



JEROMEROTHENBERGARIEAGALLES

# GRAFFITE

**Three Suites after Images by Arie Galles**

**Jerome Rothenberg**

**2012**

For some time now I've been working with Arie Galles on *Graffite*, a three-part series of graphite drawings with poem accompaniments: *MoonFields*, *CloudPoems* & *PepperTree*, in that order. Here, with the exception of *MoonFields* (abstract circles & lines), Galles's images begin as black & white photographs that he then translates, as with his monumental *14 Stations*, into three sets of twenty graphite drawings each, to which are added twenty poems of mine as linkages. My own procedures, after the fact, are largely improvisational, speaking to his images while maintaining a sense of distance & independence. To borrow from the medieval Japanese, the principle here is not one of direct comment or illustration but of something like juxtaposition &/or collage "wherein it does not matter that the upper and lower part are put together in a seemingly unnatural & arbitrary way so long as they cohere in the mind." In the dance between us, it is he who leads and I who follow, hopefully always in synch. (J.R.)

**Arie A. Galles**

**“MoonFields”**

*Suite of Twenty Drawings*

*graphite sticks, etching needle and pink pearl eraser*

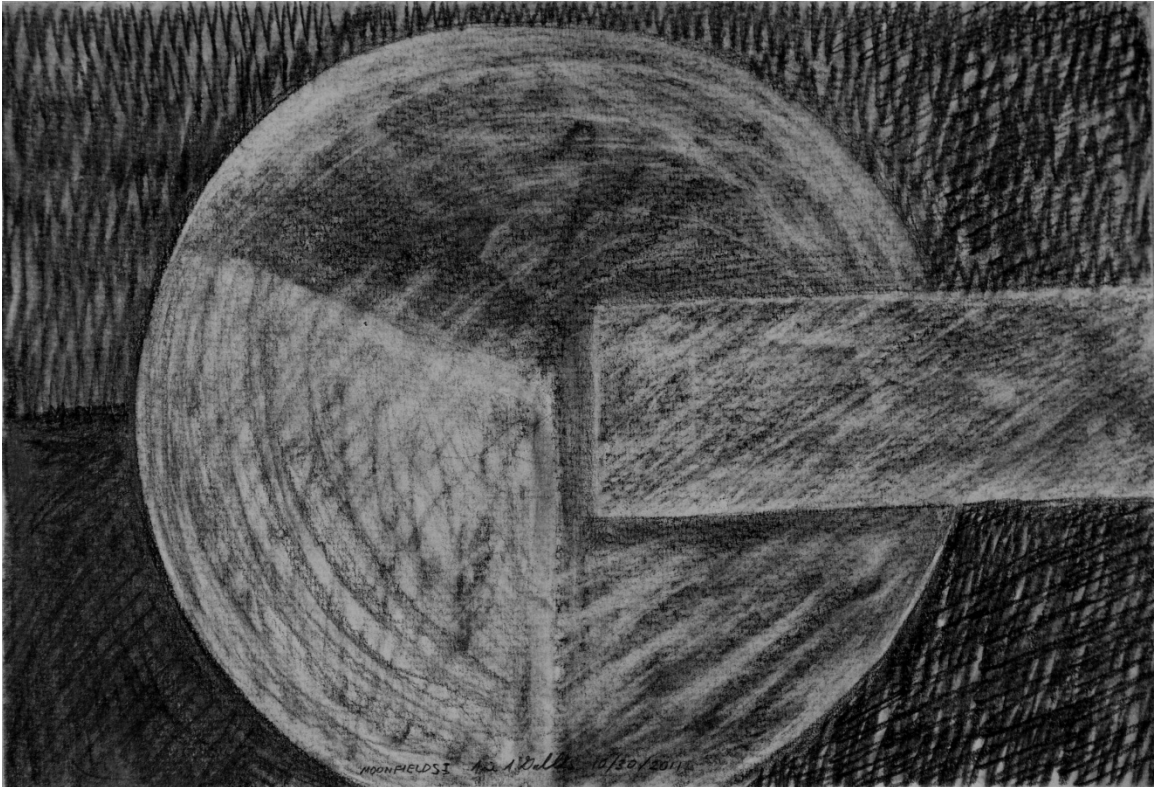
On October 30, 2011, I meandered into my studio, tore a sheet out of a sketchbook and taped it to my drawing board. I reached for a stick of graphite and a PinkPearl eraser, not knowing why or what, and my hand began to draw. After an intense year working on my latest series of Reflected-Light paintings, with their hyper-intense colors, this black and white medium seemed a calming balm to my eyes and thoughts. Having dealt with landscapes awash in circular irrigated fields crisscrossed with linear road patterns, the first drawing was both familiar and surprising: a trifurcated circle stabbed by a horizontal line, all composed of strongly gestural strokes. Inexplicably, a title for this series settled in my brain: “MoonFields.” Over the next four months I returned to these drawings at intervals, one image leading me to the next in an almost Zen-like balancing act of self imposed moderation of shapes, gestures and textures. All the while I wondered from where these images sprang, puzzled less by their final state than by the actual genesis of the iconography. The drawings led me, almost calling my hand, from one work to the next. On completing “MoonFields XVII,” it became clear that I was in the process of creating a visual “Rondo,” leading back to the first drawing, though with completely different awareness. “MoonFields XX” completed the cycle. Why twenty works? My “Sinister Drawings” suite consists of twenty images, so perhaps that was my mental directive. Or possibly a subconscious harkening back to the plastic sheets that held twenty slides influenced the decision to stop at twenty drawings. Whichever it is, I am happy with the way it turned out. (A.A.G)

## TWENTY MOON FIELDS

*"I was on the terrace, wrestling with the Moon"*

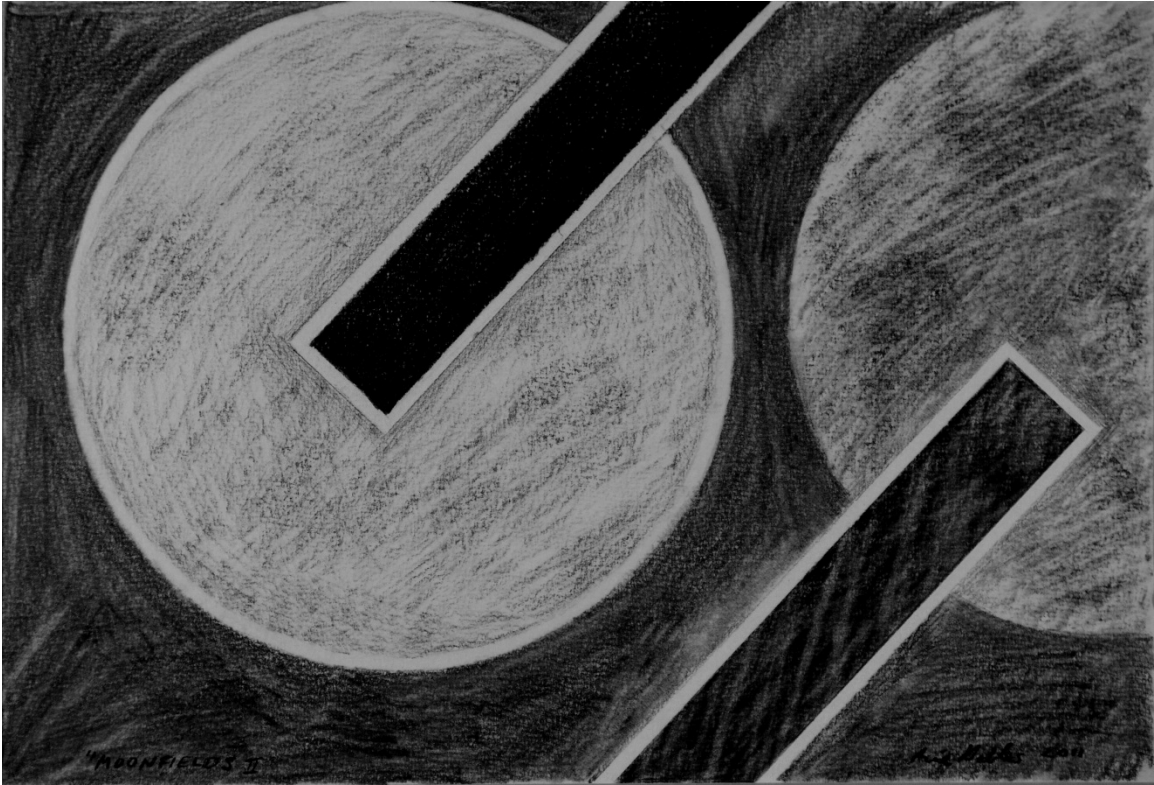
– F.G. Lorca

1



a knife falls  
in the water  
grows a second knife

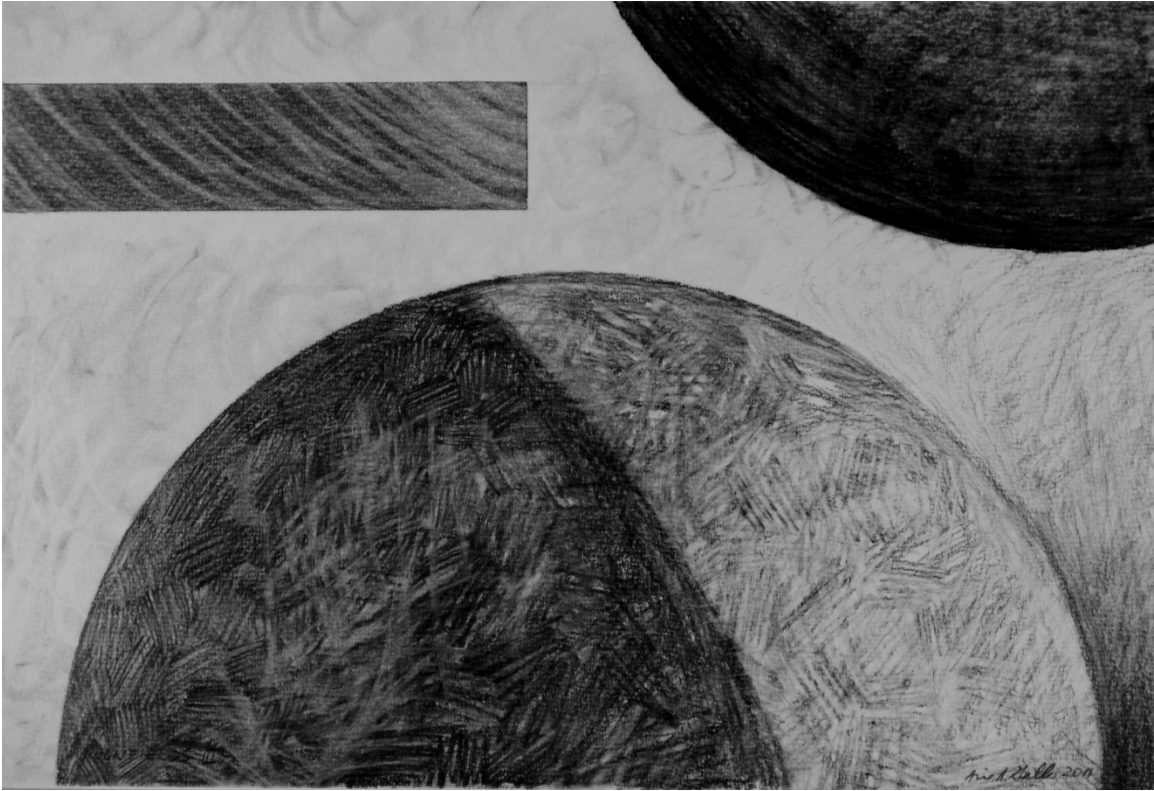
& over each knife  
looms an eye –  
my second eye trails off



