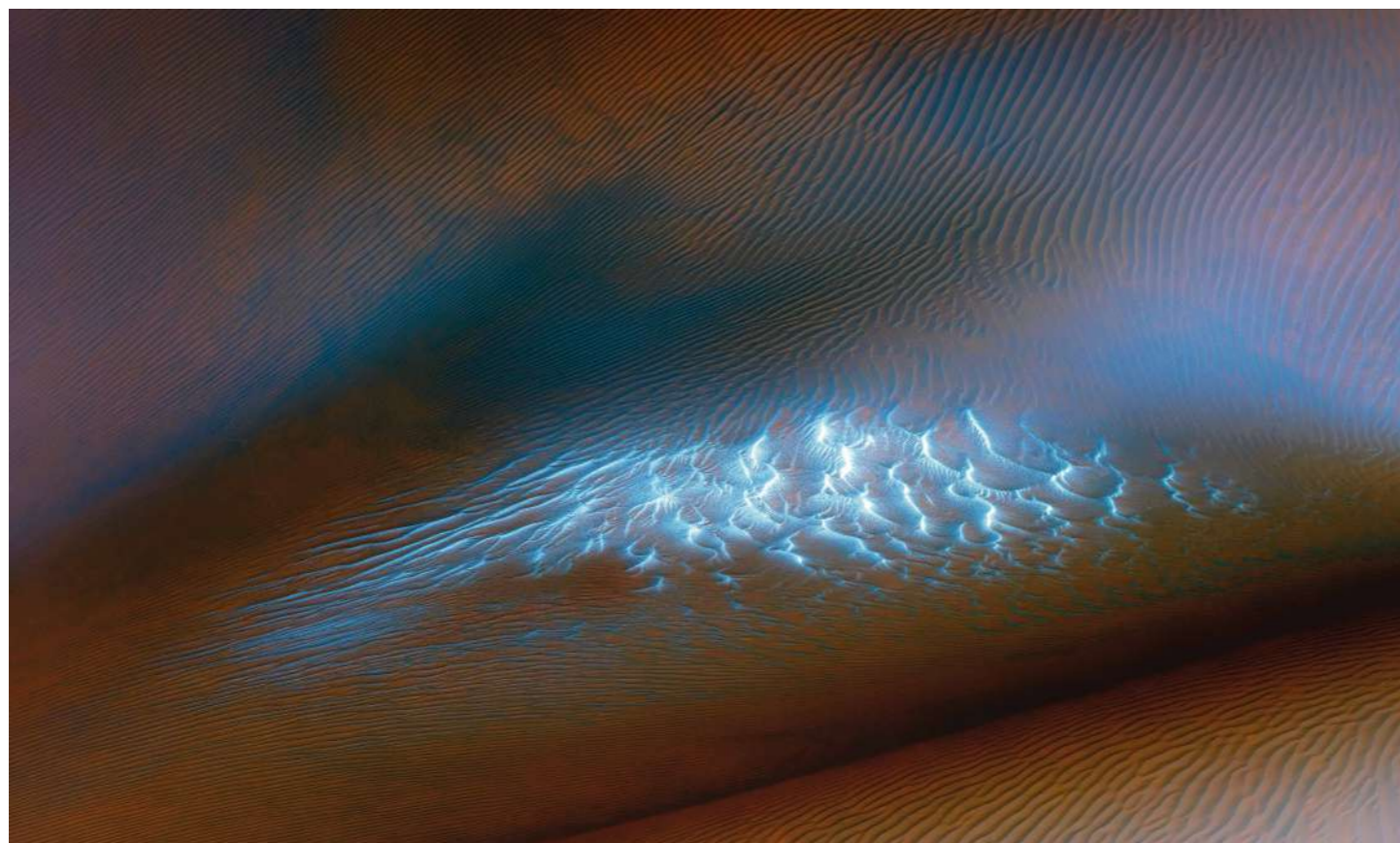


Beyond Experimentation: From Analog to Born-Digital

By *Veronica Cuomo*



Morning Thoughts, 2022, 30x50cm, archival print between plexiglas 20mm/clear and 4mm/black, Limited Ed. of 5

Boguszak (b. 1952) had experienced nearly every possibility of the photographic medium, from completely self-made analog work to born-digital artifacts encoded on sophisticated software. The Curator's Lab proudly presents the monographic exhibition *Beyond Experimentation* running from June 2 to 28, 2022 (Zurich), granting the public a rare opportunity to see photographs produced five decades apart by the same artist with contrasting techniques and visions.

