



**MINDLESS
PLEASURES**

JAMES HUCKENPAHLER



previous

study for untitled [mindless pleasures #27], 2007

pigment print, 22.5" x 30"

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JAMES HUCKENPAHLER

email to George Hemphill, 10 April 2007

I've been making the recent images in my usual roundabout way, mostly from domestic stuff—dead bugs, hairbrushes, pine cones—usually small, intimate stuff that can fit in your hand. The way my process works for these is that I take a bunch of snapshots on my digital camera of an object from lots of angles. I've got software that, if used properly, can make reasonably accurate 3D models from the images. I prefer using the software improperly.

I have a 6" Ultraman action figure that I used as the source for the *Mindless Pleasures* pieces. One of the steps in the process is to mask out the backgrounds of the images so that the software knows the difference between the figure and the ground. One day I accidentally inverted the masks and got a sort of gooey negative space where the figure should have been. Just a chunk of grey matter with intersecting avenues parting through the middle.

Recently, as I was working with this model, I remembered a passage about fifty or a hundred pages from the end of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Tyrone Slothrop, the quasi-protagonist comes to a crossroads and disintegrates, scattering to the four winds. At least that's how I remembered it. My negative Ultraman is a stand-in for Tyrone, and me, and anti-heroes. Somewhere on the internet I read that a working title for *Gravity's Rainbow* had been *Mindless Pleasures*. That title stuck in my head, I guess because it pokes fun at people who think that's what abstraction is.

"Remember that these are mostly brains ravaged by antisocial and mindless pleasures."



ultraman, removed

untitled [mindless pleasures #23], 2007
pigment print, 22.5" x 30"



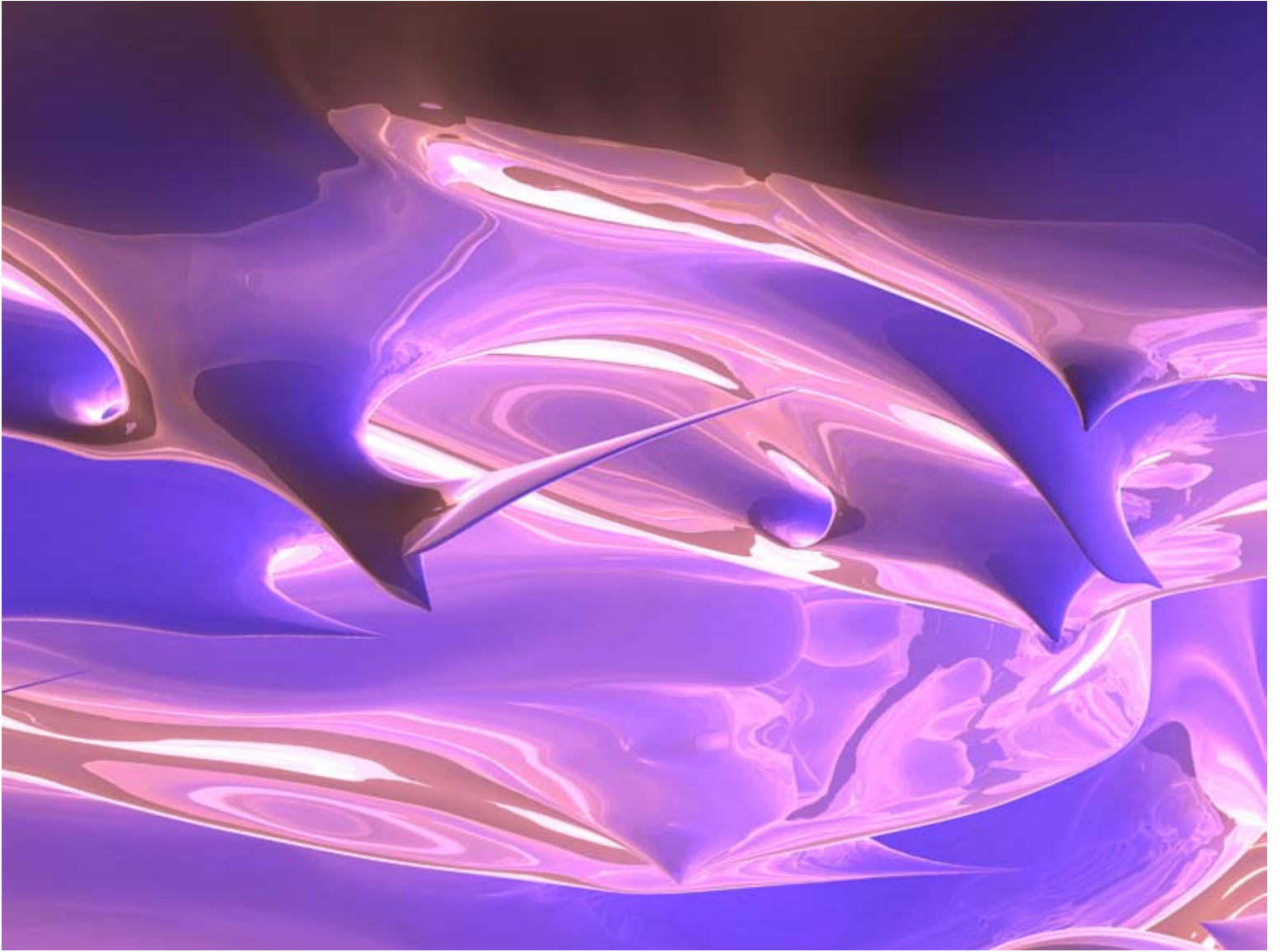
the intersection of patterns, 2007
pigment print, 56" x 42"



