

PHILLIP J. BARRATT

STRATEGIES OF LIKENESS

(TWO VOLUMES)

M.F.A. UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

1988 - 89

STRATEGIES OF LIKENESS

VOLUME 2

Presented in this book is documentation of the work produced during 1986-89
within the Masters of Fine Arts course at the Tasmanian School of Art,
University of Tasmania.

Name: Phillip J. Barratt

Date: November 1989

Book No.:

Volume 2

PROPOSAL FOR M.F.A.

From 1983 to 1985 I concentrated my photographic activity on the portrayal of social, mental and physical handicaps, which I wish to continue in the M.F.A. course.

The continuation of this study would involve many of those social groups already photographed, in addition seeking a far greater participation of the people involved. This greater involvement of people could take many avenues, for instance, the use of drawings, text, and the manufacture of environments.

The Royal Derwent Mental Hospital (a specific area I would intend to follow through from past work), was briefly extended beyond straight photography with the participation of patients who drew on photographs and large sheets of plastic, with my intention of further extending the photograph and stimulating a more active dialogue between the patient, the photograph, and the audience.

In the M.F.A. course I intend to further explore and define my use of the photographic medium; to become more articulate with the use of photography as a visual language, and to stimulate more active participation from my photographic subjects.

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2nd February, 1987.

Mr. P.J. Barratt,
96 Norwood Avenue,
LAUNCESTON, Tas. 7250



Dear Phillip,

The Higher Degrees Committee considered your application for entry into the MFA programme and, on behalf of the Committee, I have much pleasure in offering you a place in the course. The offer is subject to one condition; namely, that you agree to discuss and to alter some aspects of your study proposal in consultation with David Stephenson and myself. The Higher Degrees Committee was strongly of the view that the approach you had intended to adopt in dealing with patients at the Royal Derwent Hospital raised ethical questions which need careful scrutiny. Some modifications of the project may well be in order given those questions.

In the light of this, could you arrange to see David and myself sometime in the week beginning Monday, 12th February.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jonathan Holmes'.

Jonathan Holmes,
Dean,
Tasmanian School of Art.

Summary of MFA Work

On applying for the Master of Fine Arts Degree, my photographic work had concentrated on those people who suffered from either physical, mental or social handicaps. Of particular importance was a continuing study of degree work with the Royal Derwent Mental Hospital. However, the Higher Degrees Committee was not prepared to support this proposal for reasons of the legal liability it felt might come, as a result of this investigation. Therefore, I sought to re-evaluate the MFA Proposal that would investigate the more general principles of photographic portraiture.

Throughout the MFA Degree, considerable time has been devoted to the technical refinement of my photographic practice. This was of considerable importance in the first year of the course, that led to a greater familiarisation with the zone system, extensive correspondence with Kodak and Ilford and learning something of the techniques of hand colouring.

Studio work, about which I knew nothing, was investigated late in this year and became the predominant way of working for the remainder of the course.

Whilst a number of subject areas were investigated in this first year ranging from panorama portraits of single women, to the portraits of those who live in the country town of Tunbridge; it was in November of that year that I approached the Church of England.

I approached the clergy in an effort to investigate the strategies of show, where there exists an explicit dualism of roles - the man who is at the same time within the institution of the church and the individual outside the church.

The concept of the split personality supported by appropriate props is immensely intriguing and at the same time socially poignant, as it begins to question the nature of perception and the strategies of surface.

An additional concern of the work was the continuing investigation of photographic portraiture as the photograph becomes a further diversive element in the strategy of surface. Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* identifies it in this way.

In front of the camera as subject:

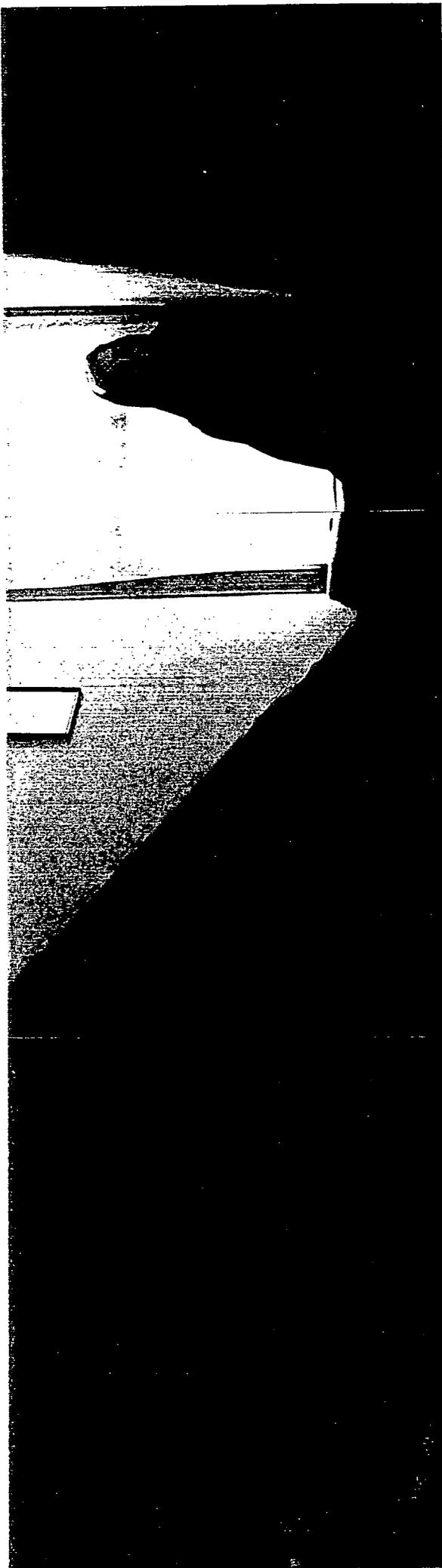
I am at the same time the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographers think I am and the one he, the photographer makes use of as his art.

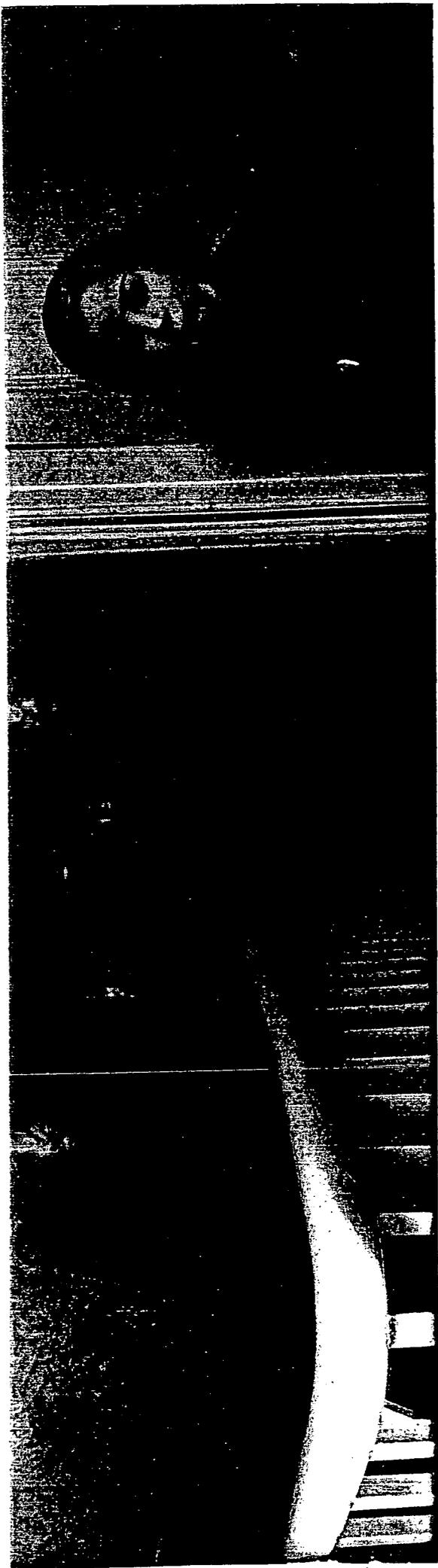
With these thoughts in mind and having gone to considerable effort to organize the clergy who were in support of this project, I was offered a commission for the Legal Practices Building, Hunter Street.

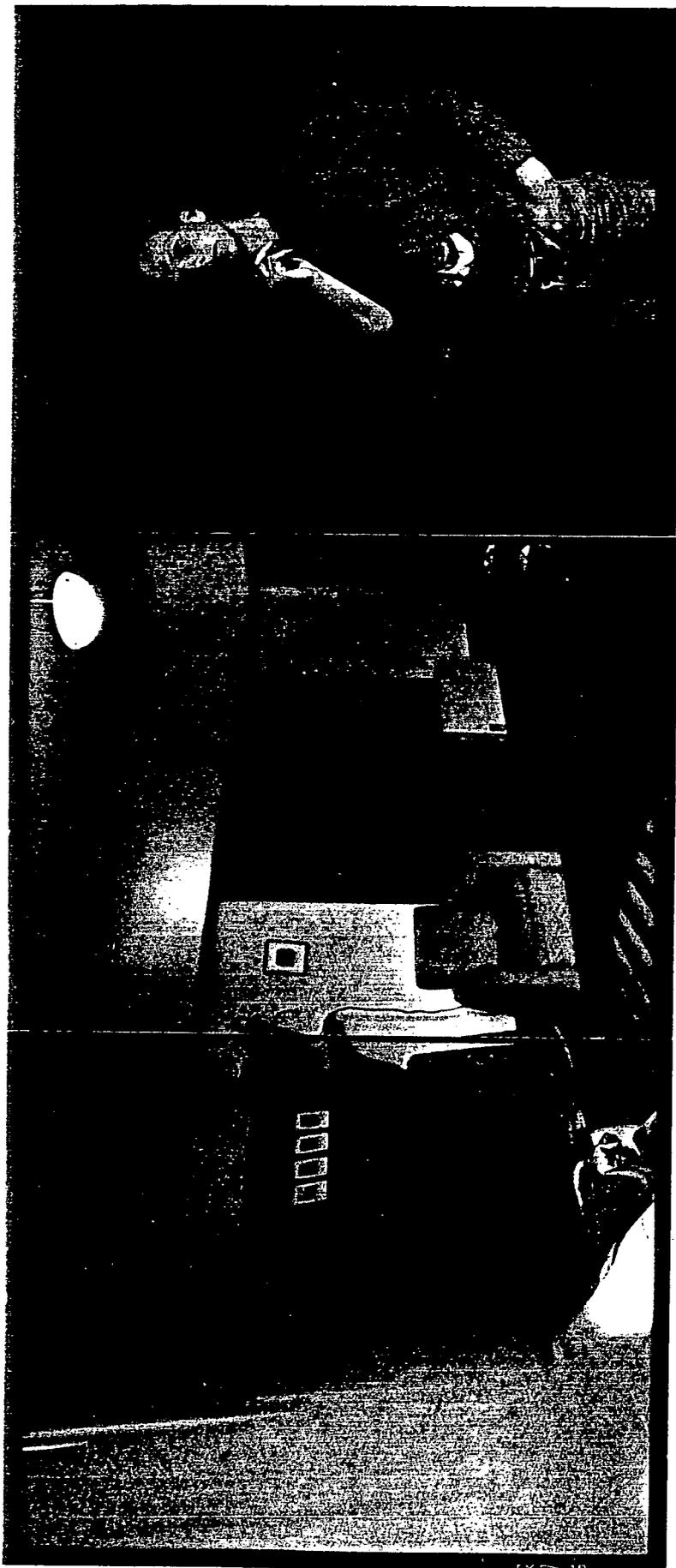
I saw there were a number of explicit similarities between the Church and the law fraternity. Both speak of power, wealth or implied wealth, both are institutions that are predominantly conservative in their views and on a more fundamental level, are predominantly concerned with the strategies of the facade - that range from buildings, to ceremonies and the archaic traditions of costume.

I therefore appropriated the concerns I had for the clergy for this new opportunity.

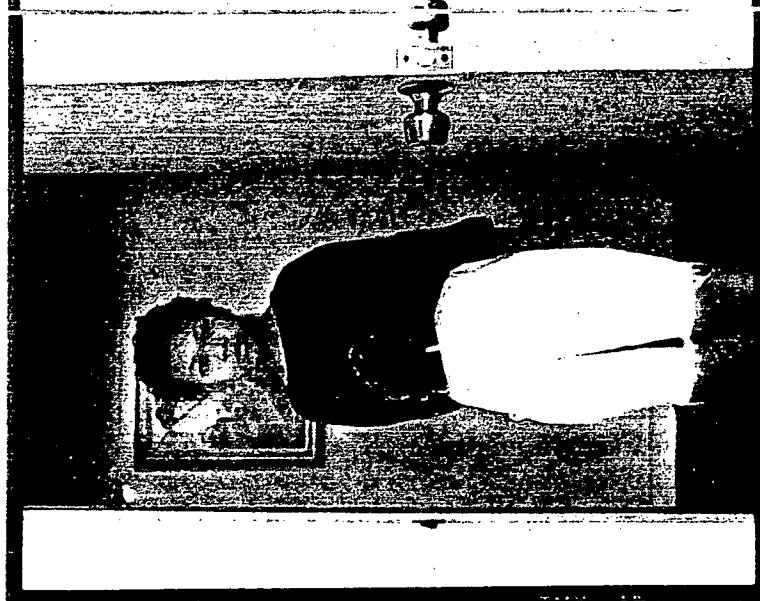
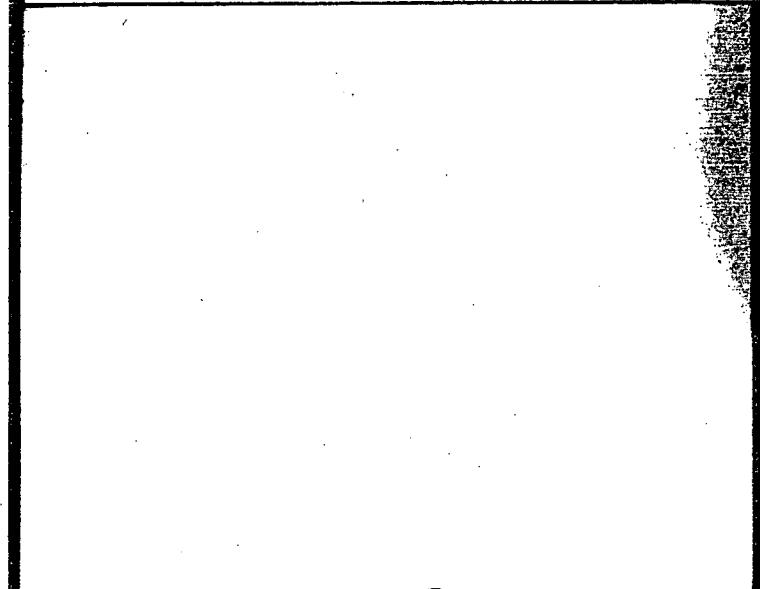
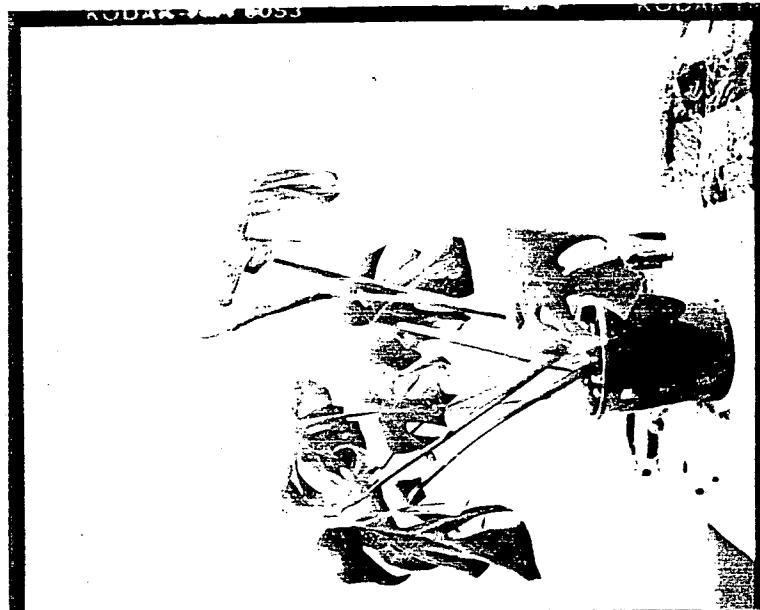


