

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SPACIAL INTERPRETATION THROUGH
THE QUALITIES OF LITHOGRAPH

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INTRODUCTION

The problems I faced in satisfying my aesthetic feelings were seemingly insurmountable. I was confronted with a choice of media and the task of developing a personal statement.

Over a period of two years I have passed through many stages but the last nine months of this period, I have devoted myself to the study of printmaking. The results of this work are explained in this paper and I feel the technical and aesthetic knowledge I have gained will contribute to my growth as a professional artist.

The process of development that an artist must engage in, is made up of a search for an artistic achievement and a search for a medium which contributes effectively to this artistic achievement. A very important step in this development is the realization that one particular medium "feels" directly associated with the artistic idea. This medium must possess the qualities of the desired end product in a supporting manner and bring to light previously unnoticed but valuable characteristics. The medium must lend itself to the idea and become an integral part of the finished work.

Involved in my personal development was the previously mentioned search for a medium and this search led me to examine many printing processes. These included silkscreen, collagraph and intaglio, none of which expressed my ideas in a satisfactory manner. The results from silkscreen do not present the feeling of space and line quality I was trying to arrive at; the flat surface of silkscreen print resulted in a lack of depth so I was unable to achieve the spacial relationship I wanted. When I entered a line composition to the surface of the print through the silkscreen process, the result was much the same: a cold insensitive relationship of hard line to a flat surface. I examined the possibilities of this medium further by the use of photo-silk, but as pleased as I was with the results, I did not feel a meaningful expression had occurred. In collagraph I

achieved qualities of interest but when building up the plate with various materials, I found, again, that I could not obtain a line which contained the expressive qualities important to a refined statement. I feel the very nature of collagraphy results in a heavy quality and this character was not to my taste. The nearest I came to personal satisfaction in my search, excluding lithography, was with intaglio. With the intaglio process I was able to solve my idea of space and what it should do. Through the use of aquatint and a soft ground etch I achieved a line and spacial quality which was interesting and contained elements of diverse character adding to the internal structure of the composition. I became dissatisfied when I realized I could not completely control the mechanical process and the results were dependent, to a large degree, upon luck. If the acid was too strong or too weak or if the time the plate was in the acid was incorrectly estimated, the result was most unpleasing. Of the processes I worked with lithography seemed to be the answer to many of the technical and artistic problems I have been plagued by. The first quality of lithography that I found important was the directness of the process itself, something the others all seemed to lack. The drawing on the stone represents what the print will appear as, and I find this a necessary part of my personal approach. As I explored the technical aspects of lithography, I came to understand and see what a simple stroke of a

lith-crayon or liquid tusche really was: the line produced in lithography is a mass of tonal quality and textural differences; it is almost as if one can see the molecular structure of the line. The sensual qualities of the line produce a fascinating range and are a necessary part of what I was attempting to achieve.

To obtain these characteristics which I feel are important, I found it necessary to control the grinding of the stone. On a stone that is ground too fine, say to 340 grit carborundum, line loses the inner quality which I wanted because it is too compact, but grinding to 130 grit, which is coarser, seems to give the stone some tooth so that the textural differences of crayon-drawn line are obtainable. The fine compact line of a fine-grained stone is an advantage if delicate tones are wanted, but does not lend itself to my image.

The further I pursued the medium of lithography, the more I came to understand the possibilities of crayon drawing and a liquid tusche-distilled water combination. In Prints Number One, Two and Three, I relied heavily on crayon drawing and a liquid tusche-distilled water combination. First I used tusche and turpentine as a mixture and found it very satisfying, but it created a technical problem: the stone tended to fill up with ink during the printing procedure and nullified important qualities of the drawing.

Therefore, I used almost exclusively a tusche-distilled water solution with much the same textural results of tusche-turpentine but without the technical problems.

At this point I was still in search of a definite direction and seemed to be searching through the flexibility of the lithography process. What I found pleasing in using the combination of crayon drawing and the tusche-water was the actual physical difference of the two in character and how they strengthened one another, yet the completed prints at this point seemed to lack a true direction but contained the character of tone and quality that I felt was necessary.

