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18th Annual Black Arts Festival

Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013

A Cultural Celebration

"A Cultural Celebration"

Design: Frank Ruffo Quaresima

Sponsored by the Congress of African Students
Partially funded by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

Acknowledgements

Many individuals deserve recognition for their contributions to this exhibition and program. First of all, I would like to thank Dickinson colleagues and students for their essential help in organizing the exhibition and presentations. Thanks go to Brenda Bretz, Nancy Winkelman, Michael Wajda, Caroline Ruff, and Donna Senderling. The fine arts faculty has also been helpful in coordinating the artists' presentations with appropriate classes. Barbara Diduk and James Cox deserve a special note of thanks for their valuable advice and assistance during every stage of this project. Likewise, Lisa Fleming, a Dickinson senior majoring in fine arts, has devoted considerable time and energy to the Black Arts Festival.

Special thanks go to Steven MacDonald, director of the Central Pennsylvania Consortium; the Dickinson Student Senate; and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for their financial assistance. Thanks, also, to student residents of the College's Fine Arts House and to members of the Congress of African Students for serving as hosts for our exhibitors and speakers.

Much assistance was needed in advertising the exhibition competition in five states and the District of Columbia. Thanks goes to Kenneth McClain, director of minority arts, New Jersey State Council on the Arts; Valerie Tramell, Cristina Cultural Arts Center, Wilmington, Delaware; Alec Simpson, staff liaison to the Visual Arts Panel, The District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and

Humanities; Grace Stanislaus, assistant curator, The Studio Museum in Harlem; Camille Giraud Akeju, executive director, Association of Community-Based Artists of Westchester, New York; Robin Holder, coordinator, Printmaking Workshop, New York City; David Stephans, Brandywine Workshop, Philadelphia; Dr. Teri Y. Doke, executive director, Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, Philadelphia; Oletha DeVane, Maryland State Arts Council, Baltimore; Anne-Marie Nolin and Barbara Ho, New York State Council on the Arts; and Richard E. Siegesmund, director of the Visual Arts/Museum/Crafts Program of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Mr. Siegesmund was particularly helpful with advice during the planning stages.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Gilberto Wilson, Willie Birch, Mary Campbell, and Vincent Smith.

D.R.

**WILLIE BIRCH
VINCENT SMITH
GILBERTO WILSON**

**BLACK ARTISTS LIVING
IN THE
MID-ATLANTIC STATES**

held in conjunction with the
**18TH ANNUAL BLACK ARTS
FESTIVAL**

March 3-April 10, 1986
The Trout Gallery
Emil R. Weiss Center for the Arts
Dickinson College

WILLIE BIRCH
VINCENT SMITH
GILBERTO WILLSON

IN THE ARTISTS LIVING
AND STAYING STATES

THIS IS CONVENED BY THE
INTERNATIONAL BLACK ART
FESTIVAL

Introduction

In 1969, the Congress of African Students of Dickinson College sponsored their first Black Arts Festival. Since that time, this public program has been an annual event at Dickinson. The stated purpose of the Festival is to bring cultural diversity to our community and to raise awareness of the major contributions made by blacks to America's cultural life. Past programs have included theater, music, dance, and the visual arts.

For the 18th-Annual Black Arts Festival, being held in the first week in March, 1986, The Trout Art Gallery is pleased to be able to participate by organizing this juried exhibition of black artists living in the Mid-Atlantic states. The response to our proposed exhibition from black artists living in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia was marvelous. This was, no doubt, because we had the good fortune of having Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, executive director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, serve as our juror. Her careful, open, and highly sensitive selection process confirmed all that we had heard of her ability and professionalism.

Her task was not a simple one: Over 40 very talented artists entered the competition. From those individuals, Dr. Campbell chose three outstanding artists: Willie Birch, Vincent Smith, and Gilberto Antonio Wilson to exhibit their work in the gallery, and to give presentations on campus during the week of the Black Arts Festival. Furthermore, she agreed to come to campus and deliver the opening address on certain aspects of contemporary black art.

This program is one of several cultural and political activities organized this year by concerned faculty, academic professionals, and students at Dickinson College. Our concerns are as multifaceted as the individuals involved. They are internally as well as externally focused and range from the work of the anti-apartheid divestment group to lectures and cultural activities such as this. I would not attempt to characterize each of our motivations in this beyond calling it an attempt to raise sensitivity within our community.