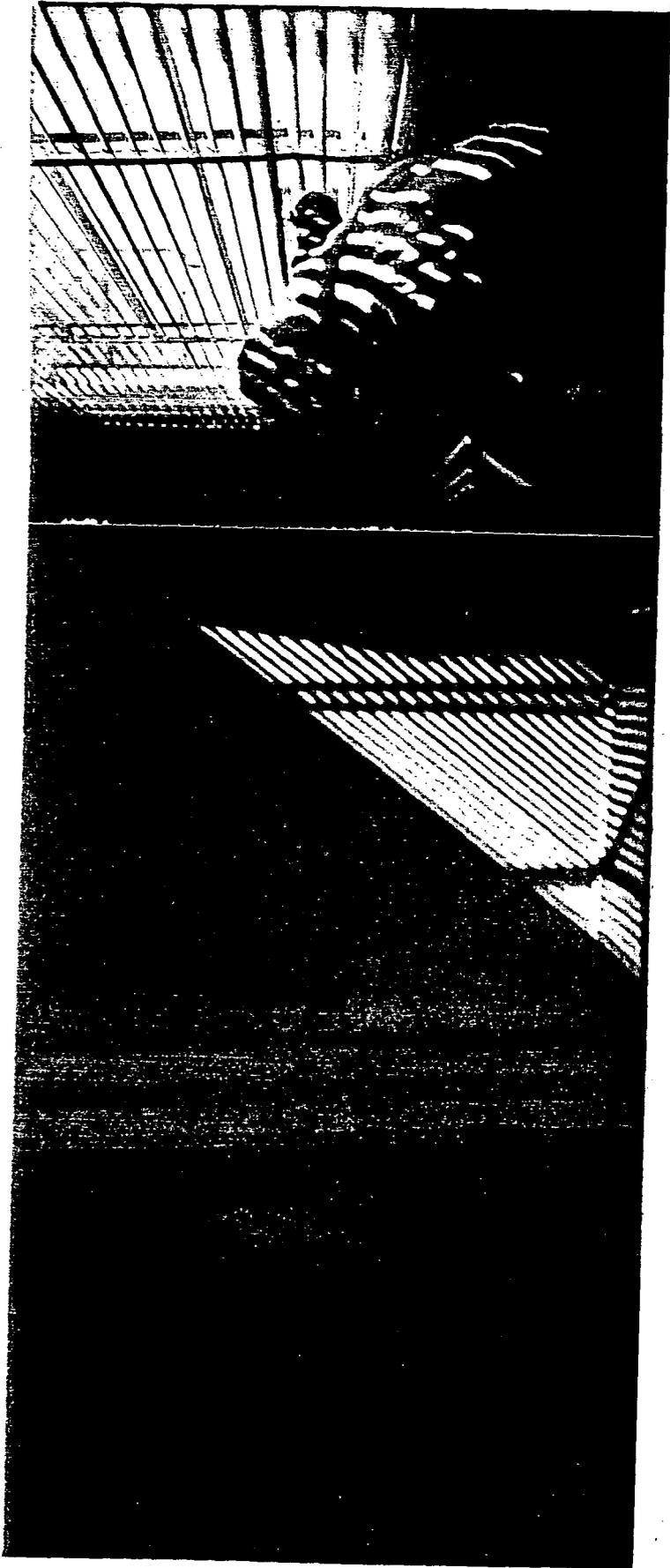


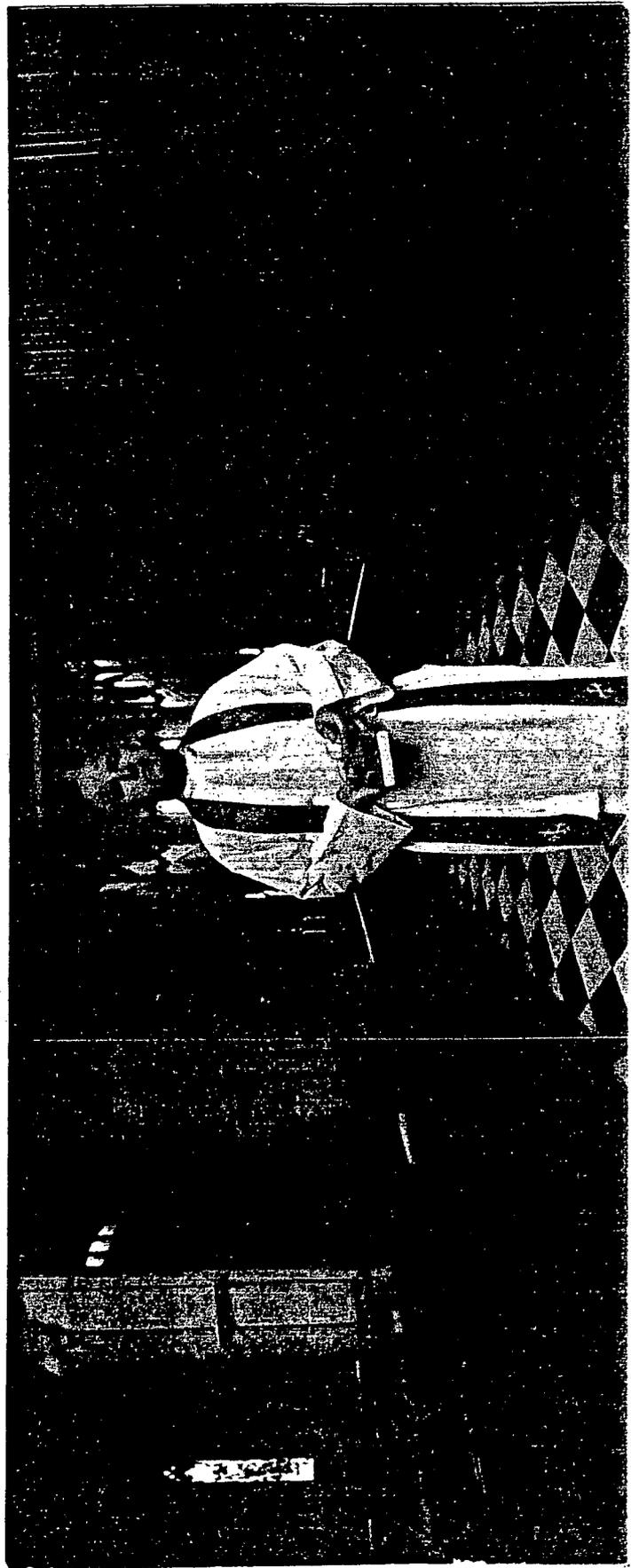


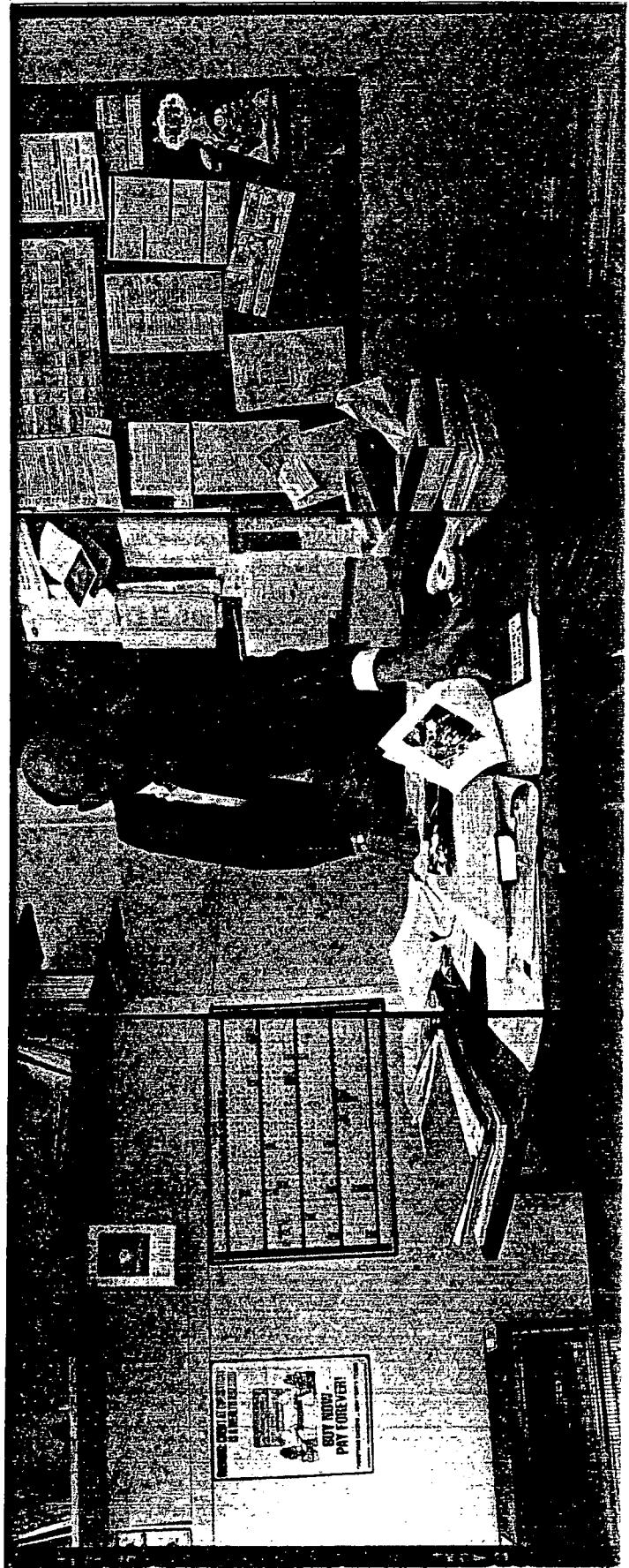


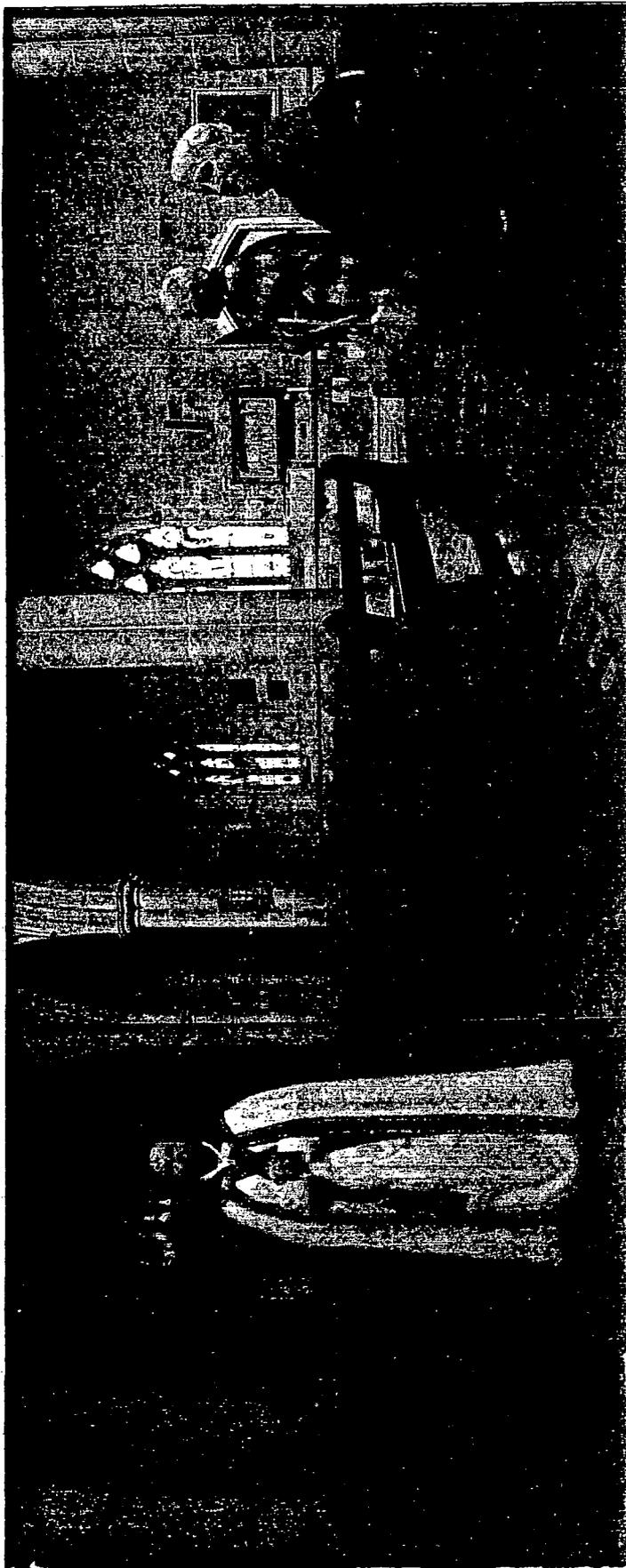


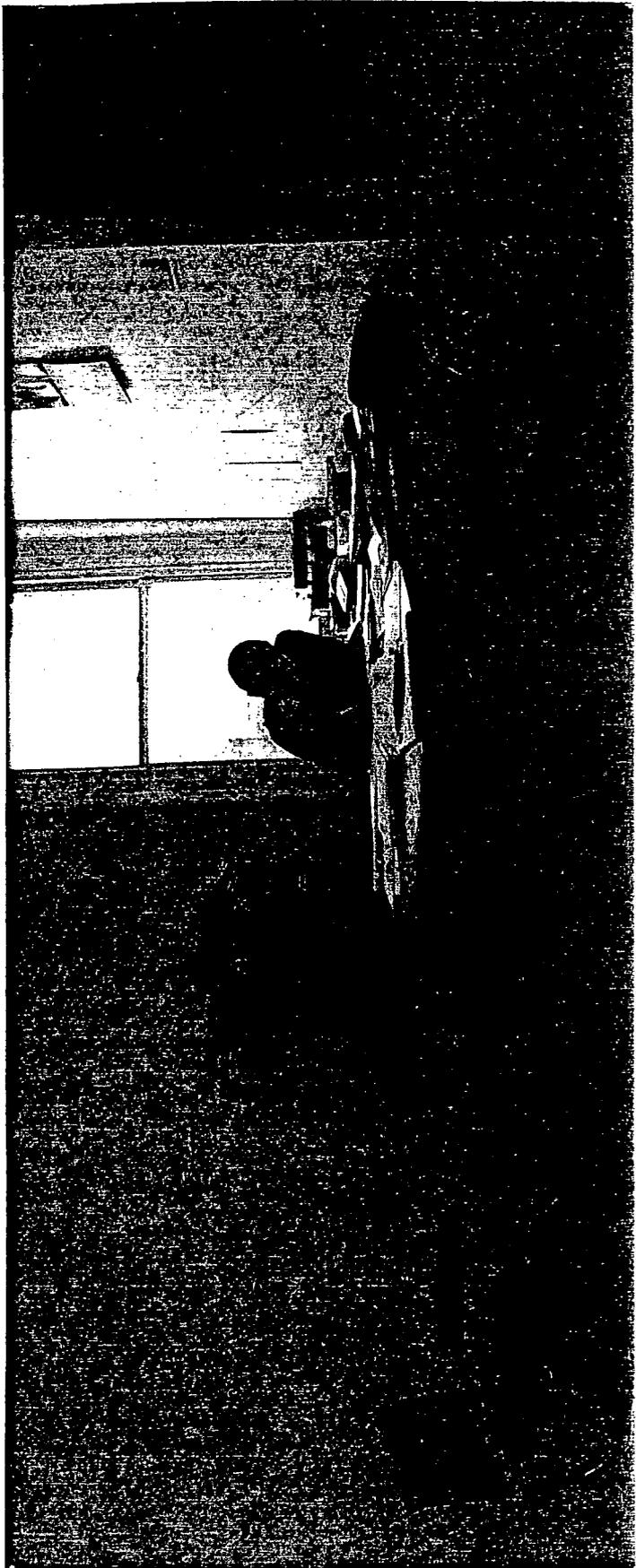












Legal Practices Commission

November 1987 - June 1988

Subject matter and

number of works

two judges

two prisoners

six barristers

Frame dimensions:

950mm x 1530mm

medium:

black and white/silver

gelatine photographs

selenium toned

Legal Practices Commission - Nov 1987 to June 1988

In considering the direction this work would take - within the concept of exploring the facade and the 'strategy of surface' - I first thought of using the polarities of the legal system, with only the judges and prisoners portrayed.

