

M I R T H A

D E R M I S A C H E

B E C A U S E

I W R I T E !









Mirtha Dermisache      Because I Write!



# Introductions

Eduardo F. Costantini  
President Malba

In 1973, Jorge Romero Brest described the graphisms by Mirtha Dermisache (Buenos Aires, 1940–2012) as “startling writings in a dialectical interplay between the real and the imaginary.” The artist herself is as unique and hard-to-categorize as her works. Though she was tied to the Grupo de los Trece, the Instituto Di Tella, and the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC), Dermisache was a solitary artist who attempted to put her intimate production into circulation by means of multiple editions. Her singular style and her consistency earned her the recognition of her peers in Argentina and abroad.

In 2011, Dermisache organized her last project in Buenos Aires, specifically at the Pabellón de las Bellas Artes of the Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina. Since the time of her death in 2012, her heirs and the executor of her will have tackled the project of preserving her archive and cataloguing her work. It is thanks to their effort, and research performed by Agustín Pérez Rubio, Malba’s artistic director, that we now have the pleasure of presenting *Mirtha Dermisache. Porque ¡yo escribo!* [Because I Write!]<sup>1</sup>—the first monographic exhibition of the artist’s work ever held in her country.

Housed in the “Silvia N. Braier” Gallery on the museum’s first floor, the show furthers a program geared to gaining women artists from Latin America the recognition they deserve, a program that Malba has been developing since 2015. The exhibition includes Dermisache’s production starting with her first book, created in 1967, and closes with her final works, from the 2000s; it revolves around her impressive calligraphic works and graphisms in an array of formats (books, letters, texts, newspapers, postcards, newsletters, and others).

The show will attest to her creative processes as well and, hence, it includes legible texts and exercises; it covers her extensive work in education, specifically projects like the tAC (taller de Acciones Creativas) and the six editions of the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma held from 1974 to 1981.

Published by Malba on the occasion of the exhibition, this book contains specially commissioned writings on the artist’s work, as well as an extensive selection of images and archival material. The edition is a coproduction with Fundación Espigas; it was supported as well by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA).

I would like to thank the Mirtha Dermisache Archive and its team, as well as the many individuals who have made this important exhibition possible. With it, we hope to help communicate the legacy of an impressive artist.



Agustín Díez Fischer  
Director Centro de Estudios Espigas

In many different ways, Mirtha Dermisache's art is tied to the archive. First, her works themselves make reference to documents often found in archives: letters, periodicals, and books that, in her work, do not make use of codified language to communicate something. Second, if—as Arturo Carrera asserted—these illegible writings open up to other discourses that interpret them, then the archive, particularly the material that the artist herself kept over the course of her life, is also a place of possibility, a space conducive to new readings and visions.

In the exhibition *Mirtha Dermisache. Porque ¡yo escribo!*, those relationships are given form. Together, the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Fundación Espigas, and Mirtha Dermisache's heirs and the executor of her will undertook a systematic study of her archive. Thorough examination of the documentary material in it has given rise to new readings of the graphisms that the artist put forth in lines, blotches, and the markings of her body on the page.

This project has taken shape at a particularly important moment in the history of the Fundación Espigas. Pursuant to a decision on the part of the foundation's president and board, the Espigas archive, which has been formed over the course of almost twenty-five years, will be placed in the custody of the Centro de Estudios Espigas, Tarea / Instituto de Investigaciones sobre Patrimonio Cultural, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, thus establishing an alliance for the preservation of the memory of Argentine and Latin American art. Malba has been a source of constant support for Espigas's work. It celebrated, for instance, the tenth anniversary of the foundation's establishment by housing the show *Arte y documento. Fundación Espigas 1993-2003* and publishing a book of the same name.

The heirs and executor of Mirtha Dermisache's work have decided to support that unprecedented agreement between the university and the foundation by donating the letters, essays, posters, invitations, photographs, and other documents that Dermisache had gathered over the course of her life's work as an artist and educator—invaluable material that, thanks to the generosity of its current custodians, will be available for future research.

Dermisache's graphisms were, arguably, a way of going beyond the limits of conventional written language. It is timely, then, that *Mirtha Dermisache. Porque ¡yo escribo!* be launched at the very moment when a new Fundación Espigas is taking shape in order to explore original ways of grappling with the idea of the archive. It is our wish that the seismic lines at play in this unique body of work become a trigger of creativity that continues to lead to new ways of conceiving artistic institutions.



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Original intervention by Mirtha Dermisache  
on sheet with CAYC letterhead.

"Cover of *Diario N° 1 Año 1* [Newspaper No. 1  
Year 1], September 1972. Published by the CAYC  
for the show *Arte de sistema II*".



# Editor's Note

Agustín Pérez Rubio

It is never easy to undertake an exhaustive study of the work of an artist, and it is even harder to do so after his or her death. The lived context vanishes with the person, and it becomes enormously difficult to discover, trace, or imagine. That process is even more complicated in the case of an artist like Mirtha Dermisache, who consciously built an enormous barrier between her work and her private life. A number of Mirthas, whose different typologies of work overlap, emerged over the course of her career, and that fact is fundamental to understanding an artist unusually complex in her ways of *making*, whether in a personal or a collective context: she moved from pedagogy to visual art, from music to writing, and from methodological control to creative freedom. Mirtha's work encompassed each and every one of those facets, and it must be understood as a continuous, layered, and contradictory whole that was, nonetheless, fruit of a single personality.

*Mirtha Dermisache. Porque ¡yo escribo!* attempts to evidence her work as a whole. To that end, the research that has yielded this book is as fundamental as the exhibition—Dermisache's first ever in a museum and the first retrospective since the time of her death—it accompanies. The project's aim is twofold: the show attempts to situate the work of an artist largely unknown in the local milieu, and even less known in the region as a whole, that is, to introduce it to a larger audience so that it might receive the recognition it is due; the publication, meanwhile, is the most exhaustive on her work to date.

Thanks to the fact that the Archivo Mirtha Dermisache (AMD) had already been formed and the artist's production catalogued, and to the parallel work performed alongside those responsible for the archive, it was possible to get a sense of the way Mirtha worked, of how she classified and made her work known, how she organized and kept that which she considered part of a creative process that encompassed exercises and expressions. My work, then, consisted of joining two conceptual components of her archive—her art and her personal documents—in a single reading that also considers works and documents not found in the AMD, and of presenting them as part of a greater process dedicated to a single pursuit.

The intersection of those two spheres has also yielded the complete chronology of the artist's life and work at the end of this book. It was assembled by the professionals that have worked on the organization and preservation of the archive. While there will undoubtedly be need for other studies that also tackle Dermisache's complex work with an eye to joining together and intersecting all of its contents, this publication is a significant step in that direction. In addition to my essay, which reviews research performed in the archive over the course of some three years, the other three texts

in this volume—all of them commissioned especially for the project—provide other possible perspectives from which to address Mirtha: the personal experience of her friend and the edition and internationalization of her work in the case of Guy Schraenen; the contextualization of her art within the genealogy of asemic works in the case of Belén Gache; and the study of her experiences with the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma in the case of Lucía Cañada. This book, then, is not a catalogue raisonné of Mirtha Dermisache's art—it does not set out to address all of its facets. It attempts, rather, to attest to the essential clusters in a far-reaching career and to act as a first approach to some of the themes that interested her and some of the relationships that she established: her tie to Romero Brest and the Instituto Di Tella; her epistolary exchange with Roland Barthes; her works with Jorge Glusberg's Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC); her contact with international editors like Guy Schraenen, Marc Dachy, Roberto Altmann, and Ulises Carrión; her experiences in education at the tAC and the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma; her *arte por sumatoria*; and her close relationship to editor Florent Fajole in her final years.

In terms of how Mirtha's work is presented here, I decided to use the same criteria that she did in naming and storing her art—the same criteria used to organize the AMD. That approach allows future researchers to see how the artist herself classified her production and the sorts of relationships she established between it and her personal papers. The works reproduced in the section of images, then, are organized according to the categories and given the names that Mirtha herself used. Also taken into account in organizing the material is when those different categories appeared. The images begin, then, with the *books*—the first of which was produced in 1967—and end with larger-format works like the *public readings*, *mural texts*, *instructions*, and *explanatory posters*—graphic forms that the artist started using in the 2000s. Between the two are the *newspapers*, *texts*, and *newsletters*, as well as the *letters*, *postcards*, and *comic strips*, produced mostly in the seventies. Regardless of when each sort of work first appeared, these “series” overlapped, that is, Mirtha continued producing examples of each one after others had been developed. The works within each section are organized chronologically, though dates are often approximate or wide (a whole decade, for instance), since the artist did not always date them. Some of the works are reproduced alongside documents, acting as illustrations that further understanding and enrich the book in an interplay of visual material and the context of its production.

Lastly, this is the first time that Mirtha Dermisache's *incomprehensible* and *legible texts* have been published. It was decided to include them in the “works” section because of where Mirtha

kept them in her archive—alongside other works—though she never exhibited or published them; she used those names for these three categories of texts. She did give photocopies of some of the texts to friends and acquaintances, but only in the early seventies. She then kept them for years in her files. It is important, hence, to distinguish these texts from what she decided to exhibit as work; they are among the artist's working materials, research notes later reflected in some of the works that she did exhibit and publish. Regardless of that distinction, I deemed it pertinent to include them in this way because—as explained—Mirtha herself kept them in her files along with works, not with her personal papers, but also because of how much light they shed on the various ways she approached the terrain of writing.

It is impossible to overemphasize the deeply collective nature of a project like this one. I would like to thank, first and foremost, the executor of Mirtha Dermisache's will, Leonor Cantarelli—one of the artist's closest friends, a student at the tAC, and a coordinator of the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma—, and J. Alejandro Larumbe, her nephew, who made himself available for any and all questions. They are the ones who, along with the artist's other heirs, founded the Archivo Mirtha Dermisache, where, Jimena Ferreiro, first, and then Cecilia Iida and Ana Raviña, along with the AMD's coordinator, Cintia Mezza, have toiled relentlessly to catalogue the artist's work. Their help in this project has been indispensable.

I would like to thank my curatorial assistant in this study, Josefina Barcia, for her patience and dedication throughout, and Verónica Rossi for her work with the archive. I am grateful to Victoria Giraudo, head of Malba's Curatorial Department, and to the curatorial team, for their commitment. Finally, I would like to thank my personal assistant, Daniela Rial, for her tireless work in the often complex organization of such a large project.

This publication was made possible thanks to the coordinated efforts of many. It is a co-edition of Malba and the Fundación Espigas, and I would like to thank Agustín Díez Fischer, the director of the Centro de Estudios Espigas, as well as Ariel Aisiks, the director of the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA), for their generosity. I am especially grateful to Raúl Naón, whose passion for Mirtha's work is what led me to look carefully at it years ago; he has been my confidant throughout this project. Mauro Herlitzka, a knowledgeable admirer of Dermisache's art, has provided counsel on countless occasions; he, along with Henrique Faria, currently represents her work commercially. At Malba, I would like to thank those who have worked on this volume day in and day out: Guadalupe Requena, head of the Communications and Publications Department; Socorro Giménez Cubillos, the editorial coordinator; Leandro Chiappa, responsible for the design concept of the book, and Pablo Branchini, for the layout.



# Reflections on Asemic Writing: The Case of Mirtha Dermisache by Belén Gache

*Writing! Words?  
I don't want a single one.  
Down with words.*  
Henri Michaux



Untitled (book), ca. 1970  
Ink on paper, unbound, 10 pages  
24.4 x 18.2 cm

Asemic writing refers to a form of writing with no semantic quality. It is wordless writing that puts before us a series of problems. Is it true writing? Is there such a thing as false writing? Do works of asemic writing hold a secret? What kind of secret? Asemic writing has been used over the course of centuries to a variety of ends (mystical, esoteric, cryptographic, countercultural, utopian). We are riveted by asemic writing due largely to the hope of finding a hidden meaning in it. But that fruitless search may lead us to conclude that reading—not only of asemic writing, but indeed of anything at all—is nothing but a hallucination.

Mirtha Dermisache was a major practitioner of asemic writing. Her texts unfold as a series of different writing systems, strokes that develop through the concepts of repetition, alternation, symmetry, and rhythm. Sometimes they are aggressive and jagged, other times circular and light. They might partake of the discontinuities characteristic of words or they might omit words altogether in a seamless text. Some of her writings are rigorous in their order, others are based on irregularities and alterations. In all of them, however, the tendency to make use of a line structure is unwavering, as is the back and forth between the black ink and the white page (Dermisache's experimentation with color was limited).

Regarding the graphic stripes, some historians have grappled with the hypothesis that writing was invented when linearity was introduced in primitive graphisms. André Leroi-Gourhan—the famous archeologist from whom Jacques Derrida drew greatly in developing his concept of *différance*—studied the period of transition from graphism to writing. Specifically, he studied the pre-figurative stage in the Upper Paleolithic whose graphism was based on the repetition of lines, equidistant strokes, and rhythmic graphic expressions. While, according to Leroi-Gourhan, all writing implies a visual motif, it also requires rhythm and ordered repetition in time and in space. Derrida would be the one to argue that, in their repetition and rhythm, gestures entail an incipient will to pre-

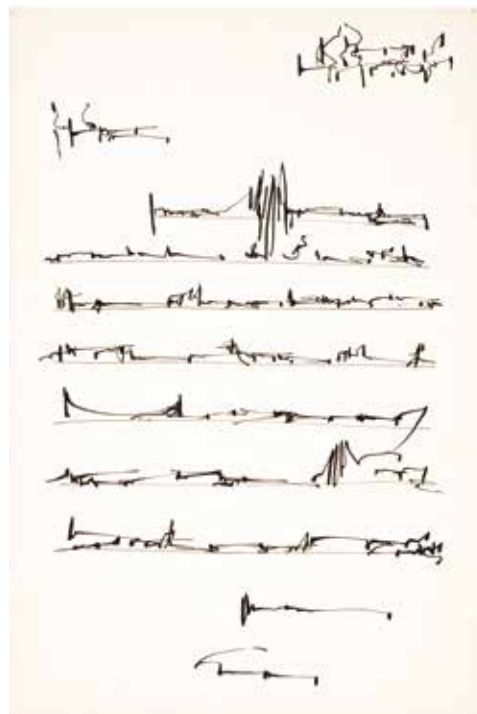
linguistic expression. It is through associating a line or stroke with a gestural, visual, or pictorial graphism that we get “grams” or letters.<sup>1</sup> Are Dermisache’s writings, then, strokes? Are they graphisms? Letters? Are they pre- or post-linguistic writing?

Beyond the question of the status of her writings, Dermisache’s works are, significantly, based on mimesis of established formats of writing in both private and public communication. They contain references to *letters*, *postcards*, *fragments of stories*, *newsletters*, and *newspapers*. The writing in her *letters*, for instance, may be completely illegible, but the spaces reserved for the date, the greeting, and the signature are intact. Other times—in the case of her *newspapers* and *newsletters*—what she seems to imitate is the graphic material; those works are rife with short lines, downstrokes, and small figures that look like crossed-out typography. The pages are suggestive of the mockups used in book design—a field the artist was clearly versed in; the conventions of layout boxes, columns, and grids are unaltered.

The source of many important precedents for Dermisache’s experimentation with asemic writing on the space of the page is modern poetry.

French symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé is widely recognized as a predecessor of 20th-century visual poetry. In his eagerness to express meaning in its entirety in poetry, he went beyond words to experiment with the visual aspect of the text in space. Indeed, this research yielded the foundational text *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard* [A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance], published in 1887. Influenced by Mallarmé, poet Paul Valéry held form over meaning and inspiration in his pursuit of “pure poetry.” He underscored the importance of the geometric component in the graphic layout of the page. Valéry remarked that Mallarmé had carefully studied the efficacy of the distribution of white and black in the design of public communications like street signs and newspapers.<sup>2</sup>

Mallarmé can be seen as the inventor of modern space; his influence would be pervasive throughout the 20th century. His experimentations with the space of the page and with alternations of black and white elements in printed matter give shape to the reader’s visual experience and “deconstruct” traditional reading of the poem; they come before us as what Octavio Paz called the “consecration of the powerlessness of speech.”<sup>3</sup> These experiments were taken still further by Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers. In his 1969 work entitled, like Mallarmé’s work, *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard*, Broodthaers reduces Mallarmé’s poem to its visual structure, even rendering it illegible by crossing out each line of the original text with a black stroke, thus turning it into an abstract image.

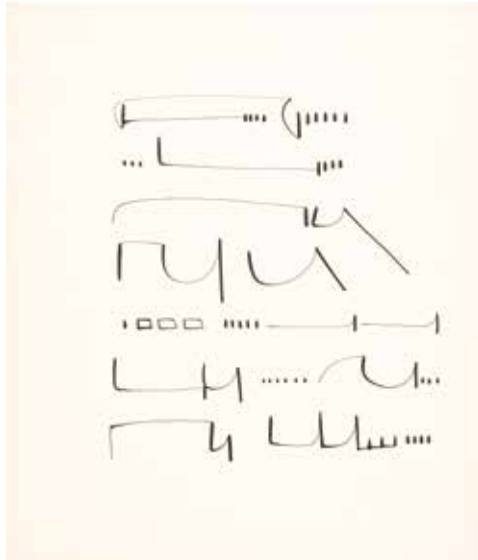


Untitled (letter), ca. 1970  
Ink on paper  
26.4 x 17.5 cm

1 Derrida, Jacques, *De la grammatologie*, Paris, Minuit, 1968. English edition: *Of Grammatology* (trad. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.

2 Valéry, Paul, “Concerning a Throw of the Dice,” in *Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, vol. 8, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015.

3 Paz, Octavio, “Los signos en rotación,” in *El arco y la lira*, Colombia, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994.



Untitled (text), ca. 1970  
Ink on paper  
28 x 23 cm

Since the early 20th century, poetry avant-gardes have been trying to restore writing's sensory quality, which was minimized, effaced, and elided in the modern era. The normalized and institutionalized typographies of modern printing presses undermined a materiality of signs that stood in opposition to the immateriality of signifieds and of a quasi-sacred logos. Many poets, then, came to address the contradictions between the visual and the linguistic facets of the written word.

Exploring that problematic, Dermisache developed her graphisms outside the realm of any existing semantics, experimenting with strokes, rhythms, forms, movements. Without straying from linearity, she conceived entire books to which the graphic stripe is fundamental to, among other things, the formation of the concept of writing over the image. Because, indisputably, what she did was write.

In this text, I will discuss asemic writings from a number of different angles (semiology, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, psychiatry) in order to then venture a hypothesis on Dermisache's production: it is not that she wrote texts not intended to be understood, but rather that her works convey messages that readers themselves failed to read.

### On "not yet to say"

Though she worked mainly in the sphere of the visual arts, Mirtha Dermisache could well be considered a poet. Are her texts intended to be read or to be looked at?

What happens when we come upon an illegible text? Once a text strikes us as impossible to read, its visual facet becomes central. Indeed, it is precisely in that double legible-visible status, part and parcel of any written sign, that we find a basic contradiction.

Philosopher Michel Foucault's reflections on René Magritte's work are pertinent to this question. In his essay on the Belgian artist, Foucault analyzes the division between sign and image, between word and icon. Studying the painting *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* [This Is Not a Pipe], he dwells on calligrams' ability to say and to represent at the same time and on how they make use of the visual characteristics of letters. "The calligram aspires to playfully efface the oldest opposition of our alphabetic civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read," Foucault says. In the calligram, text and image are as close as possible. The calligram makes the text say what the image represents; it houses the statement in the space of the figure.

According to Foucault, Magritte heightens the arbitrariness of the image and of naming; he attempts to remove paintings from

a familiar region of reading. But Foucault also reflects on how Magritte's painting evidences a contradiction, since the calligram is never capable of speaking and of representing at the same moment. As soon as one sets out to read, the form dissipates. "The very thing that is both seen and read is hushed in the vision, hidden in the reading ... Against one another in the calligram are pitted a 'not yet to say' and a 'no longer to represent.'"<sup>4</sup>

### The truth of writing

In addition to Mallarmé with his spatial treatment of signs, to Magritte at the frontier of codification systems, to Broodthaers, and to Dermisache, many other poets and visual artists problematized the sign over the course of the 20th century. Asemic writings occupy a privileged place in that field, partly due to the aforementioned fascination they induce in the reader.

In her study of the shaping of words, Johanna Drucker discusses the appeal of writings that cannot be deciphered (hieroglyphics, cryptograms, invented writings based on personal languages, pseudo-languages, etc.). One gets the sense that those imagined alphabets convey a message that cannot be expressed by existing languages. Those incomprehensible strokes awaken our thirst to understand everything.<sup>5</sup>

Acodal writing of this sort leads us to question the very possibility of codifying and of interpreting a meaning beyond linguistic signs. It also makes us ask ourselves what it is exactly that causes the meaning of the world to appear, as if by magic, from a determined set of strokes. Asemic writing seems to mean that which words cannot convey.

Perhaps it is in their search for that force that produces a full meaning, one beyond the grasp of the linguistic, that poets have always tried to express the unspeakable and to find words for emptiness and silence. But codeless writing is not only an attempt to make up for the inefficacy of words, but also—as we shall see later—evidence of mistrust of, or even rebellion against, socially established language.

Illegible writings have played a central role in 20th-century poetry. But are they really writings? That question lies at the core of the problem. Is there such a thing as true and false writing? Regarding that, Roland Barthes would say:

Nothing, absolutely nothing, distinguishes true writings from false ones. It is we with our law who decide the status of a given piece of writing. What does that mean? It means that the signifier is free and sovereign. A piece of writing need not be legible to be a rightful piece of writing.<sup>6</sup>



Invitation to the exhibition *Écritures. Graphies. Notations. Typographies* at Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques, Paris, 1980, in which Dermisache took part. The project was curated by Jérôme Peignot and Marc Dachy

4 Foucault, Michel, *Esto no es una pipa. Ensayo sobre Magritte*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 1981. English edition: *This Is Not a Pipe* (trad. and ed. James Harkness), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983.

5 Drucker, Johanna, *Figuring the World*, New York, Granary Books, 1998.

6 Barthes, Roland, *Variaciones sobre la escritura*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 2003.





Kontexts magazine, no. 8, Amsterdam, 1975-1976, where graphisms by Dermisache were included

## Writings not to be read

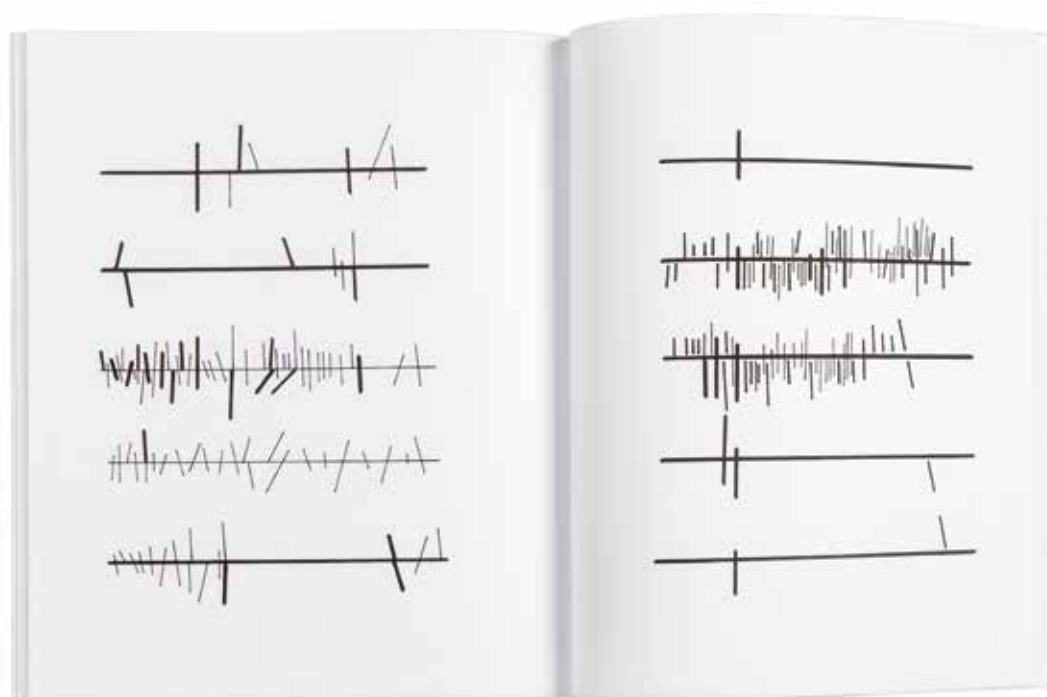
Are Dermisache's lines just meaningless scribbling? Do they convey a message we cannot grasp? Do they set out to communicate something? In the essay *Variations sur l'écriture* [Variations on Writing], Roland Barthes condemns the scientificist myth behind a conception of writing with a solely communicative function. Traditional linguistics holds that the main function of writing is to facilitate communication between men. But Barthes argues that that idea must be revisited given how common writings whose aim is precisely to hide a message and writings that are patently indecipherable are. The origin of Chinese writing, for instance, lies in aesthetic and ritual functions, rather than in communication. There are a great many examples of writings made with the express purpose of not being seen, like the ones in certain Egyptian death chambers, on high columns well beyond the scope of any human eye, and on the foundations of some Mesopotamian temples. Clearly, not all writings are intended to be read.

## Asemic writings and the avant-gardes

A number of experiences throughout the 20th century made use of acodal writing to evidence the limitations of the division between signified and signifier proposed by classical Saussurean linguistics and to make us reflect on the relationship between signs and their referents. In the realms of both sound and visual poetry, poets and artists of the last century attempted to elude the dominant linguistic order, experimenting with alternative languages and acodal forms.

Codelessness took on a number of different forms in the first decade of that century. In the context of Russian Futurism, for instance, it emerged as a language that aspired to be both transmental and universal; it claimed to be capable of bearing total expression. That was the case of *zaum*, an experimental language developed by Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh that had both graphic and sound dimensions. Italian Futurism proposed free forms, a radical break from syntactic conventions that made use of typographic combinations, graphic dispersion on the space of the page, and onomatopoeia in, for instance "words in freedom." In Dada sound poetry by Hugo Ball and in his *Verse ohne Worte* [Verseless Poems], as well as in Tristan Tzara's *Poèmes nègres* [Black Poems], the asemic often appears through the use of dislocation, nonsense, and the absurd.

In the visual arts, a "space of writing" is created in certain works by Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky with forms that take



*Libro N° 4* [Book No. 4], 1971

Ink on paper

25 x 38 cm (open)

*Libro N° 2* [Book No. 2], 1972/2008

Offset print on paper, 74 pages

Edition by Florent Fajole and Guillermo Daghero

28 x 46 cm (open)



Postcard intervened by Ulises Carrión, the mexican artist, founder of Other Books & So, the gallery and publishing house in Amsterdam.

Dermisache's works were included in many of his projects  
10,6 x 14,4 cm

shape at the ambiguous boundary between painting, drawing, and writing. Klee embarked on a series of pseudo-writings in which graphisms and invented symbols are placed on horizontal lines. On the basis of different systematic and rhythmic forms, he explored the notion of the sign in works like *Secret Characters* and *Secret Graphics*. Another pioneer in modern asemic writing, Kandinsky created paradigmatic works like *Indian Story*, in which signs suggest the presence of a message written in an unknown language. Kandinsky also developed asemic sound pieces in his series of *Klang* poems.

In the second half of the 20th century, the lettrist movement engaged the indecipherable nature of graphisms. Many of their works deliberately undermine the legibility of signs as a means of subverting the very foundations of the Western symbolic system.

Lettrism ended up expanding into the idea of “hyper-graphics,” writing systems based not only on Latin letters, but also on alphabets and signs taken from other systems, some of them made up. Hypergraphics led to novels like *Les journaux des dieux* by Isou, *Canailles* by Maurice Lemaître, and *Saint ghetto des prêtres* by Gabriel Pomerand.

Another important practitioner of illegible writing systems was Henri Michaux, who in his work pursued the border between writing and drawing as theme in a series of alphabets, in *Mouvements* [Movements], *Mescaliniens* [Mescaline Drawings], and in works in ink. Michaux, who described his work as “asemic writings based on interior gestures,” pursued a language prior to words (*avant-langues*), one that stood in opposition to the “sad and suffocating language that we normally use.” His writings attempted to free themselves of syntactical norms and, like ideograms, contained a figurative dimension that encouraged wandering and free reading.

The many other poets and artists who worked along those lines include Brion Gysin, who, starting in the 1950s, created invented writings inspired by Japanese cursive script or by Arabian calligraphy; and Julio Campal, one of the pioneers of experimental visual poetry in the Ibero-American context. Campal’s illegible writings incorporated printed texts taken from the mass media (newspapers and books) in an attempt to subvert the monolithic discourse of the corporate media.

### **Beyond the message, messages from the beyond**

Psychiatry has also addressed the question of asemic writings. In his essay *Théories du symbole*,<sup>7</sup> Tzvetan Todorov discusses the famous case of Hélène Smith, the medium who claimed to be the reincarnation of Marie Antoinette and of a fifteenth-century

7 Todorov, Tzvetan, *Théories du symbole*, Paris, Seuil, 1985. English edition: *Theories of the Symbol* (trad. Catherine Porter), Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1982.

Hindu princess; she said she was a regular visitor to the planet Mars, whose landscapes she described and whose language she spoke and wrote fluently. Her case was studied by a number of psychiatrists, among them Carl Jung, who wrote the prologue to *From India to Planet Mars*, the book on the topic that Doctor Theodore Flournoy published in 1900.

The case of Hélène Smith is paradigmatic of both glossolalia and psychography. Known as speaking in tongues, the former can be traced back to early Christianity, where there are records of men and women who suddenly began uttering incomprehensible words. It was believed in those times that the divine spirit was expressing itself through those words. Throughout history, there are also records of cases of incomprehensible writings. Known as psychography, this phenomenon refers to the production of texts in an automatic fashion, without full awareness on the part of the person writing that he or she is in fact writing, and it has been explained by the idea that the person writing is possessed by a supernatural force that dictates the messages.

Human beings have always expressed determination to communicate with hidden or inaccessible beings and, in order to do so, they have developed languages that differ from the ones used in everyday social life. In cases like Hélène Smith's, they have tried to make contact with beings from other planets, but on other occasions with the dead or with the gods. The ancient Egyptians' *Book of the Dead* speaks of talismans that must be placed amidst mummies' wrappings to protect the deceased. Engraved on many of the talismans were magical texts that the book exemplifies. The Tibetan *Bardo thodol* also provides a series of incomprehensible mantras that must be repeated time and again to purify the soul of the dead.

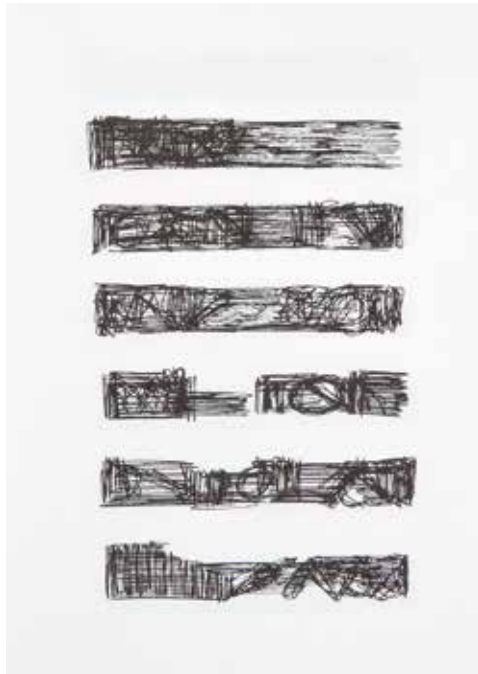
Determination to communicate with superhuman dimensions is closely tied to the work of some poets involved in the historical avant-gardes, among them those who made use of the aforementioned *zaum* language. Linguist Roman Jakobson connected that language to the ecstatic languages of the Russian Khlysty sect to demonstrate that the Russian Futurists' conceptions were not entirely new. The words uttered by the Khlystys did not mean anything, but resembled in constitution magic formulas and spells.<sup>8</sup> Symbolism and mysticism still played an important role in the avant-garde era. Kandinsky, for instance, was quite interested in shamanism; he was versed in strains of Siberian mysticism. Indeed, he considered the artist a kind of shaman, an intermediary between gods and men.

Attempts have also been made, over the course of history, to understand the language of animals. Both the cabbala and alchemy—two different magical traditions—consider the



*Desarrollo de una idea* [Development of an Idea] (card), 1999 (detail)  
Ink on paper, 3 cards in white paper envelope  
15 x 20 cm

<sup>8</sup> Jakobson, Roman, *The Sound and Shape of Language*, Berlin-New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 2002.



*Fragmento de historia*  
[Fragment of a Story], 1974 (detail)  
Ink on paper, 8 pages  
29 x 20 cm

language of birds, for instance, both perfect and secret. Birds have traditionally been a symbol of human sentiments and traits. Many legends speak of certain birds' ability to speak, an ability that is, nonetheless, hidden to most men, though a few—among them sorcerers Anaximander, Apollonius of Tyana, and even Aesop—have been able to share their secret. Birds who disclose great truths are fairly common in ancient fables of the East and of the West. Mythology tells us, for instance, that the prophet Tiresias knew the language of birds perfectly because Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, had taught it to him. Saint Francis of Assisi, meanwhile, dedicated his sermon to the birds, who were better able to appreciate it than men, determined as they were to live in ignorance.

### Reading images, signs, tracks of seagulls in the sand

For certain Pygmy tribes in Kalahari, white man did not know how to read because he was incapable of interpreting the tracks animals left on the ground. In the West, meanwhile, the Pygmies were considered illiterate because incapable of deciphering their signs. But what is writing? How are signs constituted? When does the human being begin to read? In many civilizations, the origins of writing are recounted in myths and legends. It is said, for instance, that in ancient China a wise man started to read by observing the tracks left by seagulls on the wet sand of a beach. According to others, the gods were the ones who taught human beings how to read. For ancient Mesopotamian and Chinese civilizations, God created nature and its figures, and those images were interpreted by prophets.

Images were read first. The revolution enacted by the Greeks consisted of introducing a term-by-term correspondence between a written sign and a sound, thus distancing the West from a visual conception of signs. The origin of our writing does not lie in visual mimesis; its genealogy is, rather, verbal.

It was not until 1822, when Jean-François Champollion deciphered the Rosetta stone and its Egyptian hieroglyphics, that the Western conception of writing changed course, challenging the alphabet's privilege amongst written signs. Hieroglyphics were images that imitated the form of the world's objects, and the idea of writing based on a visual model was totally alien to our civilization which, as Derrida points out in his *De la grammatologie*, is logocentric.<sup>9</sup> In that logocentrism, codifying signs is what gives rise to the series of opposing pairs on which modern thought is based, pairs like verbal-visual, meaning-meaninglessness, legibility-illegibility, decipherment-incognition.

<sup>9</sup> Derrida, Jacques, op. cit.



## Secret languages, figures, and codes

In communication and information processes, a code is a set of rules that makes it possible to translate one information system to another. But there are also encryption codes designed to obscure messages or to make them strange, illegible, or secret, codes used in, for instance, espionage. Such codes are characterized by a previous agreement for decodification between the emitter and the recipient. When, as in the case of Mirtha Dermisache, we come across illegible writings, unknown or invented languages, we cannot help but ask ourselves whether or not they contain a code we do not know. Hidden codes have been used in writing throughout history, not only by spies, but also by cabbalists, sorcerers, alchemists, Templars, Gnostics, priests, and all sorts of cryptographers who kept secrets disclosed only to a very few.

I mentioned the case of Hélène Smith, who was capable of transcribing what she claimed to be Martian writings. The phenomenon of invented writings is well known in psychiatry. It has been argued that the invented language of some patients is not meaningless, but rather intelligible only to them. In other words, there is some sort of codification behind the messages, but the emitter refuses to share it with the recipient. What we have, then, are codes known only by one person who will not share them, or—in the case of magic formulas and spells, and incomprehensible languages tied to religion and mysticism—codes that are shared by just a few but remain inaccessible to most. One interesting example of the latter are East African talismans, which are covered by hermetic, illegible or quasi-illegible writings not intended to be read—in most cases, not even by the talisman's bearer, though written on an object he or she may use or under his or her clothing. Indeed, the object's magical power depends on the fact that the bearer does not understand the meaning.

Sometimes secret languages are developed because the doctrines they convey are either not acceptable to society at large or are perceived as politically dangerous. In either case, rather than attempting to communicate, those languages aim to conceal hidden knowledge reserved for initiates who have sworn to keep their secret.

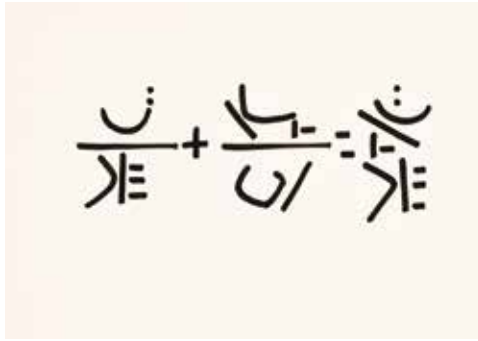
“By no means a deficient or monstrous quality of writing, illegibility demonstrates writing's truth,” said Roland Barthes, pointing out to what extent cryptography lies at the very base of writing.<sup>10</sup>

Whether in these cases or in the cases of linguistic codes shared by an entire community, any codification marks a frontier between those who know the codes and those who don't. And that gives rise to exclusions and inclusions, to exercises of power and of counterpower.



*Libro N° 8* [Book No. 8], 1970/2003  
Offset print on paper  
Edition by Geneviève Chevalier, Florent Fajole,  
and Jorge Santiago Perednik  
28.3 x 23.6 cm

10 Barthes, Roland, op. cit.



Untitled (text), ca. 1970–1971 (detail)  
Ink on paper  
12.5 x 24.5 cm

11 Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Tristes tropiques*,  
Paris, Pocket, 2001.

## The question of the master

In a note entitled “A Writing Lesson,”<sup>11</sup> anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss recounts an episode that took place in the Brazilian Amazon in the 1930s during an encounter with the Nambikwara tribe, one of the peoples native to the region. Though he suspected they didn’t know how to write, Lévi-Strauss gave them pencil and paper. At first, the Nambikwara didn’t know what to do with them, but they then began making wavy horizontal lines on the sheets. The chief drew a great many sinuous lines and showed them to Lévi-Strauss, apparently expecting him to find meaning in them. For the anthropologist, the chief had clearly captured the meaning of writing and, with the lines on his sheets of paper, he wanted to show the anthropologist that his people were an ally of white man and party to his secrets. The chief had grasped the power that lay behind writing, mainly the power to divide persons into those that know the code and those that do not. Decades later, Derrida would criticize this classic work by Lévi-Strauss, asserting that branding the Nambikwara illiterate only served to show how limited the anthropologist’s notion of writing was.

Writing is just one of the realms of language where power makes itself felt. In *Through the Looking Glass*, for instance, we find the following dialogue between Humpty Dumpty and Alice:

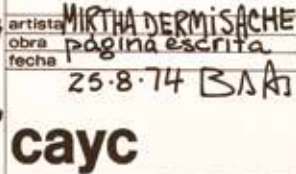
“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.” “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

In his work, Lewis Carroll addresses the problem of hegemonic language: the one who determines what words mean is the one who holds power.

All language exercises control over human beings, trapping us in conventional patterns of perception and thought and reproducing micro-systems of social control. To analyze the meaning of words requires understanding mechanisms of power and how they are then reflected in language.

## The asemic as haven and resistance

Asemic languages and secret writings have often acted as a way to resist assigned meanings, a language that defines, names, differentiates, and orders, that imposes social parameters. They have been used as a form of resistance to hegemonic cultural powers, as well as a savvy strategy to dodge censorship.



26





Untitled (letter), ca. 1970  
Ink on paper  
28 x 22.7 cm

As we have seen, sound and visual poetry often entails incomprehensible languages and irrational words; alternative writings are transformed and disturbed in their need to elude established meanings. The asemic becomes a haven and a place of resistance where what is not said is a space inaccessible to the other. Unacceptable words evidence the determination not to say, establishing a political and ethical dimension. In response to the word of power, poets forcibly retreat into a silence of meaning, holding back the words they don't want to give over to the other.

Sometimes the need to dodge censorship and to communicate in languages other than the languages of power gives rise to secret writings, like the Nüshu script, the syllabic system used by women in the Jiangyong region of southern China from the 10th to the 19th century. Since women were not allowed to learn to read or write, they developed Nüshu in order to exchange messages. Undecipherable to men, the characters took the shape of decorative stitches embroidered on fans, handkerchiefs, and everyday garments.

Another example are quilts in the Civil War in the United States. The slaves in the South would use certain patterns when assembling quilts, forming a secret code to help plan escape. The origin of many of the patterns, which were passed down from generation to generation, lay in African cultures. Though the quilts would be hung in plain sight in windows, the messages they bore were understood by only a few.

### The creation of worlds within reach

The ability of language to model culture has been pointed out frequently by writers from a range of different backgrounds. For Wilhelm von Humboldt's romantic tradition, language was seen as a form of tyrannical domination of thought capable of shaping culture. In *German Ideology*, Karl Marx asserts that language is the primary determinant of thought. George Orwell spoke of "newspeak"—a linguistic structure created in the context of alienated and totalitarian mass society—in his book *1984*. Utopian politics widely embraced the possibility of parallel languages. Published in 1516, Thomas Moore's *Utopia* included phrases in a new "utopian language." As Swift and Fourier evidence, the idea of language utopias was one of the concerns of 19th-century internationalist movements: change in social laws would follow, as a direct correlate, change in linguistic laws, and alternative languages generate alternative worlds.

Since the formulation of symmetry between the creation of languages and the creation of worlds, the likeness of the essence of poetry and animist conjuring has been steadfast; any process

of symbolization, then, is in some way akin to magic. Regarding poetry and its power to work around linguistic laws and to forge new universes, Russian Futurist Velimir Khlebnikov would write:

Growing beyond the rage of possible, we now extend our law over the abyss; we no longer distinguish ourselves from God: even the creation of worlds is within our power.<sup>12</sup>

### Reading and paranoia

Rather than dwell in writing, meaning unfolds in reading.

The 20th century, especially pursuant to what would be known as the “linguistic turn,” witnessed the emergence of a succession of considerations related to reading and writing. Marcel Proust, for instance, said that each reader, when reading, was more a reader of him- or herself than of a book.<sup>13</sup> Jacques Derrida questioned the traditional notion that the reading of a text would reveal a supposedly “correct” interpretation of its contents.<sup>14</sup> The idea of an authorized reading that enclosed a sole meaning based on the writer’s intentions was no longer relevant. Derrida was suspicious of a “true” reading that could emerge only from a metaphysical illusion that attempted to find meaning “behind” or “beyond” the text itself. Human comprehension is multiple and contingent; it is possible only by relating some signs to other signs in an endless and vaporous network. Our relationship to the words of others (here, through reading) is, then, always based on misunderstanding and on the dispersion of meanings.

Reflection on the interpretation of works is not limited to the sphere of letters, but also arises in the visual arts. In his famous article “L’Âne pourri” [The Rotting Donkey], Salvador Dalí<sup>15</sup> formulated for the first time his “paranoid critical” method. Using that method’s superimpositions and false perspectives, Dalí attempted, in his art, to reproduce paranoid mental processes where images that did not actually exist were perceived. The resulting figures were ambiguous and open to multiple readings. The Surrealists celebrated that technique. André Breton called it “an instrument of primary importance ... capable of being applied equally to painting, poetry, the cinema ... [and] all manner of exegesis.” Dalí’s method aroused the interest of Jacques Lacan, a young psychiatrist at the time. Lacan immediately understood that Dalí’s position on paranoia was closely related to his own, and that both opposed the theories unanimously accepted in the sphere of psychiatry of the time. For both Dalí and Lacan, paranoia was an active process with a concrete phenomenological dimension. Any instance of interpretation was by definition a hallucinatory act. Both men saw a clear parallel between interpretation and



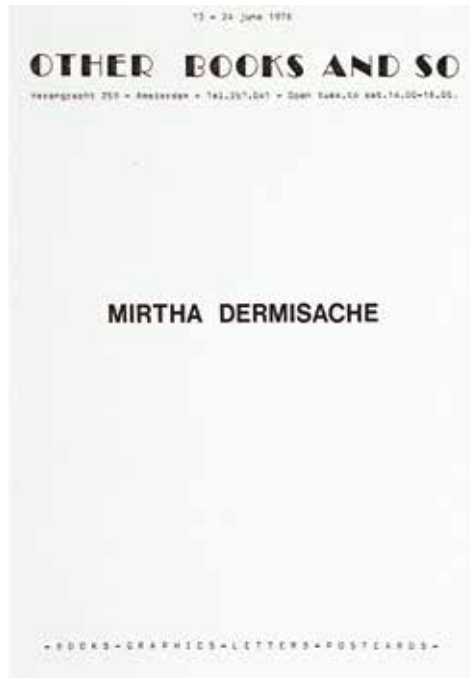
Luna-Park magazine, Paris, # 3, Nouvelle série, autumn, 2006. Directed by Marc Dachy. *Libro N° 8* [Book No. 8], 1978, by Dermisache, was published in this issue

12 Khlebnikov, Velimir, *The King of Time: Poems, Fictions, Visions of the Future*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1985.

13 Proust, Marcel, *Sur la lecture*, Arles, Actes-Sud, 1993.

14 Derrida, Jacques, op. cit.

15 Dalí, Salvador, “L’Âne pourri,” in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no. 1, July 1930.



Poster for Others Books & So  
June 13–24, 1978

16 Kittler, Friedrich, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, California, Stanford University Press, 1999.

hallucination and, from that point of view, reading was, above all else, a hallucination of meanings.

### Post-literatures

Though Mirtha Dermisache's texts are based on the rhythm and gesture of handwritten writing, her works are mechanically reproduced by means of digital methods and printing. Indeed, the mechanical reproducibility of her works is fundamental to the aesthetic proposals of some of them, for instance *lecturas públicas* [public readings] and *newsletters*.

It is impossible to speak of writing today without addressing new digital technologies. As Friedrich Kittler observed in the mid-1980s, writing had ceased to be a natural extension of humans in the manuscript, something that conveyed human gestuality and corporality, ever since the invention of the typewriter. Writing was, at that point, torn from the kingdom of the hand, its natural habitat. Humans “turn from the *agency of writing* to become an inscription surface.”<sup>16</sup>

With the new media, material structures take precedence, in Kittler's view, over any possible meaning that the messages that circulate on those media might bear. All information today—whether sound, image, text, or voice—is reduced to zeros and ones. The advent of digital media brought a split in writing, a divide between two registers, the alphabet and the computer code, the latter of which is illegible to a great many.

### Writing as impossibility

In their reticence, evasiveness, and transgression, asemic texts attest to a determination not to say. They place emphasis on the political dimension of writing and rise up against given meanings. Rather than circulate on the official and legalized channels of discourse, they become illegible writings, counter-discourses, that confront hegemonic power. Each meaningless scribble, each asemic symbol, brings to a halt the supposedly “normal” use of language; it is a pause in the course of the institutionalized meanings that we reproduce time and again with no critical distance, a challenge to the hegemonic cultural, social, and political system.

But is it really possible to escape given meanings? Or, as William Burroughs believed, are we destined to be infected with the virus of language?

In his experimental 16 mm film *La Pluie (projet pour un texte)* [The Rain (Project for a Text), 1969], Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers attempted to write a text in India ink while in the rain. The text is erased by the water as it is written down.

The intense black of the ink forms random designs on the paper as it is washed away. Broodthaers thus staged writing—the expression of a meaning with lines and strokes—as impossible.

In her archive of *legible texts*, Mirtha Dermisache gives us a new key to deciphering her work. She did not write in illegible signs due to the proverbial inability of those signs to capture the world's truths; nor was making her graphic symbols strange an attempt to escape established language, to prevent the reader from understanding them. Readers are the ones that don't understand, that don't understand her. They can't tell that she is writing; all they see in her writings is incomprehensible graphic symbols. What we are faced with, in the end, is a problem of different codes.

For both Broodthaers and for her, the very act of writing is a chimera.

Dermisache's texts are read/seen. Since they lack words, all the reader can do is look at them. This is writing with no precise semantic content, and that lack of content must be filled by readers' specific interpretations. What we have is a system with no referents, a code with no key. Her work can be seen in many different ways: as meaningless strokes, as codeless writing, as writing in a code that is unknown to us, a code that the artist refuses to share with us. The hypothesis here, as stated above, is not that she wrote texts that were not intended to be understood, but rather that she put forth messages that readers failed to read. In her work, Mirtha registered the incomprehension and asymmetry of codes in an Argentine society in a state of upheaval. Just as, at the height of the dictatorship, she attempted to incite "free graphic expression" at her workshops in color and form, her writing showed the lack of common codes in a community riddled by censorship and self-censorship, and by fear. Society, not her work, was what was nonsensical. It was not that she wrote in illegible signs, but rather that society was not capable of understanding what she was saying.



*Nueve newsletters y un reportaje* [Nine Newsletters and an Interview], 2004 (detail)  
Offset print on Dutch opaline paper, 10 pages  
Edition by Geneviève Chevalier, Florent Fajole, and Olga Martínez  
35.2 x 27.2 cm  
Malba, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires Collection





# A Transatlantic “Affair” by Guy Schraenen



MD and Guy Schraenen in the Guy Schraenen  
éditeur's printing workshop, Antwerp, 1975  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

This text relates a story that began with my first meeting with Mirtha Dermisache in Antwerp on Wednesday 24 April 1974 and ended on 8 November 2012, the day of her death in Buenos Aires. It is not my intention to analyze her work, but rather to recount a collaboration and an emotionally charged friendship during a turbulent political period. I also wish to situate her oeuvre both within the international context of her time, a period rich in new artistic developments, and within an overall historical context.

On 24 April 1974 the touring exhibition *Art Systems in Latin America* opened in its first venue, the International Cultureel Centrum (ICC) in Antwerp. It was organized by the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC), Buenos Aires. This ambitious project by Jorge Glusberg presented works by sixty-two artists from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay. It included installations, video works, objects, paintings and graphics by artists such as Antonio Caro, Guillermo Deisler, Antonio Dias, Carlos Ginzburg, Raúl Marroquín, Marie Orensanz, Clemente Padín, Liliana Porter, Ricardo Roux, Nicolás García Urriburu, Edgardo Antonio Vigo and Horacio Zabala. And by Mirtha Dermisache. The project was presented in other venues in London and Paris and was a revelation for the European public as well as for me personally.

After having run a gallery in Antwerp in the 1960s and 1970s, I had founded the publishing house Guy Schraenen éditeur. My main focus was on the publication of unreleased works such as books, sound works, prints and films, with the aim of broadening the art audience by means of various publication and distribution possibilities. In the light of my new activities, the work of Mirtha Dermisache impressed me immediately. I was already familiar with most kinds of artists' books, an art genre which had been developed since the early 1960s. In the book works of Mirtha Dermisache I discovered an oeuvre that was hitherto unknown to me. I was acquainted with language works by artists such as Eugen



Top  
MD at an exhibition of publications  
by Guy Schraenen éditeur, Paris, 1974  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

Center  
From left to right: unknown, Marc Dachy,  
unknown, MD, Vital Schraenen, Antwerp, 1978  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

Bottom  
Anne Marsily, Guy Schraenen, MD, Antwerp, 1975  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives



Gomringer, Paul de Vree, José Castillejo, Shohachiro Takahshi and many others, as well as with works by Henri Michaux, Roland Barthes or Jean Degottex dealing with abstract signs. In this field, the language developed by Mirtha Dermisache fascinated me. Aware as I was of the many problems in Latin America, in particular in Argentina, the conceptual, visual and political implications of the graphic ideas in her *Diario 1* [Newspaper 1] captivated me.

Many of the participating artists were present at the opening and at the round-table discussion organized on this occasion. I immediately sought out Mirtha Dermisache in order to express my admiration for her work and to invite her to meet me the following day. I already had in mind a possible collaboration with a view to publishing and exhibiting her work in Europe.



MD in the Guy Schraenen éditeur's printing workshop, Antwerp, 1978  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

As agreed, Mirtha Dermisache visited us at our home, which was also the location of our publishing house, printing workshop and gallery. Her vivacity and cheerfulness immediately created an atmosphere of complicity and familiarity, which included my wife Anne and our children, Nathalie, Vital and Stéphane. It seemed as if we had all known each other forever. Her visit was the starting point of a profound friendship, an enriching and productive "affair." I developed close and amicable relationships quite naturally with most of the artists with whom I collaborated as gallery owner and publisher. My relationship with Mirtha Dermisache was probably the most intense and the most complex of these. Due to factors like transatlantic distance, the Argentinian political situation and the language problem, our mutual desire to collaborate encountered numerous obstacles. I was unable to speak or read Spanish, Mirtha spoke only a few words of French and no English at all (she later attended French courses at the French Institute in Buenos Aires to facilitate our communication). Additionally, the post was very slow and phone prices were exorbitant. Despite all these obstructions, our friendship was sealed and our wish to work together was absolute.

Our first encounter proved most rewarding, even if some professional discrepancies had to be cleared up. Mirtha wanted me to publish her work, but prior to any other collaboration she insisted on her aspiration to release a European issue of her *Diario 1*, which had already appeared in Argentina. This contradicted my intention to publish only unreleased work, but I consented to her wish, proposing that the work be printed on conventional newspaper paper. However, she wanted it printed on thick white paper. I later realized that she was right. The white paper created a vital distance between her artwork and the daily press aesthetic.

Unfortunately, we were unable to develop our collaboration further at the time of our first meeting. Mirtha had to leave the

next day. We separated in the anticipation of meeting in the near future and with the intention that she would stay with us for a longer period to concretize new projects and to enjoy the visit without the pressure of time.

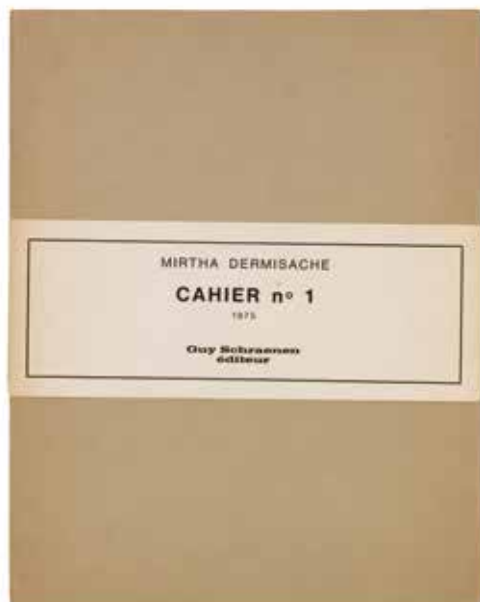
Soon after her return to Buenos Aires, Mirtha sent the material necessary to produce *Diario 1*. As soon as it was printed, I shipped her a few copies. She answered in a letter how happy she was with the result, but mentioned—in the addenda—that the cover page had been printed mirror-inverted! This was a problem that had already arisen in her very first edition, due to the abstract writing. I felt responsible for the mistake and immediately had the work reprinted.

Over the next few years, Mirtha regularly visited us in Antwerp. Sometimes we went together to other cities such as Paris or Amsterdam, where I worked on projects and she met colleagues and friends. She was present when I launched *Encoconnage* by Françoise Janicot and Bernard Heidsieck in an unusual space, a typical Parisian *bouquiniste* box by the Seine. On one of these trips she visited Henri Chopin in England. She also became friendly with the Parisian gallery owner Lilian Vincy, who visited her in Buenos Aires and organized my exhibition *Texte-Son-Image*, which included works by Mirtha. Lilian Vincy offered to serve as a kind of “letter box” for acquaintances from Argentina who could deliver or pick up art works, personal items and correspondence between Mirtha and ourselves. The record *Tristezas de la calle Corrientes*, with traditional Argentinian tango music, for example, which I received through this channel, is still with me today. I also introduced her to Ulises Carrión, the Mexican artist and founder of Other Books & So in Amsterdam, who immediately proposed her an exhibition in his bookshop-gallery. As she couldn’t be present, and as she had left me many of her original works and books on consignment, I organized the exhibition, which finally took place in 1978, on her behalf. During the same year Ulises stayed at her home in Buenos Aires when he was invited to give a lecture on “The New Art of Making Books” at the CAyC.

