

## Painting Up Front

Thomas W. Leavitt, art critic and director of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art of Cornell University, may be out on a semantic and conceptual limb with his recognition of a new art movement: "a genuine abstract art movement, the first we have seen in quite some time." This movement, which he terms "Frontalism," is the inspiration for his innovative exhibition at the Johnson Museum.

Leavitt has brought together the work of 10 New York City artists who, he feels, consistently demonstrate this new direction. The 10 painters — Nancy Brett, Renee Hanan, Stewart Hitch, Vered Lieb, Douglas Martin (*ill.: April Bridge*), Peter Pinchbeck, Richards Ruben, Edwin Ruda, Herbert Schiffrin, and Thornton Willis — all work in SoHo or Tribeca. If abstract expressionism, minimalist art, and color field painting serve as points of reference for these frontalist artists, they transcend these movements in their search for other expressive possibilities. They do not identify as a group and their styles differ significantly; so what common threads does Leavitt see in their work? He perceives them as "consistently frontal in orientation, with virtually no illusionistic depth implied."

The 49 abstract works in this exhibition rely on relationships of color and form without benefit of third-dimensional reference. For Leavitt, and possibly for us, the disquieting compositional imbalance of these works indicates that something new, different, powerful and exciting is going on in the world of contemporary abstract art.

*Ithaca, N.Y., Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art; until 24 May 1981.*

