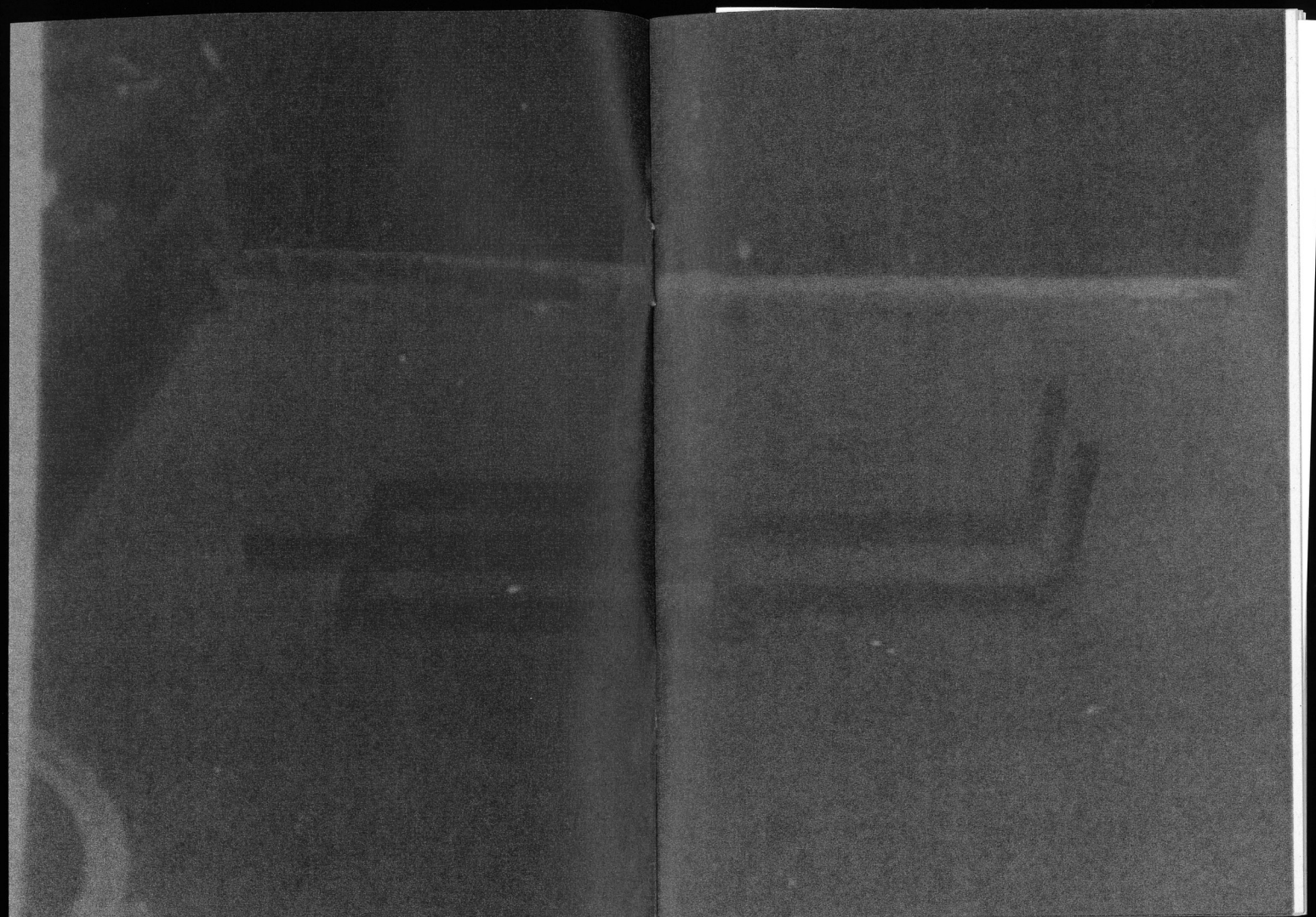


corpo

BY ROBERTO RONZANI
WITH A TEXT BY
ANNA PLOWDEN

Courtney Jagger



Sexneighbour has the flu. Meaning new kinds of moans. Usually she'd squeal like a pig, but now she howls like a haunted humpback whale. For the first time in my life I've found myself banging a mop against the wall. A stern reminder that one can end suffering by extinguishing craving.