A vintage print is, according to Rosalind Krauss (1981), made "close to the aesthetic moment"—an object created by the photographer himself and produced contemporaneously with the shooting of the image. This formula is determined by the art historical notion period style applied to the practice of connoisseurship, referring to a unique form of coherence that cannot be fraudulently breached. Boguszak's unseen series *Fragments* (1970–1983) embodies this historical and aesthetic coherence; every print exhibited is unique and unreproducible. Consistent with the mandates of

straight photography, Boguszak represents the world as it is, with simple subjects with sharp contrast and compressed details through textured close-ups without discernible mise-en-scène.

Straight photography's aesthetics emerged around the 1880s to restrain the enthusiasm of pictorialist photographers, who were devoted to laboriously handcrafted prints emulating paintings with tinges and hand-coloring, among other trickeries. Between the 1920s and 1930s, photography discovered itself in black-and-white (Gockel, 2020) with a powerful visual language enthroning its medial characteristics, decisively dismissing manipulative artifices to record the world objectively. Modern photographers like Paul Strand, Edward Weston, and Ansel Adams installed and perpetuated this vision through their lenses until the '70s. Boguszak built up a sensory relationship with photography in his early years. Shootings with a medium format Pentacon Six, the photographer's days were followed by endless hours submerged in the darkroom's chemical humidity. These experi-

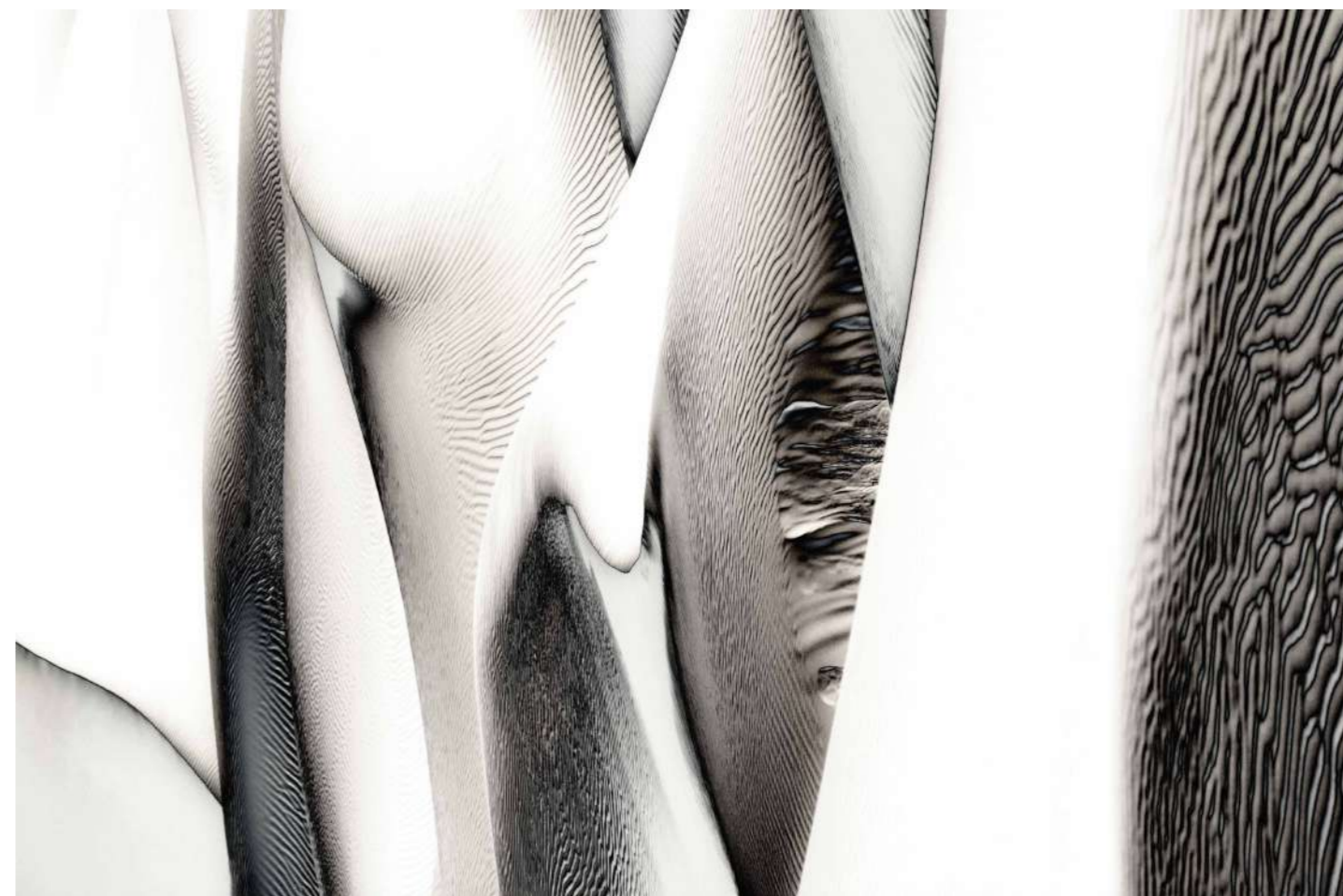
ences impregnated his practice forging an untransferable understanding of the medium palpable in his pictures. Two aspects are fundamental in these images, the management of hollows and volumes through light and their perspective and crop, as in *Fragment of Neighborhood* (around 1972). This work recalls Strand's purity and brutal directness as revealed in his abstract experiments with bright whites and deep blacks away from the soft-focus (1915–1917).