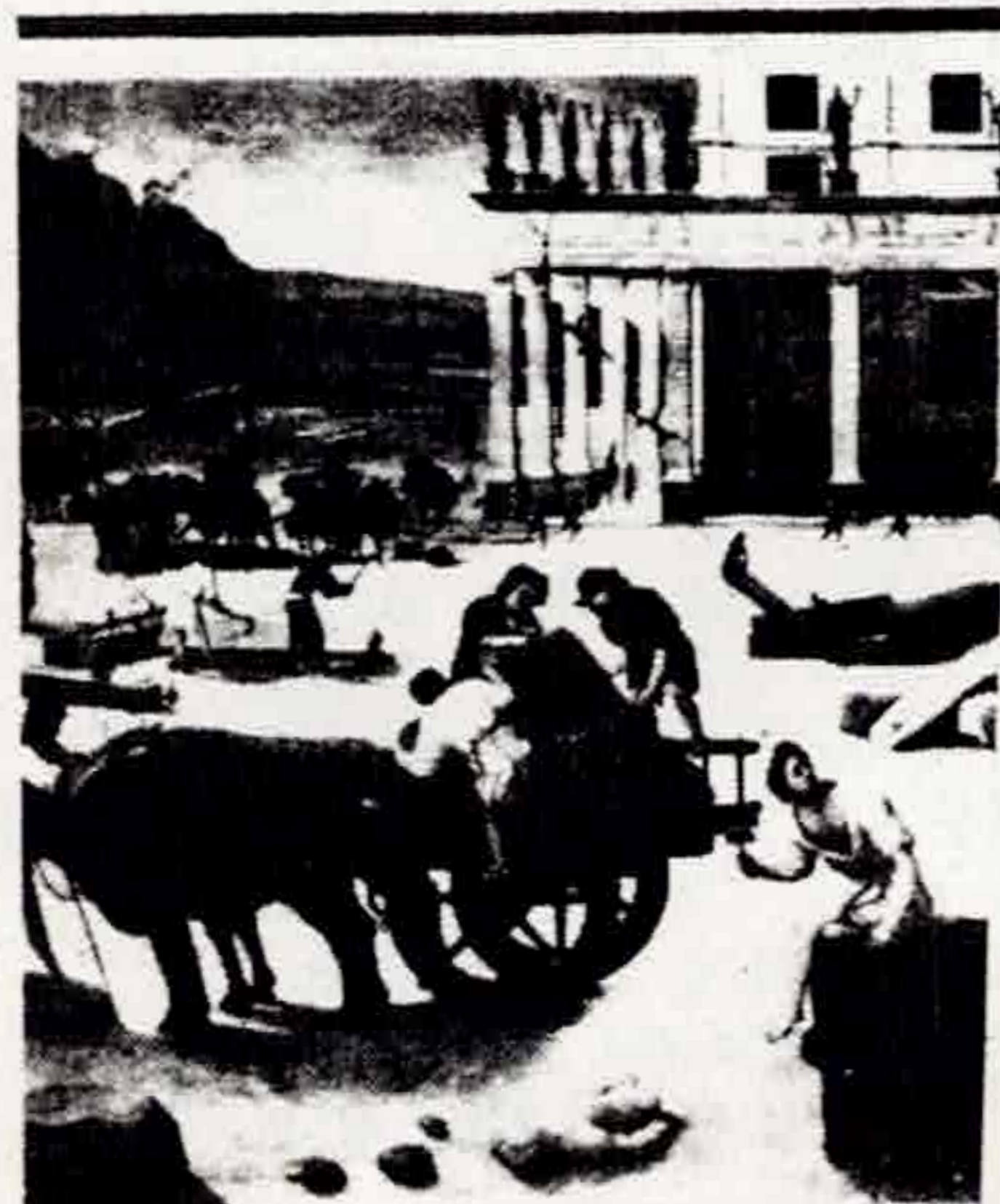
## GERMAN ART AT THE METRO

The Metropolitan Museum presenting an exhibition of 19th century art which is hoped to be the first exhibition aimed at increasing and appreciation of non-Freud European painting and drawing. The exhibition, other European art, a rich, varied and deserving of Nineteenth century German art of a belated national renaissance. The spirit of *Volkstum*, the sense of the German people, artists create in religious, allegorical, and narrative.

For this exhibition Dr. Stepan General Director of the Prussian State Museum has assembled from public collections throughout the Federal Republic of Germany 90 paintings and 32 artists (*ill.: F. Overbeck "Portrait of a Man"*) representing the most important within 19th century German art. A blockbuster show, the current serious and ambitious effort to introduce American public unfamiliar but by German Romantics, Nazarenes, Realists, and Impressionists.

## Clemente in SoHo

Metaphor and symbolism, personalized to the highest erotic and perverse degree, characterize Francesco Clemente's work. Portraits and parts — human and animal — circulate or rest in flat spaces in a world that is defiantly his own. Clemente



## Old Masters at Wildenstein

An extensive sampling from the John and Mable Ringling collection of European masterpieces will be on display at the Wildenstein Gallery in New York this month. Fifty-seven works collected by the dynamic circle impresario, attest to his fine taste and appreciation for Italian, Dutch and Flemish master paintings — particularly of the Baroque era. Ringling began