I never thought this would happen to me. Usually other people's noises glide right over my head. Usually I'm full of a pleasant-smelling and colourless volatile liquid. Recently, it's been hard to sleep. It isn't just the whale. For several weeks now, in the medium-sized city where I live, there have been no operating street lamps.

Historically they've been managed by the council. They did the whole thing pretty much top to tail: column spacing, compliance, clean-and-change. They chaired both the forward and the backwardlooking departments and ran extensive data collection trials to make sure burn hours were up-to-date. Up until recently they never made a mistake. But now they'd done something wrong. Something really wrong.

Each night, at the hour they are supposed to come on, they don't.

The first to suffer were the moths. They've gone all waif. With nowhere to collect their nectar, nothing to bang their heads against, they've turned pale and pallor and sallow and they're flying up and down in vertical lines.

There's one outside my window now. Its furious line of flight starts about three seconds south of the sill and continues for some further seven above. A vainglorious and determined virgin, slicing up the night. It antagonises any chance of kip.

Such an unusual loss of colour in the mucous membranes of an



entire species does not go unnoticed, nor stop where it starts.

What with the failure of night-time illumination, all kinds of unusual gentlemen have started shuffling out to fulfil their most clandestine, most indecent urges (desires). Twilight fantabulists, like nurses in the Crimean War, limping around with their cocks in their hands.

Sooner or later they look up at the moths and, unable to see what is directly in front of them, have banged their heads on the lamp posts and fallen to the floor like obsequious children. The sweet clank of being felled by the very column whose failure brought them outside accompanies their fall.

One's on my doorstep right now.

Not dead, but after such a fundamental collapse of personality, it's kinda hard to get up.

For several days I've stepped over him.

Yesterday, on my way back from the shops, buying midnight cereals, I stopped mid-step.

I had one leg either side, arching over him like an ancient Chinese bridge. His stomach was large and round, it reached almost halfway up my calves, and disappeared beneath the fringes of my skirt. I looked at him right in his face.

He was good looking, gentle-eyed, faintly rotting teeth, curly black hair. I did my mouth-shut smile, raising my eyebrows, and inhaling solely through my nose.

"Well," he said.

Then me too: "Well."

"Good night."

I didn't want to say it back. Something was stopping me from moving.

He tugged at my skirt.

Whilst I couldn't give him what he wanted, I sympathised with his cause.

Exhilaration fills up sinkholes. The unglamorous work of incremental progress also makes me positively sick. After each day I have to drink gallons of beer.

I pushed the key into my door. To enter the building I must type the code: 17762457.

Each time I do it I feel a pang of independence, a real gratitude for my mind. Through a psychological process called chunking, I have broken down long strings of information into smaller, rhythmic units and memorised them according to my imagination.

1776 - 24 - 57.

I resist temptation to associate 1776 with the United States Declaration of Independence as I am a good person, I pride myself on that. Fuck America! Instead I imagine a 17-year-old chatting to her 76-year-old grandma.

This carries me up the 6 flights of stairs.

Sometimes I imagine both of them ascending beside me, round bouncy left-wing boobies and an old pair of pear drops creeping up the bannister like slugs.

At the end of a long corridor is my room, and in the corner, by the window, is my bed.

By the time I got into it I was positively exhausted by myself.

There began a small moment of blank space, a rare upending of the bucket.

I stared at the ceiling.

Lying in total darkness, I can't help but think of his body. I wonder if it's changing. There must be a point at which staying still incurs some equal but opposite effect.

The low and mournful moans from the whale next-door vibrate my metal bed frame.

I count saints.