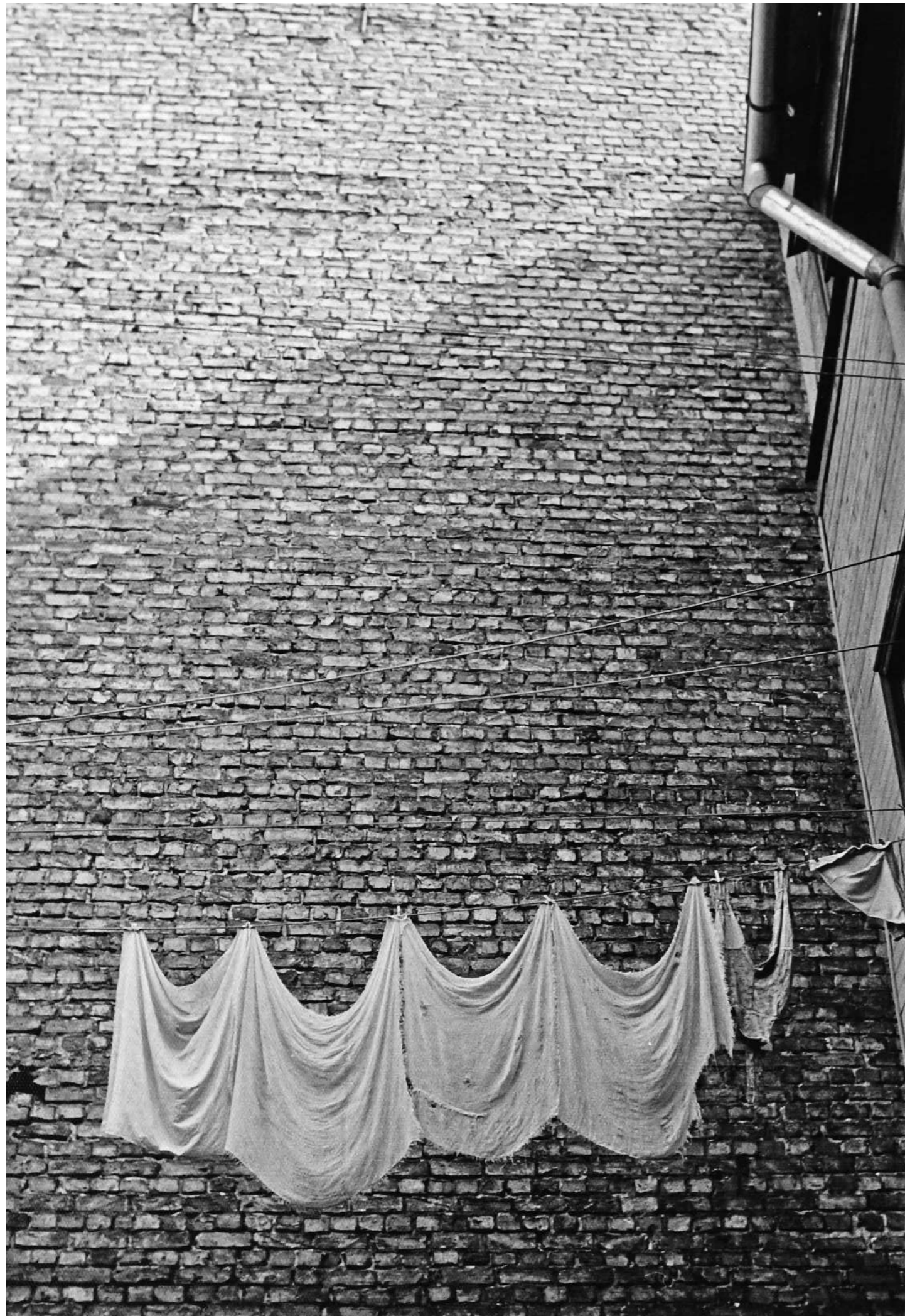
In the last years, the Czech artist has shifted from analog to digital photography starting a technically driven transformation in his image-making, going from figurative to abstract experimentations. The mesmerism of his digital landscapes finds its origin in the abstract tendencies of his early work. Lately, his sand dunes have metamorphosed into improbable dreamscape topographies emerging from the artist's unconscious through a complex post-production process. From this perspective, Boguszak's digital work functions as an equivalent detached from reality and reattached to his inner world. Minor White (1963) explained that within the logic of photographic equivalence the photographer is no longer reacting