untitled [mindless pleasures #24], 2007
pigment print, 22.5" x 30"



study for slang, 2007



email to George Hemphill, 12 September 2007

Around 2002-03 I started looking for ways of creating surfaces with deeper contours for the skin pieces I had been working on. Prior to this, I had confined myself to Photoshop, but I had reached an impasse. So I started experimenting with 3d software, with the idea in mind that I would wrap the 'skins' I was making over 3d models.

I'm not interested in creating accurate models of real things. Nor do I care to borrow pre-existing models created by other folks. Rather, I gravitate towards strategies that create models that I can't predict. Generally this involves mis-using software—deliberately *not* following the instructions, or seeking out the errors and rough edges. I'm not Pixar.

The results I was getting were so interesting that I abandoned the skin textures entirely (for the moment at least.)

The software I use reconciles a group of photos into a 3d model, with a little help from me, after I've defined what's subject and what's background. This is done by creating simple masks for each image. Things get interesting when I invert and otherwise manipulate the masks. That's definitely not in the manual, as the assumption is that one would want as accurate a reproduction as possible. The resulting models are exactly what I want, in the sense that they are completely unexpected and rich with bizarre details.

Making 2D images from these models is in many respects analogous to photography. Models exist in a virtual spaces, are lit with virtual lights, and are framed by virtual cameras. Yet all of these are far removed from the real world. Photography tends towards the 'real.' Its most natural expression is through the use of real objects, captured in a real moment, illuminated by real light.

Making images as I have, borrowing vocabularies from different technologies that occurred in different eras, is a way for me to include 'everything' in the studio: parallel lines as a means of defining contour and light from the 19th century; focus and film grain from the 20th century; polygons and virtual models from the 21st century. Computers are a meta-tool, perhaps even a meta-studio where lots of disparate forms (text, pictures, sound, motion) can all be manipulated and integrated in a single context. I think this is a good analog for dreams, where all manner of phenomena, disparate and anachronous, can co-exist and be manipulated in meaningful ways.