In Print Number Three I continued with the standard approach which I was now using, but added another element: that of scratching the surface of the stone with a sharp instrument or the side of a razor blade. The qualities of crayon drawing and the liquid tusche began to gain structural strength--a strength that comes not only from the contrast of intensity but also from the noticable separation of character. Here I realized what I was trying to say: I was no longer interested in organic form alone, nor any longer concerned with a specific statement in regard to the standard definition of positive and negative space. I was beginning to feel a compulsion to relate to the importance of tone, quality, the interdependency of shape and negative space. The shape of an object was still to be considered as an important

element, but the qualities of the shape became more important than the shape itself. The forces within a shape and between the shapes created tension in space. This tension in many instances, seemed to reverse the standard definition of positive and negative space. The importance of positive space was equalized by the now forceful negative space, and in many instances I felt the negative space became the dominant factor.

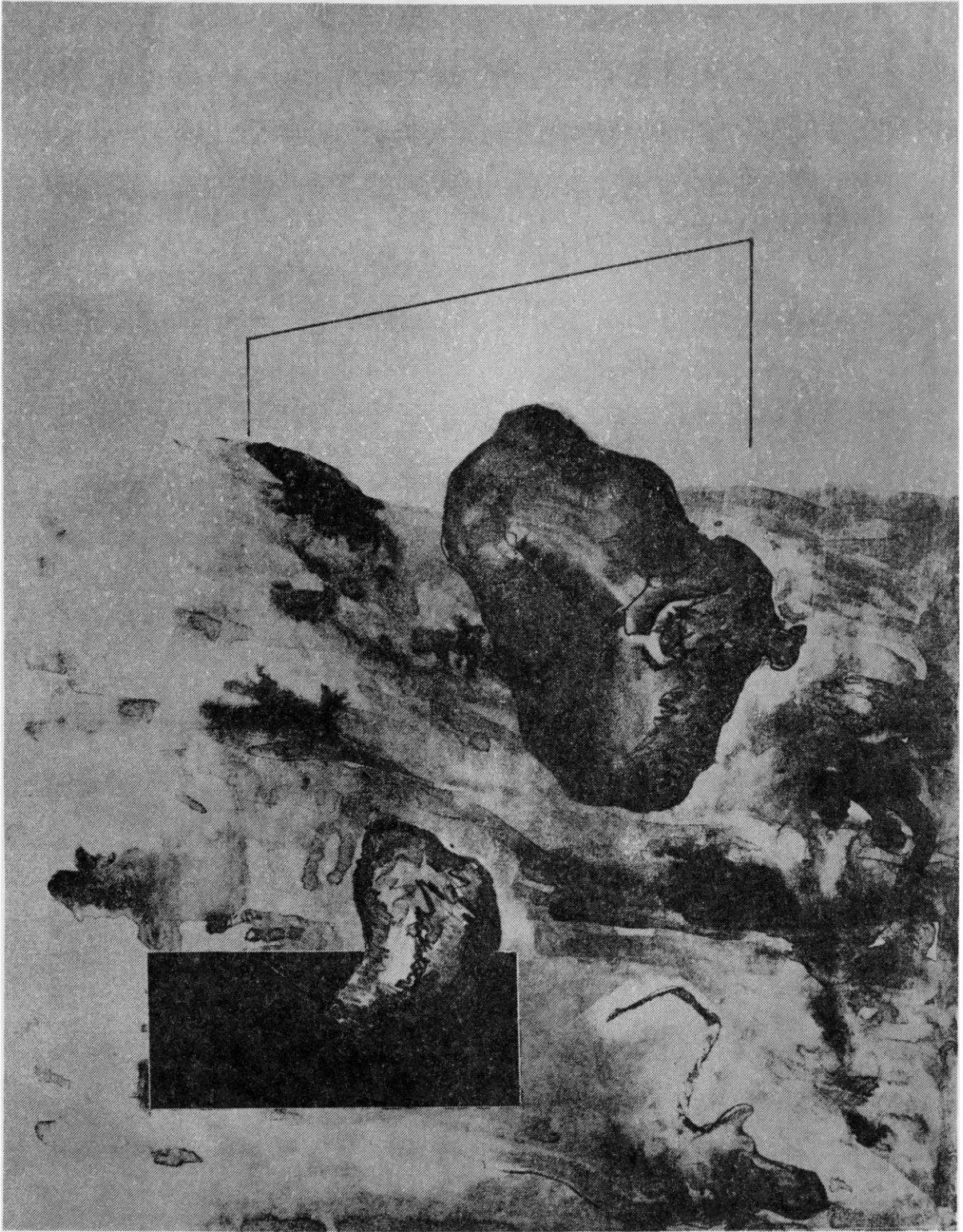
The significance of the hard-edged lines around the shapes in Print Number Five, is the position of importance the shapes play in relation to the space around them. I feel these hard edges strengthen the internal qualities of the shapes and create an impression of physical exertion against the negative space. The use of the three-dimensional box in Print Number Five, reverses the spacial concept created by the horizontal lines in the print, for the lines tend to flatten the space while the dimensional box creates depth. The space is given a quality which gains importance when associated with the spacial tension between shapes. With the combination of the shapes and their textural composition, situated in a competent relationship, I interpret negative space as a dimensional shape itself.