As it so happens, two of the artists selected for our exhibition are overtly motivated by these same concerns. Through his prints, Gilberto Wilson opens our eyes to the suffering of a great mass of people dispersed throughout the Western Hemisphere, including our own region, as the result of historical events beyond their control. Their plight, to be born into an alien and often hostile world, is alluded to in his print series *Fragments* and *Stafia Memories*. Willie Birch juxtaposes a bright and inviting palette with images of poverty and racism in our own Mid-Atlantic region. He attacks our complacency and challenges us to search within ourselves for honesty, hope, and resolve.

All three artists, with their individual styles and subjects, challenge our categorizations of contemporary black art. They remind us of the diversity and vitality of the black community living in the Mid-Atlantic region.

David Robertson
Director, The Trout Art Gallery

WILLIE BIRCH

Born in 1942 in New Orleans, the painter Willie Birch studied at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and received his Master of Fine Arts degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore in 1973.

Mr. Birch, a resident of New York City, has received many awards, honors, and commissions, and has shown his paintings in one-man and group exhibitions. Recently, his work has been included in the traveling exhibition, *Art Against Apartheid*.

Statement

These six paintings are part of a series of works in progress titled "A Personal View of Urban America." As an African/American artist, I've come to realize that my experiences don't necessarily reflect the type of art images most of us see in art magazines like *Art in America*. It does speak to the human conditions of many people living all over these United States and the world.

With these paintings, I want to force the viewer to experience the America that flashes across our television screens when human events reach epidemic or crisis proportions. I want to force the viewer to reflect upon those images only seen in passing from our vehicles as we drive through a "ghetto" area — the forgotten

America that suffers from pre-meditated, as well as unintentional neglect — the America that will not go away — infested with drug addiction, hunger, racism, homelessness, urban decay, sexism, and a breakdown of human values. That is, the America that will consume all of us, as long as we continue to deny its existence.

I hope the viewer sees these works as a sign of our times, as an inspiration to question the world we live in, and as an impetus to decide what role to play in creating tomorrow.

Willie Birch

CHECKLIST

All works are gouache on paper.
Measurements are height and width.

Feeding the Chickens on Avenue C, 1985
38 1/2 x 25 inches

Ancestral Relics, 1985
38 1/2 x 50 inches

In Search of Humanity in a Primitive World, 1985
38 1/2 x 50 inches

Tuning Out, 1985
50 x 38 1/2 inches

Like It Is, 1985
38 1/2 x 50 inches

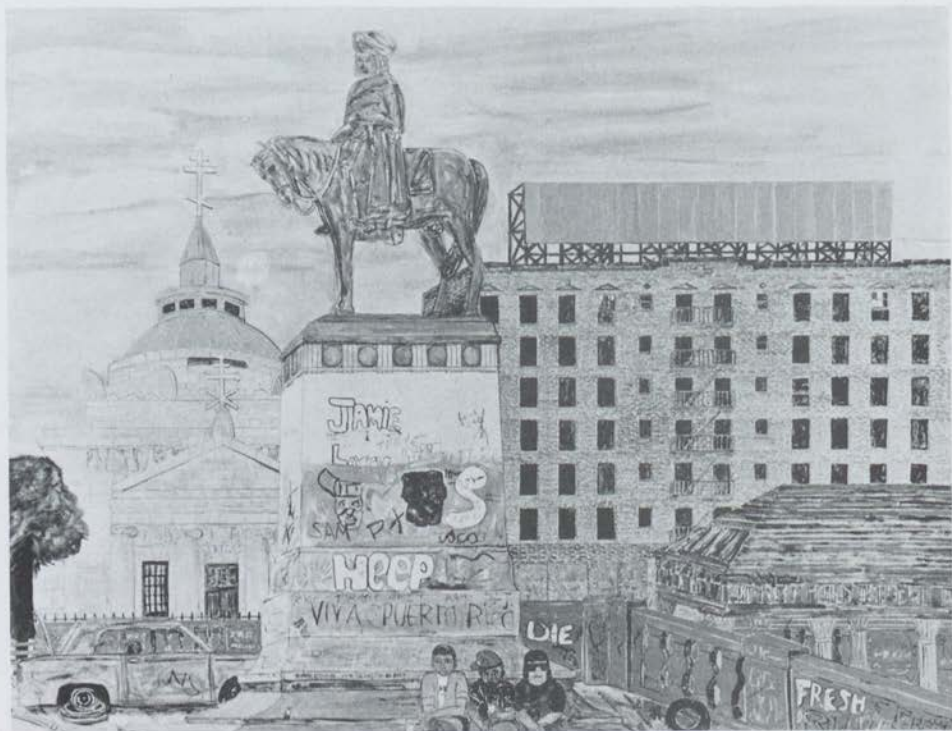
An Evening in America, 1986
38 1/2 x 50 inches