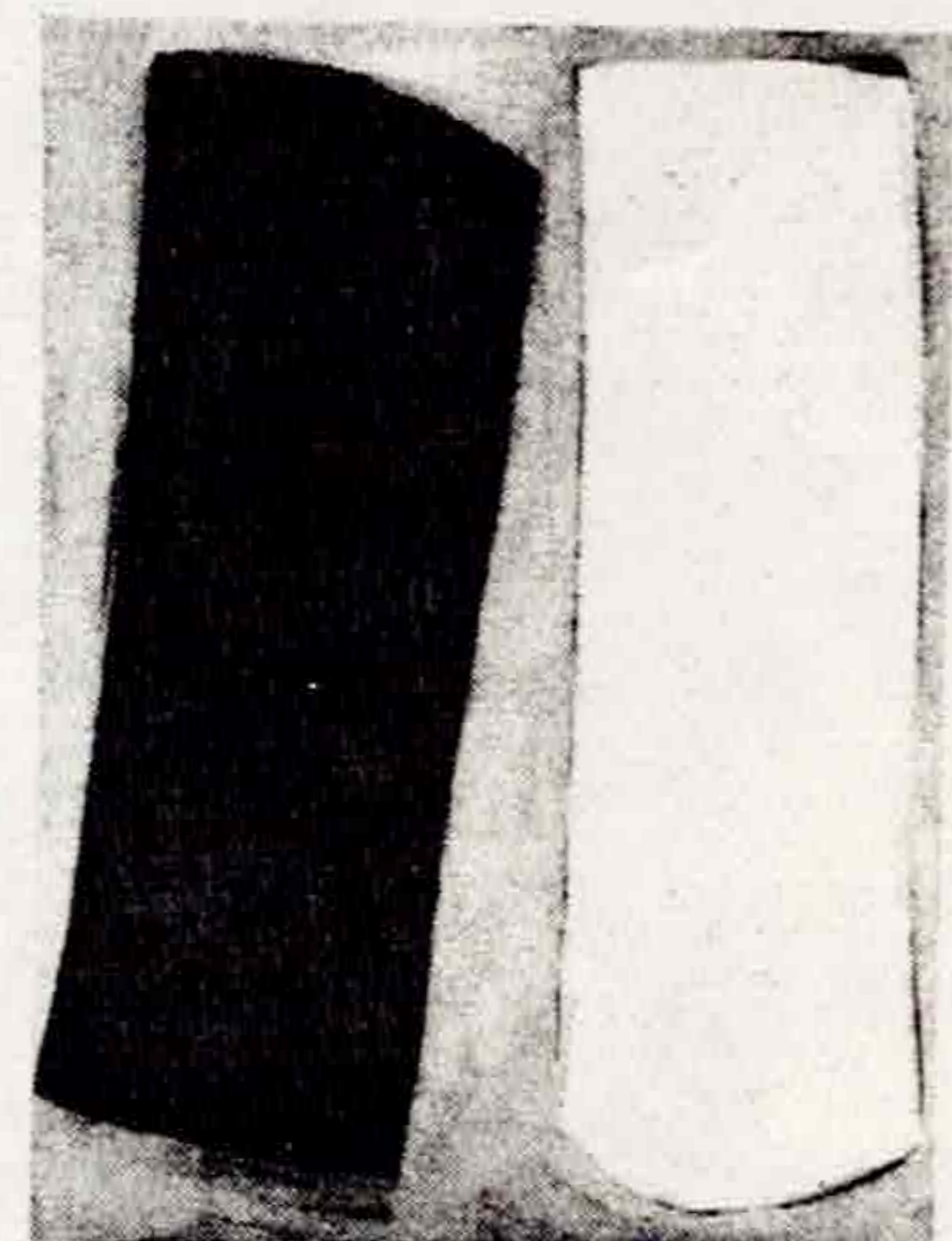
CITY #85 RUBEN RICHARDS. OIL ON CANVAS 36" X 40 1/2"

## PAINTING UP FRONT

Celebrating the arrival of a new movement in American art, the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University is presenting PAINTING UP FRONT, an exhibition of paintings by ten New York City artists, that will occupy the main galleries of the museum through May 24. Leavitt believes that the new movement, which he calls, rather tentatively, "Frontalism," is a genuine one. "By genuine, I mean that the painting was there, created by a number of artists along similar lines of inquiry, before any critics or curators arrived on the scene." Critics have begun to notice the new painting, however, and the show in Ithaca should attract national attention.

The ten artists included in the exhibition are Nancy Brett, Renee Hanan, Stewart Hitch, Vered Lieb, Douglas Martin, Peter Pinchbeck, Richards Ruben, Edwin Ruda, Herbert Schiffrin, and Thornton Willis. According to Leavitt, he discovered more than twenty artists in SoHo and Tribeca working in the frontalist direction, many of them unaware of each other. He finally settled on ten painters whose work seemed most consistently related to the new approach. In addition to Leavitt's catalogue introduction, an essay by critic Anita Feldman, statements by the artists, and illustrations of every painting in the exhibition, including twenty color plates, help to define the new movement.

Both Leavitt and Feldman stress the fact that the painters differ significantly from one