I feel all of these, space, shape and texture become actively interdependent and create an interesting interpretation of my perception of space.



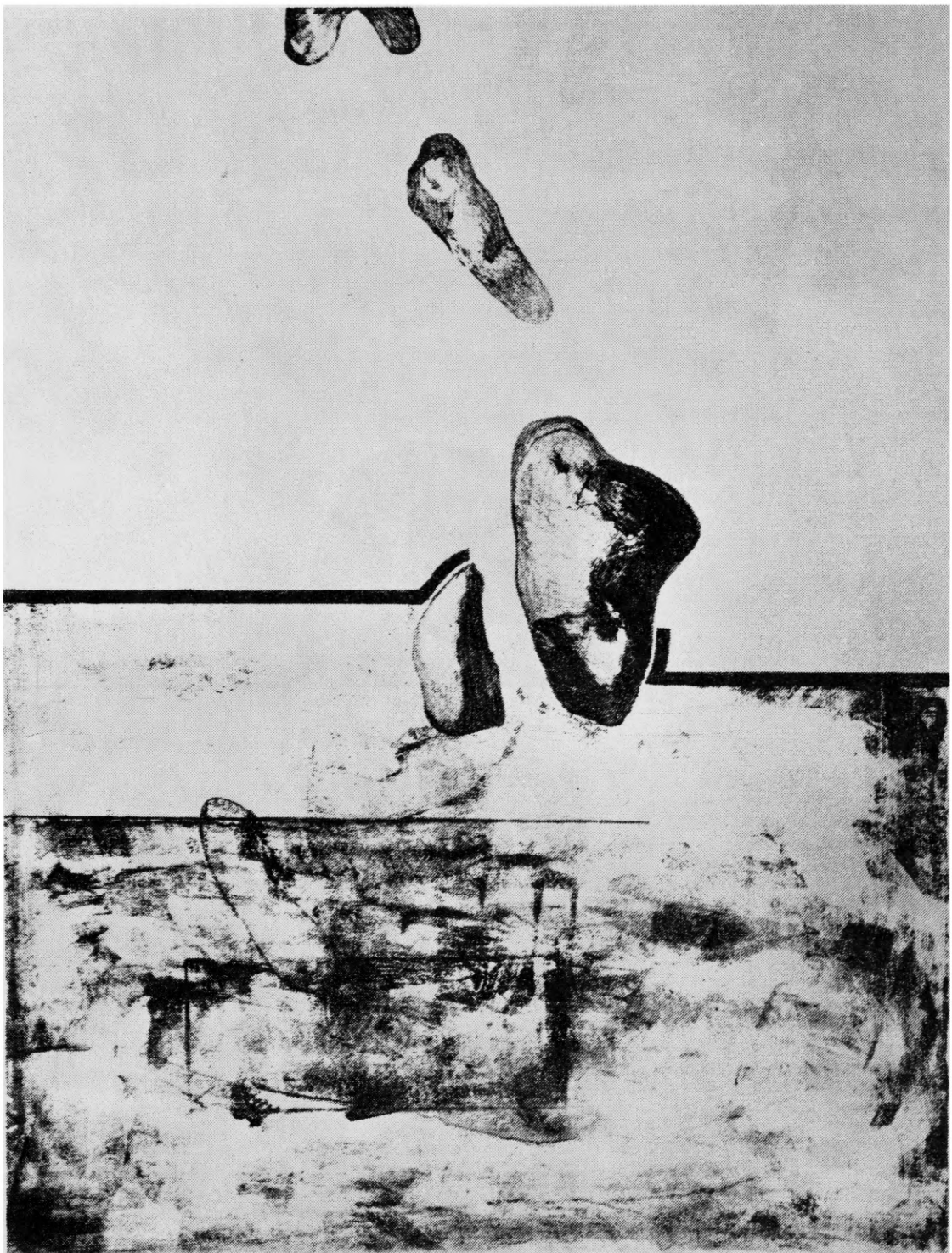
Litho Umbra 1

Alt. Esmerant - 19.5



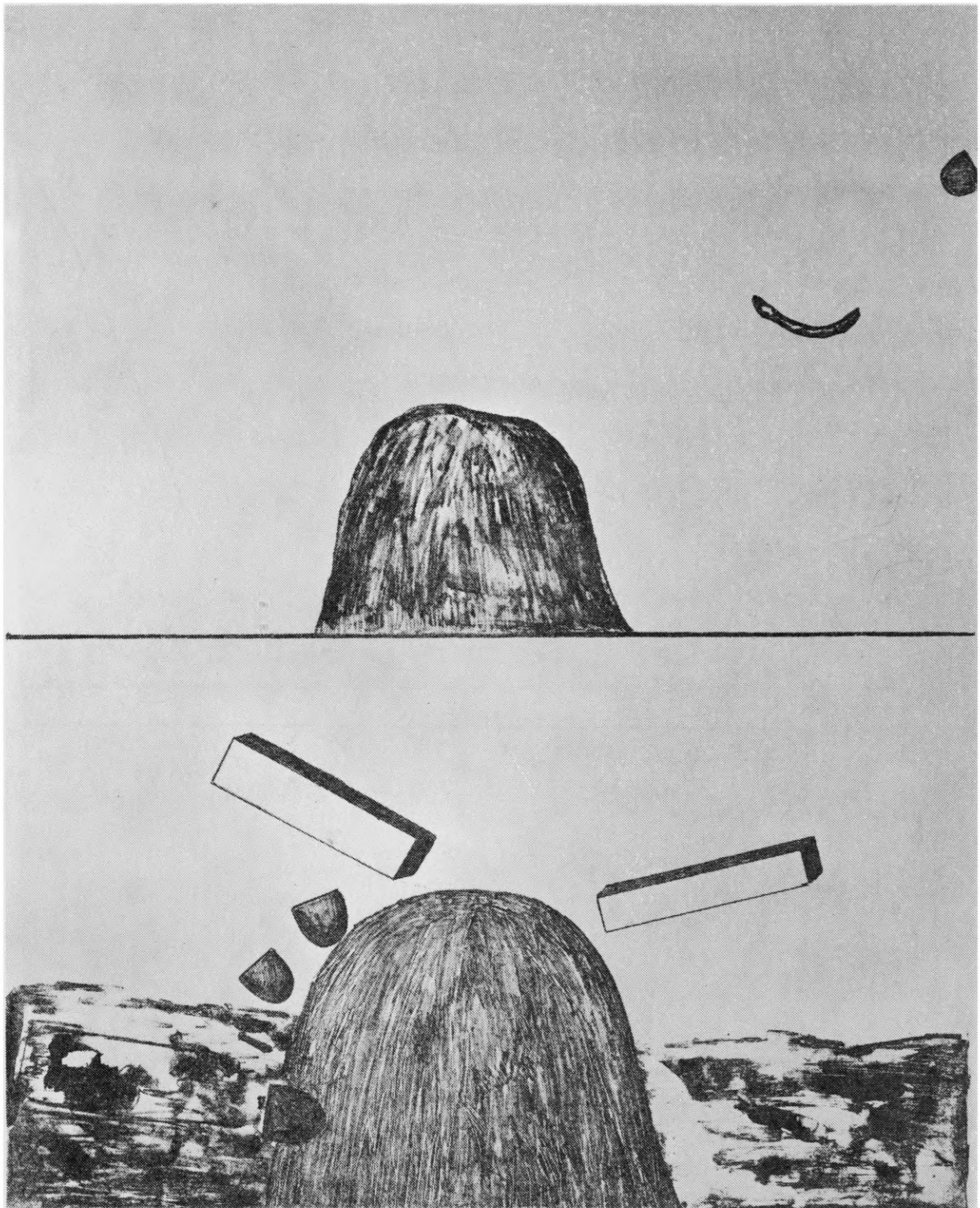
Litho Number 2

Alfred Tennaust-1969