From the mid-1960s onwards, Mirtha produced works which she called *texts*, *stories*, *informational bulletins*, *postcards* and *letters*, but also numerous books, which for me are by far the most significant part of her work. Many of her *graphies* are one-off pieces. But it is very important to point out that her intention regarding these books was that they should come to life only as multiple publications, accessible to a wide public. To help enlarge her audience, I always insisted on the importance of her work being presented by several publishers. In 1973, *Ciencia Nueva*, a magazine in Buenos Aires, was already publishing her writings. In 1974, her work was presented by the Italian magazine



Works by MD in the exhibition  
*Metamorphosen des Schreibens*,  
Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, 1994  
Guy Schraenen's personal archive





*Cahier n° 1* [Notebook No. 1],  
Guy Schraenen éditeur, Antwerp, 1975  
Mimeographic print on paper, 20 pages  
and carbon paper  
27.8 x 21.5 cm

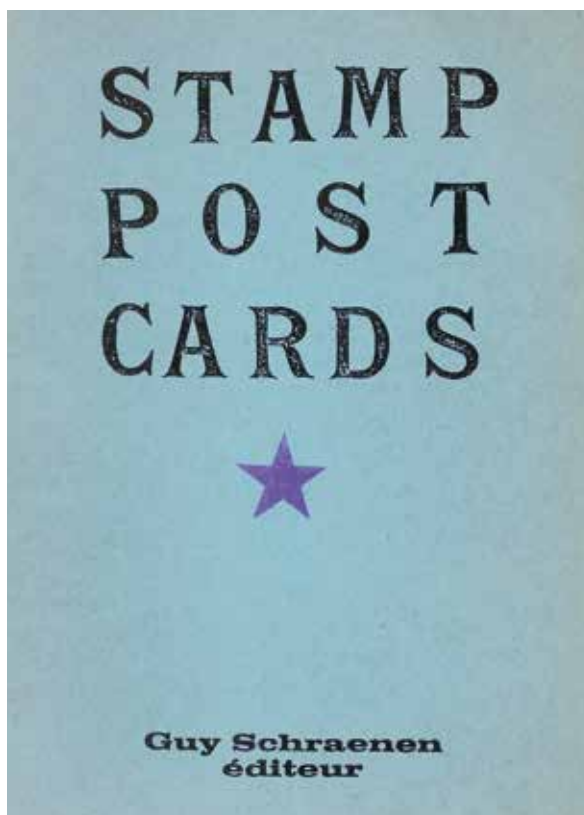
*Flash Art*. Marc Dachy, who came to meet her at our home in Antwerp, published her *graphies* in 1976 alongside works by Roland Barthes, Jean-François Bory, William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Sophie Podolski and others in the “Graphies” thematic issue of his *Luna-Park* magazine. During the same year her work appeared in Michael Gibbs’ *Kontexts* magazine and in the French magazine *Doc(k)s*. Furthermore, Gérard de Cortanze presented that year eight pages of her work in his significant anthology *America libre*, together with the work of Haroldo de Campos, Roberto Echavarren, Rodolfo Hinostroza, Severo Sarduy, Saúl Yurkhievich and others. Roberto Altmann had promised to release two of her books in his *Apeiros Publications*. Everything was prepared, but it seems that they never appeared. In the meantime, I had published several works by Mirtha. After *Diario 1* came *Cahier n° 1* [Notebook no. 1] (1975), a series of *Four Postcards* (1978) and *Article* in my *Revue AXE* no. 1 (1975), which included works by Eduard Bal, Brion Gysin, Henri Chopin, François Dufrêne and John Giorno, among others. One of her original fingerprint writings appeared in my *Guest Book* (1976–1978) along with those by Antoni Muntadas, Artur Barrio, Antoni Miralda, Pieter Mol, Ulises Carrión, Jonier Marin and others.

The book *Cahier n° 1* was created in the printing workshop which was connected to my publishing house and which functioned occasionally as an artists’ residence for the conception and production of silkscreens, small offset publications and mimeographed works. I suggested that Mirtha create a book using the latter technique. We acquired a set of tools to engrave on the film which served as the printing matrix. Sustained by the revitalizing mate tea in her calabash gourd—which she, like many Argentinians, always travelled with—she experimented day and night every possible combination of the tools and the graphic vocabularies until she found the one that suited her. Each combination of tool and graphic vocabulary was proof-printed, and the proofs remain with me to this day. They testify to Mirtha’s untiring determination and her eagerness to find the most satisfying result. The outcome of this exhausting work is today, more than forty years later, still one of my favourite publications. Incidentally, I employed this printing technique to produce the presentation flyers announcing my publications and later for the typewriter book *Substitution* (1977) by the French artist Françoise Mairey.

Observing Mirtha’s way of working, I saw that she experimented very carefully to find the appropriate combination of tool and vocabulary for each specific work. Once she had found this combination, she developed it with an extreme application. I believe that no other artist developed such a diverse corpus of

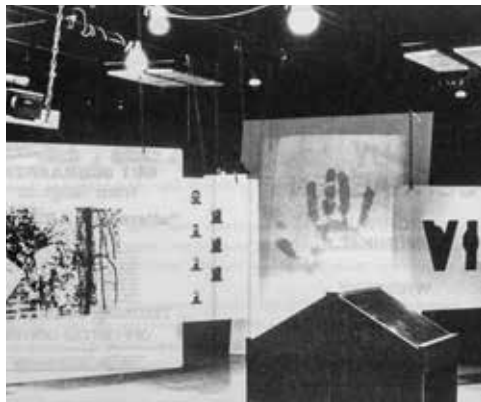
 <b>N° 698</b>		<b>TÉLÉGRAMME</b>		Etiquettes		N° d'appel :	
Ligne de numérotation <b>ZCZC</b>		N° télégraphique		Taxe principale		INDICATIONS DE TRANSMISSION <b>M A T I N</b> <b>your</b> <b>A R T</b>	
Ligne pilote		Taxes accessoires		Total <b>23/30</b>		N° de la ligne du P.V. :	
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<b>ANTWERPEN</b>		<b>24/3/78</b>		<b>22.51</b>		Mentions de service	
Indications de service taxées *		NOM et ADRESSE complète (rue, boulevard, numéro de l'habitation, bloc, bâtiment, escalier, etc.) (en lettres majuscules d'imprimerie) <b>MIRTHA DERMISACHE</b>					
TEXTE et éventuellement signature très lisibles							
A REMPLIR PAR L'EXPÉDITEUR		Nom et adresse de l'expéditeur : <b>GUY SCHRAENEN</b> (Ces indications ne sont taxées et transmises que sur la demande expresse de l'expéditeur)					
* Services spéciaux demandés : (voir au verso)							

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Guy Schraenen  
 Original intervention on telegram  
 March 24, 1978  
 14.8 x 21 cm

Stamp Post Cards, Guy Schraenen éditeur,  
 Antwerp, 1977  
 12 postcards. Edition no. 48,  
 250 numbered copies  
 14.6 x 10.8 cm



Works by MD in the exhibition  
*Éditions & communications marginales*  
*d'Amérique latine*, Le Havre, 1976  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

Works by MD in the exhibition  
*Text-Sound-Image. Small Press Festival*,  
Ghent, 1976  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

vocabulary. Many artists have attempted to work on unreadable writings with letterforms of pure aesthetic signifiers. Many have experimented with signs which escape codification within the accepted categories of communicable symbols. But no other artist has attained such a large palette and choice of writing utensils. Even her finger would occasionally become a tool, as in the above-mentioned *Guest Book*, the artistic gesture leaving the trace of the artist's body. Many of her works show evidence of great lyricism. Some of her marks seem to be engraved into the page with anger. When she liberates herself from the bondage of rules, she imposes herself. When she chooses not to let herself be overwhelmed by anger, her work can seem mechanical. But it never leaves us indifferent.

I have the impression that the vital necessity she felt to express all kinds of emotions, often in a form close to an abstract narration, was pacified from the 1990s onwards, following a long period of interruption in her artistic production. During our last encounters, this shift was the subject of controversial and lively discussions.

After having realized more than sixty publications between 1973 and 1978, I decided to put an end to my publishing activities and to devote myself solely to the Archive for Small Press & Communication (A.S.P.C.), which I founded in 1974. Mirtha was very disappointed and regularly reproached me. But I felt that I had done all I could in the publishing field and I could not make an exception for her. Collecting, preserving and exhibiting artists' publications became my main activity and often involved Mirtha's work. In 1976, I presented, alongside her books, her *graphies* as large projections in the first exhibition organized by the A.S.P.C., the *Text-Sound-Image. Small Press Festival*, a prominent international overview of the contemporary artists' publication scene, which took place in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. I also showed her work, together with works by Paulo Bruscky, Ulises Carrión, Raúl Marroquín, Clemente Padín, etc., in the exhibition *Éditions et communications marginales d'Amérique latine* (1977) in the Maison de la Culture du Havre and in the accompanying publication *Latin America Assembling*. In the international context of this period, I was occupied with the Latin American art scene equally as with that of Eastern Europe. Due to their respective political situations, the ways in which artists from these parts of the world expressed themselves and functioned had certain characteristics in common. It seemed relevant to me to have brought to the attention of the Western European public the fact that the art scene can be lively and engaged in spite of political and power pressure. Some of Mirtha's works were also shown in my exhibition *Kunst Enaars Publikaties* (1988) in the Universiteit Gent.

Within the framework of the A.S.P.C. I opened the Archive Space, devoted to exhibitions of artists' books, where a solo show of Mirtha's work was organized in 1989. This was the first exhibition in the series *12 x Artists' Books*, involving artists such as Dieter Roth, Ben, Paulo Bruscky, J.H. Kocman, Peter Downsbrough, Bernard Villers and Sol LeWitt.

From the 1990s, I worked in various museums as an independent curator and was responsible for the constitution of international collections of artists' publications. As the genre of artists' books was not yet the fashionable art trend it is today, I wished to bring these works to the attention of a larger public. I included Mirtha's work in many exhibitions; for example in *Kunstenaarsboeken uit het A.S.P.C.* (1990), in the Provinciaal Museum Hasselt, as well as in the major show *D'une œuvre l'autre* (1996), in the Musée royal de Mariemont. The latter focused on ten historically significant creators of artists' books: Christian Boltanski, Daniel Buren, James Lee Byars, Peter Downsbrough, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long, Jacques Louis Nyst, Dieter Roth, Bernard Villers and, of course, Mirtha Dermisache. In 1999 her work formed the backbone of the exhibition *Metamorphosen des Schreibens* in the Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen. Her work was also presented in other thematic exhibitions such as *Da escrita à figura* (2005), in the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves in Porto; *En los márgenes del arte. Creación y compromiso político* (2009), in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona (MACBA) and, in 2010, in the Museu de Serralves. Naturally, her work appeared in exhibitions about the A.S.P.C.; for example, *Out of Print* (2001) in Bremen, Zürich, Porto, Barcelona, Paris, Ljubljana, Erlangen, and *Un coup de livres* (2010) in the Juan March foundation in Palma de Mallorca and Cuenca. In 2015, *Diario 1* was shown in *Déjà-vu. Repetição e diferença* in the Museu de Serralves, and *Cahier n° 1* in *Prefiero llamarlos simplemente "libros"* in the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

A significant encounter for Mirtha was in 2004, with Florent Fajole, who published, with great engagement, several of her works, and organized numerous exhibitions in various countries, also in Argentina. Didier Mathieu presented an exhibition of Mirtha's works in 2008 in the Centre des livres d'artistes in Saint-Yrieix, France. Her work forms part of the collection of the Centre Pompidou and her publications have been shown in this museum on several occasions; for example, in the major exhibition of works by more than two hundred women artists of the 20th century, *Elles* (2009). In 2014, her *Diario 1* was chosen for *Reading List* by Martha Wilson as her favourite artist's book in the MoMA's artists' book collection. A selection of her work was also presented in the exhibition *My Buenos Aires* at La Maison Rouge, Paris, in 2016.





MD at the Archive for Small  
Press & Communication (A.S.P.C.),  
Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, 1994  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

Guy Schraenen and MD in Potsdam, 1994  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives

Mirtha often complained that she did not have the recognition she deserved. It is true that she was often relegated to the margins of the art scene. This was partially, although not exclusively, a result of her radical attitude of refusing to participate in various projects. Another reason was the type and format of her oeuvre, centred on a nuanced and elaborate sort of work which attracts a limited audience. Her sophisticated uniqueness simply does not appeal to a large public and does not receive the appreciation it merits. This is a characteristic she shares with most artists in the field of language art and visual and concrete poetry. On the other hand, in spite of this she undoubtedly enjoyed from the beginning considerable recognition from her peers; for example, in an article from Edgardo Cozarinski in 1970, and in a letter to her from Roland Barthes in 1971. Both acknowledged the incomparable quality and importance of her oeuvre. Moreover, her works entered the collections of international museums and were shown in individual and thematic exhibitions, mainly in Europe, but later also in Argentina.

The richness of Mirtha Dermisache's unreadable *graphies* will without doubt gain her a deserved place among the many artists who have investigated this specific field of art since the beginning of the 20th century. Since that period, artists have attempted to explore the field of verbal and non-verbal language by denying the semantic meaning of these languages. Examples include the typographical compositions of the Dadaists and Futurists Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and of more recent artists such as Clemente Padín and Edgardo Antonio Vigo; works in the field of visual and concrete poetry by Ian Hamilton Finlay, Josef Hiršal, Gerhard Rühm, Augusto de Campos and Julio Plaza; the Lettriste works of Gil J Wolman, Roberto Altmann and Isidore Isou; the typewriter works of Henri Chopin, Bob Cobbing and Françoise Mairey; the dynamized compositions of Marie Orensanz; the circular compositions of Ferdinand Kriwet; the microscopic texts of James Lee Byars; the writing systems of Hanne Darboven. Like Mirtha Dermisache, none of these artists tried to impose a new language, but sought to liberate the infinite possibilities of expression through the exploitation of the visual aspects of text-like signs. Whether their work be legible or illegible, visual or literary, all offer the possibility of discoveries by leading us to explore and become aware of the forms of language beyond the limits of our conventional language. By creating unexpected images and meanings in writing, these artists seem to create a disorder; in reality, they reposition elements so as to transform the general sense of the ossified and conformist writing system which attempts to dictate our behaviour and ways of functioning. Most of these artists are considered marginal. The lack of possibilities

for the commercial exploitation of their work mean that they are confined to an obscure ghetto, far from the traditional art scene.

But let us return to Mirtha. Despite the uncertainties of life, the disastrous political situation in Argentina from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s, financial insecurity and the distance between Europe and Argentina, our relationship remained close. Browsing through my files, I came across thirty-eight letters from her. These letters testify to our mutual interest in one another's activities. Their dates bear witness to the interruptions in our relationships due to all kinds of circumstances independent of our will. In some letters she speaks of the suffering and discouragement she felt, like so many others who faced horror and fear during the dictatorship. Below I quote some excerpts from her letters to Anne and myself which affirm her approach and attitudes towards art and life. These letters were usually translated by others, because she didn't want to make language mistakes. The result is that her spontaneity and humour, which were evident even when she was desperate, got a little lost.

1.7.1974

I hope you are all OK with the same capacity for work as when I met you. I am sorry, have not sent you my graphies for your magazine, but I will do so this week.

27.10.1974

Enclosed I send you my work. I hope it corresponds with your wishes. I have the feeling that if I had had more time, I would be more satisfied.

12.12.1974

I hope that by now my two books, published by Roberto Altmann, have appeared.... In your last letter you wrote that the publication date of your magazine has been delayed until the 15th of February. I am glad of the coincidence as I will be in Paris at that moment.

4.4.1975

Sunny day and 24° C !!!!! and the VIOLENCE goes on.... I promised you that when I was back in Buenos Aires I would write to you to explain all that I felt when we were together and that I could not express. But suddenly I am unable to enclose in words these moments of the wonderful experience of communication.

21.4.1975

I started working on the "information." Some pages are done, but I am not very satisfied, even if I very much like the idea....



Works by MD in the exhibition *D'une œuvre l'autre*, Mariemont, 1996  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives



Guy Schraenen and MD at the exhibition *Dispositif éditorial*, Centre des livres d'artistes (cdla), Saint-Yrieix-La-Perche, 2008  
Guy Schraenen's personal archives





Guy Schraenen and MD in MD's studio,  
Buenos Aires, 2007

Works by MD in the exhibition *Un coup de livres*  
(*Una tirada de libros*), Museu Fundació  
Juan March, Palma de Mallorca, 2010

Sometimes I think that if I were with you, you could transfer your capacity for work and your dynamism to me. Anyway, I will try. You see, I am not a very diligent artist.

14.7.1975

Hopelessness has stepped into our country.... What can I tell you? How can I tell you? That I have had not the resolution even to trace a line on a paper and nor do I now.... I know that if I force myself to do a job only to comply with your wishes that work would be a "lie," and I can't send you pages of lies... It is very difficult and painful to tell you all this, but this is my reality ...

25.7.1975

I dreamed of both of you last night.... Somebody came to tell me that two people were waiting for me. I asked who they were. When I saw you, you were turned with your back to me. I couldn't believe what I saw, when I came near to you both, I hugged and kissed you very hard. I was so excited and so happy that the shock woke me up.... Do you still listen to the terrible news from Argentina? I think that the situation is worse than I thought. Sometimes I have the feeling that there is no sense in going on doing things. It is absurd and stubborn and, for these reasons, sterile.

March 1977

I ended 1976 with the following medical diagnosis: total mental and physical exhaustion.... Many people have gone or are leaving. Soon there will be no decent humans left. With each person who leaves, a little part of myself leaves.

23.4.1978

I would like to write to you more often but it is such an effort that I am unable to do it for the moment.

In some of her letters, Mirtha also writes about the workshops she initiated, but normally she didn't want these to be mentioned in connection with her artistic work. Her letters confirm her extraordinary commitment and engagement, as well as the difficulties involved in creating and directing these workshops. This is particularly true in the case of the outstanding project Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, organized every year from 1974 until 1981, each time attracting thousands of young people and adults and enormous media interest. She viewed her function as that of a supplier. She always insisted that she didn't want to teach drawing or painting, nor the history of art, nor a system



Invitation to the exhibition *Tegenspraak*,  
Bibliotheek Gemeentelijke Akademie van  
Waasmunster, Waasmunster,  
September 1992 – June 1993

Original postcard, Guy Schraenen éditeur,  
Galerie Shandar, Paris, n.d.  
14.5 x 10.5 cm

of composition and analysis of art, but only techniques to help participants experiment and experience their creativity. In passing, she mentions that her dedication to these free artistic activities prevented her from developing her personal work. Indeed, there was a whole decade that was devoid of personal art production during which she focused on teaching as free training and exploration. She never explained me in detail the exact reasons why she put her own writing work to one side during this period. Perhaps she was conscious of the limitations of art when confronted with the political situation during the Argentinian crisis and terror. Her letters certainly testify to her distress and discouragement during the military dictatorship. This, as well as her complicated private life, greatly affected her personal work, and she suffered from it. But if one can consider her uncompromising commitment to strengthening the creative capacity and free expression of adults as a shift or a transition, it must also be seen as an important aspect of her artistic career.

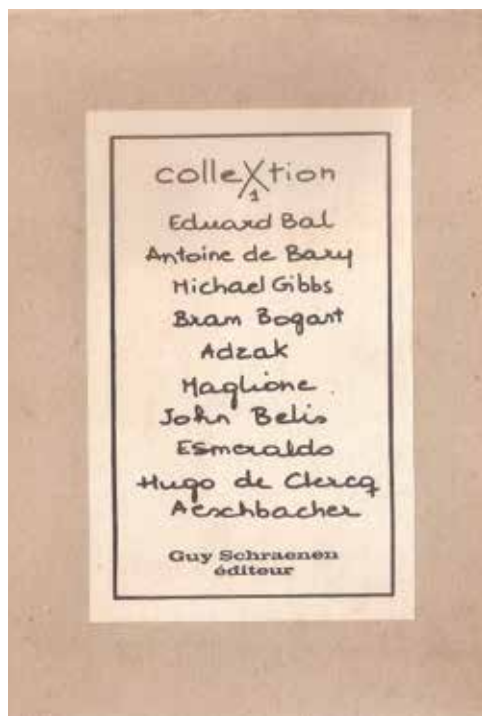
In 1999, I sold my collection and archive to the Neues Museum Weserburg in Bremen, Germany. As soon as the deal was concretized, I booked a hotel room for Mirtha in Paris, where I had settled in the meantime, bought plane tickets from and to Buenos Aires and mailed them to her. My by-then-former wife Anne, with whom Mirtha had remained in contact and who was still living in Antwerp, proposed to meet her at Brussels Airport. We hadn't seen Mirtha for many, many years. But, as during our first encounter in 1974, our relations were immediately friendly and warm. Although Mirtha was a tormented soul who was often depressed and difficult to satisfy, her open laugh and her capacity to enjoy the present moment were unique. Many of the numerous photos I have chosen to illustrate this text testify to the rare moments we shared in between life's trials and tribulations.

Following this visit, we kept in more regular contact by telephone and we saw one another in places other than in Paris. In the early 2000s, for example, we travelled together to Bremen to visit the museum where I had set up the department A Museum in a Museum, devoted to artists' books, in which her works had been exhibited on several occasions and which houses many of them. After having wished to visit Mirtha for so many years, I finally travelled to Buenos Aires for a week to meet her in her home town, studio and living space. We had an enjoyable time and many animated discussions.

Our relationship continued until the day in 2012 when I received an unexpected message announcing her imminent death. I had not been aware of the desperate state of her health. I immediately mailed her a long letter to express my concern.







I reiterated my admiration for her work, manifesting my gratification that she had received increasing recognition during the last few years. Alas, my letter arrived too late. Mirtha will always be a significant part of my life. Her work remains, her recognition will grow.

*Collextion 1*, Guy Schraenen éditeur,  
Belgium, 1976  
10 publications by artists,  
printed pages in a box  
15.8 x 11 x 2.4 cm



# Intensive Work Sessions in Color and Form (1975–1981). Art as Vital Praxis by Lucía Cañada



Poster for the Primera Jornada del Color y de la Forma, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, July 4–6, 1975  
Black-and-white print on green paper  
40.5 x 30.5 cm

A long line of people are waiting for the elevator in the lobby of the Teatro San Martín. It's June 1976, the beginning of the South American winter, and it's cold in Buenos Aires. Just a few months ago, a military junta seized power and, outside the theater, terror and discipline are taking hold. Regardless of the harsh weather and the fact that the city is once again under military rule and in a state of siege, the people inside the theater wait calmly.

The many who already know what they will find on the ninth floor of the building smile; they remark on what they have done there on other occasions or the previous year. Others have been lured in by the poster—an invitation to turn the museum into “a great workshop of creative activities”; they still don't know what awaits them. There are those who have arrived at the recommendation of a friend; they might imagine what is going on up there when they see others coming down with freshly painted sheets of paper.

On the ninth floor, the Museo de Arte Moderno has been upended. Instead of works *to be seen* there are works *to be made*. The exhibition panels have been placed in a horizontal position to be used as work tables. Men and women, young and old, sit down wherever they find room and get to work. The atmosphere is calm and joyful, steeped in a sense of play and expressiveness. Some are smiling; others deeply concentrated. There are those who work alone and others together on joint projects. The coordinators explain how to use the materials and let participants get down to work; each person remains, making work, for as long as he or she wants. Pencils, inks, temperas, clay, and cutters are among the items that have been put out by the organizers so that everyone can *express him or herself freely*.

It may be cold in Buenos Aires, but here inside, at the second edition of the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma (Intensive Work Sessions in Color and Form), it's perfectly warm. The main aim is self-expression. It is a place to play, to model, to paint, to draw, to

make prints, to smooth surfaces, to cut out. “There are no good or bad, pretty or ugly works [here], there are just different ways of expressing yourself.”<sup>1</sup> Here, despite and in opposition to the disciplinary power of the de facto government, people have the sense that they are on “an island of expression,”<sup>2</sup> a sense of “freedom” is experienced by participants time and again.

This is not the first time that Mirtha Dermisache, and the taller de Acciones Creativas (Creative Actions Workshop) (tAC) that she coordinates, have organized an activity of this sort. As early as December 1974, they put together a “pilot experience” at the Galería Carmen Waugh, which they repeated as the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires—housed in the Teatro San Martín at the time—in July 1975. In 1976, they held the Jornadas twice more—the occasion described here in June and once again in September. There would be another edition in August 1977, one more in October 1979, and a final one in November 1981.<sup>3</sup>

What exactly were these “Jornadas” that—in a context of political violence, persecution, and censorship—advocated free graphic expression, creativity, and collective work? Who participated in them and what exactly did they do? How were the sessions run? What was their purpose? And how did participants experience them?

### The historical context

On March 24, 1976, a dictatorial regime took power in Argentina. It would enact a systematic policy of intimidation, persecution, torture, and death. Civil liberties and constitutional rights were suspended throughout the country, and the government crackdown affected thousands. The armed forces were assigned the task of disciplining society in order to “reorganize” the nation in accordance with the values of God, country, and home. To that end, a planned and systematic criminal operation was devised; its vast infrastructure included clandestine detention centers. Politicians, union organizers and leaders, leftist Christians, intellectuals, young people, students, journalists, artists, educators, workers, and human rights activists were among those persecuted, kidnapped, tortured, and disappeared.<sup>4</sup>

Censorship soon beset the mass media. Indeed, on the very day of the coup, radio and television stations in Buenos Aires and other cities around the country were seized and control of them divided up between the different branches of the armed forces. Hundreds of books and songs were banned and many artists forced to leave the country.<sup>5</sup> It was in that context of persecution and censorship, but also of resistance and dissidence, that the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma continued to take place. In an interview with Mirtha

1 Text that appeared on the posters advertising the work sessions.

2 Words from an answer to one of the questions in a survey prepared by the organizers of the fifth edition of the work sessions and handed out to participants. See the Mirtha Dermisache Archive (AMD).

3 The first edition took place from July 4 to July 6, 1975, and the second from June 15 to June 19, 1976; both were held at the Museo de Arte Moderno, located in the Teatro San Martín at the time. Three months later, the third edition was held from September 7 to September 11, and from September 14 to September 18, 1976, at the Museo de Artes Visuales (an institution that brought together the Museo de Arte Moderno and the Museo Sívori). The fourth edition was held almost one year later, from August 3 to August 7 and from August 9 to August 13, 1977, once again at the Museo de Arte Moderno. The fifth edition took place from October 3 to October 14, 1979. This time, the location was the Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori, housed in the Teatro San Martín. Over two years went by before the sixth and final edition was held (November 12 to November 15, November 19 to November 22, and November 26 to November 29, 1981) at the same museum, which by that time was housed in the then recently opened Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires (now the Centro Cultural Recoleta).

4 While 1976 witnessed the beginning of the systematic implementation of state terrorism on a national scale and with an unprecedented level of organization and planning, recent historiography agrees that, by 1975, what would gain in intensity after March 1976 was already underway (Calveiro, Pilar, *Poder y desaparición. Campos de concentración en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Colihue, 1998; Pontoriero, E., “En torno a los orígenes del terror de Estado en la Argentina de la década del setenta: cuándo, cómo y por qué los militares decidieron el exterminio clandestino,” *Papeles de Trabajo* magazine, vol. 10, no. 17, 2016, pp. 30–50). For that reason, without ignoring the changes that the military coup brought, I consider the years from 1975 to 1981 a single period.

5 Judith Gociol and Hernán Invernizzi argue that, in addition to a mechanism organized to disappear bodies, a complex infrastructure to control culture and education was put in place, one that entailed censorship, analysis of intelligence, lawyers, intellectuals and academics, editorial projects, decrees, court rulings, budgets, offices... See Gociol, Judith and Invernizzi, Hernán, *Un golpe a los libros. Represión a la cultura durante la última dictadura militar*, Buenos Aires, EUDEBA, 2002, p. 23.





"Coexistence project. Fine-tipped marker on paper technique," Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires (Museo Sívori), Buenos Aires, November 1981

<sup>6</sup> Rimmaudo, Annalisa and Lamoni, Giulia, "Entrevista a Mirtha Dermisache," in *Mirtha Dermisache. Publicaciones y dispositivos editoriales* (exh. cat.), Buenos Aires, Pabellón de las Bellas Artes de la Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina, 2011, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Leonor Cantarelli by the author, October 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Group of artists formed in 1971 that revolved around the Centro de Arte y Comunicación. While its members varied over the years, the Grupo de los Trece included Jacques Bedel, Jorge Glusberg, Gregorio Dujovny, Carlos Ginzburg, Jorge González Mir, Leopoldo Maler, Vicente Marotta, Luis Pazos, Alberto Pellegrino, Juan Carlos Romero, Julio Teich, Horacio Zabala, Luis Benedit, and Víctor Grippo.

<sup>9</sup> *Arte Informa*, year 2, no. 7, July 1971, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Rimmaudo, Annalisa and Lamoni, Giulia, op. cit., p. 14.

Dermisache by Annalisa Rimmaudo and Giulia Lamoni, the artist explained that "It was not easy to hold those public work sessions in political contexts of censorship, of crackdown on social expression, and of repression."<sup>6</sup> A number of different testimonies have stated that the SIDE, the Argentine Secretariat of Intelligence, had a list of the names of the coordinators; Dermisache herself was interrogated before the last edition of the work sessions. The production of political graffiti was also prohibited in the mural area of the venue where events took place, and if any such work was produced the coordinators had to cover it up. A member of the tAC, one of the organizers of and collaborators with the work sessions, a personal friend of the artist, and the current custodian of the Mirtha Dermisache Archive (AMD), Leonor Cantarelli, explains that "if anything against the dictatorship, anything in any way related to politics, appeared on those walls, we would take it down at lightning speed ... and paint over it."<sup>7</sup>

### Precedents

A newspaper, a letter, a book—those were the formats that, in the early seventies, Mirtha Dermisache chose for works featured in shows at the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC). Those early formats partook of two things that would be constants throughout her production: emphasis on expression and the idea of an art for everyone.

From 1970 to 1976, Dermisache participated in different CAyC initiatives, exhibiting her work in Argentina and in Europe. Rather than form part of the Grupo de los Trece,<sup>8</sup> she decided to participate erratically as a guest artist. In 1971, she took part in the show *Arte de sistemas I* presenting five original manuscript books (produced in 1967, 1968, 1969, and 1970) and fourteen letters (produced in 1970). Regarding her work, she said at that time, "I am not trying to say anything. [The work] becomes meaningful when the individual who engages it expresses himself through it."<sup>9</sup> In 1972, she was featured in the show *Arte de sistemas II* held at the Museo de Arte Moderno. This time, she published and exhibited her *Diario 1* [Newspaper 1] (1972). On the choice of the book format, the artist stated:

From the beginning, I intended to create books. My first job was as a bookmaker ... [As a book], the work is accessible to anyone who wants to buy it, or it might be in a library where anyone can look through it. That's important to me. For that reason, the printing is essential—it keeps it from being isolated as a unique work of art. It's important to enabling the work to go everywhere.... What matters is that it reach people who wouldn't be able to buy the original.<sup>10</sup>

The idea of an art accessible to everyone was one of Dermisache's chief concerns throughout her lifetime. In all of her oeuvre, there is an intention to place the audience at center stage, to make it an active subject before production that was—for that very reason—an object to be handled and interpreted in many ways. That, in turn, would enable men and women to express themselves (her second concern)—an act that would “bring into the outer world that which we carry in our inner world.”<sup>11</sup> From early on, Dermisache's work asks the audience to touch, to handle, to interpret, to give meaning. In order to delve into the experiences the artist proposed, it was necessary to perform an action.

### Creative Actions Workshop

The year is 1971. In her home, Mirtha proposes to a group of adults that they play with color, lose themselves in time, and create freely—overcoming the fear of the blank page. After explaining to them how to use the materials, she lets them go at it. Music plays in the background. Their sole task is to experiment, to make shapes, to get their hands dirty, to test things out, to cut, to paste, to paint, to draw, to take pleasure. Thus, the taller de Acciones Creativas, one of Dermisache's most important projects, was born.

This space for artistic experimentation began as a private project run out of the artist's home before moving to its own location. Until the tAC was started, Dermisache had divided her time between the production of her own artwork and teaching art at grade schools. It was on the basis of that prior teaching experience that she came up with the idea of a new method for teaching art grounded on the development of creativity rather than of technical skills.

When they arrived at the tAC each week, students would find a space that had been set up for them to work in. A different technique was explained at each class, and all of the materials needed made available (from sponges, clay, and canvas to benzene, cornstarch, wax pencils, and carving tools). Dermisache not only made sure that everything needed was there and laid out in suitable fashion, but also generated an atmosphere she considered conducive to work. To that end, she decided what music would be played at each session, how to arrange the space, what assignments participants should do, and even when everyone should be silent. She gave few instructions and used phrases like “Revel in color” and “Don't worry about the outcome—you have your whole life for that. Now, experiment.”<sup>12</sup>

The classes were weekly and there was no set beginning or finishing time—sometimes people kept working until dawn. Once a week, an open or free studio was in operation from seven



Letterhead of the “taller de Acciones Creativas. Mirtha Dermisache & otros,” ca. 1978  
Color print on paper

11 Mirtha Dermisache, undated manuscript, available in the AMD.

12 Materials from the AMD.



Workshop open to the public, free of charge,  
that became the pilot experience for the  
Jornadas del Color y de la Forma,  
Carmen Waugh gallery, Buenos Aires,  
December 1974

"Aniline printing technique," Sextas Jornadas  
del Color y de la Forma, Centro Cultural Ciudad  
de Buenos Aires (Museo Sívori), Buenos Aires,  
November 1981

13 Manuscript in the AMD.  
Underlined in the original.

in the evening until two in the morning; anyone who had ever participated in the tAC could take part in the workshop for all or part of that time. The sessions, which were run by a coordinator and an assistant, were for groups of no more than fifteen persons. Most of the participants were young adults between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five.

One of the tAC's underlying ideas was that adults did not need systematic training in order to express themselves graphically; what was required was getting in touch with what they had *inside* in order to produce, without paying much attention to what was *happening on the sheet of paper*. What mattered was not the final product, how beautiful or meaningful it was, but rather the *creative process* and the *lived experience*. The aim of the tAC was not to train artists, but to generate a space in which to develop *creative and expressive ability* by means of artistic techniques. That's why, instead of teaching subjects like art history, composition, or theory, the tAC conveyed techniques that would allow students to use the materials available. In the words of the artist herself, "[What matters is] the act of expression, bringing the inner state into the outer state. Action is what turns one state into another ... For some reason, we feel the need to externalize that inner world."<sup>13</sup>

The tAC operated, if intermittently, from 1971 until the end of Mirtha's life. It was housed at three different physical locations at different times (known as "Juncal," "Posadas," and "Cerviño" for the names of the streets where the workshop was situated), and its coordinators changed many times. Many different individuals and groups attended at one time or another, some of them for years and years, others for just a few months. Mirtha was always at the center of the project. The tAC was not only her studio, but also the materialization of her way of understanding art, an art that—as described above—should, in her view, be available to everyone as a tool of expression and, therefore, of transformation for each subject, an art that was irremediably bound to life.

### Intensive Work Sessions in Color and Form

Large tables with materials await participants in the work sessions. At first, there is nothing *to see*. Gradually, however, the walls, floor, and corners of the space will be covered with finished works set out to dry or, provided their makers have not taken them home, to be viewed in a makeshift exhibition. Everything starts all over again the next day. Action, making, is at the center of the scene—indeed, it is in that collective making that the work sessions take on color and come to life, become an artistic fact. That act of carving an enormous brick wall, of modeling a giant piece of clay, or of drawing on a small piece of paper is where the work sessions take shape.

**2<sup>da</sup>. JORNADAS DEL COLOR Y DE LA FORMA**

**CON LA PARTICIPACION DEL PUBLICO**  
15, 16, 17, 18 Y 19 DE JUNIO DE 18 A 20.30 HS.

**El museo se transforma en un gran taller de acciones creativas, solo para adultos.**

**ENTRADA LIBRE**

**MUSEO DE ARTE MODERNO**  
CORRIENTES 1530  
9°. Pso - BUENOS AIRES

<b>COORDINADORES</b> Jorge Luis Gioiosa Liliana Schwartz Silvia Vallero Pepita López Susana Muñiz Martha Szwarcvich María Dávila Ada Marbach Adriana Gutiérrez V. Omar Álvarez Alisa Mañón Sandra Gioiosa Isabel Corvi Ana María E. De Goum	<b>ASISTENTES</b> Fernando R. Ponce de León Raúl Tamar Joaquín Moré Luz Balón Cristina Molero Angela Bonachon María Inés de Luca Kuki Schvartz Eva Ferrer Paloma Miro Eliana Palote María Rosa Elorza Marcelo Gorbunov Gabriel Gantier	<b>ASISTENTES</b> Oswaldo Otero Andrés Humilde	<b>SUPERVISION GENERAL</b> Susana Fortunato	<b>PROYECTO Y DIRECCION</b> Mirtha Dermisache
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**3<sup>ra</sup>. JORNADAS DEL COLOR Y DE LA FORMA**

**CON LA PARTICIPACION DEL PUBLICO**  
7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17 y 18 de Septiembre de 18.15 a 20.30 Hs.

**El museo se transforma en un gran taller de acciones creativas, solo para adultos.**

**MUSEO DE ARTES VISUALES**  
(EX MUSEO DE ARTE MODERNO)  
CORRIENTES 1530  
8°. Pso - BUENOS AIRES

<b>COORDINADORES</b> Martha Szwarcvich Jorge Luis Gioiosa Liliana Schwartz Silvia Vallero Pepita López Susana Muñiz Isabel Duggan Omar Álvarez Alisa Mañón Sandra Gioiosa Isabel Corvi Ana M. Ruiz de Goum Fernando R. Ponce de León Luz Balón Cristina Molero Angela Bonachon Kuki Schvartz	<b>ASISTENTES</b> Martha Szwarcvich Eliana Palote Leonora Contarelli Olga Marcondes Carlos Lazzatti Ernesto De Castro Claudia Viviani Rosa Jelin María Dávila Maggie Tassone Eva Ferrer Cecilia Bultrini Joaquín Moré María Inés de Luca Julia Otero María Rosa Elorza Marcelo Gorbunov Gabriel Gantier	<b>ASISTENTE DE SUPERVISION</b> Oswaldo Otero	<b>DOCUMENTACION FILMICA</b> Claudio Colli	<b>SUPERVISION GENERAL</b> Susana Fortunato	<b>PROYECTO Y DIRECCION</b> Mirtha Dermisache
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**PRIMERAS JORNADAS DEL COLOR Y DE LA FORMA**

**9, 10, 11, 12 y 13 de enero**

**PARTICIPACION DEL PUBLICO EN UN GRAN TALLER DE ACCIONES CREATIVAS**

**SOLO PARA ADULTOS**

**20.30 a 23.30 hs.**

**CENTRO DE ARTE DI TULLIO (anexo)**  
AVDA. MITRE 458 - S.C. DE BARILOCHE

**PROYECTO Y DIRECCION**  
MIRTHA DERMISACHE

**SUPERVISION GENERAL**  
JUAN MARCHESI

**REALIZACION: TALLER DE ACCIONES CREATIVAS**

**SE AGRADECE LA COLABORACION DE:**  
DIRECCION DE CULTURA Y DIRECCION DE TURISMO DE LA MUNICIPALIDAD DE SAN CARLOS DE BARILOCHE  
DI TULLIO S.A.

Top left  
Poster for the Segundas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, June 15–19, 1976

Top right  
Poster for the Terceras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Museo de Artes Visuales, Buenos Aires, September 7–11 and 14–18, 1976

Bottom  
Poster for the Primeras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro de Arte Di Tullio (annex), San Carlos de Bariloche, Río Negro, January 9–13, 1980



There is no distinction between audience and work, between artists and non-artists. There are no good or poor works. This is a place where everyone can graphically experiment for a while, everyone can use artistic techniques as tools for free self-expression.

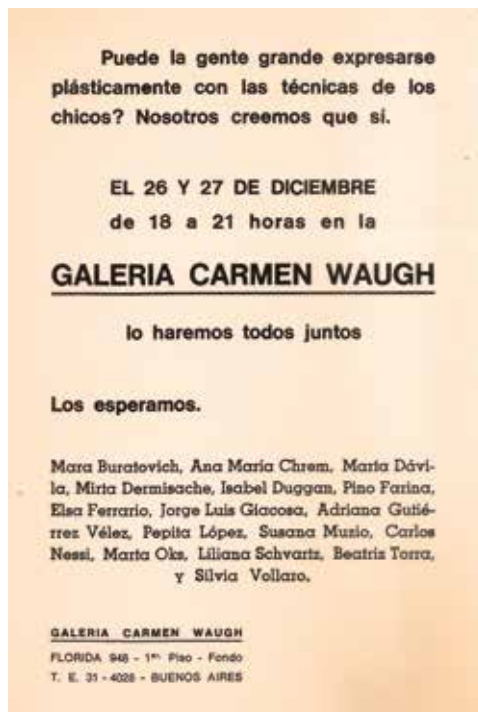
According to Jorge Luis Giacosa—a participant in the tAC and one of the coordinators and organizers of the work sessions—it was in 1974 that the Galería Carmen Waugh in Buenos Aires invited participants in the tAC to hold an end-of-the-year show there. The gallery had opened in 1969 and, after the Instituto Di Tella was shut down in 1970, it had become a venue for the Argentine avant-garde. After much debate, the group decided that the “show” format did not represent the tAC’s spirit. True to the idea that all adults should have access to *free graphic expression*, they decided to hold a work session that was open to the public free of charge on December 26 and 27, 1974.

That experience, which the organizers called a “pilot,” was a broader public version of the tAC. In it, the coordinators explained different artistic techniques and the participants created freely as individuals, or as groups and in combinations, producing joint works. The posters announcing the event read: “Can grown-ups express themselves using the techniques children use? We believe they can. We will do it all together.”

The event was such a success that it was repeated the following year; the dynamic was the same, but this time the name was Jornadas del Color y de la Forma. It would be the first of six editions of the Jornadas held in Buenos Aires from 1975 to 1981; each year, the event would grow in terms of number of days, of coordinators, and of participants, as well as the variety of techniques available.

The Jornadas were open to all adults free of charge (depending on the edition, the cutoff age was fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen). They were for adults only because the organizers believed that children already had access to graphic expression at schools. Participants varied greatly in terms of age, social class, and profession.

Even though the Jornadas were a private initiative that did not receive any public funding, all of its editions were held in cultural venues run by the Buenos Aires city government. The members of the tAC were the ones who organized and managed the Jornadas; not only did they not get paid for their work, but they also saw to procuring the donations of the materials required, from paint and paper to bleach and rags. The team would meet for a number of months before the Jornadas took place to organize outreach, to plan the structure of each work table, to get the materials, and to determine how the space—and each table—would be laid out. For months, they would send letters to companies soliciting



Poster for the first pilot of the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, open to the public free of charge, Carmen Waugh gallery, Buenos Aires, December 26 and 27, 1974

donations, to the media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations) for the sake of outreach, and even to art schools, asking for support.

Posters invited the public to turn the museum into “a large workshop of creative activities for adults.”<sup>14</sup> There was no explanation of what exact activities the workshop entailed or who was involved in it. The only information provided was that it was a workshop, that is, a space of production. The people who attended after work, then, did not really know what they were going to find.

The dynamic at the Jornadas was similar to the dynamic at the tAC, but the scale was larger. Large work tables with materials used for different media (color monotype, black-and-white monotype, tempera painting, individual or joint clay modeling, carving in insulated brick, mural painting, and others) were set up in the museum’s gallery. At each table there were coordinators (members of the tAC) who explained how to use the materials and replaced them should they be used up. They provided no instruction regarding style, form, or composition, and passed no judgment on the quality of the work produced. According to *La Actualidad en el Arte* magazine, the coordinator’s role was “to act as a guide, but not to interfere on aesthetic questions or to impose a scale of values or even of colors.”<sup>15</sup>

People could stay for as long as they felt like; they could change table (and, hence, technique), or just look on; they could either leave or take home what they had produced. Mirtha Dermisache described the dynamic as follows: “We give [participants] the work tools and materials but no indication of an aesthetic nature: the material is there, act on it.”<sup>16</sup>

On an artistic level, the workshop combined disruptive and traditional elements. On the one hand, it aimed to defy the separation between viewer and work and to undermine the museum space by turning it into workshop or studio—a common practice among the avant-garde in the sixties and early seventies. On the other, the tools provided were largely those associated with traditional and basic artistic techniques (tempera for painting, clay for modeling).

In a context where visual artists were returning to their studios to work alone and in traditional formats like easel painting,<sup>17</sup> Dermisache proposed a collective practice in the public space; she attempted to disrupt art’s commonplaces like beauty. The Jornadas evidence her concern with an art in which everyone plays a central role, an art that is a tool of expression.

In many interviews with Dermisache, and in the non-public documents now housed in her archive, the idea that expression is an innate need felt by all men and women—even if that need might be “latent,” “hidden” and/or “held back”—is recurring.<sup>18</sup>



Posters for the Cuartas (1977), Quintas (1979), and Sextas (1981) Jornadas del Color y de la Forma

<sup>14</sup> Poster available in the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires Archive.

<sup>15</sup> *La Actualidad en el Arte*, October 1979, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Clarín* newspaper, January 24, 1980, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> The year 1976 marked a change in the course of Argentine art history. As Longoni points out, in the previous years a group of visual artists had strategically returned to museums and galleries to voice, from there, a condemnation of the situation the country was experiencing. That tactic was abandoned in the days before and after the military coup, when many artists sought refuge in easel painting, where they could “gradually articulate a discourse capable of attesting to the terror” (Longoni, Ana, *Vanguardia y revolución. Arte e izquierdas en la Argentina de los sesenta-setenta*, Buenos Aires, Ariel, 2014, p. 275).



“Group work in clay technique,” Primeras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro de Arte Di Tullio (annex), San Carlos de Bariloche, Río Negro, January 1980

<sup>18</sup> It is important to clarify that the organizers of the work sessions were not referring to the conditions imposed by the dictatorship (indeed, they formulated their discourse prior to the coup), but rather to a modality of adult experience tied fundamentally to the rational and to the way art was taught in schools. The visual arts were, from the work sessions’ perspective, a tool that would enable the individual to reach the greater end of self-expression and emancipation.

<sup>19</sup> Poster available in the Centro de Documentación, Investigación y Publicaciones, Centro Cultural Recoleta.

<sup>20</sup> Longoni, Ana, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> In an interview by the author, October 2015.

<sup>22</sup> *La Opinión*, no. 13, 1976, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Propuesta*, November 1979.

<sup>24</sup> *Clarín* newspaper, January 24, 1980, p. 4.

Dermisache called on us “to release the world of forms locked inside and to recognize ourselves in them,” “to extend our inner gesture in the work tool. What happens on the page does not matter; what matters is what happens within us.”<sup>19</sup>

If that discourse, with its notion of “liberating the internal gesture,” is compared to the discourse of the avant-garde of the period (the early seventies), it seems conservative and traditional. Avant-garde art was, at that moment, largely at the service of pressing political circumstances, and one of its basic functions was to denounce the violence the state was unleashing on the country. In moments of intense radicalization, some artists gave up producing art altogether to focus instead on their activism only to resume production after the coup (one example would be Juan Pablo Renzi).<sup>20</sup> Regardless, in relation to the context in which it was produced—mainly, the dictatorship and the year before the coup, when state terrorism was already a fact of life—the discourse surrounding the Jornadas takes on new and different meanings.

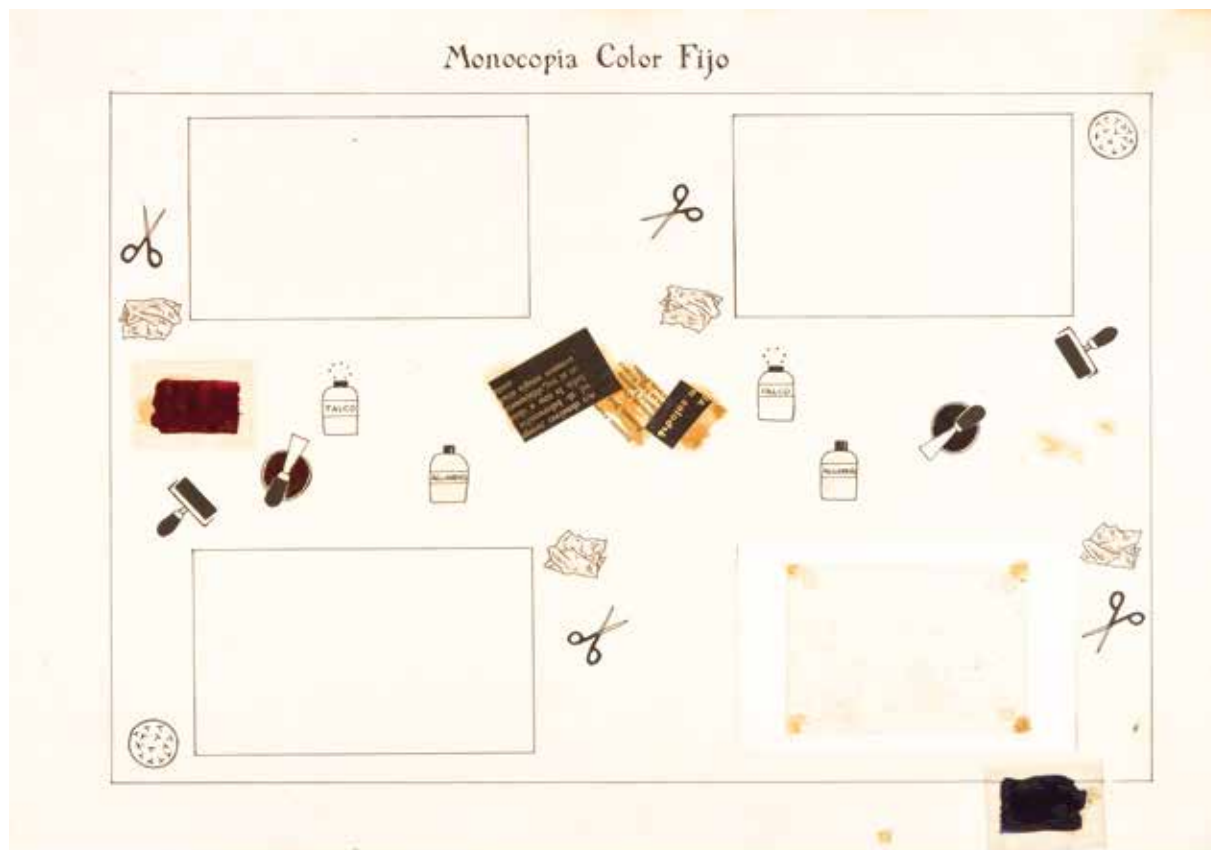
Along those lines, Jorge Luis Giacosa states:

We were really an island of freedom; it was that [the military authorities] didn’t realize it. We had to be very careful what we did ... when we made a poster, for example. [We had to consider] who wanted to be named and who didn’t, because each of us had to present ID and a lot of people who helped a great deal did not want to be mentioned; besides, no one cared about getting credit. We were all behind the idea ... that the revolution was exactly what was happening there.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the context acts on artistic practice, changing and re-signifying it: creating “an island of freedom” was, at that time, a political act.

According to an array of media, the various editions of the event were well attended. One article on the third edition of the Jornadas published in *La Opinión* magazine reported: “The line [to get in] started at the elevator, and extended out the door and out into the street.”<sup>22</sup> Writing on the fifth edition of the Jornadas for *Propuesta* magazine, Leonor Cantarelli asserted that there were around five hundred people working at the same time, most of them young people; at times, there was a line to get in.<sup>23</sup> Rodolfo Arze stated that some eight thousand people “from different social and professional milieus”<sup>24</sup> participated in that edition. Remarks from the participating public included:

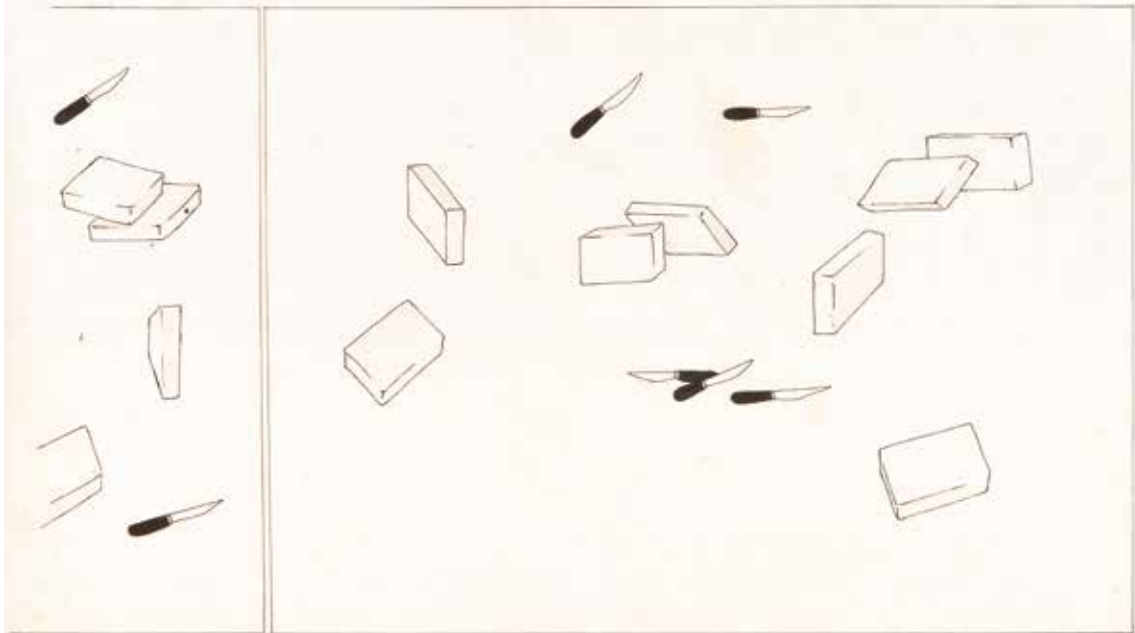
... the elevator was always full, with teenagers as well as people over the age of seventy ... The festive atmosphere was



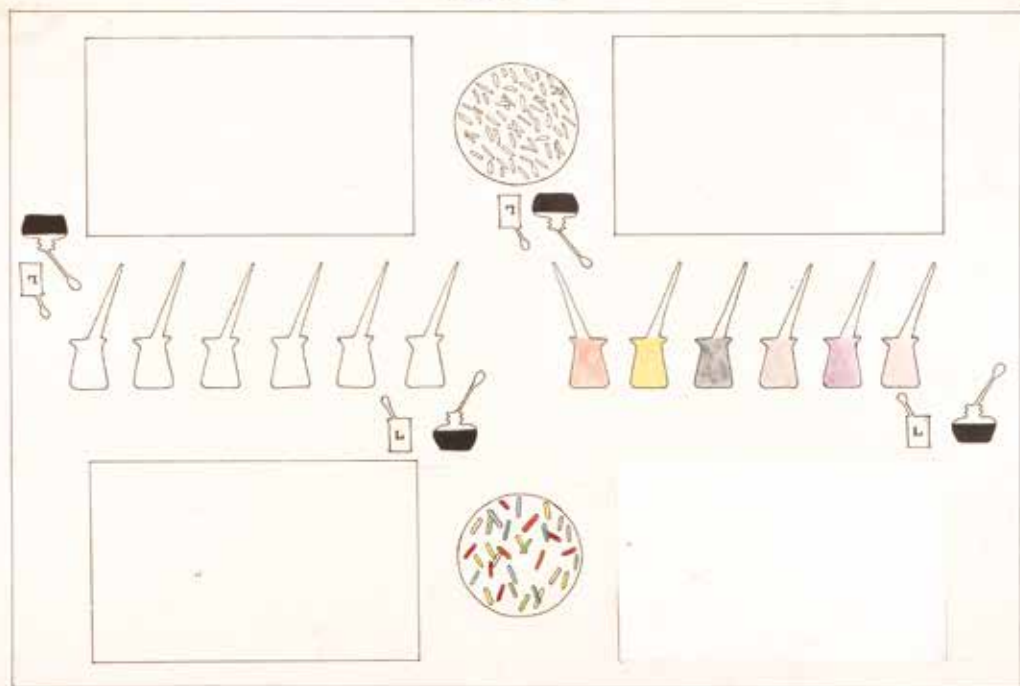
Illustrated instructions for putting together the work tables for the Jornadas.  
 Techniques: single-color monotype, soap engraving, aniline printing  
 Unique copies on laminated cardboard  
 34.8 x 49 cm

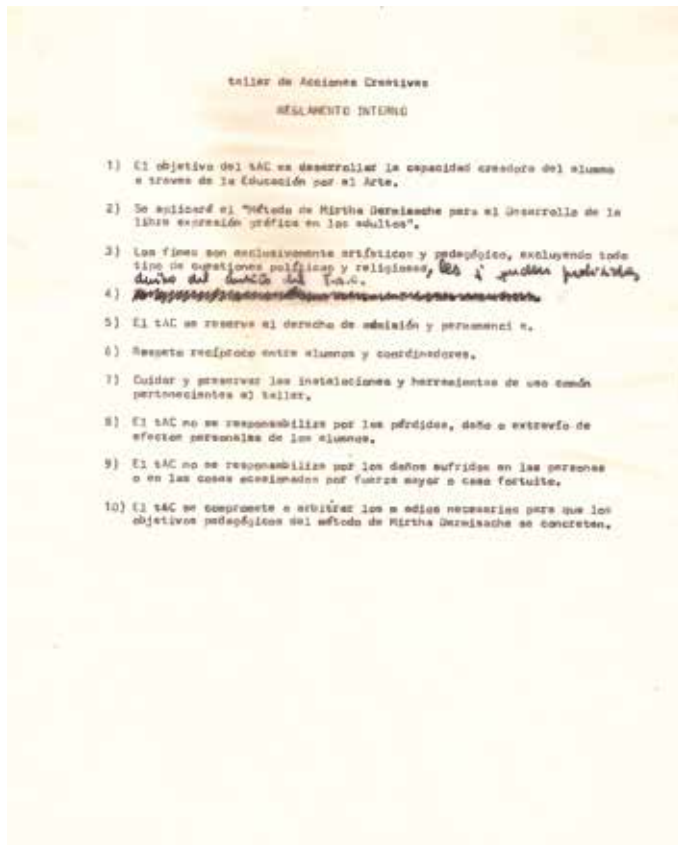


## Tallado en jabón



## Anilinas





Top left  
"Reglamento interno" of the tAC, typewritten, with corrections handwritten by Leonor Cantarelli, original, ca. 1978-1979

1983

(MARCAR CON UNA CRUZ LO QUE CORRESPONDA)

1 - Participó en otras oportunidades en las "Jornadas del Color y de la Forma"?