Within the context that this work would hang within the Legal Practices Building, decorating the walls of a building used in a course for requires young emerging law graduates - the articles year, I considered an investigation of prisoners and judges would on the one hand, show the legal and social extremities of these two groups, and on the other, allow a conceptual space for the graduate to anticipate on graduation.

It was with difficulty, however, that I secured the portraits of the judges, and as for the prisoners and prison system, the commission administrators were extremely dubious of any such enquiry. The project therefore, looked to barristers from both Hobart and Launceston, with particular emphasis placed on those who work in the courts and who are required to wear the wig and gown.

An additional strategy was to identify an individual insecurity within a legal institution that appears to be the paradigm of power and social importance.

Technical procedures include the use of the panorama and a wide angle lens. This enabled me to:

- a) visually document a large proportion of an office interior that in addition accentuates the illusion of space.
- b) within the office, exposed barristers began to look insignificant or somewhat misplaced.
- c) camera height was at all times an important consideration for both compositional reasons and the feelings the viewer would receive i.e. a haughty arrogance by a low

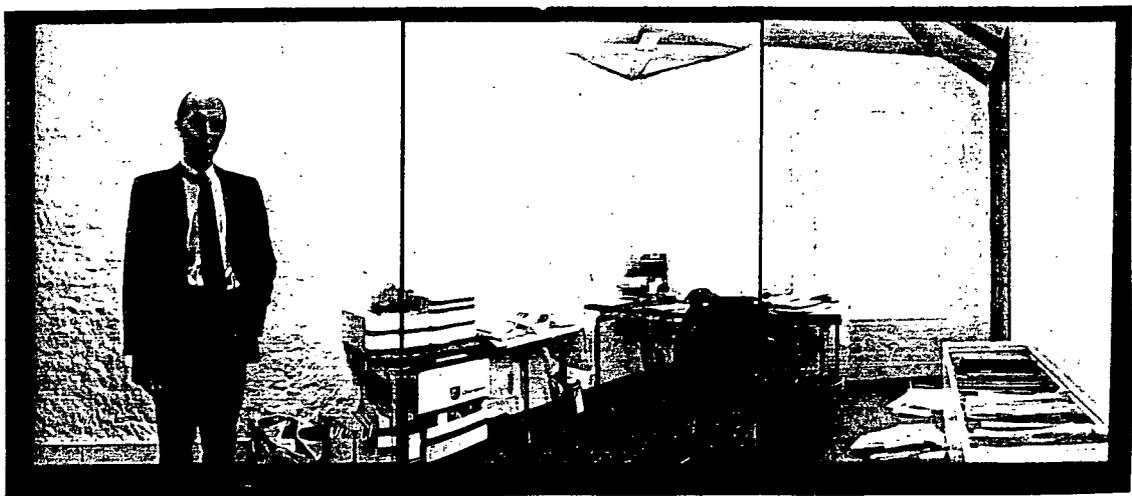
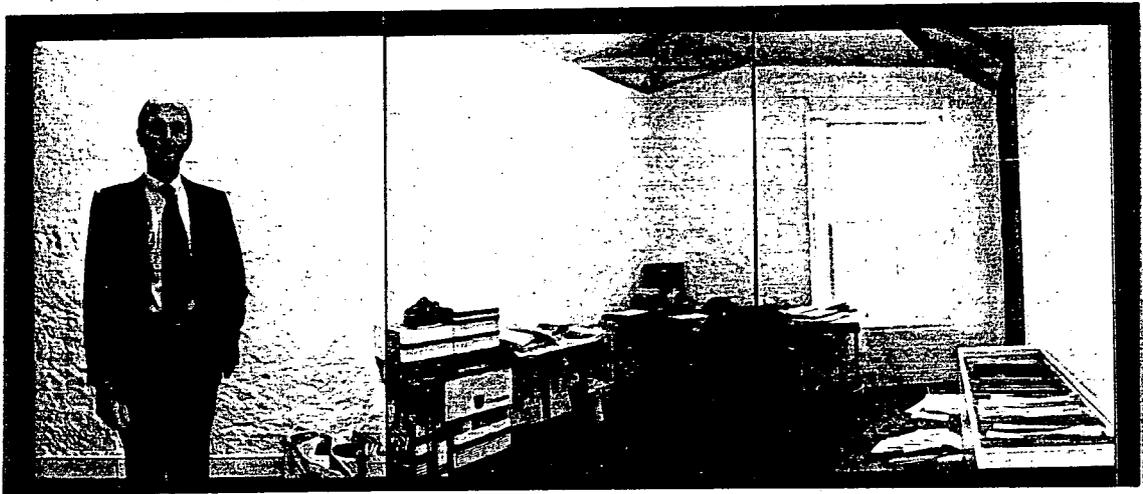
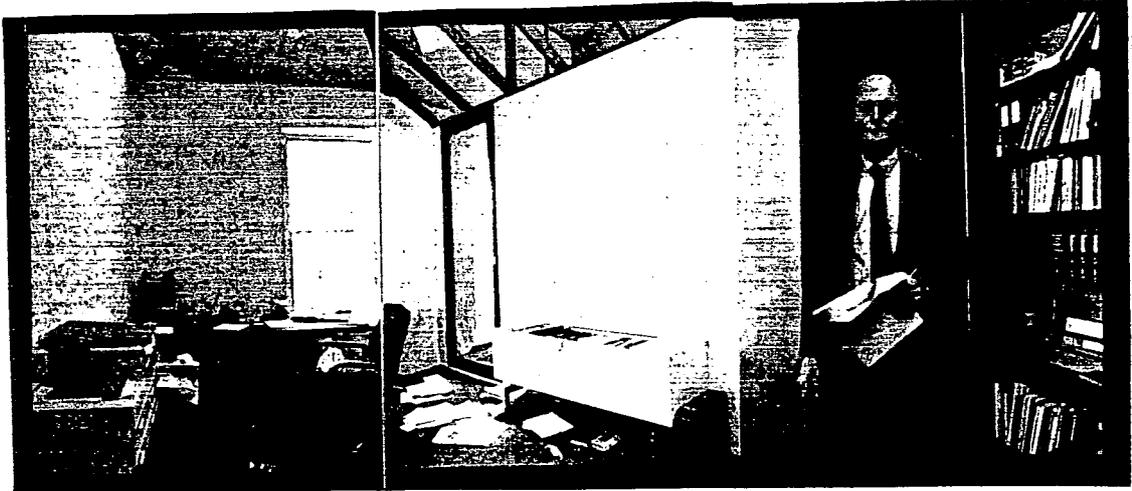
camera angle or a sense of vulnerability by a high camera angle.

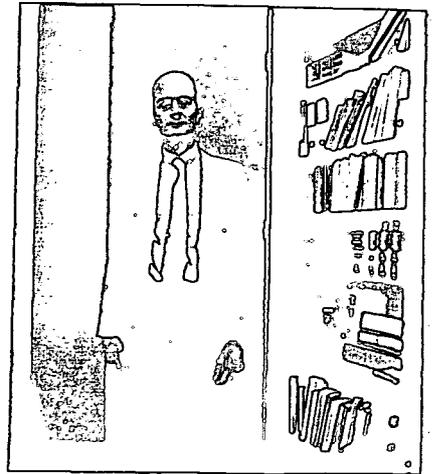
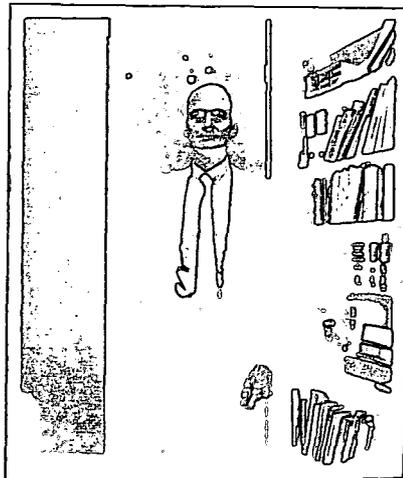
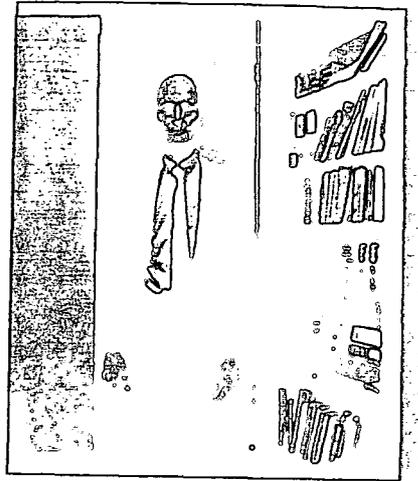
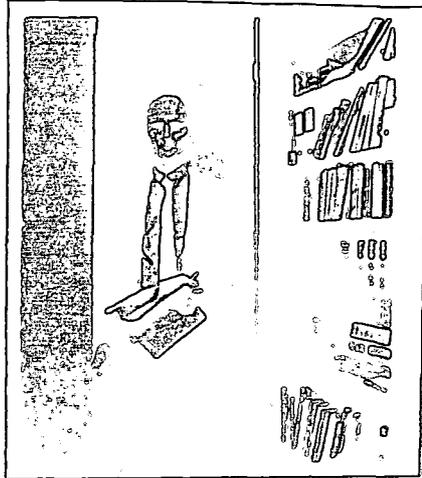
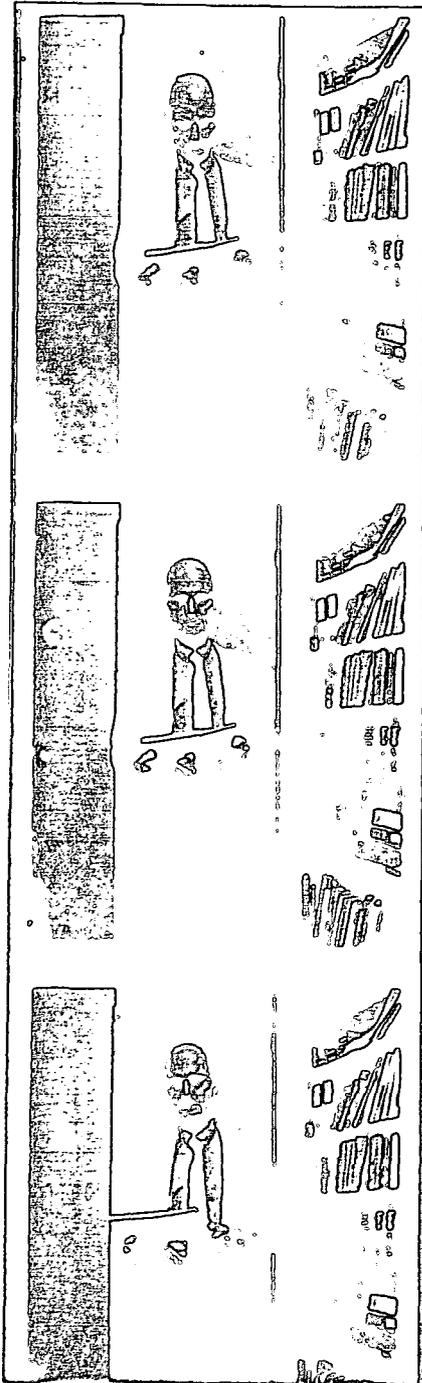
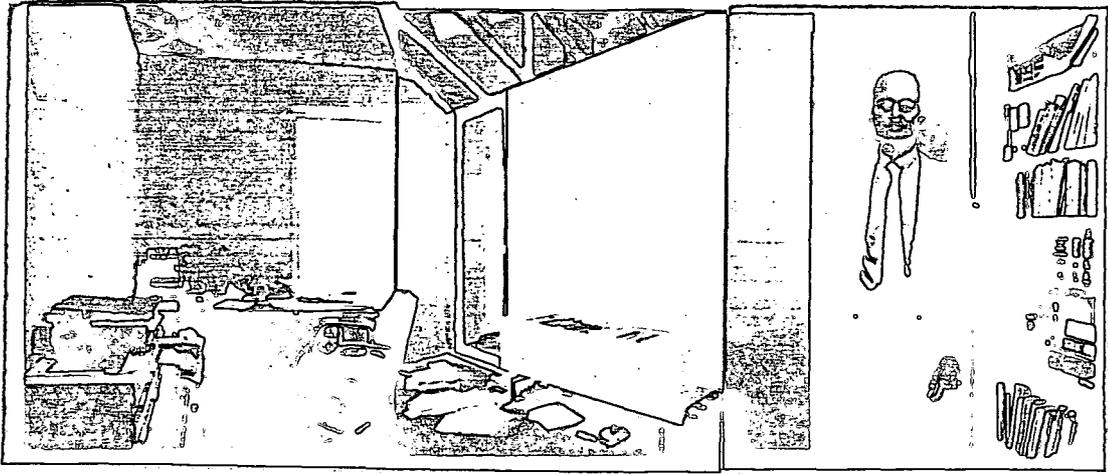
The studio consisted of tungsten lights and a large white paper backdrop.

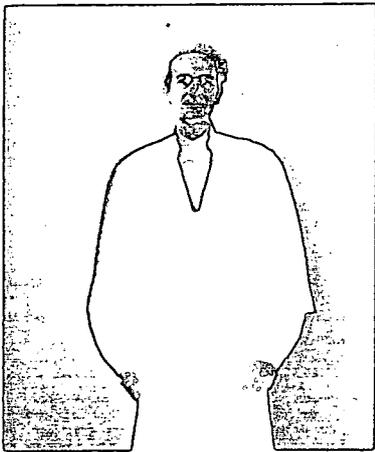
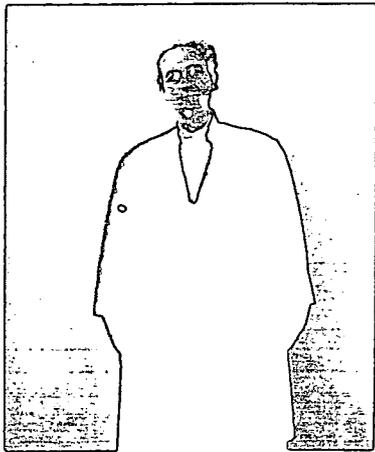
- a) for maximum luminescence and sterility of this spatial 'void' - the background of all photographs was bleached to paper base white.
- b) enlargement of these studio photographs enabled me to reveal every skin blemish, scar and shaving rash that black and white film will allow at this enlargement.
- c) black and white film was used for its graphic qualities, maximum darkroom flexibility, expense and familiarity.
- d) all participants stood for a sense of vulnerability and what might be referred to as 'mug shots'.