life has spirit, death  
has only chalk

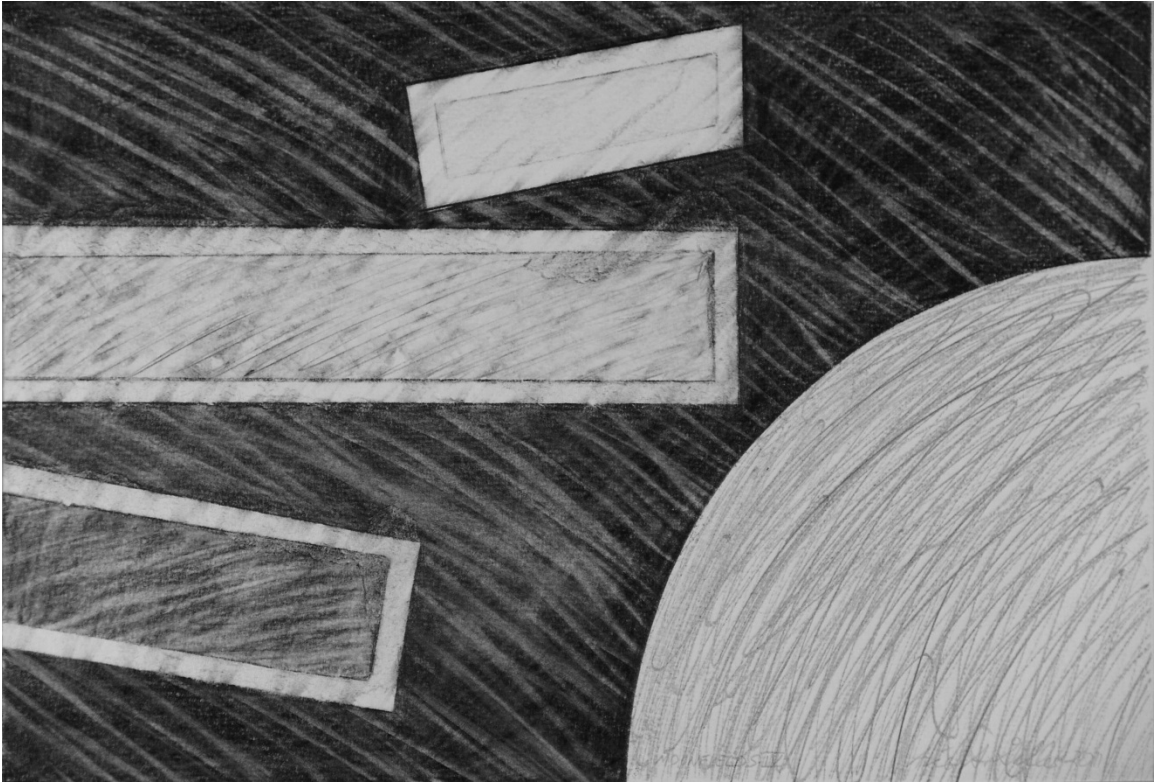
with chalk a word  
is written

but not by you



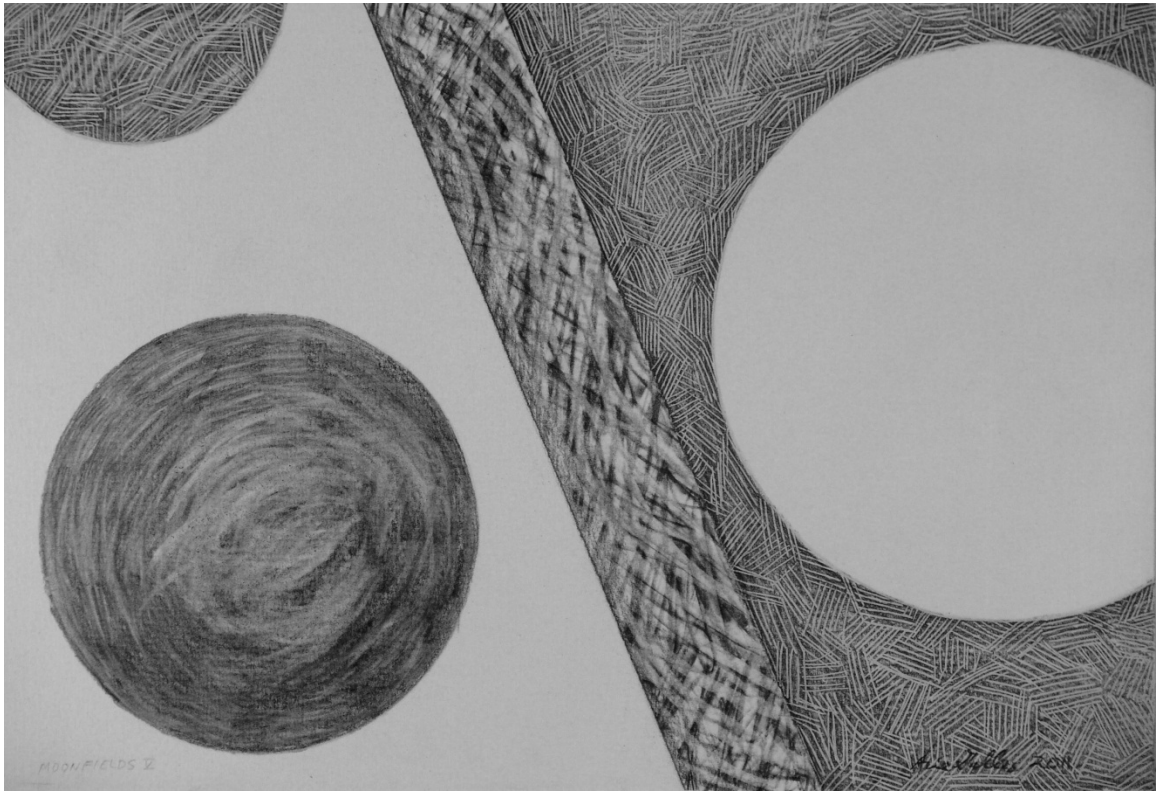
end it here,  
the man says  
as he puts his thumb on it

the thumb is raw,  
behold,  
the man is even now alone



easy sleep  
easy rest

easier to be an animal  
than not



*after Nerval*

like inserting two pictures  
in a single viewer

(he writes)

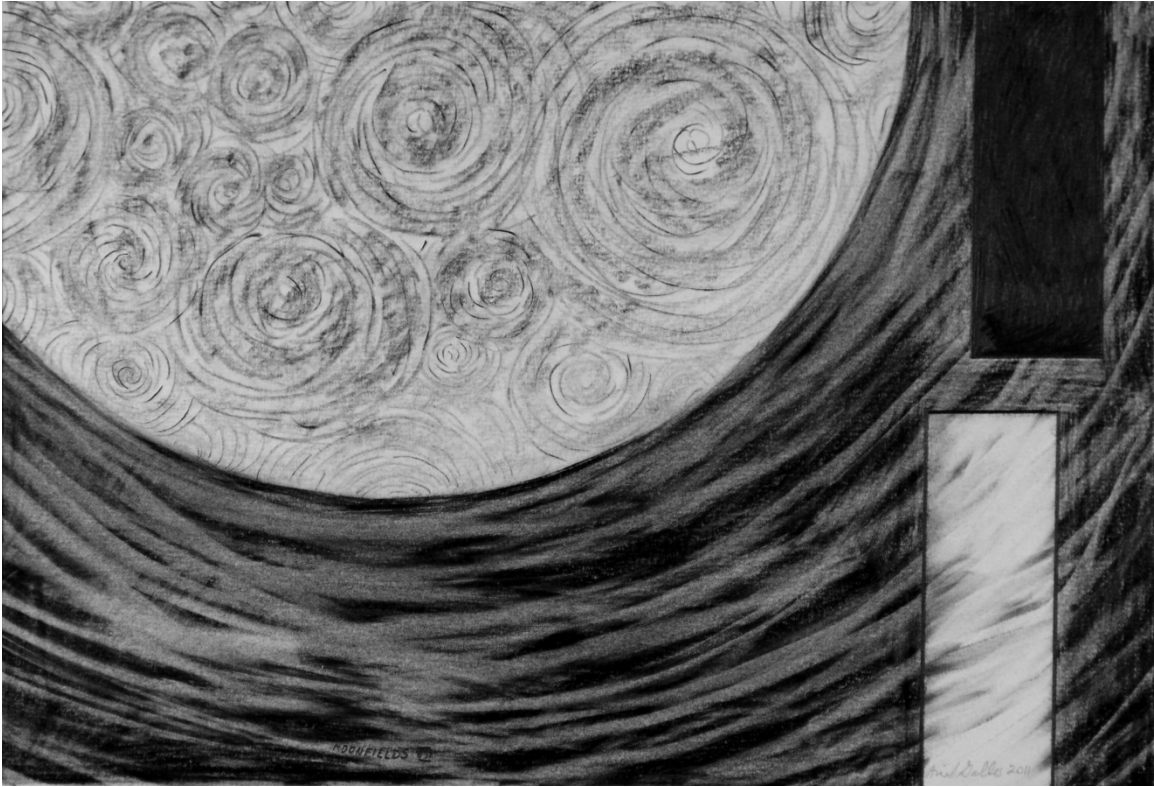
then moving my hand as if  
sketching my signature



DIRECTIONS

rub this side of the chain  
against that side

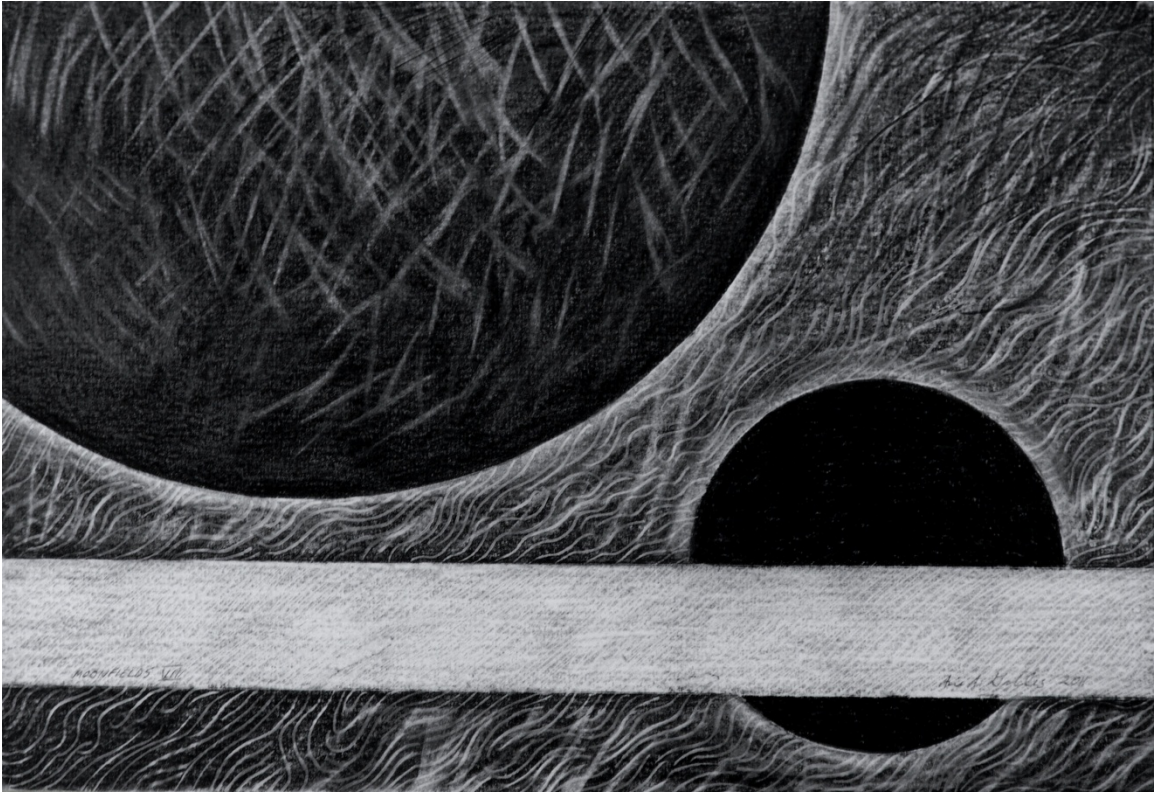
how many years before  
the chain rubs out?