SI ☐ NO ☒ CUANTAS VECES ☐

2 - Ha tenido anteriormente acceso a la expresión gráfica?

SI ☐ NO ☒

3 - A través de qué medios se enteró de las Jornadas?

AMIGOS ☐ MEDIOS DE DIFUSION { T.V. ☐

AFICHES ☒ RADIO ☐

t a c ☐ REVISTAS Y DIARIOS ☐

OTRO ..... (Especificar)

4 - ¿Dónde reside habitualmente?

CAPITAL ☒ BARRIO: *Cobarruto*

GRAN BUENOS AIRES ☐ LOCALIDAD: .....

INTERIOR PAIS ☐ PROVINCIA: .....

EXTERIOR ☐ PAIS: .....

5 - ¿Qué actividad desempeña? (Marque la ocupación principal)

EMPLEADO ☐ ARTESANO ☐ AMA DE CASA ☐

DOCENTE ☐ OBRERO ☐ JUBILADO ☐

PROFESIONAL ☒ TECNICO ☐ OTRO: .....

COMERCIANTE ☐ ESTUDIANTE ☐ (especificar)

6 - Indique el sexo y el grupo de edad a que pertenece

VARON ☐ MUJER ☒

16 - 19 años ☐ 40 - 49 años ☐

20 - 29 años ☒ 50 - más años ☐

30 - 39 años ☐

Top right  
Participants working at the tAC, ca. 1979

Bottom  
Questionnaire handed out at the Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Buenos Aires, 1981



"Mural painting technique," Primeras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro de Arte Di Tullio (annex), San Carlos de Bariloche, Río Negro, January 1980

25 *Expreso Imaginario*, November 1979, p. 18.

26 *La Opinión*, no. 13, 1976, p. 58.

27 Comments from the assistants to the fifth and sixth editions. Available at the AMD. Underlined in the original.

reminiscent of old rock concerts (B.A. Rock, for example), but here there were no viewers or actors.<sup>25</sup>

... the nicest part was to see the looks of concentration on people's faces, and—in some cases—the happy faces of those getting down to work after the workday.<sup>26</sup>

A useful means to recover what we lose when we become adults, that is, the ability to play without competing, which allows us to express ourselves freely without fear of what others will think. Important as a place to get together and share.

... [The Jornadas] awaken life and happiness; like good music, they take me away to feel something truly beautiful.

A moment to get away from it all through artistic expression. For me, it was beautiful: something like an antidote to all the paralyzing "should nots".<sup>27</sup>

Expressions like "vital happiness," "festive atmosphere," "pleasure in doing," "happy face," and "life awakening" appear throughout newspaper and magazine articles, as well as participants' comments, which attest to an atmosphere clearly different from the one reigning in the country at the time. Indeed, those same words and images appear today in conversations with people who attended the Jornadas, which are often described as a "space of freedom" where "you could forget about what was happening outside," a space in which to act and create without a constant censoring vision, in which to express yourself fearlessly, in which to play and to throw your body into something without danger.

### Possible outgrowths

After the sixth edition of the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, the idea of holding a seventh edition the next year began to circulate. There are accounts of its organization, and of the possible availability of the Museo de Arte Moderno to house the event. Regardless, the seventh edition never took place, due to the enormous effort required as well as a lack of funding.

There were, however, other smaller (or less ambitious) projects that carried on the spirit of the Jornadas. Three-day events for teenagers, "color and form birthday parties" for children, and activities at private companies evidence the same intention to bring art to new spaces in new ways.

In January 1980, a work session was held in the city of Bariloche as part of an attempt to reproduce the prior experience in Buenos

Aires in other places. A group of members of the tAC traveled from Buenos Aires to that city in Patagonia in order to train local coordinators. Another outgrowth of these experiences were projects based on a summation method realized both in the context of the tAC and beyond. The method, which consisted of continuing the work someone else had begun, was used for different techniques from the beginning of the tAC experience; other projects were geared to the summation method from the beginning, among them two books (one produced in 1998 and the other in 1999) for which different members of the tAC created, at Dermisache's request, one or two pages that the artist then arranged and brought together in book form. Similarly, students at the tAC produced a summation postcard project.

Starting in 2004, Dermisache, along with Florent Fajole, created a series of publishing devices with which the public could give shape to productions—move and assemble them, make them their own. A series of tables with materials for the audience to handle, and thus appropriate the work, is reminiscent of the format chosen by Dermisache years earlier for her Jornadas. Starting at that time, she began questioning the role of the audience as mere viewer, of the original as single and marketable copy, of the author as sole creator, and of the museum as consecrated space for the exhibition and preservation of work, that is, the concerns that would prove constants throughout her work.

While the Jornadas did not continue as such, then, their method (and, with it, their animating ideas) did develop and proliferate—as the fact that the tAC continued to exist until the time of the artist's death attests.

### **By way of a conclusion**

Mirtha Dermisache's artistic project took shape in the early seventies, when she was still very young, and continued until the time of her death. But that project was not limited to her own experience; it affected as well the lives of many others who spent time in her studio or took part in these work sessions. Notwithstanding, her influence has yet to be duly studied or valorized by art history.

Like the tAC and her summation projects, the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma evidence a way of understanding art that cannot be extricated from vital praxis. An art available to anyone, an art capable of expressing an inner world, an art that requires no specialized knowledge to be understood. While Dermisache never claimed that we could all be artists, she did think that we could all have access to art—and not merely through looking, but also through taking action.



Participants filling out questionnaire, Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires (Museo Sívori), Buenos Aires, November 1981

Data entry of questionnaires, Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires (Museo Sívori), Buenos Aires, November 1981



Signs at entrance, Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires (Museo Sívori), Buenos Aires, November 1981

From 1975 to 1981, political violence in Argentina was relentless, even reaching the extremes of persecution, torture, and death. In that context, artists used art as a means of condemnation—first (before 1976) openly and later (after the military coup) with metaphors and euphemisms. What Mirtha Dermisache proposed, though, was something else. She didn't speak out against censorship or persecution explicitly, though she had been a victim of both. What she did, rather, in that context of the discipline and control of bodies and of ideas, was to offer a space to play, to unwind, to express oneself graphically. Perhaps because of that context, it was a space in which, as Calveiro put it, to feel "relief, to restructure oneself, and to resist." In a context of greater and greater individualism, of betrayal, and of mistrust of the other, Dermisache formulated a collective proposal where people could sit down together, work with or next to someone else, further that person's work and make it one's own, or leave it be knowing that someone else would pick up on it. Dermisache extended an invitation to conceive creative actions, to play with color, to connect to a vital praxis. That was her greatest political act, her bold wager, her avant-garde gesture.



# Methodology for Free Expression

## by Agustín Pérez Rubio



Mirtha Dermisache with her *Libro N° 1*, 1967  
Buenos Aires, 1967

1 Cozarinsky, Edgardo, “Un grado cero de la escritura,” *Panorama*, Buenos Aires, year VII, no. 156, April 1970, p. 51. This passage is cited in the in the chronology section of this publication, p. 261.

2 Unpublished typescript, March 1973. AMD.

### Reverse learning process

In an early interview with Edgardo Cozarinsky, Mirtha Dermisache explained how she had started making graphisms. It was, according to the artist, almost as if she had stumbled on it by chance, out of the need to express herself; an unrestrained impulse gave way to a sort of babbling.<sup>1</sup> Mirtha sensed that she was beginning a process, a methodology, that would lead to the formation of quasi-linguistic signs—a language of sorts that eluded logos. As psychoanalyst Diego García Reinoso wrote in his “Prólogo para un libro de Mirtha Dermisache,” after her first six years of work as an artist:

Mirtha Dermisache’s writing took shape as staunch rebellion against the hegemony of logos, not only as the “word” but also as all the outgrowths of “reason,” “intelligence,” “universal reason,” and “law of all things.”<sup>2</sup>

From the start, a duality seems to run through Dermisache’s work: it searches for creative freedom while also respecting a set of rules and discipline. That duality would be a constant throughout the entire corpus of her production, starting in 1967 until the time of her death. It was enmeshed in her pedagogical work, understood as experiment in a reversal of learning: “unlearning” certain ideas that hinder free creative expression. That notion would enrich all facets of the artist’s work: her graphisms; her approach to the talleres de Acciones Creativas (Creative Actions Workshops) (tAC) and the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma (Intensive Work Sessions in Color and Form); the freedom with which she tackled exhibition devices at the end of her career in her work with her last editor, Florent Fajole. Indeed, everything she did was informed by the same search for free expression.

It is interesting, then, to compare two phrases uttered by the artist herself. In 1970, when she was first getting her start, she said, regarding one of her first books, “It’s a product; I want it to be independent of my person.”<sup>3</sup> And, less than two months before the artist died, in one of her final interviews, she stated, regarding the techniques used at the tAC and the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma:

3 Cozarinsky, Edgardo, op. cit.

For me, [those experiences] were important to my life and to my work—which are one and the same ... Actually, I’m not saying a thing, not with the graphisms or with the periodicals that you have seen... The reading is in the hands of the one who picks it up—that is the expression ... whether in a studio or beyond it, in a museum, perhaps.<sup>4</sup>

4 Interview with Sofía Zavala, “En el terreno de la libertad,” November 2011. Audio archive housed in the AMD.

By that time, Mirtha had a vision of her life and work as a whole; she envisioned her artwork and her teaching experience—her work with others at the tAC and Jornadas—as part of a single process. And that is the point I would like to dwell on in order to better understand the course of her production.

In the same interview, she said, now speaking of her “method”:

I created a method elsewhere, in a place of total freedom, a method from the seventies. I’m not sure I would do it the same way today. Truth to tell, I am only now really discovering the method I developed. I came up with the guidelines, but now that I am calmer and working just a little, [I realize] that the action is what happens inside. It doesn’t matter if the work is good or bad, but to find ways of expressing oneself. And I discovered or developed a method in the terrain of expression. It wasn’t easy to get rid of the terminology I had learned, to learn to unlearn what was learned as language.<sup>5</sup>

5 Ibid.

The “language” that Mirtha is suggesting in that last phrase is the technical language of an artist’s work, notions like volume (in sculpture), space and balance on the page. For the artist, those notions must be unlearned in order to concentrate on the act of self-expression. What matters is “trying to express what you have inside; what happens on the page is entirely secondary.”

Since that “unlearning” is evident in her art and in her pedagogy—which are, after all, “one and the same”—this research into Dermisache’s work is based on the observation that, throughout her trajectory and in every aspect of her work, Mirtha applied the same method, and that method was a combination of discipline (her processes were often highly complex, rigorous, and even tedious) and creative freedom.





*Diario 1 Año 1* [Newspaper 1 Year 1], 1972  
Ink on paper  
47 x 36.3 cm  
Private collection

*Diario 1 Año 1* [Newspaper 1 Year 1],  
5th edition, 1972–1995  
Offset print on paper  
47 x 36.6 cm  
Private collection

<sup>6</sup> That was the case, for instance, with her famous *Diario* [Newspaper], which Mirtha gave to a printer in exchange for an edition; the original cover was lost.

Those contrasting aspects make themselves felt in both her asemic writings, where the reader is the one who ultimately produces the meaning of what has been written, and in the method of expression she started developing with her students in 1971 at the first tAC. From the beginning of her career, that driven pursuit of expression at once primary and regulated, a language that does not speak, but seems to speak, a language addressed to a reader who must find his or her own way of reading and singular experience (a meaning), formulates a relationship between her writings and the appeal to freedom in each and every person. And that was the case as well with the students at her workshops. It was at the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma that her method found its maximum expression; after years of work at the tAC and of personal and solitary toil before the sheet of paper, she was able to convey her relationship to techniques and to language more perfectly.

The manifold nature of her textual pieces is a fundamental part of that pursuit. Mirtha always said that what she was really interested in was the edition of her originals, that is, their existence as texts that circulate as broadly as possible to come into contact with others. It was for the sake of that democratic and anti-commercial idea of the work of art, where uniqueness was not what mattered, that she sometimes sacrificed original works so that they could be printed.<sup>6</sup>

But we must take one thing at a time: there are a number of facets of her career and production that, together, support our thesis.

### Creating structures between simulation and invention

In approaching Mirtha's legacy, there is evident vivacity in her early works, especially in her first major book—divided into what is now known as *Libro N° 1, 1967* [Book No. 1, 1967] and a bundle of loose sheets in her archive—and in her first texts. Those works make use of an array of colors and curved lines in expressions that, though within the writing format, are less rigorous and more akin, perhaps, to drawing.

Not long after, in the seventies, Mirtha decided to produce a whole series of textual devices with different typological characteristics (books, texts, letters, postcards, fragments of stories, comic strips, etc.) to facilitate an understanding of her work as writing. In some, she simulates words by using forms that look like our Roman/Latin alphabet (p. 194); in others, the “words” are more enigmatic, but the textual intention remains the same (there are distinguishable sentences, chapters in the case of the books, or even a narrative that progresses as the density of the graphic symbols increases just as a novel unfolds) (pp. 112–115).

Mr. Roland Barthes  
Esstimado Mr.

hace muy poco tiempo tuve su carta con:  
migo.

Meerito agradecerle y decirle que ello ha  
rido para mi el hecho más importante dentro  
de mi trabajo.

El Mr. Hugo Santiago le entregará un libro  
mio. La elección fue difícil. Ruego a Ud lo  
puede Es mi única auténtica forma de  
estar con Ud.

Lo saludo cordialmente



Militha Dominache / Bs As 5 de setiembre de 1971

Handwritten letter from MD to Roland Barthes,  
September 5, 1971

At the same time, Mirtha's personal notebooks, found in the Archive, give a behind-the-scenes look at the artist's creative process. It is here that she would doodle and scribble, and make up writings with countless graphic forms repeated as exercises time and again until she had gotten from them everything they had to give. She would later find ways to give clearer shape in the viewer's eye to ideas now honed.

If her works are studied along with her notes, a clear intention becomes patent: she was looking for a relationship between form and content. While the meaning of her writings may be indeterminable, their degree of semantic content greater or lesser, there is no doubt that Mirtha is writing.

### **From the illegible to the legible by way of the incomprehensible**

During the seventies, Dermisache made use of a device she called, simply, "texts" to produce different types of graphisms. *Illegible texts*, akin to continuous manuscripts, paved the way for another series, her *incomprehensible texts*, related, on a formal level, to mathematics, musical notation, and lists (she kept lists for everything: expenses, reminders, invoices, budgets), all of which are present as well in works like *Libro N° 5, 1972* [Book No. 5, 1972].

A third typology of texts—which the artist called *legible texts*—first appeared in her work in 1972. She only produced those texts for a brief period; she never spoke of them or wanted to exhibit them as works, but she did keep them amongst her papers along with the others. Shown for the first time in this exhibition, these *legible texts* provide us with clues to read Mirtha's work as a whole. They are drafts, works in progress, that helped her to exercise the gesture, the stroke, and to grasp the mechanisms at play in writing.<sup>7</sup>

While the artist's *texts* are categorized according to these three typologies, a number of them are midway between the incomprehensible and the legible, that is, they partake of traits of both: conventional formulas, words, or signs appear alongside others that are impossible to decipher. We see a plus sign, or what looks like a logarithm or equation, where the numbers have vanished and known symbols been replaced by invented ones; there might also be loose phrases and words like "boring," "I'm sorry," or "I don't know" (pp. 189, 192). There are also graphisms similar to the drawings yielded by the musical experiments she did with Fernando von Reichenbach and other composers at the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales (CLAEM) in 1971, of which some scrolls remain in the Archive. Some of these graphisms look like words stretched out over the width of the page; they could be read as images of the suggested words' sounds.

<sup>7</sup> The year before, Mirtha had received a cherished letter from semiologist Roland Barthes in which he used the term *illegible writings*. Their correspondence continued until the end of the seventies. Mirtha requested on many occasions that the theorist write a text for a publication on her work, but that never came to pass. Notwithstanding, the artist's exchange with Barthes was a watershed in her career; it greatly influenced her own vision of her work.

On one of these graphisms, the words “I hate bad words” seem to appear—but that could also be an illusion (pp. 190–191).

Within the *incomprehensible texts* category, and in the passage from the incomprehensible to the legible, another sort of work takes shape where the writing is legible insofar as letters from the Latin alphabet are used, but the meaning cannot be understood. There are, then, bits of phrases or words like the one in a footnote that says “hulk” along with other terms incomprehensible in Spanish (p. 193); continuous texts as if in narration (p. 194); and even what look like concrete poems that tie words together and let them go, joining and splitting them in what seems like a sphere or lettered geometrics (p. 195). It is striking that though the image of these works is like forms of poetry, they never veered definitively in that direction. A device called “poem” is not among the conventional structures that Mirtha used to present her work. Perhaps she thought, paradoxically, that poetry was an overly aesthetic or “artistic” form of writing on the visual level, and that it might confuse or condition how she wanted to express herself, mainly, as a writer. While some of the *illegible texts* could be poems in four phrases or have a structure akin to that of poetry, she never gave her writings that name or wanted to use the verse form.

Together, these works inevitably raise the question not only of meaning, but also of signified. We know, after all, that Mirtha wrote, that she enacted writing, its form, subjected at times to specific structures. And, though she always said that her graphisms don’t say anything, but that the viewer determines them, some of her works combine asemic graphism with semantically legible graphic markings. The text from which this publication takes its name entails one such combination. It begins with coiled, almost illegible graphic signs in which the phrase “because I write!” can then be made out. Towards the middle, we can, albeit with difficulty, discern the words “I write” muddled with incomprehensible scribbling. Those same words appear again, upright and resounding, towards the end, “But, my God, don’t you realize that I write?,” words followed by the artist’s signature (p. 197).

Those works also evidence Mirtha’s wrath at the art scene, at critics and the general response to work that did not easily find a place in the studies or processes of the day. In June 1971, she wrote, “For some months now, I’ve been thinking that I am far too alone in my work...” (p. 71).

The signature on the text with those words appears to have been written afterwards, though the text itself is earlier than others dated 1972–1973. It seems to have been written as a letter or journal entry, perhaps as a way to exorcise the reality in which she lived. Significantly, soon after having written those words Mirtha began work on the tAC; having collaborated with the

Desde hace unos meses pienso que en mi trabajo estoy demerariado sola.

Arees (a raíz de esto) pienso q' la meta (a pesar mio) será algo así como la locura. (O porq' no, le locura)

Ni siquiera leo, ni libros, ni diarios ni revistas. Ni estudio nada. Ni me reúno con grupos que "hagan algo", Cosa que parece ser muy importante en este momento en esta ciudad y

especialmente para la gente del "corto circuito".

Todos de alguna manera pertenecen a "algo". Y no, no es que no quiere, pero me siento no perteneciendo a nada en especial (ahora pienso q' de una forma, diría: casi lamentable, tengo una manera para de pertenecer a todo)

En el nivel del trabajo, Mis cosas son totalmente rechazas (en algunas excepciones) por los que escriben. Por supuesto, ya hace tiempo que ni mencio no el :- q'... escribo...

(Quizás algún otro día siga con todo esto.

61 Barrio Norte y alrededores. junio de 1971  
62 Por los q' no escriben también...

Top left and right  
Untitled (legible text), 1971  
Colored ink on paper, 2 pages

Bottom  
Handwritten letter from MD  
to the Grupo de los Trece,  
December 1971

No se cómo debe ser este grupo.

No se qué objetivos debe tener.

No sé porque lo integro.

Si se que estoy en él en condición expectante.

En caso de que los demás integrantes no acepten mi participación en estos términos, es decir que de alguna manera sea un elemento que tenga un rol negativo para el desarrollo del grupo, creo que sería conveniente retirarme.

En caso contrario continuará en él hasta sentir una incorporación efectiva al grupo.

MARTHA ZEROLICH

Bds. diciembre 1971



Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CayC) previously, she was now invited by Jorge Glusberg, the center's director, to form part of the Grupo de los Trece (she was the only female member). Amidst her correspondence is a letter replying to the invitation in which her response is not entirely clear: she appears to accept, but also expresses doubt about whether she was right for the group (p. 71). Indeed, ambiguity or contradiction of that sort was characteristic of Dermisache. On the one hand, she complained that her work was not given the attention it deserved but, on the other, she never seemed entirely comfortable with the invitations she did receive. In the end, she formed part of the group, and Glusberg was the one who, in September 1972, first published her celebrated *Diario* [Newspaper]—a work exhibited at CayC *al aire libre*.<sup>8</sup>

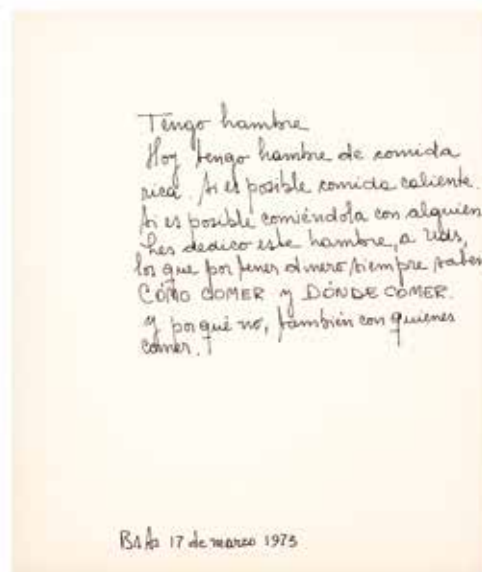
A number of the third type of texts, the ones the artist called *legible texts*, are bound to the act of speaking and, hence, to the relationship between writing, speech, and listening. They can also be read in terms of Mirtha's personality: she was a bit of a recluse, and would struggle to communicate, often using phrases like "I would love to—you know?—but I just can't..." At other times, these works seem like passages from a childhood diary—the graphic symbols are large, or they gradually get large and round, expanding on the space of the page where words are repeated; litanies akin to sound poems that operate through repetition; reflexive acts in relation to her writing and speech joined; speeches read before an audience that might even be rebuked, in a back and forth between the imperative and censorship, where we are not sure if a personal incident is being described or if, rather, it is a work of fiction or an act of condemnation.

If the latter—a rebuke or a condemnation, which is a political form of speech—, it is important to point out that, while Mirtha never made public political statements, one of her texts does address the economic and class powers that be in a highly ironic fashion.<sup>9</sup>

Many other *legible texts* were simply a way of warming up her hand. In them, she would practice writing words typically used at the end of letters—another of Mirtha's preferred writing devices.

This relentless and meticulous work with conventional forms and structures of text (pages, letters, postcards, speeches, lists, footnotes, comic strips, stories, etc.) was a rigorous discipline that she would then have to unlearn. And only that subsequent unlearning, which presupposes some knowledge, could make way for free expression of forms and, perhaps, an "other" language. It is not by chance, then, that in late 1974 and early 1975, Mirtha's production took a dramatic conceptual turn and, as she herself put it, a phase in her work came to an end. It was at that juncture that she produced the *Libro de vidrio* [Glass Book]

<sup>8</sup> Thanks to the research performed by the AMD, we realized that Mirtha's process was often based on trial and error. In the original version of her *Diario*, for instance, the comic strip that appears on page seven in a later edition is not included. The production of editions, then, often gave her a chance to amend her work, to expand on or dismiss sections, to correct mistakes, and to hone the conception.



Untitled (legible text), 1973  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy. Dated, unsigned and untitled  
28 x 23 cm

<sup>9</sup> Mirtha rarely spoke directly about the Argentine political context. She did do so in relation to the tribute in her *Diario* to those killed in Trelew, and in the aforementioned unpublished interview by Sofia Zavala preserved in audio format in the AMD.



tAC payment slip, ca. 1978 (detail)



Work by MD, part of the installation by Mederico Faivre *Escenas de la vida cotidiana* o *La gran orquesta* [Scenes from Daily Life or The Great Orchestra], in the exhibition *Arte e ideología. Arte de sistemas II, CAyC al aire libre*, September 23, 1972

and *Libro de espejo* [Mirror Book], works in which she abandoned graphic symbols entirely so that her readers could read themselves with complete freedom.

Those two pieces sum up the research that Mirtha had performed up to that point. Months before, the artist had started attending sessions at the pedagogical conferences in Brazil, and she was now—after her first direct contact with a group of individuals for the sake of artistic experience—putting into practice the pedagogical method so widely addressed in the coming years. Those two works would likely never have been produced were it not for the various conferences in Brazil, as well as the artist's work at the tAC and the trial session of the *Jornada del Color y de la Forma* in 1974 (held at Carmen Waugh gallery), and finally the culmination of her pedagogical proposal at the *Primeras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma* in 1975 (held at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires). At this moment in Dermisache's trajectory, all of her work in different fields of research and thought, and from different perspectives, came together as an integral whole. Starting at that point and for a number of years, her pedagogical work and her art would be joined by the same way of approaching the other and by the same search for freedom. She would continue making editions of books and implementing new ideas for textual pieces like *posters* and *public readings*, that were closely bound to communication and connection between people while also pursuing her work as an educator.

### A continuous line of work for the freedom of the other

It is widely known that Mirtha grew more and more focused on her classes, and everyone who took part in those experiences recalls how meticulously she prepared them, heeding details of scheduling, materials, and the music that would be listened to throughout. Her control over the tAC and the *Jornadas* experiences was close to absolute. While, of course, both were a means for the artist to support herself, she was wholly dedicated to them, investing her time and money; they gradually became a way for her own artwork to expand. Today, that use of new media is surprising, as is the application of experiences related to music and to information technology, or ideas tied to marketing and new theories of communication that, along with the systems art advocated by the CAyC, were on the rise at the time.

"What I want is to give people a territory of freedom," the artist explained.<sup>10</sup> And, perhaps, through that, she began to give herself that same freedom. From 1975 to 1981, she worked less and less in the formats that had been central to her production; gradually, her method became more important as part of her work as an artist.

<sup>10</sup> From an interview with Sofia Zavala, op. cit.



It has been said that she did not produce art during that period—an assessment that is, in my view, entirely groundless, since it assumes that Mirtha Dermisache's artwork consists solely of her graphisms, of her writings. It is true that that period witnessed a change: at that juncture, her work began actively pursuing the creativity of others without foregoing rigorous control.

For Mirtha, it was essential to prepare everything conscientiously in order to produce the perfect atmosphere. Her archive contains an overwhelming amount of documentation on the Jornadas: posters, coordinators' forms, timetables, charts for each technique explored, attendance records, instructions for the placement of materials, lists, budgets, etc. There are also records of occasional activities and the meetings of the tAC after the Jornadas, specifically from 1982 until the late nineties.

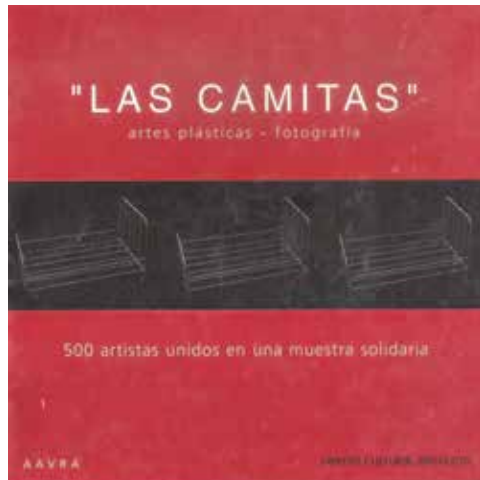
What I want to underscore, then, is the fact that she never stopped working, or even decided to stop producing artwork. She was fully conscious, particularly in her final years, of the course her work had taken. As I stated at the beginning of this text, Mirtha pursued the creation of a method of expression from the very start, and she did so until the end. Therein lies the great merit of her art.

Many may ask themselves, then, where the work from that period is, where her expressive forms are. I believe the answer is that that work, those forms, is in each and every one of her students, in each of the individuals that attended the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, in every piece produced in them. In that sense, Mirtha's work is not that different from Yoko Ono's *Instruction Pieces* in which Ono invites people to make a work along with her, or from other models of collective production like the happening and artists' action. It is telling that the tAC is, as its name indicates, a question of "action" in, among other things, the performative sense of the word. Mirtha envisioned those workshops as creative actions in their own right, ones that did not ensue on the blank page, but rather in the other, in the person reflected in her *Libro de espejo*, in each of the others that experimented with the techniques she was testing out in her studio and that enabled her to return to a sort of primary creative state. It was for that reason that she was no longer satisfied to immerse herself in her own work space or to express herself solely on the page. She had tremendously rich human material at hand, and her utensils were both the tools of the variety of techniques explored and her many impassioned acolytes—the students and coordinators onto whom she projected her texts.

Though it may be hard to grasp, Mirtha's trajectory is closely bound to the notion of inner strength, to a search as meditative as it is psychoanalytic—one not that unlike the methods used in therapy or in self-help. The names of some of her workshops and

<u>JORNADAS 1981.</u>	
<b>Magasin 12</b>	
389-399.	Cartel
400-426.	Colas recepción entradas
426-427.	Bencina
428-433.	Ladrillo endividual
<b>Magasin 13</b>	
434-437.	Ladrillo individual
438-444.	Convivencia
445-449.	Arcilla individual
450-452.	Linograbado PP
453-459.	Linograbado P6
460-467.	Patio ladrillos
468-469.	Muro
<b>Magasin 14</b>	
470-476.	Muro
477-492.	Muro témpera (PG)
493-502.	Mural témpera (PM)
503-505.	Mural témpera (PP)
<b>Magasin 15</b>	
506-515.	Témpera Mural (PP)
516-521.	Monocopia color
522-523.	Nos.reservados para Monocopia negro
524-530.	Arcilla grupal (PG)
531-534.	Arcilla grupal (PP)
535-537.	Dactilopintura
538-541.	Estructura de cajas (PG)
<b>Magasin 16</b>	
542-543.	Estructura de cajas
544-548.	Hoja mojada
549-551.	Espanja
552-553.	Anilinas
554-561.	Videocasett
562-577.	Escenas grupales y Multitud
<b>Magasin 17</b>	
578-581.	Escenas grupales y Multitud
582-601.	Entrega trabajos
602-604.	Encuestas y computadora
605	.Limpieza

List of music magazines with the music selected for work with each technique at the Jornadas  
No date



Invitation to the exhibition  
*Las camitas*, Centro Cultural Recoleta,  
 Buenos Aires, 2002–2003

*Postal por sumatoria* [Postcard by Summation]  
 for the exhibition *Las camitas*, Centro Cultural  
 Recoleta, Buenos Aires, 2002–2003  
 Color print on paper

events, like *Paths of Growth*, are striking, as is the fact that, in the nineties, the works produced at the tAC bear the signature “Mirtha Dermisache & others.”

Since those years, research into pedagogical techniques and practices understood as artistic endeavor has become more common. Mirtha detected that tie well before the use, in recent decades, of the term “pedagogical turn” or pedagogical curating. In the Latin American context, Luis Camnitzer is an eminent example of that school of thought, but in Argentina in the eighties pedagogy was not often included in conventional artistic research.

Reading different aspects of Mirtha’s production on the basis of her method makes it possible, in my view, to situate her work beyond its different facets and periods. Her art is held together by the search for free expression—whether her own or that of others—that requires previous learning and control. Her words and actions, and the way she chose to produce, circulate, and preserve her work, indicate that Mirtha was always concerned with the tension between discipline and creativity, and by the relationship between individual and collective creation.

The practice of making “works by summation” that she implemented at the tAC and the final editions of the Jornadas attests to both of those pairs of relations. In the two books she produced collectively through creative learning experiences, Mirtha played the role of editor. Others did the writing, each one contributing a double page to a common work that she then edited (compiled, organized, bound). She produced postcards using the same modality and, in the 2000s, projects like *Las camitas* at the Centro Cultural Recoleta.

At the opening of *Libro por sumatoria N° 1* [Book by Summation No. 1], she wrote:

*So my work is re-summed in the work of these “authors” whom I have accompanied in the exploration of a technique and in creating an atmosphere for the process.*

*The idea of addition is part of the context of this book.*

*A book that is not a work of my “authorship.”*

*Because this book is my work given over to others.*

*It is the Summation book.*

*Mirtha Dermisache*

It is in keeping with Mirtha’s own decision, then, that the *por sumatoria* works are not included in this publication. She had gone beyond individual authorship to become a sort of conducting virus, a method, a pedagogical form at the service not only of the reader, but also of the creative other, at the service of each and every participant in those experiences. It is clear why, in the late nineties,

NOS INTERESA CONTAR CON SU OPINIÓN SOBRE ESTA EXPERIENCIA

Utilice para ello el siguiente espacio y luego, por favor, llene el cuestionario incluido al dorso.

No tengo ninguna experiencia sobre expresión gráfica realizada en algún taller de creación, pero he tenido experiencias que me han interesado por trabajos hechos, aunque yo no puedo hacerlo, no tengo poder de creación. Aquí dice lo que yo quisiera que se hiciera lo trabajo creativo, o tal vez que tipo que había trabajado antes o ahora me interesa a los distintos grupos de trabajo con el fin de hacer bien a mal lo que yo quisiera de que se dependa en cuanto al momento de satisfacción y del superamiento.

(Este formulario debe ser completado una sola vez a lo largo de las Jornadas)

(MARCAR CON UNA CRUZ LO QUE CORRESPONDA)

3450

1 - Participó en otras oportunidades en las "Jornadas del Color y de la Forma"?

SI ☐ NO ☒ CUANTAS VECES ☐

2 - Ha tenido anteriormente acceso a la expresión gráfica?

SI ☐ NO ☒

3 - A través de qué medios se enteró de las Jornadas?

AMIGOS ☒ AFICHES ☐ T A C ☐ MEDIOS DE DIFUSION { T.V. ☐ RADIO ☐ REVISTAS Y DIARIOS ☐ OTRO ☐ (Especificar) .....

4 - ¿Dónde reside habitualmente?

CAPITAL ☒ GRAN BUENOS AIRES ☐ INTERIOR PAIS ☐ EXTERIOR ☐ BARRIO: CABALLITO LOCALIDAD: CAPITAL PROVINCIA: PAIS: (Especificar) .....

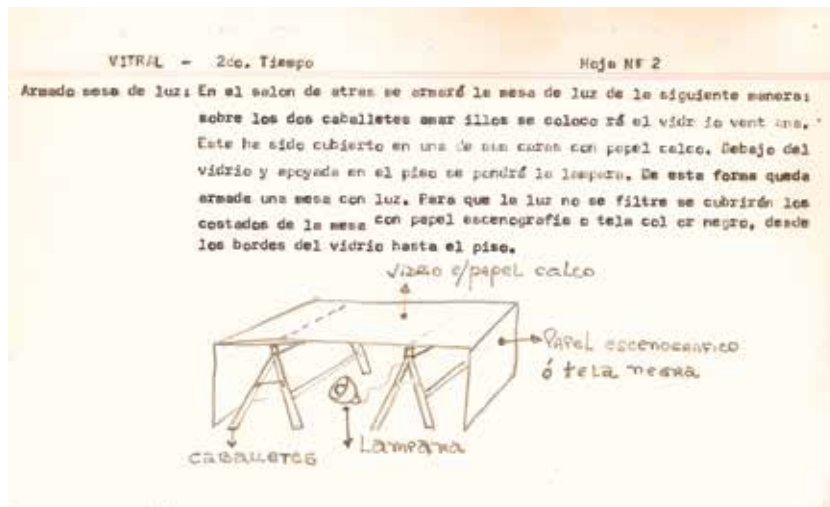
5 - ¿Qué actividad desempeña? (Marque la ocupación principal)

EMPLEADO ☐ ARTESANO ☐ AMA DE CASA ☐ DOCENTE ☐ OBRERO ☐ JUBILADO ☐ PROFESIONAL ☐ TECNICO ☐ OTRO: PINTOR (especificar) COMERCiante ☐ ESTUDIANTE ☐

6 - Indique el sexo y el grupo de edad a que pertenece

VARON ☒ MUJER ☐

16 - 19 años ☐ 40 - 49 años ☐ 20 - 29 años ☒ 50 - más años ☐ 30 - 39 años ☐



Top left and right  
Questionnaire handed out at the  
Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma,  
Buenos Aires, 1981

Bottom  
Cards describing the techniques explored  
at the tAC and the Jornadas



Invitation to the exhibition *Mirtha Dermisache. Livres. Florent Fajole. Dispositif éditorial*, Centre des livres d'artistes (cdla), Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche, Paris, October 4–December 20, 2008

she returned to her graphisms from the seventies, albeit without the same degree of freshness; she repeated them tirelessly, her hand somewhat stiffer from age, and made some new ones as well. Much of that later work entailed editions—a device that reaches out to others—which she worked on with Florent Fajole, her editor since 2003. He grasped the need to communicate Mirtha's works and helped her with the conceptualization of that relationship with others. One striking example is *Lectura pública. Dispositivo editorial 2* [Public Reading. Editorial Device 2], a project they did together at the Centro Cultural de España en Buenos Aires (CCEBA) in September 2005. The large display case at the entrance was full of scrolls—copies of the artist's *Lectura pública 2*—that visitors could take with them.

In her final works, like in that exhibition format, Mirtha was “emptying” herself out onto others, disappearing in her own work freely, fully aware of her process of unlearning, of the long path she had traveled starting with those first graphisms.



## Works

Books

Letters

Illegible Texts

Incomprehensible Texts

Legible Texts

Newspaper

Comic Strips

Fragments of Comic Strips

Fragments of Stories

Written Pages

Informational Bulletins

Cahier

Postcards

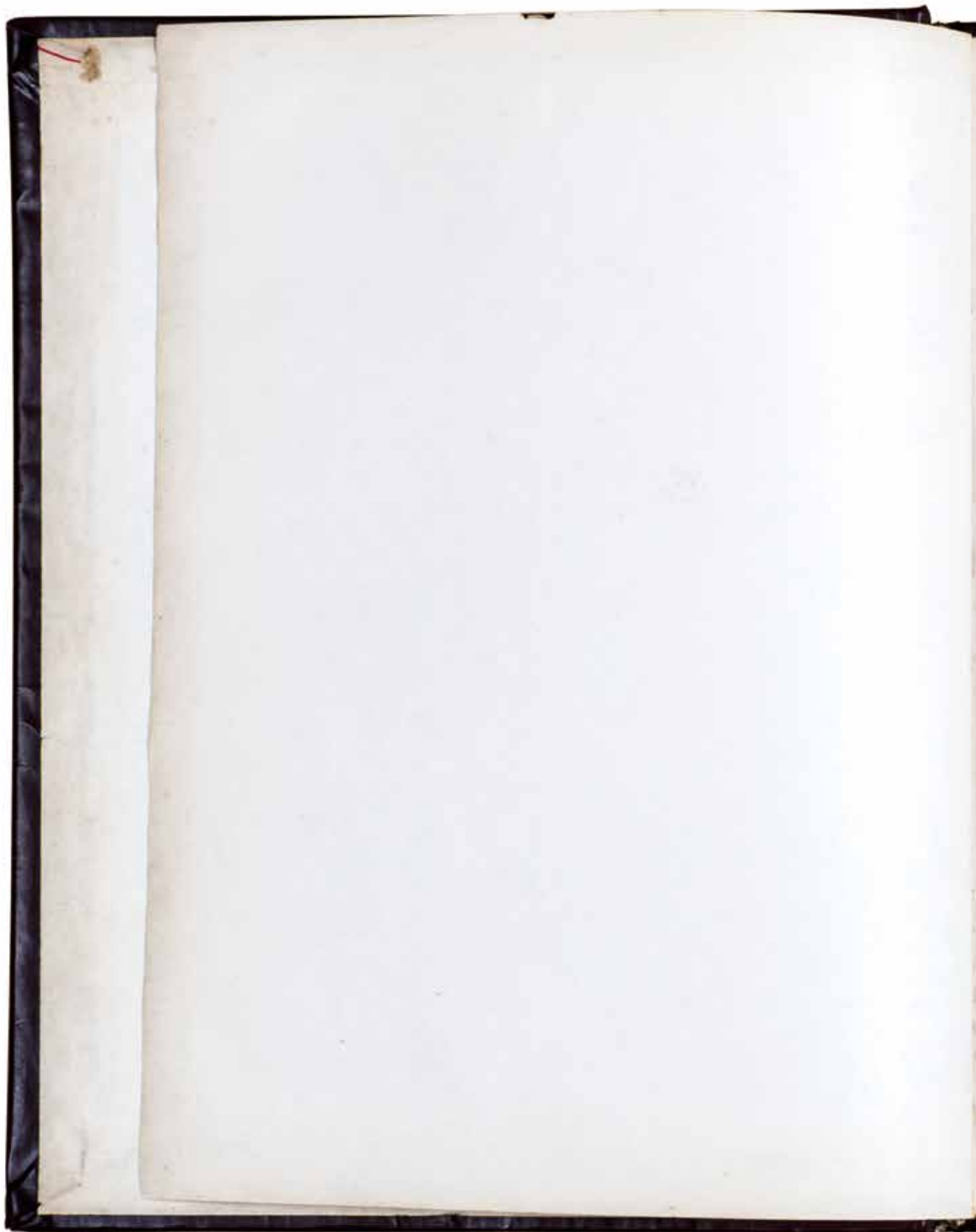
Newsletters

Public Readings

Mural Text

Instruction

Explanatory Poster

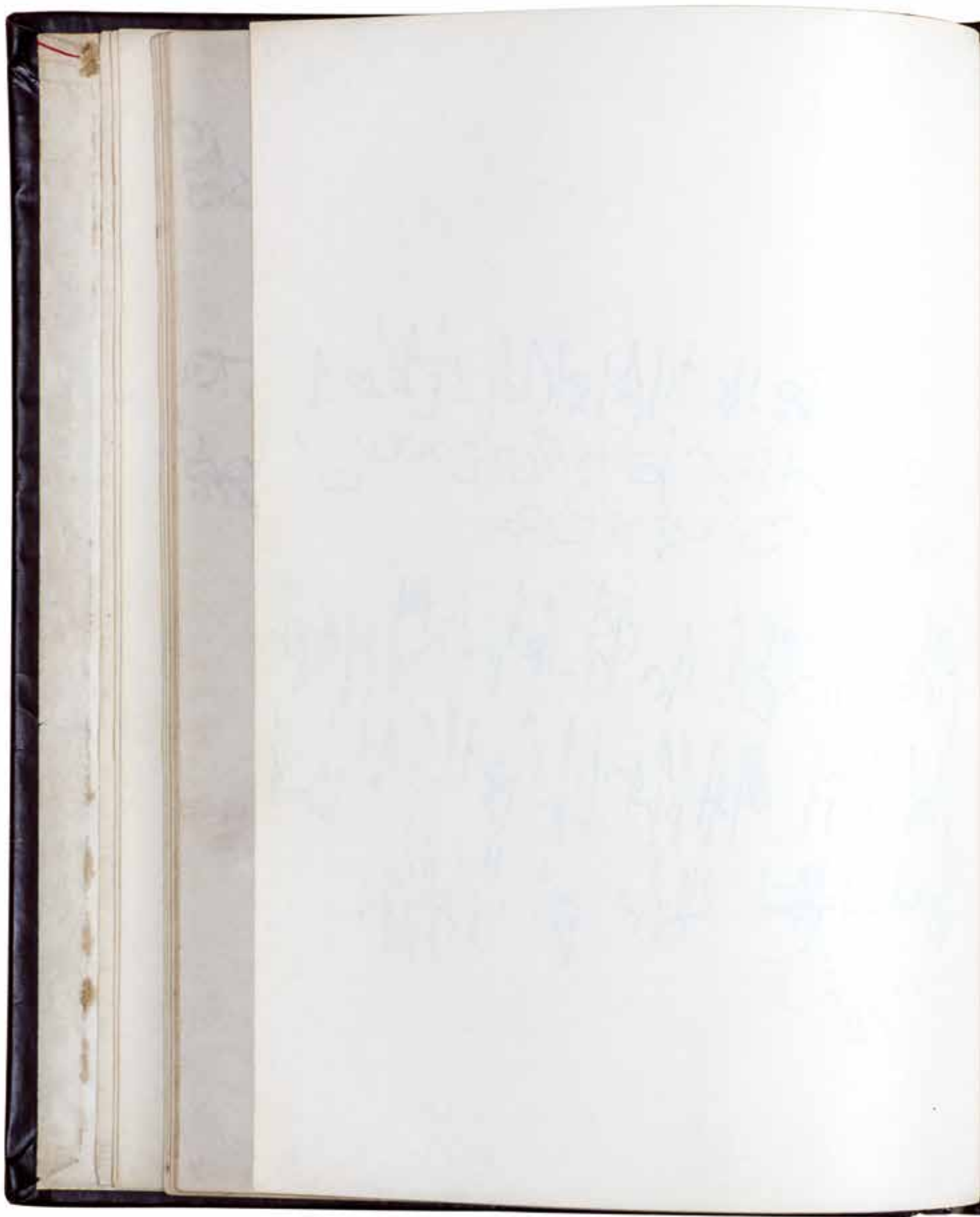




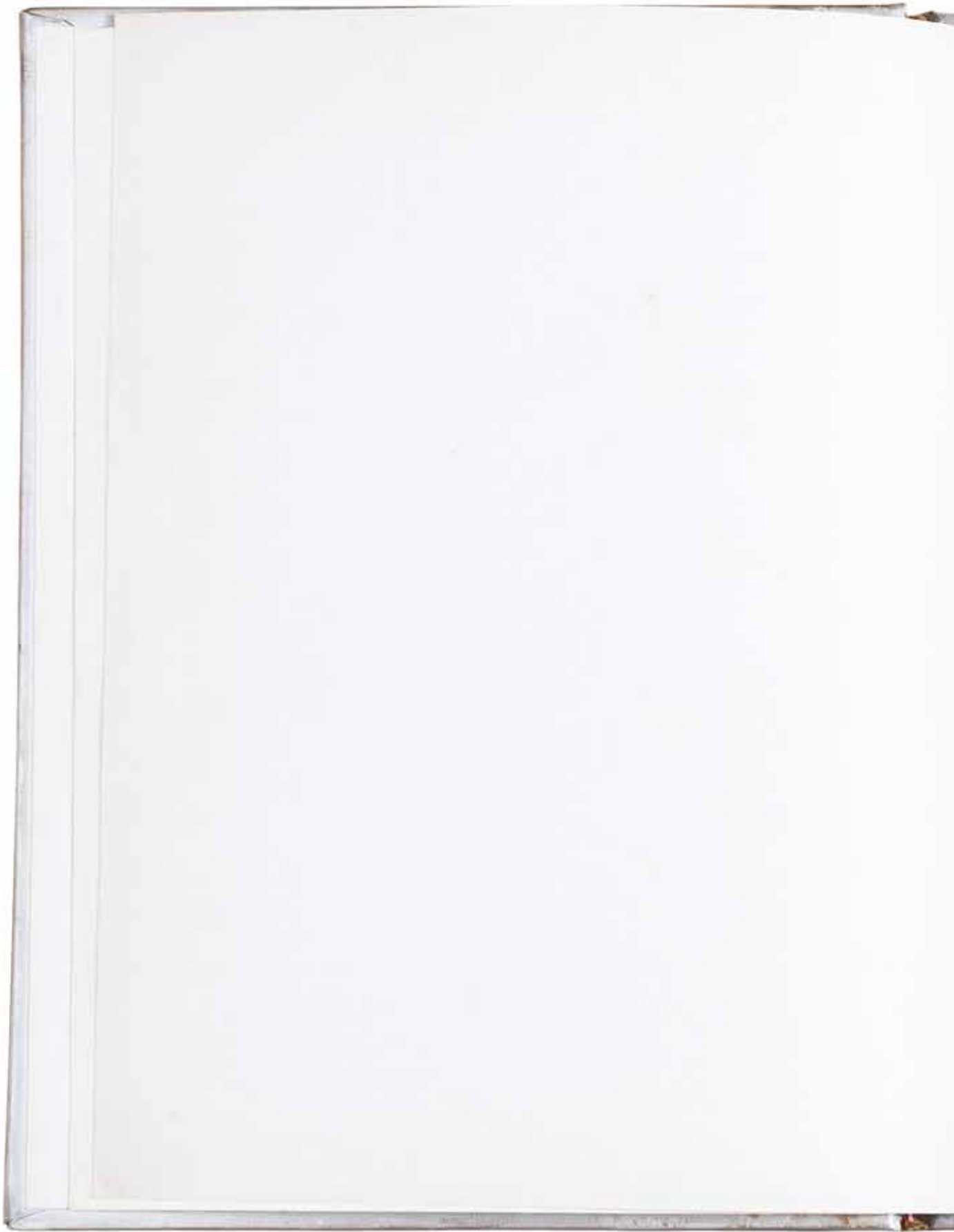
Up in yonder over the  
robin stills for and the  
new the the year the but  
in the lake

How many you can find by  
repeating is by the  
last letter.

How many you can find  
in the word the by the  
by the word the word  
and you can find the  
that is the word



Handwritten text in Odia script, written in red and green ink. The text is arranged in six lines, with some characters appearing to be stylized or repeated. The first line is the most complex, featuring many overlapping strokes. The second line is simpler, with a few characters. The third line is also simple, with a few characters. The fourth line is more complex, with many overlapping strokes. The fifth line is the most complex, featuring many overlapping strokes. The sixth line is simpler, with a few characters.