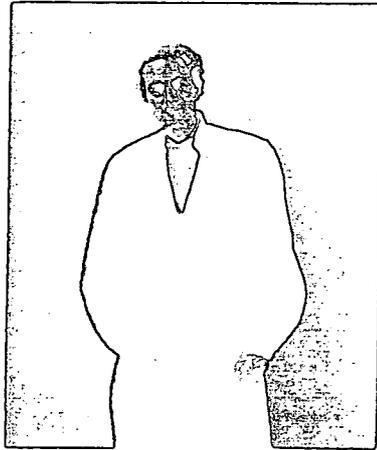
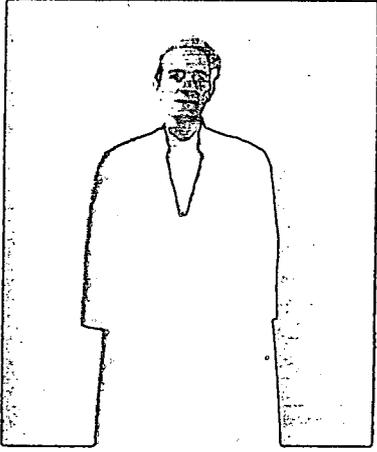
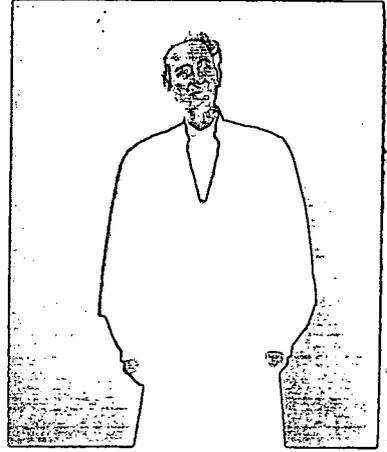
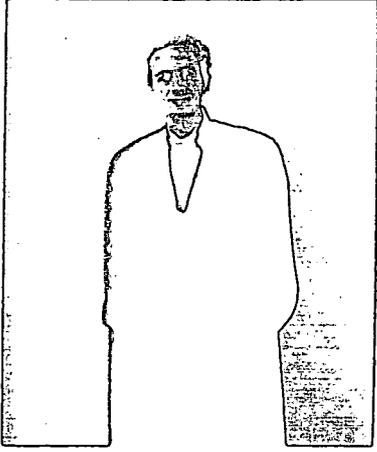
It is interesting to note that on conclusion of this commission, people within the Art School felt that I had made fools of these people, with the suggestion that the commission might not be accepted. It must be said that it was not my intention to make fools of anybody. The enormous quantity of film taken, the number of participants involved and the careful scrutiny of all photographs, sought to find a compromise between that which would not offend the participant and yet would signify something of my concerns and enquiry.

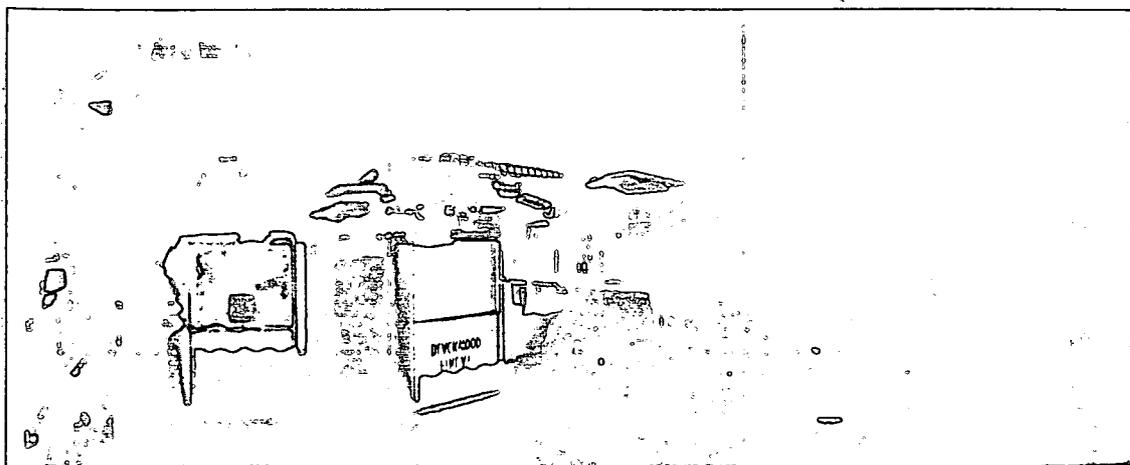
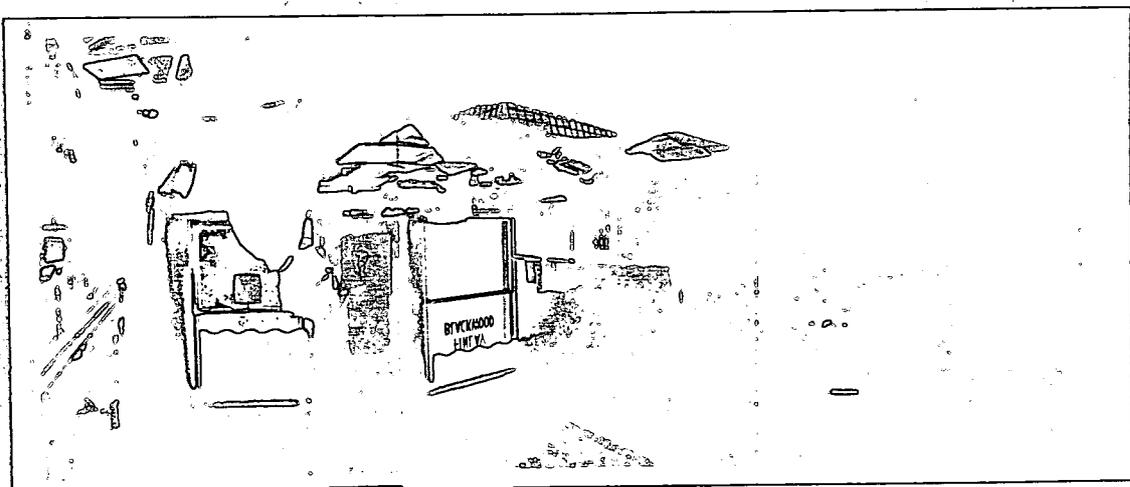
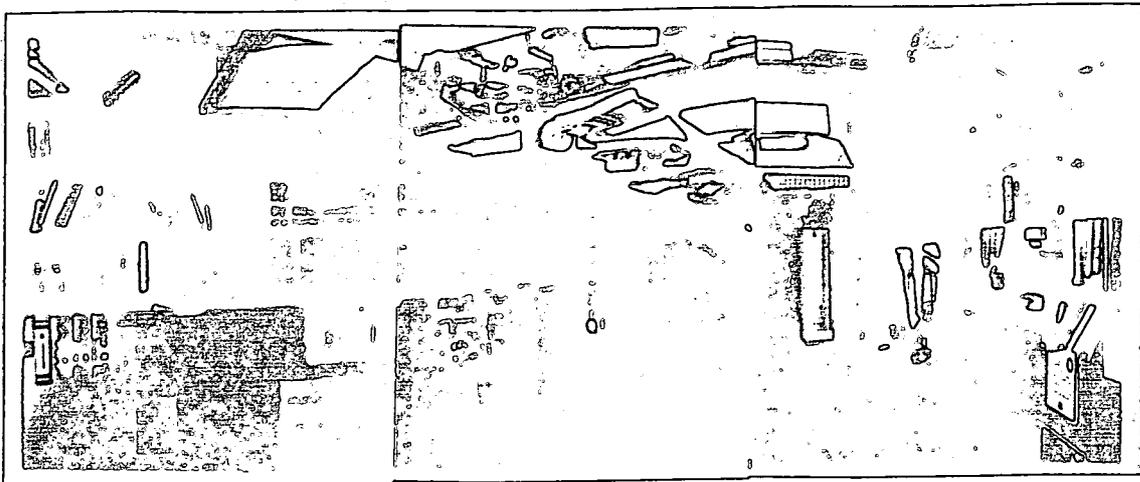
Given the comments of the commissioners who felt that the project was a success and with a number of participants purchasing photographs, it only goes to show that the surface is a dimension of infinite possibilities.

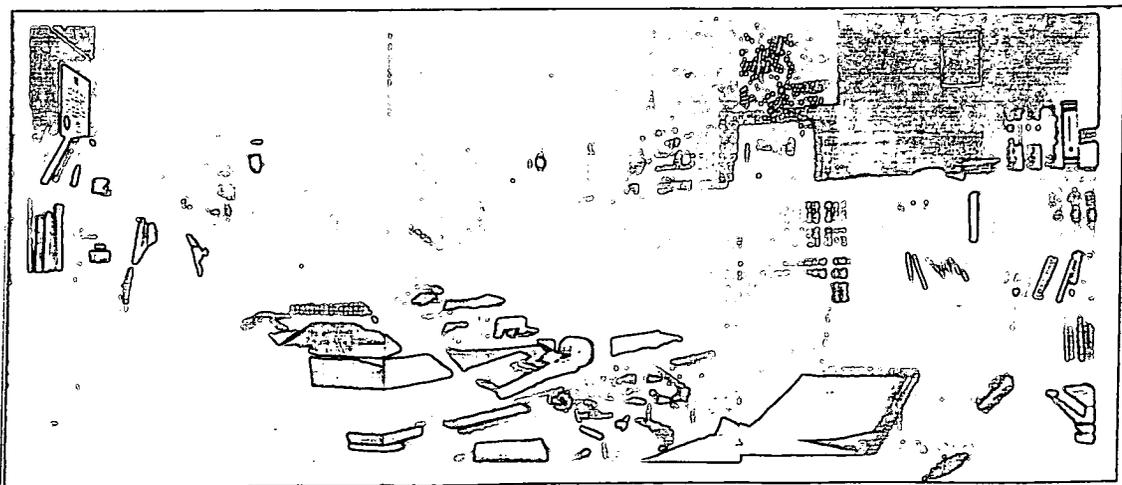
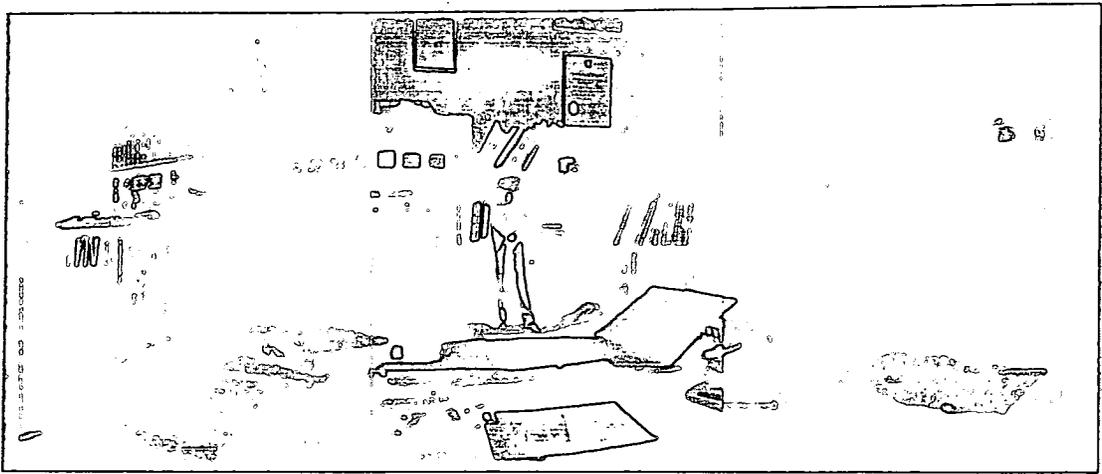
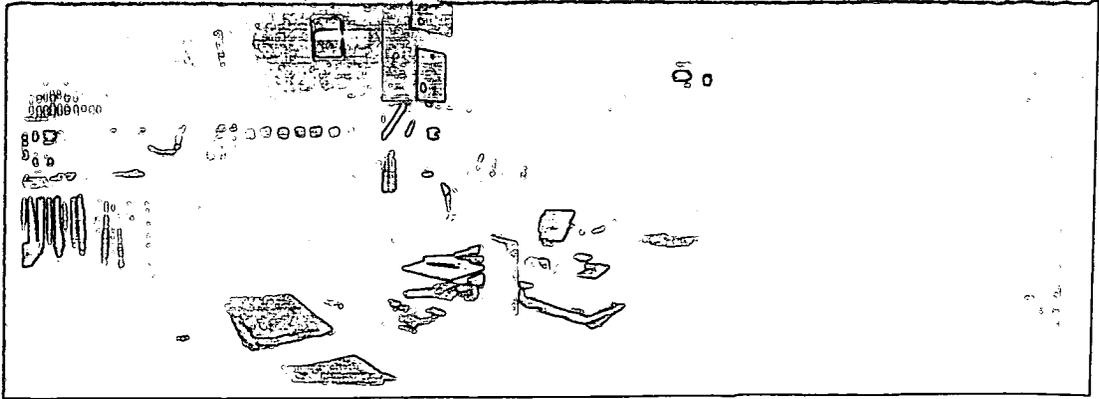


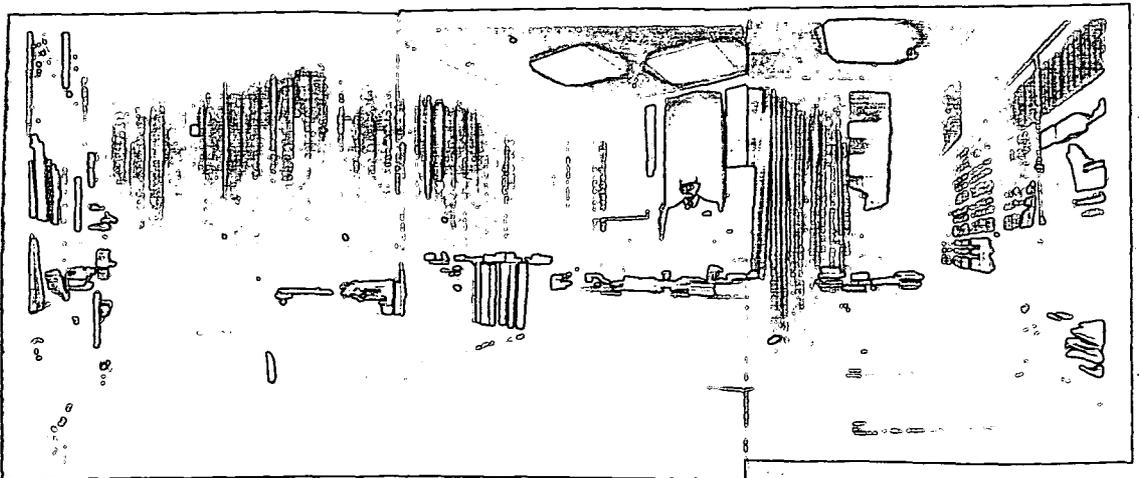
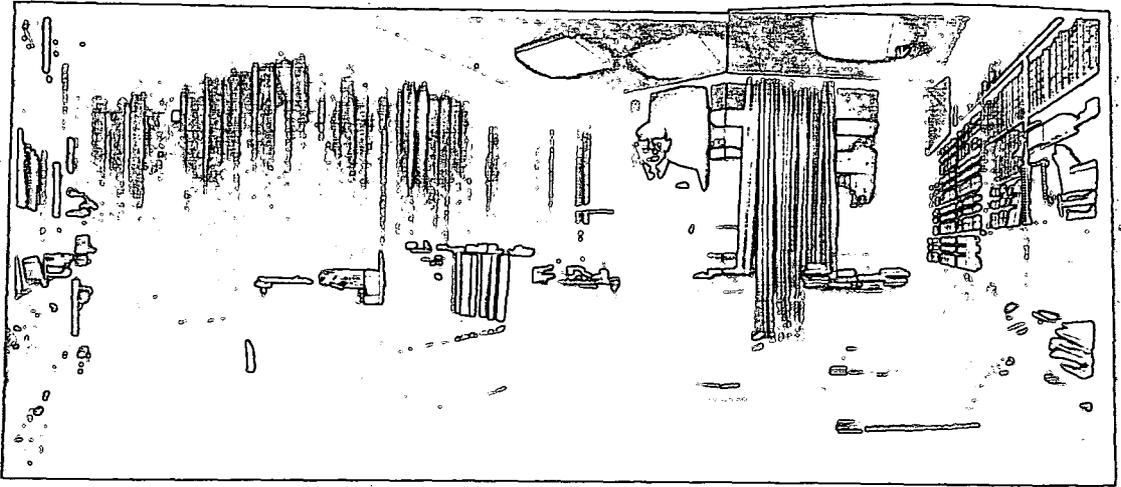
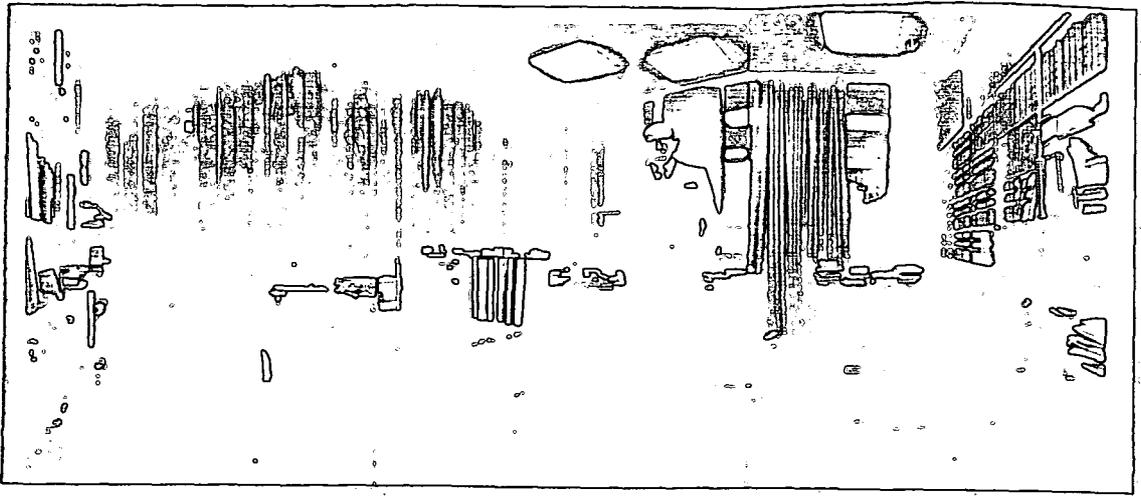


