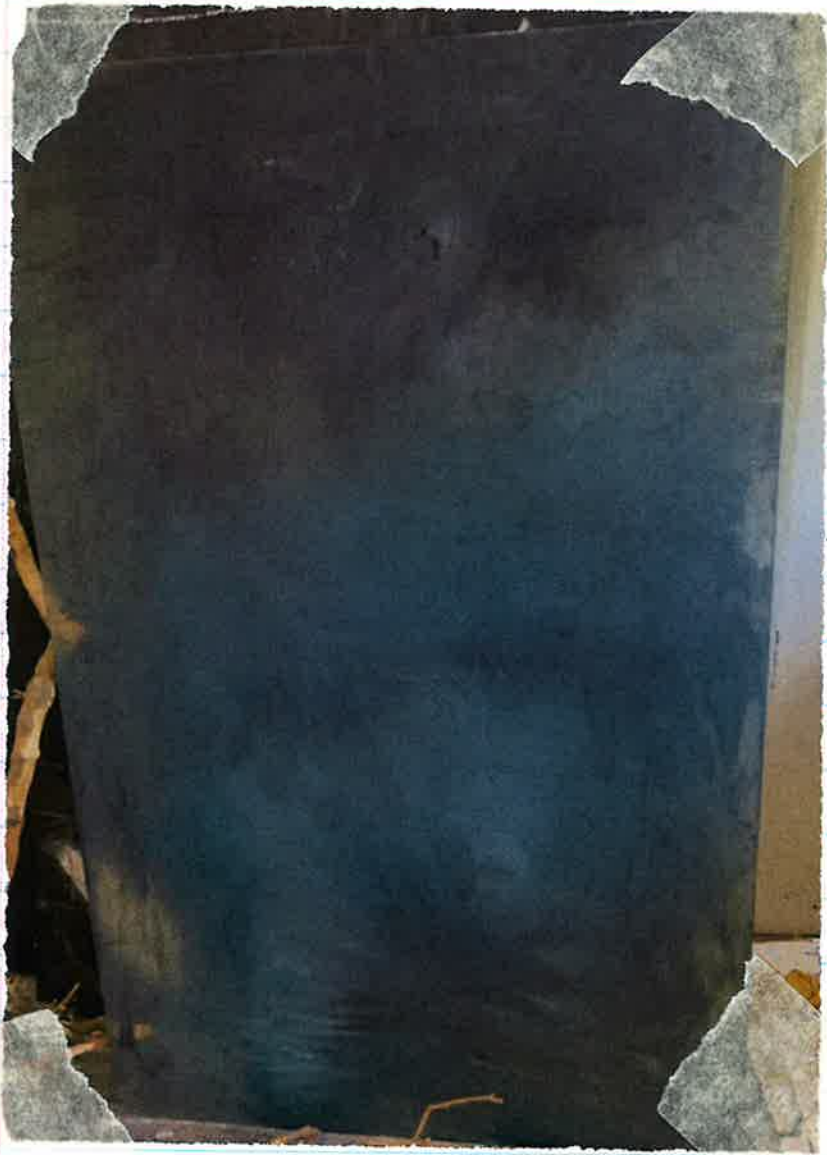
Trying to manage situations that were beyond my role as a child, became the pattern upon which my brain developed itself.



This base not only found its way into my emotional development but into my artistic practice.



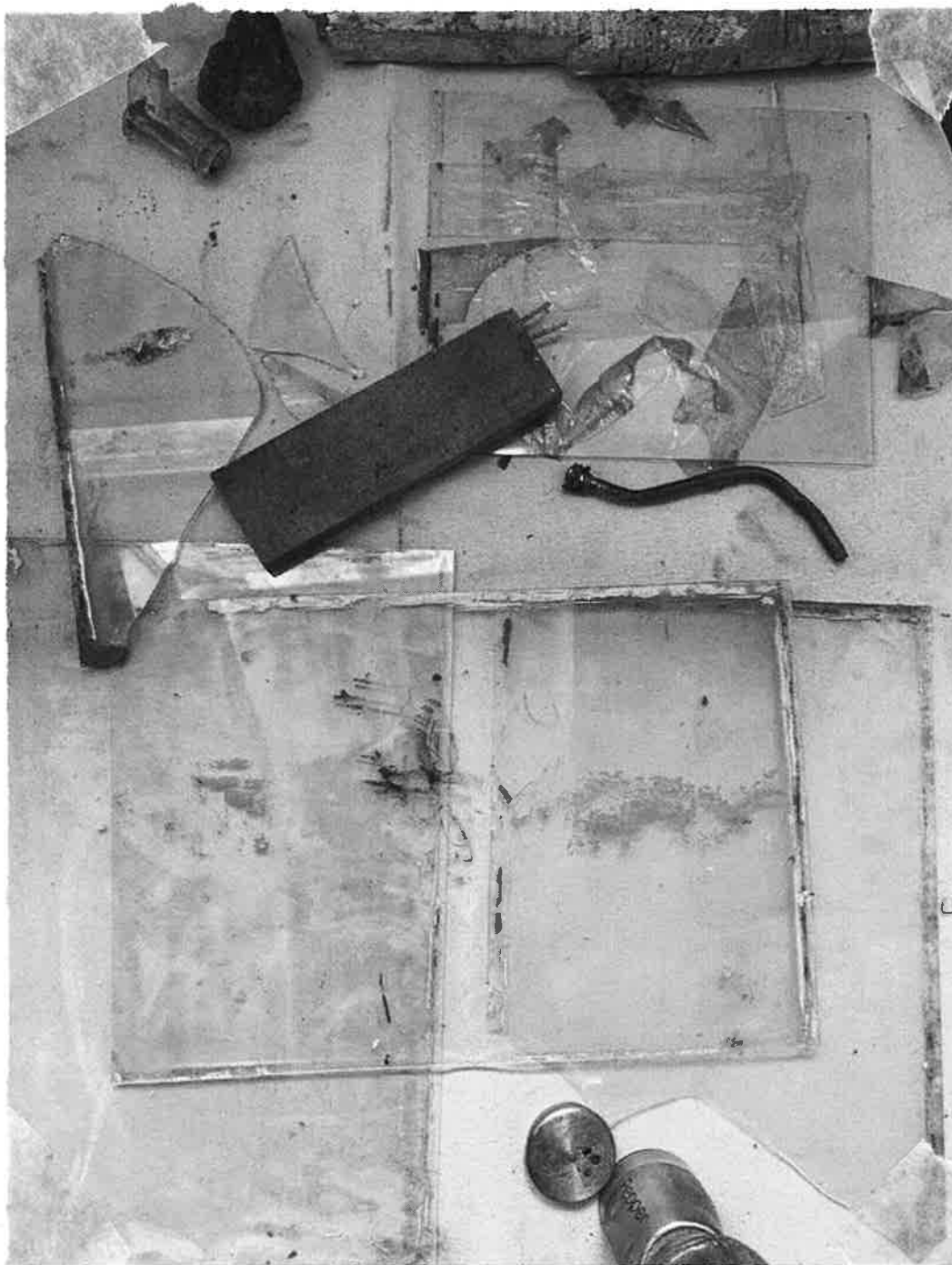
This past year I've explored these childhood feelings and experiences through a series of works that aim to



evolve the tension between the seen and unseen, silence and testimony, fragility and resilience.

I used found, discarded windows, pieces of broken glass, and a deep black solution of charcoal, printing ink and wood

glue, to create pieces that speak to these emotional states I experienced
I'm
working from a place of
stillness, I'm



those emotional traumas have continued to bubble to the surface of my consciousness my entire life. These pieces began as an attempt to process my emotional state through my work.

While

~~the work is not a direct reflection of my life~~
~~but it is a reflection of my inner world~~
~~and it is a reflection of the pain I have felt~~