death has a taste  
after we hear of it

a man's taste  
or a woman's

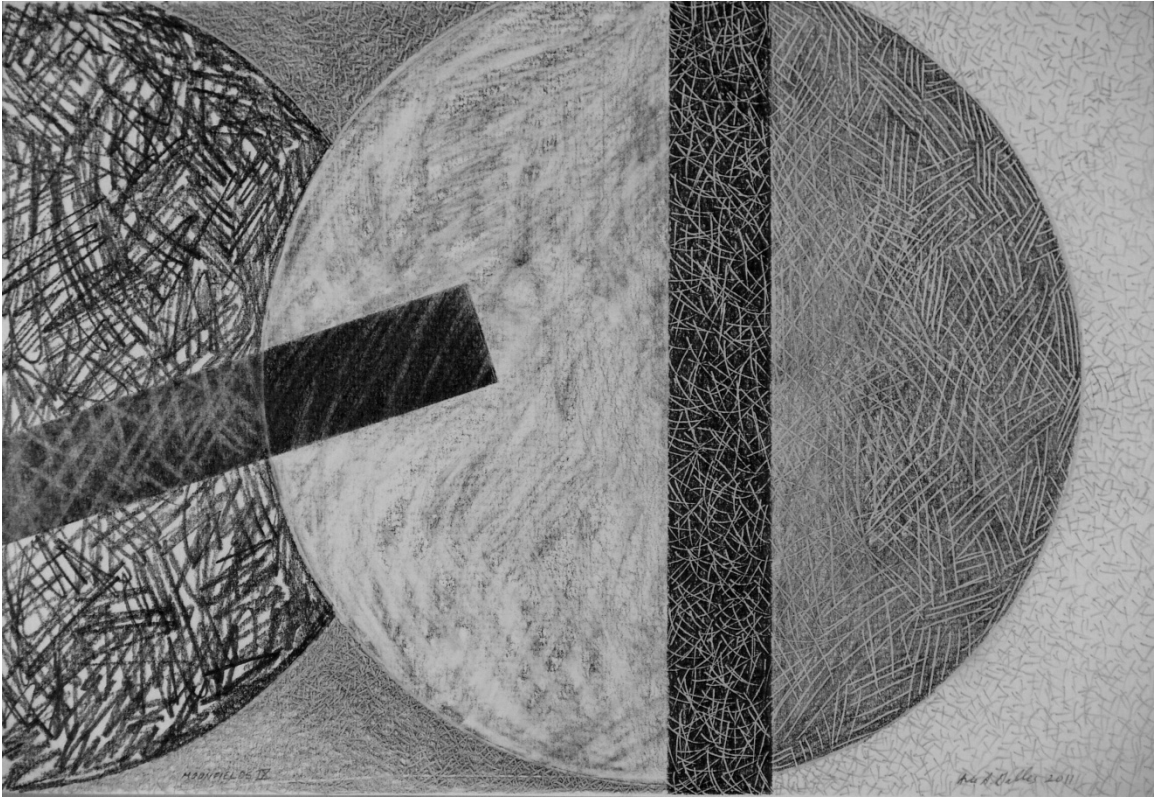
a child's taste  
or a cat's



someone slips below the sod

the grass grows over him

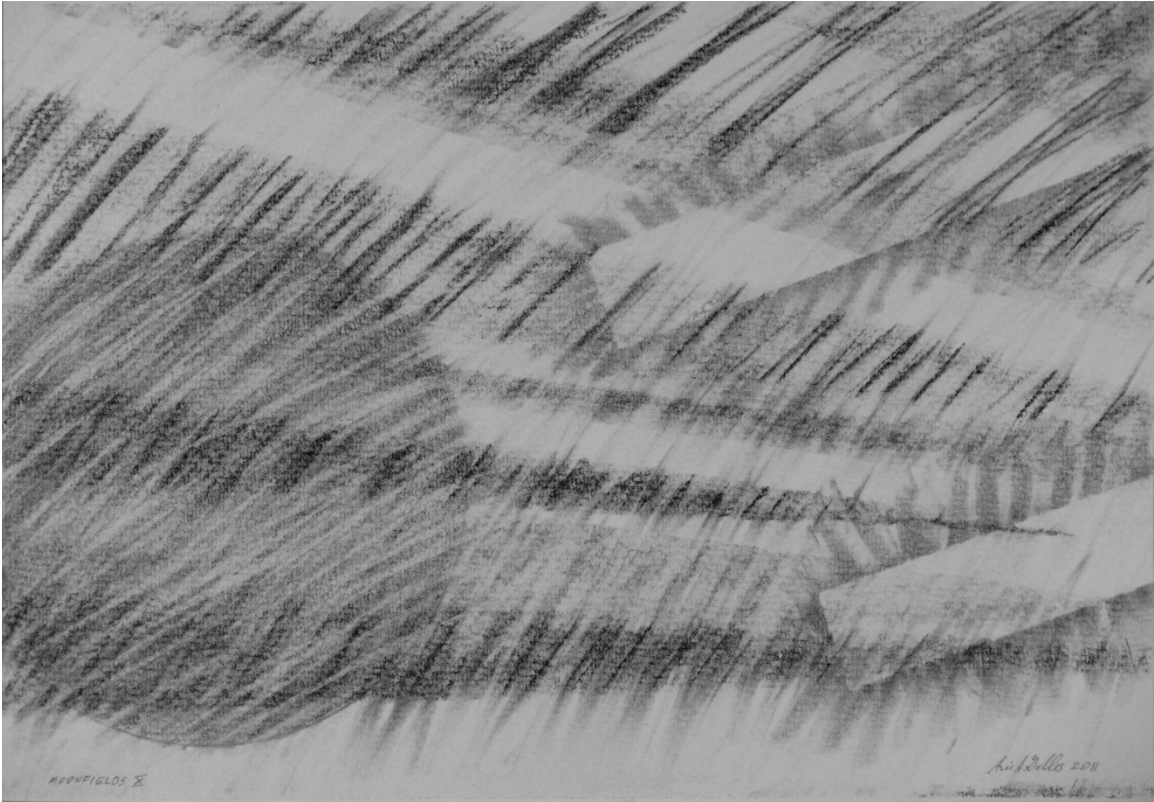
as if someone has died,  
but no one stops to ask



A FUTURE POETICS

with inspiration vanished  
respiration took its place

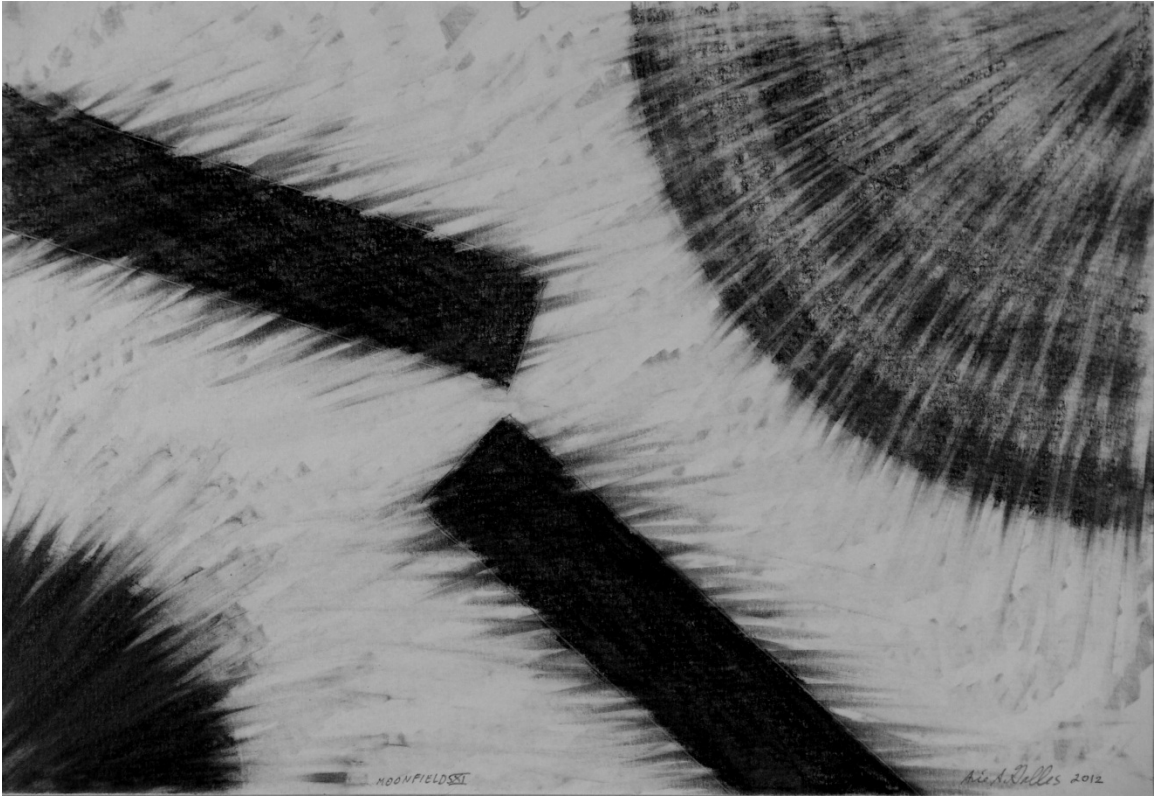
is expiration next?