Sin título (libro) [Untitled (book)], 1967

[illegible]









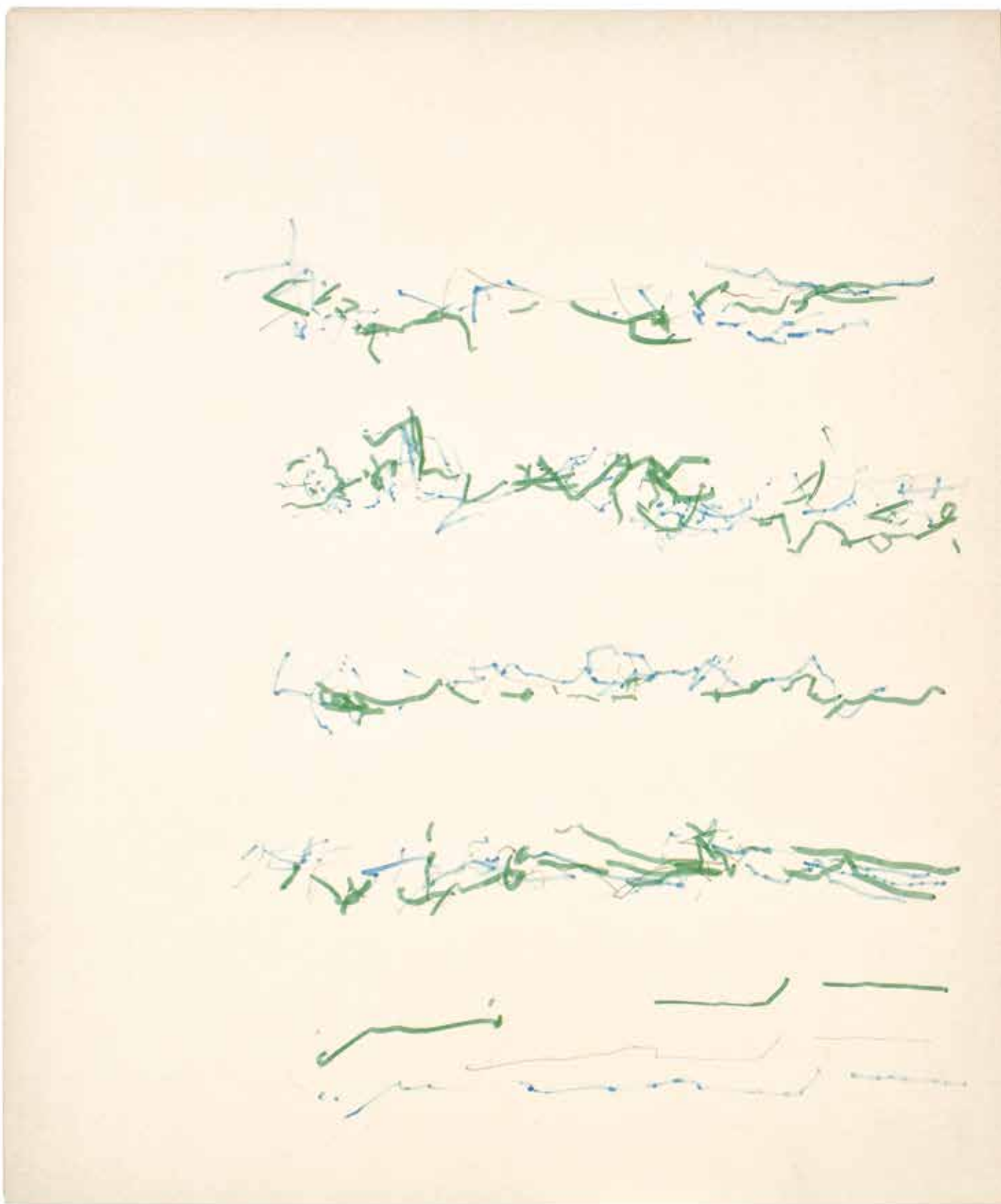


*Libro Nº 2 [Book No. 2] or  
Obra de teatro [Play], 1968*



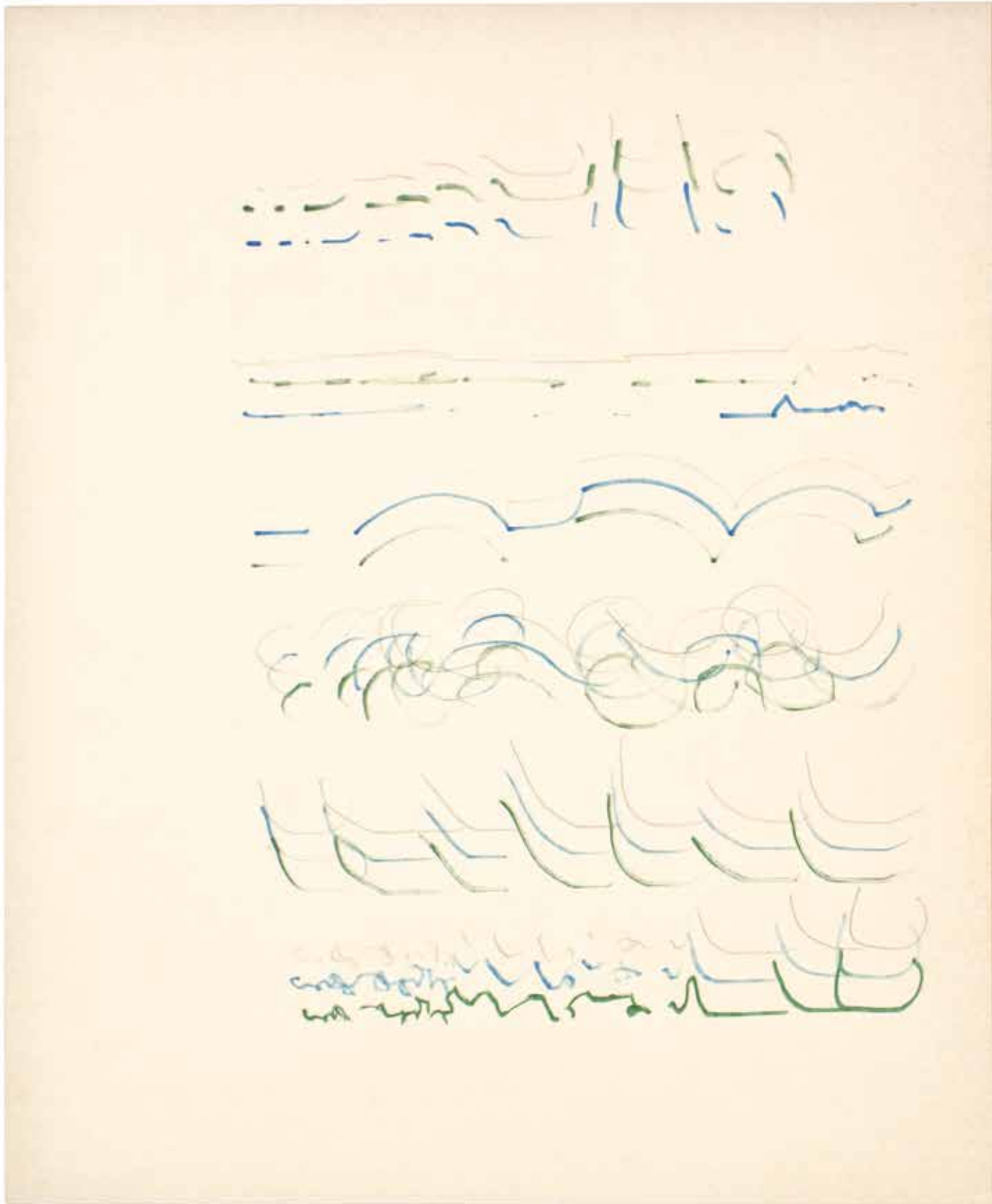








Handwritten text in four lines, written in a cursive script using green and blue ink on aged paper. The text is oriented horizontally but appears to be a transcription of vertical Chinese characters, likely from a historical document or manuscript.







Handwritten text in Hebrew, consisting of several lines of dense, stylized script. The text is written in dark ink on a light background. The script is highly stylized and appears to be a form of shorthand or a specific dialect. The text is arranged in a vertical column, with some lines being more densely packed than others. The overall appearance is that of a personal or artistic manuscript.

Sin título (libro) [Untitled (book)], ca. 1968–1979

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a title or header.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a title or header.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a title or header.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a title or header.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a title or header.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a title or header.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a title or header.

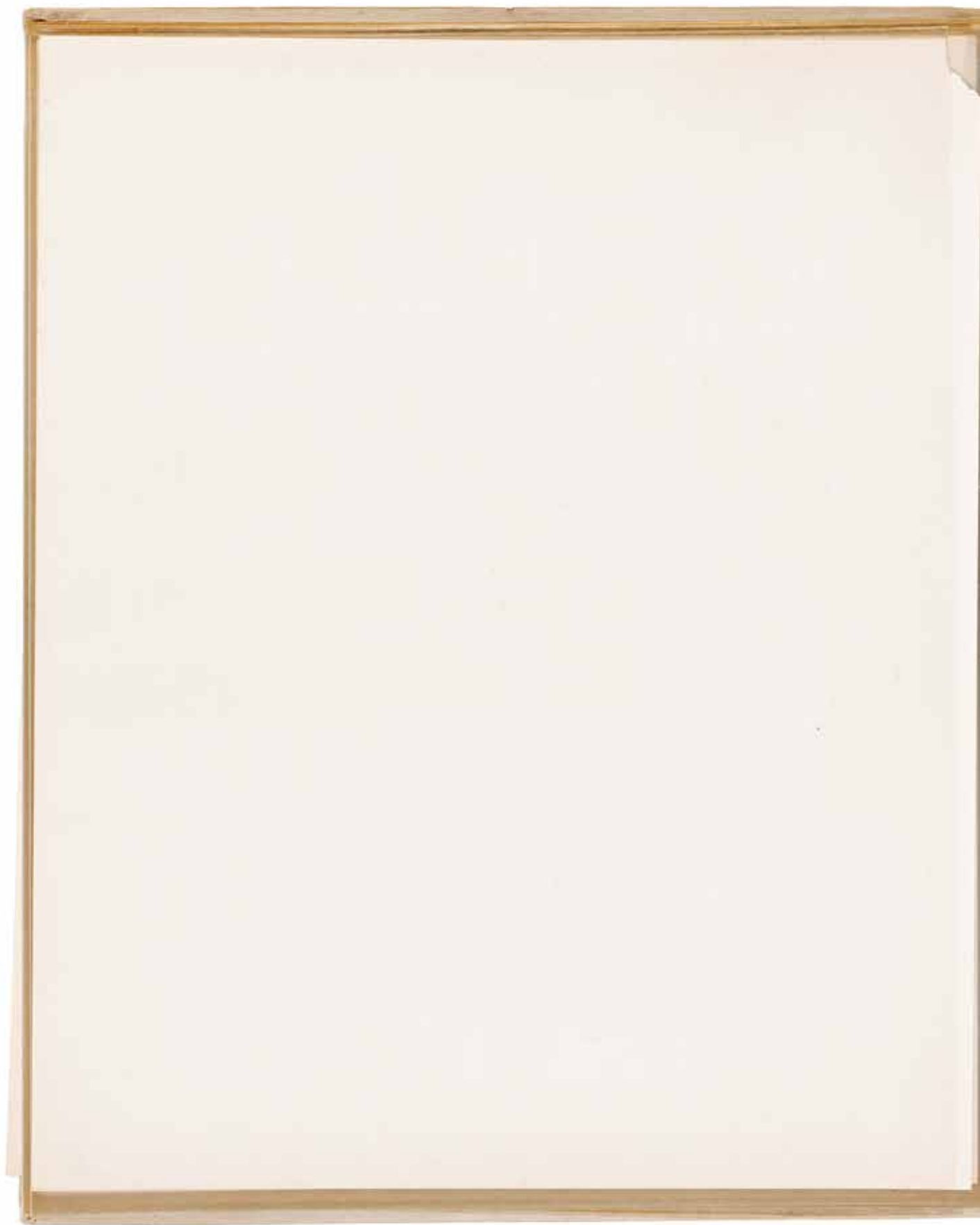


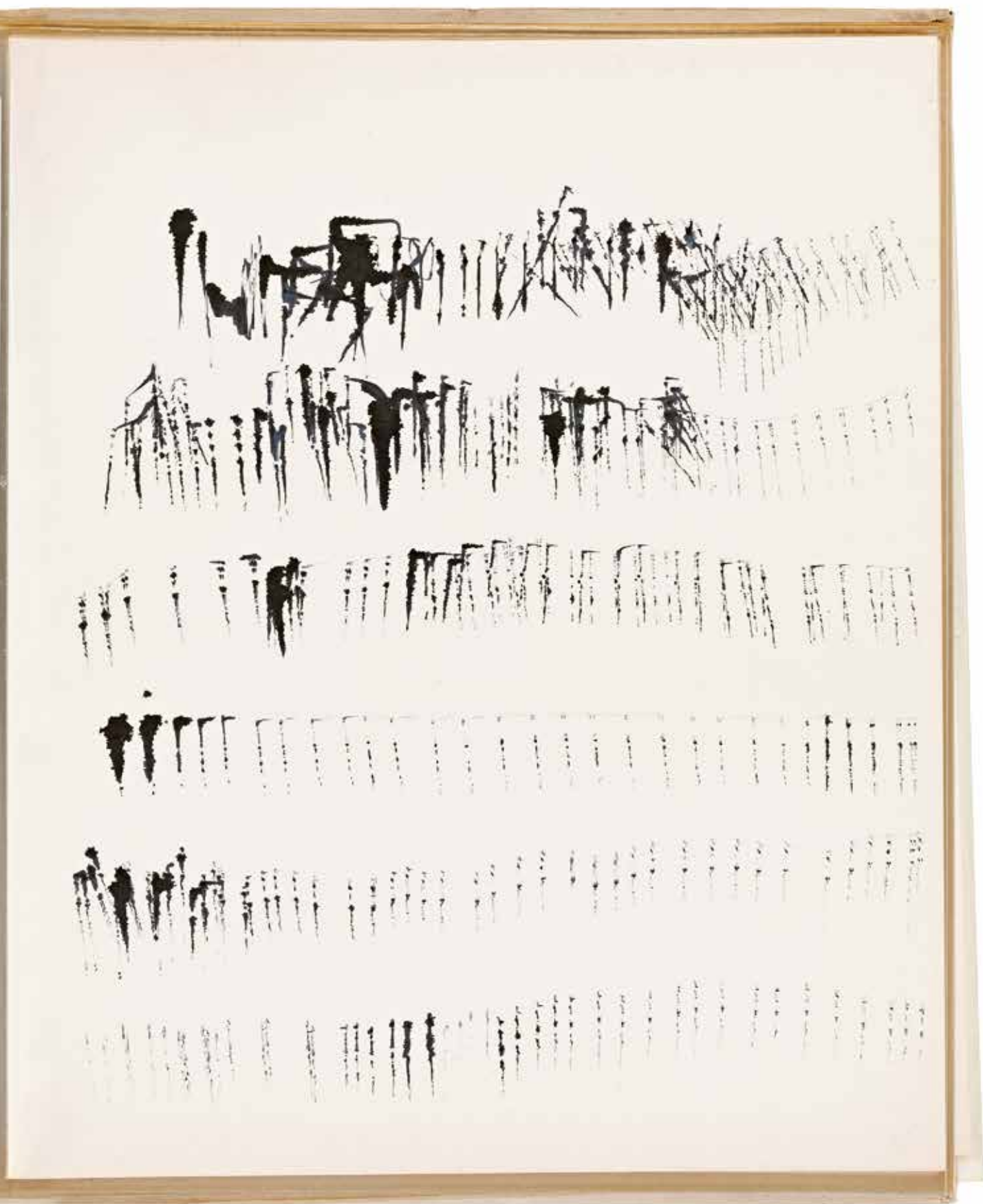
Handwritten text in Urdu script, likely a religious or philosophical passage. The text is written in a cursive style and is surrounded by decorative floral and geometric patterns. The main body of text is arranged in several lines, with some words appearing to be in a different script or dialect. The overall appearance is that of a manuscript page.

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ  
ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਹੋਵੇ ॥ ਅੰਤਿ  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ

ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਹੋਵੇ ॥ ਅੰਤਿ  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ

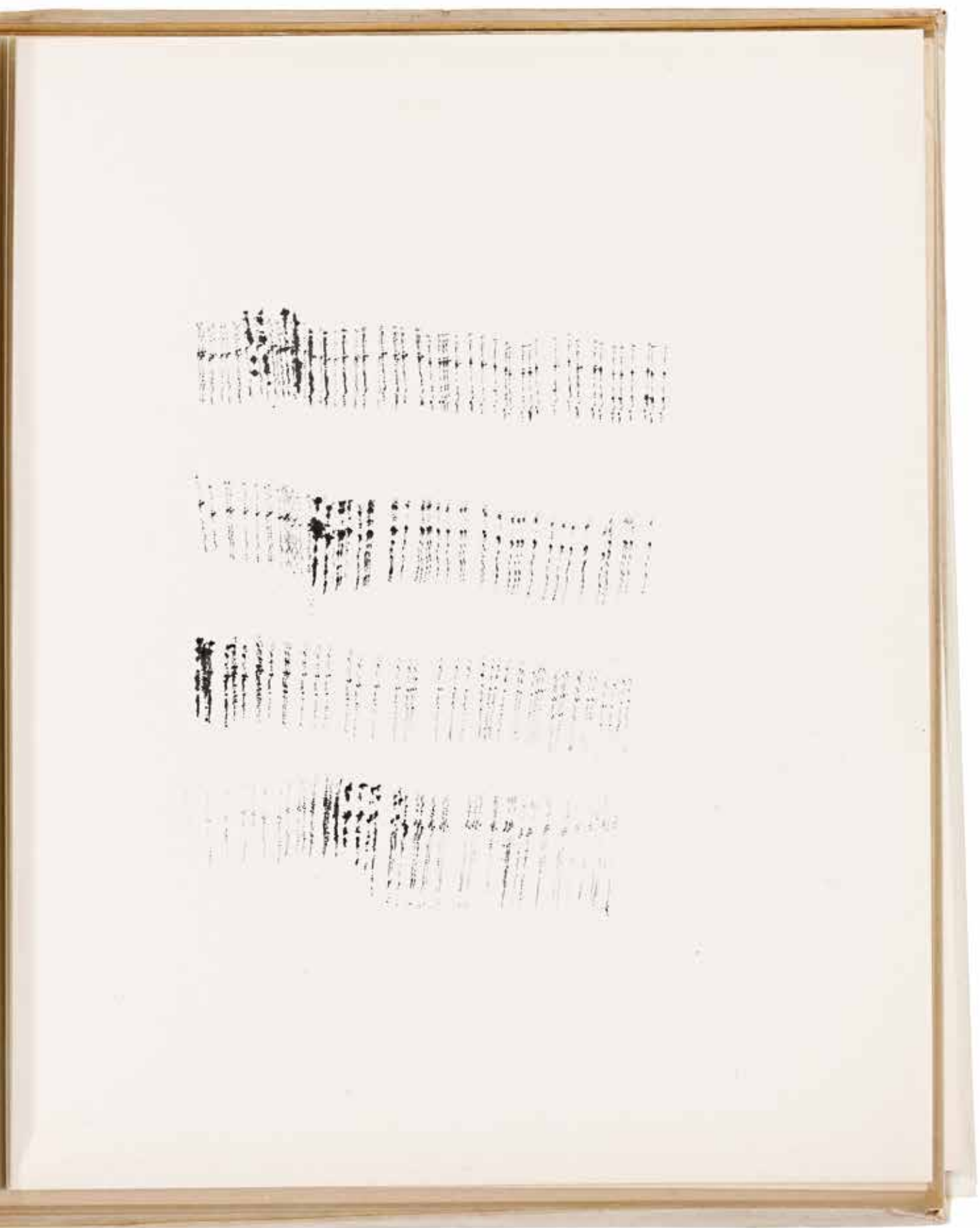
ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਹੋਵੇ ॥ ਅੰਤਿ  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ

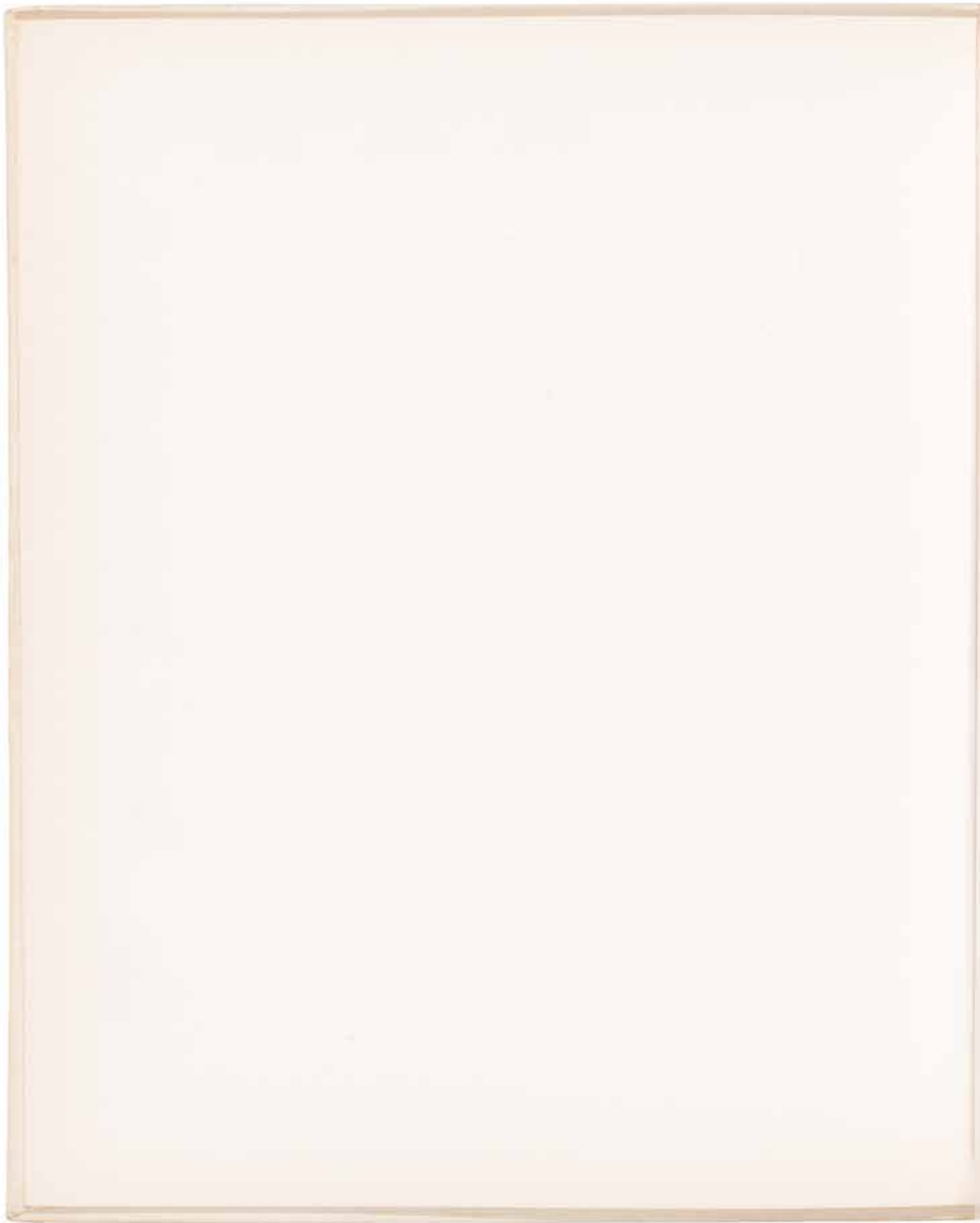












~~Handwritten text, heavily scribbled out with dark ink.~~

~~Handwritten text, heavily scribbled out with dark ink.~~

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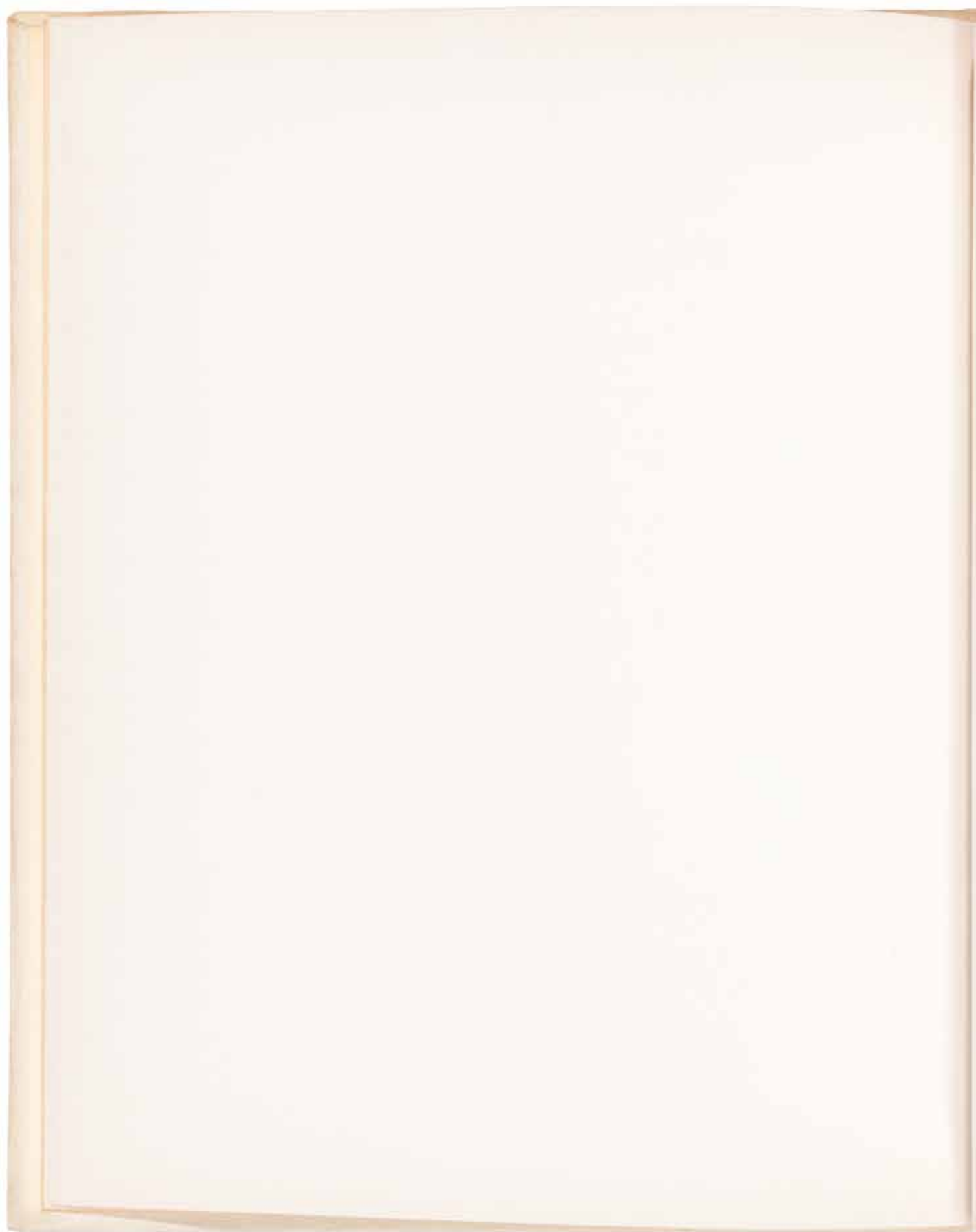
~~Handwritten text, heavily scribbled out.~~



*Libro N° 3* [Book No. 3], 1970

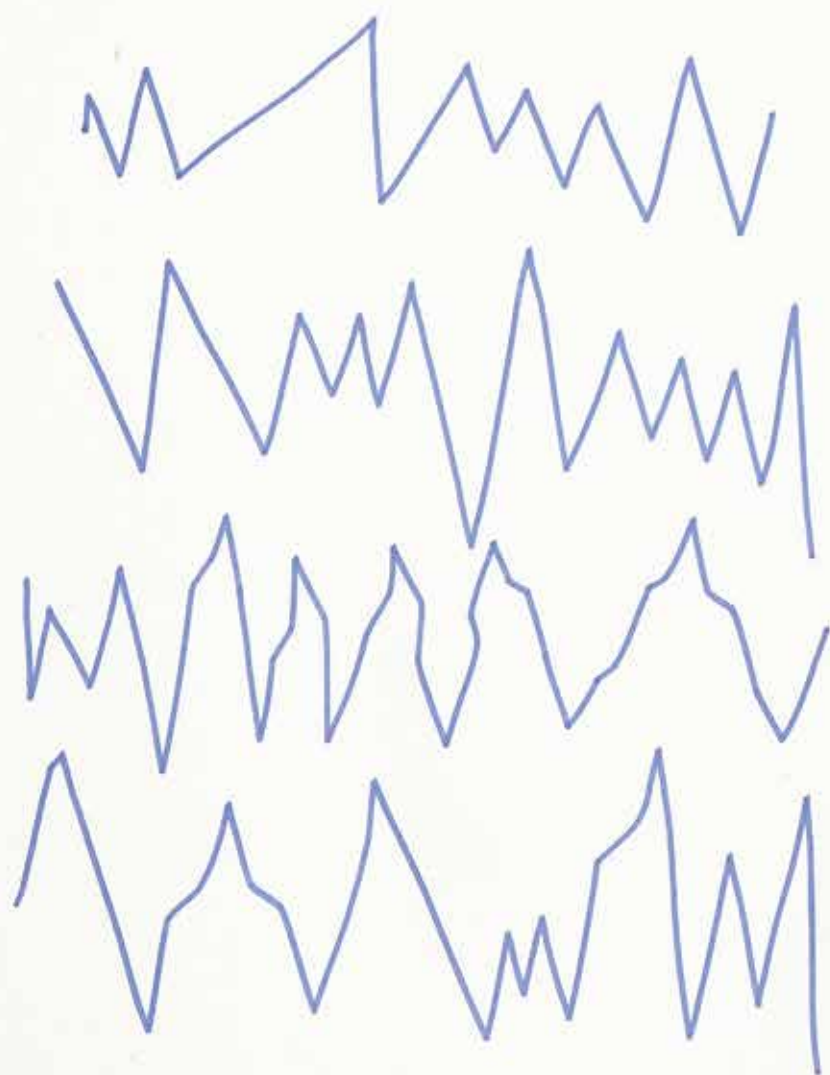


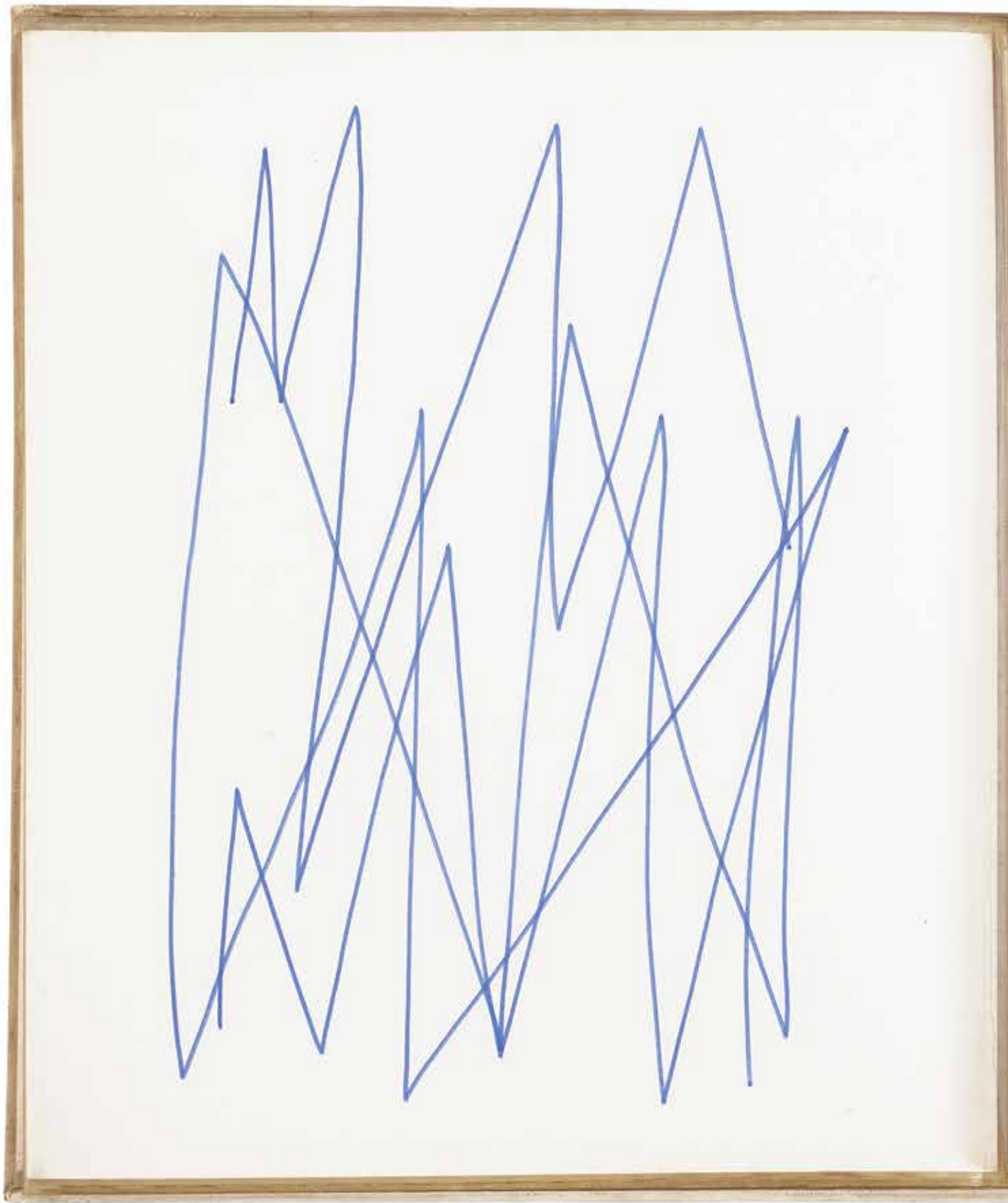




הַיְּהוָה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בָּהֶם  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בָּהֶם  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בָּהֶם  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בָּהֶם  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בָּהֶם  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בָּהֶם  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בָּהֶם

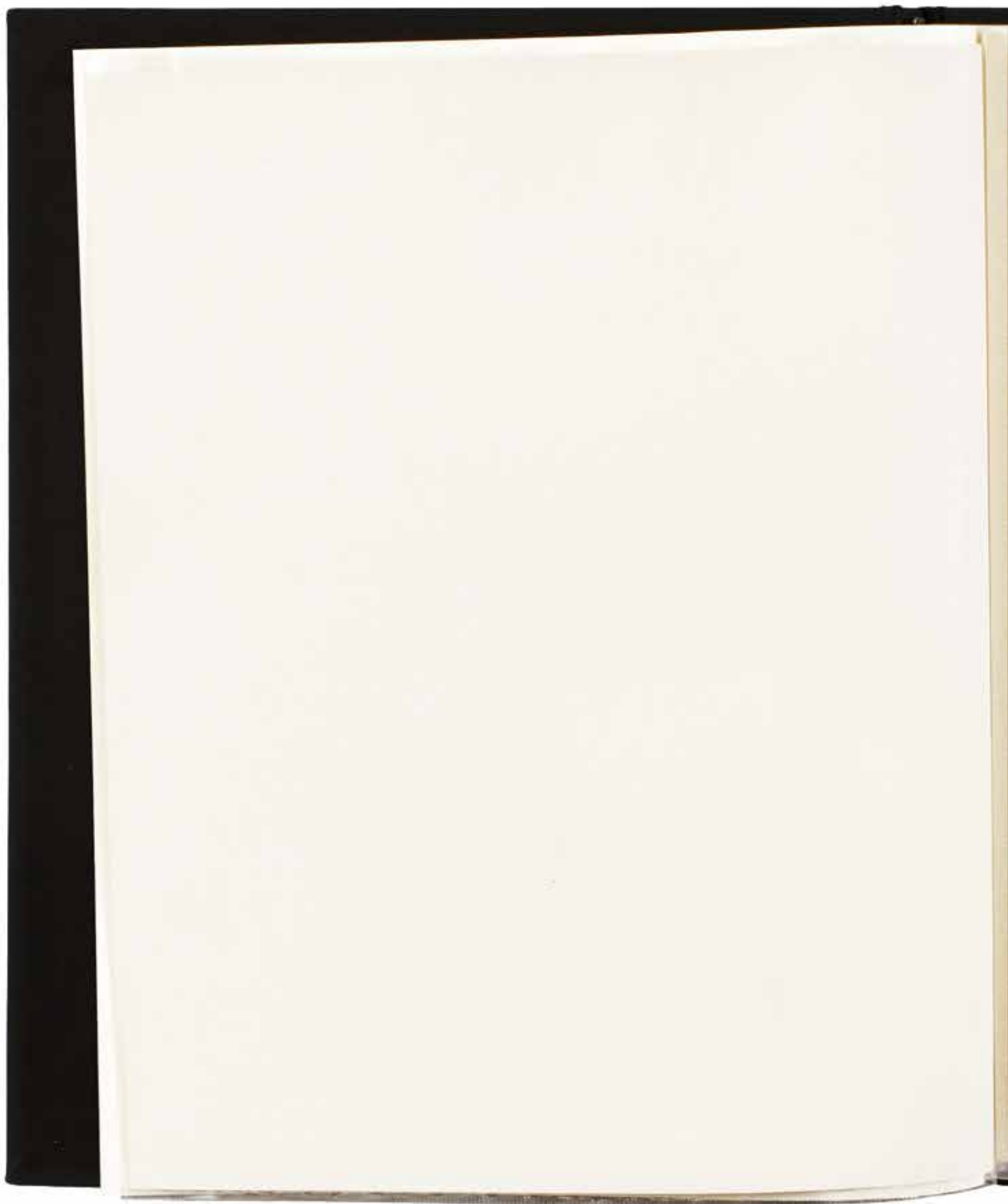












[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

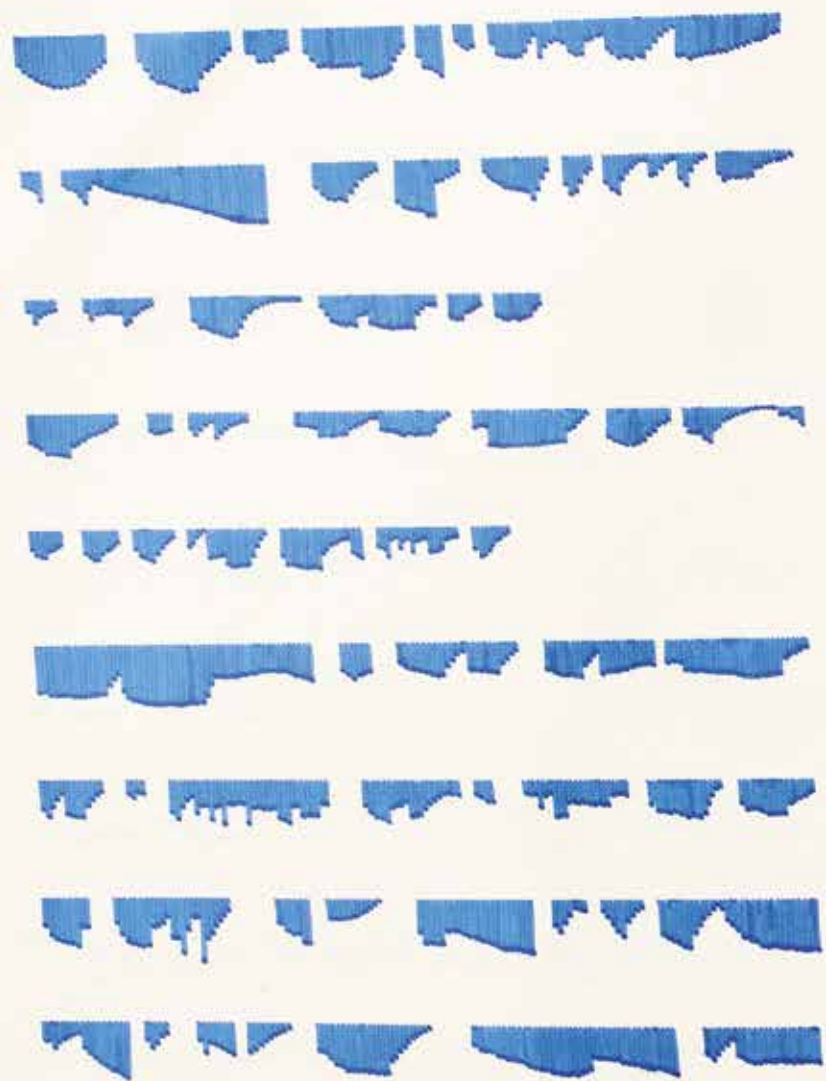
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[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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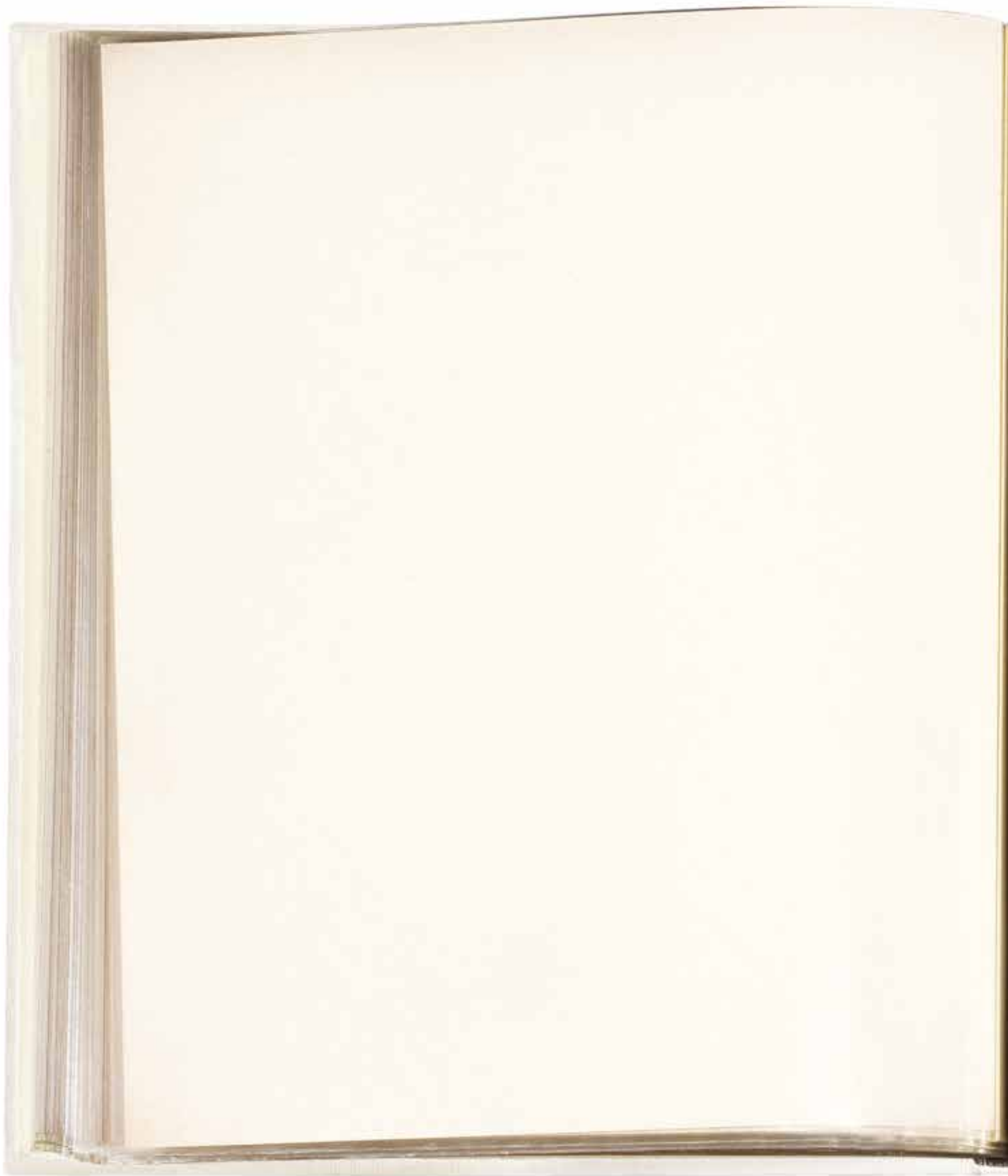
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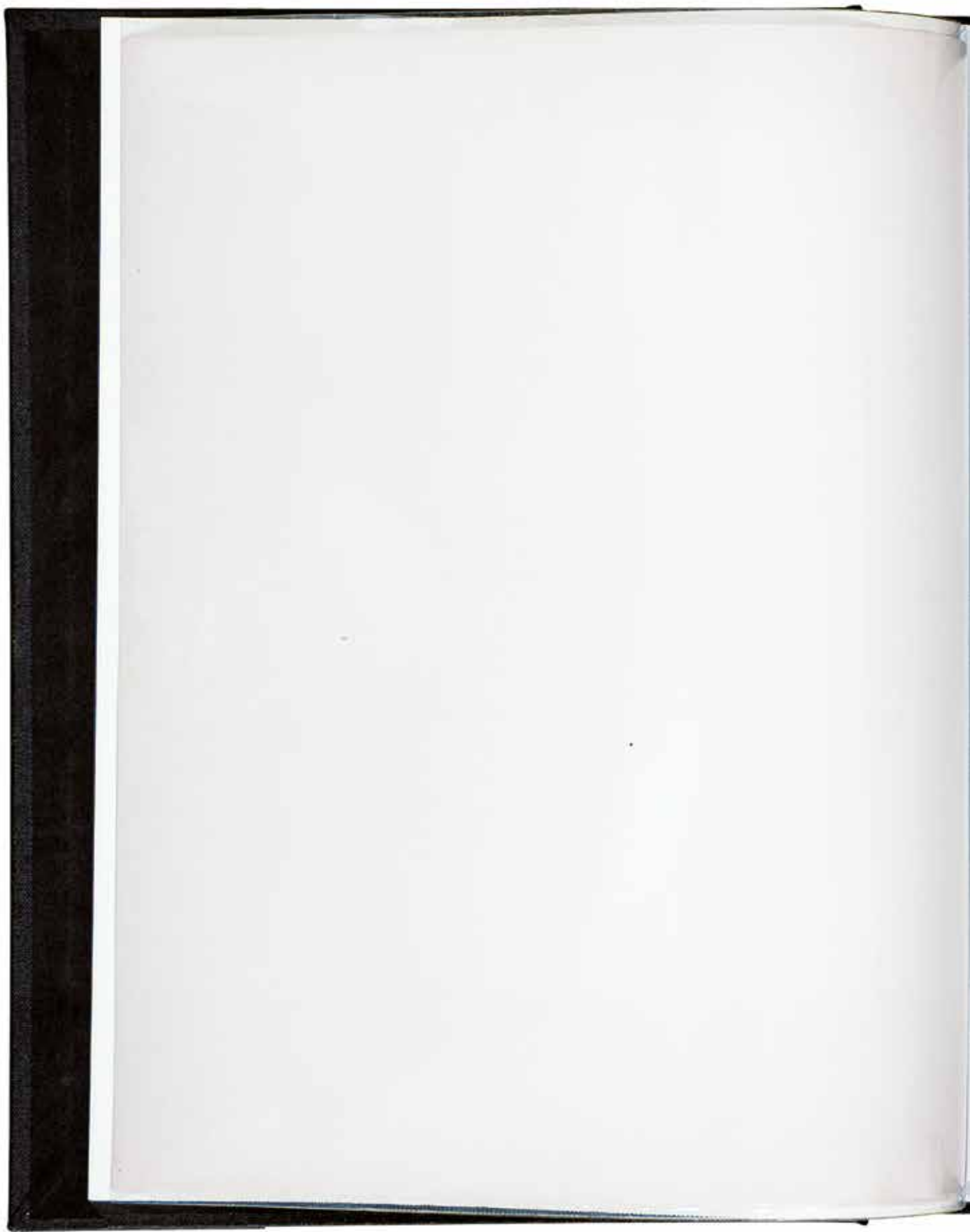








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Sin título (libro) [Untitled (book)], 1971



[illegible]

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Yohanan 16: 1-11

Reaction in Friedel Crafts

Top of Wall of Hole

1. Handwritten text

മലയാളം

පුද්ගලයන්ගේ සේවය පිළිබඳව

විමර්ශන මගින් සොයාගන්නා

විස්මය ප්‍රතිචාරයන්

සමස්ත වශයෙන්ම පිළිගැනීමේ

අවස්ථාවක පිළිගැනීමේ

අවස්ථාවක පිළිගැනීමේ

අවස්ථාවක

අවස්ථාවක පිළිගැනීමේ

අවස්ථාවක පිළිගැනීමේ

100 ന്റെ 10000 ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നതിന്

നിയമനം അനുവദിക്കുന്നു

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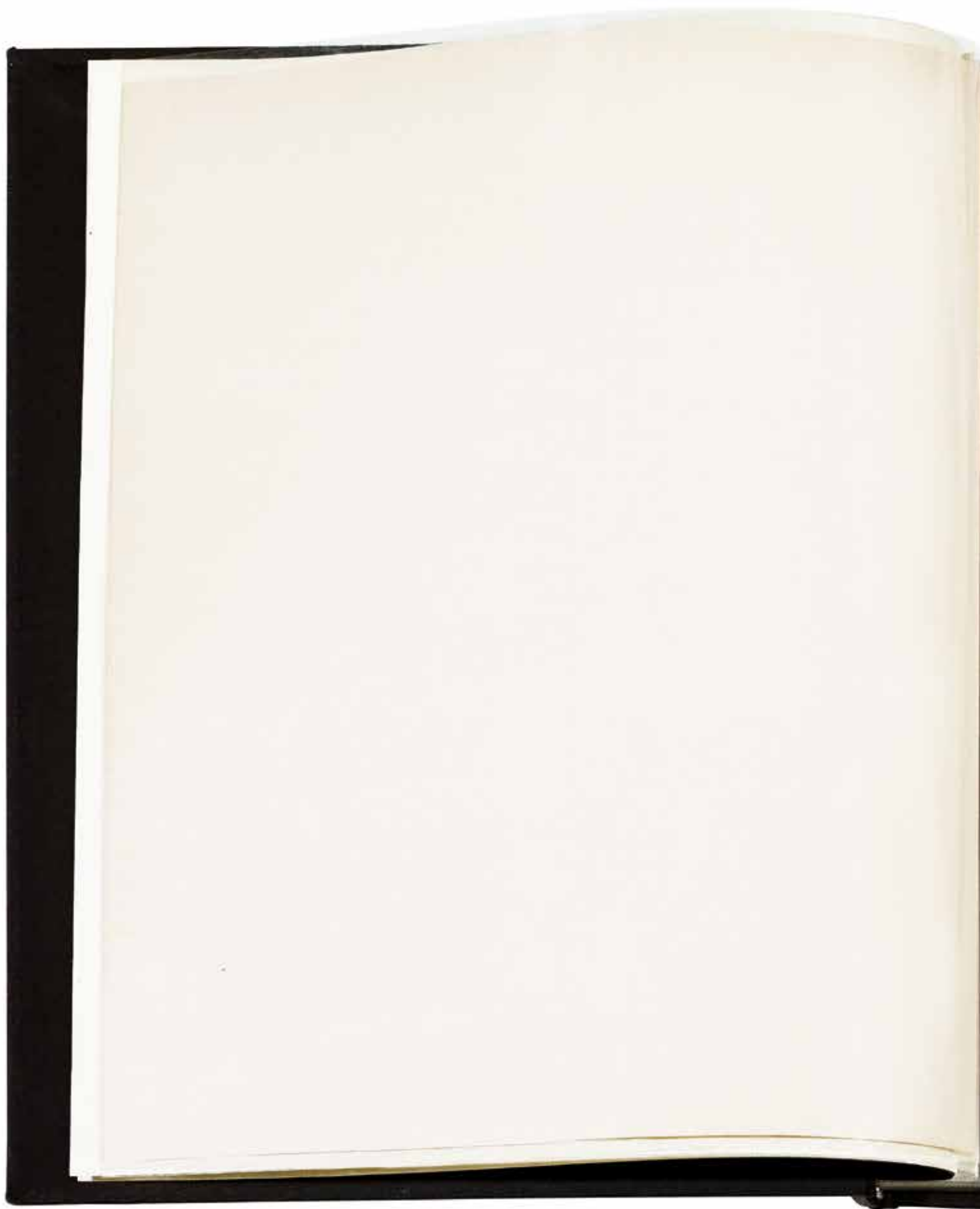
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1. **THE** 2. **THE** 3. **THE** 4. **THE** 5. **THE** 6. **THE**

[illegible]





אֲנִי מֵיִן וְעַד הַיּוֹם  
 וְעַד הַיּוֹם וְעַד הַיּוֹם  
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 וְעַד הַיּוֹם וְעַד הַיּוֹם

אם נעלה ארצנו  
עולה ארצנו  
אלמלאות וארצנו  
ולא  
נעלה ארצנו  
נעלה ארצנו



החלום האדום והלבן

אור האדום והלבן

אור האדום והלבן

אור האדום והלבן





וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ

וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ

וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ

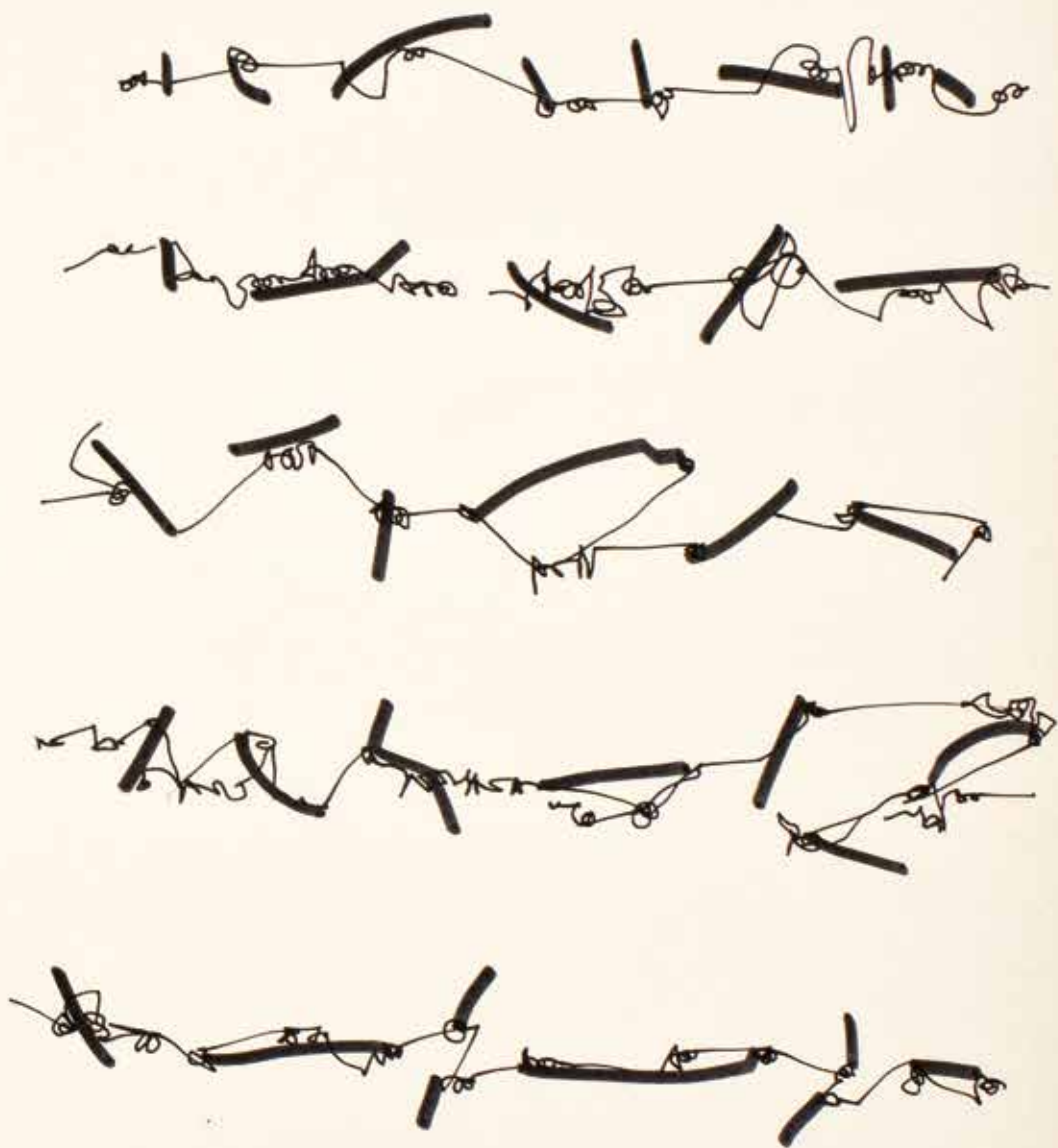
וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ וְיָשָׁב אֶל-בְּרִיתוֹ

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| 10 | 11 | 12 |  
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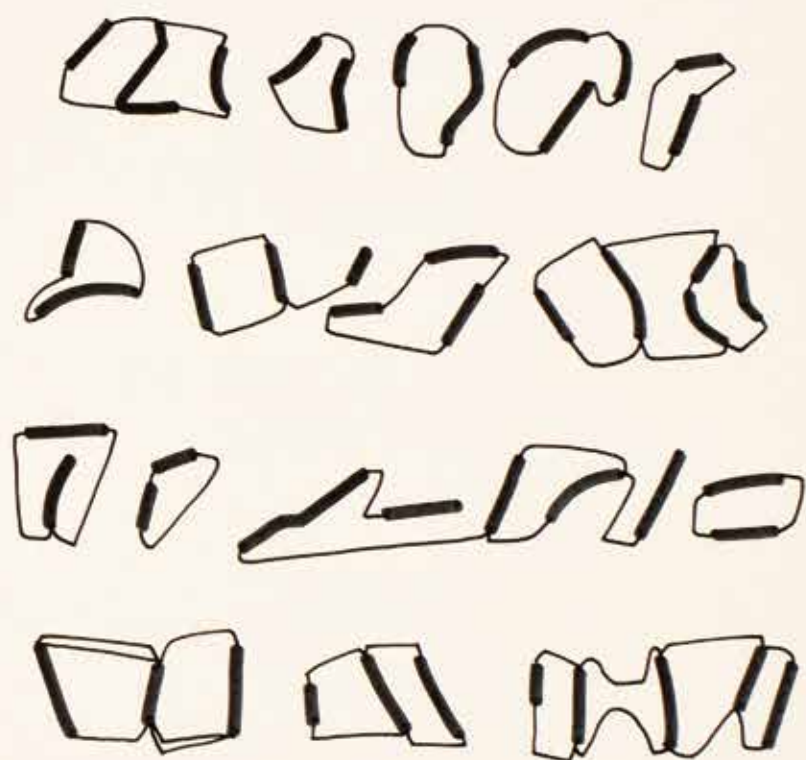
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Sin título (libro) [Untitled (book)], 1973