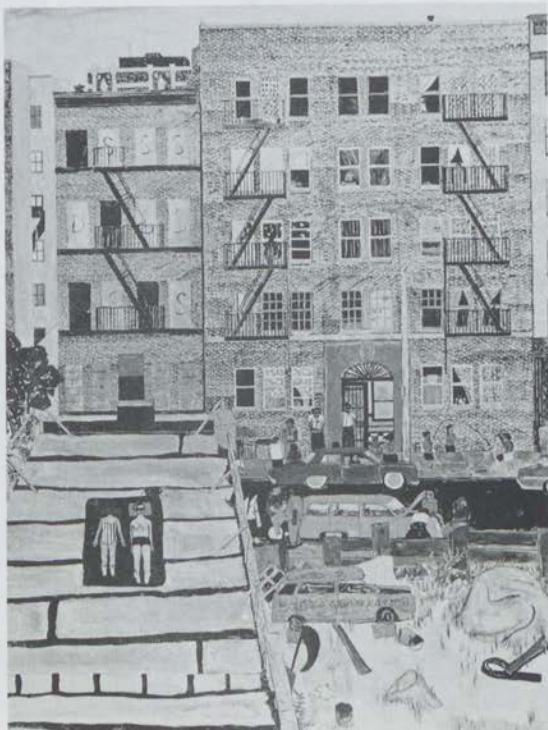
Feeding the Chickens on Avenue C



Ancestral Relics



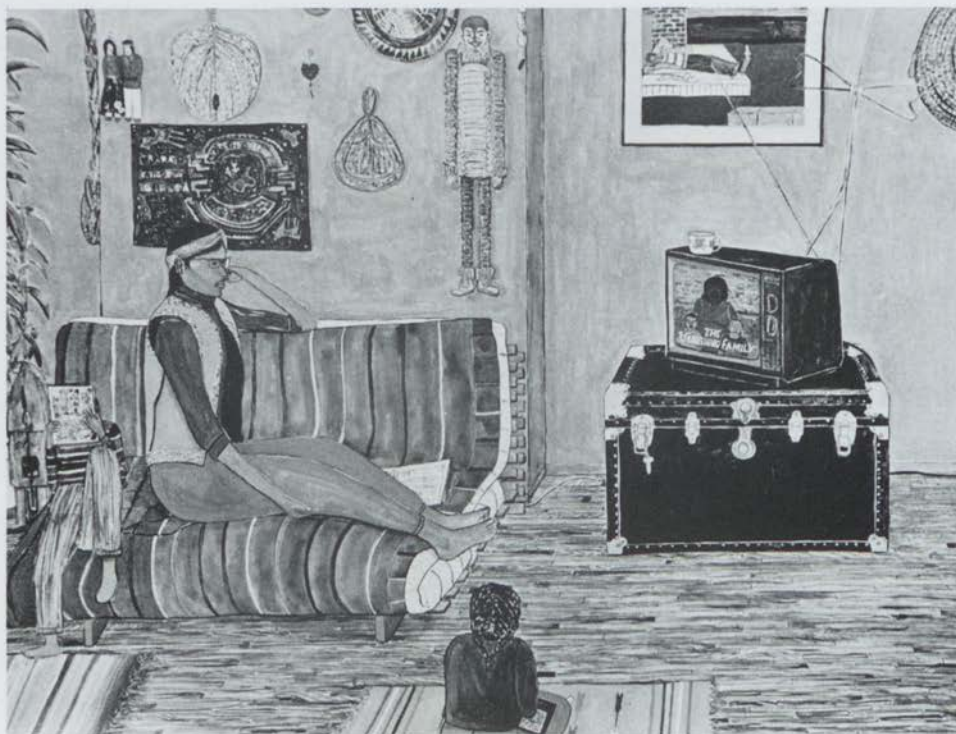
In Search of Humanity in a Primitive World