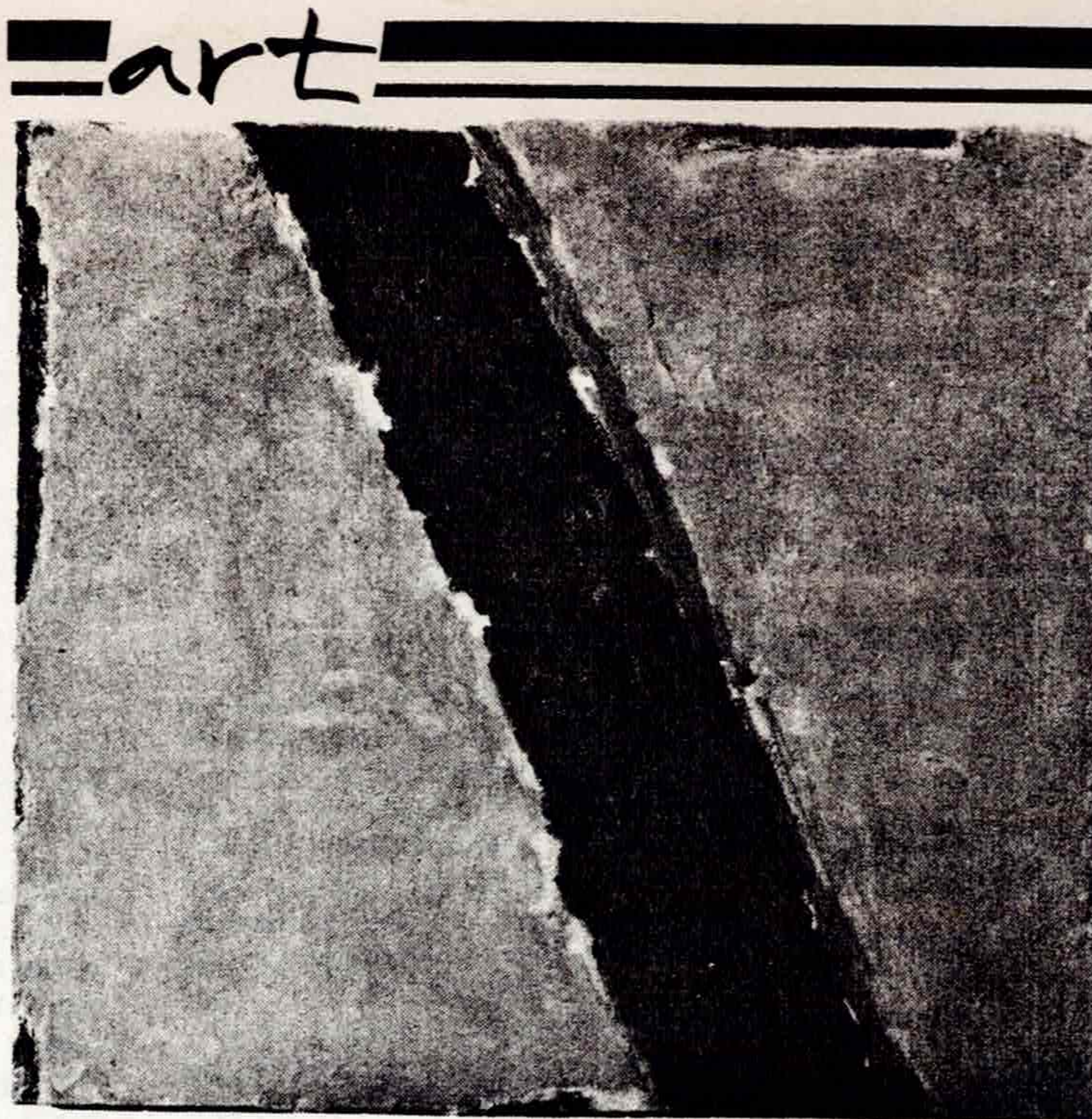


"FORE PLAY" N. BRETT ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 91" X 44"