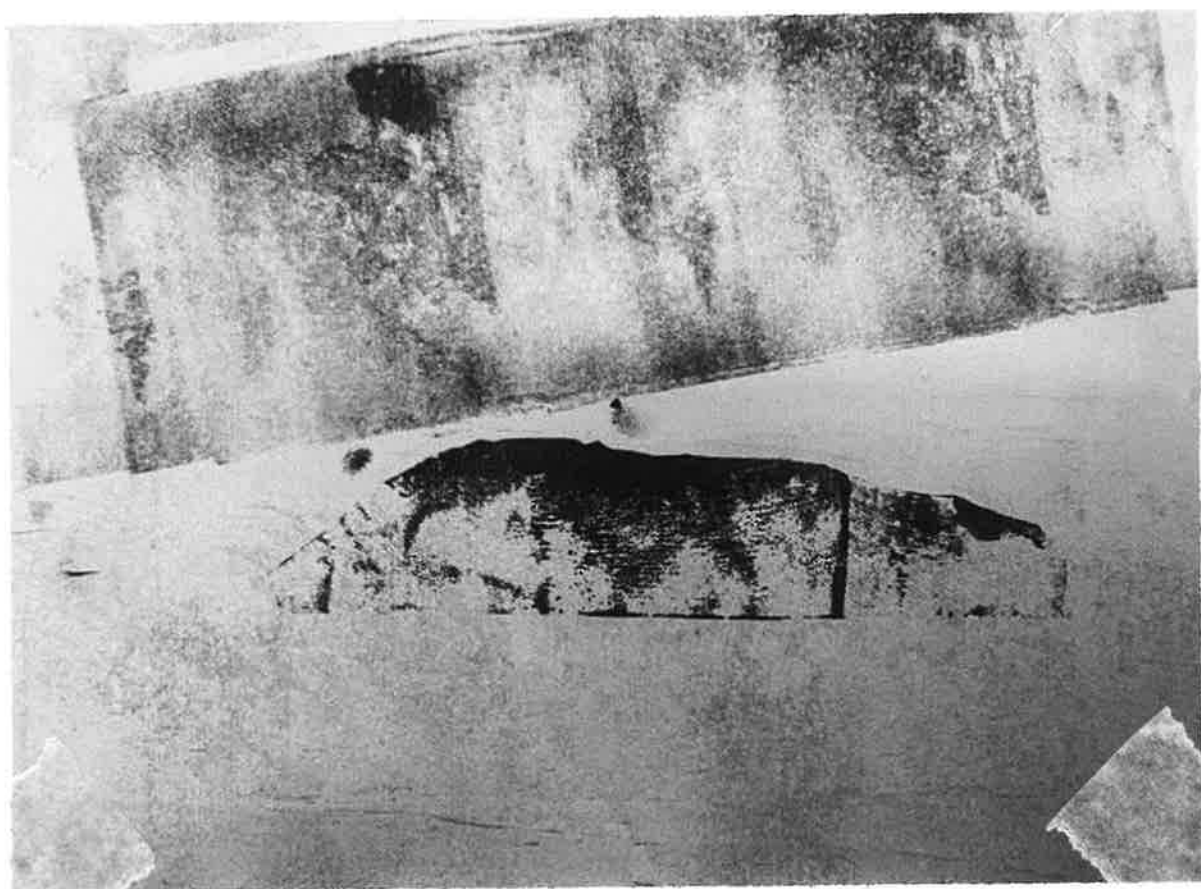
In an attempt to explore the thinking behind this practice I have selected Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* as a central theoretical framework for this essay. Cathy Caruth is a leading theorist and author in trauma



studies and states in her work *'Unclaimed Experience'* that trauma is not a singular event but also a belated experience that returns through repetition, dreams, action and other forms of manifestation.

This framework allows me to analyse my work as both a childhood testimony and material explorations of the way trauma persists and returns.

Caruth states that trauma is "always a story of a wound



that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available!" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). Caruth further states that trauma is defined by belatedness; she refers to trauma as resisting comprehension or interpretation in the moment it occurs and later returns, creating repetition of the trauma such as flashbacks or intrusive thoughts and feelings. Caruth



observes "the traumatized... carry an impossible history within them... which possesses them." (Caruth, 1996, p. 5)

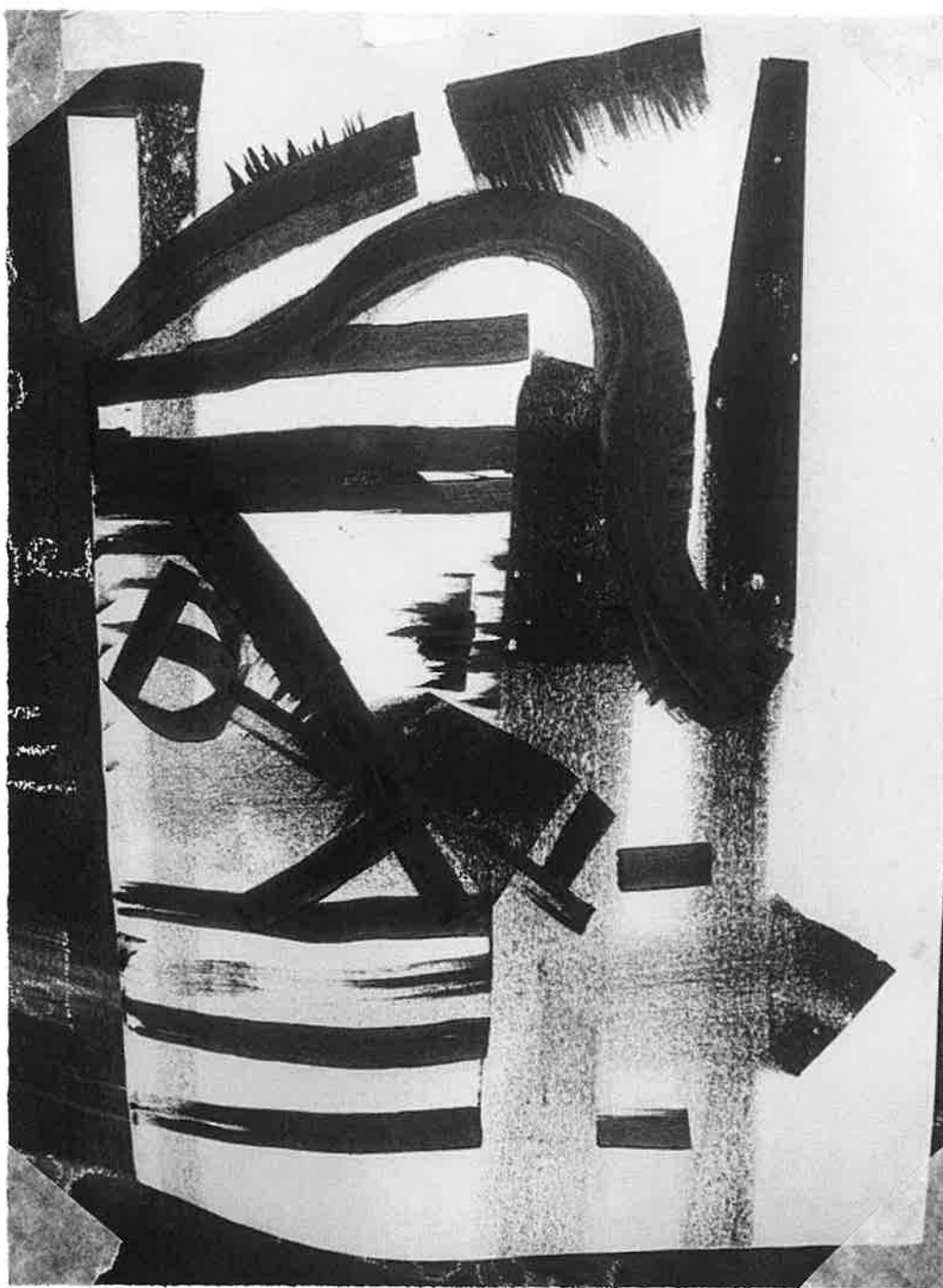


These ideas that Caruth proposes and investigates in *Unclaimed Experience* resonate strongly with my artistic practice.



I was too young to understand, however, I
always felt a deep fear, a sense of child
guilt, as if I had done something wrong
and I rather silently kept the peace.

What I do recognise I was unable to understand
as a child was that I had sacrificed my
own internal peace for the peace
of the situation and people around
me.