Tuning Out



Like It Is



An Evening in America

VINCENT D. SMITH

Vincent Smith was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1929. At the age of 23, he studied at the Art Students League in New York City, and in 1955-56 he received scholarships to both the Brooklyn Museum Art School and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Mr. Smith, a resident of New York City and an avid world traveler,

has exhibited his work nationally, in Europe, and in Africa. His work can be seen, among other places, in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Brooklyn Museum. Mr. Smith holds memberships in the National Conference of Artists and the African-American Museum Association.

CHECKLIST

Black Gold and Alligator Slim on the Beach, 1982

monoprint

39 x 49 inches (framed)

Black Gold, 1982

monoprint

39 x 68 inches (framed)

Personages "The Nubians", 1982

monoprint

39 x 49 inches (framed)

The Black Family, 1982

monoprint

39 x 49 inches (framed)

Miles Ahead, 1984

monoprint

37 x 30 inches (framed)

The Falashes, 1984

oil and sand, dry pigments

36 x 30 inches

Dagon, 1984

oil and sand, dry pigments

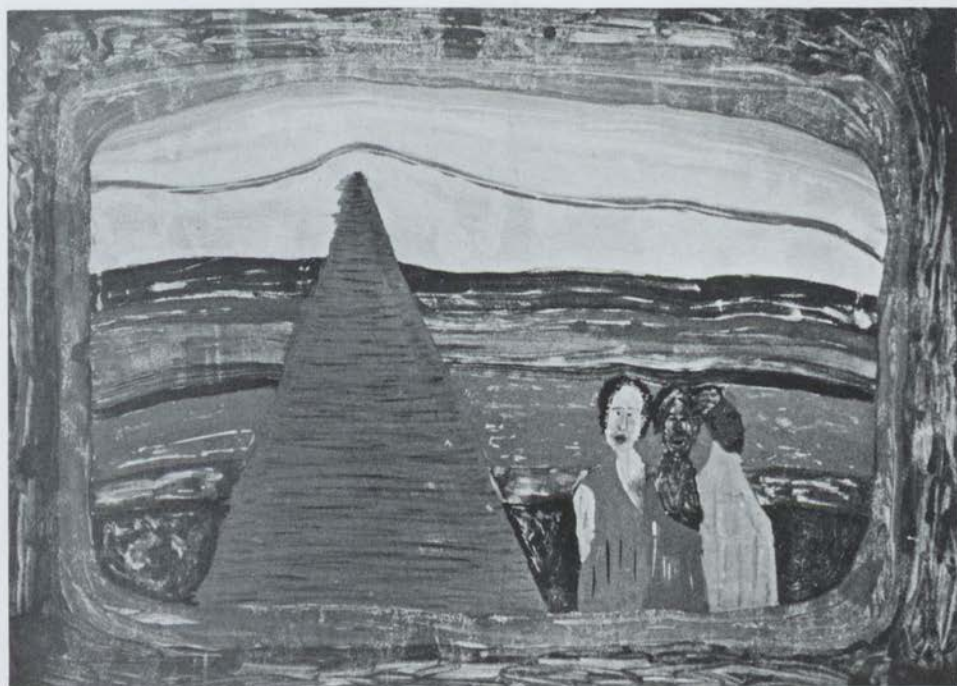
49 x 39 inches



Black Gold and Alligator Slim on the Beach



Black Gold



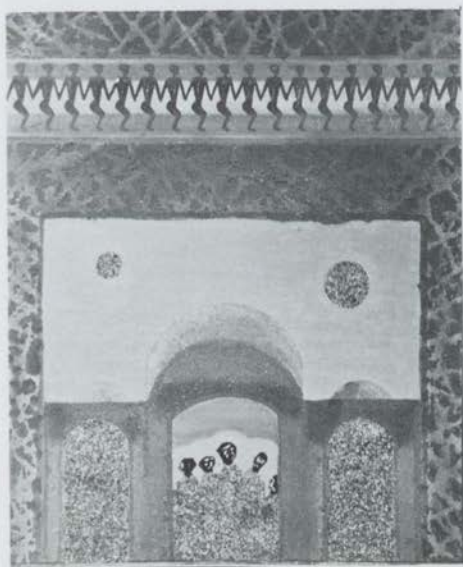
Personages "The Nubians"