to something from outside but instead projecting what is inside himself—established by previous experience—and returning to the world as if the world was responding to the observer. The artist manipulates the image and the photographic matrix with mastery and immediacy, achieving results beyond expectations. Recently, pristine ellipses have colonized the pictorial space (*Unveiling*, 2022), pushing the experiment's expressiveness further.

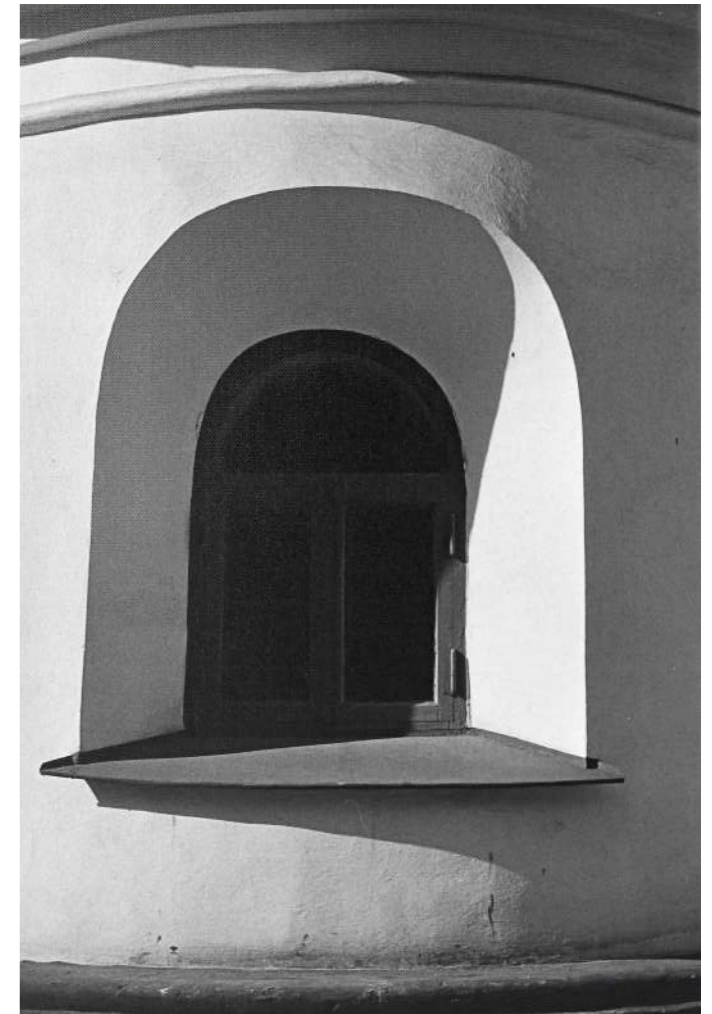
Right - Fragment of Everyday, around 1975, unique vintage print, gelatin silver, framed 20x30 cm, passepartout and black wood frame

Bottom - Metamorphoses I, 2022, 30x50cm, between plexiglas 20mm/ clear and 4mm/black, Limited Ed. of 5





Boguszak's contemporary use of color photography is distant from its historical vocation of recording the colors of reality. Instead, it is a powerful means of expression, mirroring the artist's emotional universe. Boguszak adheres to rendering the world via light and shadow in his classical photography, recalling the avant-garde endorsement of contrast and sharpness when black-and-white became a color of photography (Timby, 2020).



Top - *Fragment of Outlook*, around 1975, unique vintage print, gelatin silver, framed 20x30 cm, passepartout and black wood frame

Left - *Unveiling*, 2022, archival print between plexiglas 10mm/clear, 4mm/opal, Limited Ed. of 5



Beyond Experimentation highlights the conviction that there has never been only one type of photography. Boguszak explores, in this exhibition, the dialectical shifts between representation and abstraction, black-and-white and color processes, unique handmade prints and mechanically reproducible ones, and digital and analog techniques. In this setting, pictures turn into reflections, and the exhibition display evolves into a discursive space revisiting image-making's significance. This narrative presents a critical body of work that redefines photography as an expressive medium of endless experimentation potential and remarkable malleability. Engaging viscerally with the viewer, Boguszak's overachieved compositional devices occupy the gallery walls with absolute pregnancy.