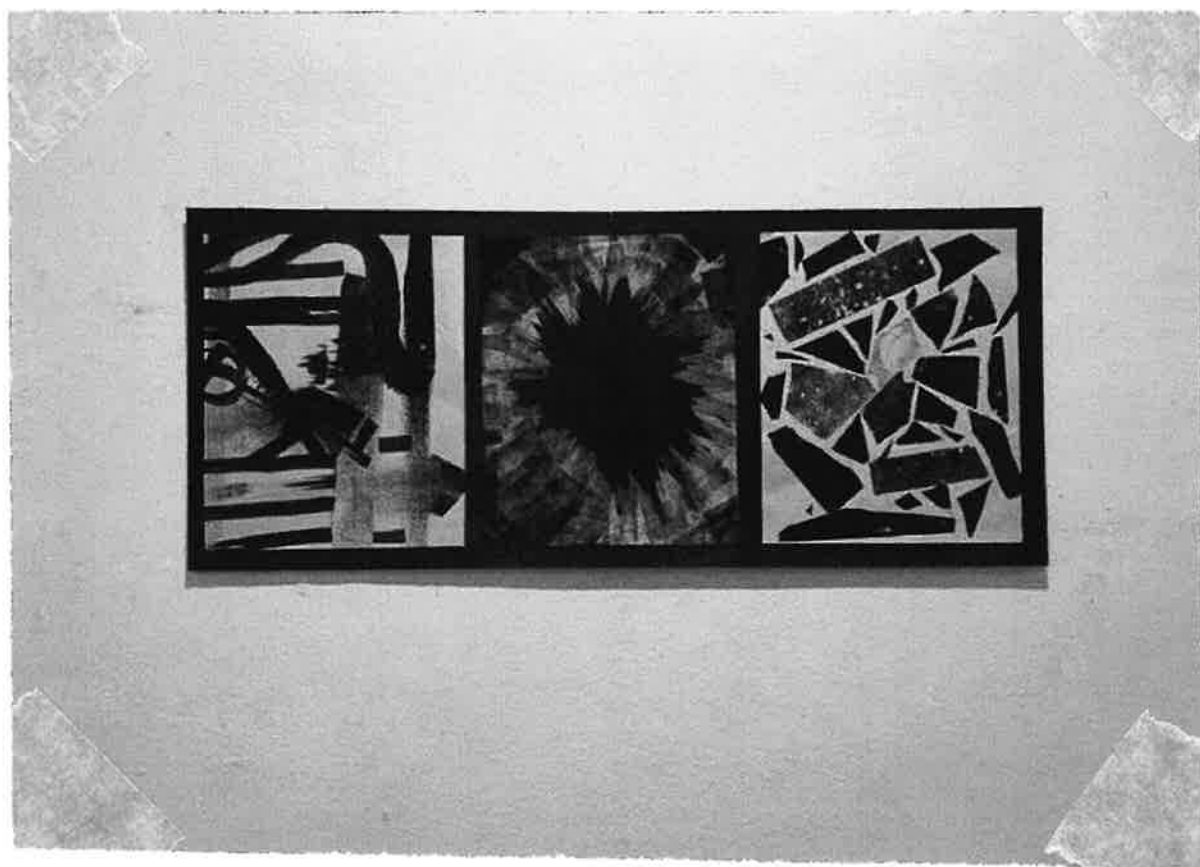


Today my art becomes the medium through which I try to relinquish control in attempt to externalise that fear, responsibility and

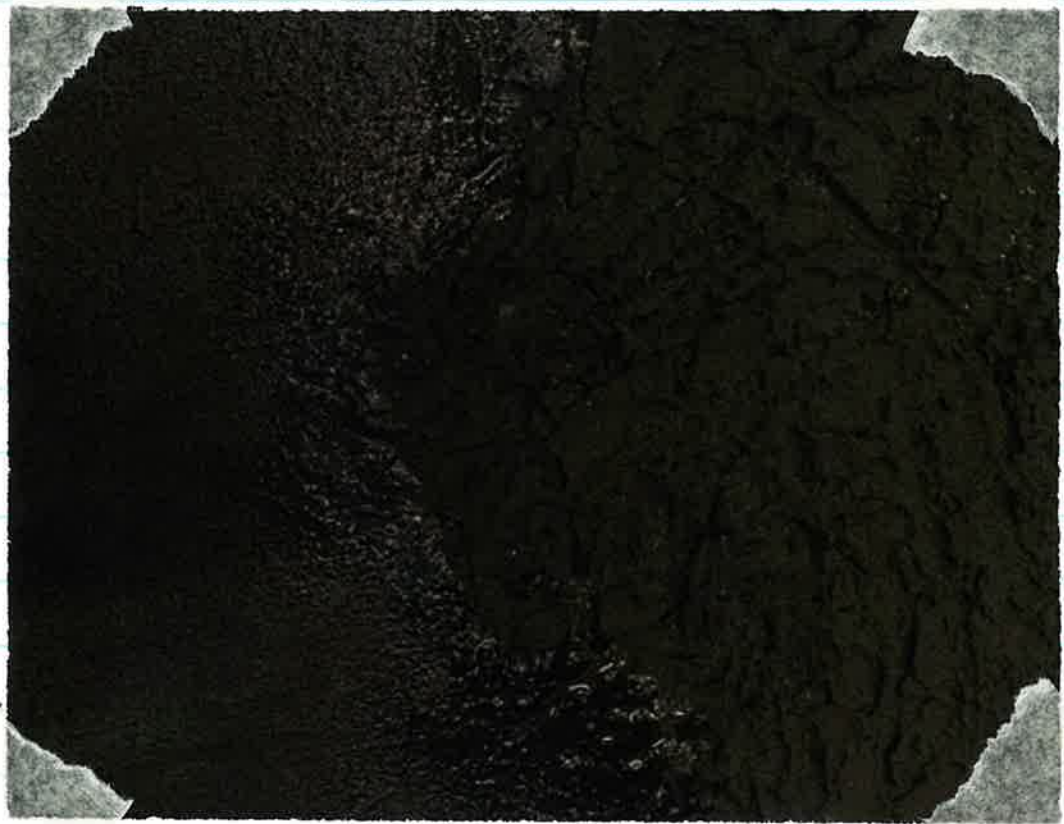


anxiety. The repetition of particular motifs, the spatial arrangement and materiality are to witness and give physical form to something that was unspeakable as a child. Caruth's framework helps to situate my





Trauma does not only disrupt memory, it can disrupt the very structure of ~~can~~ consciousness; it is present and absent, known and unknown. Caruth references Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered*. A story of two lovers, Tancred and Clorinda, who are torn apart by fate, and one



unknowingly wounds the other and only later confronts the devastating truth of what has happened. Caruth references Tasso's work to emphasise how trauma is experienced in repetition "Tancred does not hear the voice of

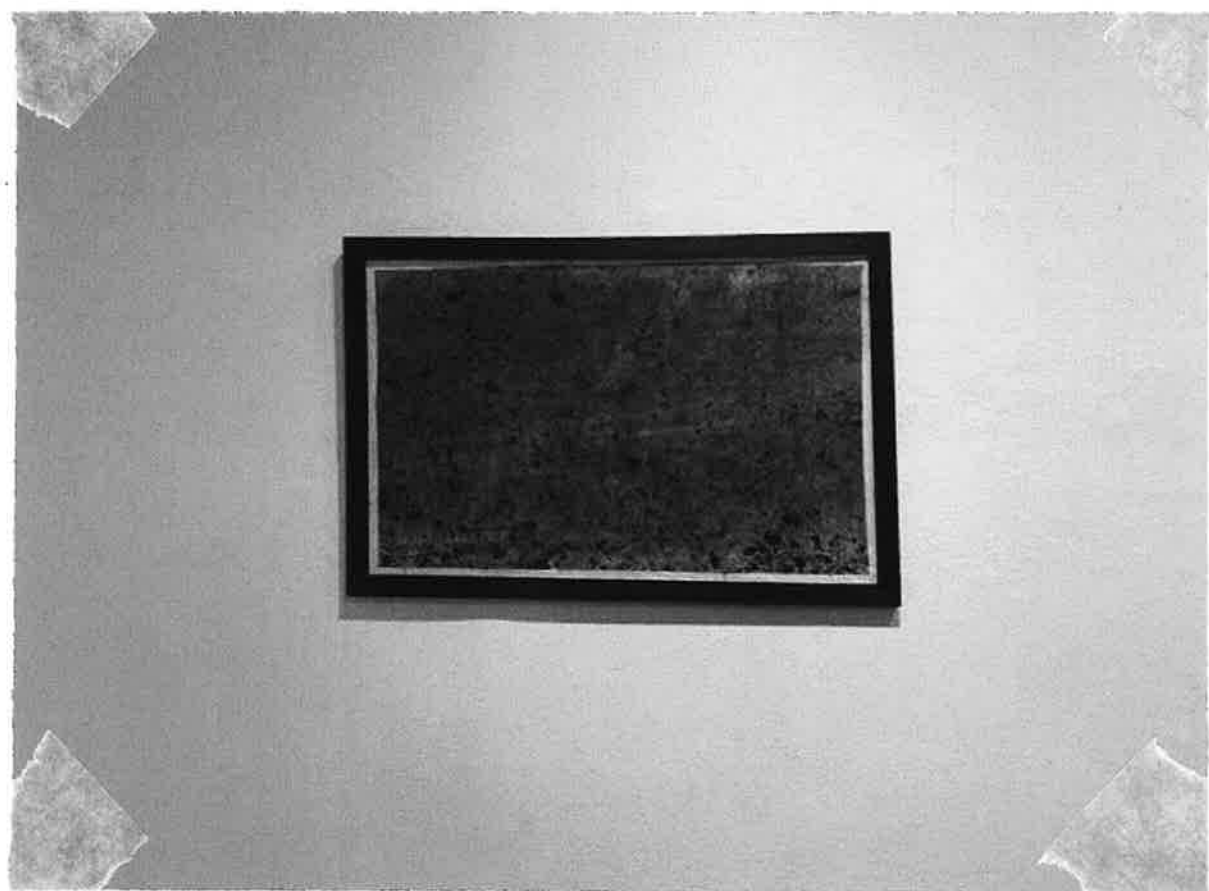


Clorinda until the second wounding, so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in a way that its very unassimilated nature... returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth, 1996, pp. 3-4)

A central theme that emerges from Caruth's works is the paradox of survival. Caruth uses Freud's writings to further explain how a survivor of a traumatic event confronts the traumatic experience repeatedly: "the survivor is forced, continually, to confront it over and over again" (Caruth, 1996, pp. 61-63)

The repetitive nature of trauma is not accidental, it is the structural effect of the trauma. Caruth highlights that this repetition is suffered because the traumatic experience is not directly available to be experienced. "The breach in the mind ... the conscious awareness of the threat