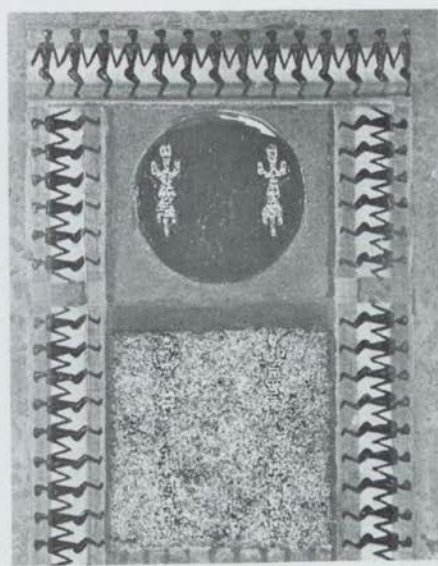
The Black Family



Miles Ahead



The Falashes



Dogon

GILBERTO ANTONIO WILSON

Born on the Dutch Island of Aruba, the Philadelphia-based printmaker Gilberto Antonio Wilson is a recent graduate of Temple University's Tyler School of Art (1980). He received his BFA from The Cooper Union School of Art and Science in New York City in 1978. Since that time, Mr. Wilson has taught graphic arts and photography at The Basement Workshop, Philadelphia's Community High School, and Prints in Progress. Between 1980 and 1985, he has been an artist-in-residence at the Brandywine Graphics Workshop in Philadelphia. Mr. Wilson has exhibited his work in group and one-man shows since 1980, in Philadelphia, New York, Rome, and Atlanta.

Statement

My work cannot be discussed without introducing the subject of *Diaspora*, the Brazilian term meaning "the dispersion of people throughout the world." As one journeys through the Mid-Atlantic states, taking in the faces and life-styles of the black people who were settled here, a living rainbow starts to immerge, hues from alabaster to umber. We are the results of *Diaspora*, the African has lived it, the Brazilian has defined it, my artwork embodies it.

The series on display in the Trout Gallery are "Fragments." Some fragments from my Afro-Caribbean roots that I gathered since coming to the United States at the age of 14.

One of the recurring images we see in these "Fragments" is of an old woman, posted like a handbill, worn through, covered and recovered, against a brick wall. That is a fragment of *Diaspora*, worn with time, covered and recovered, still standing even when our backs are against the wall.

My artwork is essentially about all of us, torn from there, transplanted here, pulling fragments together to build a way of life.