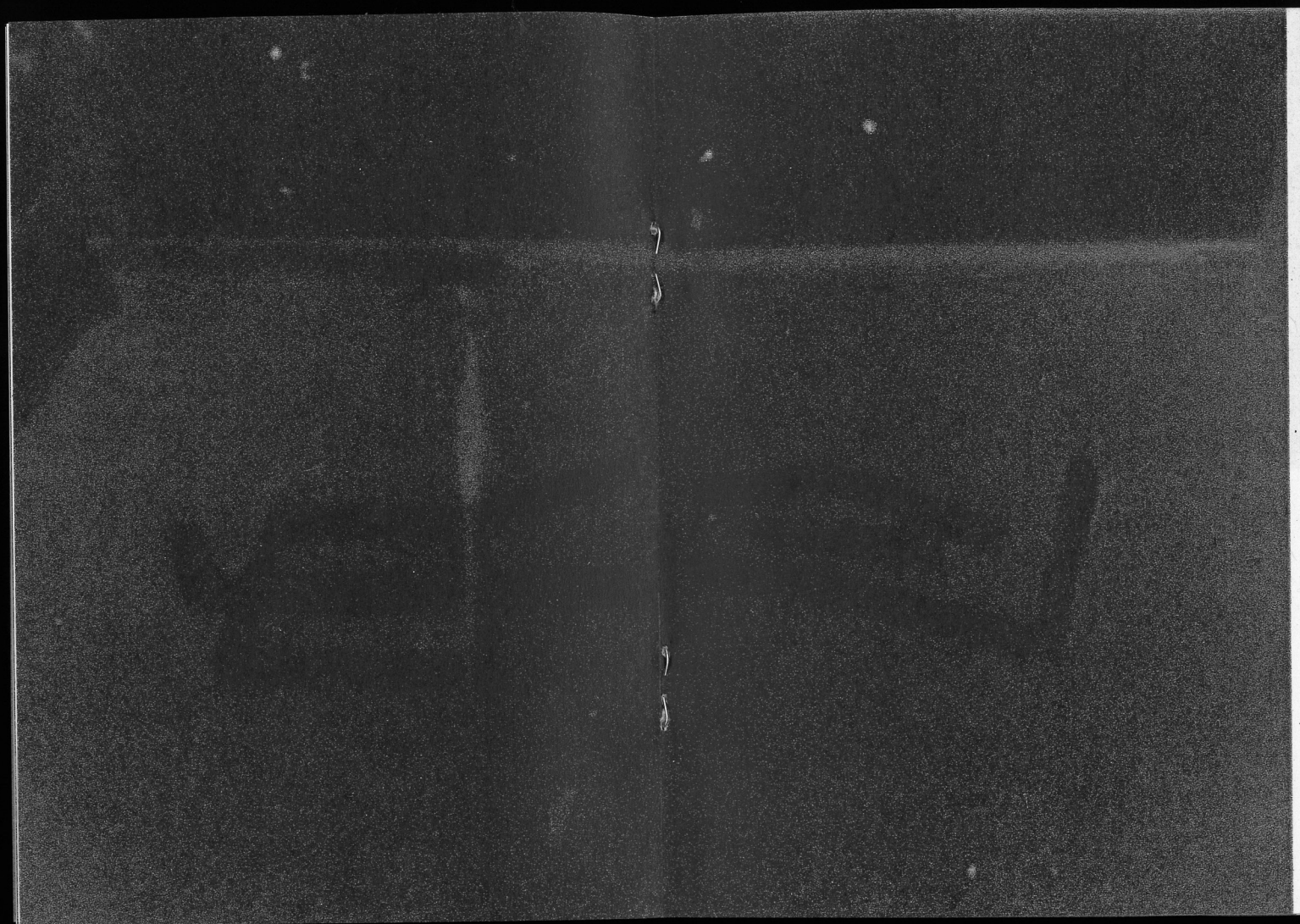
St Anthony of Padua,
St Andrew by the wardrobe,
Ruth in the alien corn
etc.

"OHUUUUHUUHUUUUUUUU"

I swear I'll never sleep again.

I think of other things that get no rest; hotel receptionists, bullfrogs, fridges, my father. Sugar factories tend to stay on all night. They're simply too expensive to turn off.

Wasn't it Plato who said the spleen exists to keep the liver bright and pure? Like a napkin always ready prepared and at hand to clean the mirror. It occurs to me that this is true in every version of the universe. I am thinking about him again.



All this time I haven't moved an inch: *is this the point at which staying still incurs some equal but opposite effect?*

What am I doing here? What am I doing here?

I run downstairs, heart going up and down like a moth.

Lying next to him on the ground, I place my hand in his, and ask:

"what's your problem?"