there is something  
we like to hide

if not our tongues,  
our eyes

if not our immortal souls,  
our daily vices

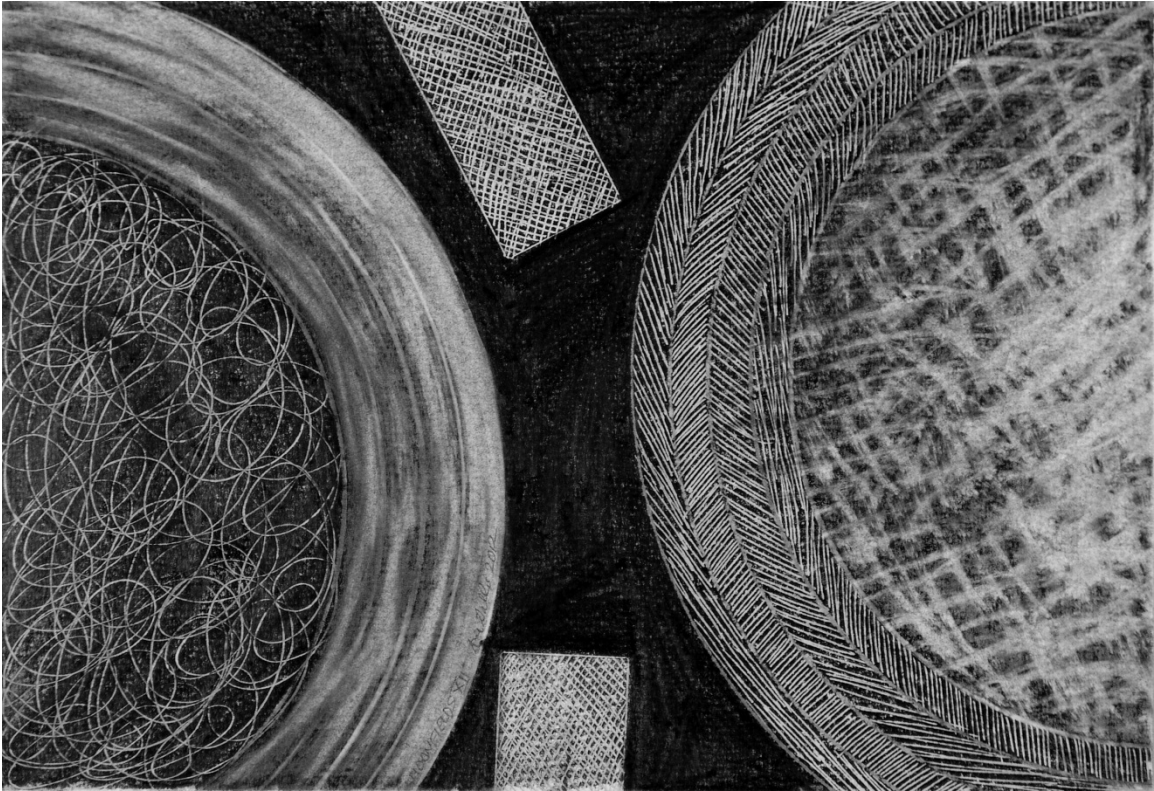


easy sleep

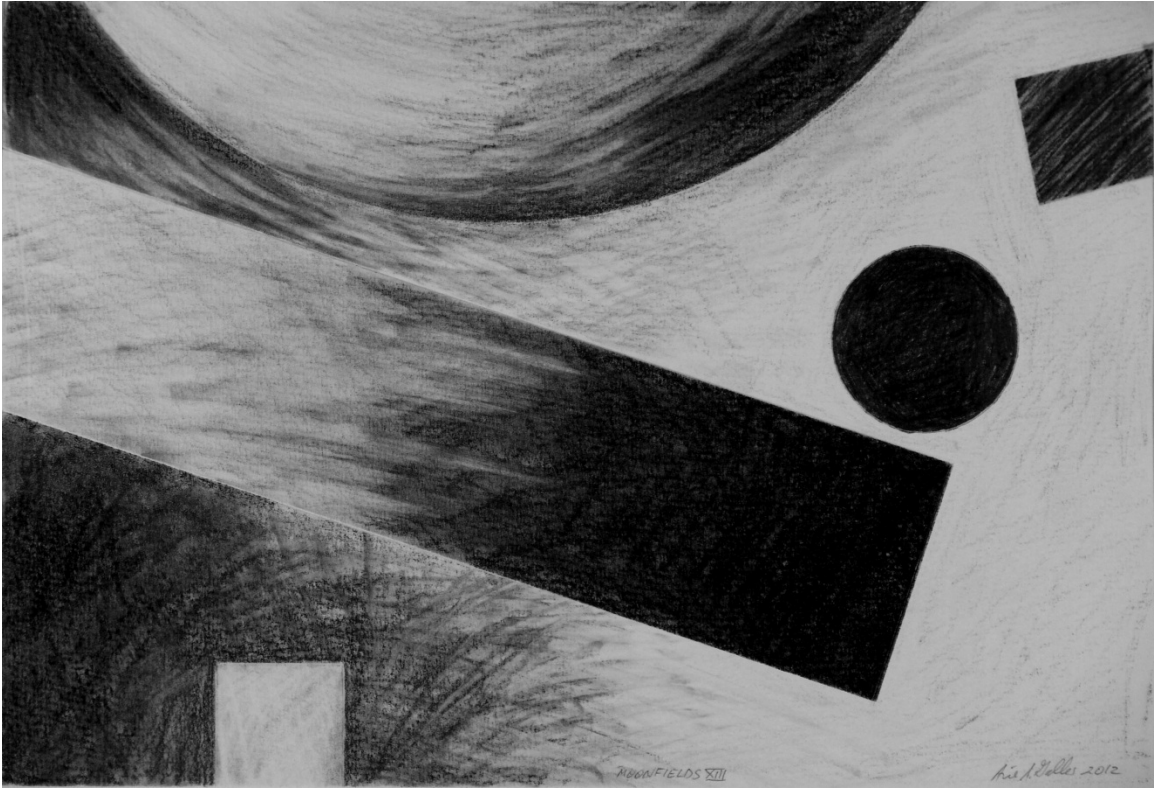
easy rest

easier to be an animal

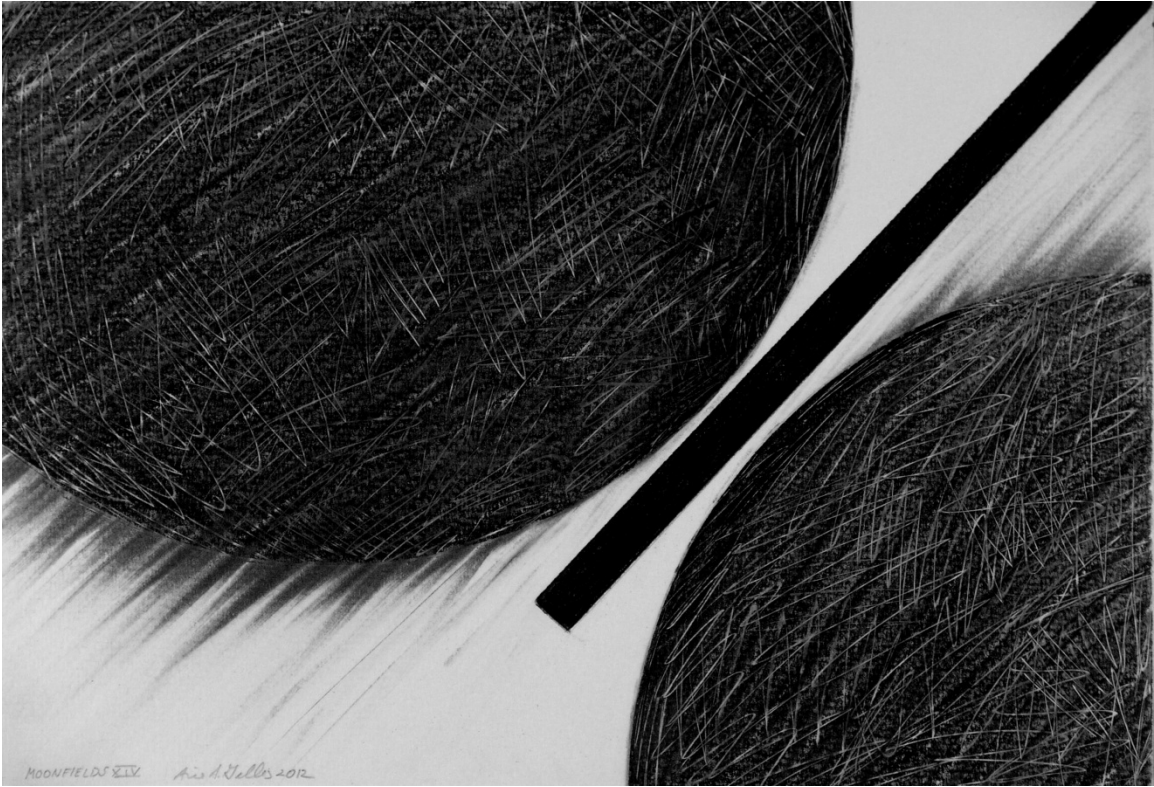
than not



go inside  
look around you  
come back out again

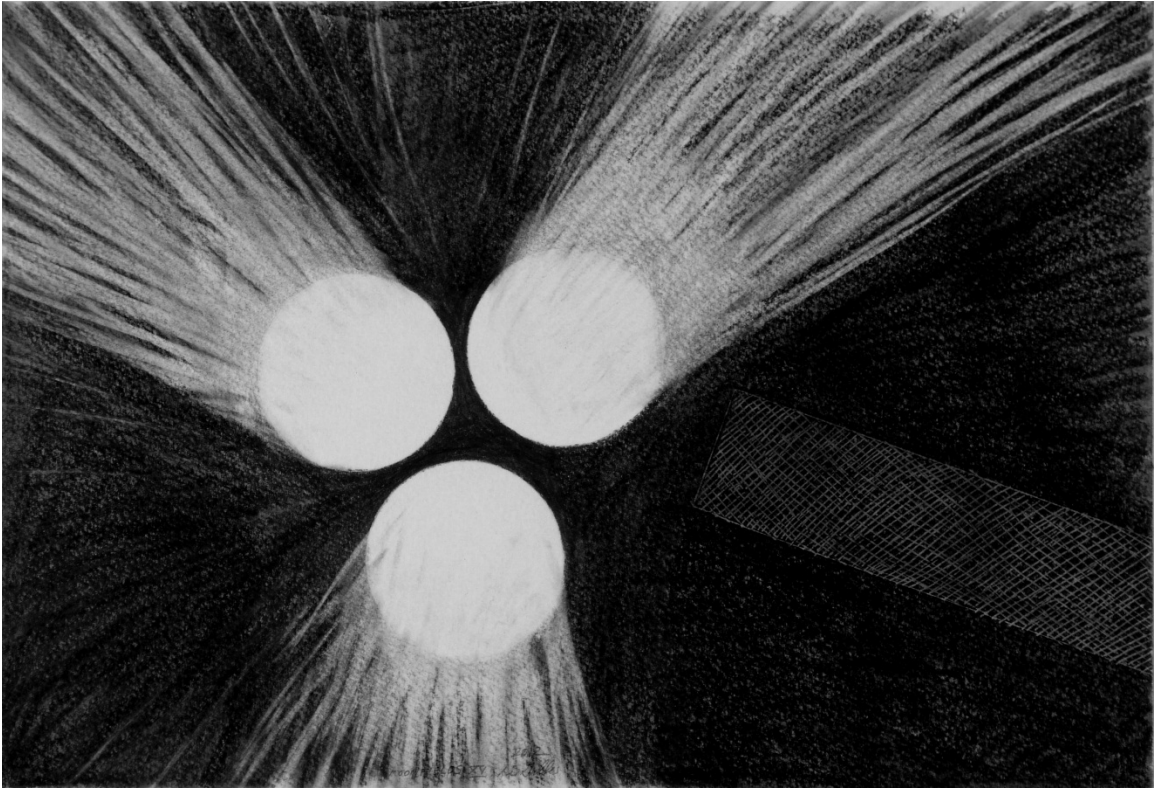


a rabbit sneezes with the desperation of a man  
a knife drops inward with the sound of water