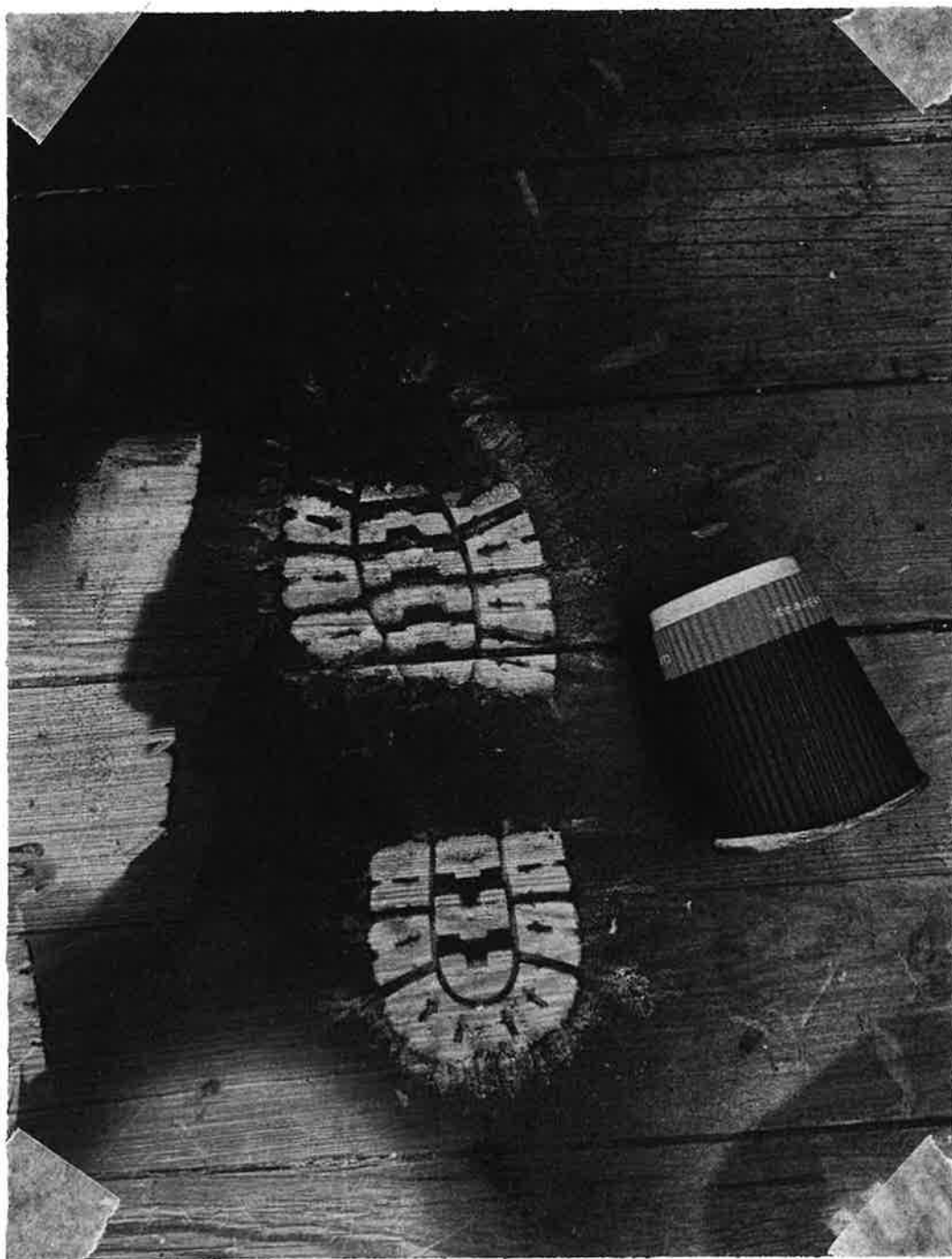




to life - is not caused by a pure quantity of stimulus, but by 'fright', the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly" (Caruth, 1996, pp. 61-63).



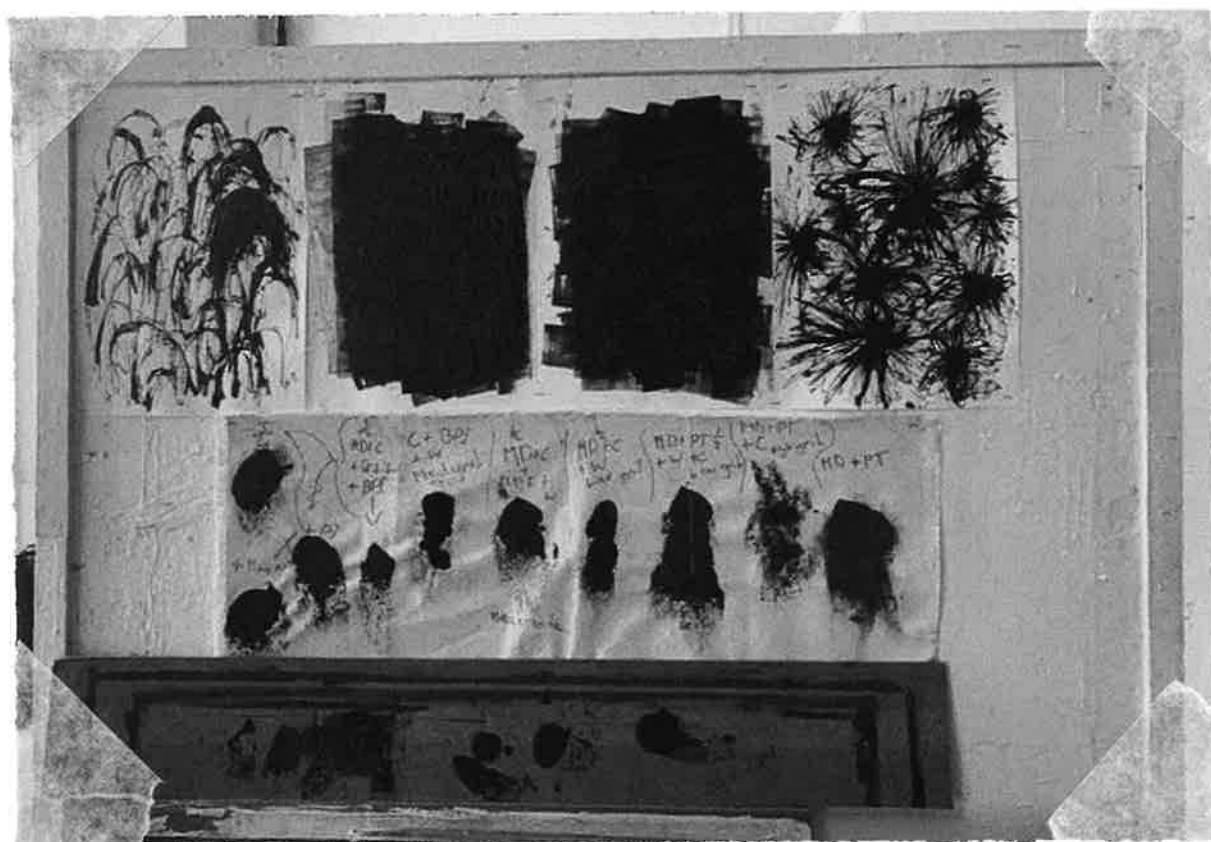
Trauma is therefore atemporal, it fractures time, creating a repetitive return of unresolved moments. This framework of Caruth's resonates with my practice, in the



repeated motions of smudging, cutting, layering and rebuilding that reflect the structural repetition of trauma. The acts of destruction and attempts to repair show the brain's compulsion to return to an experience it cannot fully comprehend, making my material and process an analogue of my psychological experience.

Using the example of Tasso's work Caruth further notes the relational dimensions of trauma. A traumatic experience is generally bound to another person, creating a site to encounter not only your own but the other's suffering: "the wound





that speaks... is not precisely Tancred's own but the wound... of another... trauma may lead... to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (Caruth, 1996, p. 8). Trauma is not only individual but social too, placing the survivor in a web of social and historical consequences. My work directly reflects this relational trauma. Placed in a web of possible consequences my work evokes the tension between being seen and unseen,

expressing the psychological impact of relational trauma, most expressed in my piece 'hiding in plain sight'.

Caruth acknowledges the difficulty of narrating trauma and the role of representation.





she states that trauma is "always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). This shows a paradox where trauma both demands and resists narration, and while it is not directly relatable in the moment of experience, it still insists on being communicated, even if belated and fragmented.