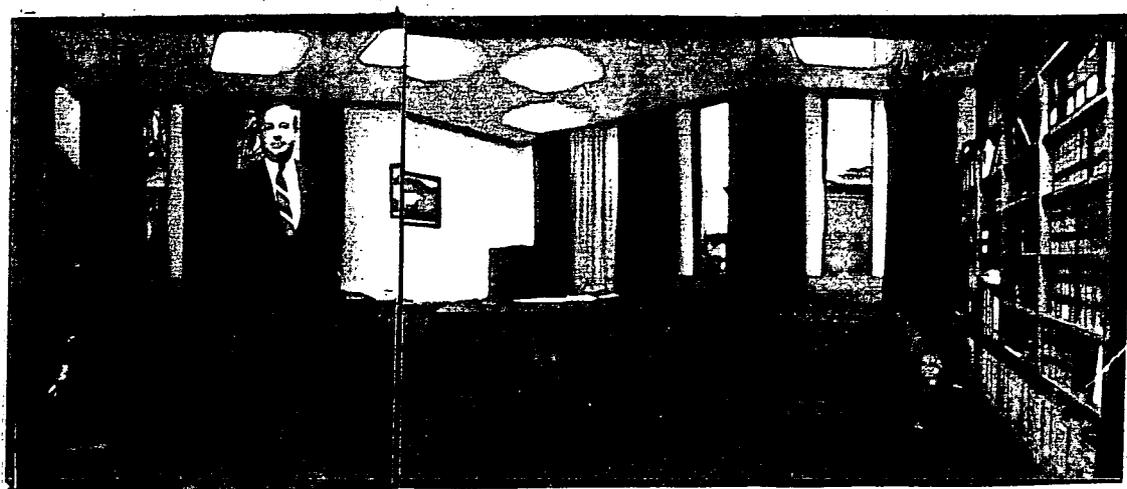


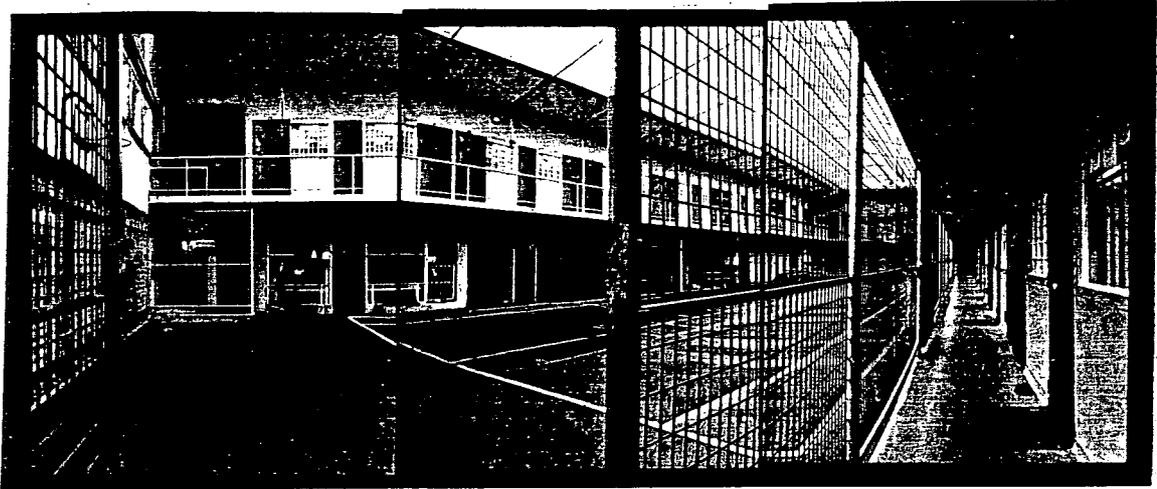


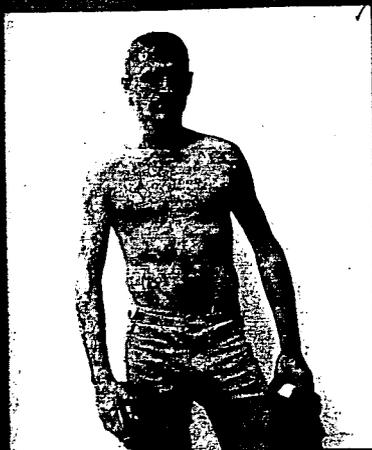
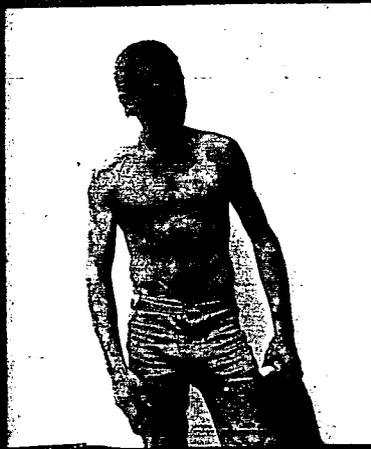




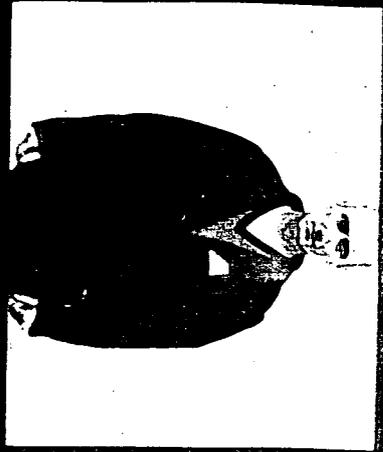












Strategies of Show - Series 1

1988-89

Subject matter:	body builders
Number of works:	five triptychs
Total work dimension:	1300mm x 3200mm
individual unit/frame dimension:	1000 x 1300mm
medium:	black and white/silver gelatine photographs selenium toned

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Strategies of Show - Series 1

1988-89.

There exists some parallels between the commission for the Legal Practice course and this work. I saw it investigated a further dimension of surface and the facade. With a western culture increasingly consumed by the body aesthetic, with writers like John Berger and Rosalind Coward, among others, who identify the social power and exploitation of the body - usually female; the body aesthetic was something that was close to me and socially pertinent.

My enquiry therefore looks to the most exaggerated and exhibitionistic aspect of the body cult, in the form of body building, believing that the body building image profoundly exhibits a social perversion somehow gone wrong and refers to aspects of a society and the individual, that are beyond the literal image.

To clarify what I was thinking about, the following points were taken into consideration.

The body building image speaks of:

- a) obsession
- b) facade
- c) it 'implies' an exaggeration of masculinity for the male through increased muscle bulk, that may in fact be a diversion - a cover-up for a lack of maleness. i.e. - insecurity or libido.
- d) whilst body building for the male appears to promise maleness - for the female it 'can' be a type of androgeny.
- e) for the male body builder, they become predominantly the object of attention for other males. Traditionally

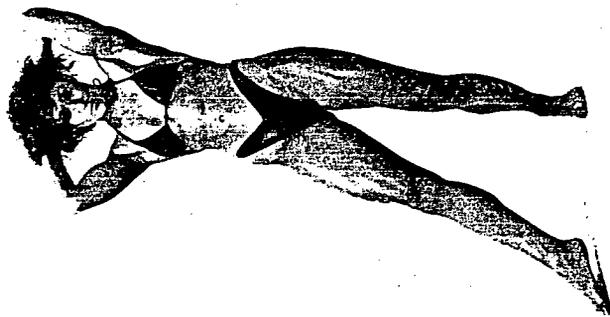
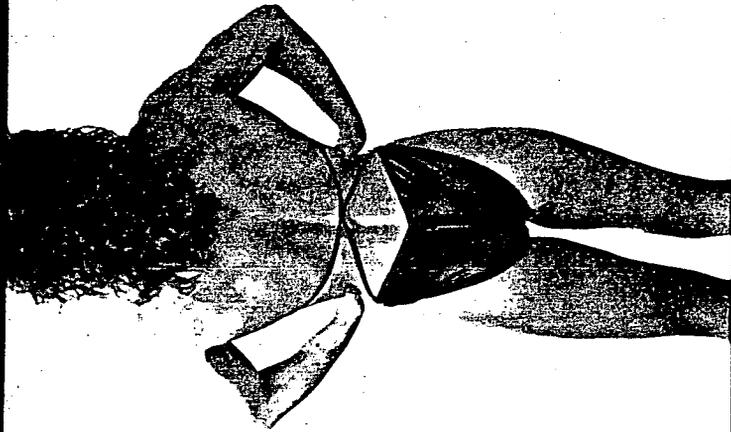
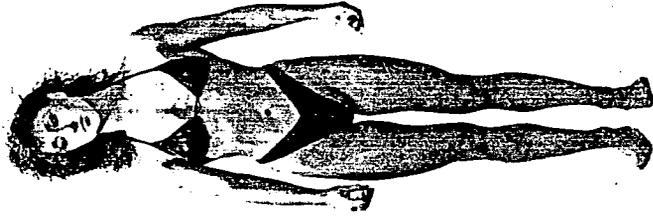
many body builders were gay. The culturing of the 'super-male' in this way is no longer a 'turn on' for the opposite sex (female) but one that often hovers between revolution and intrigue - not attraction.

- f) it now speaks of drugs (and not only steroids) that sadly, for the attainment of the body ideal, can destroy the very image it exudes. i.e. steroids can limit fertility, libido, can contribute to premature loss of hair, shrinking of testicles, damage to the liver and contribute to the permanent incapacitation of joints through increased muscle and tendon strain.
- g) it speaks of a decadence and futility as these bodies are not built to work but for show.
- h) the body is an exhibit - where it becomes dressed in its nakedness and yet so bodily conscious are these people it rarely ever sees the light of day - it is never good enough. Or, it becomes of such freak proportions, the individual can no longer handle the implications of exhibiting it publicly.
- i) it is an image that is obsessive in the maintainance of the ego, which I see as entirely cogent with the mental disorders of anorexia nervosa and some cases of bulimia.
- j) the entire image may in fact revolve around the phallus and as already referred to the libido may be impaired through the use of steroids. The very hub of the entire male image can in its relative size to the surrounding muscle bulk begin to look small and rather insignificant.

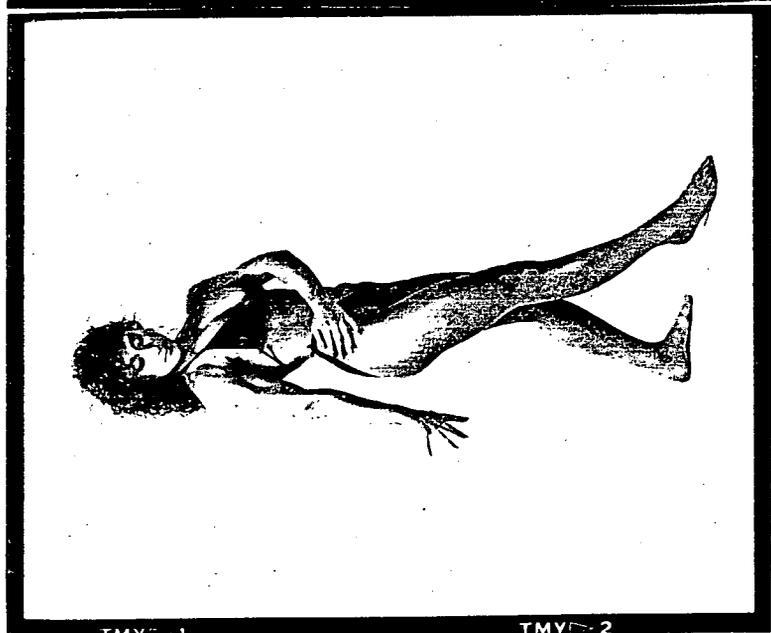
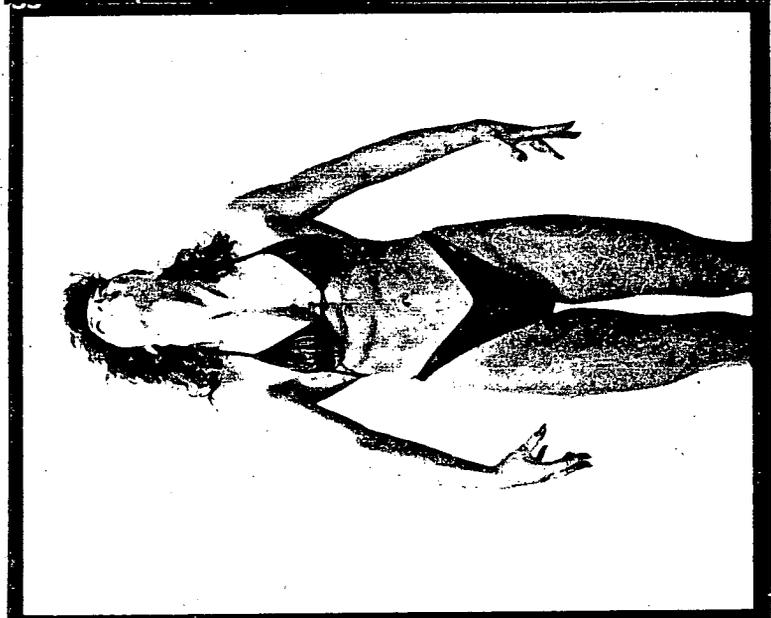
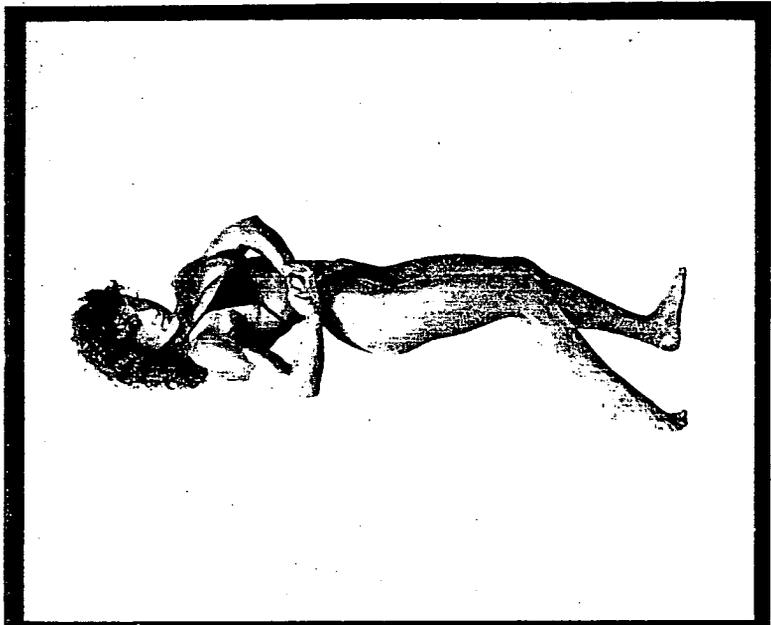
Whilst these photographs can only refer to some of these issues, the photographs are carefully choreographed to explore the body as an exhibit, where it oscillates between beauty and ugliness, success and failure. But, in addition to this, I explore something of the individual - where the facade exhibits a literal strength in muscle bulk, but does at the same time imply a fragility, weakness and an insecurity of the individual. If these images are merely humorous or merely absurd, then the social implication of this facade and these photographs has been sadly misunderstood.