Turns out to be ectopic, some small hardened fury instilled in him by his mother. He went to see a modern-thinking psychoanalyst, but that only made it worse. He turns to me:

"Funny, right? How a bunch of closely clustered occurrences can suddenly ruin your life?"

We lie in silence for a while together. Performing a meditation on principle, spite, elegance and luck.

I'd like to kiss him, but there's no point. I know the weight of the whole entire world is centimetres above us.

Tomorrow they'll turn on the lights.

He'll stand up and head back down to the pub, where his arm is some strange weapon, propping him up at the bar. He'll drink and talk to anyone who'll listen.

And the world will keep burning, the vast muddy inclines of banks propped up by small shifty wooden planks, pinned by thirteen inch nails which drive to the centre of Absolutely Not the problem. Mass and reality will continue to fall either side of the net. Feeling'll slip off its structure. Nothing'll stand still. Love'll move on without us.

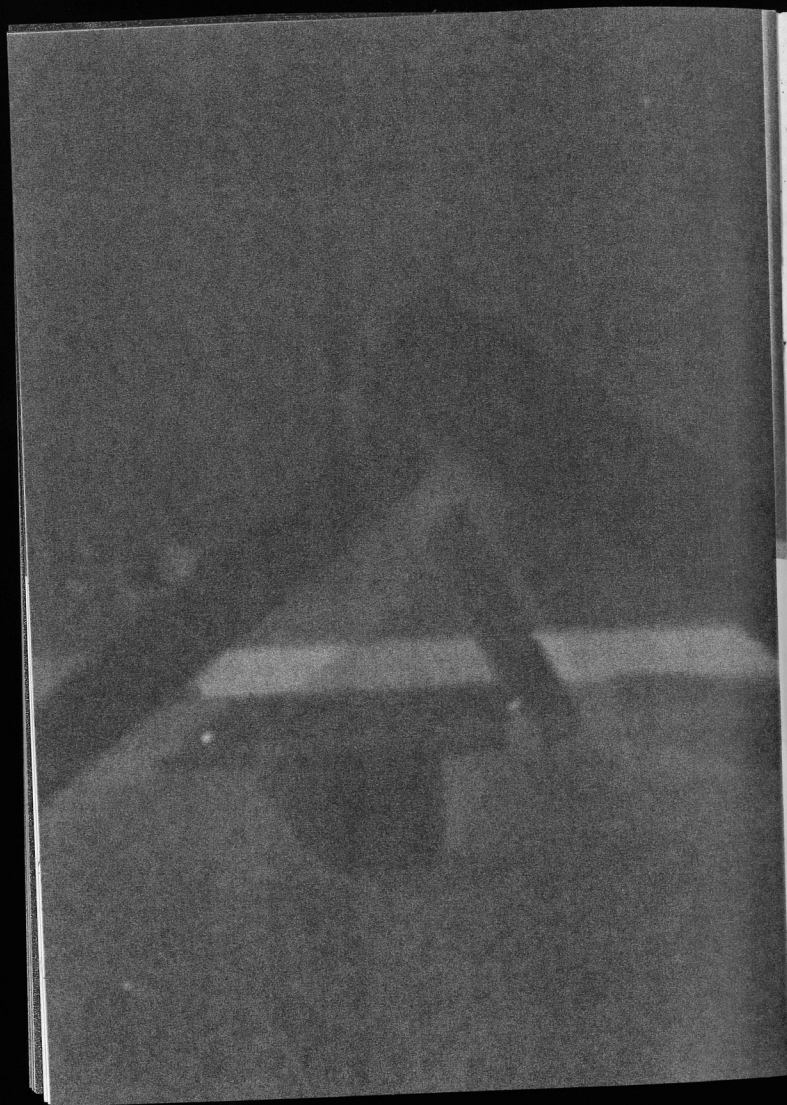
I count saints. Language splits up and marches off in separate directions. He snores loudly besides me.

BY ANNA PLOWDEN



Anna Plowden (*1996) is an artist working across sculpture, writing, collage and film. She lives in London.

Roberto Ronzani (*1998) is an artist working across drawing, painting, collage and sculpture. He lives in Munich.