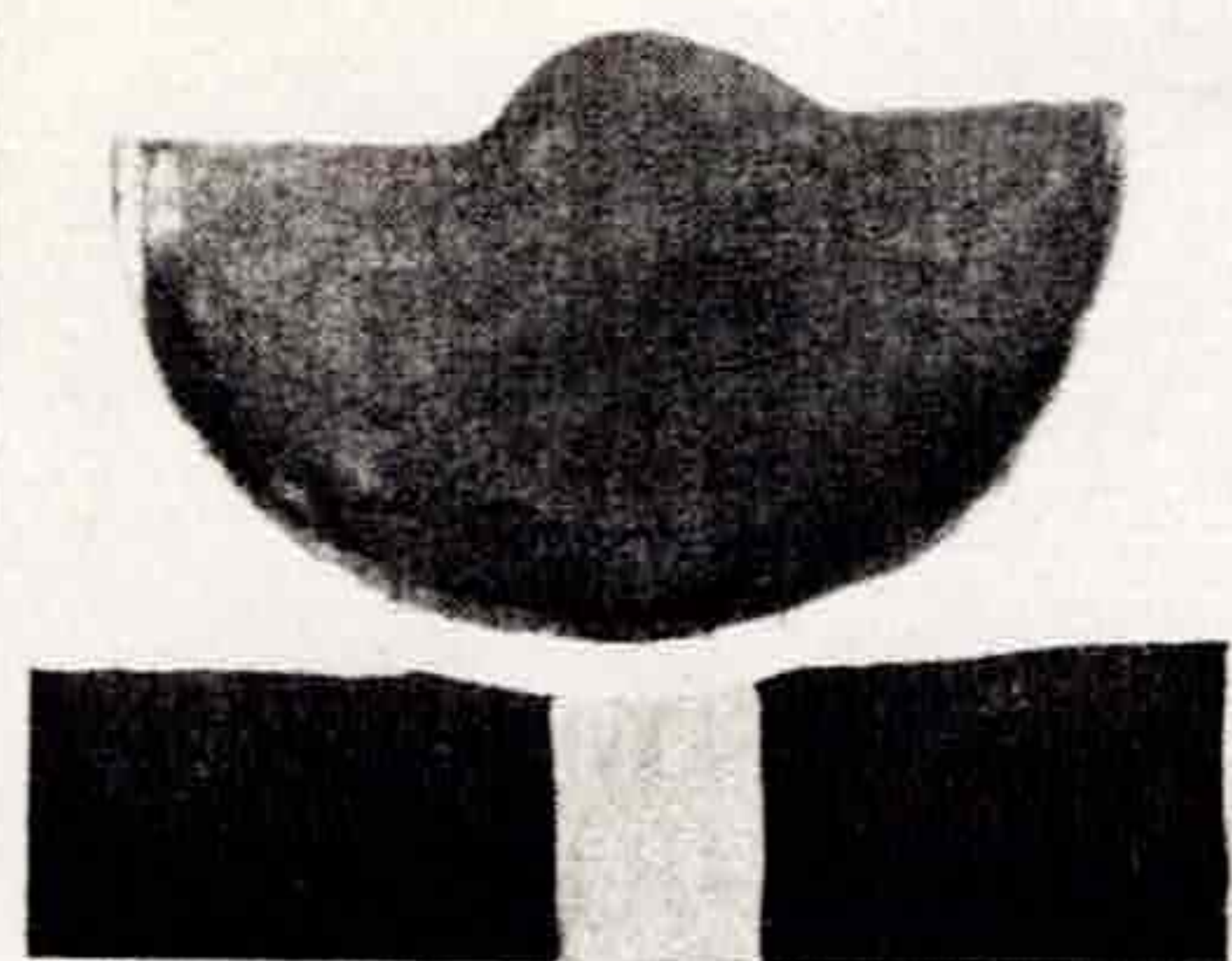
another in style. According to Feldman, "The artists who made these paintings do not consider themselves a group or a movement," although many of them have exhibited and published together, and most of them are more aware of their affinities now than they were two years ago." Leavitt, however, describes some common characteristics. "The new painting is consistently frontal in orientation, with virtually no illusionistic depth implied. It is essentially single image painting; even when there are two or more shapes they are isolated on, or in, ground that is as actively positive as the shape itself. Relying upon color and form relationships, the artists establish tensions that often are not resolved within the canvas, or at least not apparently so. As a result, one frequently feels uneasy in looking at these works; they appear unbalanced, lacking in the equilibrium we have come to expect in abstract compositions. In fact, although each painting is experimentally executed rather than planned in advance, it does ultimately achieve a kind of balance through subtle handling of brushstrokes and color harmonies and dissonances worked out in different combinations over a series of twenty or more related paintings."