everything is possible  
meaning nothing

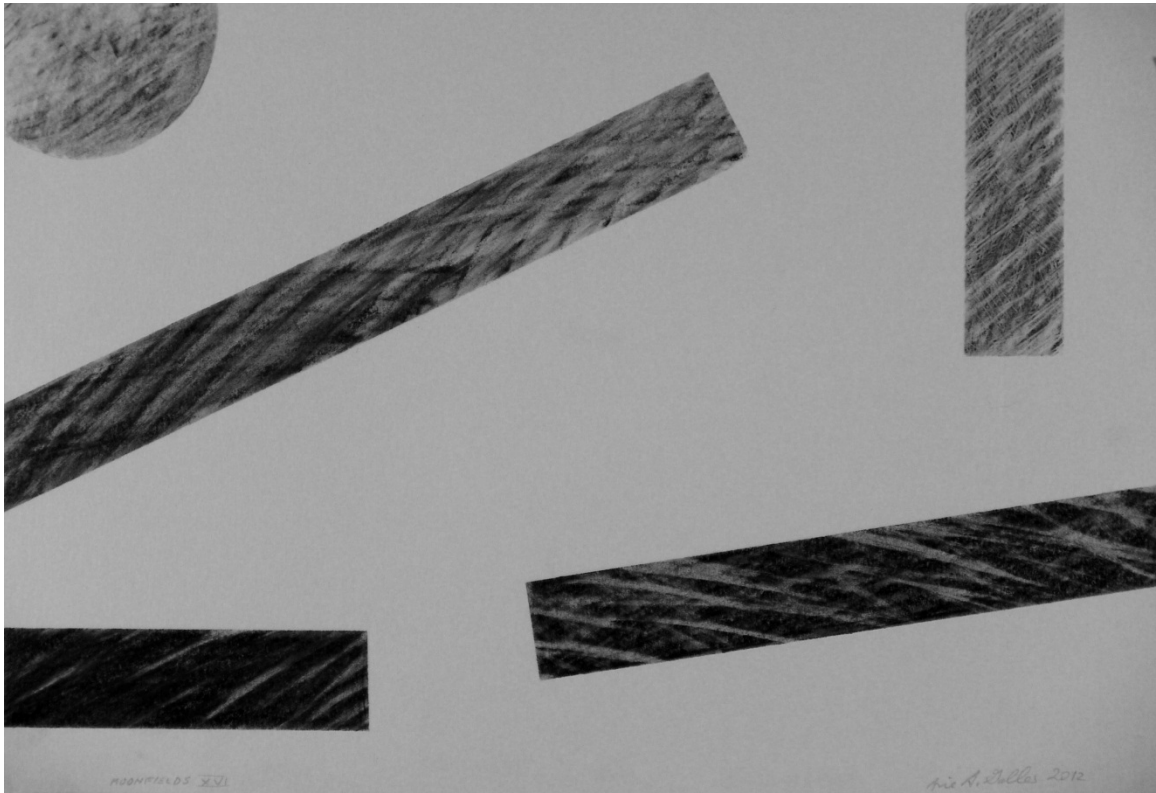
and if nothing is possible  
everything is too



clap hands together

never forget  
the lessons taught you

the value of a song



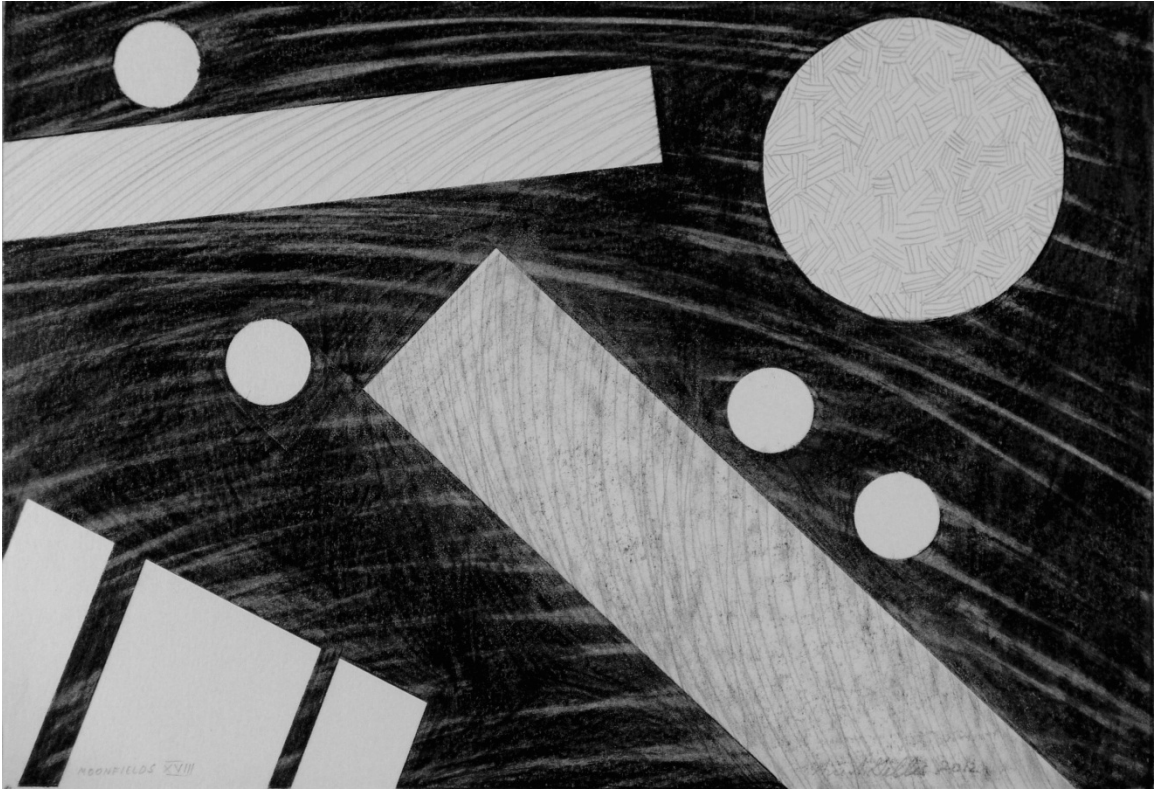
the place of resistance  
has moved away from us

so that we're running to keep up  
& stumble



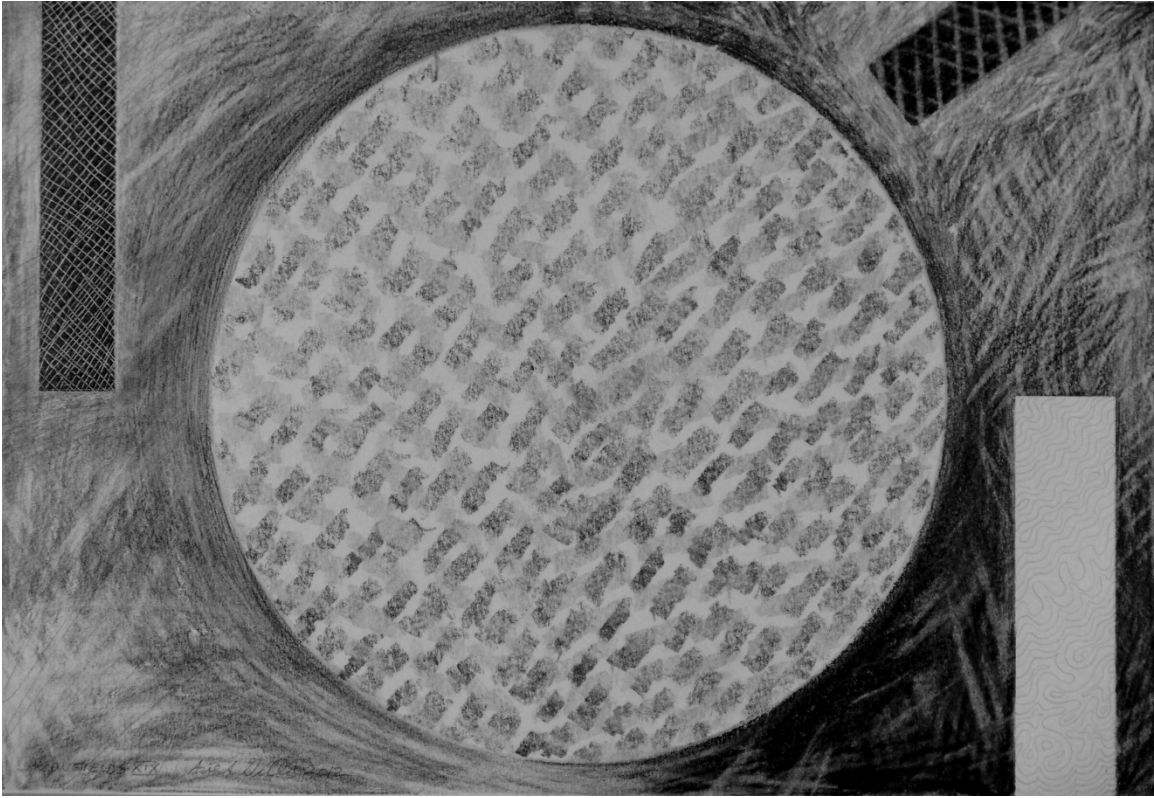
as many people  
will be murdered this year

as were murdered  
the year before

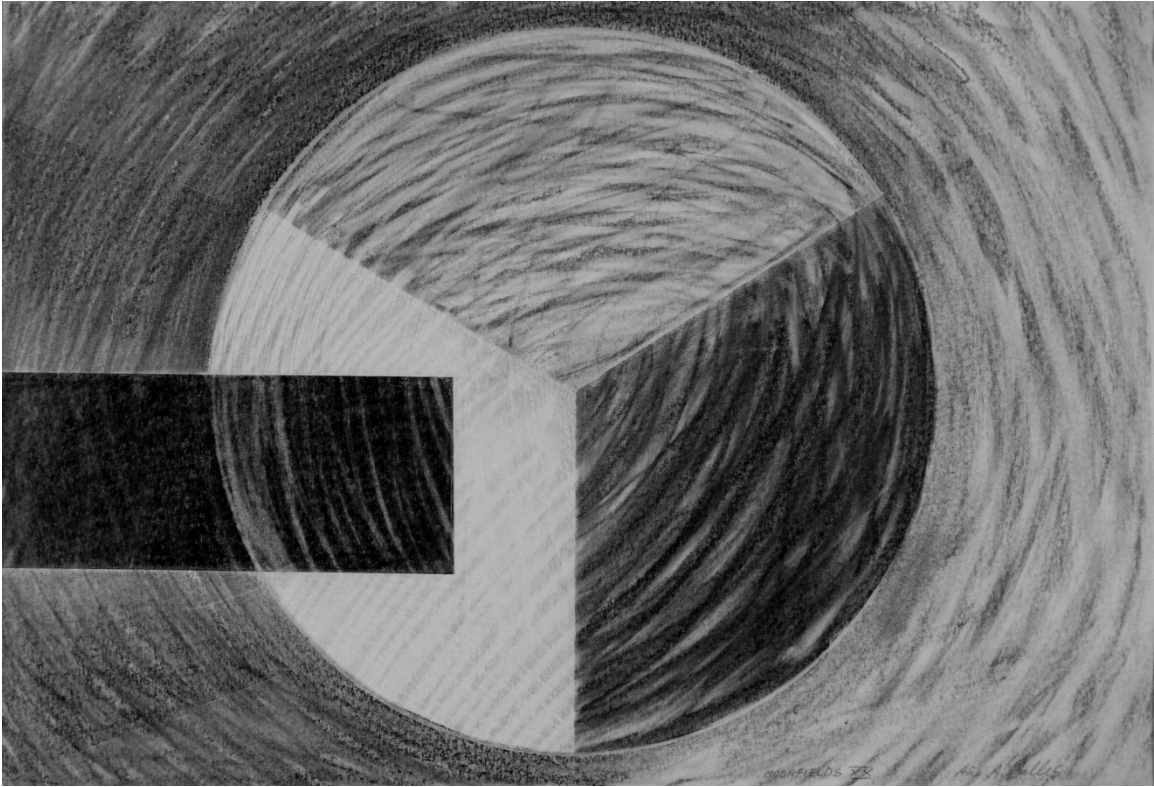


there is a constant  
at the heart of things

that serves to keep  
the universe in motion



the resistance is all the moon that's left to us



the *spirit* of the dead  
means nothing

**Arie A. Galles**

**“CloudPoems”**

*Suite of Twenty Drawings  
powder graphite and kneaded eraser*

After completing the “MoonFields” drawings, works of speed markings and rough hand gestures, my next suite was decidedly calm and gentle. Again, my images returned to an aerial perspective, this time to cloud fields viewed from above with occasionally an inkling of landscape peeking through. The white of sunlit cloud tops floating above the dark depths of their own shadows fascinates me. It is a landscape that is at once soft and pitted, stark and blurry and evanescent. For sources I used images I photographed on my frequent flights, recordings of ever-changing fantastic vistas. I used powdered graphite applied to the paper with a brush, and/or, blending stumps. These marks were then modified and heightened using a kneaded eraser. The powdered graphite, blending, eraser and texture of the paper combined to create a focused, yet soft, interplay of shapes and values within each drawing. Working with these tools and in, what is for me a very small format, was both a challenge, a delight, and in a way, poetry. Images without a defined purpose, at times disjointed, yet open to a gamut of interpretations. (A.A.G.)