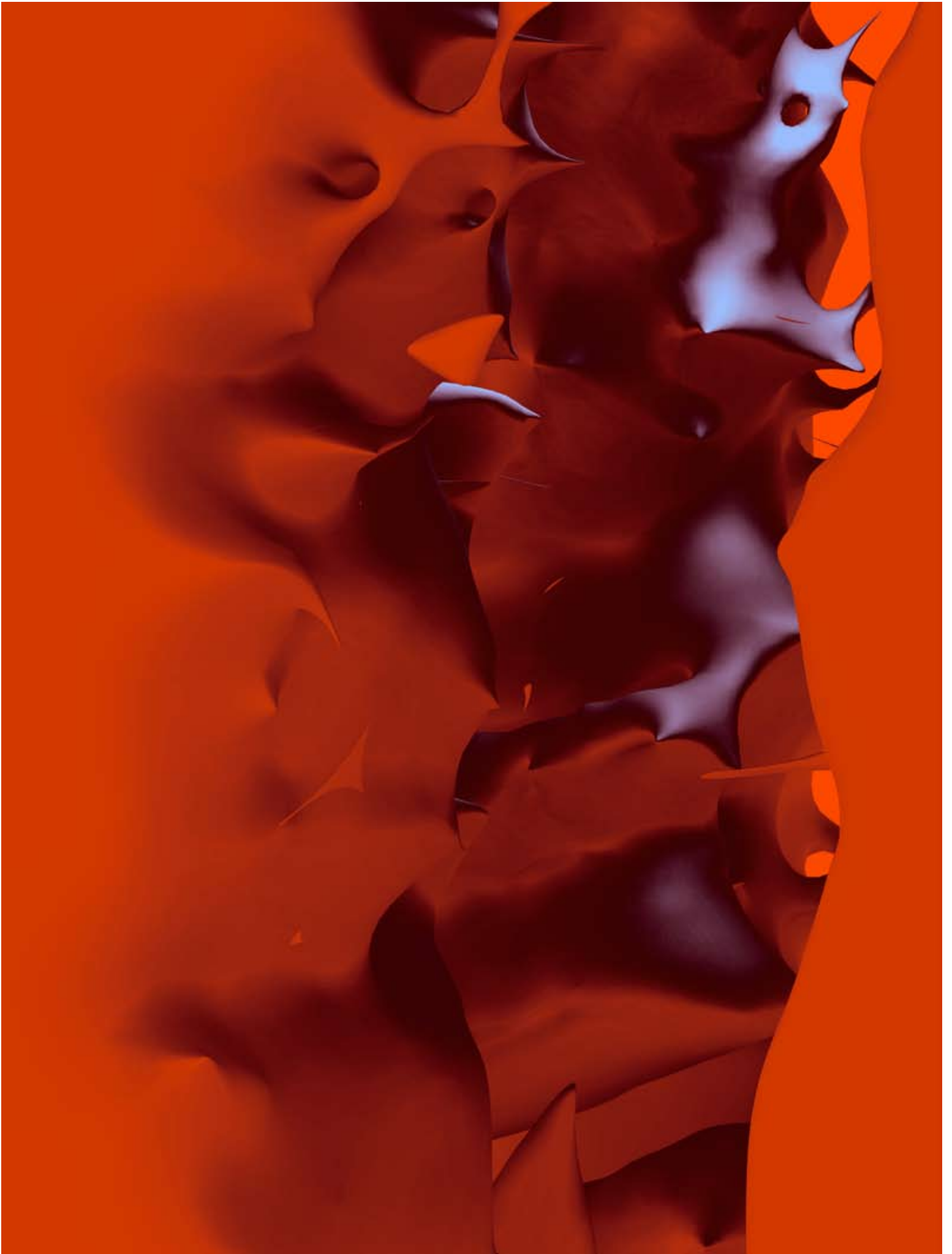


previous
paolo and francesca, removed

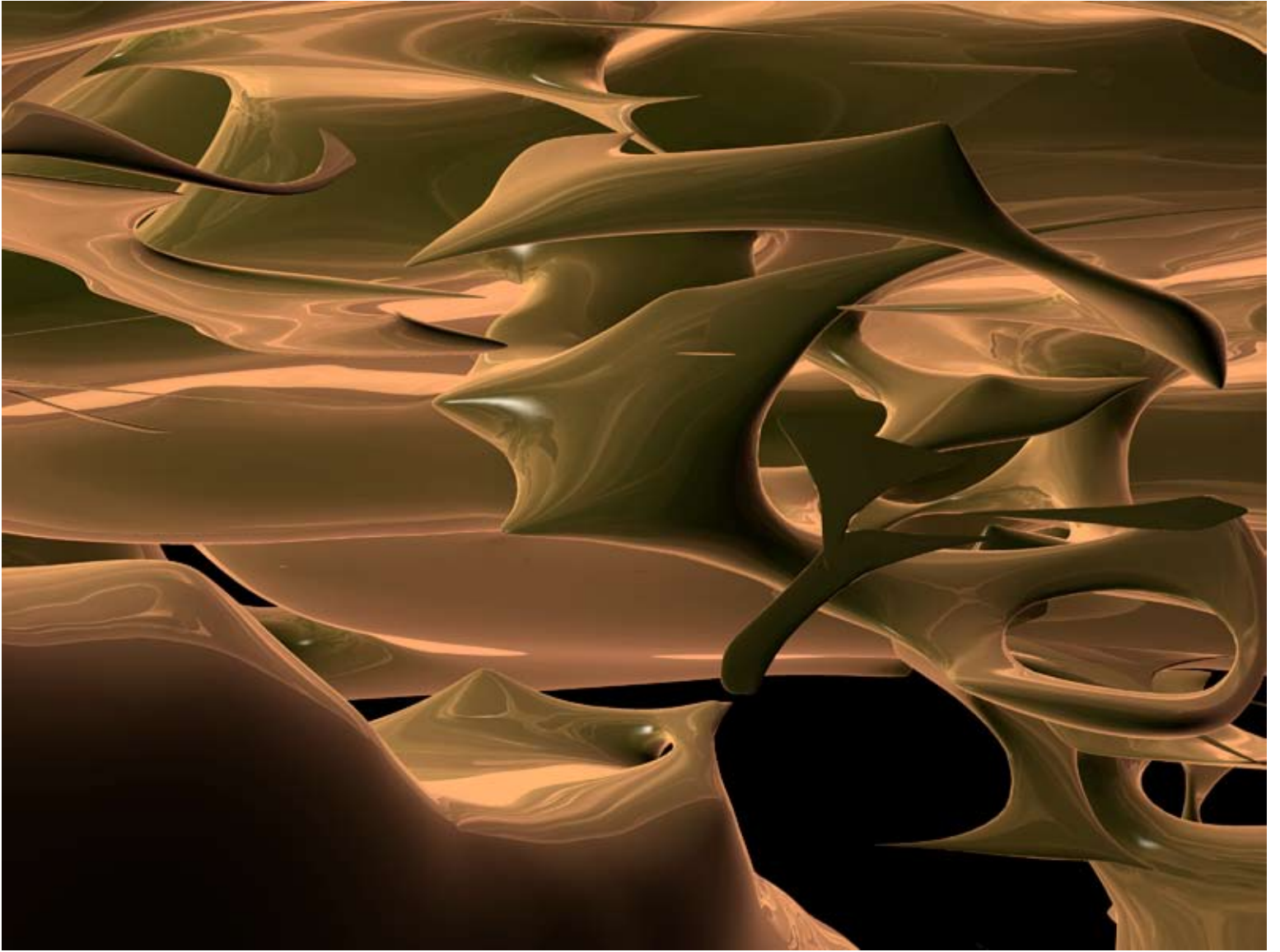
I read somewhere that an author strives to include everything she or he knows into a novel. As an image-maker I want to include every type of image, in the studio at least, if not in individual pictures. Many of the new images are illuminated by the twilight of Gustave Doré's Inferno engravings, while others assert sovereignty over my own interior world.

Making pictures on a computer is fairly conventional now, but I grew up with personal computing, literally. I lived through the transition from personal-computing-as-science-fiction to personal-computing-as-appliance. I got my first computer around the time my hormones started kicking in, so I have a bit of a romantic relationship with them. For the generation after me, computers are ubiquitous, so their use of computers has more to do with practical necessity. I am still a specialist. I make 2-dimensional images and I still believe in their efficacy as a point of departure for introspection.