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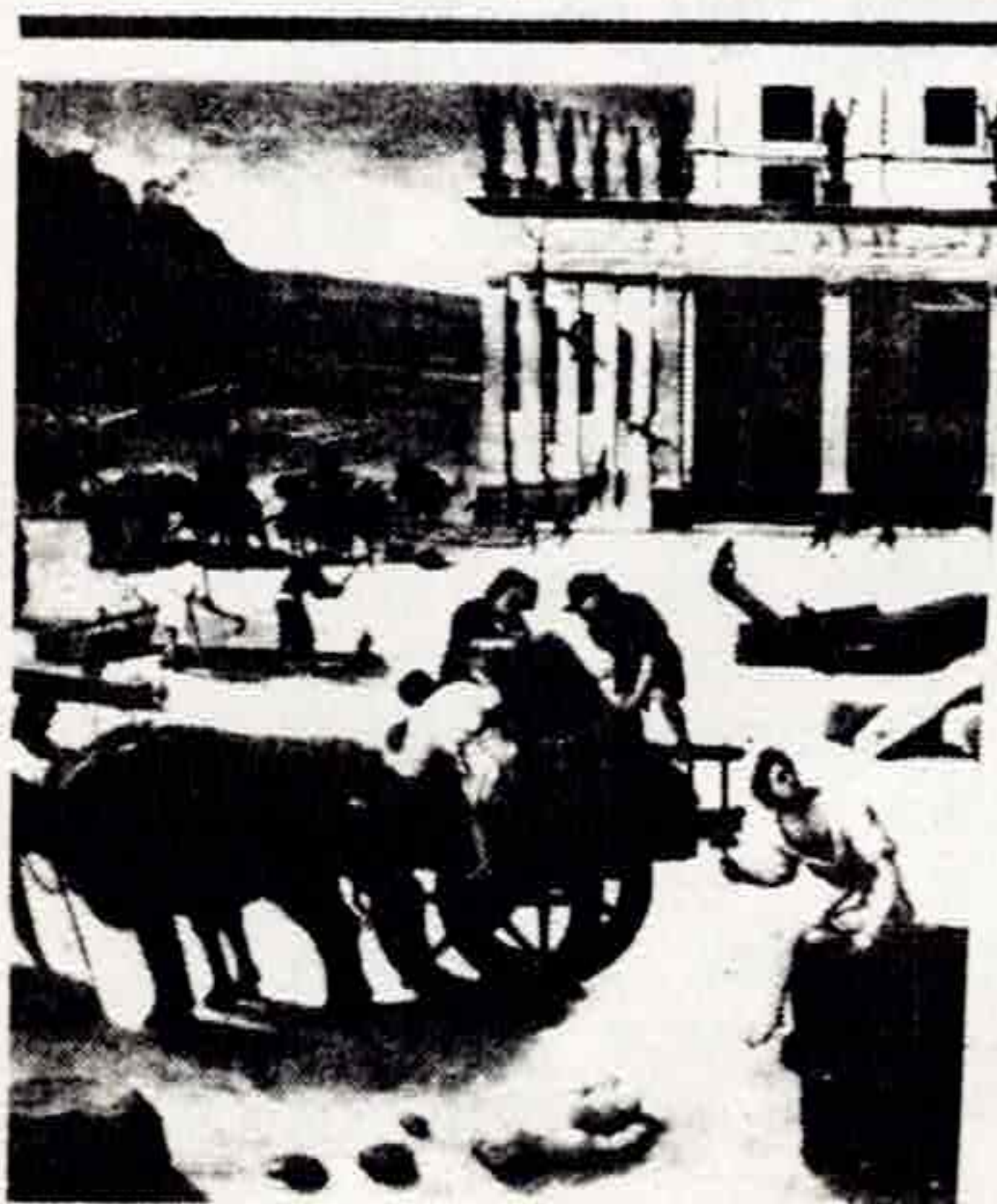
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For this exhibition Dr. Stejneger, General Director of the Prussian State Museums, has assembled from public collections throughout the Federal Republic of Germany 90 paintings and 32 artists (ill.: F. Overbeck "Pope Pius VI"). This exhibition, representing the most important art movement within 19th century German art, is a blockbuster show, the current serious and ambitious effort to bring to American public unfamiliar but important art by German Romantics, Nazarenes, Realists, and Impressionists.