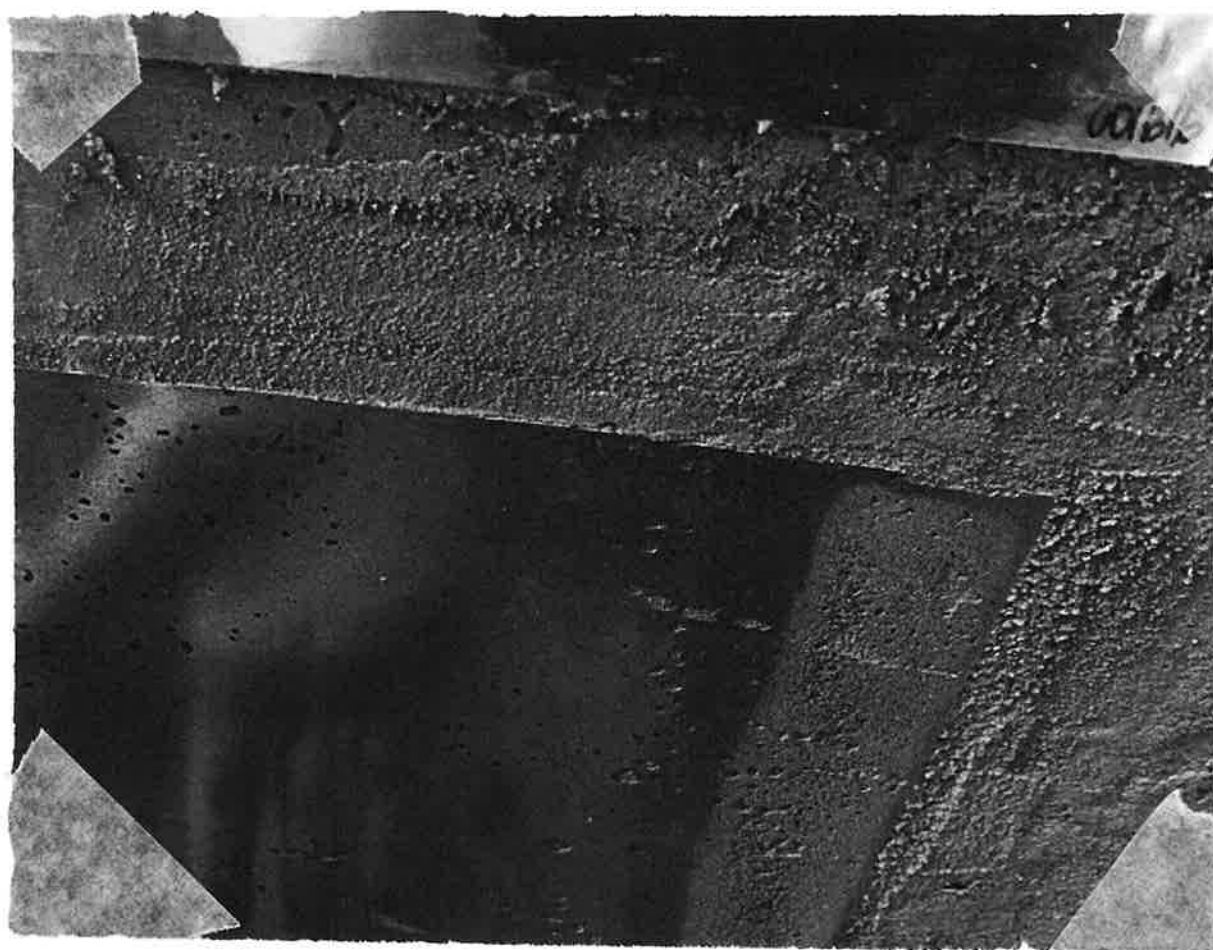


In my work I evoke the repetitive structural effects of trauma using salvaged, blackened surfaces, and fractured glass to create spaces where the scar is visible but elusive.

The materials themselves become a lens for witnessing what was once hidden, unspoken or unspeakable. As

Caruth uses literature as the medium through which trauma

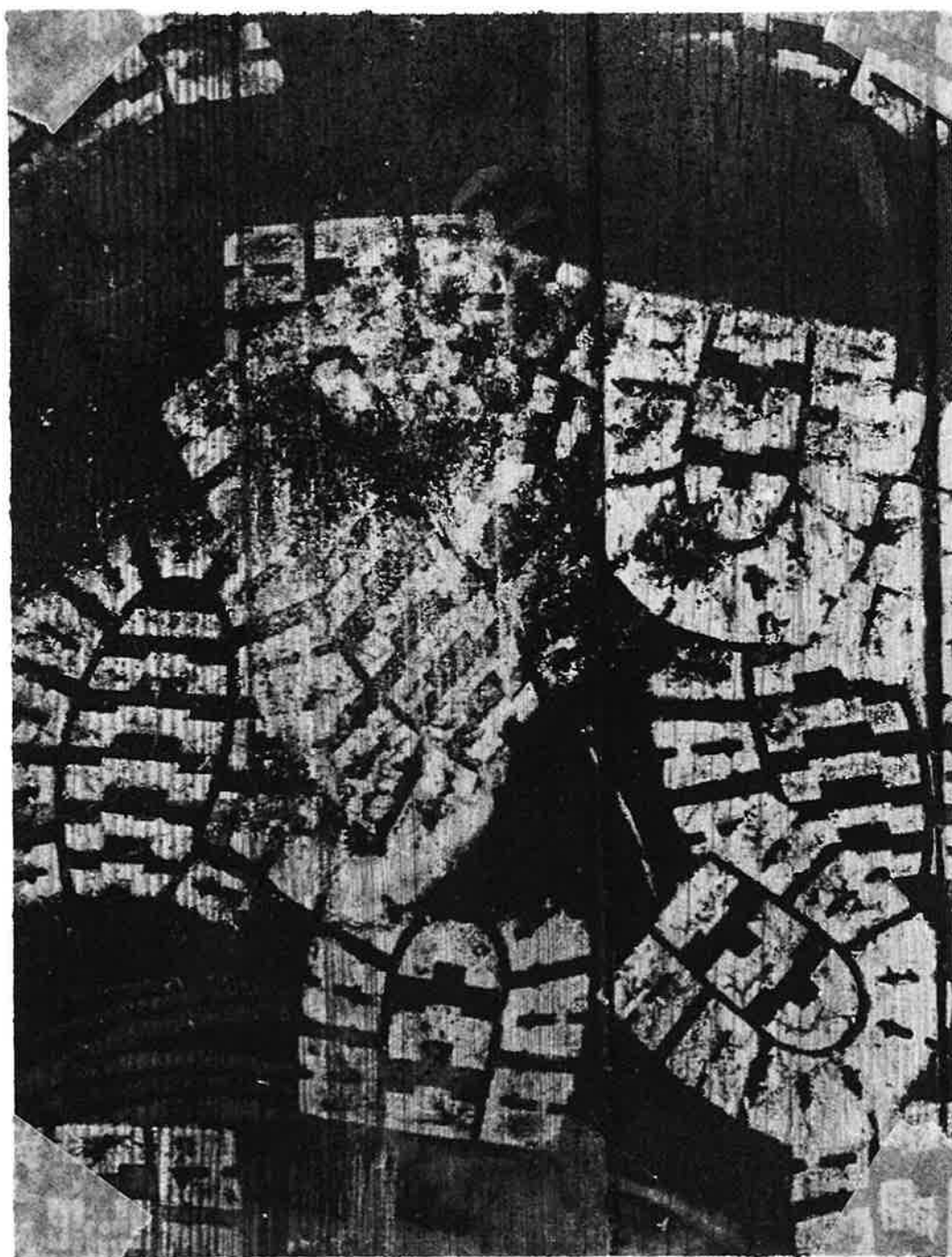
speaks belatedly, my practice uses form, texture, and repetition as sites where trauma can return, demanding engagement from both maker and viewer.



Caruth's work thus provides a solid theoretical framework for understanding my practice. ~~Be~~ Belatedness, repetition, relational engagement with the other, and the difficulty of representation are active tropes in my work. My practice becomes a space where trauma can be witnessed, and felt, making the personal, historical, and relational dimensions of trauma visible.

My work doesn't attempt to tell the story of my childhood but rather tries to communicate the intensity of the emotional states I experienced and how those states shaped my survival strategies.