## TWENTY CLOUD POEMS

*But none of them paused,  
none of them wanted to be a cloud*

F.G. Lorca

### CLOUD POEM (1)

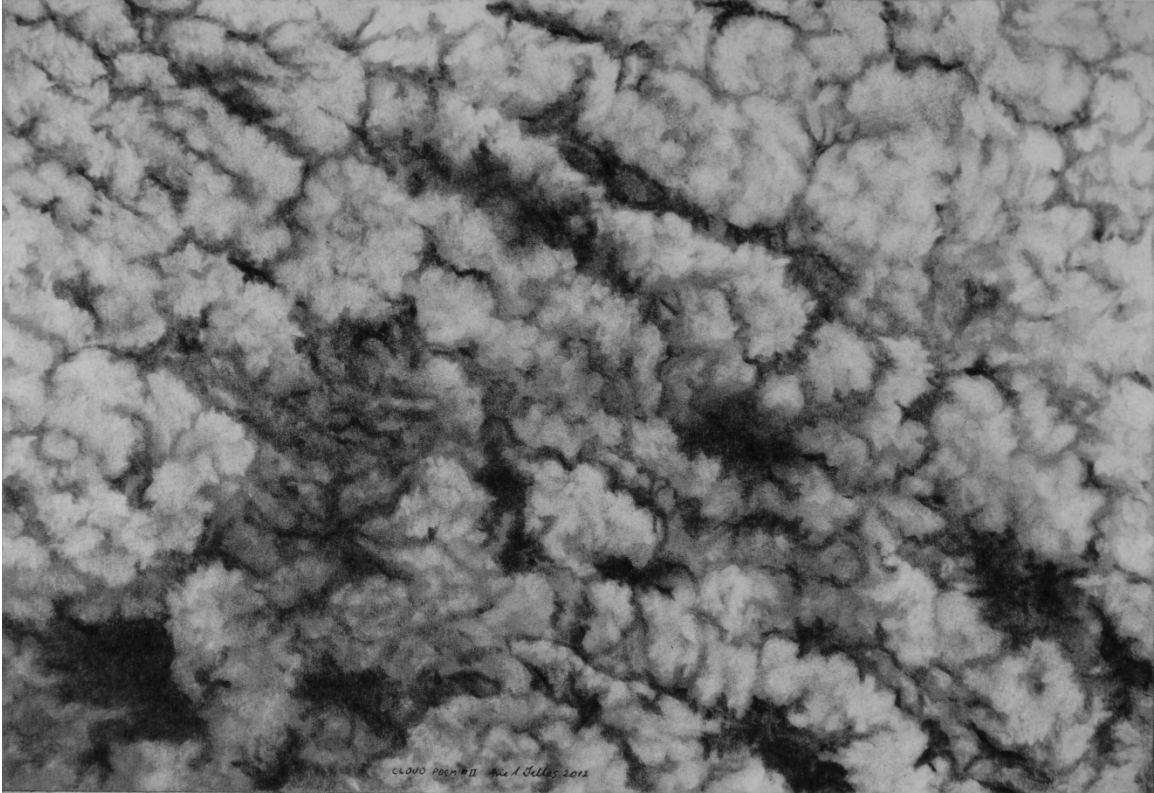


among the clouds  
one face appears

a world of babes  
& shadows

wrapped in its caul

CLOUD POEM (2)



stretched out in coils  
the bodies of the lost  
lie dormant

babes as fair  
as paradise  
who sleep their dreams

so hard to lend an eye to  
& to look inside  
to see the earth below

more like the sky  
when turning softly over  
the blue above

goes grey

CLOUD POEM (3)



inside the grey world  
black eyes open

black lips  
lie in wait

ready to suck down  
the lights

the white  
an opening more real

than morning  
a limpid hole

CLOUD POEM (4)



the dead return

the nearly dead  
lie sleeping

keeping a line  
between them

hungry, mutilated  
faces lost

ghosts wrapped  
in gauze

& set in rows  
like sleepers

CLOUD POEM (5)

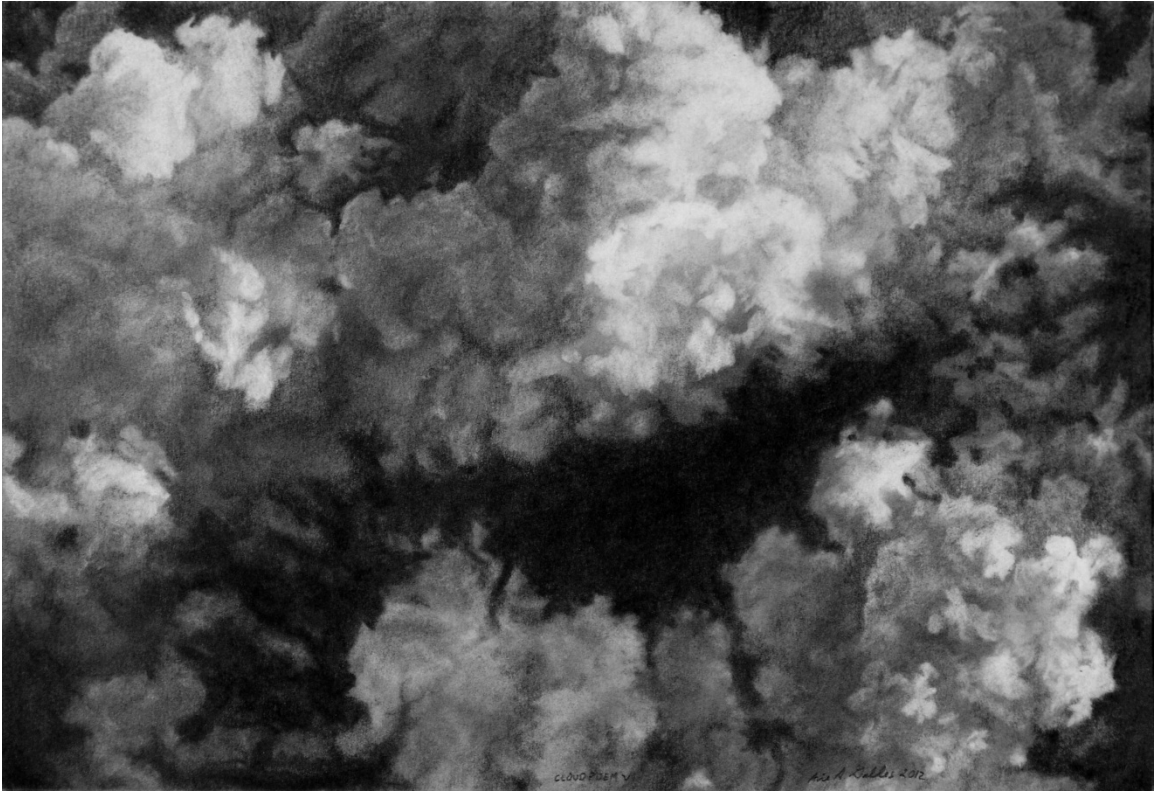


land breaking through  
at last at sunset

at the breaking down  
& folding up

of borrowed  
time

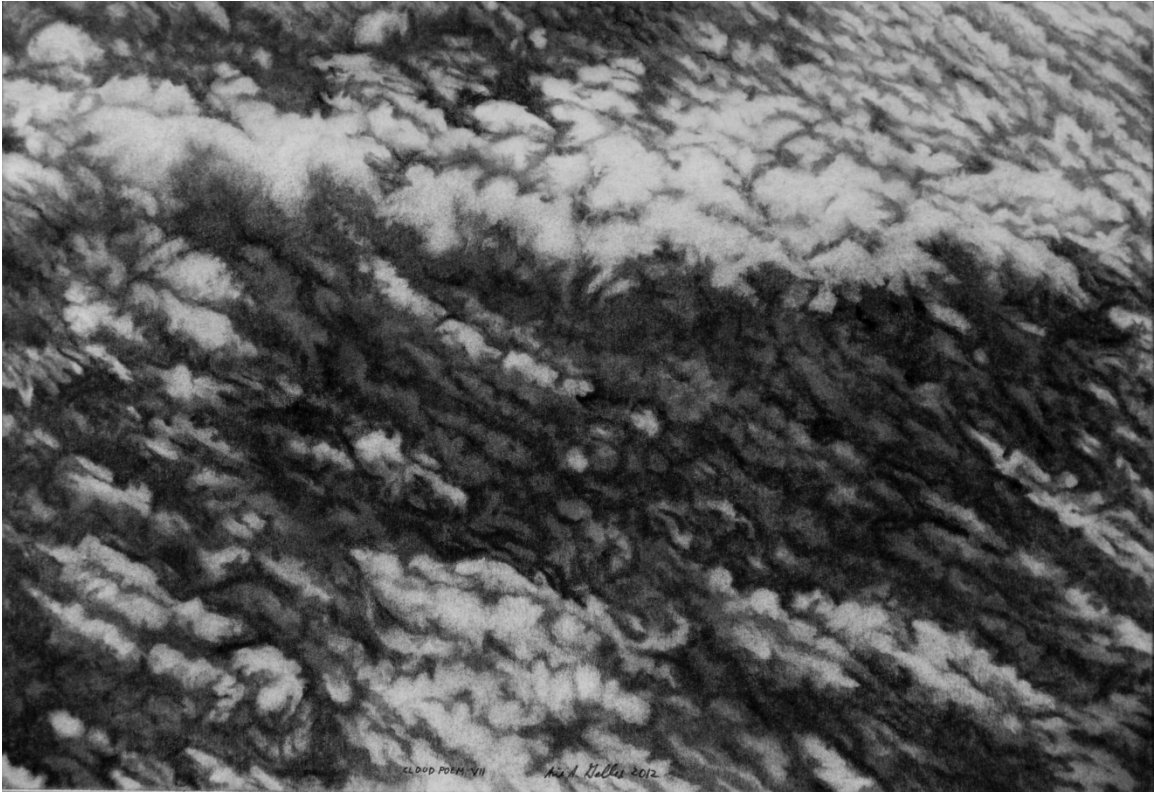
CLOUD POEM (6)



to be a cloud  
face up  
against the other  
brighter cloud

more like an animal  
a life gone by  
who would not  
rather be?