Gilberto Antonio Wilson

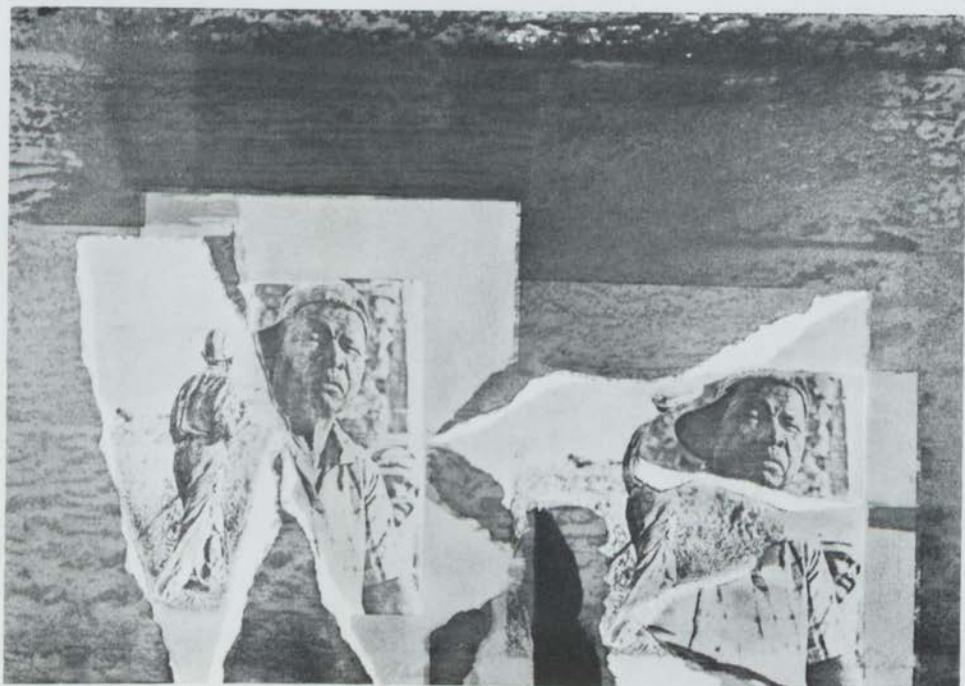
CHECKLIST

Fragments Series. Four silkscreen and mixed media prints. each measuring 22 x 15 inches, 1985

Stata Memories Series. Five silkscreen and mixed media prints. each measuring 15 x 22 inches, 1985