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KODAK



TMY-13



TMY-1

TMY-2



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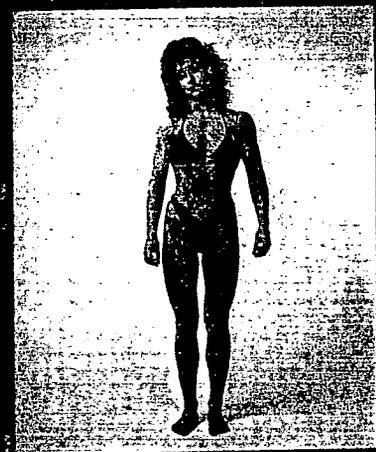
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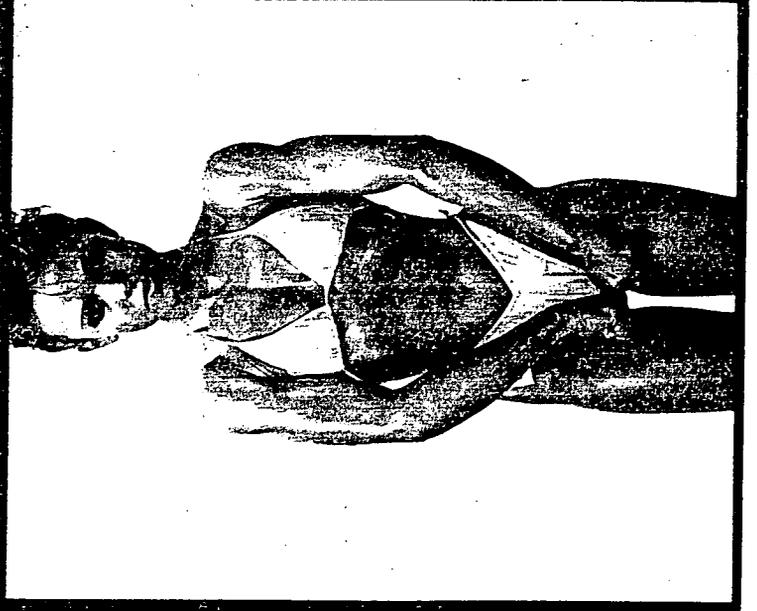
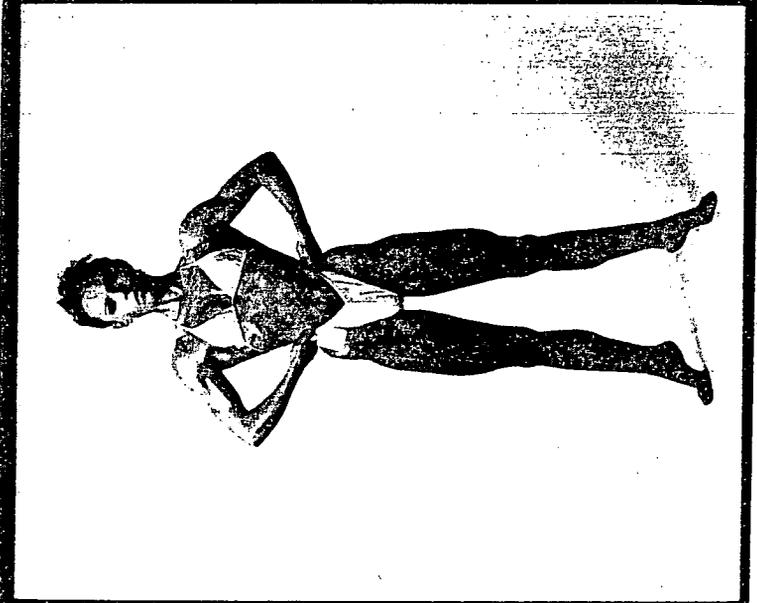
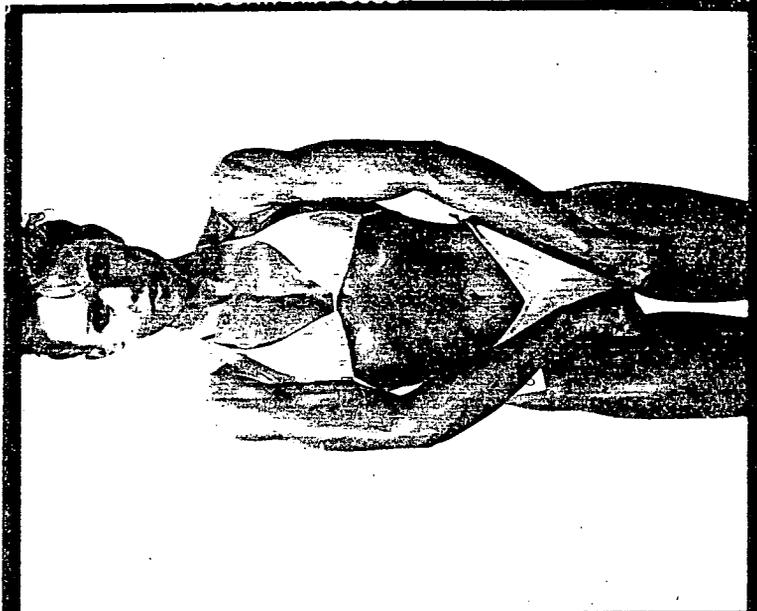
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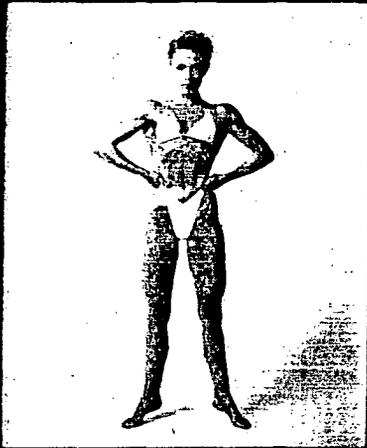


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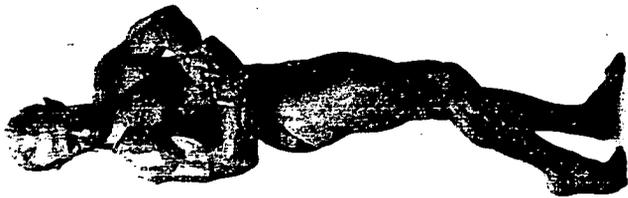
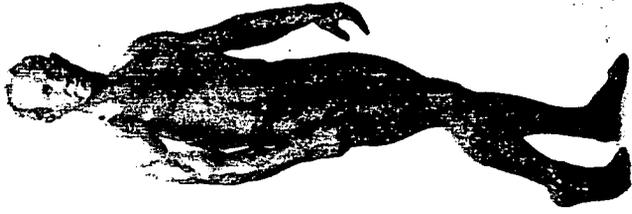
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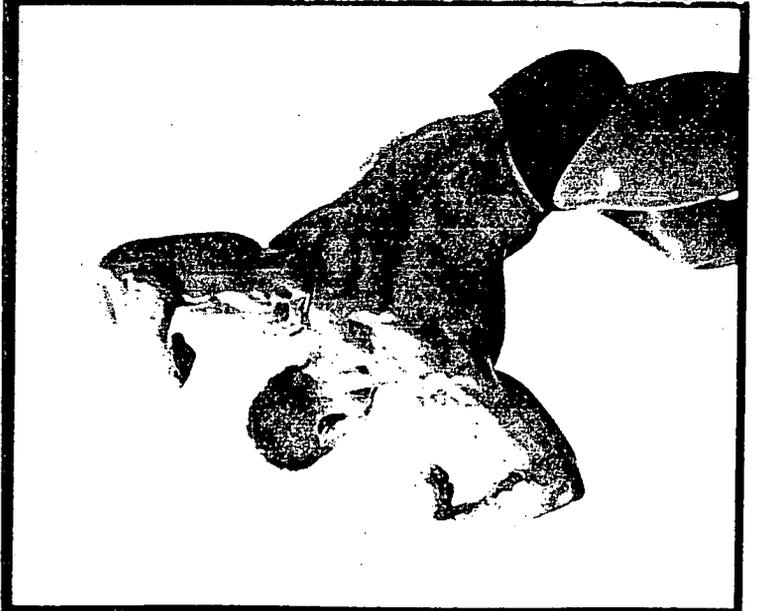
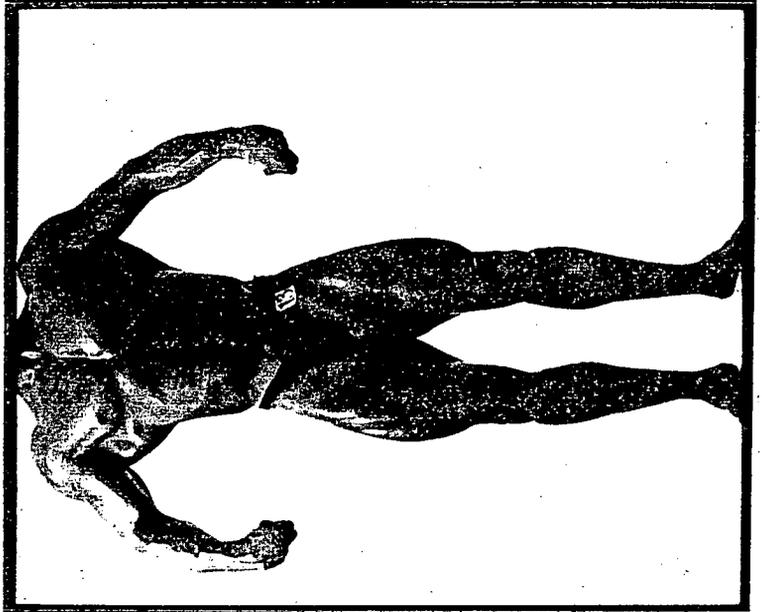
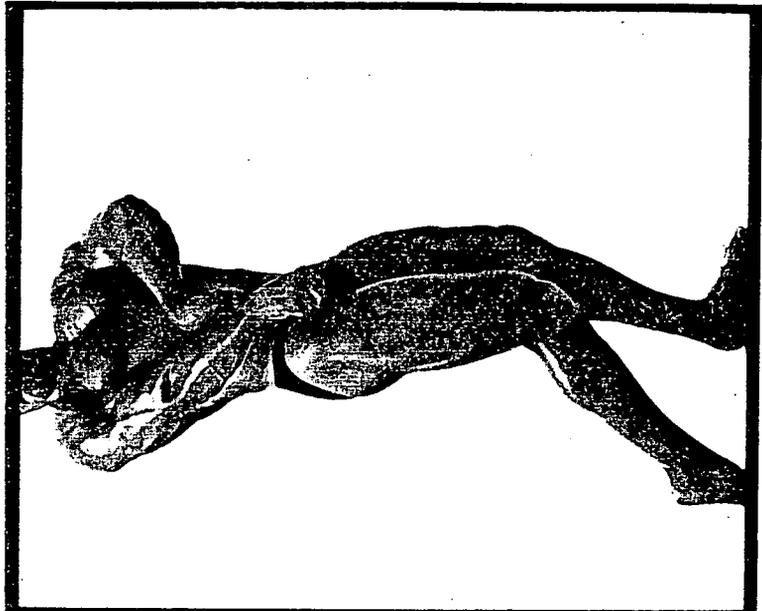
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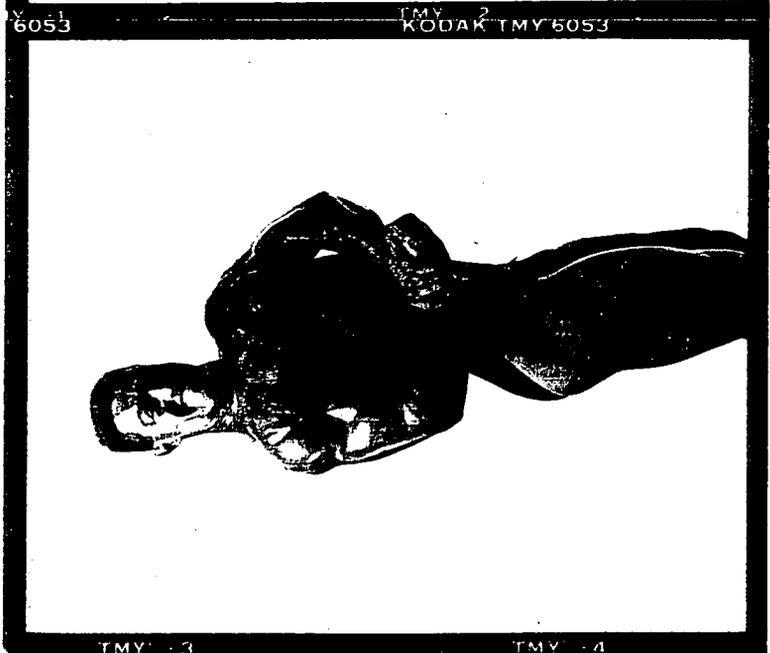
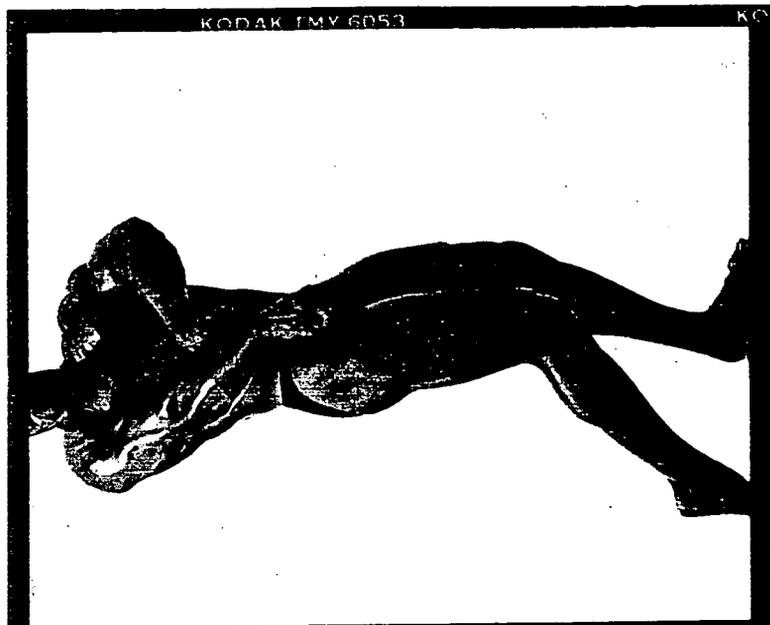
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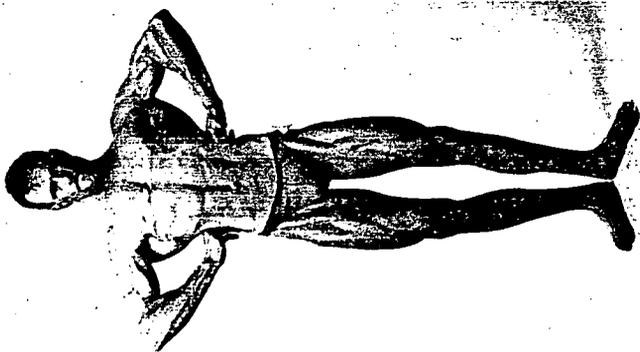
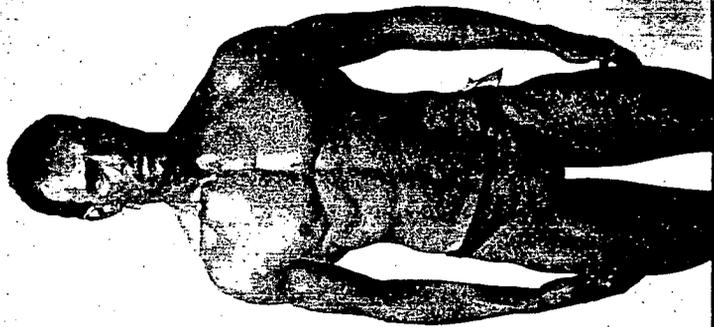
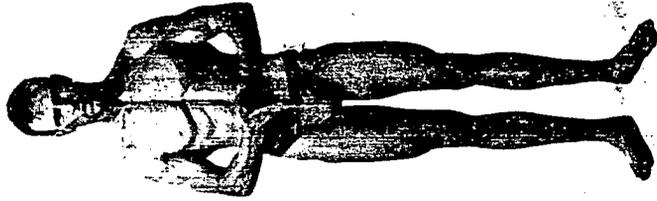
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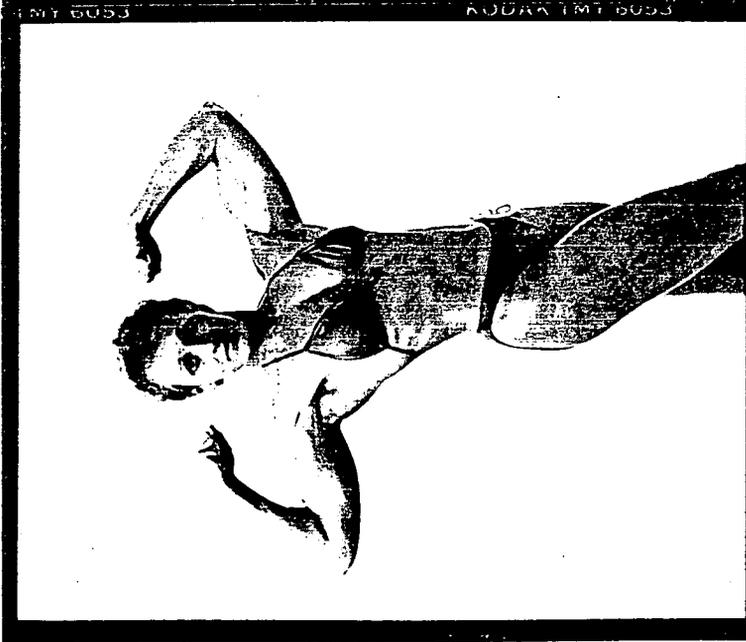
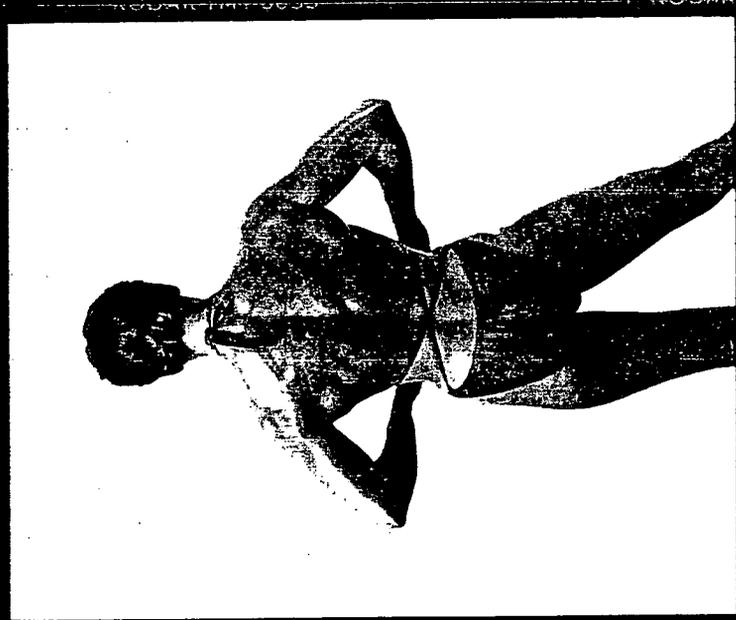
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KODAK