CLOUD POEM (7)



denial

where the winds rush

lifting bodies

like false clouds

from darkness

into light

& back

to darkness

CLOUD POEM (8)



a god is easy  
sighting

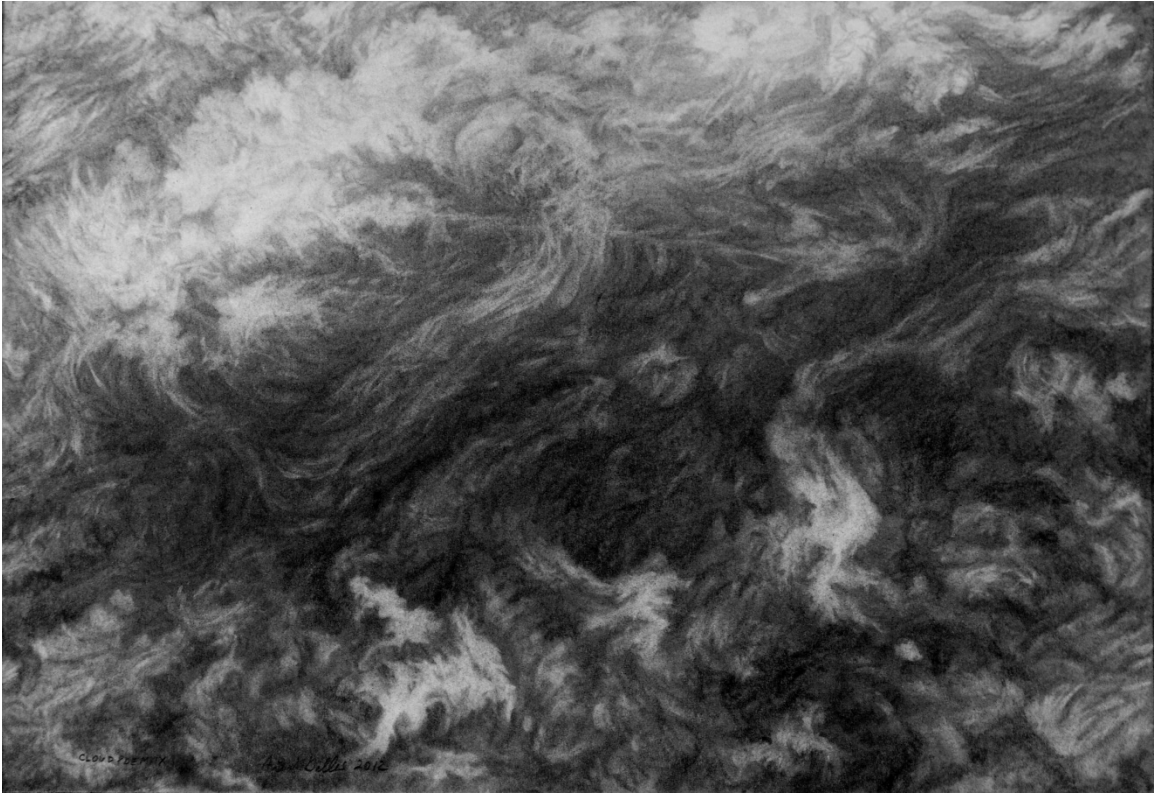
easy body  
of a man  
or woman

easy dreams  
of power

from the side  
where light  
fades out

the face of night  
is lurking

CLOUD POEM (9)



in flying  
& the fear  
of flying

stars pop up  
then hide  
their brilliance

in the shadow  
little lives  
fly by

& vanish

CLOUD POEM (10)



a wound first  
or a slit  
in time, in sex

a pool or lake

an island  
flying past

a smaller body  
& a larger

open jaws

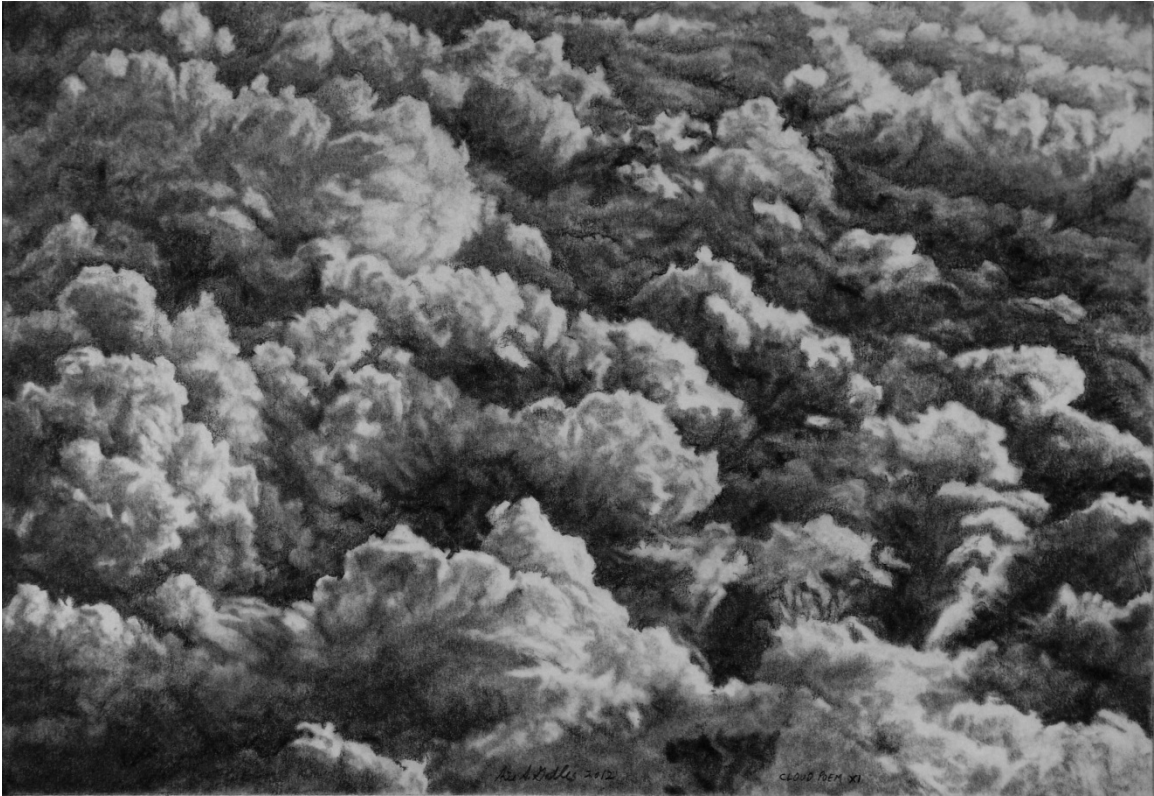
CLOUD POEM (11)



look down  
& see  
what  
to the eye  
are only  
clouds

the earth below  
forgotten  
(almost)  
in the mind  
is only  
earth

CLOUD POEM (12)



lost habitat  
through which  
a fish

or snake  
breaks loose  
a vestige

blown across  
the sea  
& sky

the wish for life  
nearly  
unmans him

before he dies

CLOUD POEM (13)



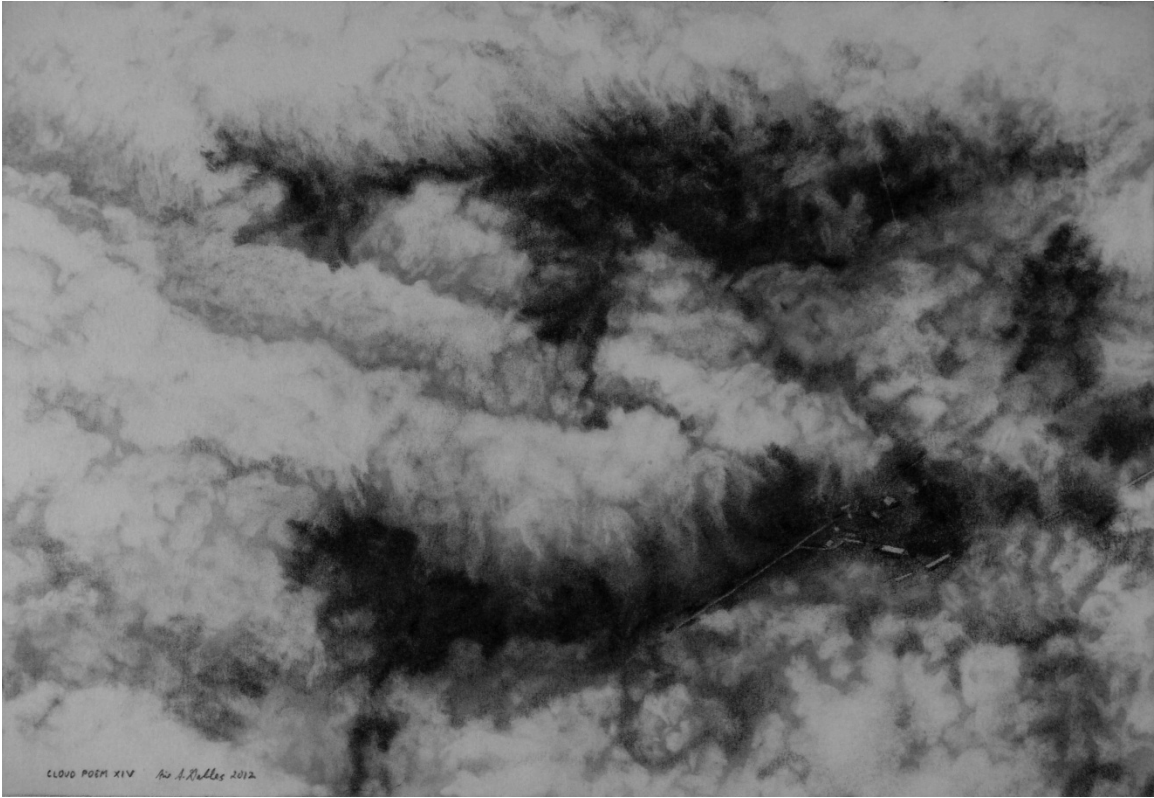
the lines  
across the earth  
escape us

at the center  
where the clouds accrue  
*a white Dot*

*call'd a Center*

(W. Blake)

CLOUD POEM (14)



a fracture  
like a mouth

a gash  
in space & time

unstable  
changing

mouth on mouth

CLOUD POEM (15)



to drift away  
a cloud  
no longer

lighting up  
the sky  
in triplicates

they vanish  
where the night  
begins

a smearage  
smeared by hand  
& darkened

CLOUD POEM (16)



to drown  
& to be gone  
forever

swallowed  
by the tufts  
of smoke

a hateful  
morning  
half alive

*I do not want it*

CLOUD POEM (17)



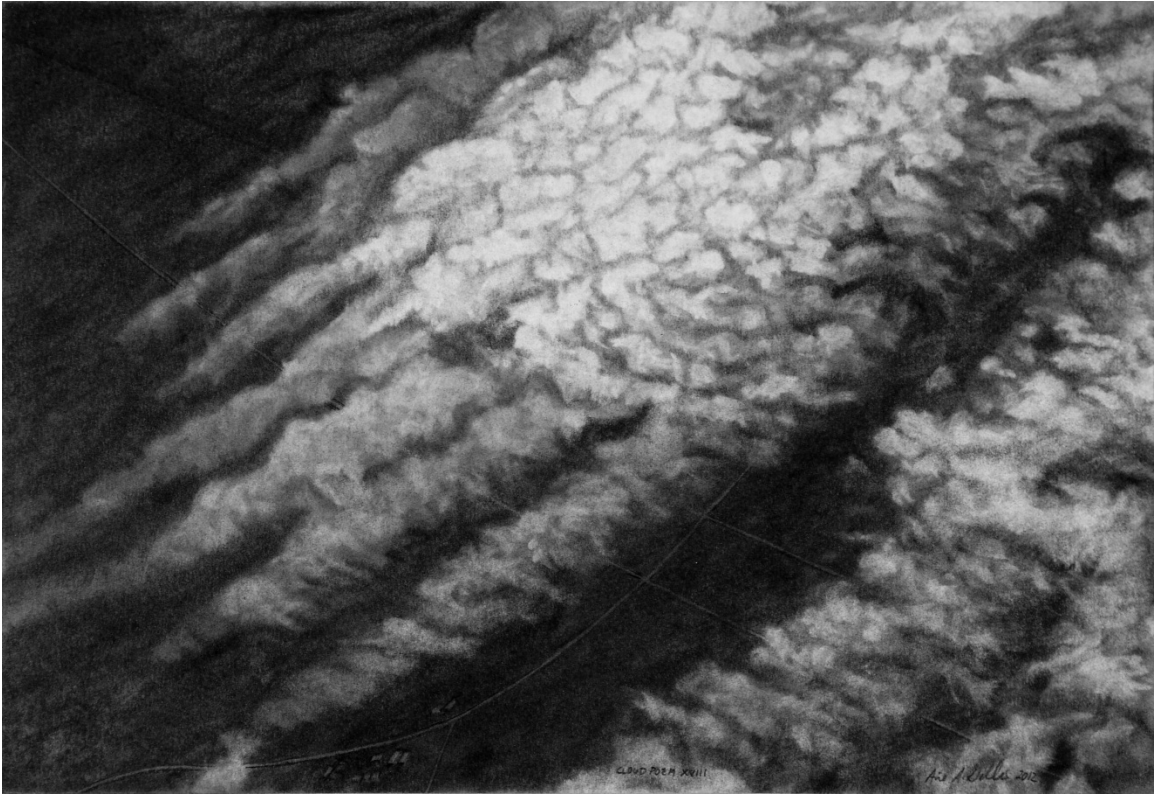
beauty so great  
the fear awakens  
& breaks through

the lights  
that should bring joy  
bring terror

bodies  
bumps in time  
& space

all that they write  
turns back on them  
erased

CLOUD POEM (18)