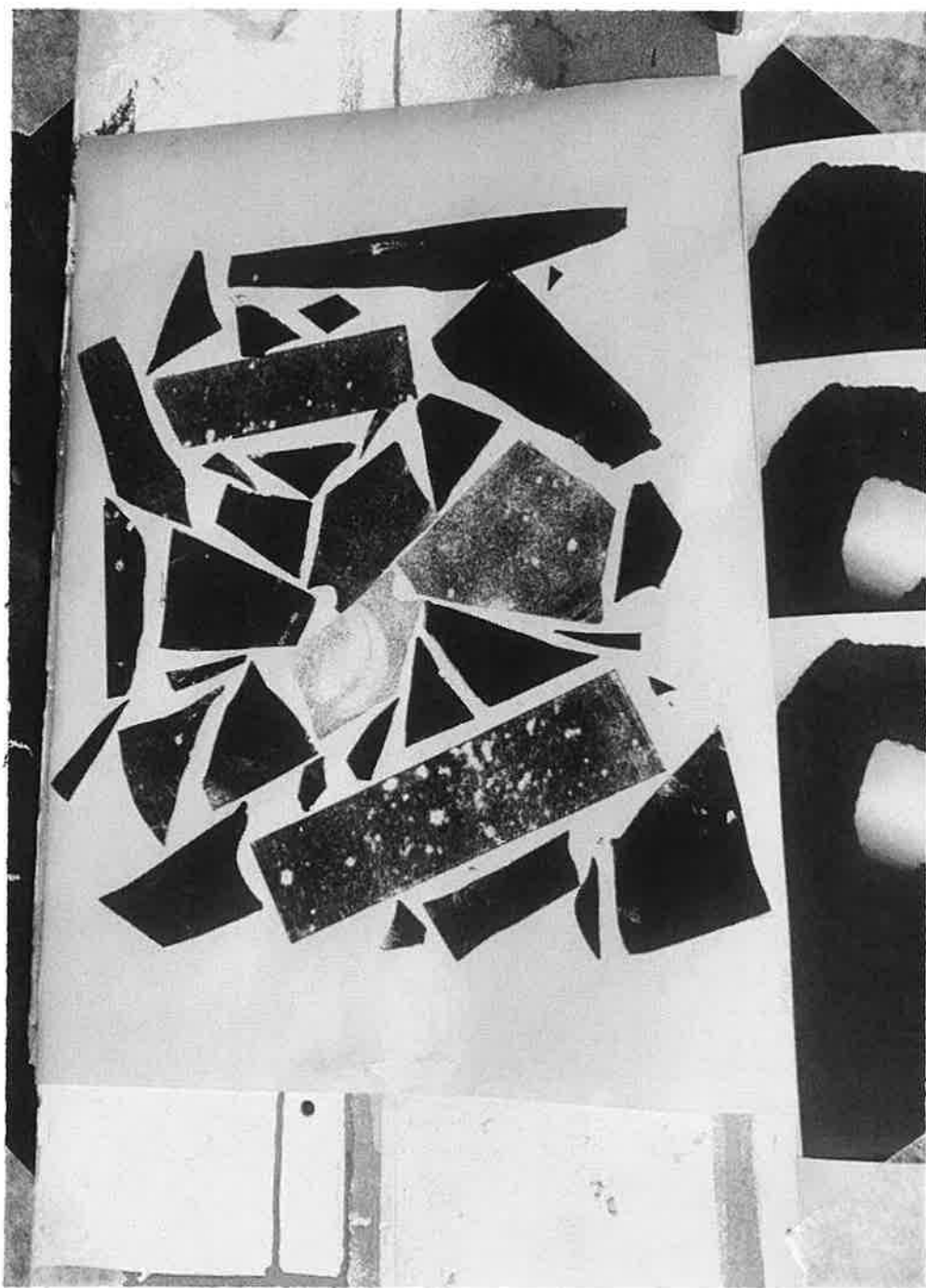




Hiding in Plain Sight



This piece began with found, salvaged windows. I had the idea that this piece would have to do with my sense of 'home'. As I constructed this piece, I climbed inside to put it together and ~~re~~ realised it was a child-like fort of windows. I continued its



assembly knowing this piece had become
a visual representation of me hiding

The final window
placed in this piece shifted the structure
from resembling a child's fort to evoking
an animal trap. The tension in this work
mirrored my childhood survival strategy. Hiding

and windows
now create the barriers I rely on to keep
distance and ensure my mental safety.

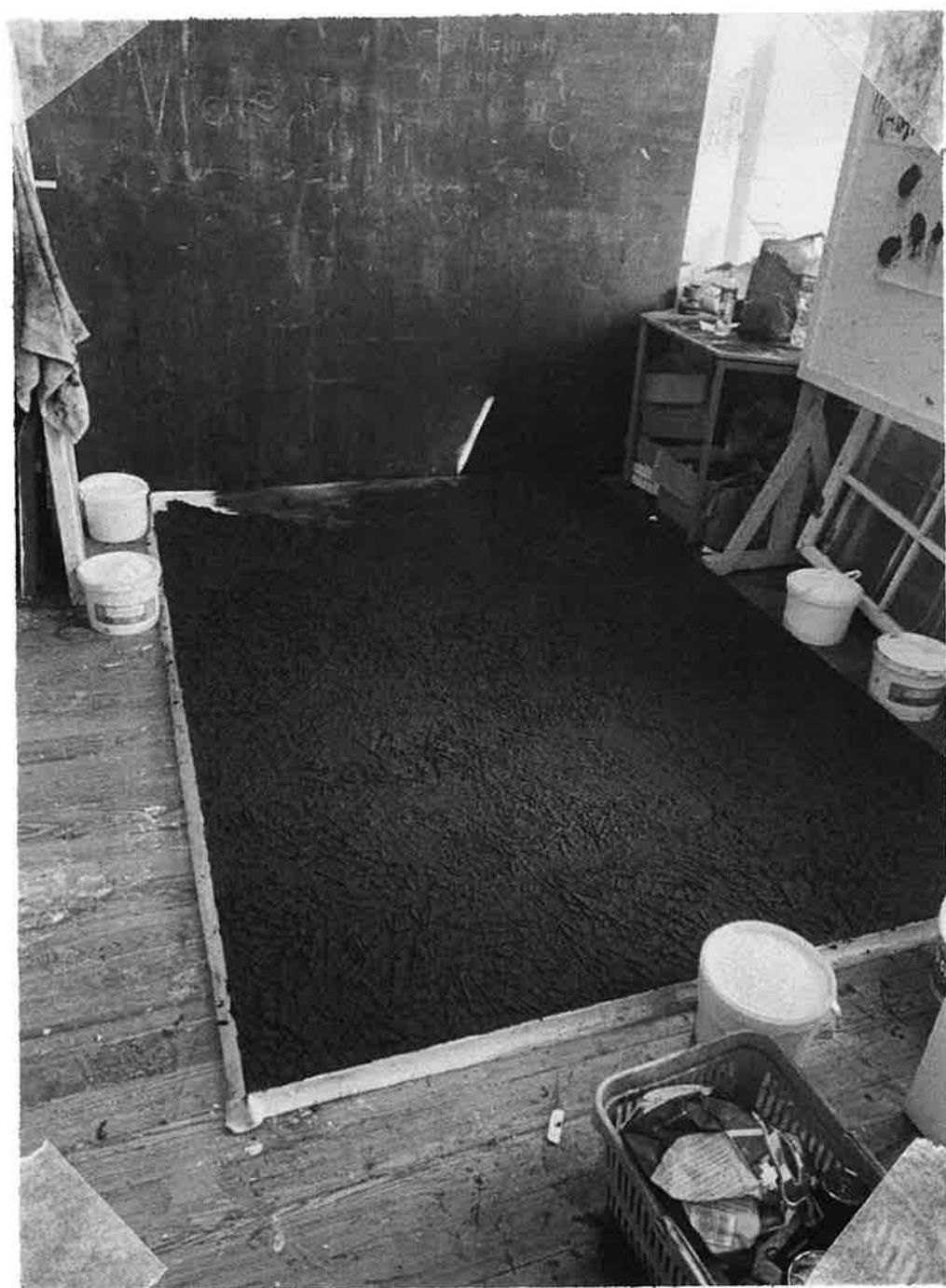
In terms of Caruth's work this piece embodies the
paradox of trauma, a structure that both protects
and confines. The trap motif emphasises how I
felt bound to the same patterns of hiding.
The windows were left in the same condition in
which I found them, some panes intact, some
missing, once white paint peeling back with
age to show its raw colours. By not repairing the
windows they have been allowed to remain in
their original unstable, fragile state of unresolved
tension. The size of this piece is scaled
to an adult yet it displays as a child's



hiding place, the transparent panes allow for visibility both in and out. The larger window tips the balance of the work both physically and conceptually, shifting protection into entrapment.

The Void.





this piece comes from [redacted]
experience of ~~being~~ being trapped in a cycle
of instability and fear. [redacted]
[redacted] pulled apart any sense
of ~~the~~ normalcy I had. [redacted]
was inescapable, I would dissociate, waiting for
peace, but it never came. This work was inspired
by the "Nothing" from The NeverEnding Story that
consumes the land of Fantasia in a way that
is both visible and unstoppable. (The NeverEnding
Story, 1984) Like Bastian watching the Nothing,
I witnessed [redacted]
while powerless to intervene.