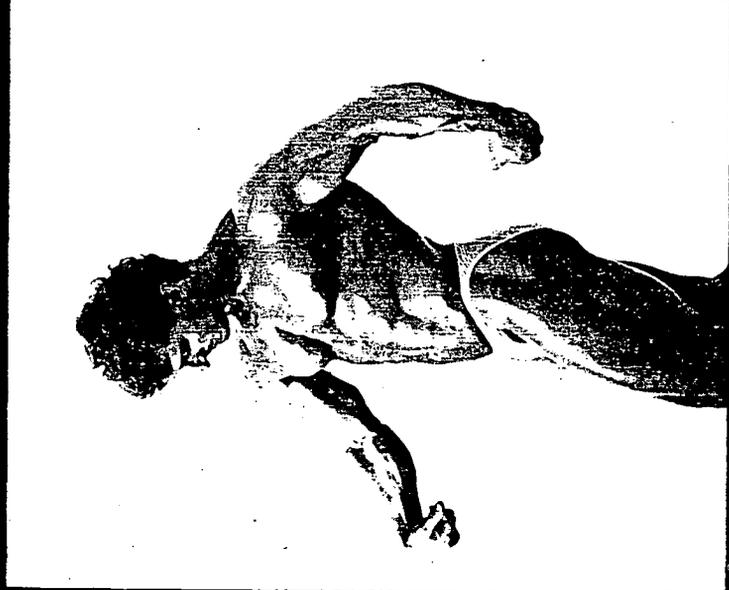
TMY 5

TMY



KODAK TMY 6053

KODAK TMY



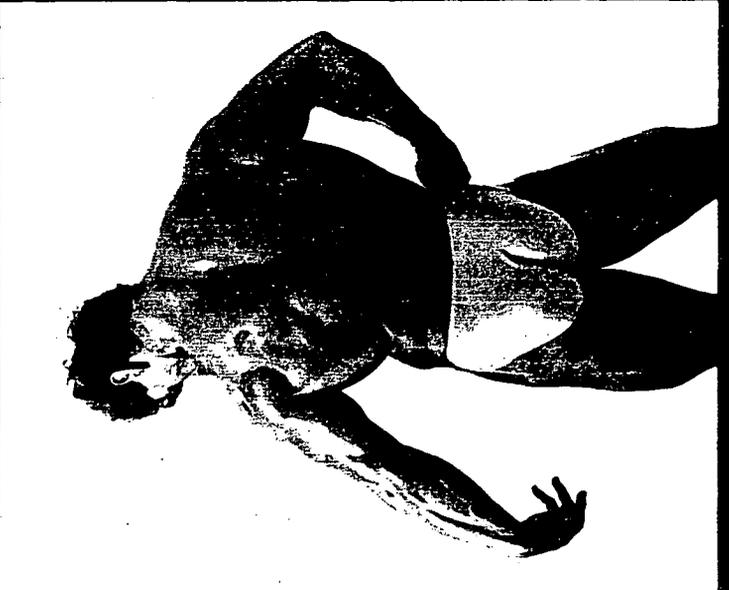
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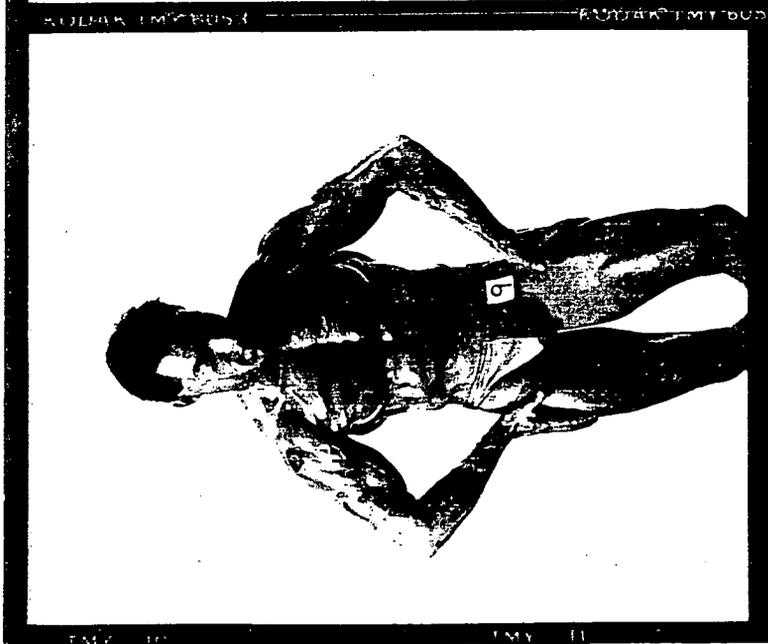
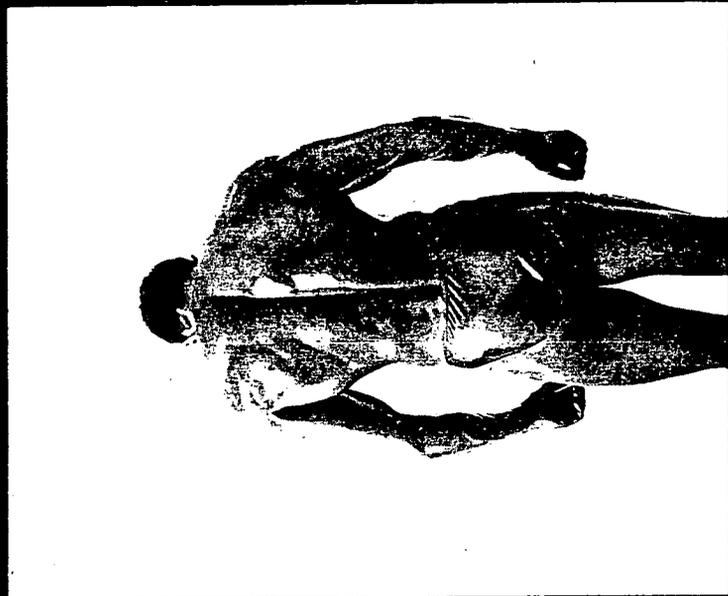
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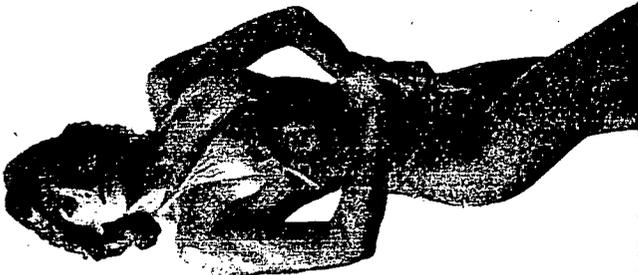
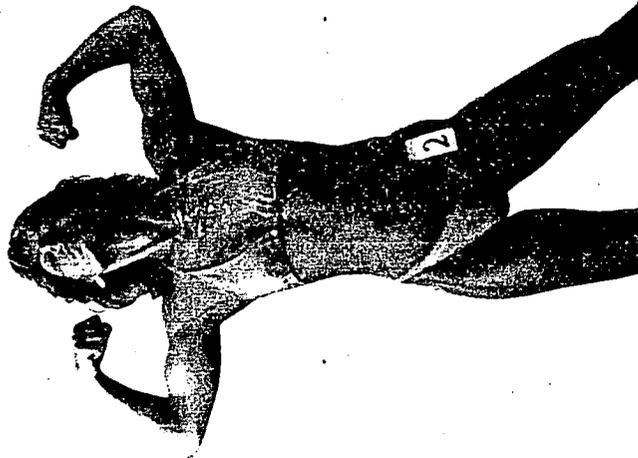
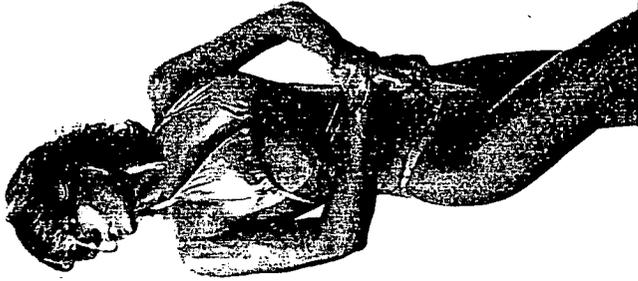
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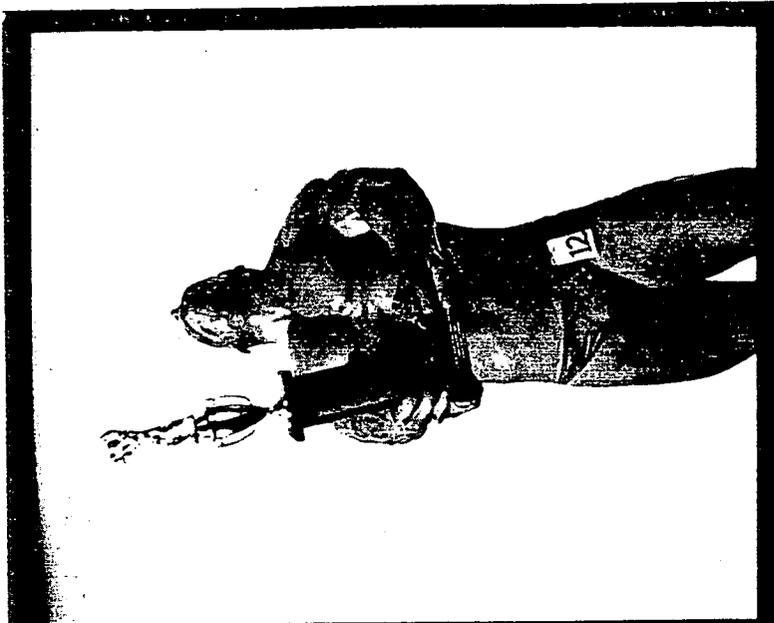
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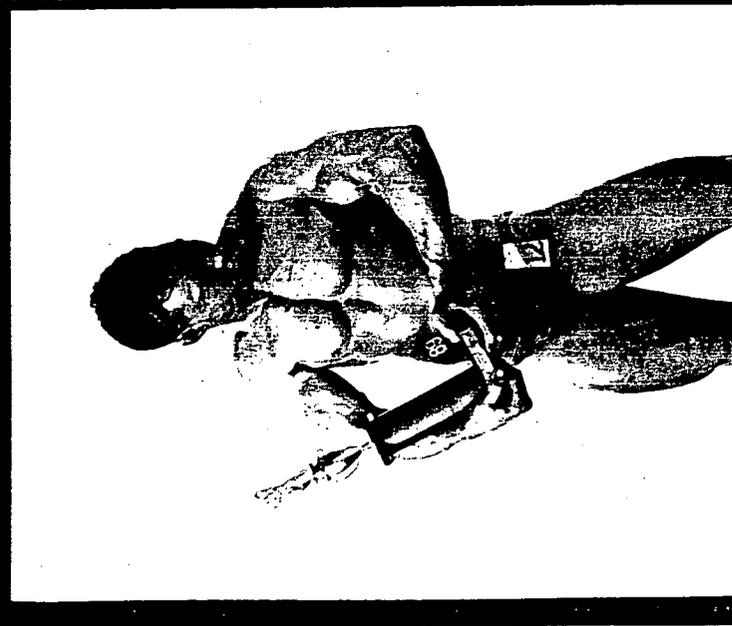
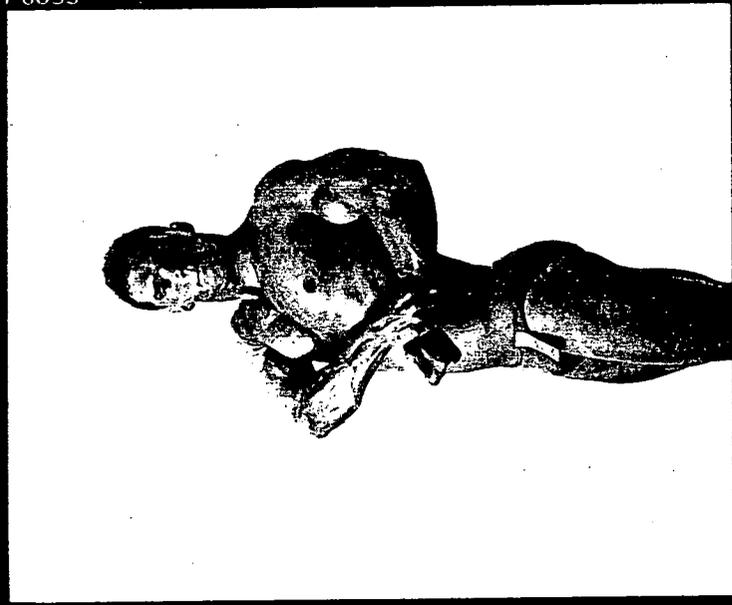