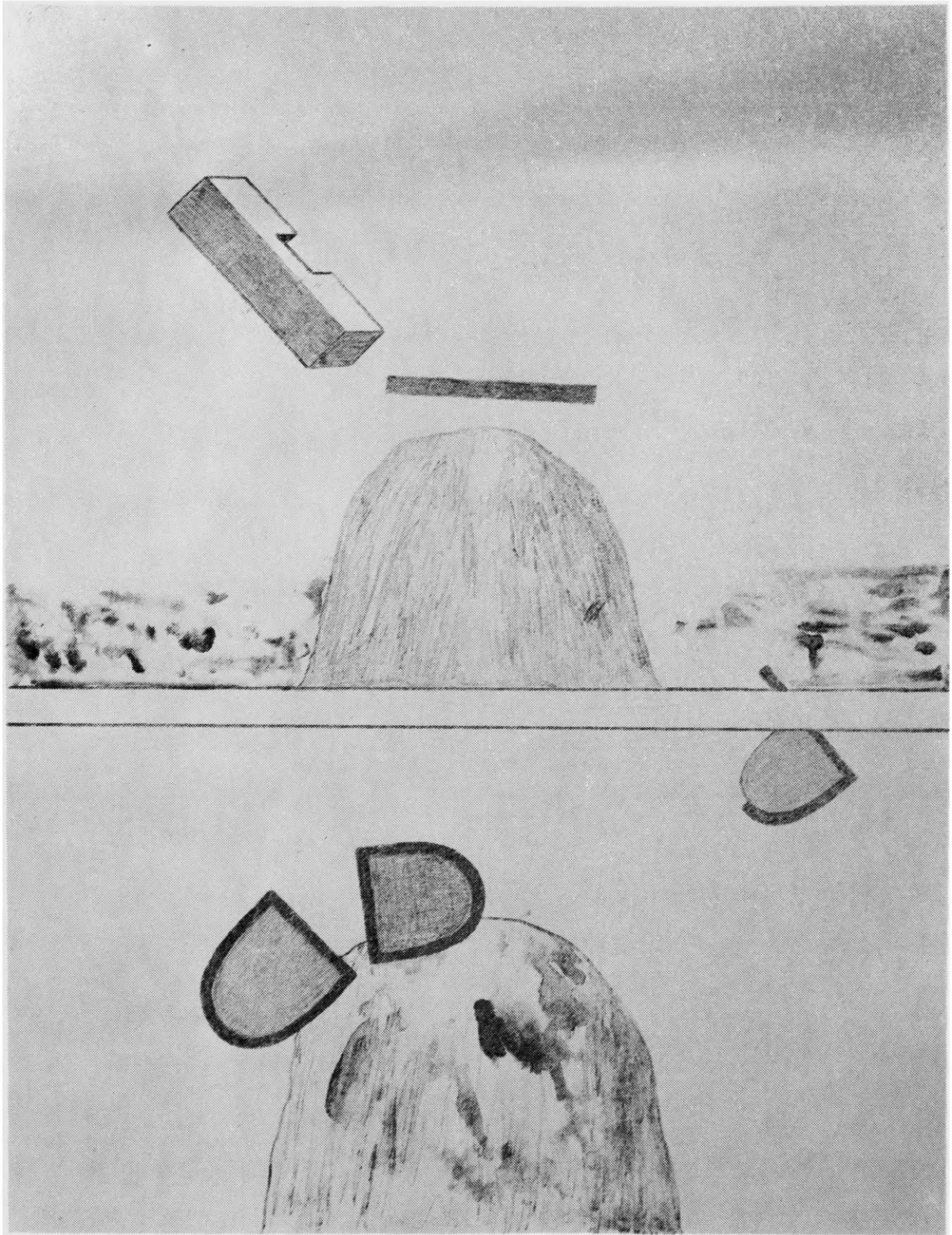
Litho Number 3

Ol' Pennant - 1969



Litho Number 4

Al Tennant - 1969



Litho Number 5

Al Tennant - 1969