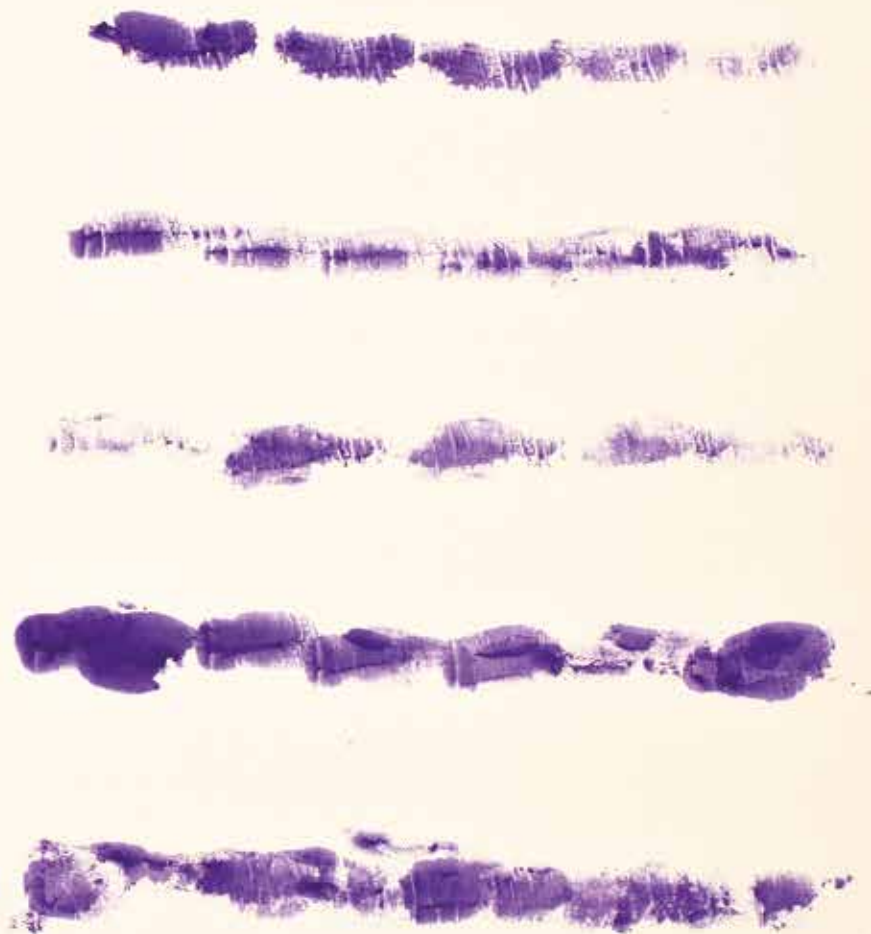












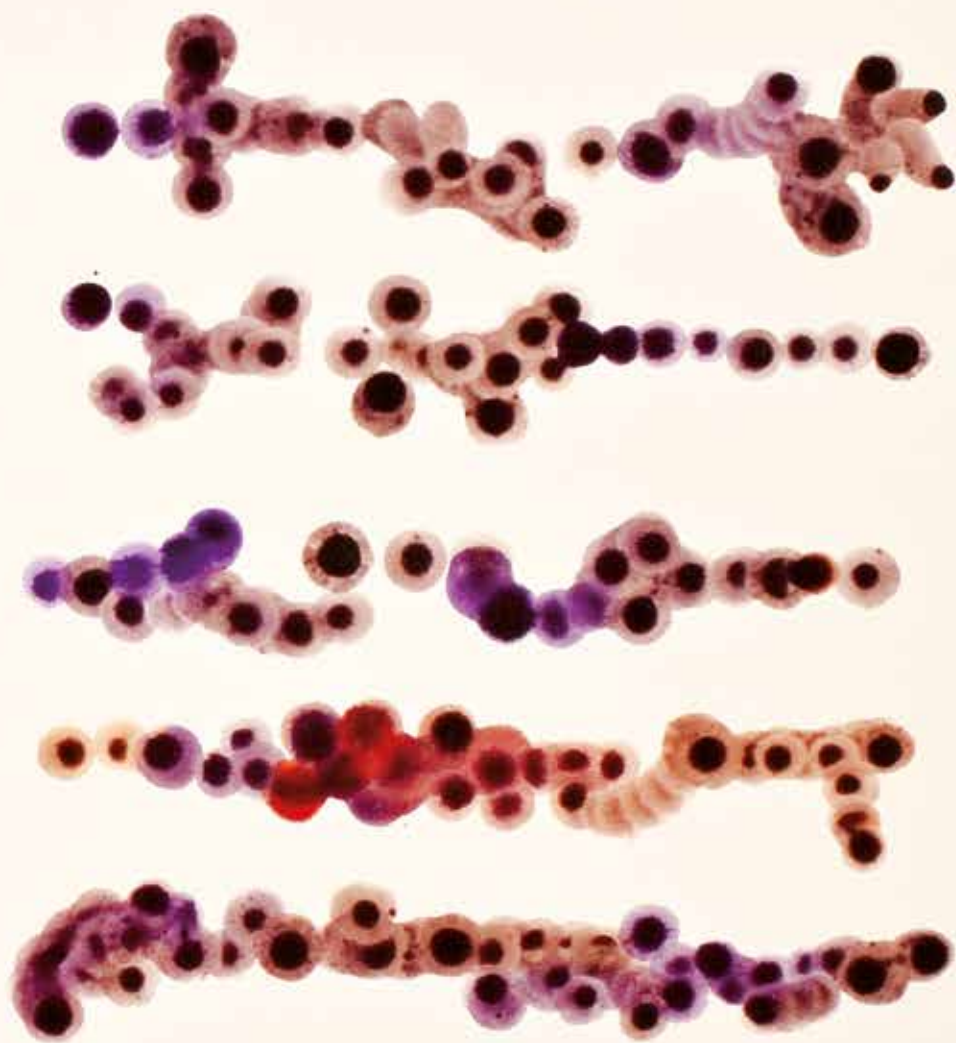


Sin título (libro) [Untitled (book)], 1974



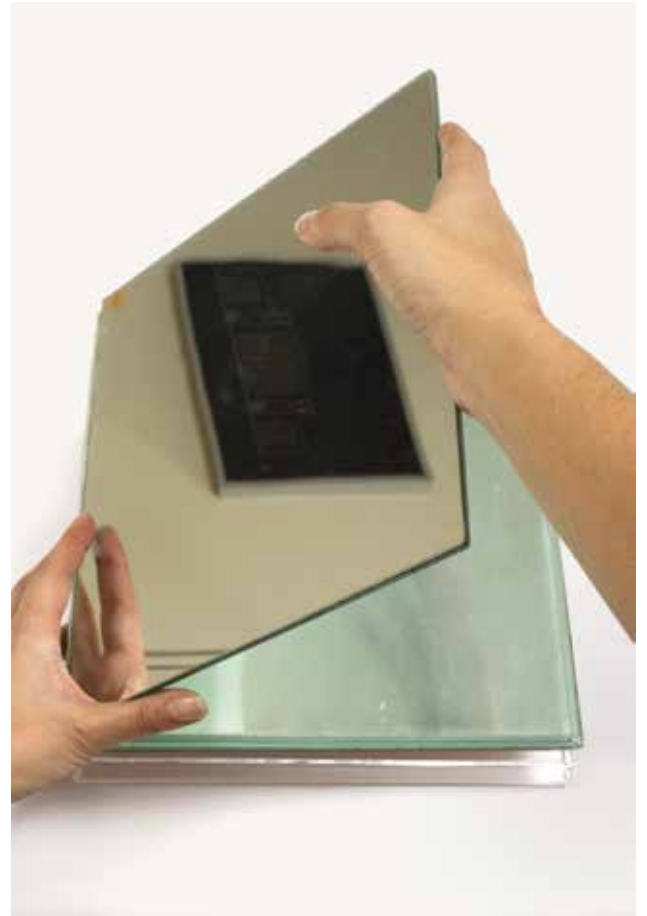




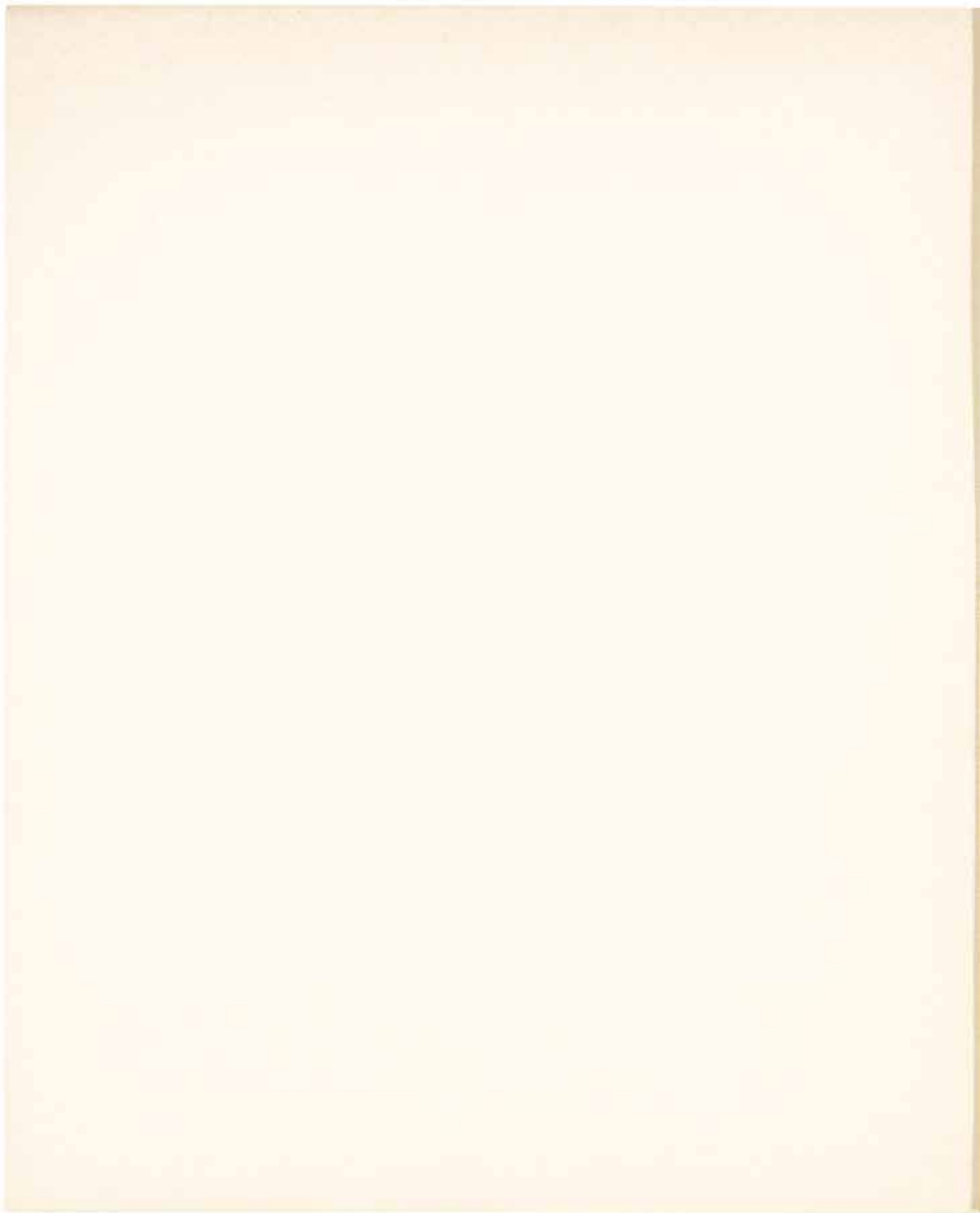




*Libro de vidrio* [Glass Book], 1975



*Libro de espejo [Mirror Book], 1975*



Sin título (libro) [Untitled (book)], 1970s

Handwritten cursive script, likely a signature or decorative flourish, featuring a large 'X' and a prominent 'M'.

Handwritten cursive script, featuring a series of connected, flowing letters, possibly reading 'X' followed by a series of 'M's or 'W's.

Handwritten cursive script, featuring a series of connected, flowing letters, possibly reading 'W' followed by a series of 'M's or 'W's.



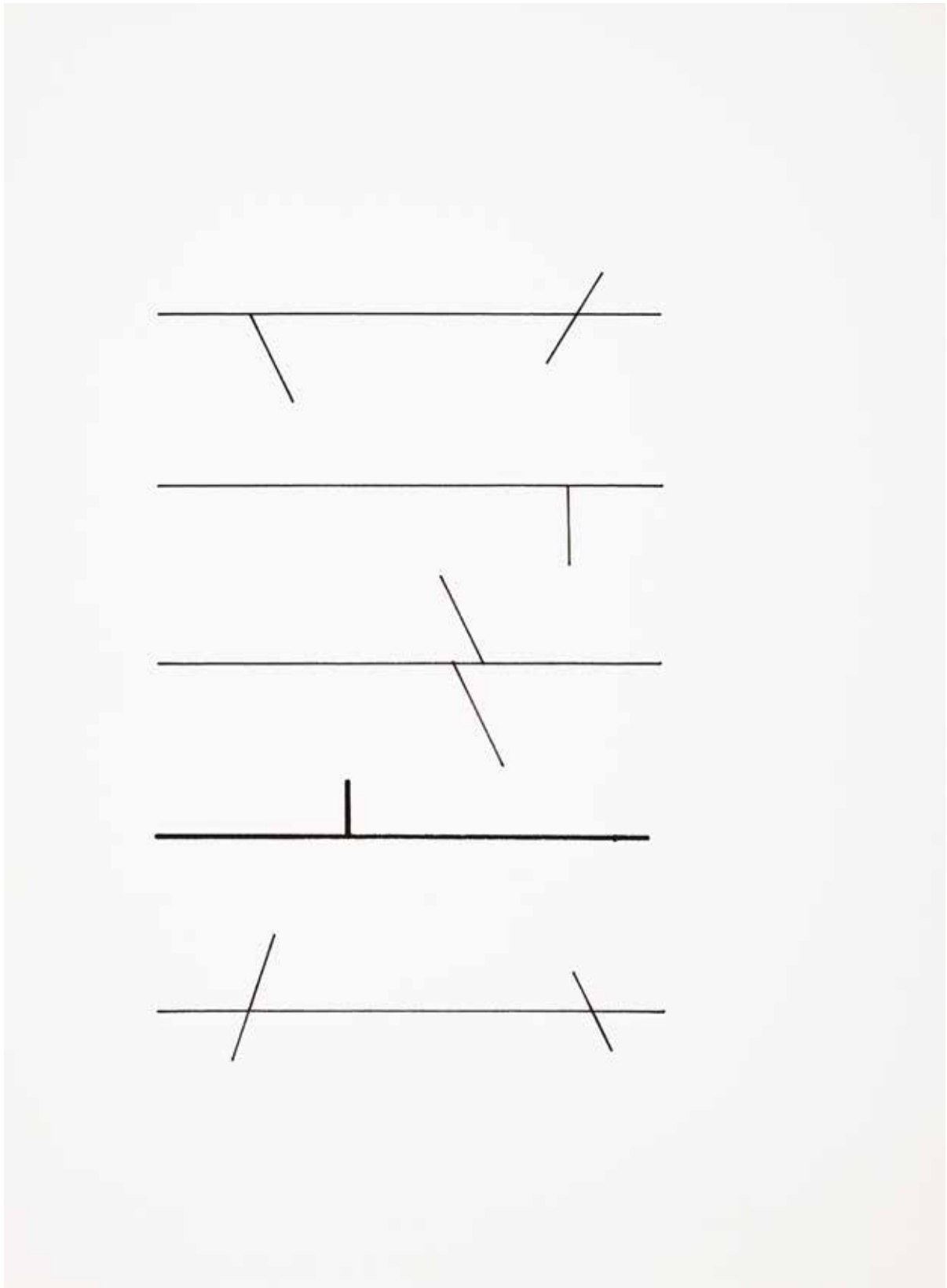
Handwritten cursive script, possibly a signature or name, featuring a prominent vertical stroke.

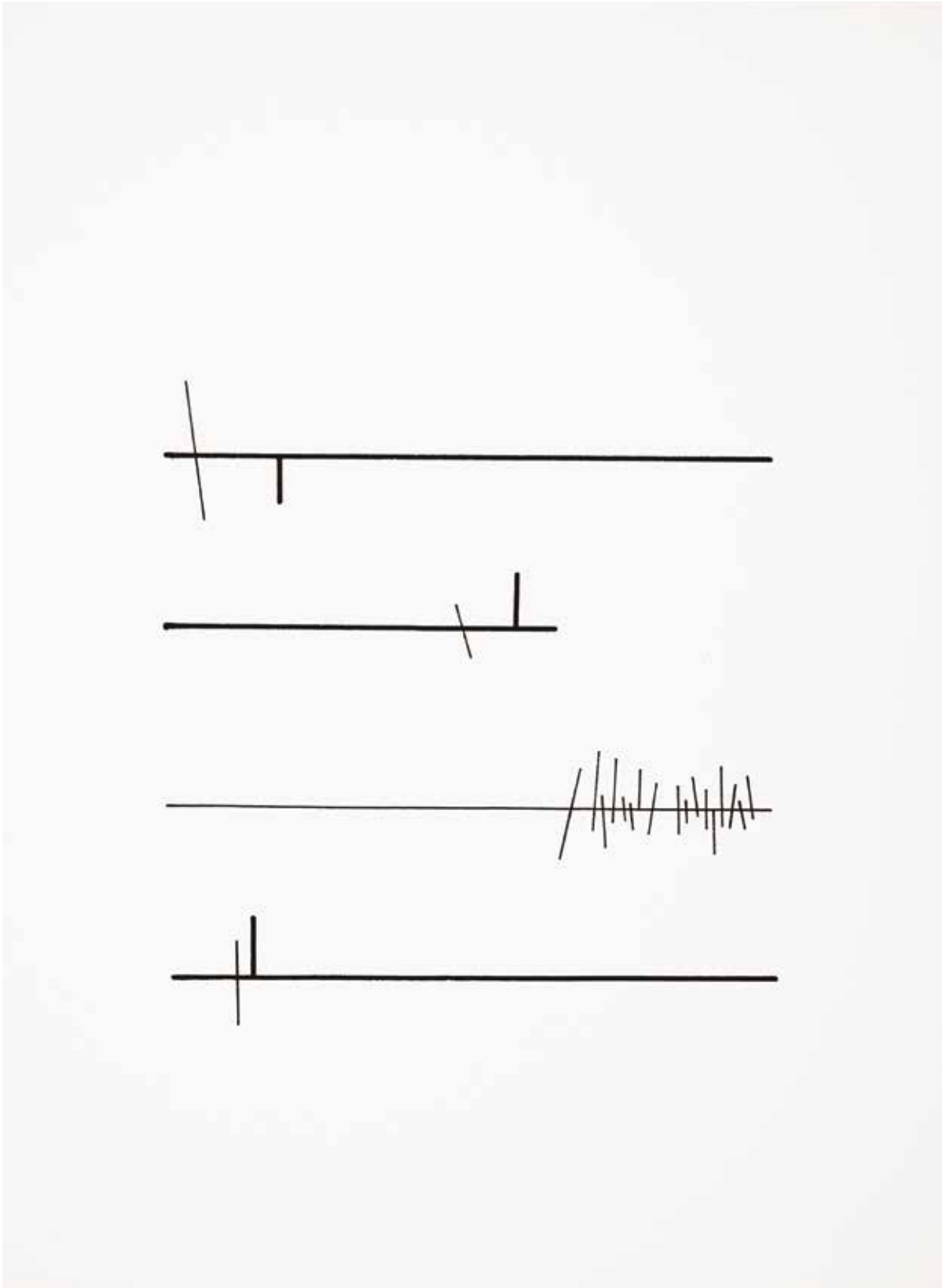
Handwritten cursive script, possibly a signature or name, featuring a prominent vertical stroke.

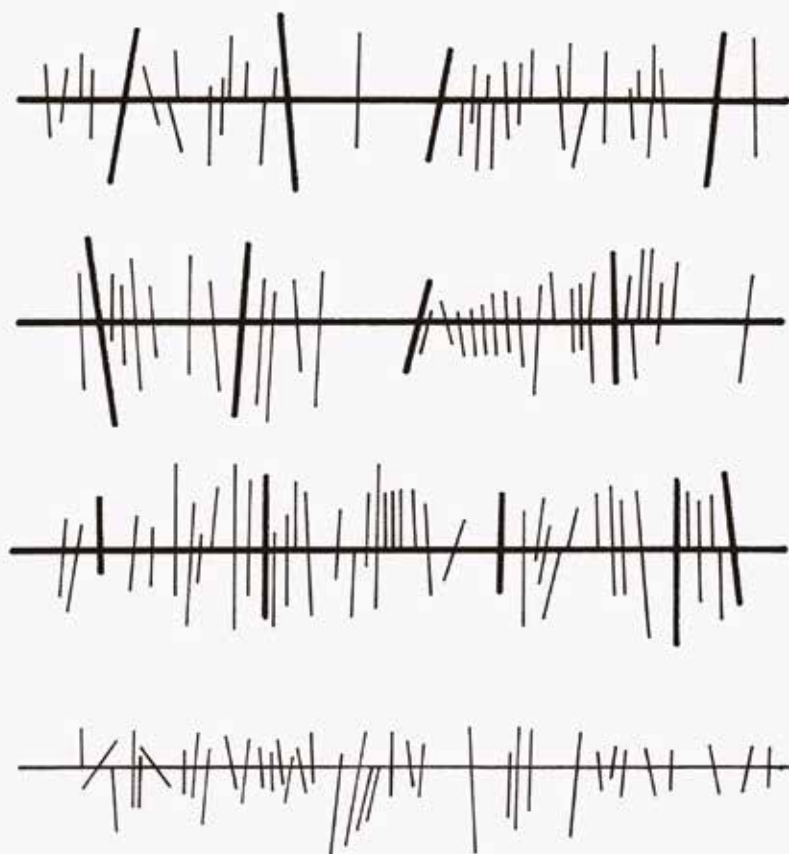
Handwritten cursive script, possibly a signature or name, featuring a prominent vertical stroke.

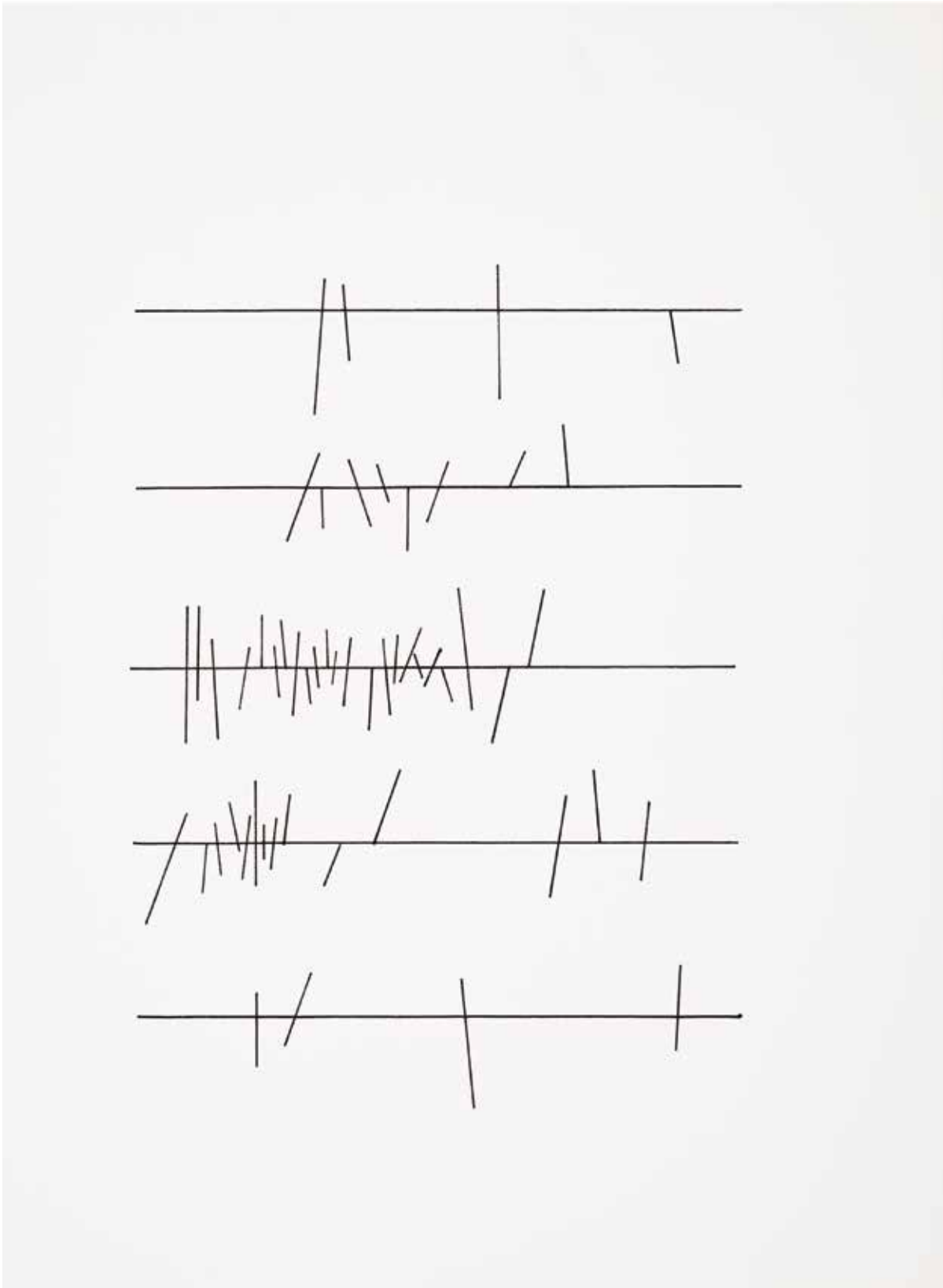
Handwritten cursive script, possibly a signature or name, featuring a prominent vertical stroke.





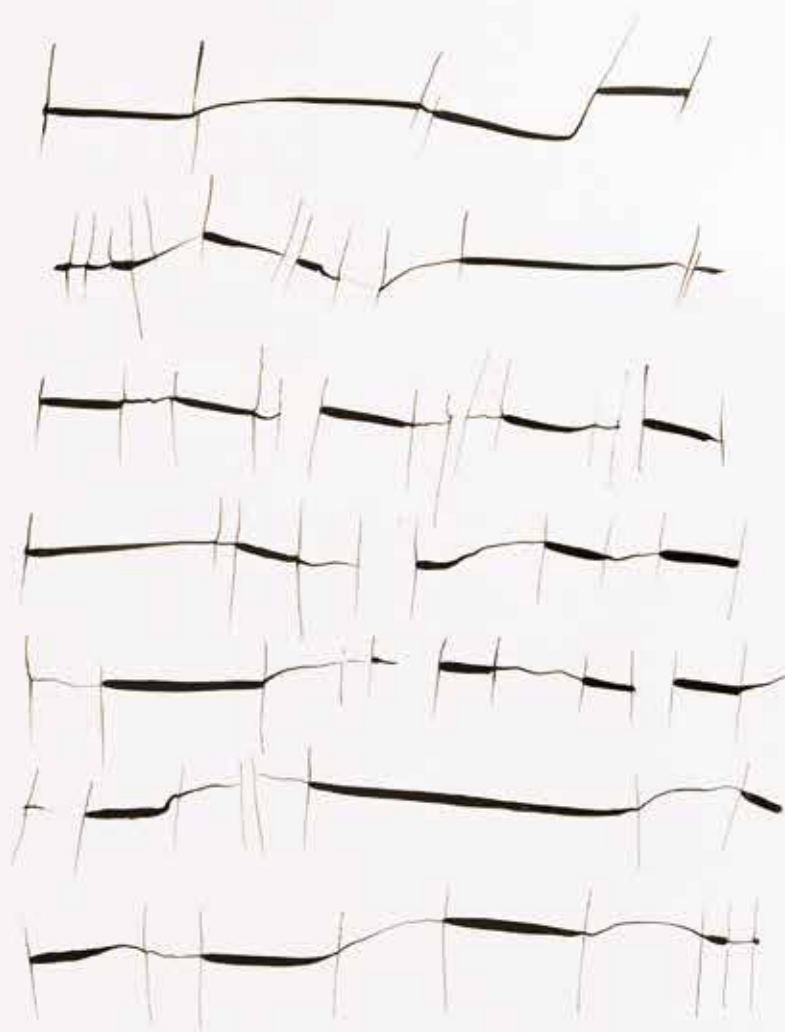






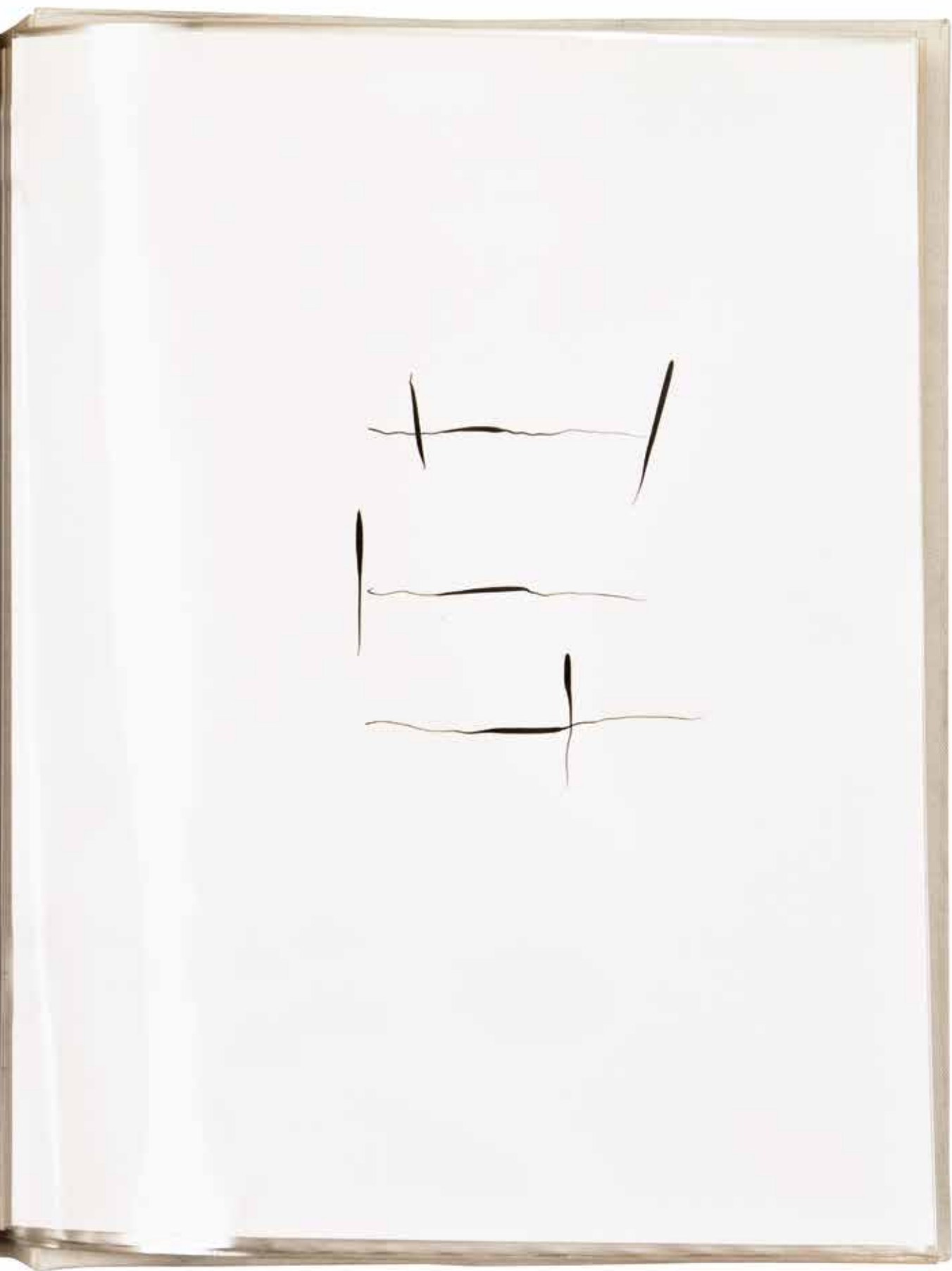


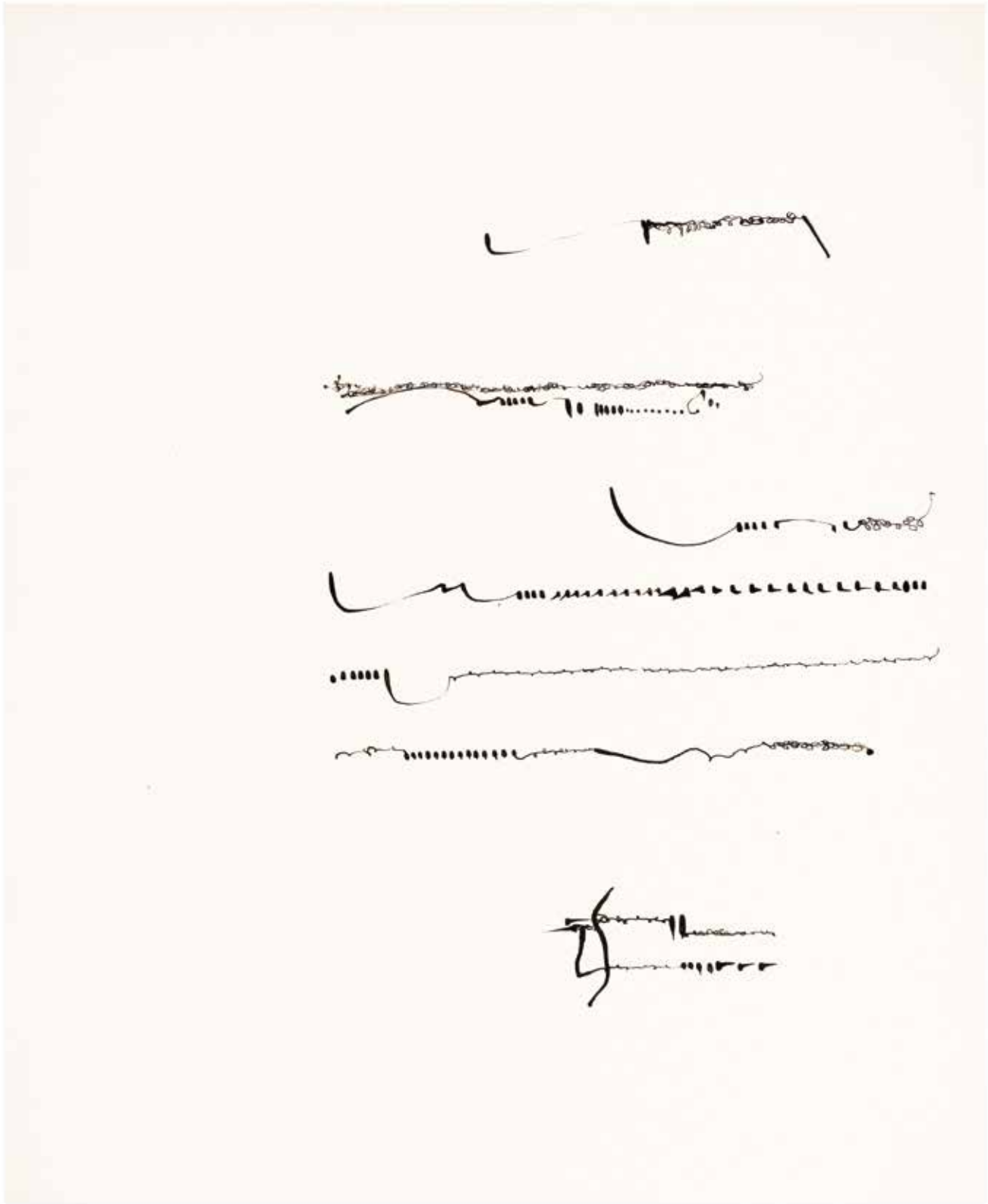
*Libro N° 1* [Book No. 1], 1997



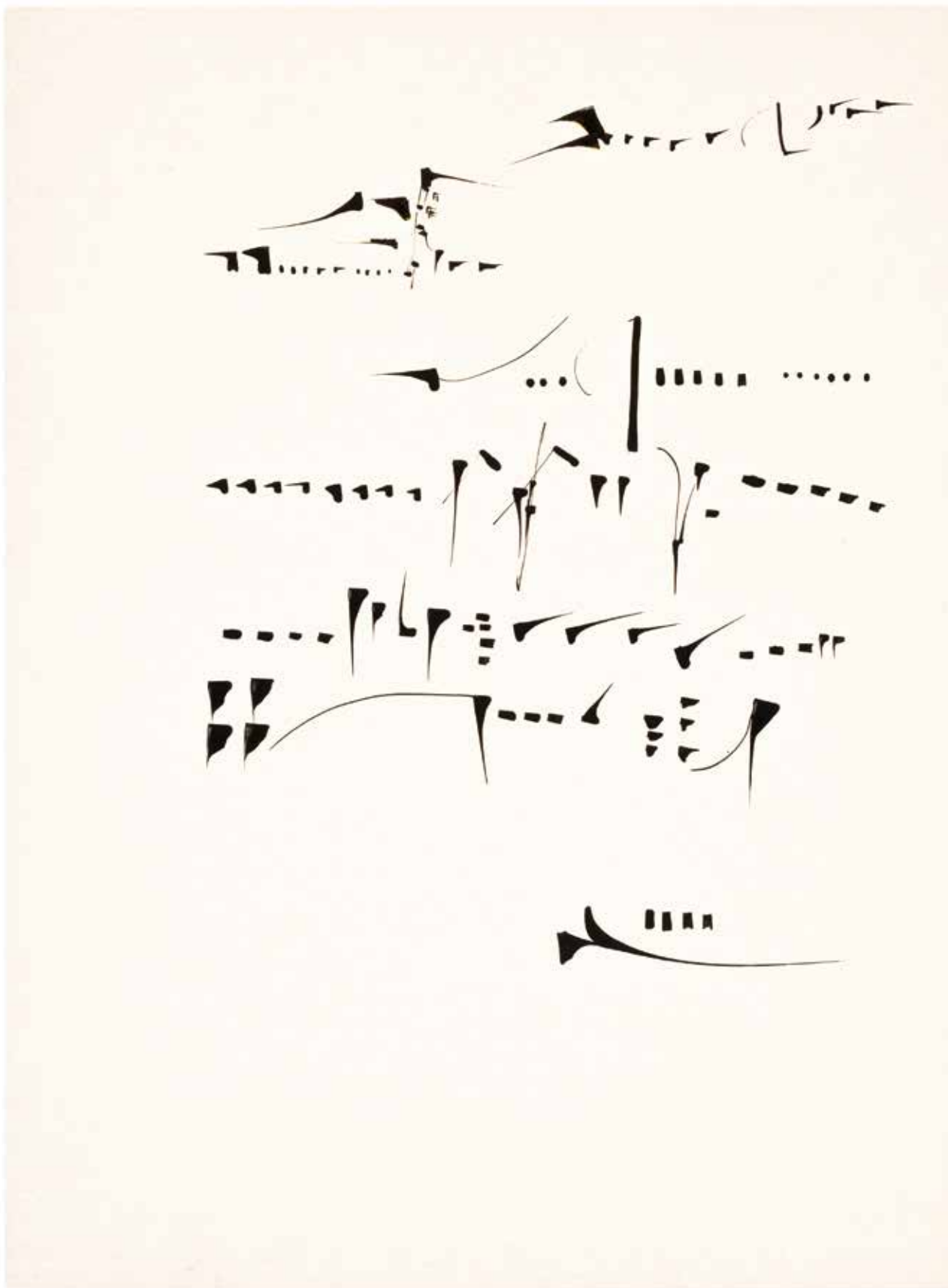




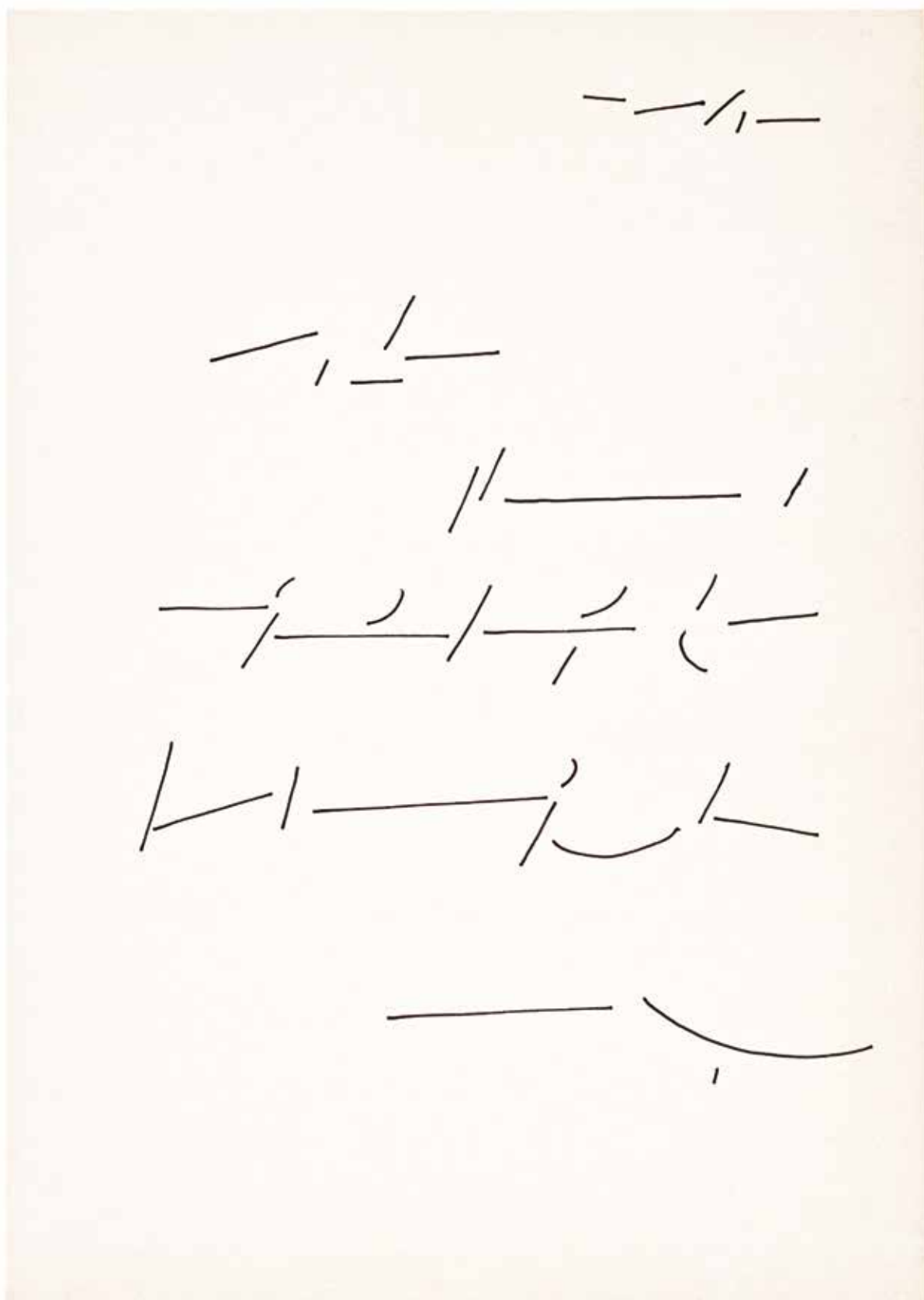




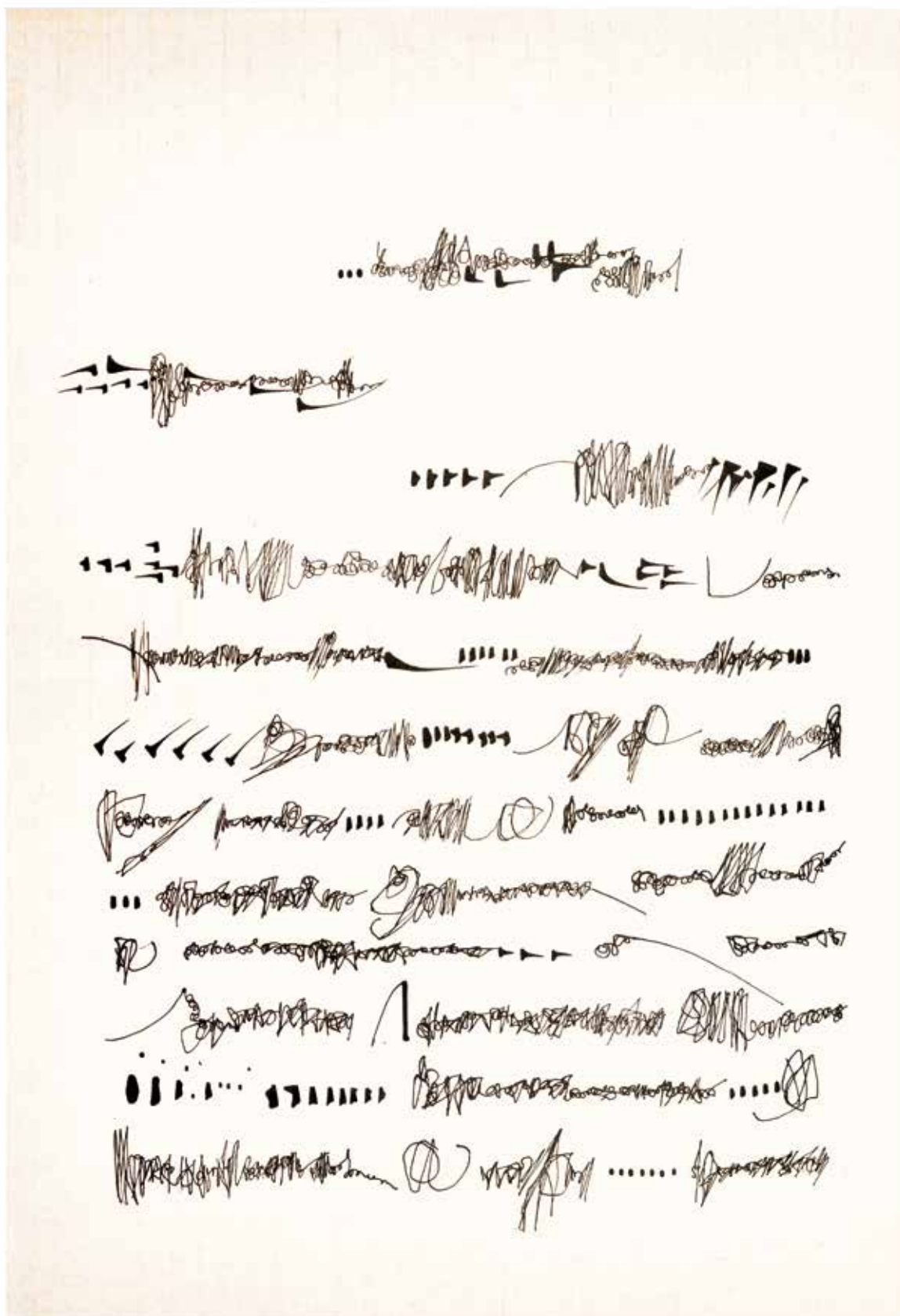
Sin título (carta) [Untitled (letter)], 1970s



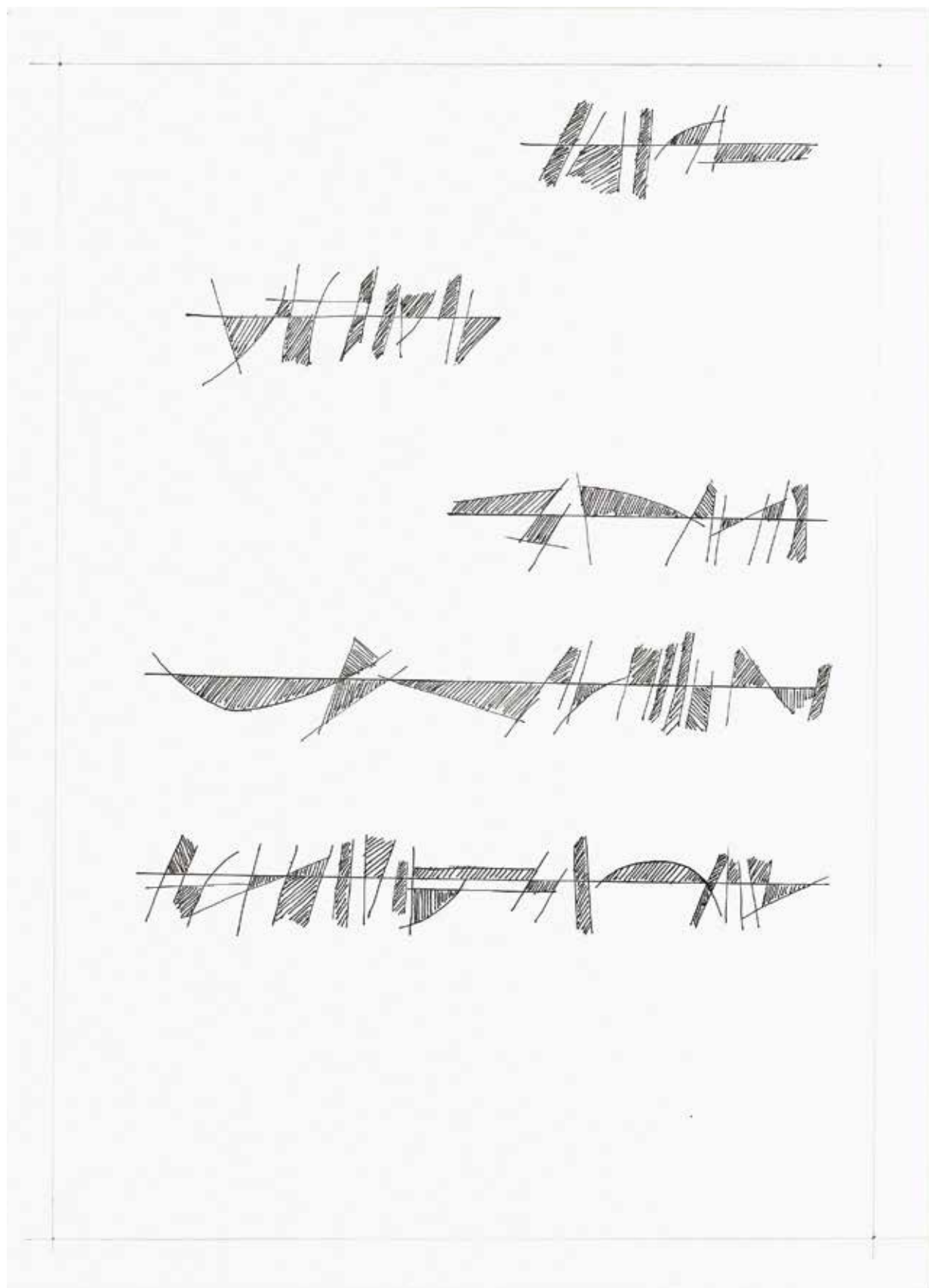
Sin título (carta) [Untitled (letter)], 1970s



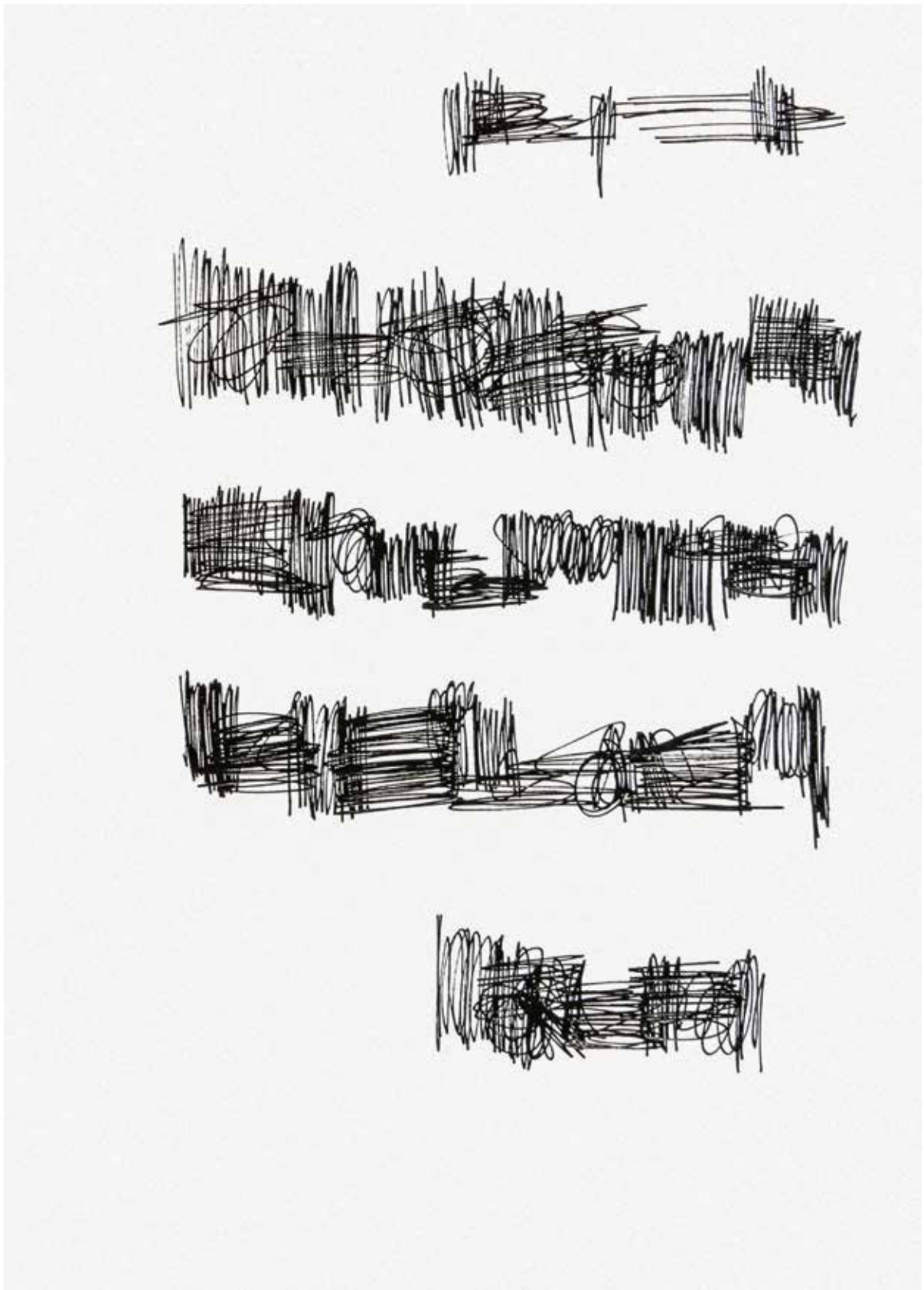
Sin título (carta) [Untitled (letter)], 1970s