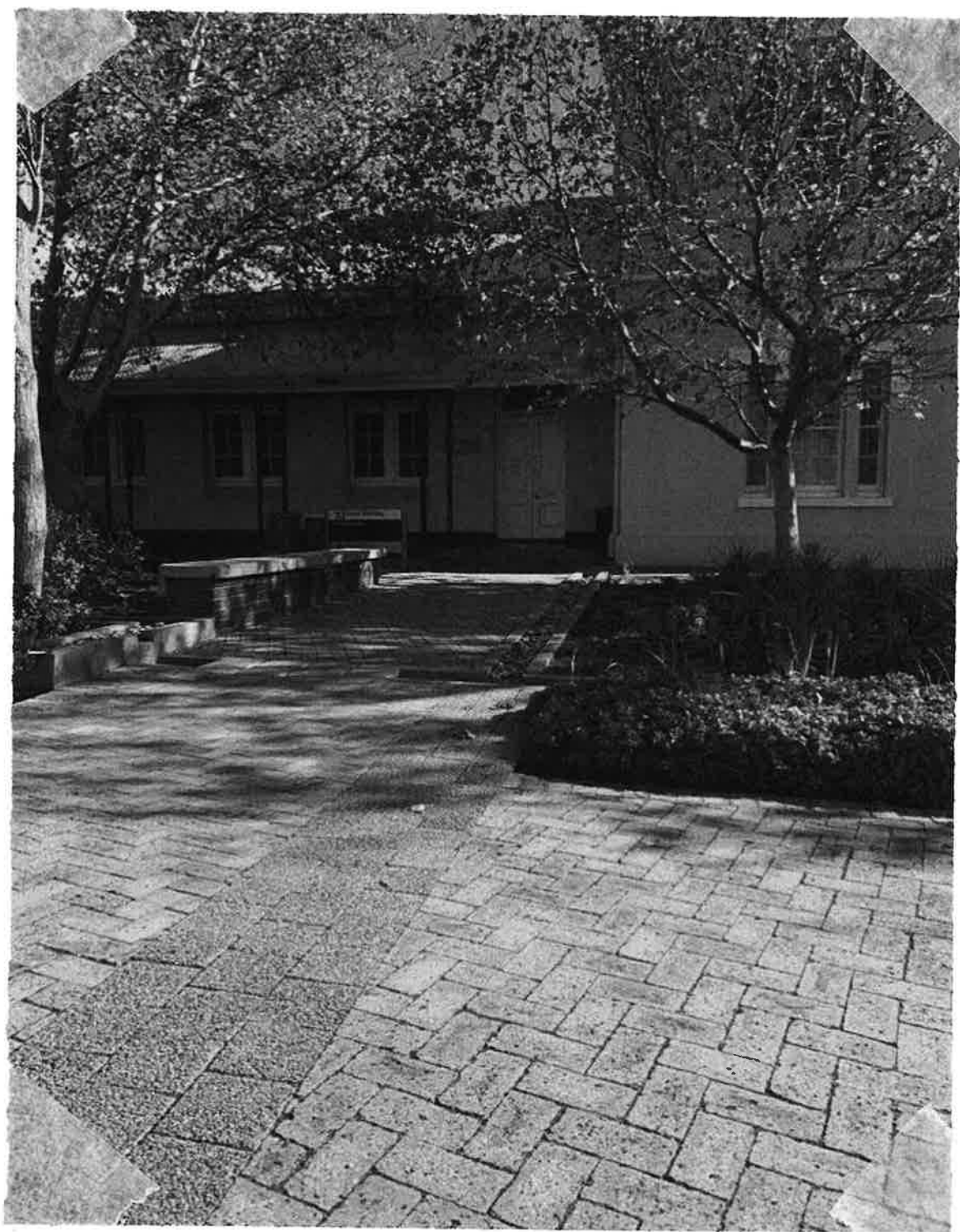
The Void is a representation of [REDACTED]
consuming force and a material embodiment of
the helplessness I felt [REDACTED]

This piece is made from a solution of charcoal
powder, glue
and ink,

creating a
dense black
surface that
can be cut
into. I used
a shard of
glass to cut
into ~~the~~ this
solution over
and over ~~or~~
once it was
placed on
the canvas.



The repetition
of these cuts or wounds makes the work a
collection of scars. The black solution emphasises
the sense of absorption both of light and viewer.
The Void has a central point that radiates
~~diagonally~~ diagonally outward, like a ~~black~~ black
hole, visually echoing the consuming nature
of the force it represents. The scale and
shape are designed to confront the



to the viewer, one can experience the weight and pull of its darkness.