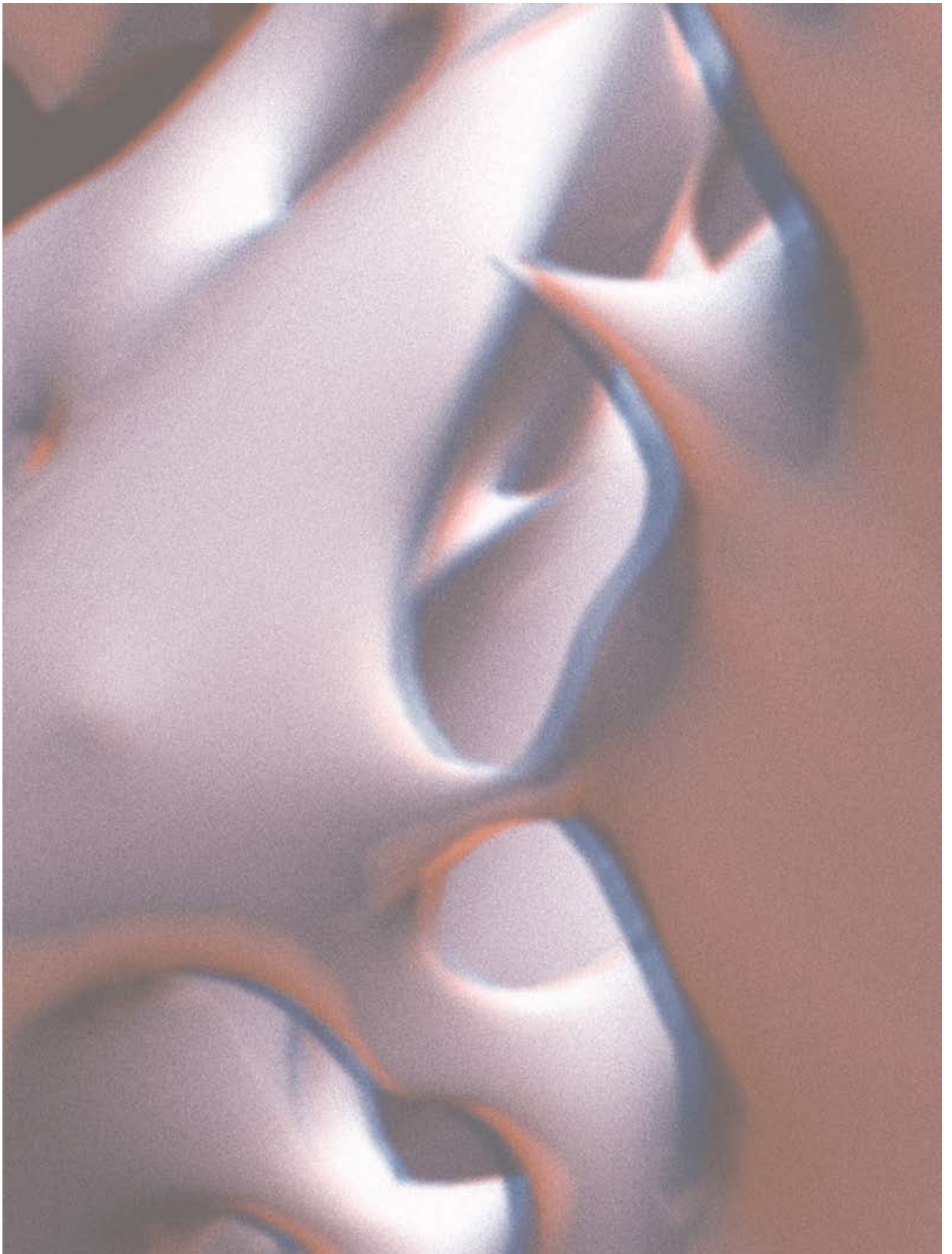
inferno, 2007
pigment print, 56" x 42"