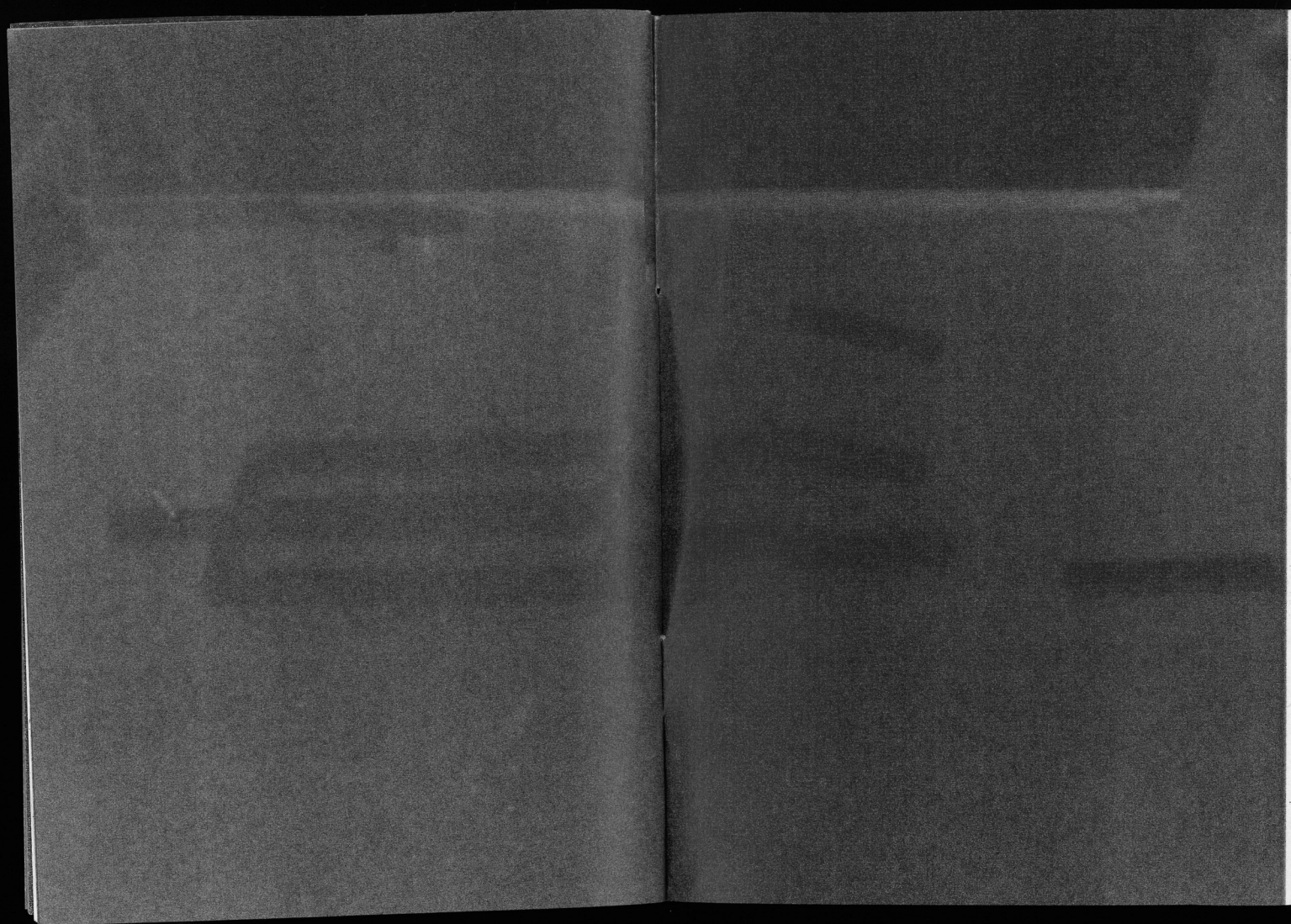


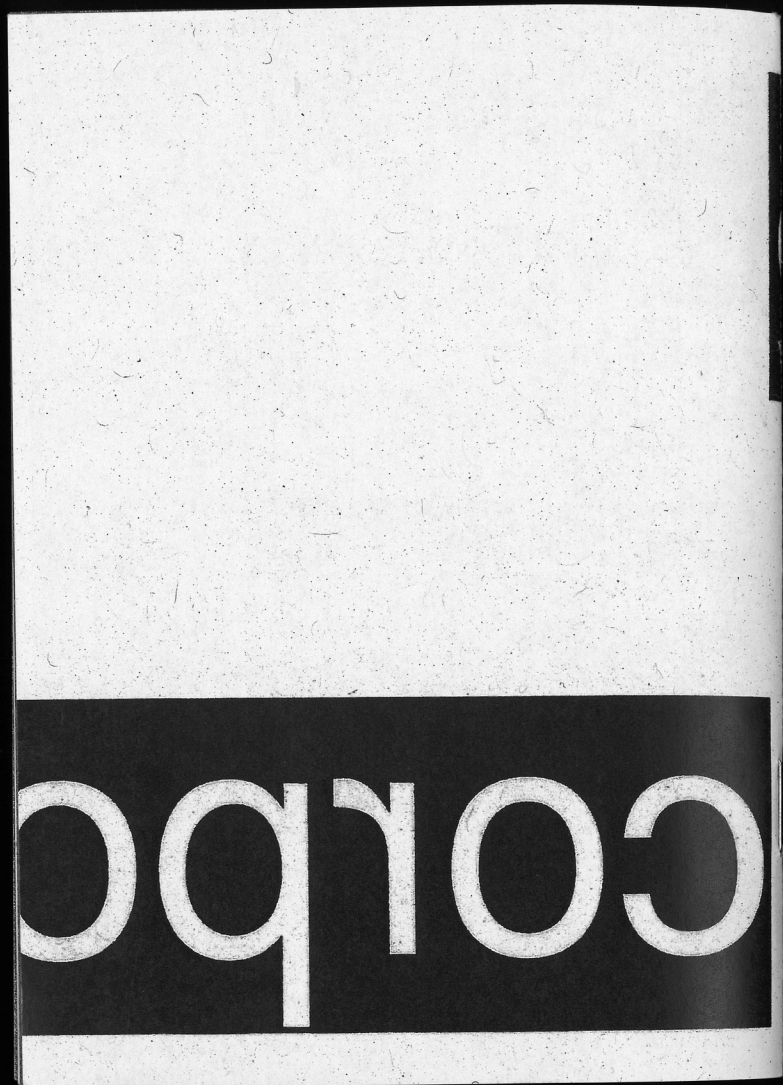
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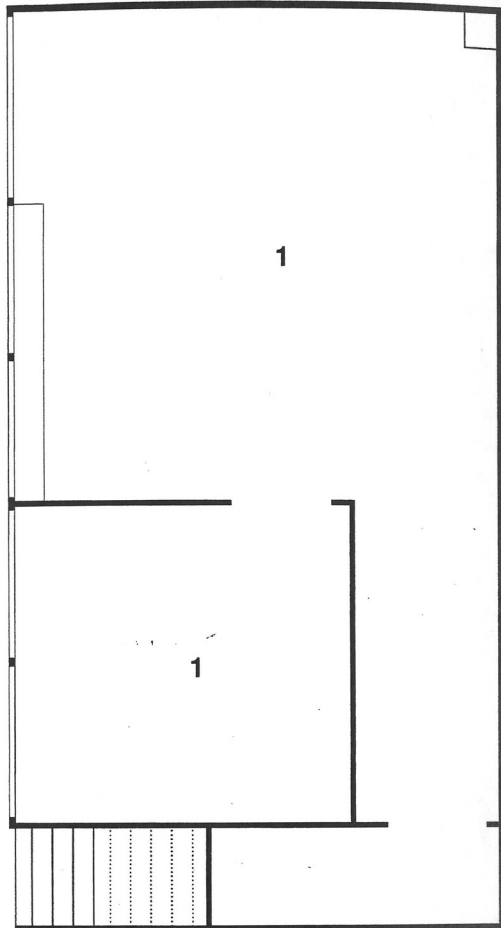


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Image Courtesy: Roberto Ronzani
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13 C-prints, each 10 × 15 cm, framed, 20.5 × 25.5 cm