Sin título (carta) [Untitled (letter)], 1971

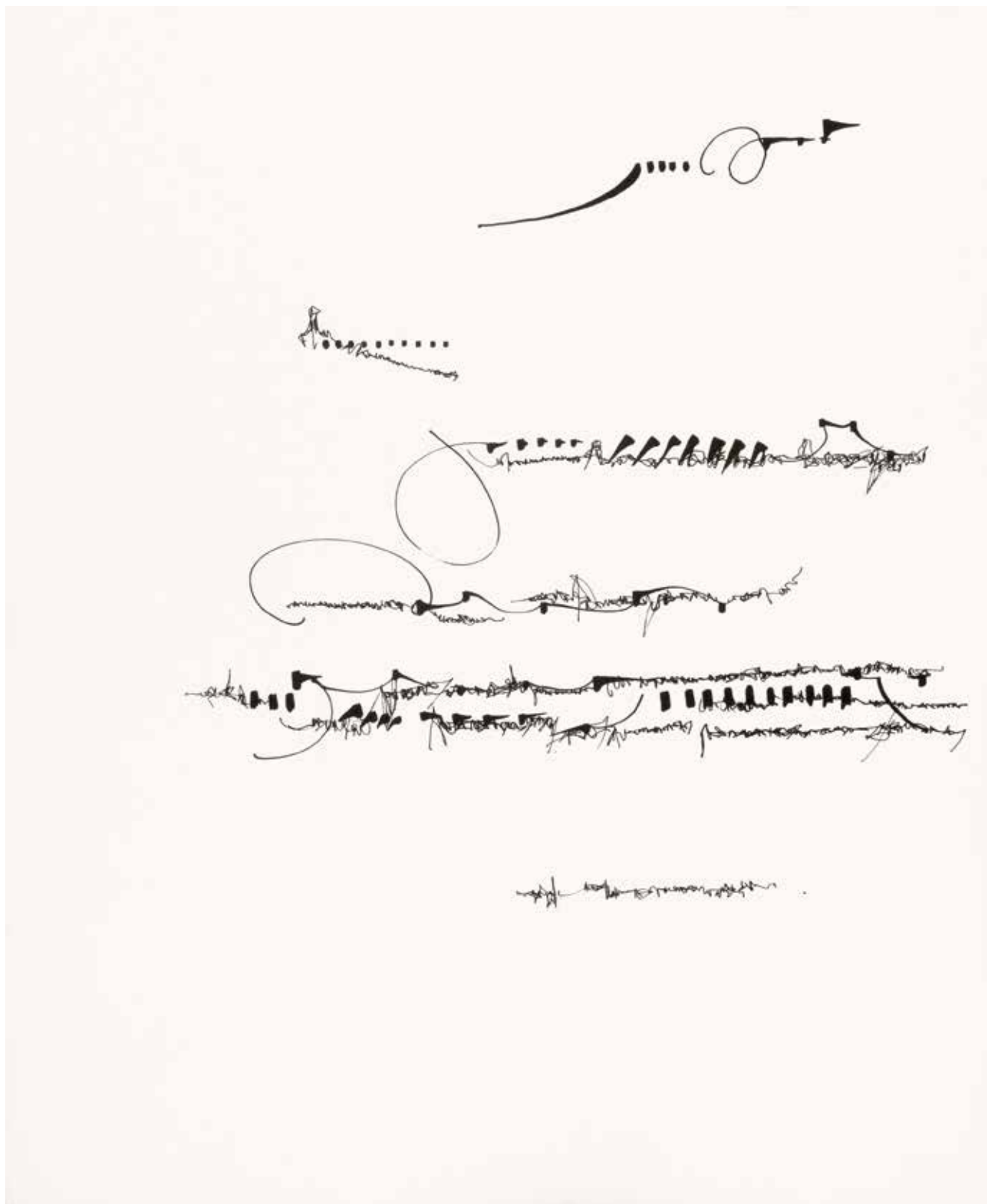


Sin título (carta) [Untitled (letter)], 1974

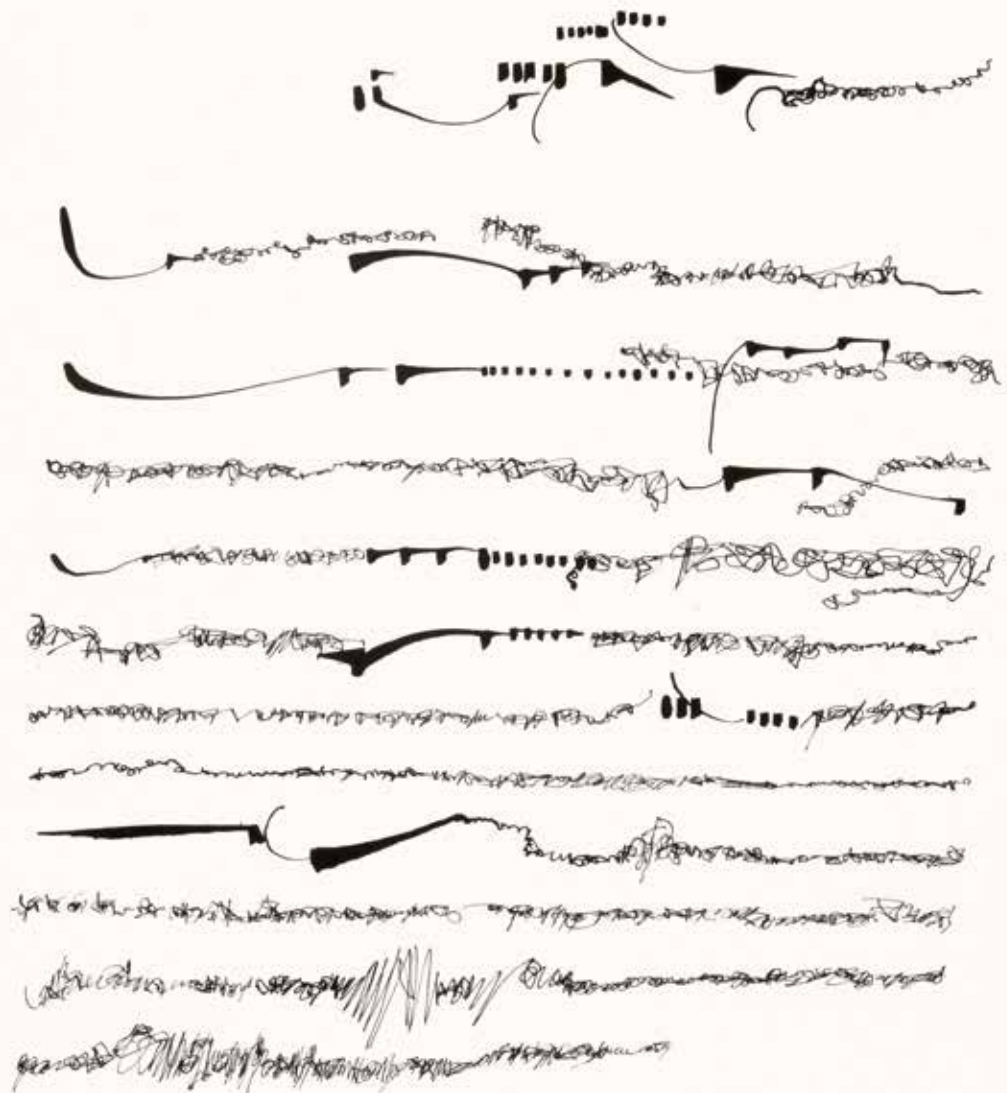


Sin título (carta) [Untitled (letter)], ca. 1970

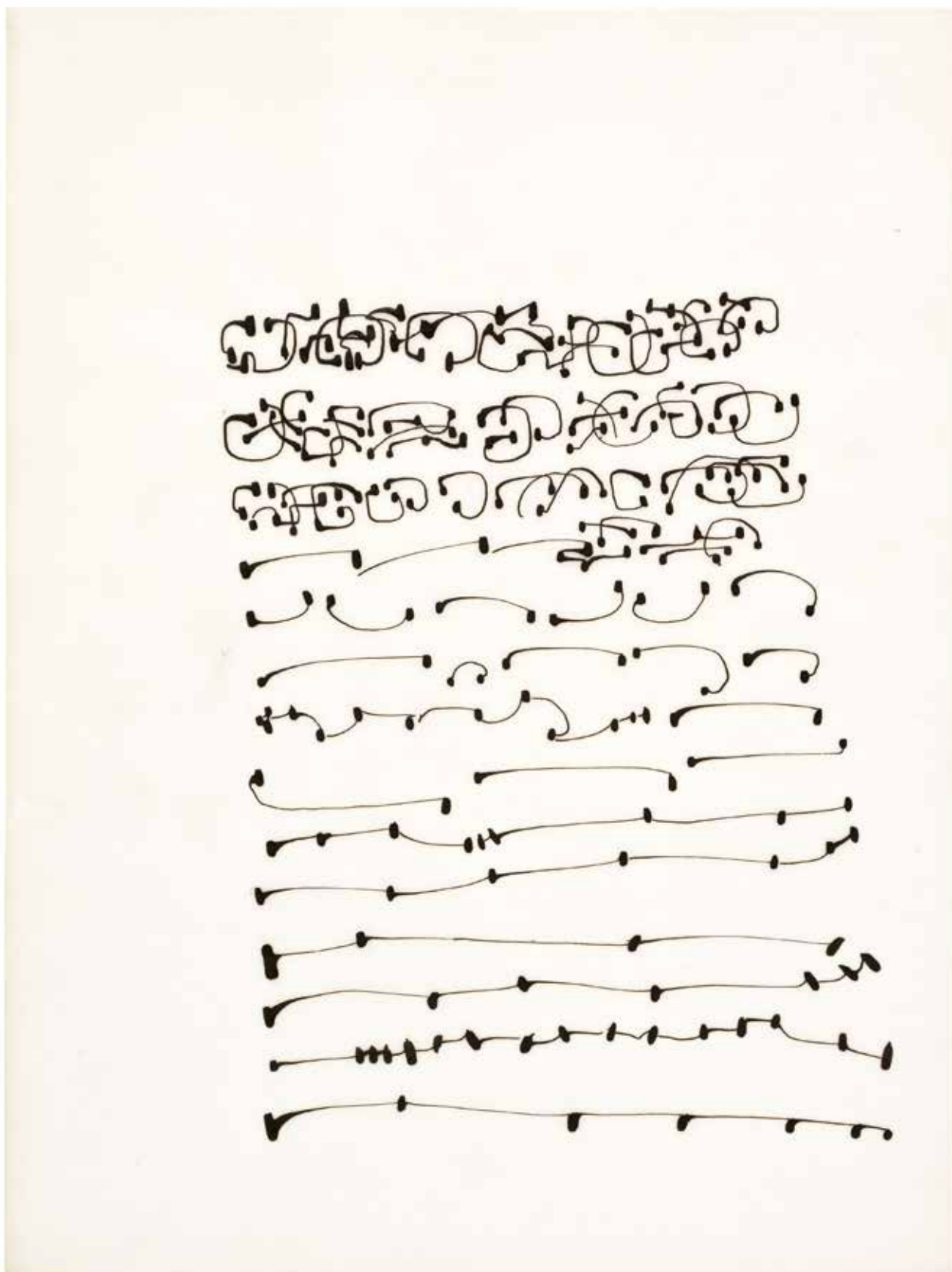




*Diez cartas, 1970-2010. Cartas para mandar.  
En homenaje a la idea original del arquitecto  
Amancio Williams [Ten Letters, 1970-2010.  
Letters to be sent. Homage to the original idea  
of architect Amancio Williams] (fragment), 2012*







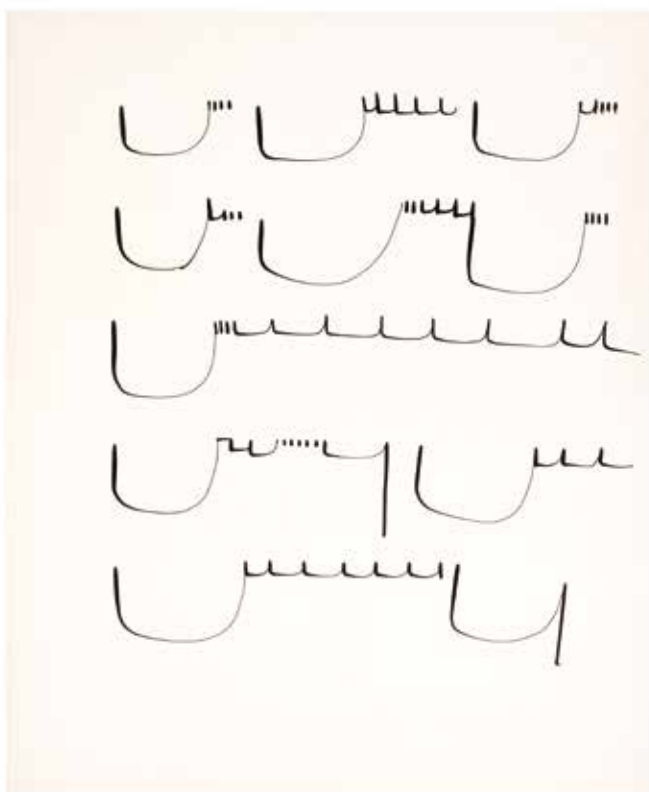
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], 1970s

Handwritten text in a stylized script, consisting of three lines of characters.

Handwritten text in a stylized script, consisting of three lines of characters.

Handwritten text in a stylized script, consisting of two lines of characters.

Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], 1970s

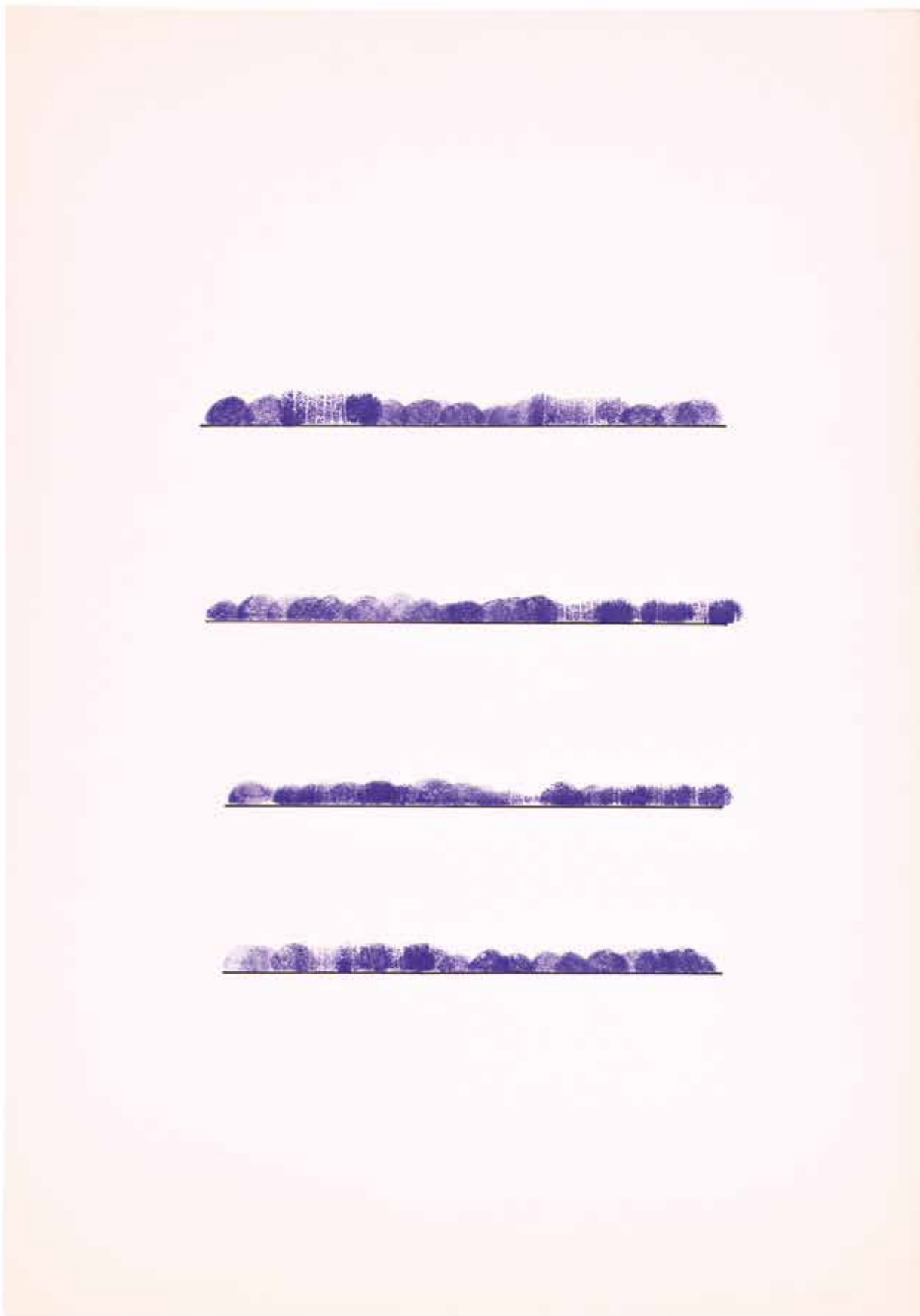


Sin título (textos) [Untitled (texts)], 1970s



Sin título (textos) [Untitled (texts)], 1970s

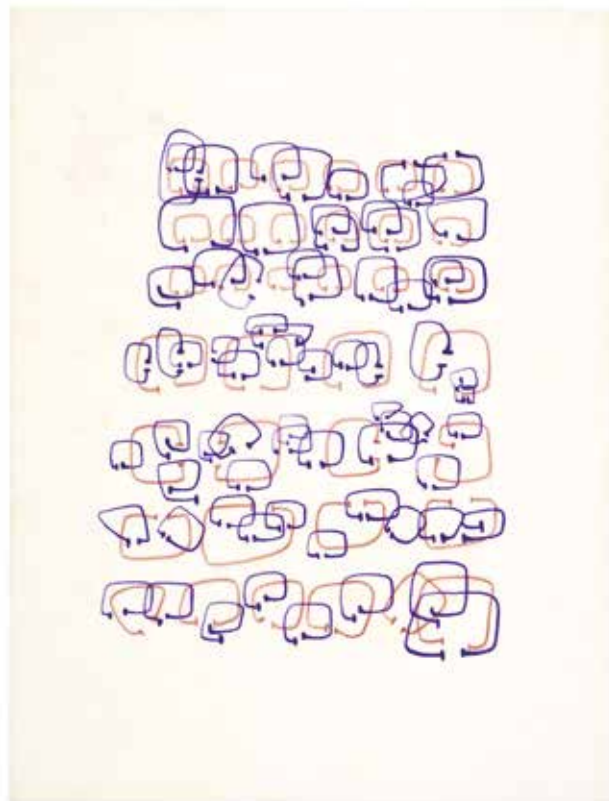




Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], 1970s



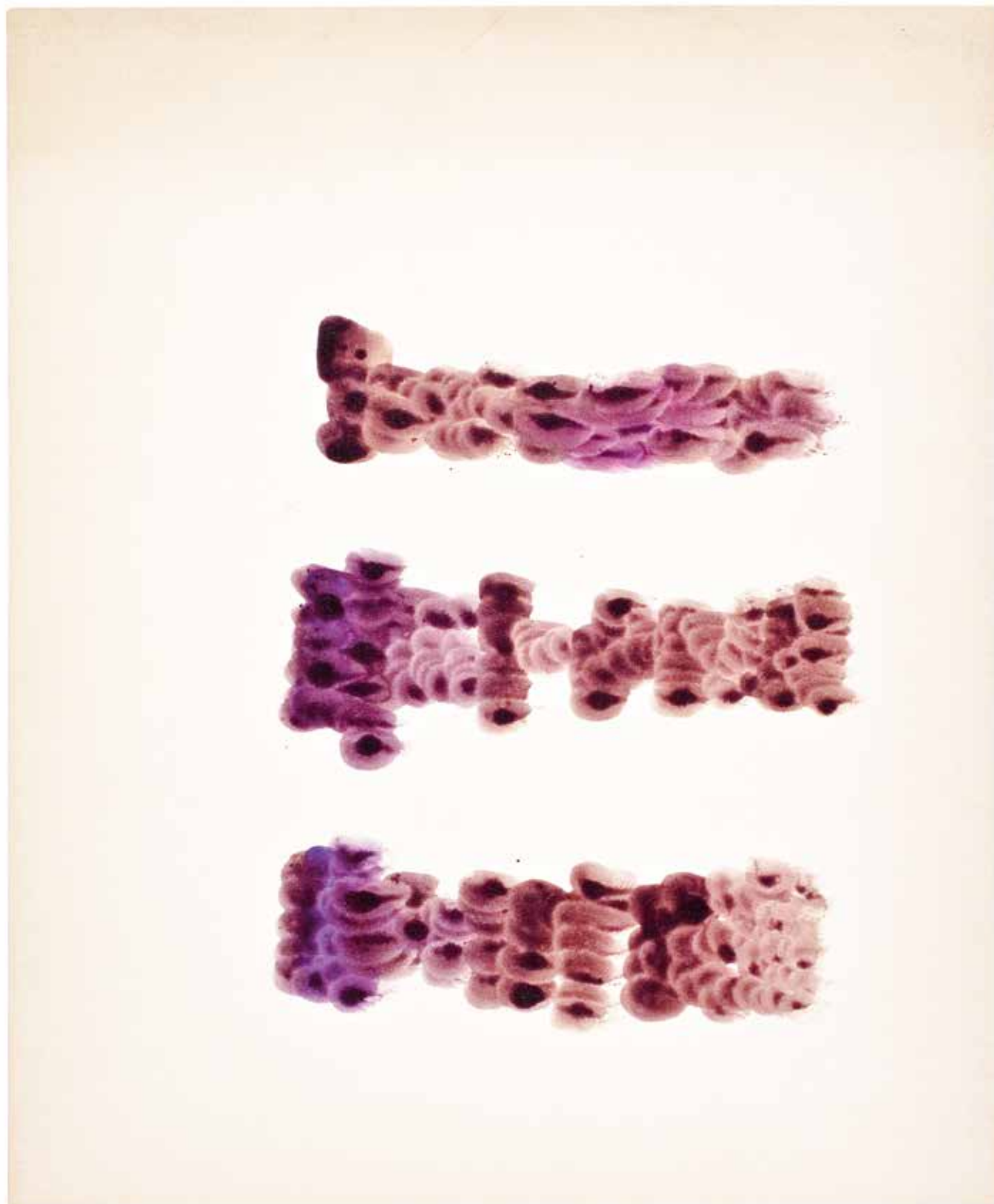
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], 1970s



Sin título (textos) [Untitled (texts)], 1970s



Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], 1970s



*Texto 17* [Text 17], 1974



Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], 1970s

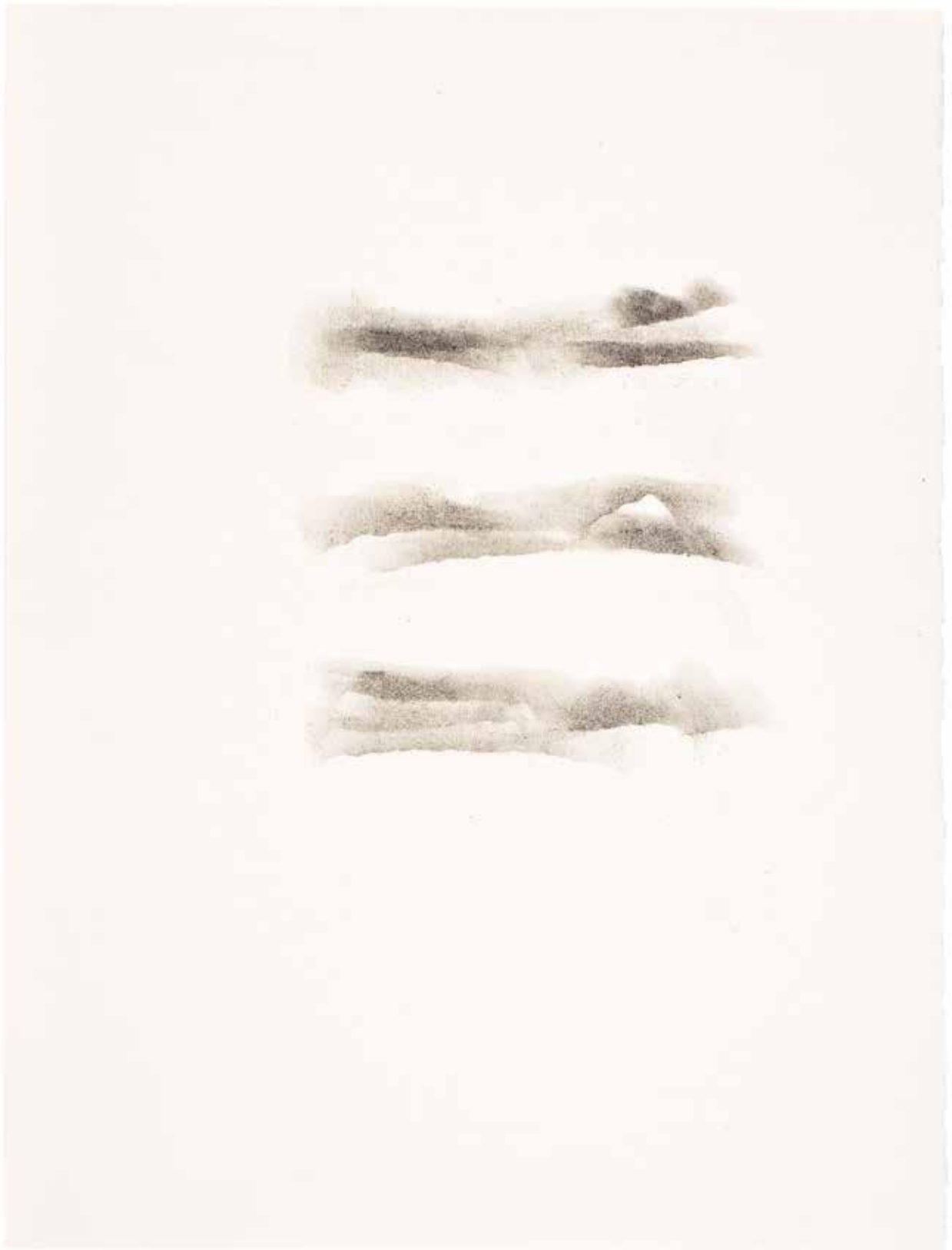


*Cuatro textos* [Four Texts], 1978





Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], ca. 1997–2006



*Texto 1/1* [Text 1/1], 1998

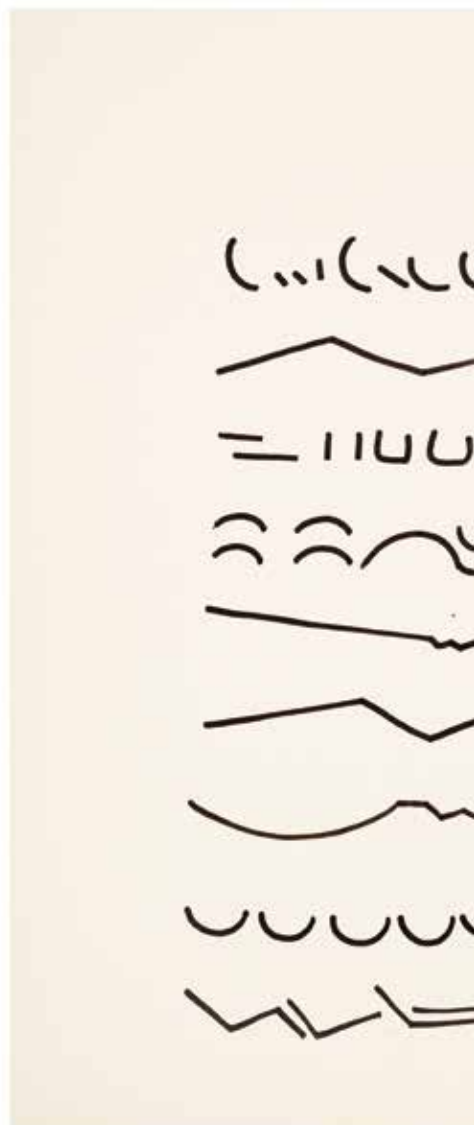
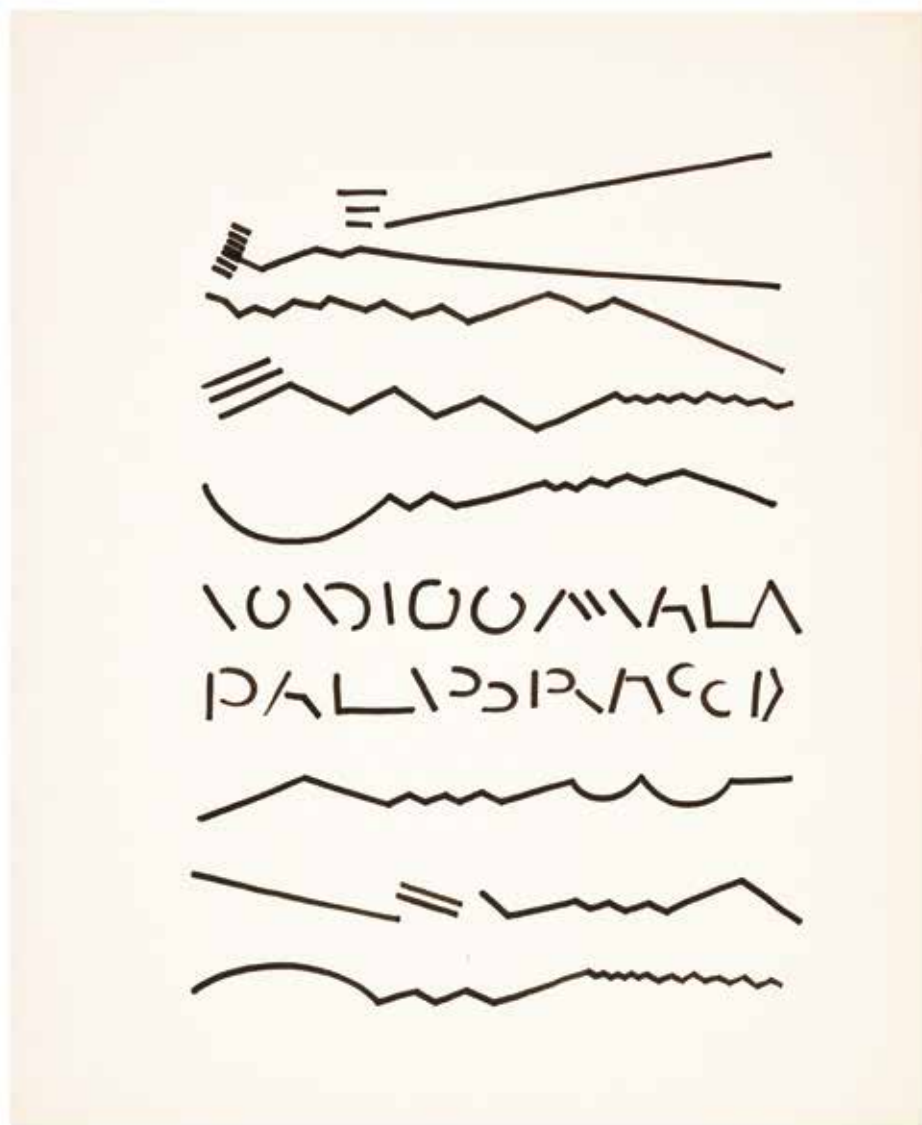


$\cup. + !-) =$  *lo siento, mose*  
 $\cup. + !-) =$   
 $\cup. + !-) =$

$\frac{\cup}{\times} + \frac{\cup}{\cup} = \frac{\cup}{\times}$

$\cup. - = \cup.$   
 $\cup. + = \cup.$   
 $\cup. : = \cup.$   
 $\cup. : = \cup.$

Sin título (textos) [Untitled (texts)],  
 ca. 1970–1971



Sin título (textos) [Untitled (texts)],  
ca. 1970–1971



1-7 = a aburrido

1-7 = a aburrido

1-7 = a aburrido

1-7 = a aburrido

1-7 = a aburrido

1-7 = a aburrido

1-7 = a aburrido

1-7 = a aburrido



Intanc eku dunlep  
hat."

(.) hulk

Blida tuste chagkle tue  
Imanoca jun fintotet  
buc tas cres tenaparac.  
Ducles pospe altum.  
Cinguel clameja umnec  
Erispelsu remurac tunem  
Dusco usalet oponi rock  
hemeligor tunor ananasec  
suc hurfa galilecant  
hacayet perun sumka  
lut prerot funfanot  
penoca tetroro dichienec  
Iqus paplot genolecac

Centreloschivay  
Centre loschiway  
Centreloschivay  
Centre loschiway  
Centreloschivay







Nosotros nosotros  
nosotros, nosotros  
Ellos Ellos Ellos  
Ellos ellos ellos  
ellos ellos ellos  
ellos ellos ellos  
él cree, él cree  
él cree él cree  
él cree él cree  
pero no es cierto

justicia  
nuestro  
porque  
no es  
lo que  
abstracción  
de la  
unidad

Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], ca. 1970–1973

in my opinion  
the most common  
to the coast  
and to the  
interior  
of the country  
the most common  
to the coast  
and to the  
interior

the most common  
to the coast  
and to the  
interior  
of the country  
the most common  
to the coast  
and to the  
interior  
of the country  
the most common  
to the coast  
and to the  
interior  
of the country



Hoy comenzaremos  
por: afectuosamente.  
¿A ver?

Afectuosamente  
afectuosamente, abec-  
tuosamente, afectuo-  
samente, afectuosamente

Bien, sigamos, cariño-  
samente.

cariñosamente cariño-  
samente cariñosamente  
cariñosamente

Otra vez...

cariño sa men te

ahora : afectivamente  
afectivamente  
afectivamente  
e.

Cuidado, un poquitito  
de atención : afectivamente.  
afectivamente, afectosa-  
mente afectosamente  
te

Bueno, no impacientarse ya  
va a salir bien.

afectosamente  
e

Buenas noches a todos  
a cada uno de ustedes  
muy buenas noches.

Ante todo quería decir  
les que me encuentro  
muy feliz en este lugar.  
Que es ésta una de  
las más hermosas ciuda-  
des que he visitado y don-  
de más feliz me he sen-  
tido. Sus hombres verda-  
deramente hospitalarios  
Me comparten con una  
generosidad sin límites

y ahora con uds, la dulce,  
la sutil, la enigmática,  
la GRANDE, la grande  
por encima de todas las  
cosas, la muy Gran-  
de: Soledad

Comprendo la emoción  
de cada uno de uds de  
estar en este privile-  
giado momento con  
ella.

Se preguntarán uds  
para tan magnífica  
presentación; porque he  
elegido a la querida

Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)], ca. 1970-1973



ciudad de Buenos Aires? Si si, sé que eso me lo preguntarán. Pues bien, dejaré pasar un instante más.

Ya ven, ahora la emoción es mía. Pero por favor no se acerquen tanto, yo puedo verlos a todos. Y ella si es necesario hablará más Alto, o gritará no se acerquen tanto por favor. Atención podría asfixiarse.

O podrían asfixiarse uds. y morirían. Pero señores calma. Ella tiene capacidad como para estar con todos ustedes. Su sabiduría, recibida de generación en generación es la que le permite poder estar hoy aquí entre nosotros.

Permitámonle hablar unos instantes. Será un día inolvidable. Lo aseguro.

Decime Decime  
decime. decime  
deci deci deci  
decilo decilo  
decilo.

No te calles  
No te calles  
No te calles  
No te calles  
No te calles

Escuchá, escuchá. A veces  
es un poco de música, otras  
palabras y palabras y más  
palabras y se habla se habla  
se habla se habla  
se habla se habla  
se habla se habla  
se habla se  
habla se ha  
bla.





Diario 1 Año 1 (Newspaper 1 Year 1), 5th edition, 1972/1995 (cover)

Diario 1 Año 1 (Newspaper 1 Year 1), 5th edition, 1972/1995 (cover)

Diario 1 Año 1 (Newspaper 1 Year 1), 5th edition, 1972/1995 (cover)

Diario 1 Año 1 (Newspaper 1 Year 1), 5th edition, 1972/1995 (cover)



1972  
 1972  
 1972

1972  
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 1972

1972  
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1972  
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1972  
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 1972

1972  
 1972  
 1972







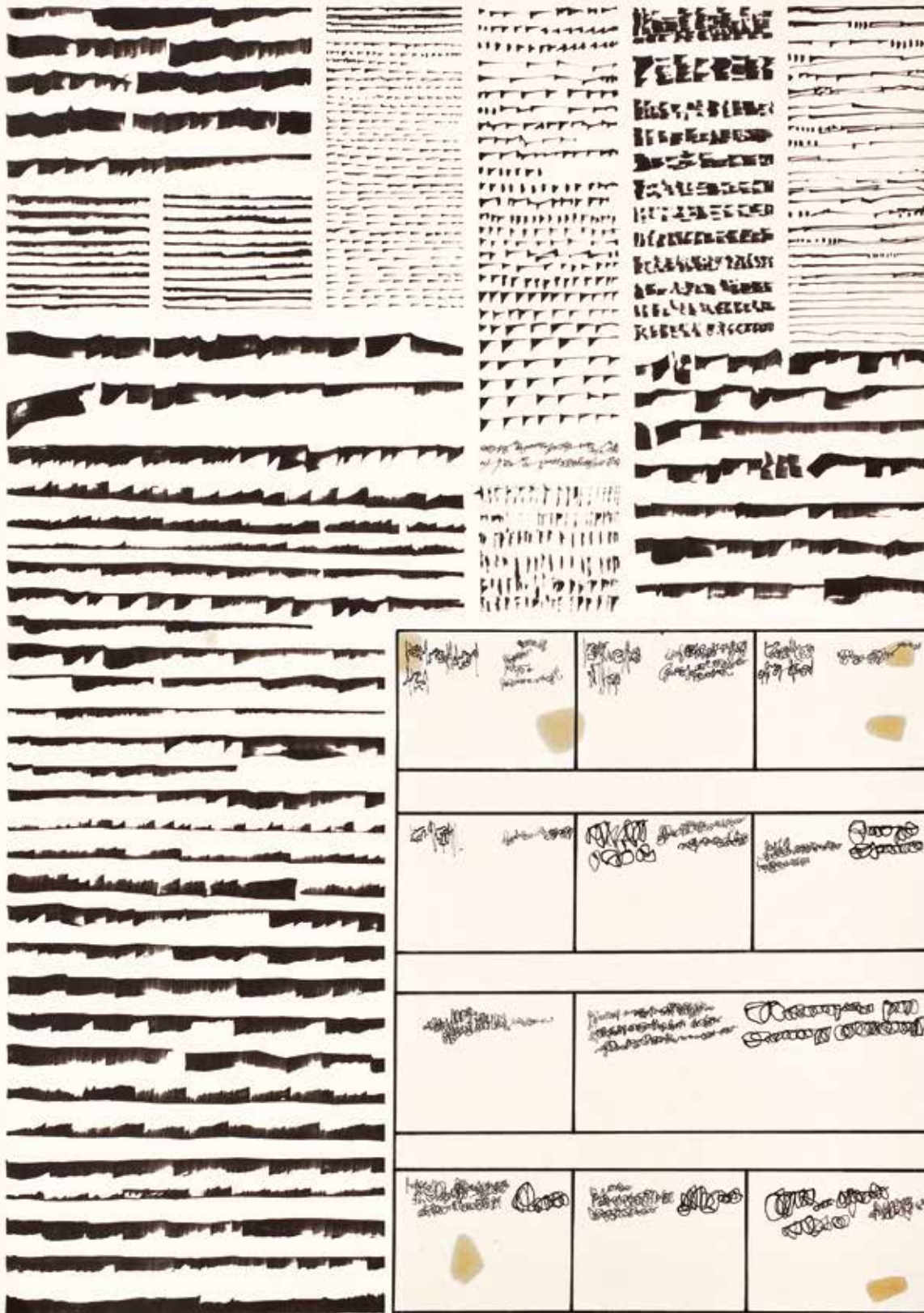
















1167

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document. The text is arranged in several columns, with some lines being more prominent than others. The script is dense and characteristic of early modern European handwriting.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document. The text is arranged in several columns, with some lines being more prominent than others. The script is dense and characteristic of early modern European handwriting.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document. The text is arranged in several columns, with some lines being more prominent than others. The script is dense and characteristic of early modern European handwriting.

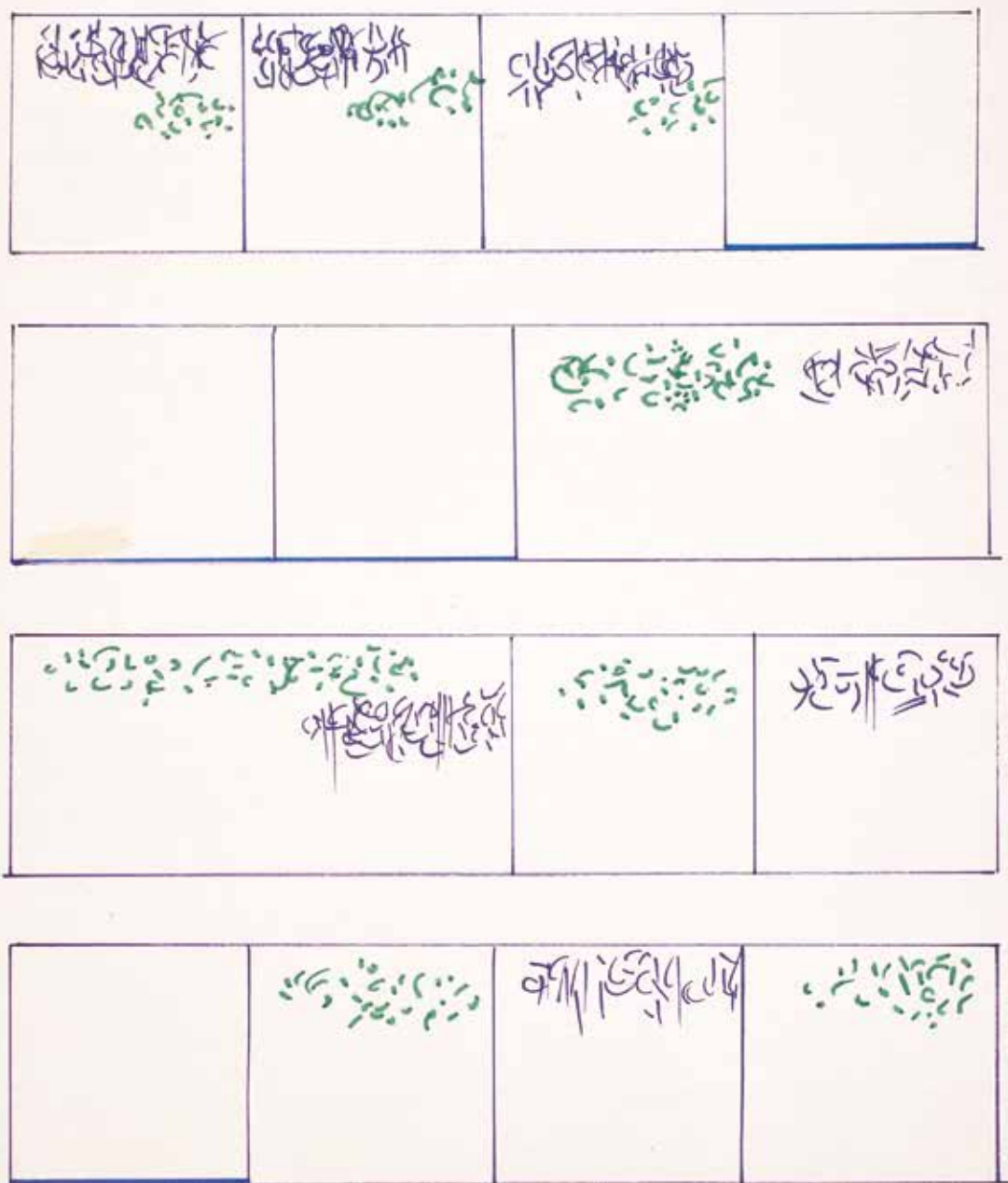
Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document. The text is arranged in several columns, with some lines being more prominent than others. The script is dense and characteristic of early modern European handwriting.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document. The text is arranged in several columns, with some lines being more prominent than others. The script is dense and characteristic of early modern European handwriting.

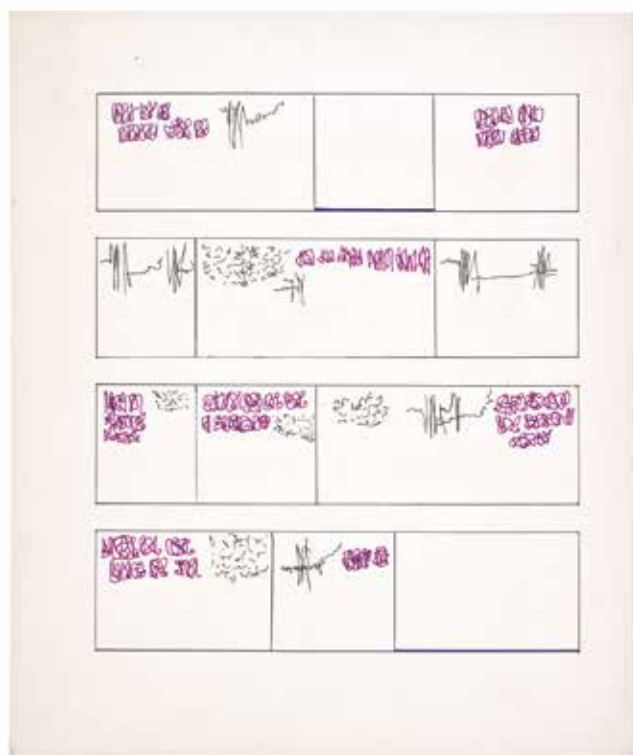


Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document. The text is arranged in several columns, with some lines being more prominent than others. The script is dense and characteristic of early modern European handwriting.





Sin título (historieta)  
[Untitled (comic strip)], ca. 1972–1974



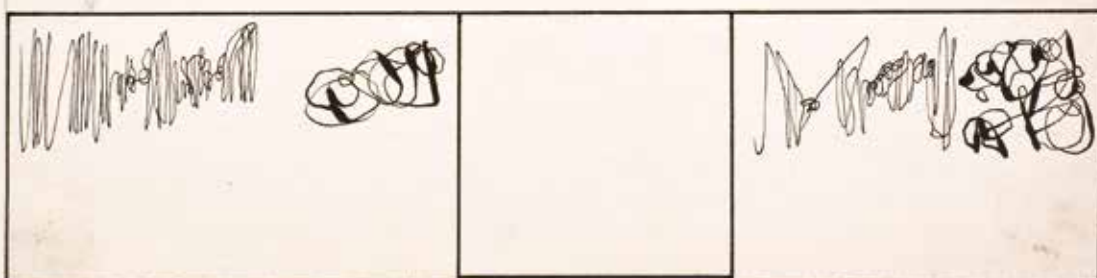
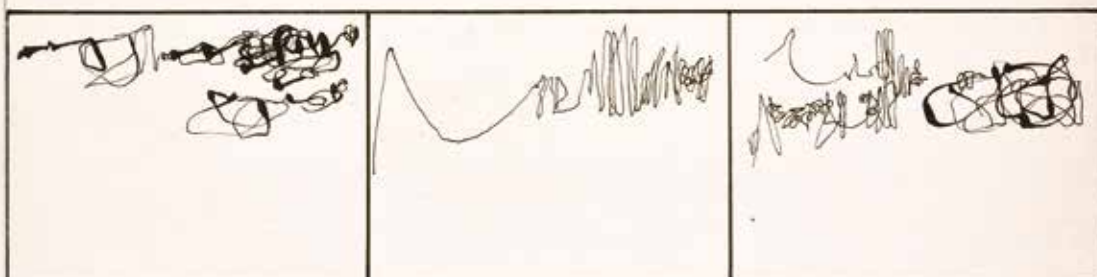
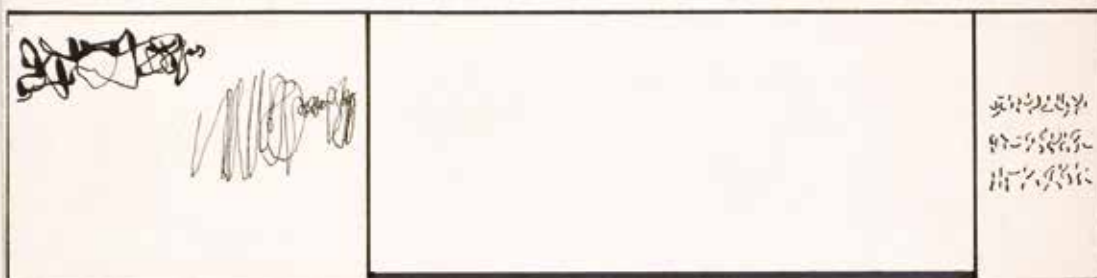
Top  
Sin título (historieta)  
[Untitled (comic strip)], ca. 1972–1974  
Bottom  
Sin título (historieta)  
[Untitled (comic strip)], ca. 1972–1974



GT-453  
3-9-74

CAYC

# fragmento de historieta



**mirtha dermisache**

Inauguración 20 de setiembre  
a las 20 horas - Viamonte 452

Reducir a 23,5 cm.