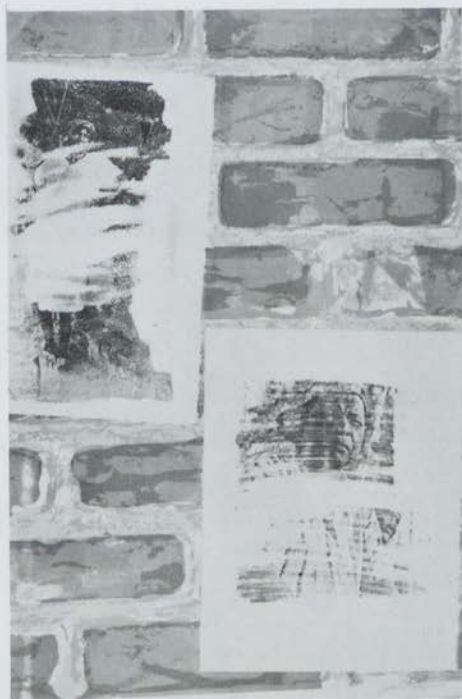
Fragments Series



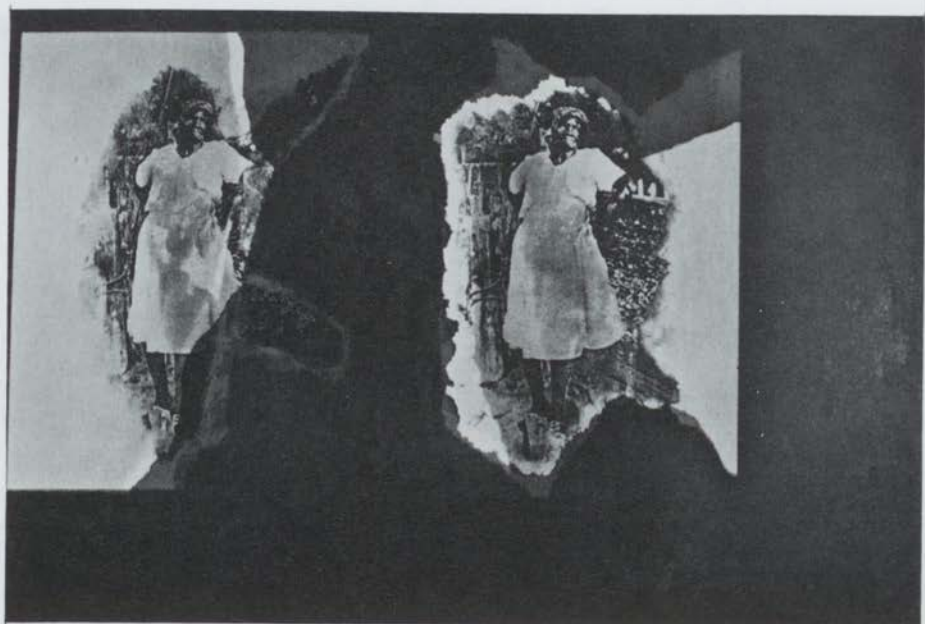
Fragments Series



Fragments Series



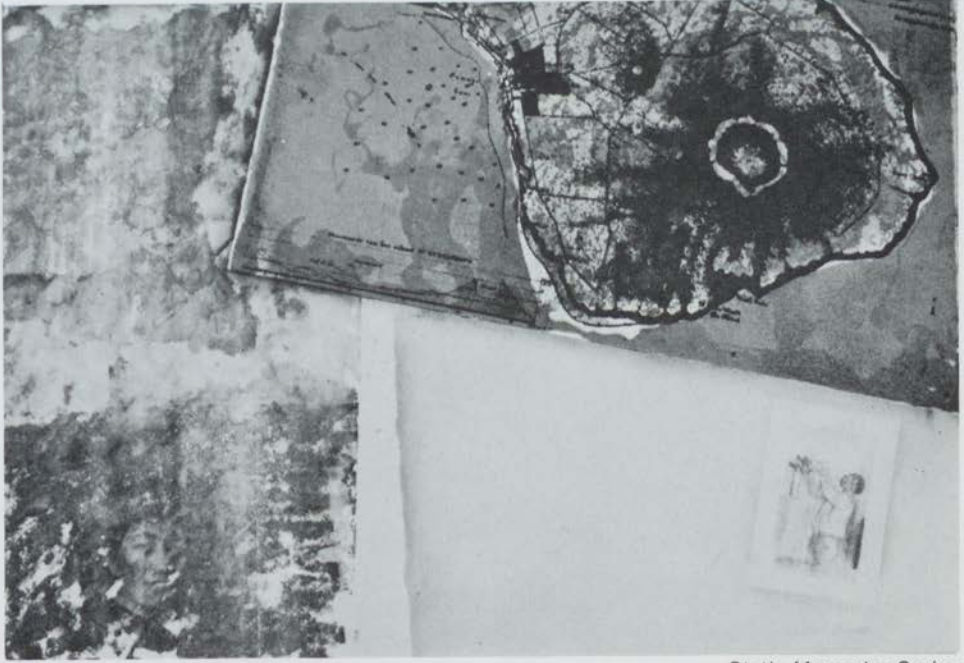
Fragments Series



Statia Memories Series



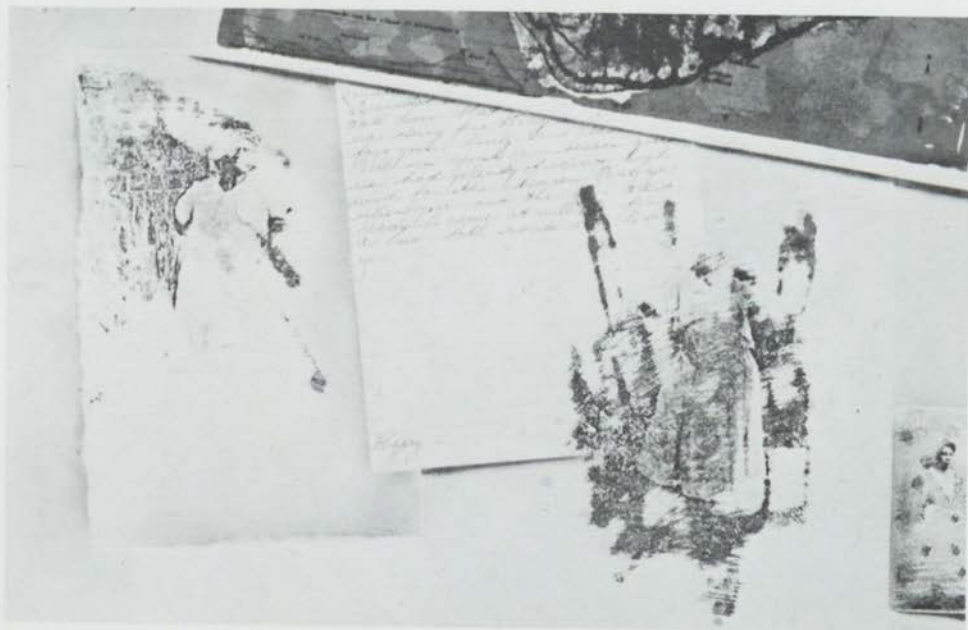
Statia Memories Series



Statia Memories Series



Statia Memories Series



Statia Memories Series

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