

THESIS  
TOWARD THE FECUNDITY OF BEING

Submitted by  
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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### TOWARD THE FECUNDITY OF BEING

The images represented here, both abstract and representational, deal with the question of how the concept of “self” relates to “Being” (as with Heidegger) through the study of the interrelation between the artist, materials and the subject matter. The premise for the early nonobjective and surreal experiments was the assertion that the state or qualities of being that an artist brings directly and uninhibitedly to the artists materials would be found as content in the image that resulted from this relationship. With these images I was interested in invoking a heightened, rich visual presence that reflects a sense of being on the edge of life and death. It seemed that this would be the place of being where “self” would most readily be revealed. While nothing “substantial” was found, it began to occur to me that what was most interesting about the process was that moment or series of moments where “I” was sublimated into the creative process within the materials and subject matter.

During this time a transition began to occur with my image making. I began to understand “self” as a function of relationships in general. The peculiar aspect of the relationship between artist, materials and the subject matter is that it is a relationship within which all involved are transformed. The artist grows and changes through the process, the materials are transformed from raw materials into living visual language, and the subject matter ceases to function as a consumable object “it” (the land for example) and instead becomes, in Martin Buber’s words, “thou” that now functions as *the beloved*.

(It seems ironic that one answer to counter-consumerism is not necessarily overt activism, but rather, educating people to be studio artists.)

While I was in the process of understanding all of this I began to work more and more from everyday life. Our human experience of Being is by its nature relational in that we are what (and how) we are engaged in at any moment. The nonobjective work was becoming like a song stuck in my head. I was finding in the World, as it offers itself for investigation, a bottomless well of spectacular visual information. In contrast, the investigations into my internal environment were exciting at first, but the process and imagery was fast becoming repetitive and boring.

The still ongoing series of plant and garden images are a result. My new thesis is that if my being-in-the- world as an artist is relational and I know that the quality of being that I bring is reflected as content, then as an artist, I can choose what type of relationship to participate in. In doing so I take responsibility for *both* the contents of my life and of the images because they reflect and inform each other. The land, and gardens in particular, gives me an opportunity to reconnect with my original Nature. Gardens are especially interesting because they are the work of directly participating in Nature by bringing the experience into our urban environment. This series of images involves bringing the materials to the gardens and making marks that are a direct response to the interrelationship of my being and the being of the environment as a whole. As such, I choose to participate in the fecundity of Being.

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## DEDICATION

This body of work is dedicated to my wife and best friend Bonnie, my father, Gregory Butler, my family and friends. Your love and generosity of Spirit make it all worth while.

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Plate 1. *Dolmen*, intaglio, 34"x19.5"





Plate 2. *Dolmen Petroglyph*, Intaglio, 14.5"x21"

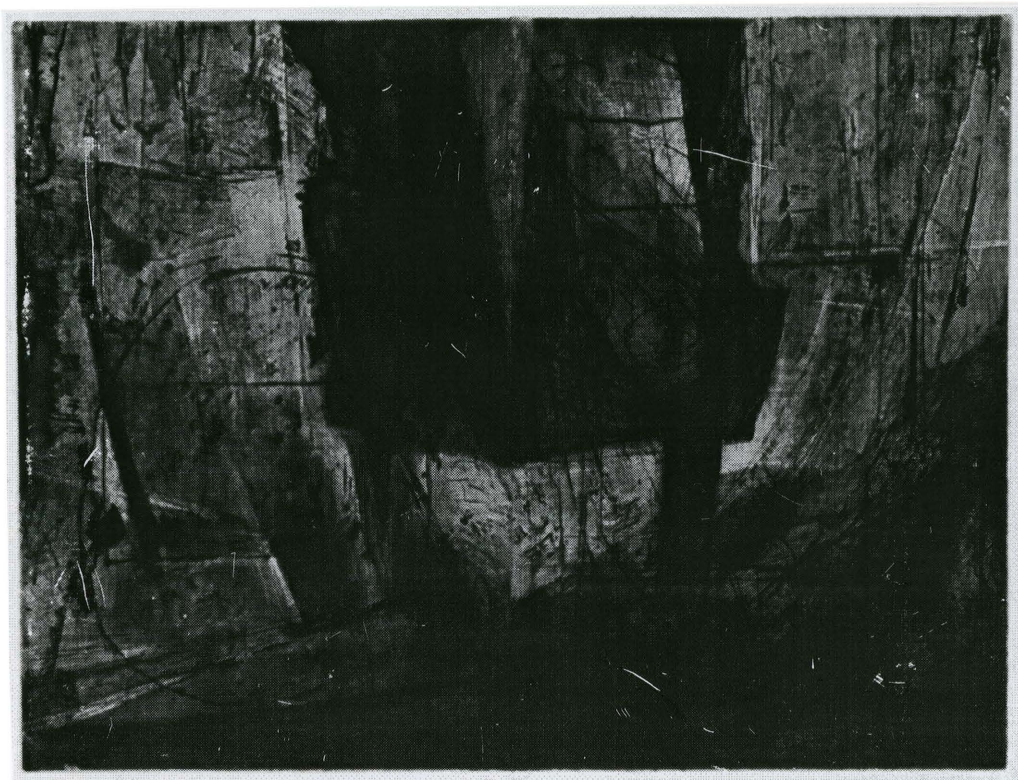


Plate 3. *Guardian*, intaglio, 36"x48"