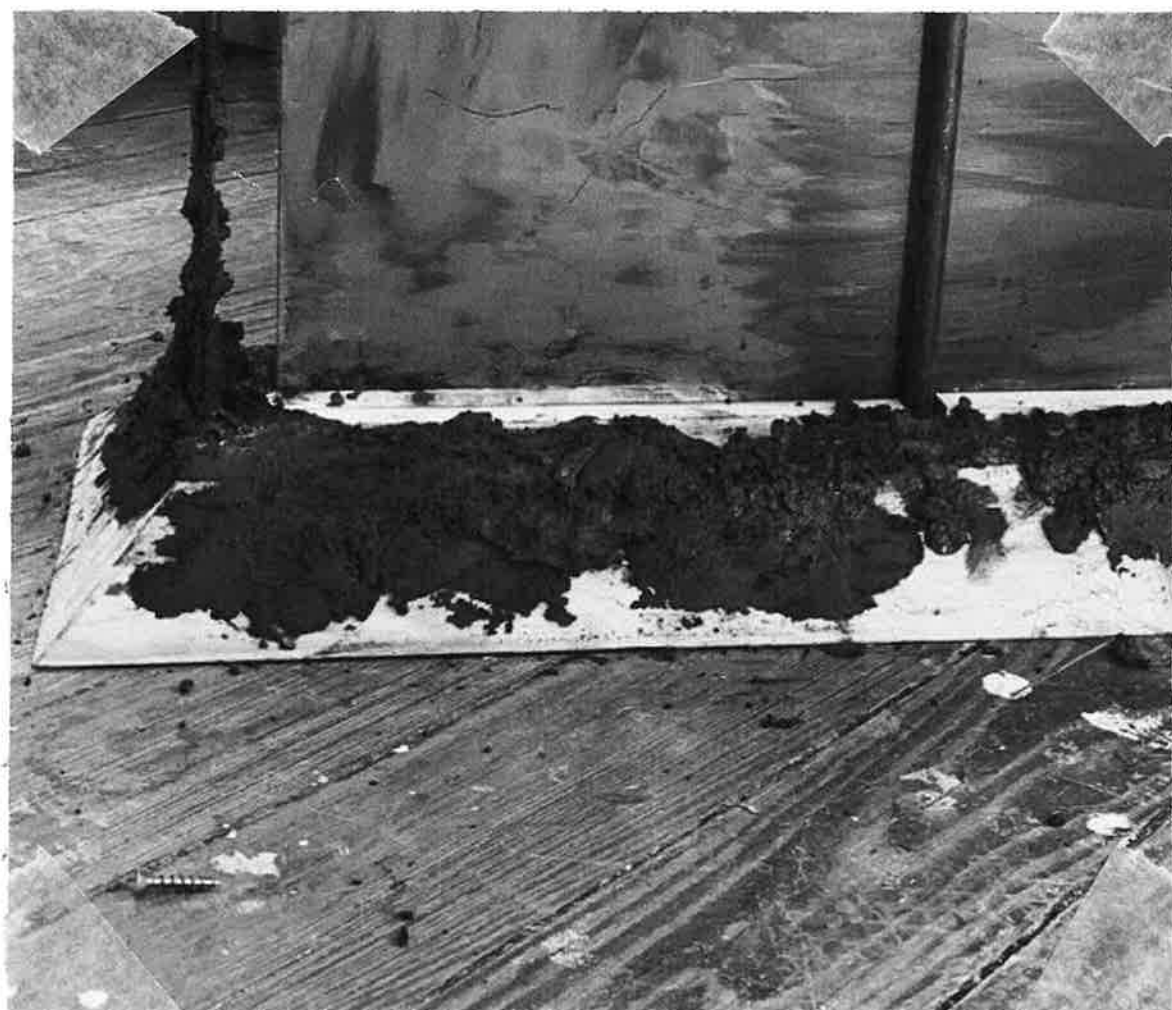
Black Window 1





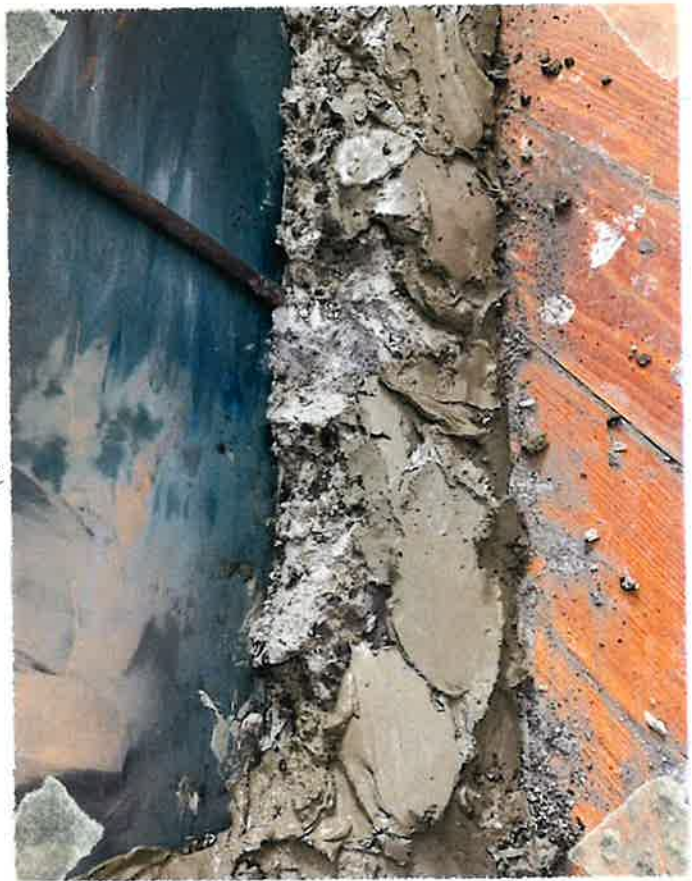
Black window I started ~~painting~~ ~~only a sheet of glass, the portrait~~
~~depicted a figure looking to the ground~~
~~screaming~~, my first encounter with externalising
rage and fear. The weight of the portrait
was heavy and emotional, I then smudged
the paint creating a mess of eligible
colour. I then broke the glass and began
the process of reassembling: soldering the
shards together, attempting to repair what
could not fully be restored, but could
be strengthened. The soldered joints became
scars, demonstrating the impossibility of
complete repair. The soldered joints, while
strong, could not know the weight of the
broken glass on its own. I built two sets
of ~~burglar~~ burglar bars and placed the
glass between them, framing the glass in a
cage, for stability. What began as an act of
expression transformed into a material record
of suppression, fracture, and containment,
reflecting the persistence of unresolved
emotional histories.

This work is constructed from 4mm glass,
broken and soldered back together. The joints
are rough and unpolished, emphasizing the
attempted repair rather than concealing
it. The burglar bars contain the



the glass, creating discussion around constriction vs protection. The surface is then coated in black charcoal dust over a cement base, which I broke down to resemble a window pulled from a building worn, heavy, and tactile. This act shifted the piece into a physical site of tension: a surface that absorbs light, conceals, and invites the viewer to encounter the history embedded in its materiality.

Standing at stomach height, the piece demands close engagement. The bars, scars, and blackened, textured surface give form to absence creating a space where the aftermath of emotion and trauma can be experienced.



86 cm W

140-2.5

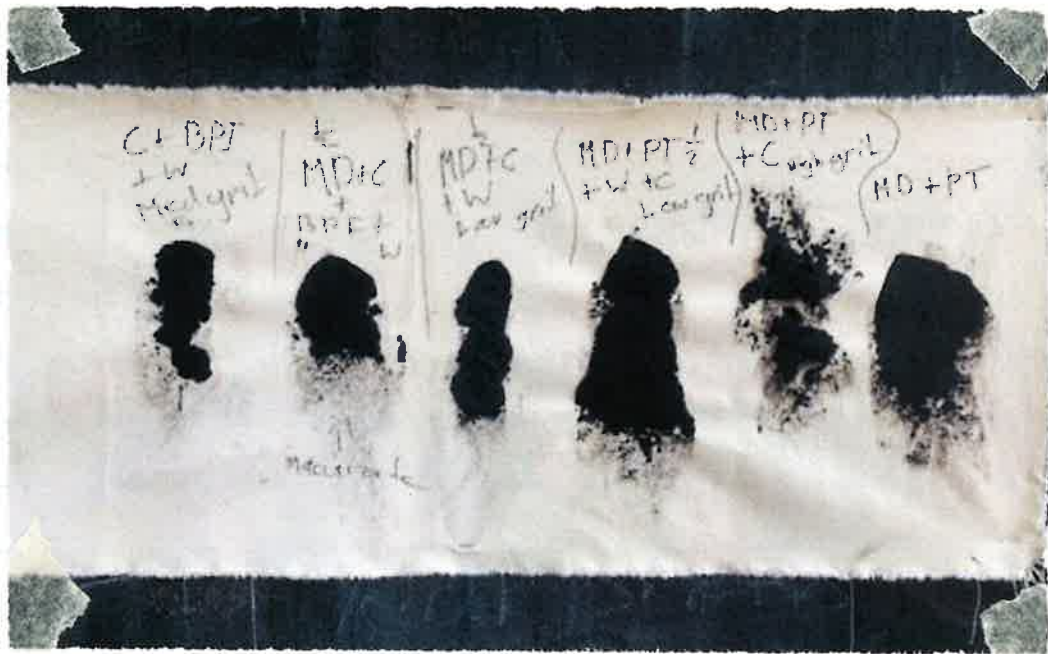
137.5 ~~L~~

Black
glass

86 W

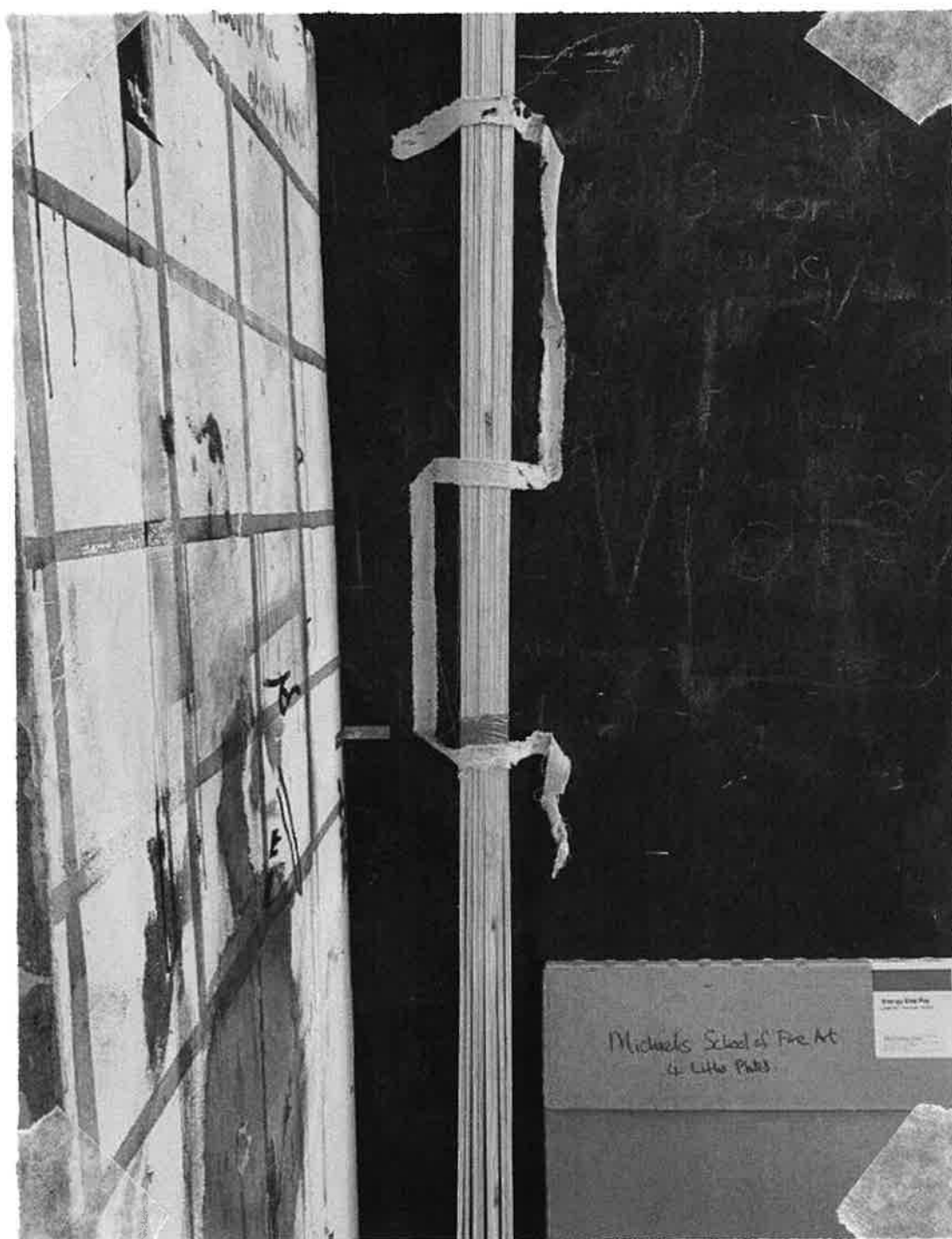
137.5 L

The intention of this body of work is to externalise the traumatic internal ~~and~~ emotional state in attempt to let go of the hyper ~~the~~ vigilant control I have developed in response to trauma. To externalise this state would be to free myself from the idea that I need to stay silent to stay safe. My work aims to evoke a



sense of empathy, reflection and a ~~reg~~ recognition of emotions that have been invisible or suppressed. While the impetus behind my work is rooted in deeply personal experiences, it also offers a ~~a~~ space to consider traces of trauma in a broader human and social ~~cont~~ context.

I see my works sitting in an intersection of trauma studies and materiality, by externalising these private childhood experiences and emotions into material forms presented to the public.



References;

- * Caruth, C., 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- * *The NeverEnding Story* (1984) [Film], Directed by Wolfgang Petersen. Munich: Constantin Film.