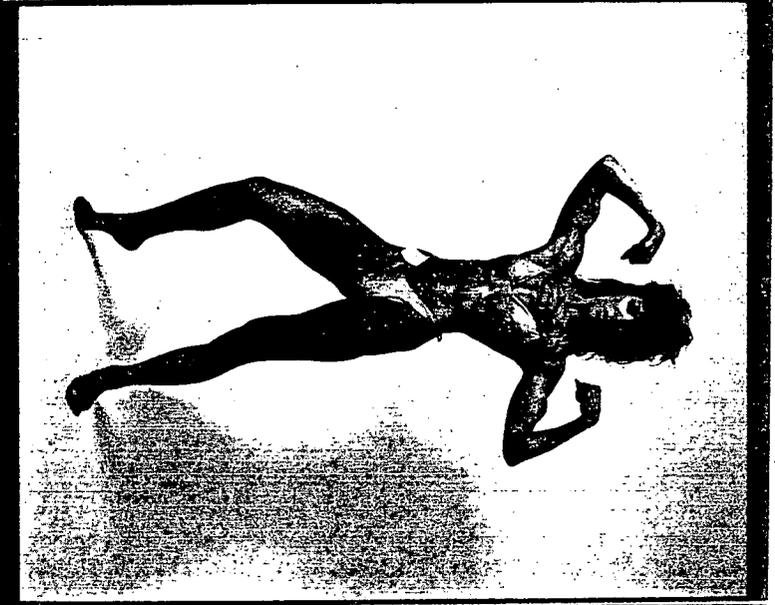
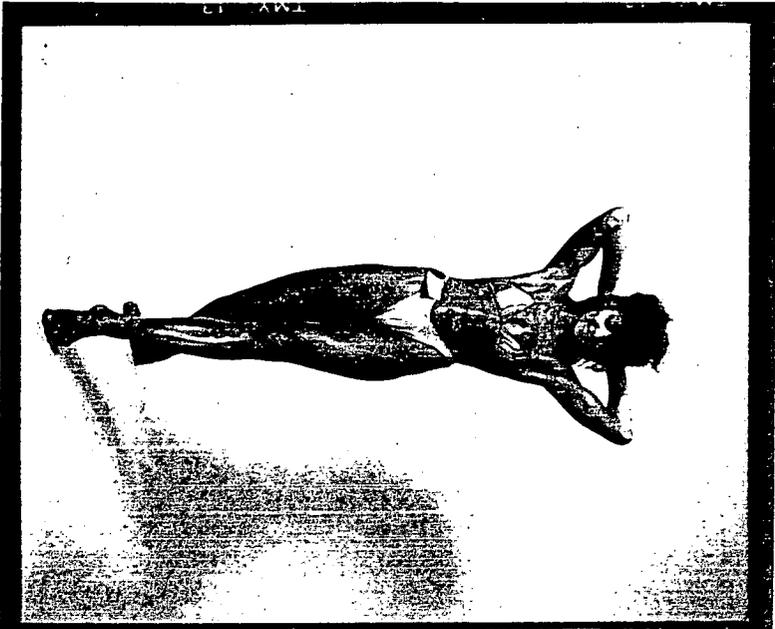
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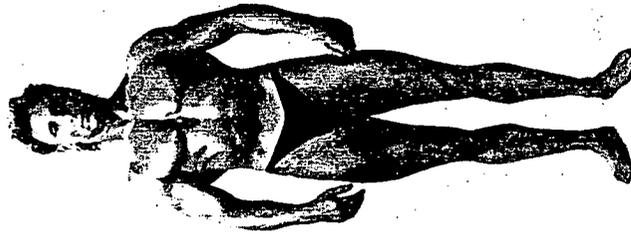


ET XVI

KODAK SAFETY FILM

KODAK TMY 6053

KC



TMY-14

TMY-15

Small pertinent melodramas - Series 2.

1989.

subject matter:	body builders and young women
number of works:	seven
total work dimension	840mm x 780mm
medium:	black and white/silver gelatine photographs selenium toned.

Small pertinent melodramas - series 2

This third and somewhat different looking work is a literal extension of some of those aspects implied through the earlier body building triptychs.

The series began with body builders and ballet dancers. It was attempting to extend something of the body aesthetic - where an implied or literal incongruity of the two images would be seen.

I chose not to pursue this in an attempt to make my images more socially poignant. In this way I arrived at the seven or so images on display. Unlike the triptychs that were carefully directed in an effort to be credible, these images are more obviously overt in suggesting a melodrama. They are comical but have an aspect of poignancy about them.

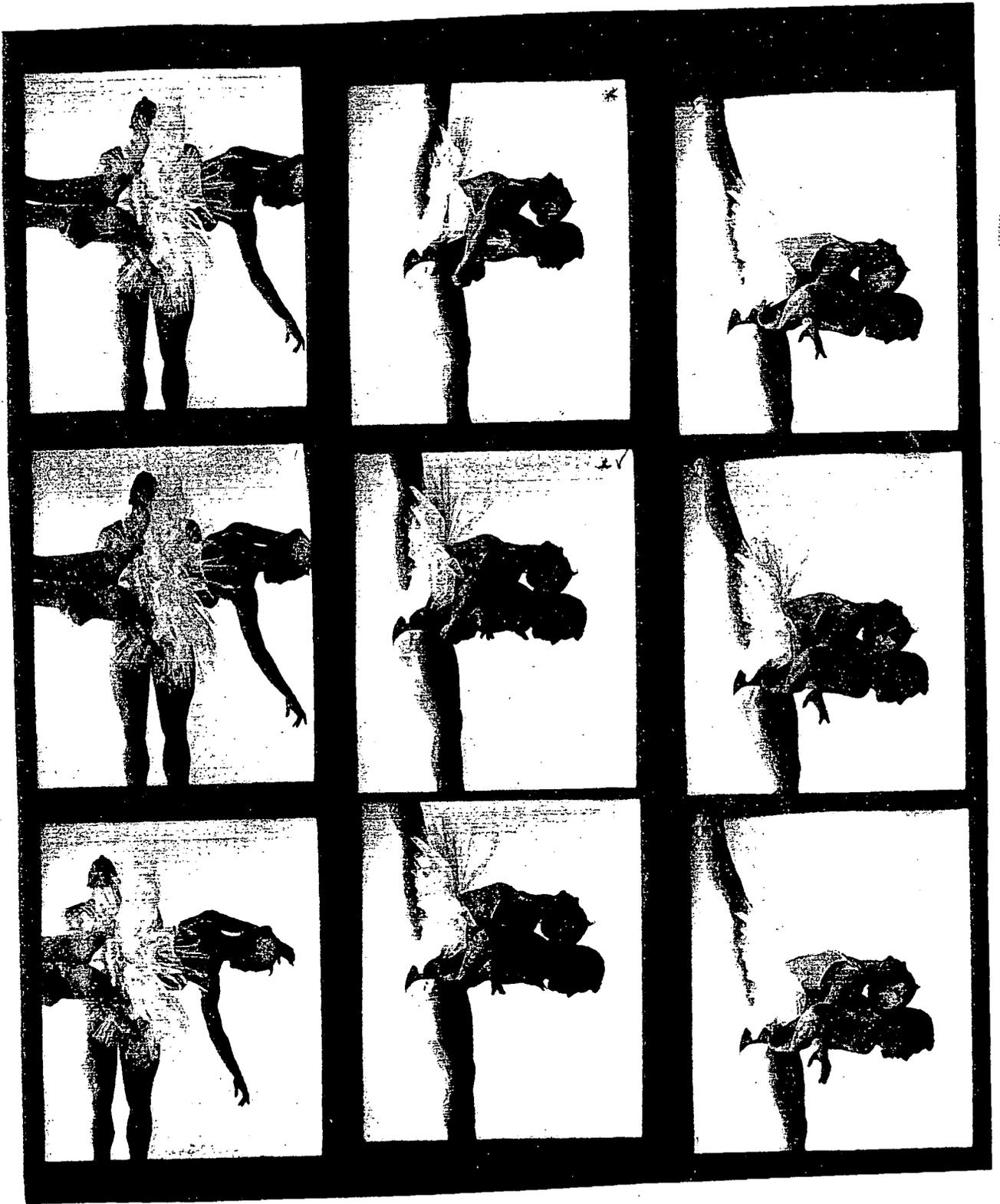
Images that deal quite obviously with a sexuality, bondage and the male ego.

This work is unfinished and has considerable scope for further development in which I have at this time every intention of pursuing.

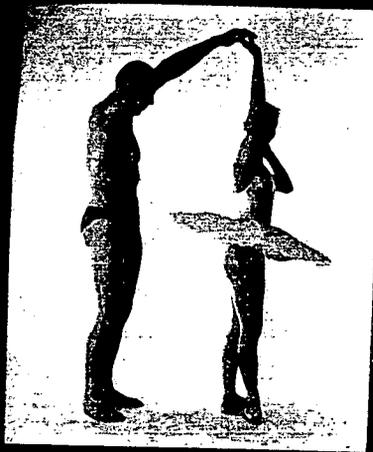
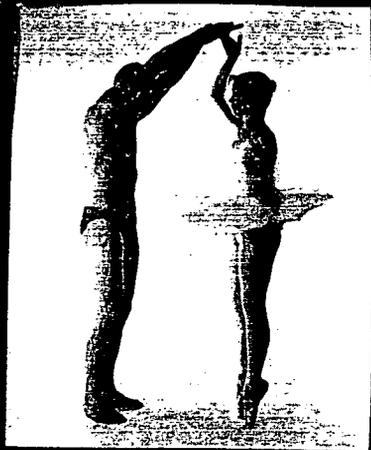






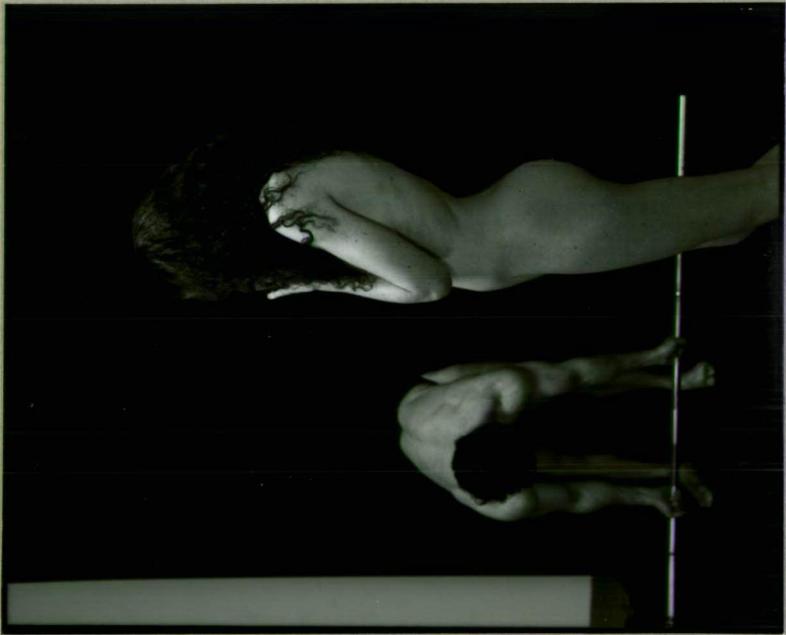








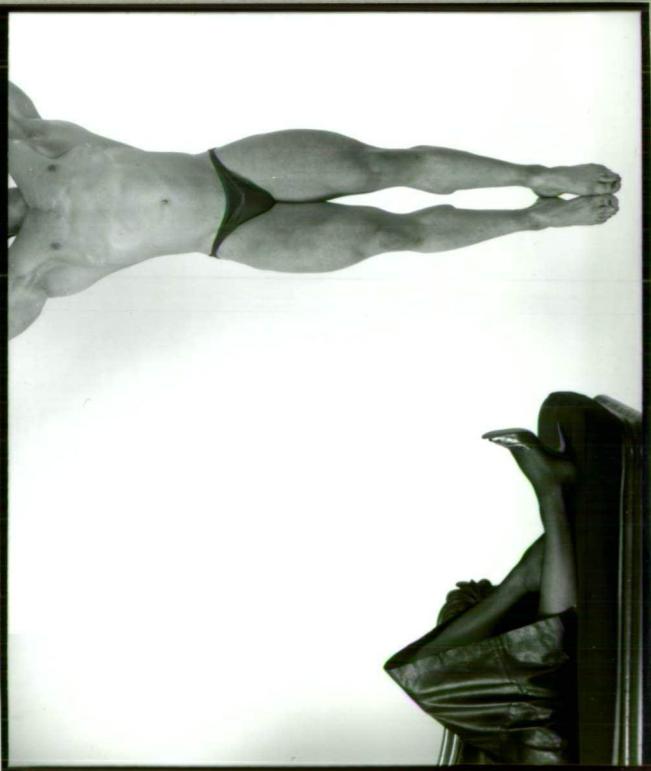


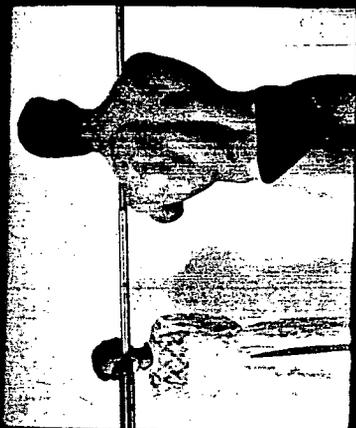


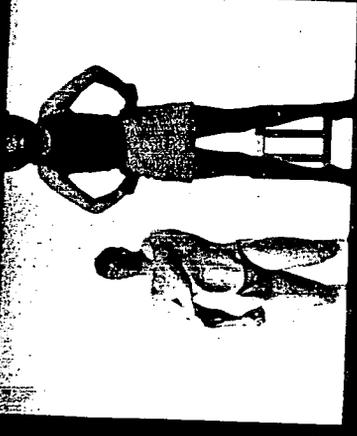
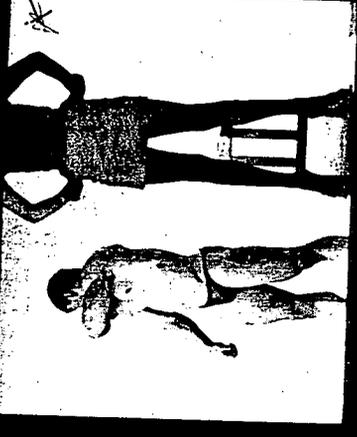
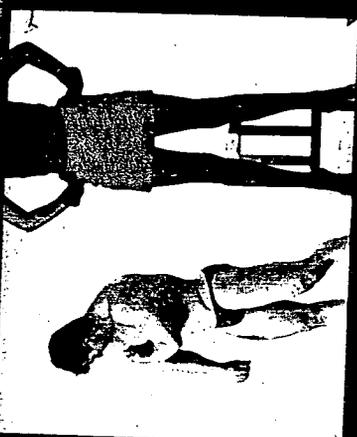
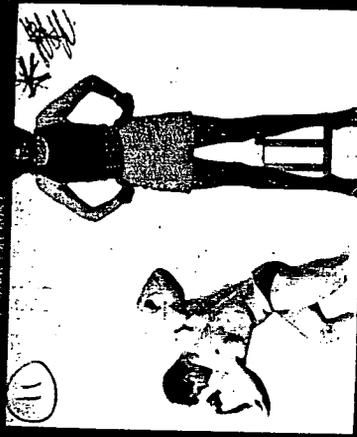


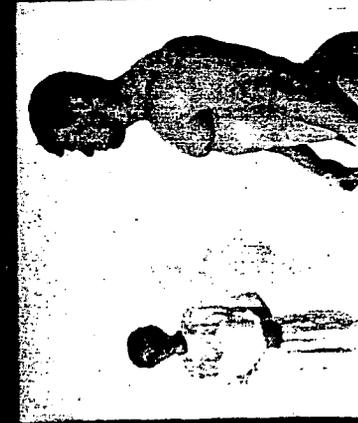












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