Plate 4. *Bone Cavern*, intaglio, 12"x19"



Plate 5. *The Transmigration of Old Man Carp, or After Jack's Big Fish*,  
intaglio, 10"x36"



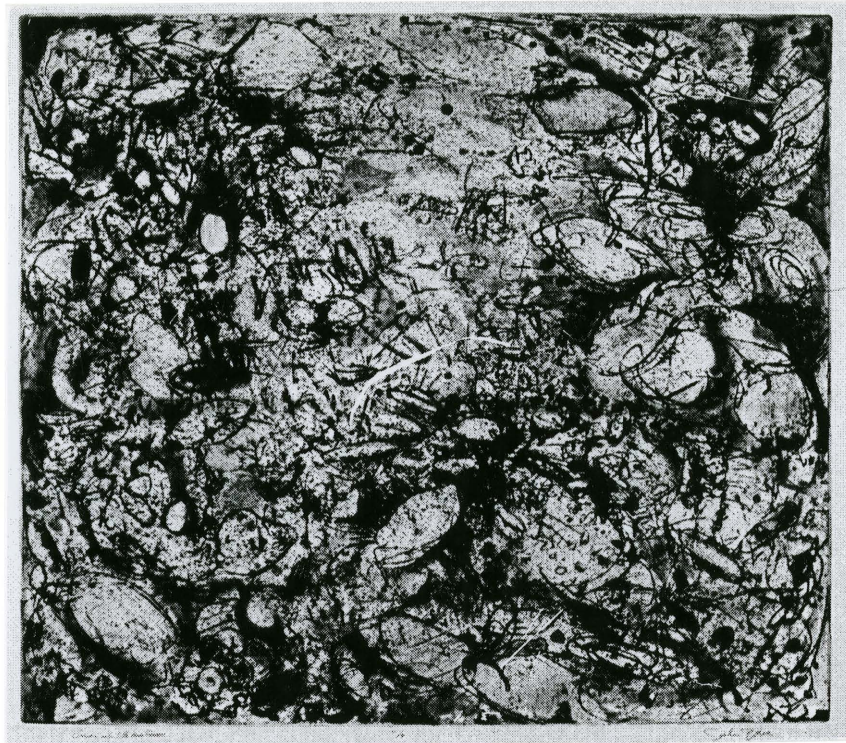


Plate 6. *Garden with Little Round Flowers*, intaglio, 23.5"x25"



Plate 7. *Hanging Pant #2*, intaglio, 23"x25"



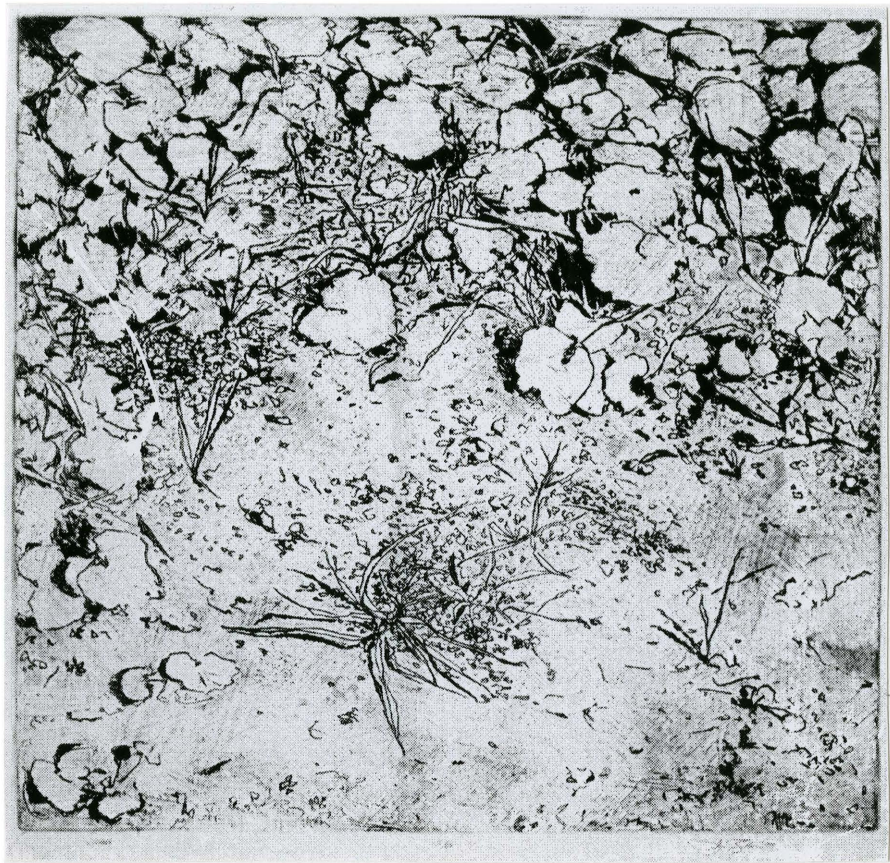


Plate 8. *Weeds*, intaglio, 24"x25"