study for land grab, 2007



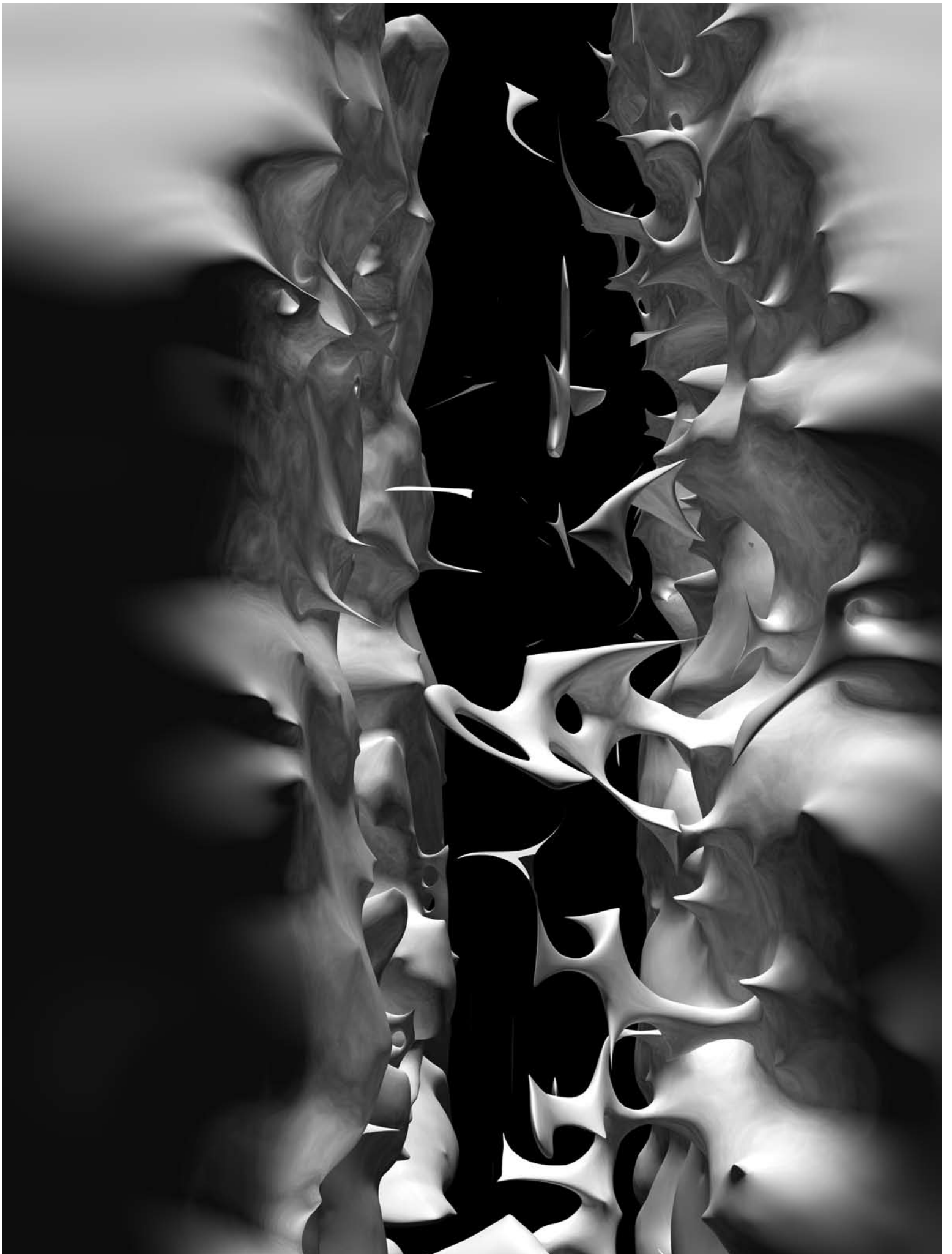
study for value proposition, 2007



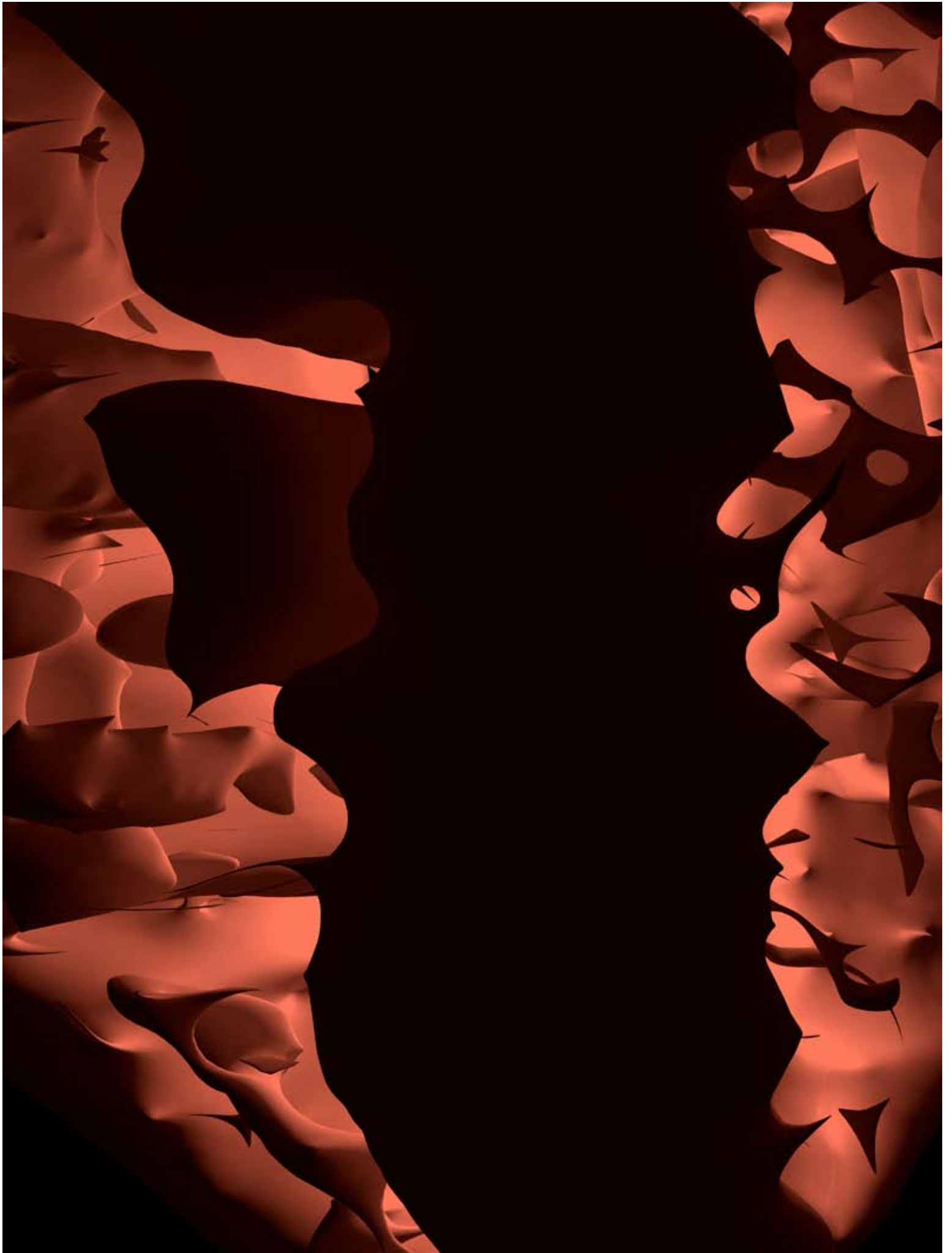
untitled [mindless pleasures #22], 2007
pigment print, 22.5" x 30"



study for untitled [mindless pleasures #2], 2007



black site, 2007
pigment print, 56" x 42"



Crosses, swastikas, Zone-mandalas, how can they not speak to Slothrop?
He's sat in Säure Bummer's kitchen, the air streaming with kif moirés,
reading soup recipes and finding in every bone and cabbage leaf
paraphrases of himself... news flashes, names of wheelhorses that will
pay him off enough for a certain getaway... He used to pick and shovel
at the spring roads of Berkshire, April afternoons he's lost, "Chapter
81 work," they called it, following the scraper that clears the winter's
crystal attack-from-within, its white necropolizing... picking up rusted
beer cans, rubbers yellow with preterite seed, Kleenex wadded to brain
shapes hiding preterite snot, preterite tears, newspapers, broken glass,
pieces of automobile, days when in superstition and fright he could make
it all fit, seeing clearly in each an entry in a record, a history: his own,
his winter's, his country's... instructing him, dunce and drifter, in ways
deeper than he can explain, have been faces of children out the train
windows two bars of dance music somewhere, in some other street at
night, needles and branches of a pine tree shaken clear and luminous
against night clouds, one circuit diagram out of hundreds in a smudged
yellowing sheaf, laughter out of a cornfield in the early summer morning
as he was walking to school, the idling of a motorcycle at one dusk-heavy
hour of the summer... and now, in the Zone, later in the day he became a
crossroad, after a heavy rain he doesn't recall, Slothrop sees a very thick
rainbow here, a stout rainbow cock driven down out of the pubic clouds
into Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands
crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural...

Gravity's Rainbow
Thomas Pynchon



previous

prehistoric concrete, 2007

pigment print, 56" x 42"

study for 25% sugar, 2007



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by James Huckenpahler

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