88

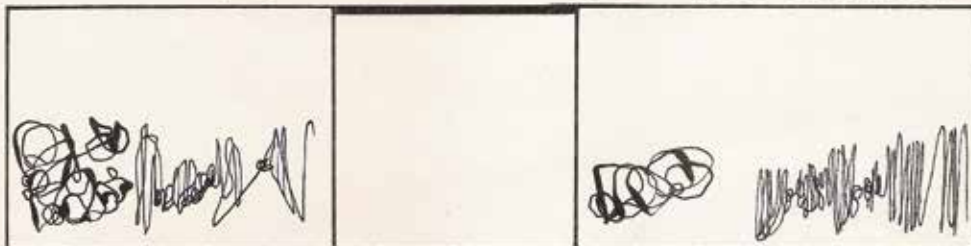
Fragmento de historieta  
[Fragment of Comic Strip], 1974

# cayc

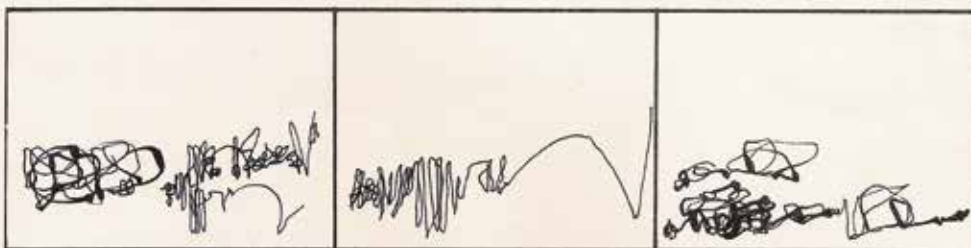
GT-453  
3-9-74

## fragmento de historieta

argentina



buenos aires

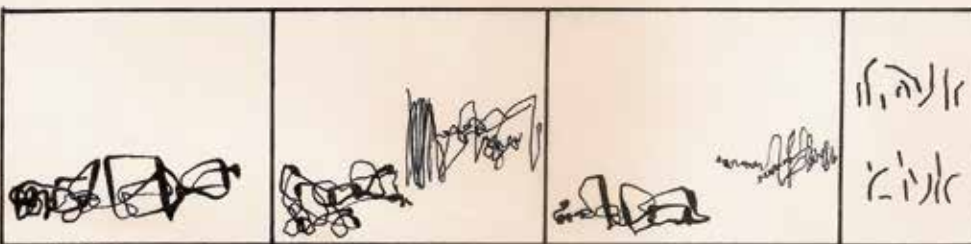


566-8046

elpidio gonzález 4070



centro de arte y comunicación

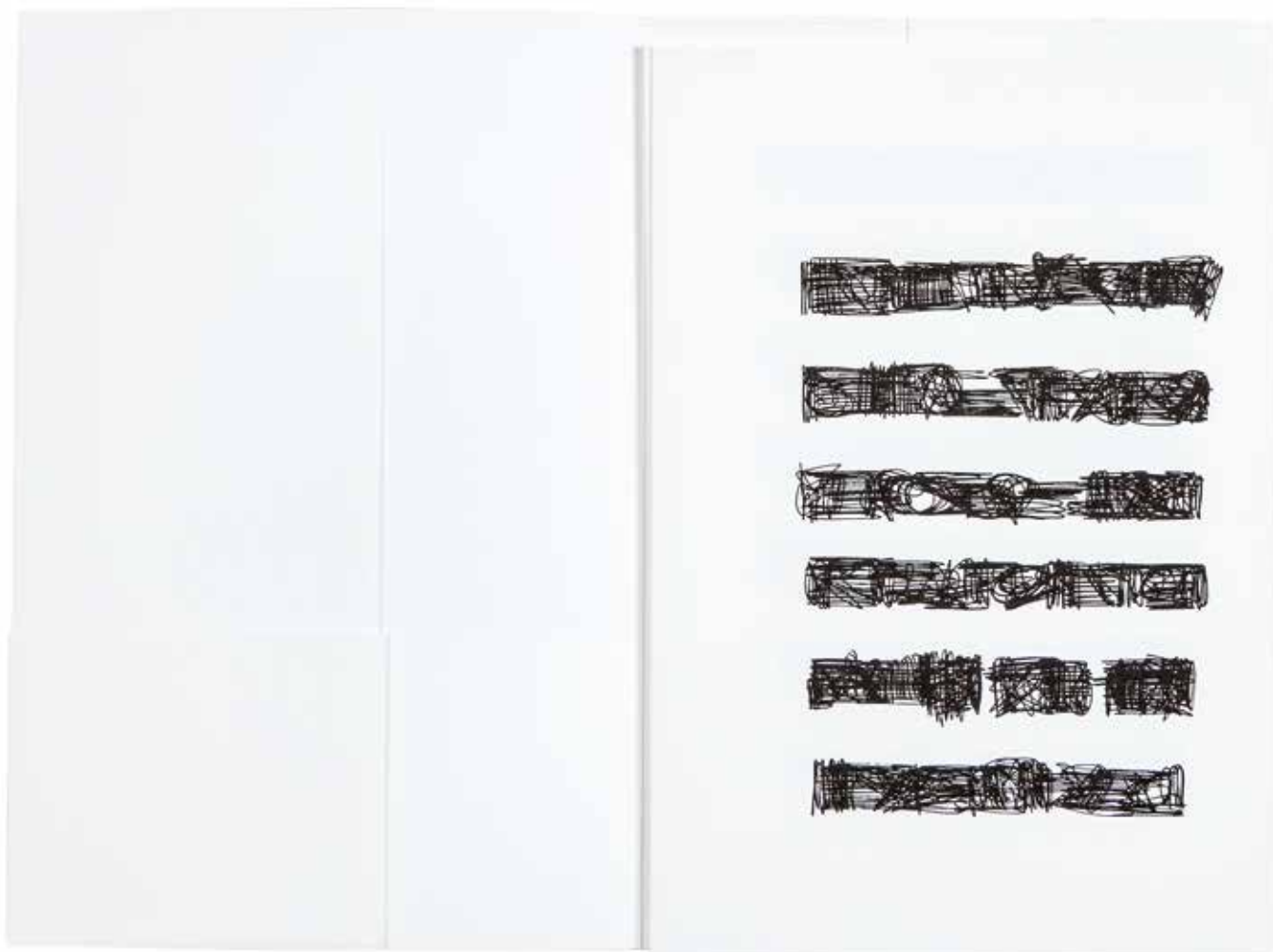


### mirtha dermisache

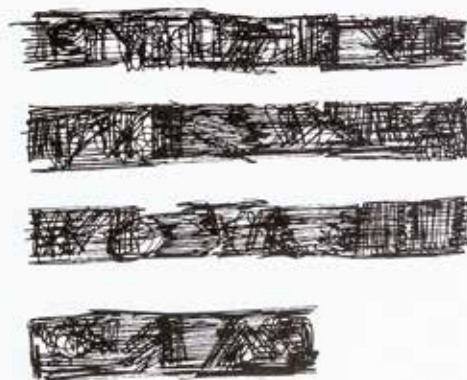
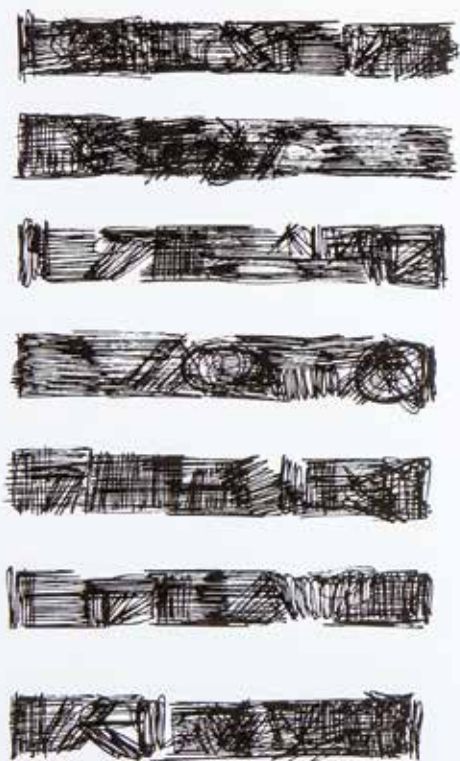
Inauguración 20 de setiembre  
a las 21 horas - Viamonte 452

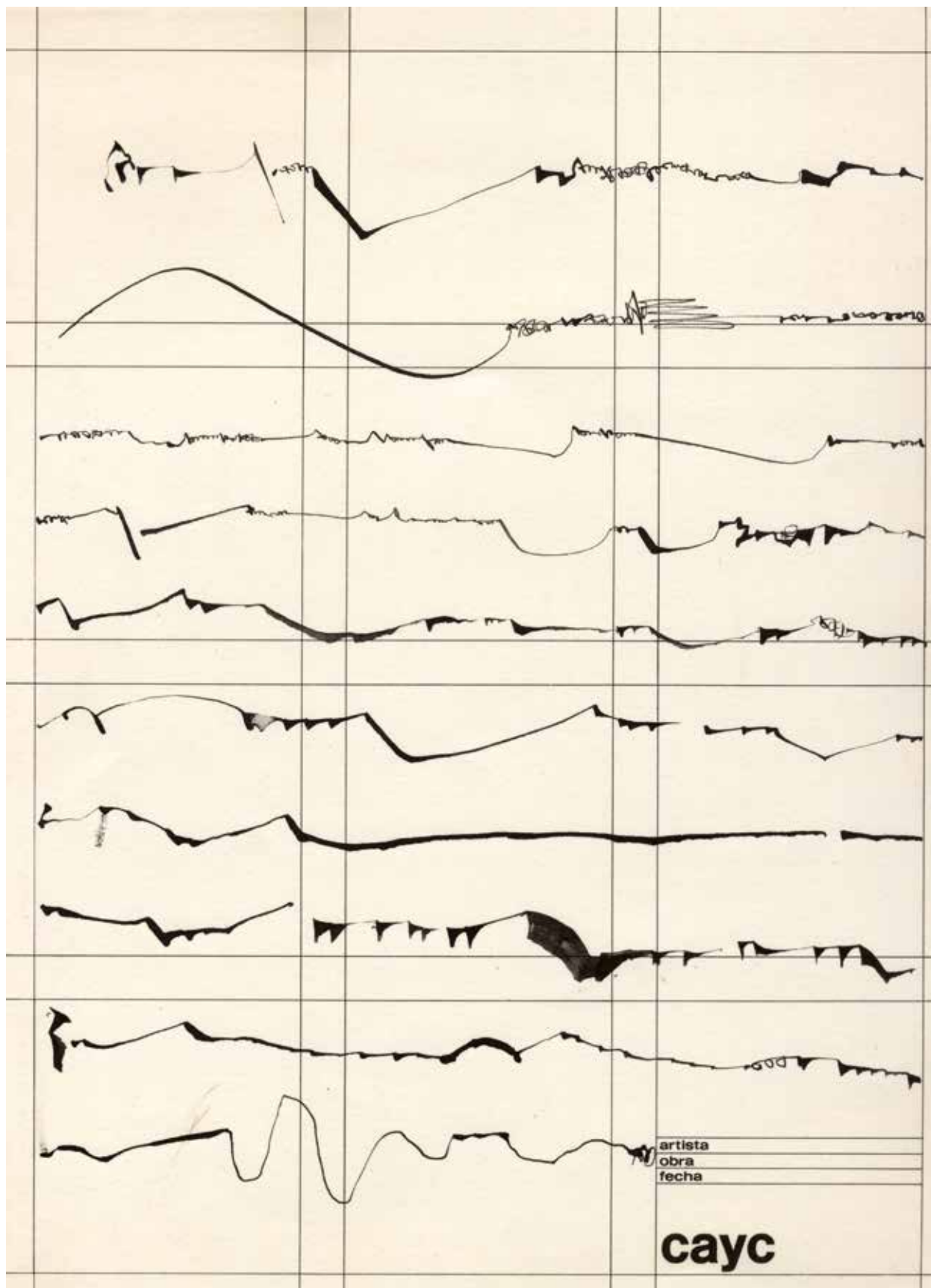
*Fragmento de historieta*  
[Fragment of Comic Strip], 1974



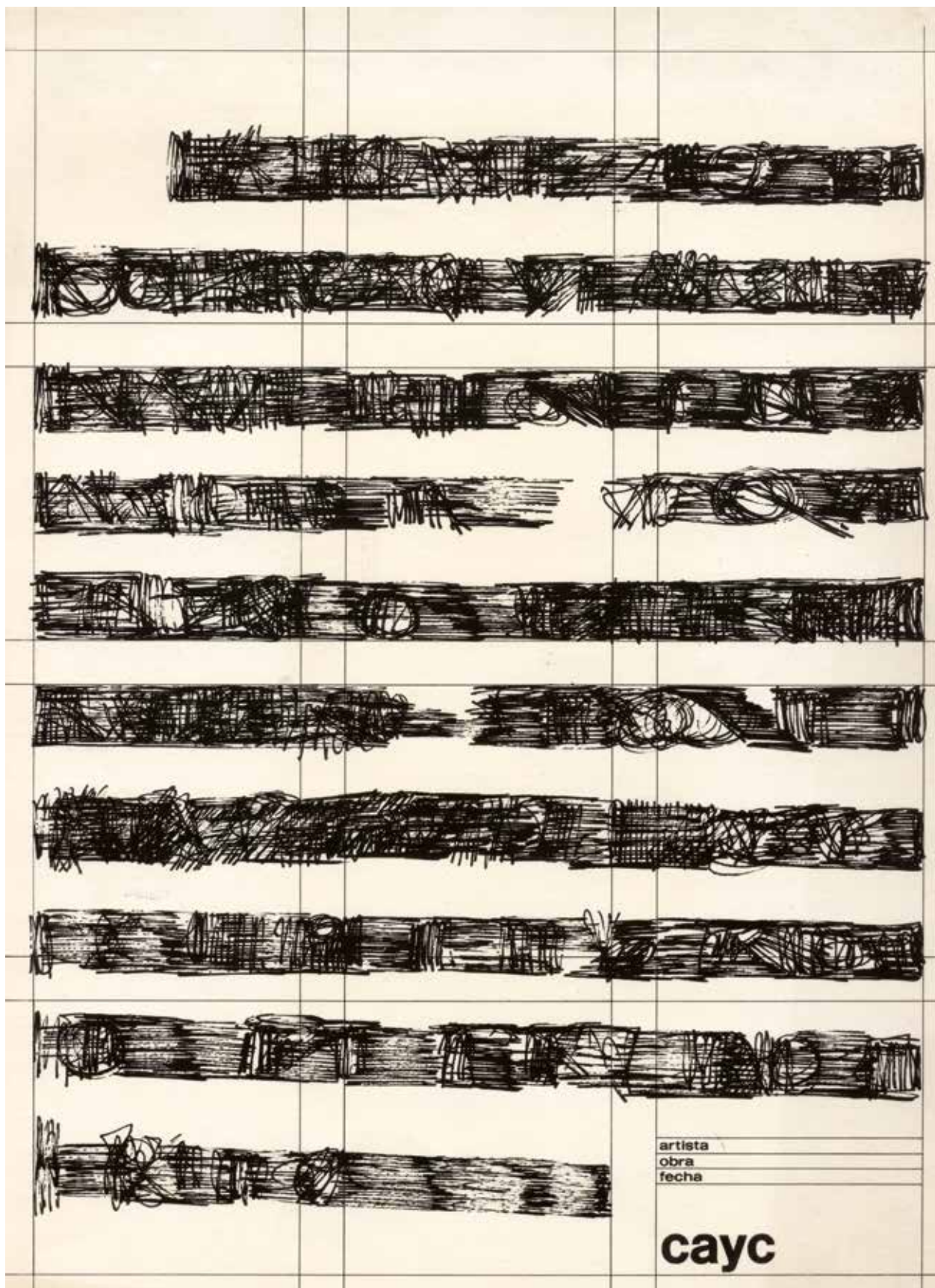


*Fragmento de historia*  
[Fragment of a Story], 1974



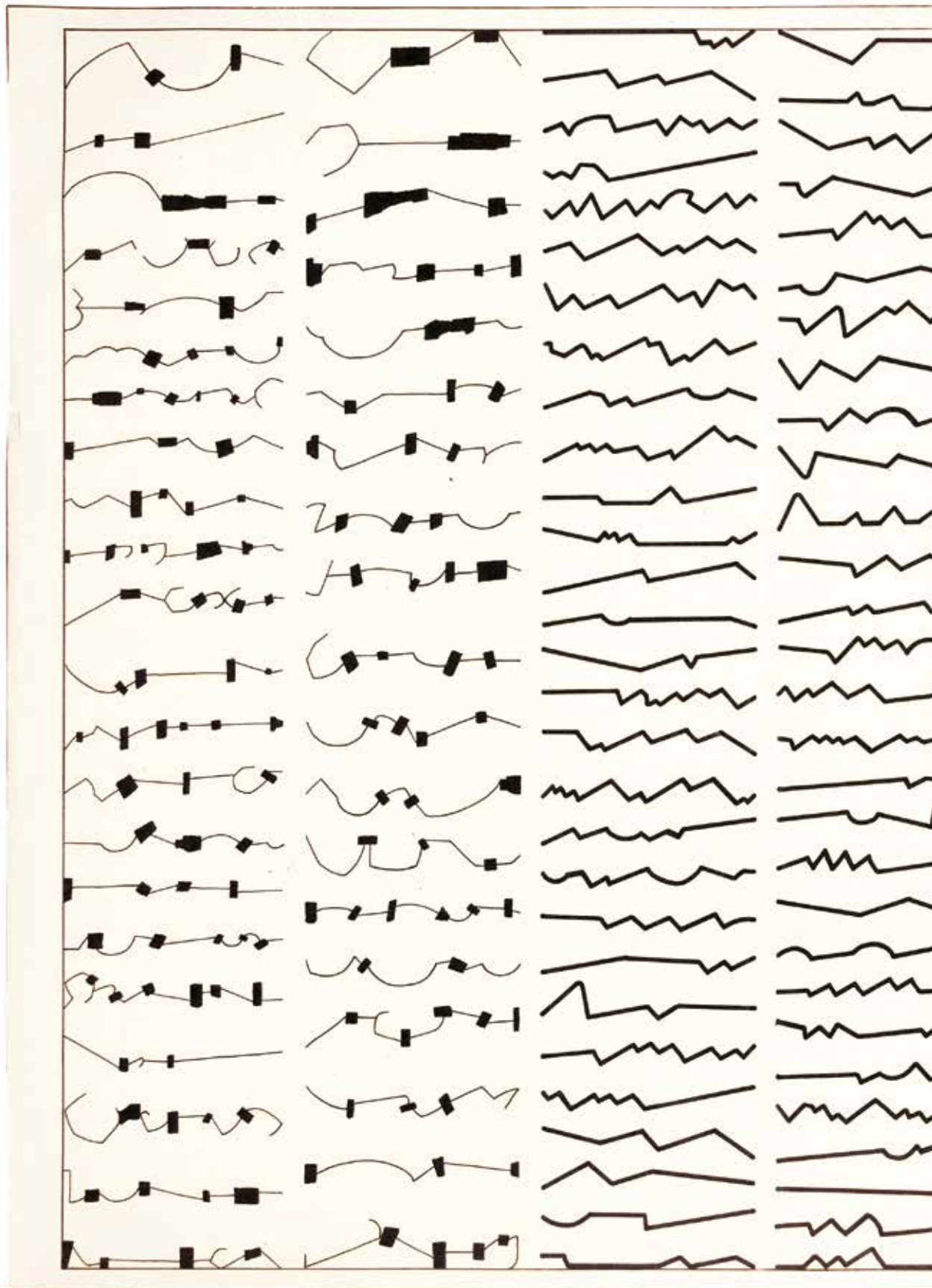


*Página de un libro [Page from a Book], 1974*

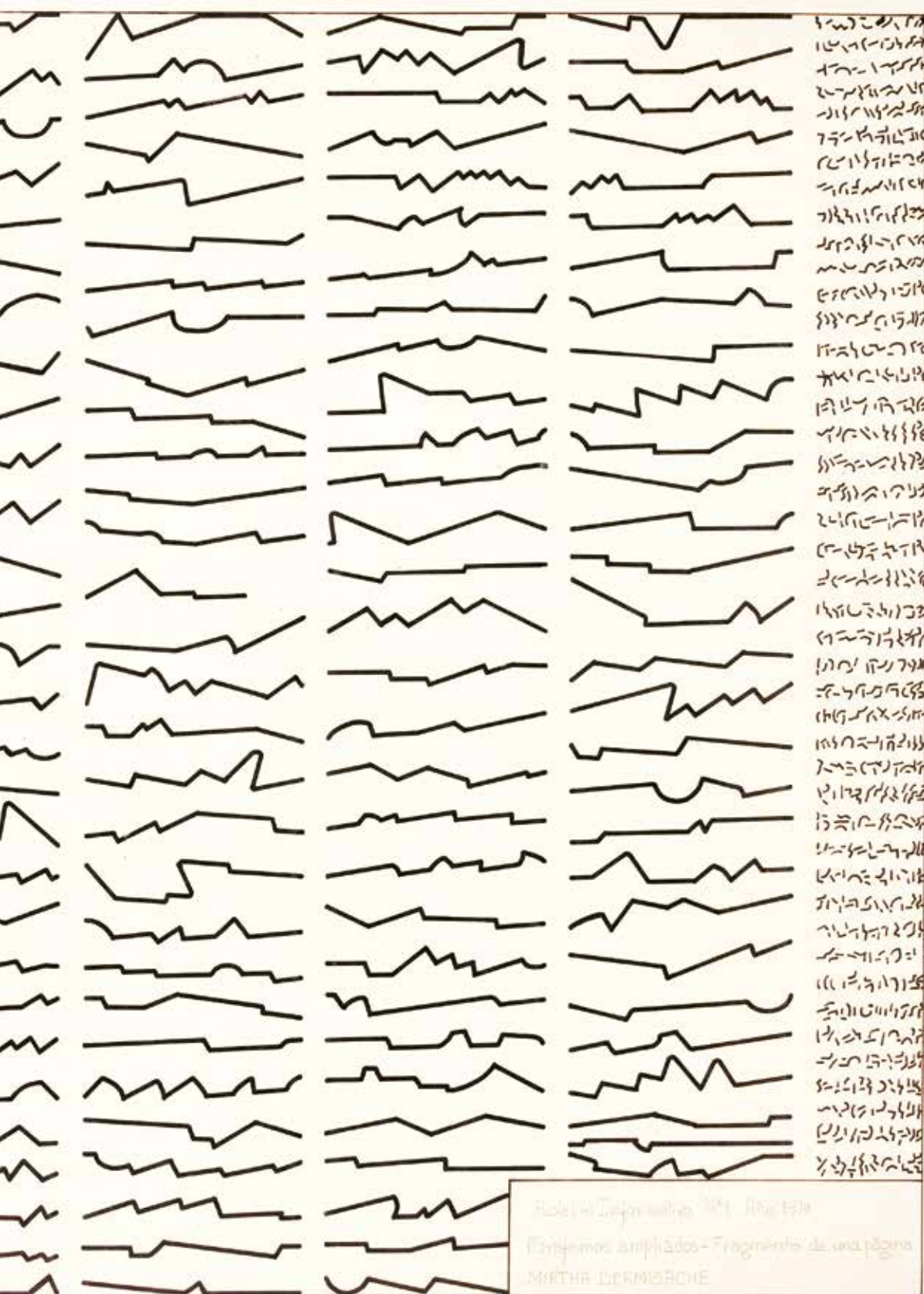


*Página de un libro* [Page from a Book], 1974





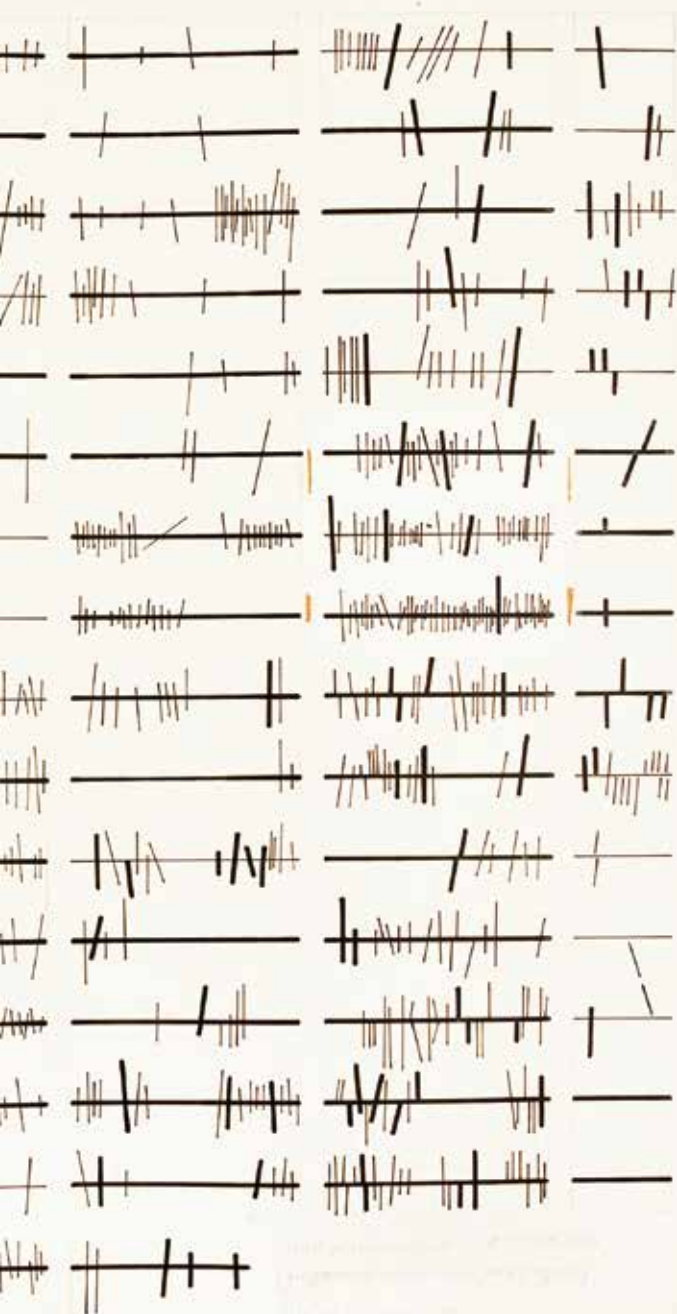
*Boletín informativo N° 1* (grafismos ampliados - fragmentos de una página) [Informational Bulletin No. 1 (enlarged graphisms - fragments of a page)], 1974

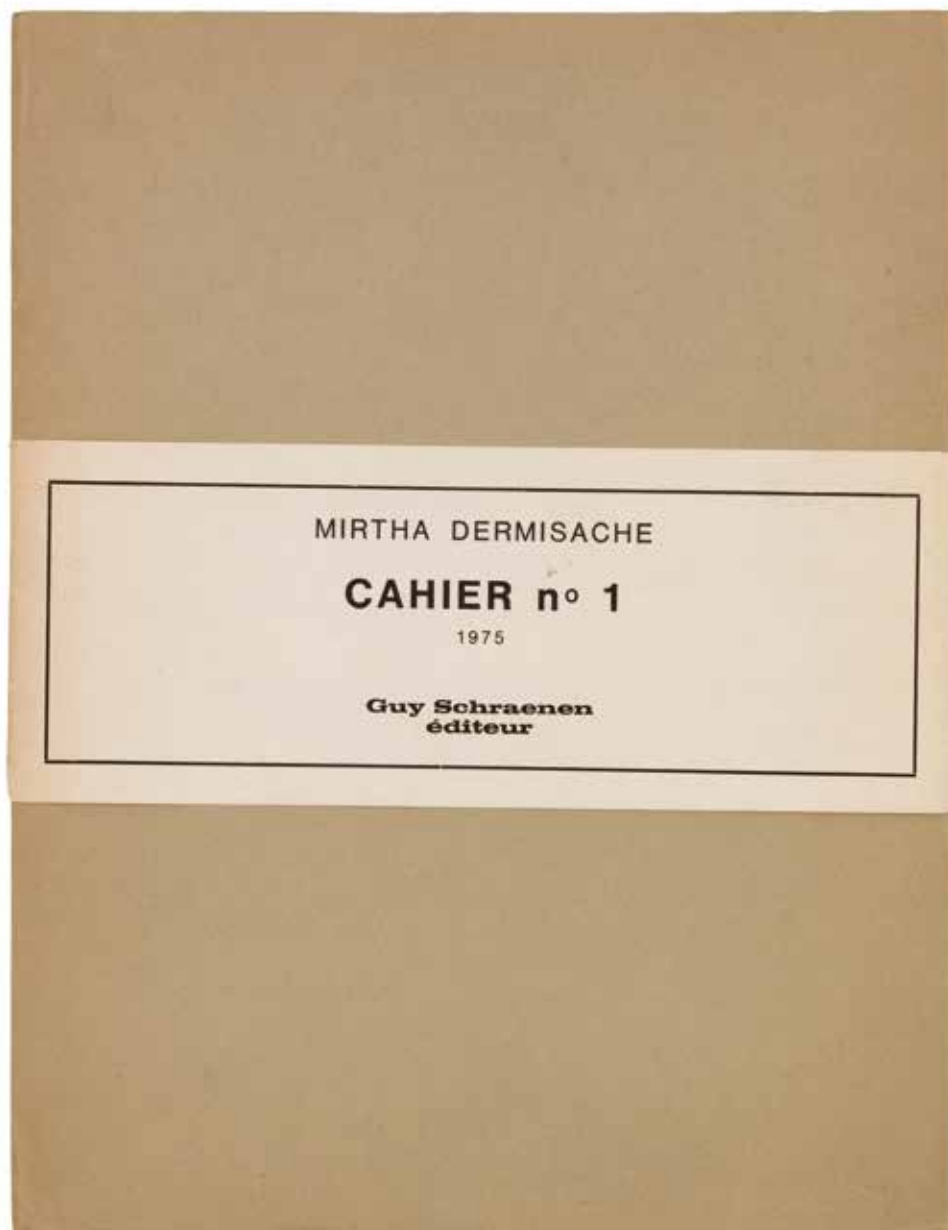






Boletín informativo  
(fragmento ampliado de una página)  
[Informational Bulletin (enlarged fragment  
of a page)], 1974

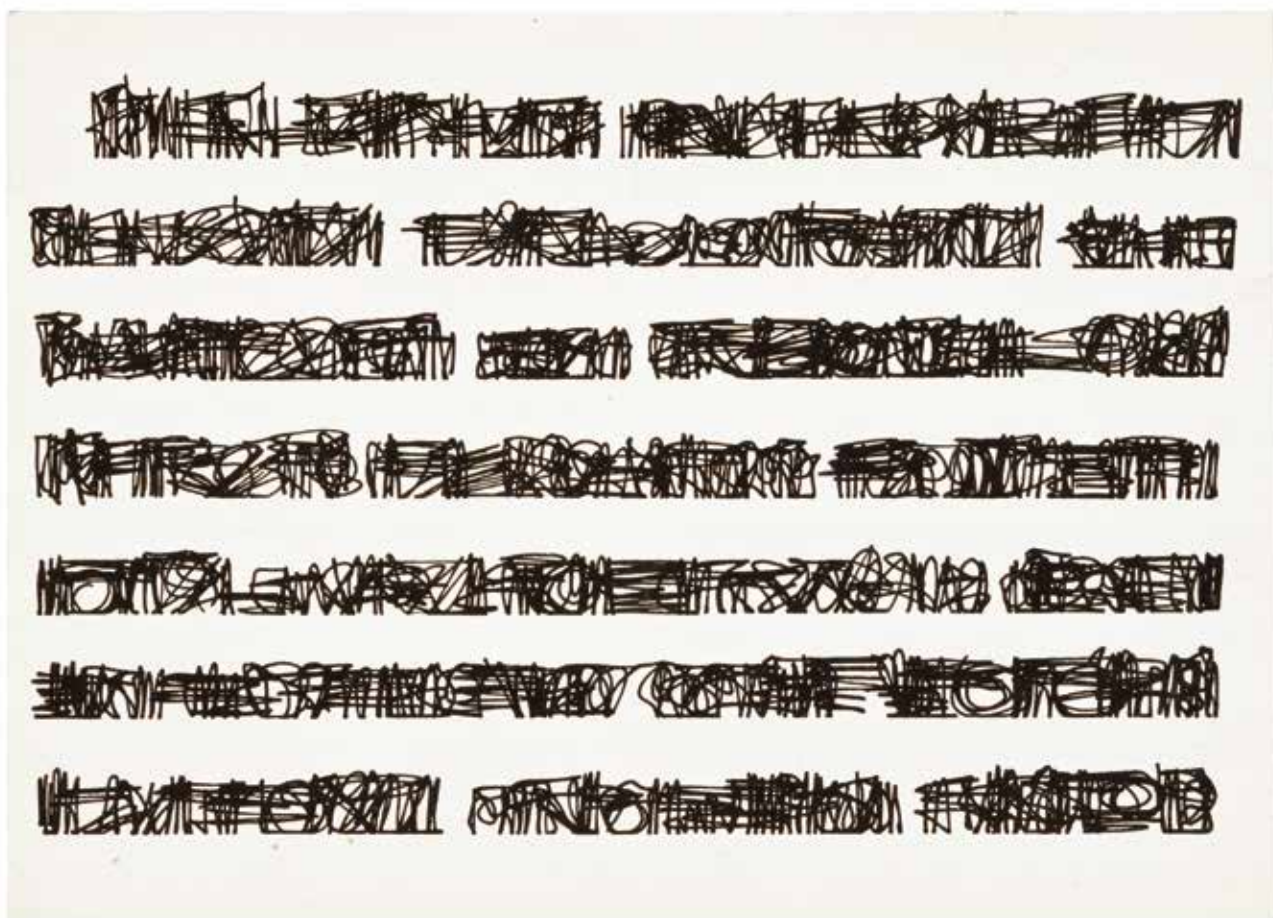




*Cahier n° 1*  
[Notebook No. 1], 1975







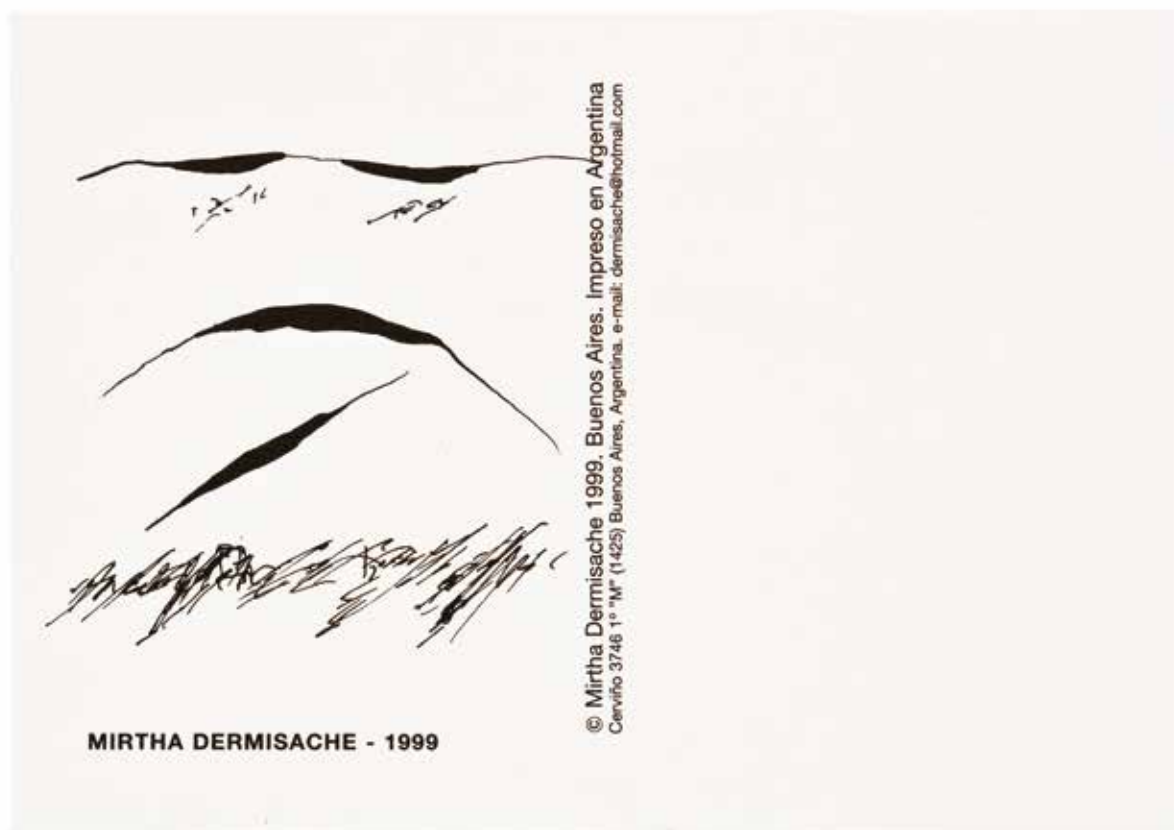
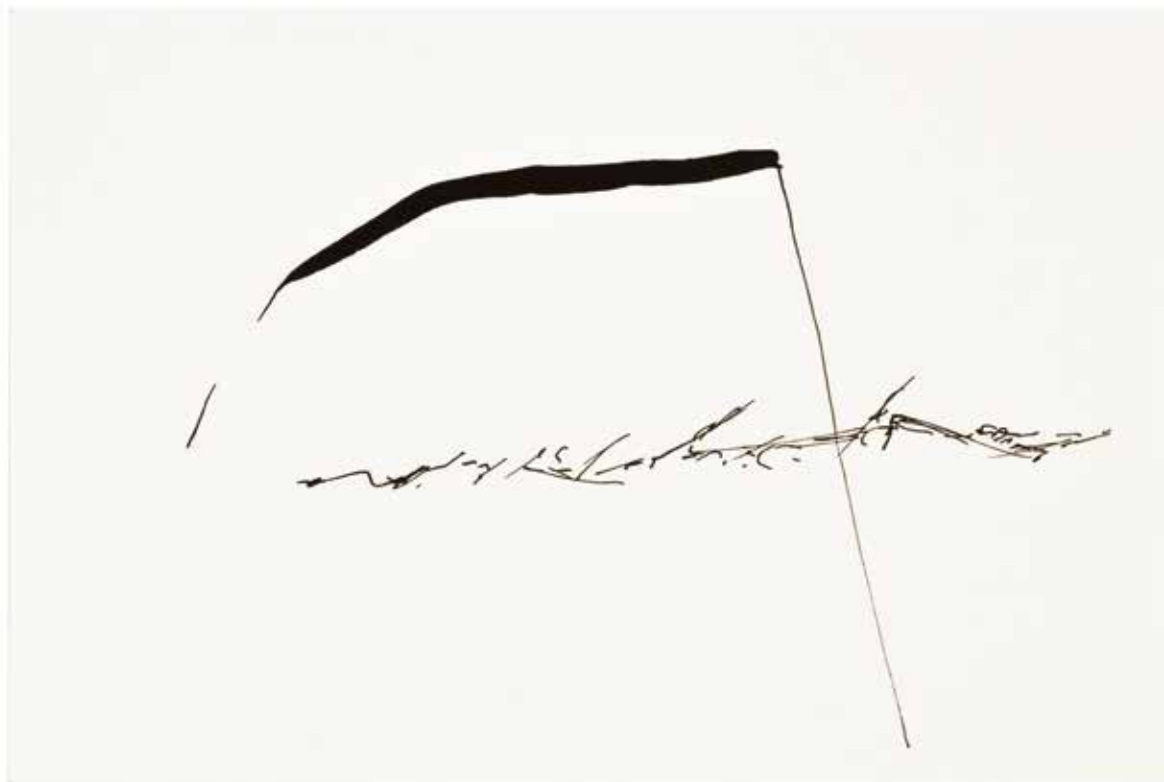
Sin título (postal) [Untitled (postcard)], ca. 1975



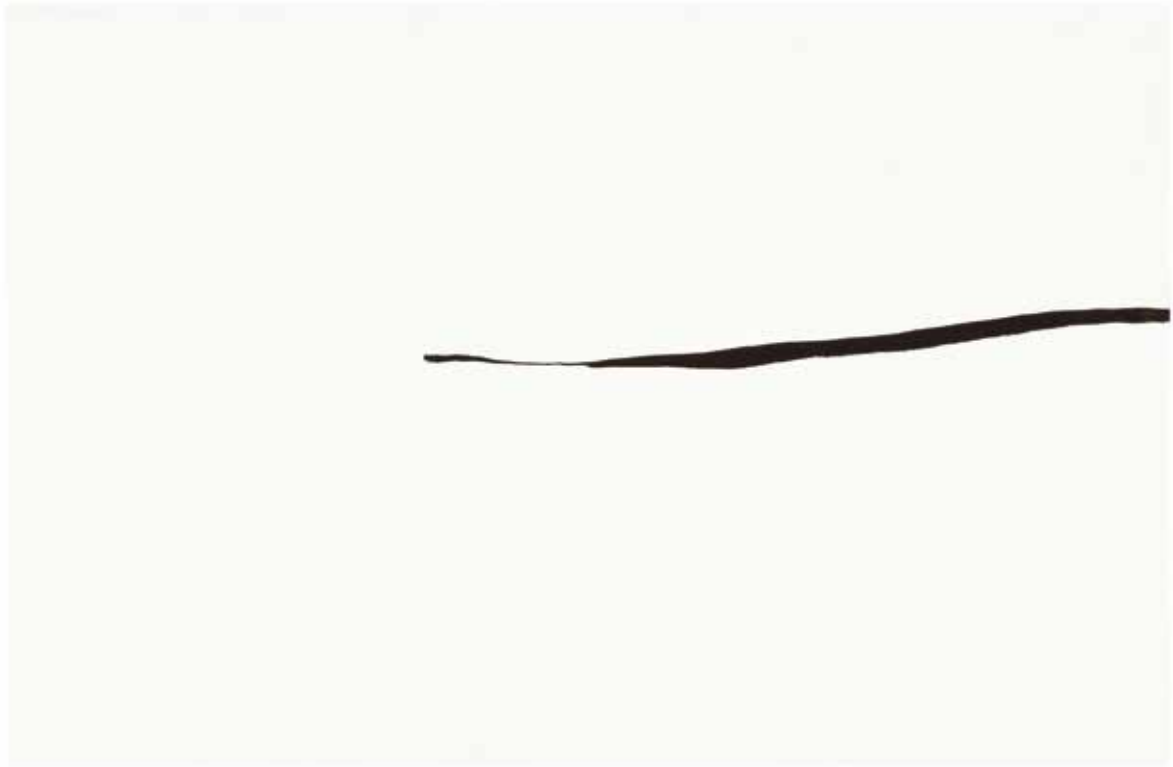




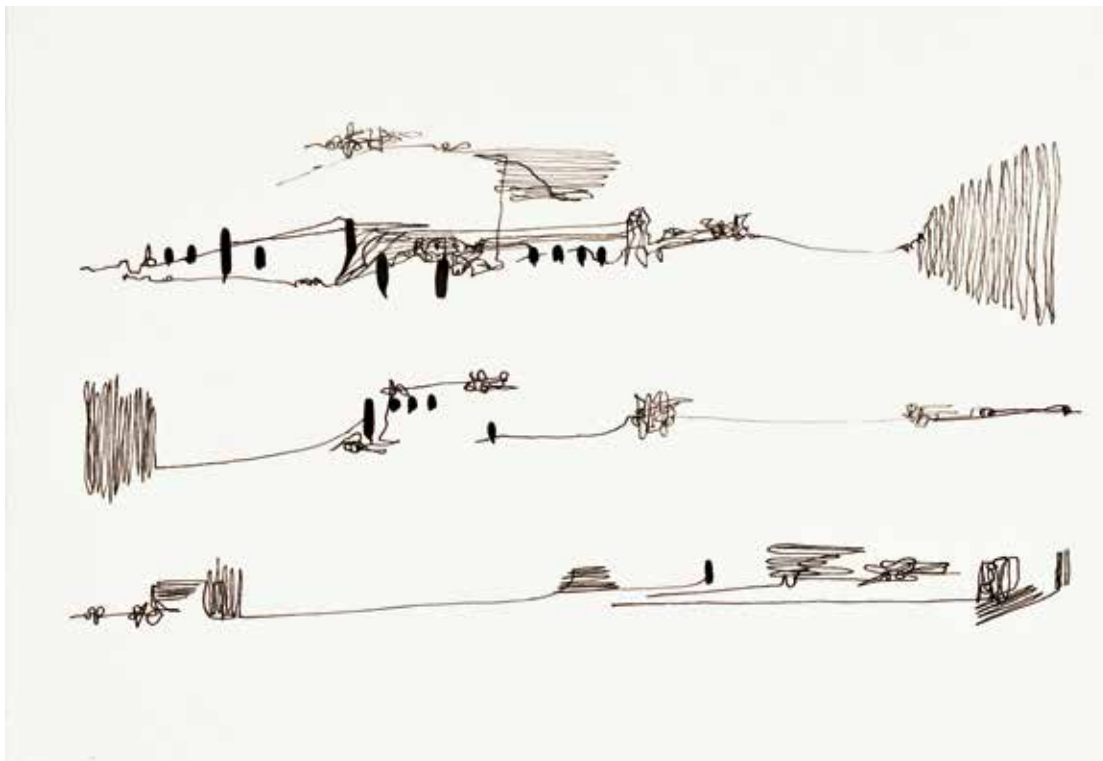
Sin título (postal)  
[Untitled (postcard)], ca. 1997–2011



Sin título (postal)  
[Untitled (postcard)], ca. 1997–2011



Sin título (postal)  
[Untitled (postcard)], ca. 1997–2011



centre international de poésie  
*Marseille*

**MIRTHA DERMISACHE**  
*Écritures [:] Multiples*

Exposition  
du vendredi 10 septembre  
au samedi 16 octobre

Vernissage  
en présence Mirtha Dermisache  
suivi d'une rencontre-débat  
avec Florent Fajole et Nicolas Tardy

**le vendredi 10 septembre 2004 à 18 h 30**

Manifestation proposée par mobil-home.

centre international de poésie *Marseille*  
45 - www.cipmarseille.com  
seille

centre  
2, rue de la Charité

|   |   |
|---|---|
| c | i |
| p | M |

Sin título (postal)  
[Untitled (postcard)], 2004



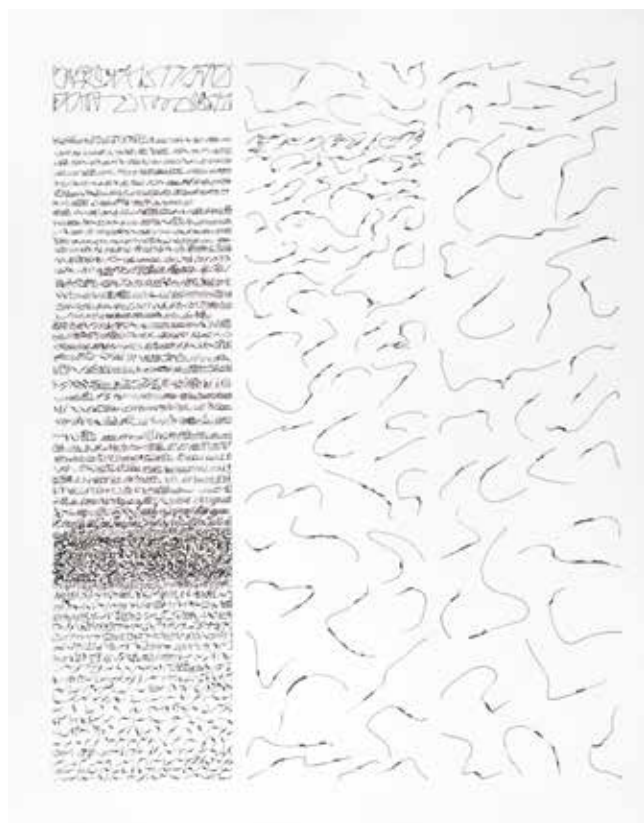
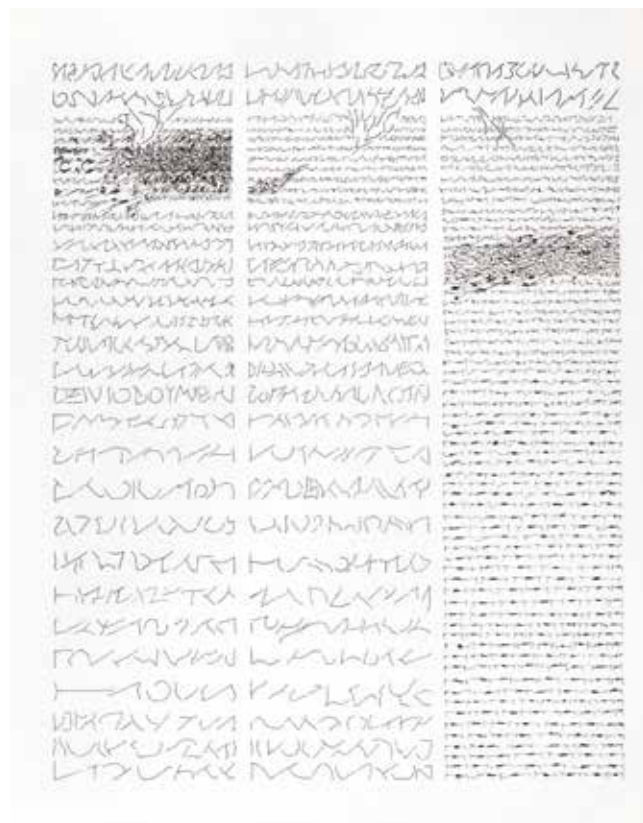
7 Tarjetas postales [7 Postcards], 1999

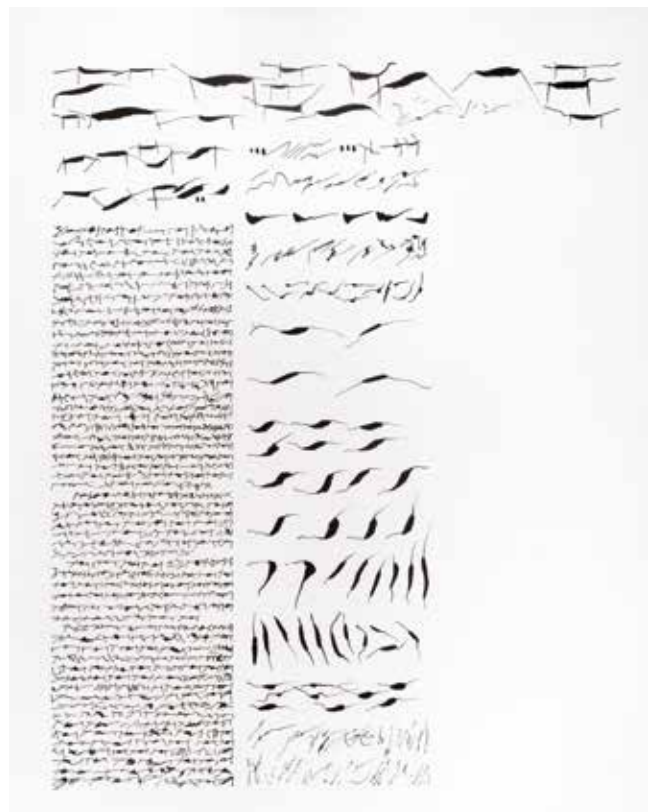




1. What is the main purpose of the study?  
 2. What are the research objectives?  
 3. What is the significance of the study?  
 4. What are the limitations of the study?  
 5. What are the conclusions of the study?







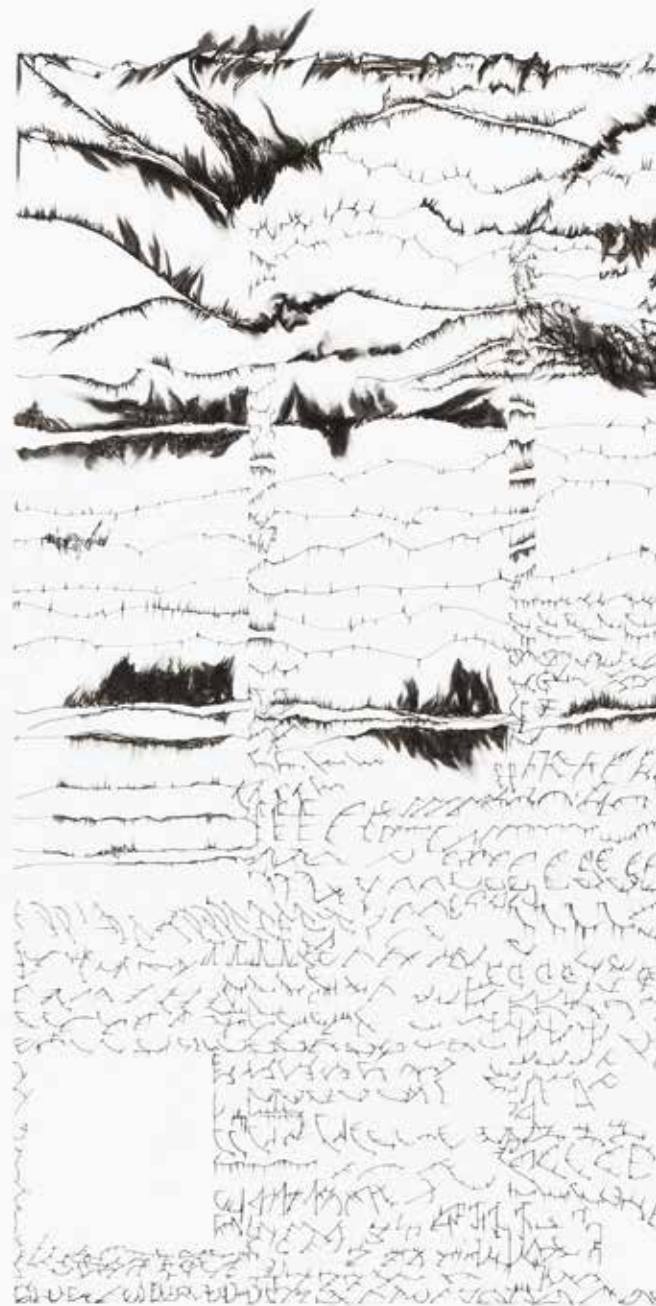












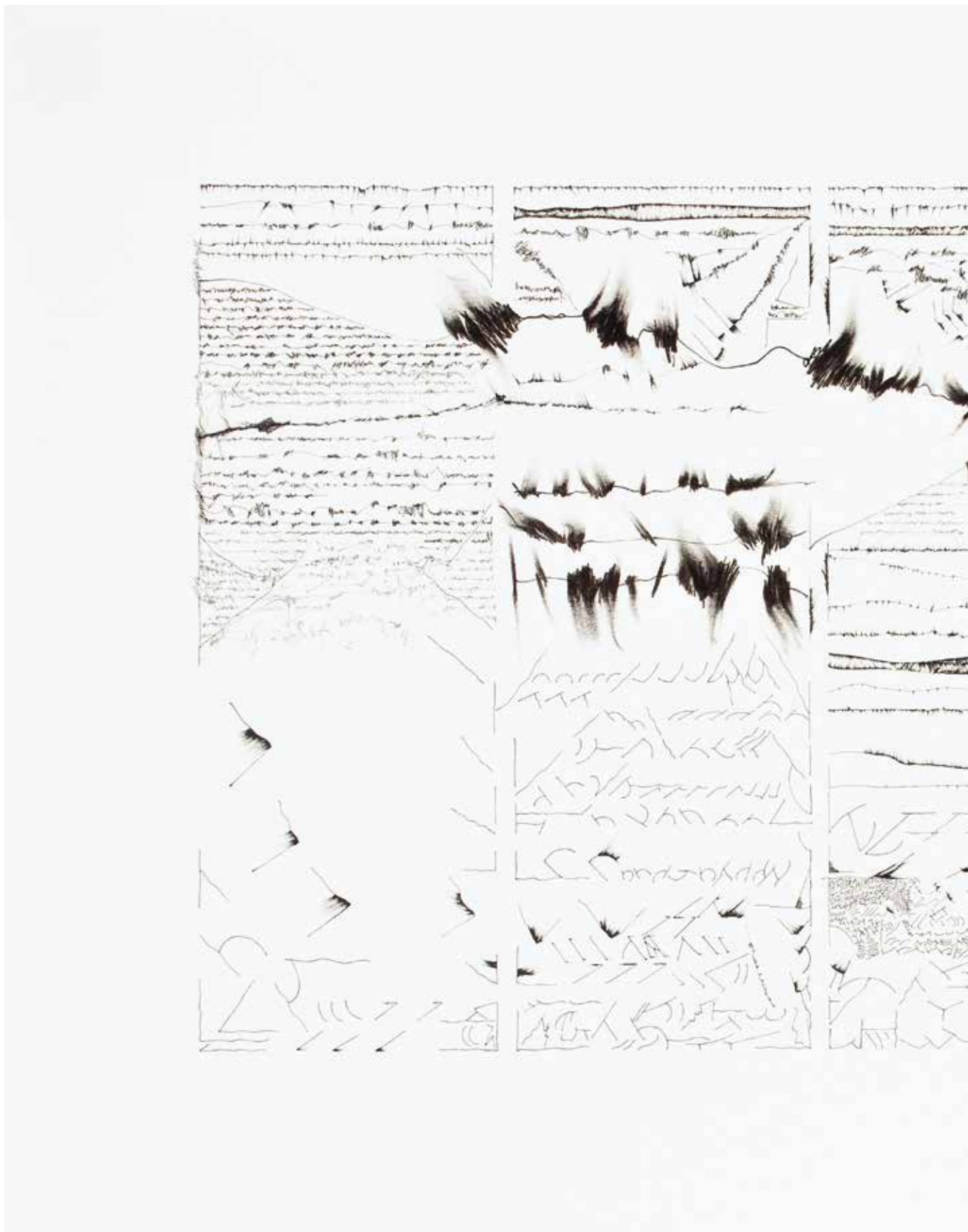




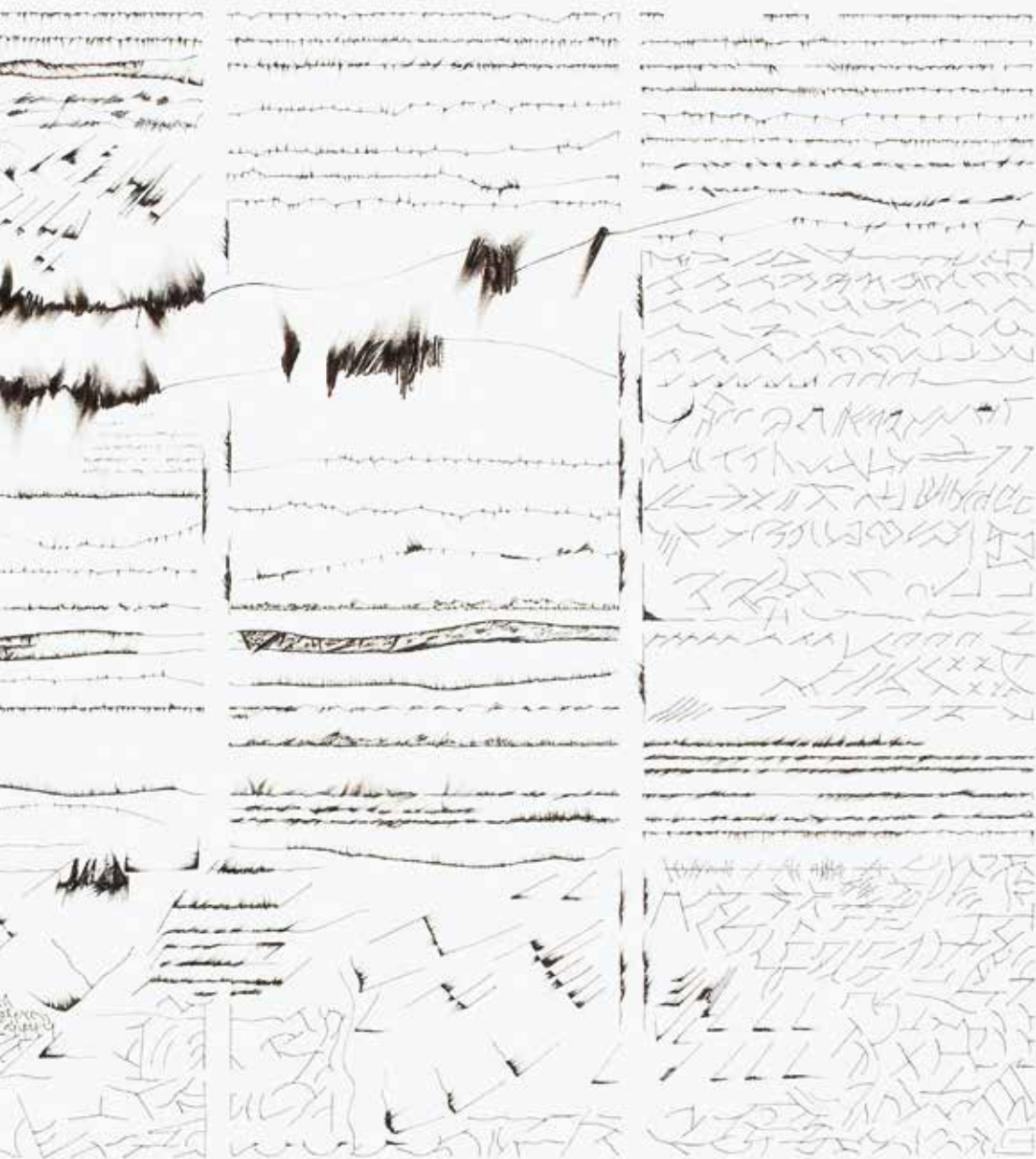
Sin título (lectura pública)  
[Untitled (public reading)], 2009







Texto mural 3 [Mural Text 3], 2007







Handwritten text in two columns, appearing to be a list or ledger. The text is heavily obscured by horizontal lines and is mostly illegible.



*Afiche explicativo* [Explanatory Poster], 2010





# Mirtha Dermisache, Life and Work 1940–2012 by Cintia Mezza, Cecilia Iida, and Ana Raviña

## Introduction

Mirtha Dermisache died in January 2012. In her will, she had named heirs and an executor, specifically her friend and student Leonor Cantarelli. Cantarelli, along with Alejandro Larumbe—Dermisache's nephew and heir, and representative of his brothers, Gabriel, Pablo, and Facundo Larumbe—and Félix Matarazzo—her godson—created the Mirtha Dermisache Archive (AMD, for the acronym in Spanish) to continue to communicate her work and to keep her legacy alive.

At that point, a professional team was put together to catalogue her works and to organize documentary materials. The contents of the archive were classified on the basis of the logic and internal order determined by the artist; they served as the chief source of information for her biographical timeline and curriculum vitae. Cintia Mezza (coordinator of the AMD), and Cecilia Iida and Ana Raviña (its custodians) wrote the biographical timeline that follows in a process that entailed crosschecking information in different materials in the archive, that is, various curriculum vitae, inventories of works, and records of sale written by Mirtha, as well as other documents and audiovisual materials from over the course of her career that had been carefully kept (correspondence, photographs, articles in the press, interviews, texts, prologues to catalogues and books, her methodological writings for workshops, topics from her personal library, and other meaningful objects discovered in the process of taking apart her home-studio).