### Clemente in SoHo

Metaphor and symbolism, personalized to the highest erotic and perverse degree, characterize Francesco Clemente's work. Portraits and parts — human and animal — circulate or rest in flat spaces in a world that is defiantly his own. Clemente's work is a unique blend of the surreal and the real, often depicting figures in a flat, two-dimensional space that defies the laws of perspective.



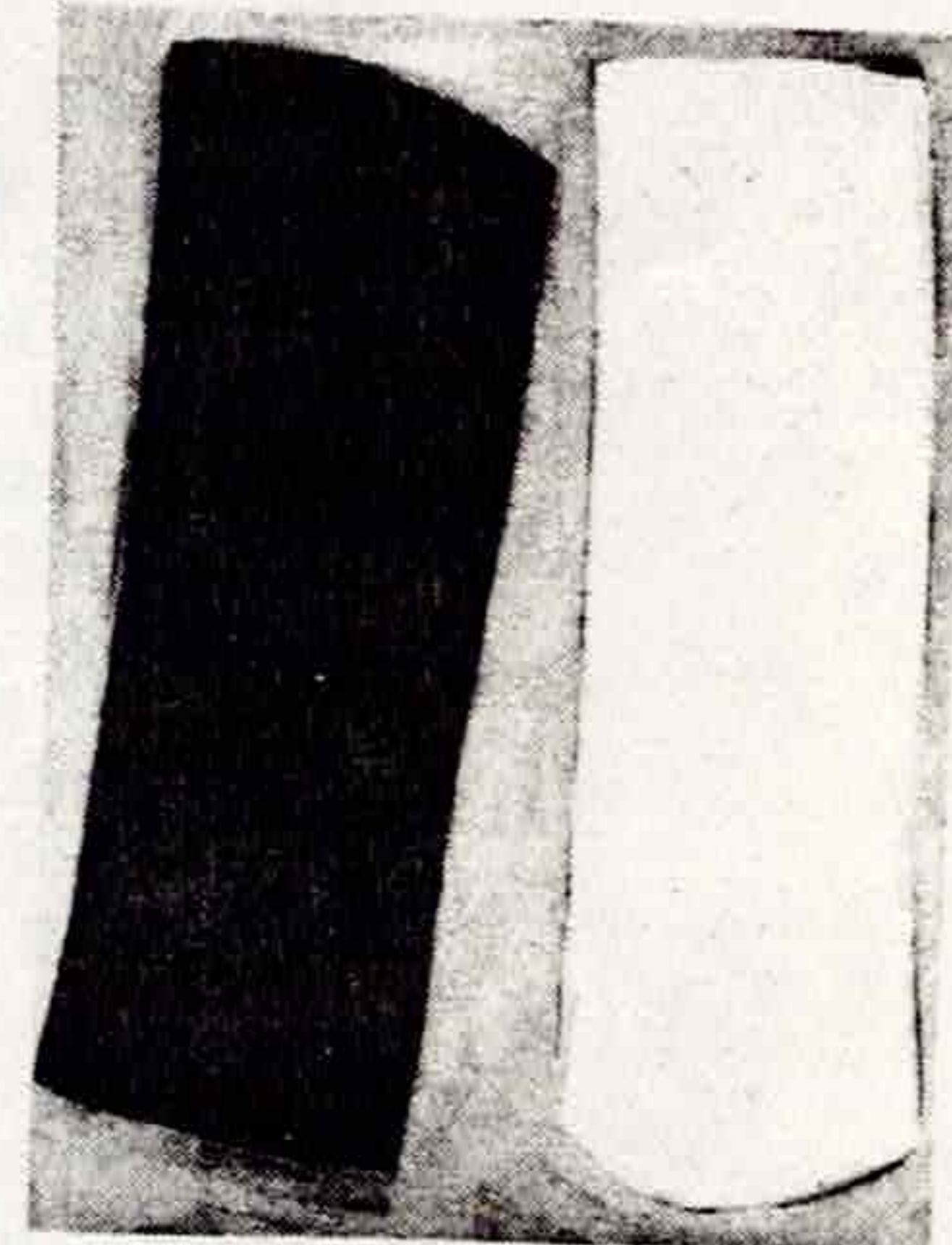
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