Plate 9. *Garden #6*, intaglio, 6"x6.25"



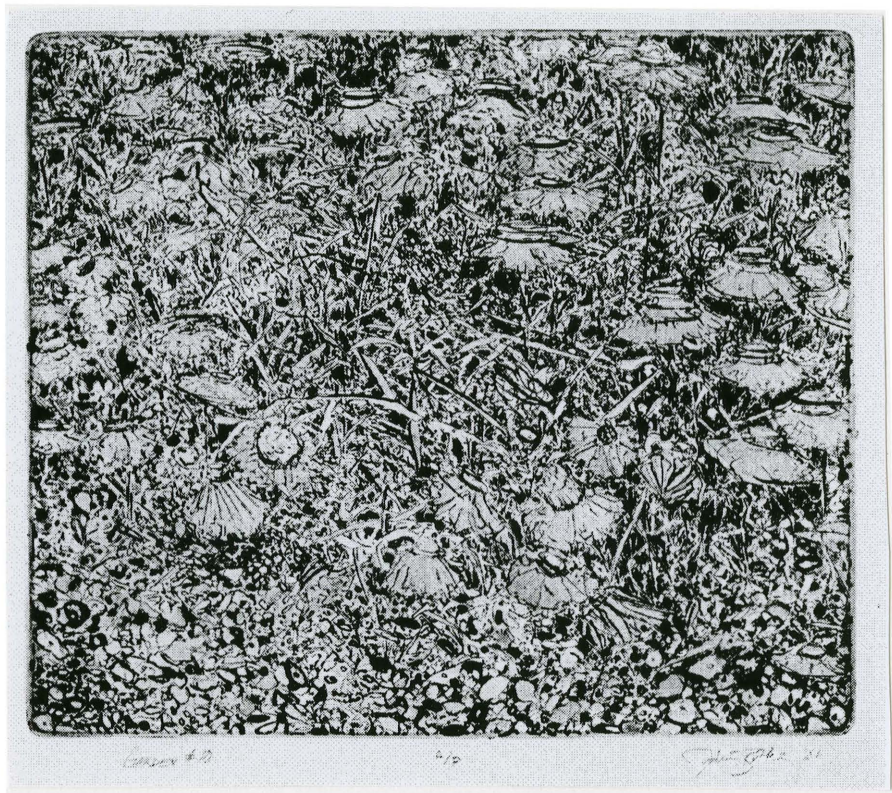


Plate 10. *Garden #10*, intaglio, 10.5"x9.25"

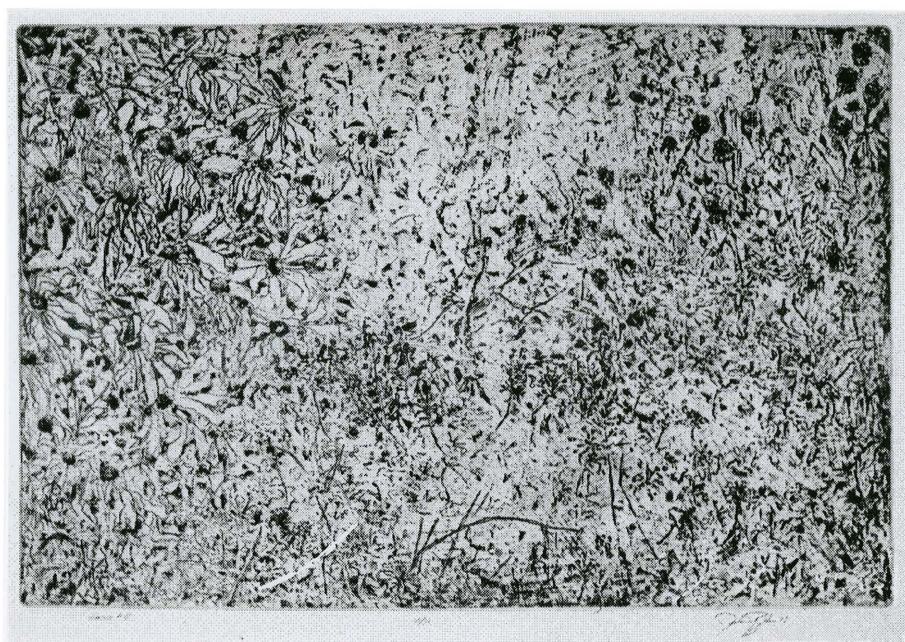


Plate 11. *Garden #12*, intaglio, 16"x24