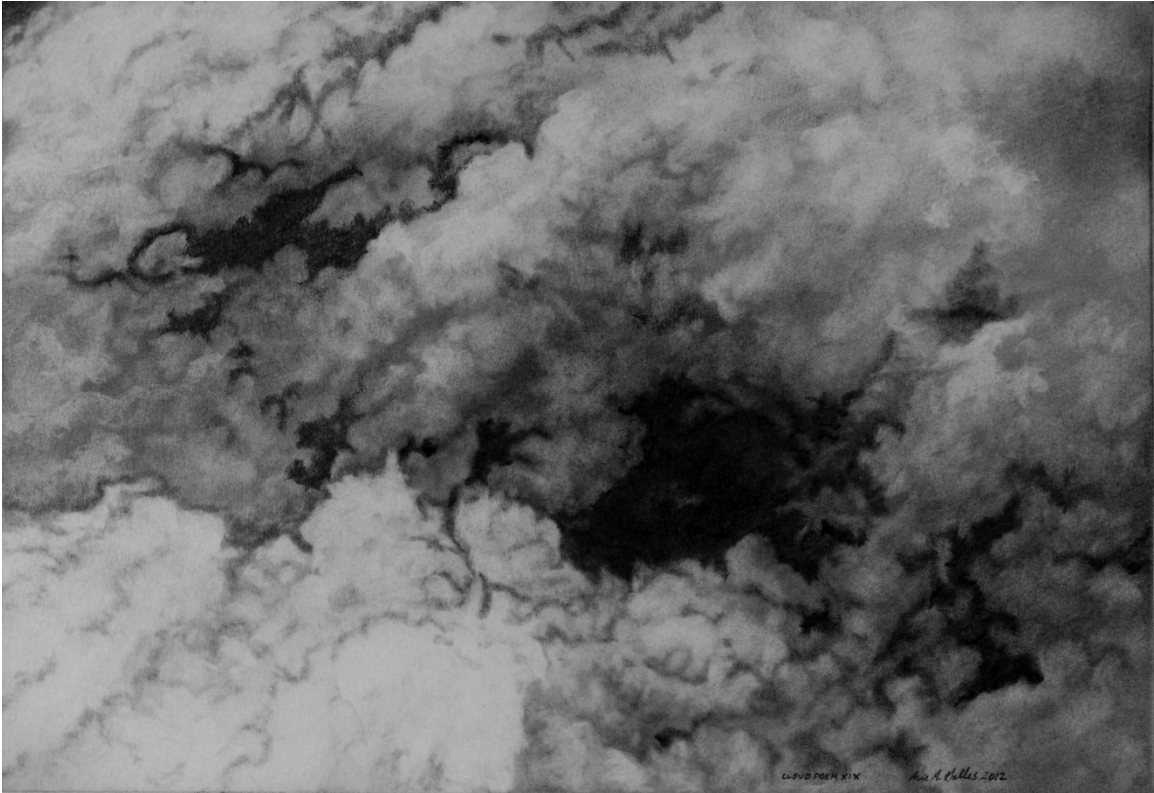


now dark  
the fingers of  
one hand  
glow past their time

an alphabet of sound  
before all sound  
goes black condensing  
colorless & cold

the ships leave harbor  
in a flight  
so bountiful  
the night drifts by

CLOUD POEM (19)

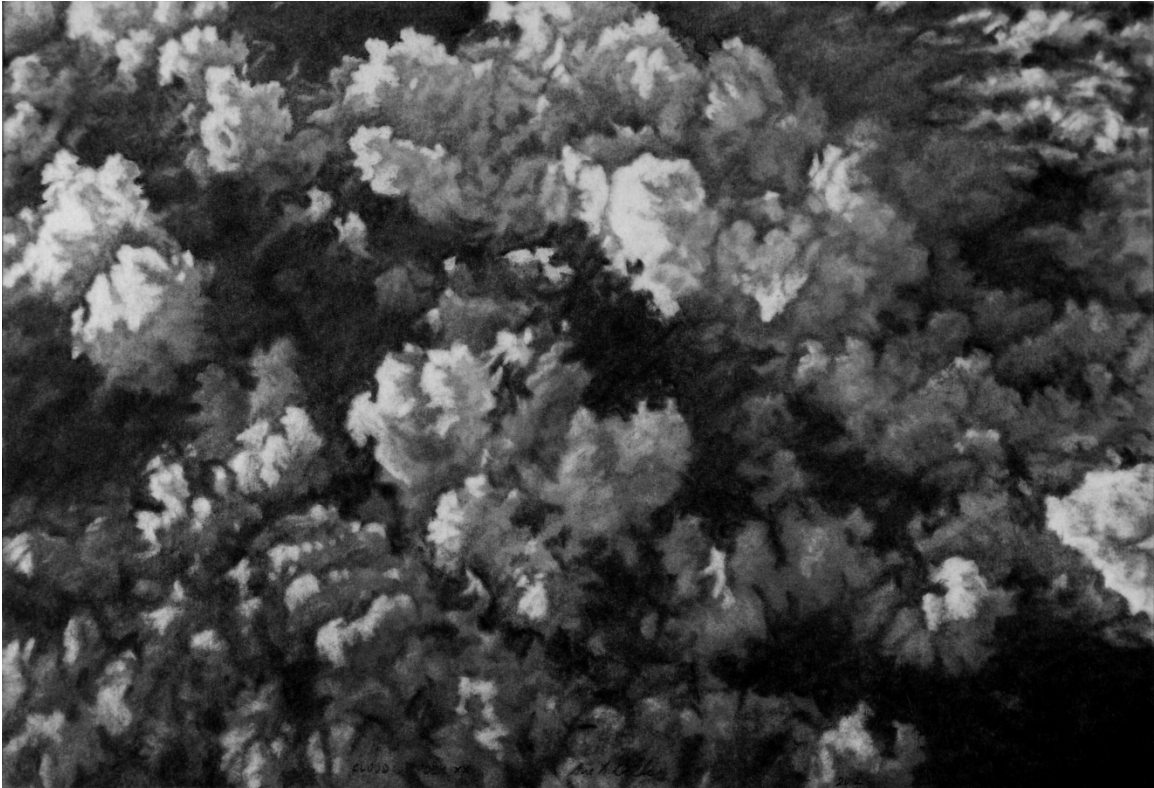


peninsulas like clouds  
& clouds  
like phantom fingers

freed from touch  
the lines dissolve again  
& now again

the gaps appear  
like holes in time  
ever anew

CLOUD POEM (20)



the cloud as metaphor  
makes me recoil  
gliding above them

fearing a ledge  
that will not hold  
but succors me

only for now  
this tender moment  
vagabond

a paradise of clouds  
that shrouds  
the hell within

the life within

13.x.12

**Arie A. Galles**

**“PepperTree”**

*Suite of Twenty Drawings*

*Pencils*

On my first visit to the Pepper Tree retreat I was immediately fascinated, and overwhelmed, by this felled, yet alive, ancient pepper tree. In this calm and nurturing place, a tree so central and spiritual, silently perseveres and thrives. It contains the continuity of existence, its crumbling and deeply reticulated old trunk is host to new trunks and a host of vigorous young sapling branches. I kept circling the tree for what seemed like hours, each step presenting a new braiding of sunlight and shadow, texture, movement, warmth and refreshing coolness. After numerous passes I felt compelled to take out my camera and recorded over two hundred images. I had to draw this tree. I immediately realized that the task would be impossible during my short stay, so the photographic images would serve as my fixed observation points, snippets of time as sources for hands' work. I chose twenty. These images had to be the completing elements to my “Graffite” suite. In the year's-time that it took to complete these drawings, I was guided by my initial inspiration, calmly letting my eyes see and my hands move. In drawing these works, pulling the intricacies' of texture and evanescent light out of the black white sheets of paper, I used more than twenty various-shaded pencils and no eraser. Amazingly, the more each sheet was covered by pencil marks, rather than dimming the whiteness and overtaking the paper, the dark graphite allowed each sheet to glow with an increased radiance. (A.A.G.)

## THE PEPPER TREES

*"They are gone, the pepper trees"*

F.G. Lorca

1



the more a man's arms  
stretch  
to reach the woman's

& the branches  
can no longer bear  
their weight



moss is foremost  
if the mind will entertain  
matters of fact

a tactile splendor



ferns & rind  
the black a distance  
deeper than a star



heavy as a heave  
the layered cork & wood  
cry out to you

or is it only  
something furtive  
hidden

in your heart?



at the side a shadow  
like a child  
beside the fallen bodies

the last chance  
for sleep



serpentine  
a limb athwart  
coiled branches

forest dreams  
& shiny shadows



is there a black hole  
here on earth?

a place so deep  
that even leaves  
turn black



spiny dust  
over the swollen  
bark

the hairy wood  
is like a man's flesh  
or a woman's



a memory of where  
we lived & swung –  
our place in nature



to seat yourself  
inside it  
ache of trees  
& ache of majesty

he who falls  
recovers grace  
only a little



the ferns take over  
& the question  
rattles our minds

where have the bodies  
gone where  
in the world is love



plain in our sight  
the black hole  
carved into the center  
limbs askew

more what the woman gives  
a field of light  
below her

down where the world  
takes root



they dance together  
taut arms rising  
from dark trunk

in front of which  
the dancer  
leaves her shadow\*

\* her meadow

eager to draw him back



that which is lost  
leaves only a wound  
behind

the mystery of light  
more than the mystery  
of something lost

the memory of where  
we were  
guarded by snow

a scar that will not heal



between an island  
& the main  
blind spring arrives

the strange allure  
of black on white

drives color from the brain  
refraction from the eye



is every image that we see  
seen from a height

& every block of wood  
as stiff as stone\*

\*as bone

receivers & believers  
we let the shadows go



counting by threes  
is learnt by rote  
nohow forgotten

more as a number known  
by comrades  
than by a bride & groom

the tallest tree of all  
no taller than  
those that surround him

the way that every count  
leaves space & air  
between



brought back to earth  
the sadness  
of mute nature

waiting for the dead  
to rise & shine



like stony ridges  
schist & caulk\*  
no sign of verdure

\* chalk

but the layers  
stacked each one  
atop the next

offers a broken wall  
a perch for demons



eggs dropped  
along the way  
or hanging from  
the rotted bark

a bed laid bare  
the rank turd  
lies within  
firm in its nest

eggs & turds  
the rest is barely  
bark & sunlight

traces of a life  
long gone