We propose an active reading of this timeline, one that makes use of some of the resources Mirtha herself employed in her workshops. Music was a key part of her exploration and personal creative process, and she used it as a tool in her original teaching method. She would design a playlist for each activity and technique



in the workshops, or she would play music brought in by students; other times, work would be performed in a pregnant silence. The timeline includes a series of songs and albums from the AMD envisioned to be played while reading about different episodes in her life or phases of her work. Another resource is the artist's own words, which are highlighted.

All of the images in this timeline belong to the Archivo Mirtha Dermisache, and further information on solo and group shows, publications, and works in collections, is available at its website.

We would like to thank the entire AMD staff, the individuals interviewed, as well as researchers Olga Martínez, Natalia March, and Fernando Davis for their contributions to this text.

## Episode 1

1940–1966

### Learning to *unlearn*

🎧 Musical selection for this episode

Milton Nascimento, *Travessia*, 1967

Leonard Cohen, “Winter Lady,” *Leonard Cohen’s Songs*, 1967

Deep Purple, *The Book of Taliesyn*, 1968

Mirtha Dermisache<sup>1</sup> was born on February 16, 1940 in Lanús, a town on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Her father, José María Dermisache, was a wool and leather merchant who played the accordion; her mother, Filomena Mattera, a pianist who took care of Mirtha and her sister, Beatriz, while also exploring canvas-based crafts and painting.

Restless yet very reserved, Mirtha attended the Colegio San José in Quilmes; she went on to get a teaching degree from the Escuela Normal Nacional Almirante Brown, and then a degree in art education from the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Manuel Belgrano. She then attended the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Prilidiano Pueyrredón, currently the Departamento de Artes Visuales of the Universidad Nacional de las Artes (UNA). At the same time, she took studio classes at the Escuela Superior Ernesto de la Cárcova. From the time she was seventeen, she formed part of the Subcomisión de Teatros de Títeres, a group coordinated by the Asociación Gente del Arte de Avellaneda. She was asked to organize a puppet theater that would be used for performances at that association and other organizations, social clubs, and public hospitals.

In 1958, she published an article on painter Ernesto de la Cárcova in the quarterly journal *Vuelo*, put out by the Asociación Gente del Arte de Avellaneda. Two years later, she began teaching



*Vuelo* magazine, no. 51,  
Buenos Aires, October 1957

<sup>1</sup> Her full name was Mirtha Noemí Dermisache, but she never used Noemí, a name she didn't like.

2 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHyrQjNjSCA>

3 Sunnyhill was a pioneering school in liberal education. It was created in 1950 by Alexander Sutherland Neill, a progress Scottish educator dissatisfied with conventional British public education. Mirtha Dermisache's library contains many volumes on progressive art education for children. For further information, see the AMD.

4 In an interview by the AMD staff with Leonor Cantarelli and Jorge Luis Giacosa (2015) reveals that Susana Fortunato was one of Mirtha's assiduous collaborators; she was in charge of overseeing the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma.

5 Villanueva, Roberto, "Un experimento", in *Ultra Zum!!* (playbill), Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual, Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, September 1965.

art at public schools in Bernal, Lanús, and Quilmes—towns to the south of Buenos Aires. In 1968, she enrolled in the Instituto Nere-Echea (Basque for "our home"), founded by, among others, Susana Fortunato. A pioneering institution in a conception of education as means of individual and social development, the Instituto Nere-Echea was the first school in Argentina to implement a curriculum based on philosophy for children and "educational camping trips." The underlying principle was "learning by doing." Mirtha worked as a consultant in visual education at that school for four years; she developed mural projects with students based on their interests. In the schoolyard, there is still a fountain that she and students made and donated to the school. The production of the cement and stone fountain covered in mosaics of recycled tiles was an enriching experience,<sup>2</sup> and the origin, for Mirtha, of a question: Why can children learn by doing whereas, if adults sign up for a studio class, they are "taught" how to draw or paint with anti-pedagogical methods like copying? In that question lies the basis for the pedagogical vision the artist developed, an approach aimed at unleashing adults' creative capacity influenced by the writings of Herbert Read and the Sunnyhill experience.<sup>3</sup> Revolutionary at the time, her method would lead, a few years later, to the talleres de Acciones Creativas (Creative Actions Workshops) (1972), and then to the public Jornadas del Color y de la Forma (Intensive Work Sessions in Color and Form) (1975–1981).<sup>4</sup>

Mirtha was a member of the cast of *Ultra Zum!!*, *15 hechos en un solo acto*, a play by Celia Barbosa performed at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella's Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual from September 16 to 22, 1965. The playbill, which featured an introduction by Roberto Villanueva, explained the experimental work's primary characteristics:

Here, a group of very young people with backgrounds in dance, film, music, and the visual arts has produced a work that attempts to be different and current, a work at the boundaries of all those disciplines, one that makes use of all their techniques ... It encompasses parody of "serious" dance and theater, the creation of objects and audiovisual pieces, references to fashion shows, happening-like staging, allusions to Hollywood stars like Buster Keaton and to folktales like Little Red Riding Hood, classical compositions by Vivaldi to talk about birth-control pills, a tribute to the Beatles and a call for psychedelia, in order to embellish "with all the imagination" that the viewer can muster ...<sup>5</sup>

While the performances were diverse, they did "share a common repertoire of themes and procedures, as well as an aesthetic and cultural sensibility. The Instituto Di Tella continued



**CELIA BARBOSA  
PRESENTA:**

**ULTRA  
ZUM!!**

**LOS DIAS: JUEVES 16,  
VIERNES 17, MARTES 21  
Y MIERCOLES 22  
DE SETIEMBRE DE 1965  
A LAS 19.15 HS.**

**SALA DEL CENTRO DE EXPERIMENTACION AUDIOVISUAL  
DEL INSTITUTO TORCUATO DI TELLA  
FLORIDA 936**

Top left  
MD at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes  
Prilidiano Pueyrredón, ca. 1958–1960

Top right  
Playbill for *Ultra Zum!!*, 15 hechos en un solo  
acto, CEA, ITDT, Buenos Aires, September 1965

Bottom  
Text by Edgardo Cozarinsky "Un grado cero  
de la escritura," *Panorama*, Buenos Aires,  
year VII, no. 156, April 1970, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> For further information, see Pinta, María Fernanda, “Pop! La puesta en escena de nuestro ‘folklore urbano’,” in *Caiana* journal, no. 4, first semester, 2014 ([http://caiana.caia.org.ar/template/caiana.php?pag=articles/article\\_2.php&obj=139&vol=4](http://caiana.caia.org.ar/template/caiana.php?pag=articles/article_2.php&obj=139&vol=4)).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Rimmaudo, Annalisa and Lamoni, Giulia, “Entrevista a Mirtha Dermisache,” in *Mirtha Dermisache. Publicaciones y dispositivos editoriales* (exh. cat.), Buenos Aires, Pabellón de las Bellas Artes de la Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina (UCA), 2011, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Pomiés, Julia, “Mirtha Dermisache. El mensaje es la acción,” *Uno Mismo* magazine, Buenos Aires, no. 105, March 1992, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Carlos was of Irish descent, and his family nickname was Sonny.

<sup>11</sup> Cozarinsky, Edgardo, “Un grado cero de la escritura,” *Panorama* magazine, Buenos Aires, year VII, no. 156, April 1970, p. 51. The title makes reference to the concept of writing Roland Barthes develops in his first essay, *Le Degré zéro de l’écriture* (1953).

to support experimental work of this sort throughout the decade.”<sup>6</sup> On those years at the Instituto Di Tella, Mirtha stated:

It’s true, that was my favorite place. Not only because of the exhibitions held there, but because of all the other activities as well, the experiments in theater, music, and dance, and the Escuela de Altos Estudios Musicales. I took part in some of them.<sup>7</sup>

From 1965 to 1967, she studied philosophy, and in 1968 and 1969 she traveled to Europe and Africa for several months. It was there that her art underwent a transformation, changing from scribbles and disordered drawings to graphisms more like some recognizable form of writing. Regarding that process, Mirtha remarked:

...I never painted or drew, but I did study drawing and painting, as well as printmaking and art history. And whatever I didn’t learn at art school, I was going to learn elsewhere ... What did I do with everything I learned? It helped me a great deal to go against the grain, to connect all of those parts within me and, one day, to sit down to write, to unlearn.<sup>8</sup>

According to Julia Pomiés, “Mirtha Dermisache was between the ages of twenty and thirty when she married Carlos Donnelly; they split and weren’t together during her thirties and forties. In her fifties, they remarried.”<sup>9</sup> Neither her relatives nor her students remember exactly when those weddings were held, but everyone agrees that both were celebrated in Uruguay. Carlos, whom everyone called Sonny,<sup>10</sup> was an engineer. He was her life companion, and he helped with the coordination and organization of the workshops and studio classes.

## Episode 2

1967–1974

From the scribble to “*writing degree zero*”  
and from Lanús to the world



Musical selection for this episode

Astor Piazzolla / Horacio Ferrer, *Balada para un loco*, 1969

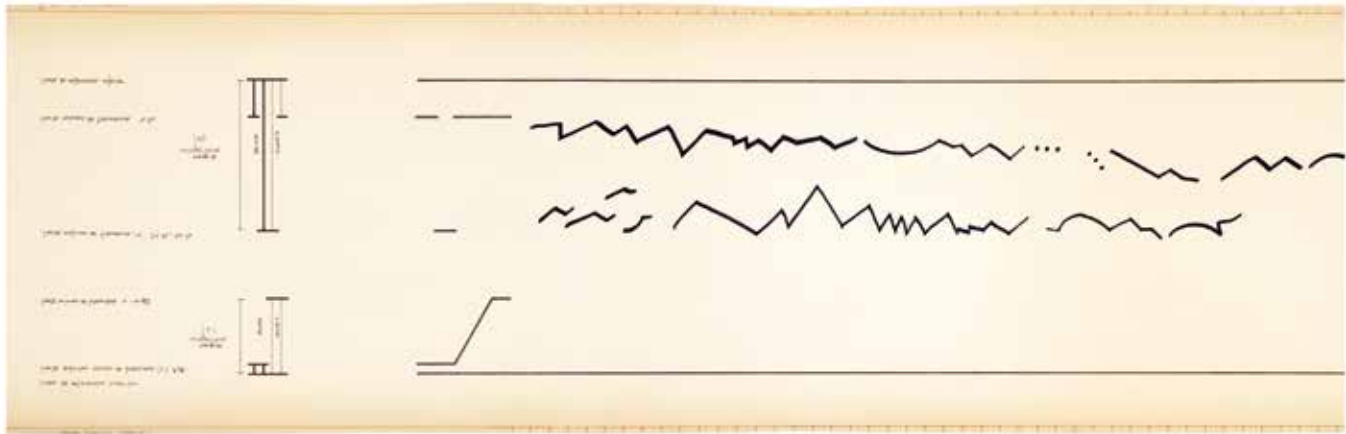
Robert Fripp, *Prelude: Song of the Gulls*, 1971

Naná Vasconcelos / Agustín Pereyra Lucena,

*El increíble Naná con Agustín Pereyra Lucena*, 1971

In 1967, Mirtha organized her graphisms in book format for the first time. In an interview with the artist by Edgardo Cozarinsky published in *Panorama* magazine in 1970,<sup>11</sup> Mirtha recounts how she created one of her founding works, *Libro N° 1* [Book No. 1]:



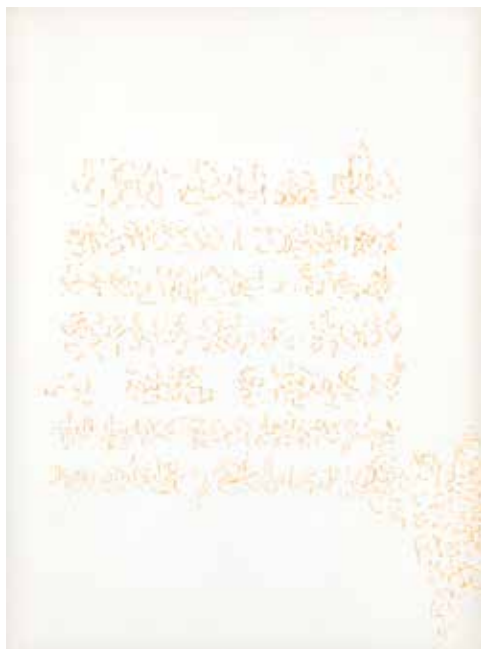


|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>utilizo este espaço para dizer:</p> <p>minha obra necessita um editor</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>escrever a:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p>                | <p>utilizo este espacio para decir:</p> <p>mi obra necesita un editor</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>escribir a:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p>            | <p>I use this space to say:</p> <p>my work needs a printer</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>write to:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p>                                      |
| <p>je me sers de cet espace pour dire:</p> <p>mon oeuvre a besoin d'un éditeur</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>mon adresse:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p>         | <p>utilizzo questo spazio per dire:</p> <p>la mia opera ha bisogno di un editore</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>scrivere a:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p> | <p>ich gebrauche diesen platz um zu sagen:</p> <p>mein werk braucht einen verleger</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>schreiben die an:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p>      |
| <p>jag utyttar den här spalten för att säga:</p> <p>mitt verk behöver en utgivare</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>känvända stället:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p> | <p>私の作品を出版して下さい人が必要です。</p> <p>同じくお宅に</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p>   | <p>ПОДПИШЬТЕ ПО ПОСЛАНИЮ</p> <p>47064 CREAMS:</p> <p>НОЕ АРОНБЕРГЕ</p> <p>КРЕМЕРС Б. А. 13.07.1971</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>АНОСТ:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p> |
| <p>vyráľvám tohoto msta abych řekla:</p> <p>mé dílo potřeboje vydavatele</p> <p>mirtha dermisache</p> <p>píšte na adresu:</p> <p>juncal 2280 - 9° B</p> <p>buenos aires</p> <p>república argentina</p>           |   | <p>cayc</p>  |

Top  
Sound translation of Mirtha's graphisms,  
ca. 1970  
Ink on heliographic paper  
23 x 214 cm

Center left and right  
Fragment of the catalogue to the exhibition  
*From Figuration Art to Systems Art in Argentina*,  
London, Center of Art and Communication in  
Candem Arts Centre, 1971

Bottom  
Page from the catalogue to the exhibition  
*Arte de sistemas I*, Buenos Aires,  
Museo de Arte Moderno, 1971



*Libro No. 1* [Book No. 1], 1967  
Ink and colored markers on paper  
25.7 x 20.8 cm

12 Ibid., p. 51.

13 As explained later in this episode, the artist herself divided a single 500-page edition into these three parts.

14 Romero Brest, Jorge, "Una mosca blanca," *Crisis*, Buenos Aires, no. 27, July 1975, pp. 74–75.

15 According to her students, Carlos Espartaco might have been the one who gave the artist this piece of advice, but it could also have been Jorge Romero Brest or Jorge Glusberg; there is no written confirmation of this information in the AMD.

I had studied art, as well as philosophy, for one year, and I was traveling. One day, I felt a sort of knot coming undone in me, the beginning of a process that I could not yet really make out. Sitting in a patio three days later, I started to make scribbles on a piece of kraft paper, like tangles of wool, but with titles and distinct paragraphs. Then letters in earnest. Then I decided [those pages] had to be in a book with arbitrary—though deliberately chosen—size and volume ... I wanted them to be pages of a book, an object with front and back cover, bound on one side and open on the other. If someone wanted to stick one of the pages to the wall, they would have to break it, to perform the act of tearing a page out of a book and putting it elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

The AMD has records of three books produced in 1967.<sup>13</sup> Starting then, Mirtha numbered her books consecutively, beginning each year with number one. She made series of books until 1978, and then again in the nineties. The graphisms don't make reference to a real alphabet; her technique, generally speaking, entailed different inks on paper, and her aim was always to publish them, to increase their number, to disseminate them. Jorge Romero Brest called her work "a white fly"<sup>14</sup> because so unique at the time. Interested in *Libro No. 1*, he put Mirtha in touch with Paidós publishers to embark on the publication of that book—a project that ultimately did not come to fruition because of the complications of producing a five-hundred-page-long edition of this sort. At the recommendation of Carlos Espartaco,<sup>15</sup> Mirtha divided the book into two parts to work around the problem of length; one of them—known now as *Libro No. 1*, 1967—had brown leather front and back cover, and the other—*Libro No. 2*, also from 1967—had hard white front and back cover. A third edition, this one unpublished and unbound, is in the AMD (it follows the same sequence).

At least three books were produced in 1968, four in 1969, and eight in 1970—the year when she began using specific writing formats in her work, formats like "text," "letter," and "sentence."

In 1971, she began participating regularly in exhibitions and other projects, that is, she became an active member of the contemporary art scene. There are records of eleven books produced that year. In February, she was invited to take part in the group show *From Figuration Art to Systems Art in Argentina*, CAyC (Centro de Arte y Comunicación), organized by Jorge Glusberg and held at the Camden Arts Centre in London; she exhibited books. In July, she participated in *Arte de sistemas I* held at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, also curated by Glusberg, where she showed books produced from 1967 to 1970, as well as fourteen letters from 1970. In the catalogue, she published, in ten languages, a sort of classified ad looking for an editor:



I use this space to say: my work needs a printer.  
Mirtha Dermisache. Write to: Juncal 2280 - 9°B,  
Buenos Aires, República Argentina

Regarding her books and her determination to publish them to make them available to a broad public for daily engagement, she wrote:

I would exhibit the original [books] and the audience would be able to touch them (the pages were protected) ... It was important that people be able to touch and handle the work. I don't really care about the shows as much as about publishing the work.<sup>16</sup>

In December, pursuant to an invitation from Glusberg to participate in a "laboratory studio," the Grupo de los Trece was formed.<sup>17</sup> A text handwritten by Mirtha at the time attests to the fact that she was one of the group's original members. In it, she remarked:

I'm not sure what this group is supposed to be like. I'm not sure what its aims should be, or why I am part of it. I am sure that it excites me ... and I will stay on as long as I feel I play an active part.<sup>18</sup>

Due to three major developments, her career changed course in late 1971: she created a studio space to stimulate creativity in adults, thus beginning a new phase in her work as an educator;<sup>19</sup> she applied for a Guggenheim Fellowship, which required developing an extensive project; and she began corresponding with Roland Barthes,<sup>20</sup> who proved key to the distinctive nature that Mirtha's graphisms were taking on.

The taller de Acciones Creativas (tAC) first operated in the artist's apartment on Juncal Street, in the Barrio Norte section of the city. A larger space later proved necessary and, along with a group of students, she purchased a space at 1209 Posadas Street. It was there that the "taller de Acciones Creativas, de Mirtha Dermisache y otros" was started. The aim was to interact with, explore, and experience different techniques in order to develop creativity and free graphic expression in adults. A wide range of materials and tools—not all of them conventional for art—were made available for use in group classes. The conception was clear and novel:

After a pilot group of eight or nine people was put together, I started working. I told them, "I'm not going to teach you visual language, but provide you with techniques so that you



tAC postcard, 1997

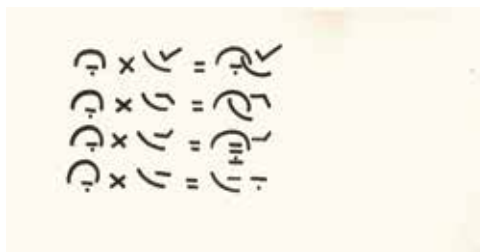
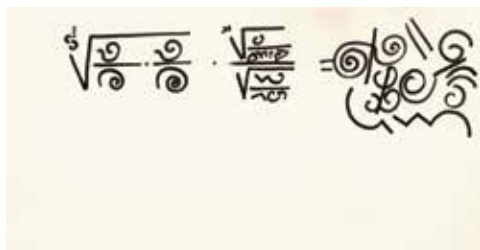
16 Mirtha Dermisache, in Rimmaudo, Annalisa and Lamoni, Giulia, op. cit., pp. 10–11.

17 According to a printed CAYC document in the AMD, the original members of the Grupo de los Trece, formed in 1971, were: Jacques Bedel, Luis Bedit, Mirtha Dermisache, Gregorio Dujovny, Jorge Glusberg, Víctor Grippo, Jorge González Mir, Vicente Marotta, Alberto Pellegrino, Alfredo Portillos, Luis Pazos, Juan Carlos Romero, and Julio Teich. That initial group underwent changes and, according to researcher Fernando Davis—consulted for this project—the "laboratory studio" drew inspiration from the ideas of Polish theater director Jerzy Grotowski, who had given an informal lecture at the CAYC. Mirtha had been invited to attend that event; she is on the list of the group's original members. The main aim of the group was to join thought and production in order to foment systems art of the sort advocated by the CAYC.

18 Handwritten text by Mirtha Dermisache on her expectations regarding participation in the Grupo de los Trece—most of the other members of the group wrote similar texts—, Buenos Aires, December 1971.

19 There are some discrepancies in documents in the AMD about when she began this work; it is sometimes recorded as 1971 and sometimes as 1972.

20 French philosopher, writer, essayist, and semiotician Roland Barthes (1941–1980) is the author of *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, 1953; *Éléments de sémiologie*, 1965; *L'Empire des signes*, 1970; and other books that theorize work-text.



Untitled, ca. 1971  
Ink on paper  
12.5 x 24.5 cm

Untitled, ca. 1971  
Ink on paper  
12.5 x 24.5 cm

21 Pomiés, Julia, op. cit., p. 49.

22 Unpublished essay by Fernando von Reichenbach on Mirtha Dermisache, Buenos Aires, May 11, 1973. There are copies in the AMD and in the von Reichenbach Archive, Universidad Nacional de Quilmes.

23 Cecilia Castro of the von Reichenbach Archive, Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, crosschecked the information in the AMD. After the experiences at the Instituto Di Tella, the CLAEM moved, in 1972, to the Centro Cultural General San Martín, where it formed part of the Centro de Investigaciones en Comunicación Masiva, Arte y Tecnología.

24 Through Silvia Sigal, Mirtha and Hugo Santiago engaged an epistolary exchange from 1970 to 1972. In 1972, Santiago gave Barthes a book and letter from Mirtha and, later, her *Diario 1 Año 1* [Newspaper 1, Year 1]. That was how Mirtha came into direct contact with the French philosopher.

can gain access to that world, to emotion through work with materials, to what happens within, before language.” That’s how the work began.<sup>21</sup>

In August and September, she began a series of works that she called “incomprehensible writings”: graphisms reminiscent of mathematical formulas, though obviously invented, laid out horizontally.

On October 5, Mirtha, along with Fernando von Reichenbach and composers José Ramón Maranzano, Gabriel Oliverio Brnčić Isaza, and Ariel Martínez, embarked on a musical experience in relation to her graphic works at the Laboratorio del Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales (CLAEM), a part of the Instituto Di Tella. The project continued through 1971. In it, the musicians used a “graphic converter” to translate her graphisms into sound. In the words of von Reichenbach:

One day, Mirtha’s graphism turned into sound. We did a strange experiment at the Instituto Di Tella in which we articulated sounds synthesized on the basis of a scroll she had drawn. Since she didn’t know how the device worked, unexpected twists appeared in the sound.<sup>22</sup>

The AMD contains pieces of heliographic paper with texts that appear to be a sound proposal based on her writings, the results of those experiences.<sup>23</sup>

Also in 1971, Mirtha engaged in experiments, along with Ricardo Ferraro—an engineer and the director of programmers, engineers, and analysts at the CAyC—in which her graphisms were exposed to the processor of an IBM 1130-16K computer and a Calcomp plotter, which translated them into computerized graphisms that could be printed on paper. It was envisioned as a way to publish Mirtha’s work—and to increase its number—which had always been one of her aims.

Meanwhile, Mirtha engaged in an extensive exchange with filmmaker Hugo Santiago, who—during one of his trips to Paris—had given one of her books to Roland Barthes.<sup>24</sup> In a letter written in 1971—the first in an epistolary exchange that would continue through 1974—the French semiologist described Mirtha’s production as “illegible writing.” The now-historical letter in which Barthes uses that powerful phrase was repeated and reproduced; it is now fundamental to understanding Dermisache’s work:

I will only say how struck I am not only by the remarkable visual quality of your lines (and that is not a secondary

question), but also—indeed mostly—by the extreme intelligence of the theoretical problems around writing that your work tackles. You have managed to produce a certain number of forms that are neither figurative nor abstract, forms that could be called illegible writing, which leads readers to formulate something that is neither a specific message nor a contingent form of expression but, rather, the idea, the essence, of writing.<sup>25</sup>

Even in one of her last interviews, which Mirtha gave for the catalogue to a solo show in 2011, she recalls how deeply she was affected when she first read the French linguist's words; he grasped, supported, and championed her work as no one had before:

It was amazing because it was at that point that I understood what I was doing. It was as if he were explaining to me what I was doing. That was very important ... The day in 1971 when I got the letter from Roland Barthes—especially when I read the part where he says “You have managed to produce a certain number of forms ... that could be called illegible writing”—I felt that, after having said “I write” for so many years, someone was finally, for the first time, calling my work writing. That was so important for me. From then on, of course, I could not for an instant think of anything else.<sup>26</sup>

It was in response to Barthes's intense words that, the same night she received the letter (March 28, 1971), she began and completed, working without break, her *Libro N° 3* [Book No. 3].<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, she was filling out the long application for the Guggenheim Fellowship, asking critics and fellow artists for essays and letters of recommendation that are now found in the AMD. Contributors to her application included Carlos Espartaco, Roland Barthes, Diego García Reynoso, Gregorio Klimovsky, Jorge Romero Brest, Fernando von Reichenbach, and Jorge Prelorán. Her project, *Investigación y creación de grafismos y su aplicación interdisciplinaria* [Investigation and Creation of Graphisms and Their Interdisciplinary Application], proposed exploring the zone between visual communications and art, and developing what she called the *boletín informativo* [informational bulletin], a writing format new to her work. In her application, Mirtha organized her production for the first time, formulating in writing what it consisted of; she provided a systematic account of materials and examples, and presented ideas about how to grow and to expand into other media with an interdisciplinary approach. As she put it:



Envelope of the letter from Roland Barthes to MD dated April 5, 1973

25 Letter from Roland Barthes, Paris, March 28, 1971.

26 Quoted in Rimmaudo, Annalisa and Lamoni, Giulia, op. cit., p. 8.

27 This information is from an interview by the AMD staff with Olga Martínez, Buenos Aires, November 20, 2016.



Untitled (legible text),  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper  
28 x 23 cm

28 Mirtha Dermisache's application for  
the John Simon Guggenheim  
Foundation Fellowship, 1971.

What does my work with graphisms consist of? It is not easy for me to provide an explanation based on them. While I began developing graphisms some eight years ago, they were not expressed or produced as such until 1967. At that point, a hard-to-imagine process of evolution and projection set in on an aesthetic, but also on a conceptual, level. Important to my graphisms are not only their continuity, development, relationship, and dynamic, but also their forms and, in some cases, their colors. My work, then, bears relation to graphic arts, visual arts, linguistics, and writing, in terms of the elements that make up the object of my creation as such.

...

These graphisms are original forms. They are “signifiers” with no “signified,” though that does not mean that they could be described as arbitrary. ... They serve as support, as “empty structure,” so that the other, the one within, might fill each empty signifier with his own signifieds and build his own story.

...

I “write” (inscribe) my books, which are perfectly illegible, and that tenuous structure of “emptinesses” is filled when the “reader” comes along; it is not until that point that it could be said that what I “write” constitutes a “message” and the “empty signifiers” signs.

...

While, in my practice, what has been and is essential is research in graphisms, I have applied them, along with other creators, in an interdisciplinary fashion ... I seek to further their expressive capacity, their ability to generate other types of visual and/or audible manifestations.

...

My research into the cinematographic potential of my graphisms and their expressions might lead to the production of a short film.<sup>28</sup>

Her project was not selected. The letter she received from the Guggenheim Foundation in June 1972 spoke of “budget cuts” and encouraged her to keep working. Mirtha was upset by the rejection, even though she had done so much over the course of the year: she put together an extensive network of contacts and her work had become known to a number of intellectuals whose sharp vision helped shape a critical apparatus crucial to her own process, to self-recognition in her work, and to confidence in its interdisciplinary potential.

There are records of at least six books produced in 1972; that same year, she made a short series called *textos legibles* [legible texts], some of them dated 1972 and 1973. She also started work on

PARIS, LE 28 Mars 1971 19

Chère Mademoiselle,

M. Hugo Santiago a bien voulu me communiquer votre cahier de graphismes. Je me permets de vous dire très simplement combien j'ai été impressionné, non seulement par la haute qualité plastique de vos tracés (Ceci n'est pas indifférent) mais encore et surtout par l'extrême intelligence des problèmes théoriques de l'écriture que votre travail suppose. Vous avez su produire un certain nombre de formes, ni figuratives, ni abstraites, que l'on pourrait ranger sous le nom d'écriture illisible — ce qui revient à proposer à vos lecteurs, non point les messages ni même les formes contingentes de l'expression, mais l'idée, l'essence de l'écriture. Rien n'est plus difficile que de produire une essence, c'est à dire une forme qui ne renvoie qu'à son nom; les artistes japonais n'ont-ils pas mis toute une vie à savoir tracer un cercle qui ne renvoie qu'à l'idée de cercle? Votre travail s'apparente à une telle exigence. Je souhaite vivement que vous le continuiez et qu'il soit publié.

Je vous prie de recevoir mes vœux de succès, de travail et de croire à mes sentiments très cordiaux

Mlle Mirtha Dermisache

Roland Barthes





*Diario 1 Año 1* [Newspaper 1 Year 1],  
1972/1995, fifth edition  
Offset print on paper  
47 x 36.6 cm

29 The show was one in a set of two exhibitions entitled *Arte de sistemas II*, one held in Rubén Darío plaza and the other at the Museo de Arte Moderno.

30 Rimmaudo, Annalisa and Lamoni, Giulia, op. cit., p. 15.

a series entitled *páginas* [pages], *páginas escritas* [written pages] or *páginas de un libro* [pages of a book], which she would continue to develop for the length of her career, but with particular intensity in the seventies and nineties. Those works consist of writing directly on CAyC letterhead.

On May 12, she participated in the “Encuesta acerca de arte e ideología Jasia Reichhard - Jorge Glusberg” at the CAyC. On September 21, the exhibition *Arte e ideología. CAyC al aire libre*, curated by Glusberg, opened.<sup>29</sup> According to a letter from Glusberg to the City of Buenos Aires requesting the use of the plaza space, the original name of the event was *Escultura, follaje y ruidos I y II*; it was scheduled to open sooner, but the incident known as the Trelew massacre, which occurred on August 22, caused the opening to be postponed and changed the event’s ideological bent. In the exhibition, envisioned as a continuation of the experiences the CAyC had organized in Rubén Darío plaza in 1970, works were made to dialogue in the public space. Mirtha showed her *Diario 1 Año 1* [Newspaper 1 Year 1], published by Glusberg for the occasion, as part of the intervention *Escenas de la vida cotidiana o La gran orquesta* [Scenes from Daily Life or The Great Orchestra] by artist Mederico Faivre, installed in a public bus. Later, the artist described the black rectangle on *Diario*’s left column as an expression of mourning for those killed in Trelew.

The only time I made reference to the political situation in my country in my work was in *Diario*: the column on the left on the last page alludes to those killed in Trelew. That was in 1972. Except for that massacre, which affected me—and many others—a great deal, I never wanted my work to be read in political terms. What I was doing, and still do, is develop graphic ideas on writing which, in the end, have little to do with political events but much to do with the structures and forms of language. I never delved into the theory on the topic, though.<sup>30</sup>

There were a number of later editions of *Diario*: a second edition by Mirtha Dermisache herself (Buenos Aires, 1973); a third edition by Guy Schraenen éditeur (Antwerp, 1975); a fourth edition (a four-page facsimile) by Silvia de Ambrosini, published in *Artinf* journal (Buenos Aires, 1995); and a fifth edition by Mirtha Dermisache (Buenos Aires, 1995).

On March 12, 1973, Gregorio Klimovsky published an essay on her work, calling it an intellectual challenge that proposed a method of “open” communication. Klimovsky compared her art to the use of the axiomatic method in modern mathematics and to the construction of a musical line on the basis of sheet music. That same year, Oscar Masotta proposed envisioning Mirtha’s writing



as a channel, a medium removed from the message. He explained, “Her art shuts itself off like a stubborn and wild animal in strange terrain. There is, in that stubbornness, a structure that semiologists have not described, one that merits study.”<sup>31</sup> Silvia de Ambrosini, director of *Artinf* journal, wrote the text “Mirtha Dermisache hoy,”<sup>32</sup> which marked the beginning of a friendship between the two women that would last for years.

In July, her works were published in the journal *Ciencia Nueva*.<sup>33</sup> For that publication, she made printing blocks, matrices, for mass printing akin to a series of pieces she called *Reportaje* [Interview]. There are records of at least four books produced in 1973, as well as a strange portrait (perhaps a self-portrait) from that same year. She became a member of the CAyC’s Communication Department and attended a number of seminars there, among them “Teoría del signo artístico,” given by Professor Carlos Espartaco, and “Diversas aplicaciones de los modelos lingüísticos” and “El análisis científico de los fenómenos de comunicación,” both given by Armando Levoratti. She was invited to participate in the 12th São Paulo Biennial, though she ultimately did not take part.<sup>34</sup> She did travel to São Paulo in early 1974, however, giving a lecture entitled “Development of Free Graphic Expression in Adults” at the I Congresso Brasileiro de Educação on January 12.

According to the AMD, she produced at least eight books in 1974, incorporating into her graphic production new formats in works like *fragmentos de historias* [fragments of stories] and *historietas* [comic strips], as well as *Boletín informativo*, a series of large-scale pieces that were part of her proposal for the Guggenheim. This same year, *Libro N° 1*, 1969 [Book No. 1, 1969] was published after having been released, in December of the previous year, by Glusberg for the CAyC. She was invited to participate in a number of CAyC activities, publications, and group shows, among them *Kunssystem in Latijns-Amerika*, organized by the International Cultureel Centrum (ICC) in Antwerp. Latin American Week was held in that city in the framework of the show; it included roundtables, screenings of films, and concerts of electro-acoustic music. On April 24, she took part in the roundtable “Art and Culture in Third World Countries.” The show went on to tour the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and, under the title *Art Systems in Latin America*, the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. It was in the context of those shows that Mirtha met Guy Schraenen and Marc Dachy, curators specialized in artists’ books; they took an interest in her production. Along with Guy and his wife, Anne Schraenen, she was invited to participate in the publication *Cahier n° 1* [Notebook No. 1], which came out the following year. Guy would become another pillar of her career; he was her first editor in Europe and an adviser to her publications;



*Libro N° 1* [Book No. 1], 1969,  
exhibited at the CAyC, Buenos Aires, 1974

31 Masotta, Oscar, letter-essay for Mirtha Dermisache, Buenos Aires, March 1973.

32 The final version of the article was published later as “Dermisache. El libro ausente”, *Artinf* journal, Buenos Aires, no. 91, 1995, pp. 22–23, pursuant to the publication, in the journal’s issue no. 90, of the fourth edition of the *Diario 1 Año 1*.

33 *Ciencia Nueva. Revista de ciencia y tecnología*, Buenos Aires, year III, no. 24, July 1973, p. 48.

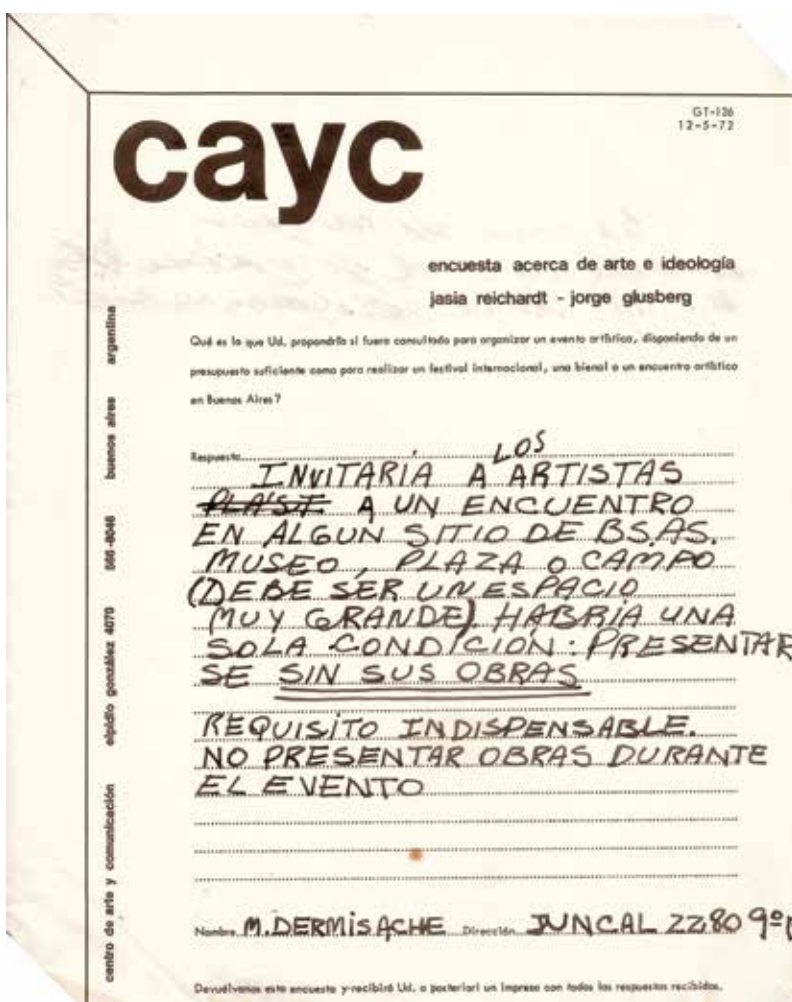
34 The artists invited decided not to participate, as explained by Glusberg in the article “Por qué resolví participar con *Art Systems* en la Bienal de San Pablo y ahora desisto.”



Top left  
Artinf magazine, Buenos Aires, year 23,  
no. 105, winter 1999



Top right  
Certificate from the I Congresso Brasileiro  
de Educação Artística,  
APEMA - ASPEC - SBEM, São Paulo,  
January 7–12, 1974



Bottom  
“Encuesta acerca de arte e ideología”  
[Questionnaire on art and ideology] filled out by  
MD for the CAyC, Buenos Aires, May 12, 1972

through him, she learned to pay more careful attention to the materials she used and to the size of print runs.

On September 20, 1974, the exhibition *Arte en cambio II* opened at the CAYC. Mirtha showed *Fragmento de historieta* [Fragment of Comic Strip]. From November 28 to December 6, her work was on exhibit in *Latin American Week in London*, an event held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), Nash House, London.

In December, Carmen Waugh gallery in Buenos Aires made its space available to Mirtha for a show of students' work. Mirtha was not sure whether or not to accept the offer, since her studio was not geared to training artists but to fostering creative freedom in adults. Ultimately, she decided to organize an extension of the tAC in the gallery, offering classes to the general public free of charge. The experience was, in a sense, a pilot that gave rise to the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma. The posters advertising the event read:

Can grown-ups express themselves using the techniques  
children use?

We believe they can.

We will do it all together.<sup>35</sup>

### Episode 3

1975–1981

**Write until disappearing . . .**

🎧 Musical selection for this episode

John Cage, *Empty Words*, 1973/1974

Brian Eno, *Music for Airports*, 1978

Mike Oldfield, *Tubular Bells*, 1979

The AMD contains a set of *Libros de apuntes* [Notebooks], as the artist called them, from this period, representative of the work routine she performed throughout her lifetime. According to her family, Mirtha would always carry notebooks of this sort in her bag, working on graphisms on a daily basis.

In 1975, she took part in *Art Systems in Latin America*, a show held at Espace Cardin in Paris (it later toured to the Institute of Contemporary Art, London) and in *Arte de sistemas en Latino América*, held at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara. That same year, *Cahier n° 1* was published; twenty numbered copies of a print run of one hundred and fifty contained an original work on carbon paper; there were also two artist's proofs marked A and B. She began working on what she called her *cartes postales*, a series of works of illegible writing with the dimensions and structure of a postcard. Ulises Carrión published them in a special mail art edition of his monthly *Ephemera*.<sup>36</sup>



*Libro de espejo* [Mirror Book], 1975

Mirror, glue

28 x 23.2 cm

Private collection

35 Poster for the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Carmen Waugh gallery, Buenos Aires, December 1974.

36 Writer, editor, and experimental artist Ulises Carrión (Veracruz, Mexico, 1941 – Amsterdam, 1989) left both Mexico and orthodox literature behind to produce contemporary art in Europe.



Certificate from the II Congresso Brasileiro de Educação Artística, APEMA - SBEM - FIAM, São Paulo, January 5-10, 1976

After the successful experience of the workshop in Carmen Waugh gallery, the tAC, coordinated by Mirtha, organized the first Jornadas del Color y de la Forma on July 4, 5, and 6, 1975; the event took place at the Museo de Arte Moderno, which was housed on the ninth floor of what is now the Teatro San Martín. Free of charge, the sessions were geared to adults, with or without a background in art, interested in experimenting with different techniques. In the space, open to the public from 5 to 8:30 p.m., materials were laid out on large tables. Coordinators—students in Mirtha’s first workshops—explained how to use the materials. The basic instruction was not to pass judgment on the work created. A playful and relaxed atmosphere conducive to creativity was generated.

Mirtha ended the year with a new body of work. She participated in the Paris Biennial and produced the *Libro de vidrio* [Glass Book] and the *Libro de espejo* [Mirror Book]. The artist explained:

For a show with Minujín, Peralta Ramos, Grippo, Kennedy, [and] Clorindo Testa ..., I decided to make a glass book and a mirror book. Neither one was very long due to questions of structure and fragility. The design, in both cases, was quite classic. The cover [of the glass book] was made of translucent glass, and when people opened it they would find that each page was transparent. And, upon opening the mirror book, the reader would see himself, [and] the setting ... Years later, I realized that in that second book I no longer produced even the signifier, perhaps to enable the reader to provide everything. With those last two books, I brought a cycle to a close.<sup>37</sup>

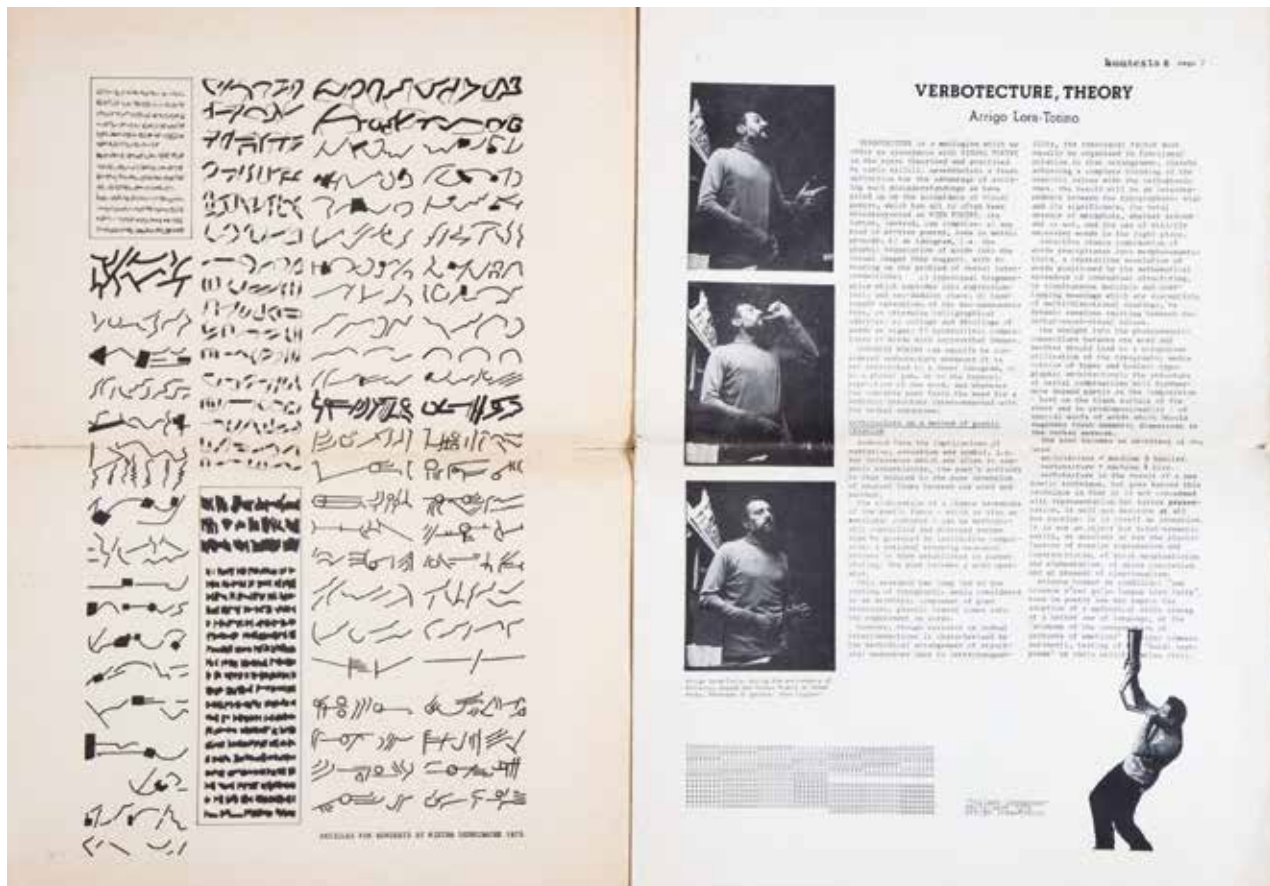
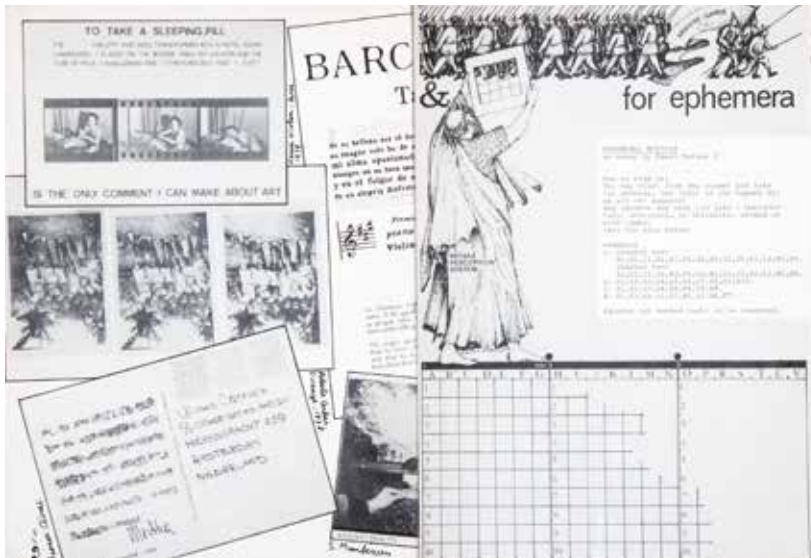
37 Pomiés, Julia, op. cit., p. 51.

In 1976, she gave her first lecture at the II Congresso Brasileiro de Educação Artística in São Paulo. In April, a work of her authorship was published in *Luna-Park* journal; “Articles for Kontexts by Mirtha Dermisache 1975” appeared in *Kontexts Publications*, the Netherlands.

From June 15 to 19, the Segundas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma were held, once again at the Museo de Arte Moderno. The slogan for the event was “The museum will be turned into a great workshop of creative activities, for adults only.”<sup>38</sup> Some participants had taken part in earlier editions; others came at the recommendation of a friend or in response to the posters; still others were curious due to the long lines at the entrance to the venue. Once inside, some only looked on, while others delved into the techniques proposed. The third edition was held in September, at the same place and during the same hours. This time, there were nine large tables, each one with its own coordinator and materials. Hanging on the walls to dry were earlier works as varied in nature as the participants, who grew in number each day.

38 Poster for the Segundas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, June 1976.

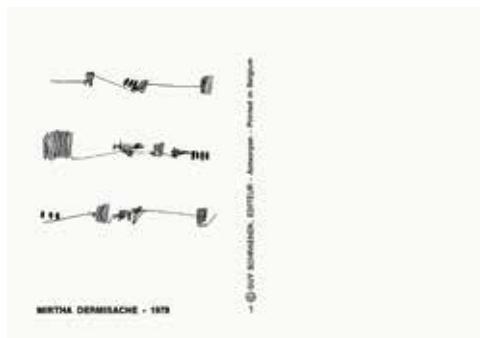
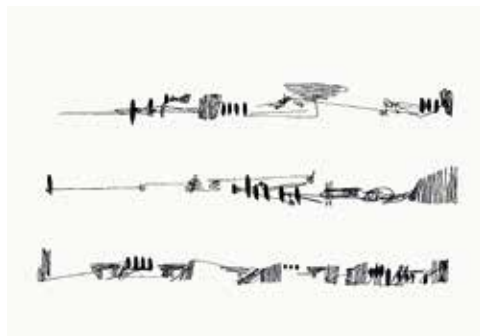




Top left and right  
Ephemera magazine, year 8, no. 8, June 1978

Bottom  
"Articles for Kontexts by Mirtha Dermisache 1975," *Kontexts*, Amsterdam, no. 8, spring 1976, p. 6





4 *Cartes postales* [4 Postcards], 1978  
Offset print on paper  
Guy Schraenen edition  
4 postcards, 1 card with information  
about the edition, folder  
10.5 x 14.7 cm

39 Guidelines that appeared on the poster for the Cuartas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, August 1977. The conceptual guidelines were formulated in 1975, and they were used for both the Jornadas and the taller de Acciones Creativas.

40 Fellow participants included Guillaume Apollinaire, Roberto Altmann, Frédéric Baal, Roland Barthes, Marcel Broodthaers, André Breton, Documents DADA, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Brion Gysin, Jasper Johns, Henri Lefebvre, El Lissitzky, René Magritte, Sophie Podolski, Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian, Man Ray, and A. Rodtchenko.

In June, Mirtha showed work—specifically her glass and mirror books—in the exhibitions *Arte en cambio 76* and *¿Hay vanguardia en Latinoamérica? Respuesta argentina*, both held at the CAYC; she took part in *Text-Sound-Image. Small Press Festival*, a show that toured the Netherlands, organized by Guy and Anne Schraenen at the Galerie Kontakt in Antwerp. Starting in November, her work formed part of *Zeitungskunst*, a group project housed at the Verlaggalerie Leaman, also organized by Guy and Anne Schraenen, and in *Newspaper Arts* *Newspaper* at Other Books & So space, a gallery, shop, and—later—archive (Other Books & So Archive, OBASA) in Amsterdam created and run by Ulises Carrión. She formed part of a number of projects related to systems art in European cities; along with Schraenen, she participated in group shows on artists' books and on other forms related to the specific problem of art and communication, among them *Éditions et communications marginales d'Amérique latine*, Maison de la Culture, Le Havre. In December, at Artemúltiple gallery, she brought the year to an end with an informal lecture with slide projections on the final Jornadas she had organized in 1976.

In August 1977, the Cuartas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma were held at the Museo de Arte Moderno. The number of participants and coordinators grew. This time, a set of new guidelines were handed out to attendants:

We will not teach you how to draw or how to paint; you won't learn about art history, composition systems, or art appreciation. All we will do is explain techniques.

As children, did those of us who are now adults have access to free graphic expression?

Why is it that when an adult is inclined to graphic expression he must resort to a rational and systematized learning process?

We will release the world of forms locked inside and recognize ourselves in them.

There are no good or bad, pretty or ugly, works in our view; there are different ways of expressing oneself.

We extend our inner gesture in the work tool.

What happens on the page does not matter: what matters is what happens within us.<sup>39</sup>

There are records of at least three books of graphisms produced in 1978; her work continued to gain legitimacy on the international scene. She took part in the group show *Typographies. Écritures*, curated by Christian Dotremont for the Maison de la Culture de Rennes. The show brought together 20th-century artists from a number of different countries, all of whom attempted, in their work, to engage in a sort of writing.<sup>40</sup> In March 1978, she took part in

*Tecken. Lettres, Signes, Écritures* at Malmö Konsthalle, an exhibition curated by artist Roberto Altmann; in June, Guy Schraenen presented *4 Cartes postales* in Belgium, an edition with four original signed copies.

On September 27, 1979, Dermisache, along with Martha Susana Buratovich, Silvia Vollaro, and Jorge Luis Giacosa, registered the trademark “Jornadas del Color y de la Forma” and, first from October 3 to 7 and then from October 9 to 14, the fifth edition of that event was held at the Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori. That edition was sponsored by companies that donated work materials (paint, clay, rags, sponges, ink, paper, and so forth). Around five hundred people participated in each session; they sometimes had to stand in long lines to get in.

From January 9 to 13, 1980, the Primeras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma in the city of Bariloche were held; this was the only edition of the event to take place outside of Buenos Aires. To organize it, members of the tAC traveled to Bariloche beforehand in order to train twenty-five people as coordinators who might later communicate the event. The Jornadas were sponsored by Aerolíneas Argentinas and by the local departments of Tourism and Culture. They took place in an annex of the Centro de Arte Di Tullio. The techniques and implements used included wet sheets of paper, sponges, individual and joint work in clay, murals in tempera paint, carved brick, and black and white and color monotypes. The event was extremely well attended and appreciated by the local community. Leonor Cantarelli recalls:

I was twenty-two years old when I first went to Mirtha’s workshop; it was in 1976, one year before it moved to Posadas Street, where it would eventually have as many as one hundred and thirty students ... I was involved in every detail of the organization of the event in Bariloche; we were seen as “apostles”—they even called us that—because Mirtha was extremely demanding at every instance, from the very beginning of the Jornada until it was over ... Each step, including choosing the right music for each technique, was carefully heeded. To be an assistant or coordinator required taking a special and taxing course, which meant not only mastering all facets of the technique, but also knowing how to handle the entire situation, from welcoming students or participants to closing the door behind them.<sup>41</sup>

In 1981, Mirtha continued to participate in a number of Guy Schraenen’s initiatives, among them *Libellus*, a monthly publication of mail art put out by the ICC in Antwerp. The Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, organized that same year,<sup>42</sup>



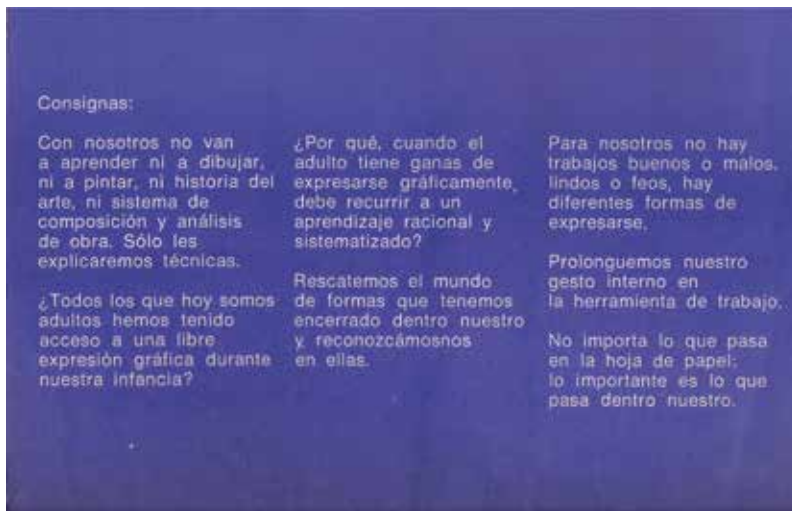
Entrance to the Primeras Jornada del Color y de la Forma, Centro de Arte Di Tullio, Bariloche, January 1980

41 Interview by the AMD staff with Leonor Cantarelli, Buenos Aires, October 17, 2015.

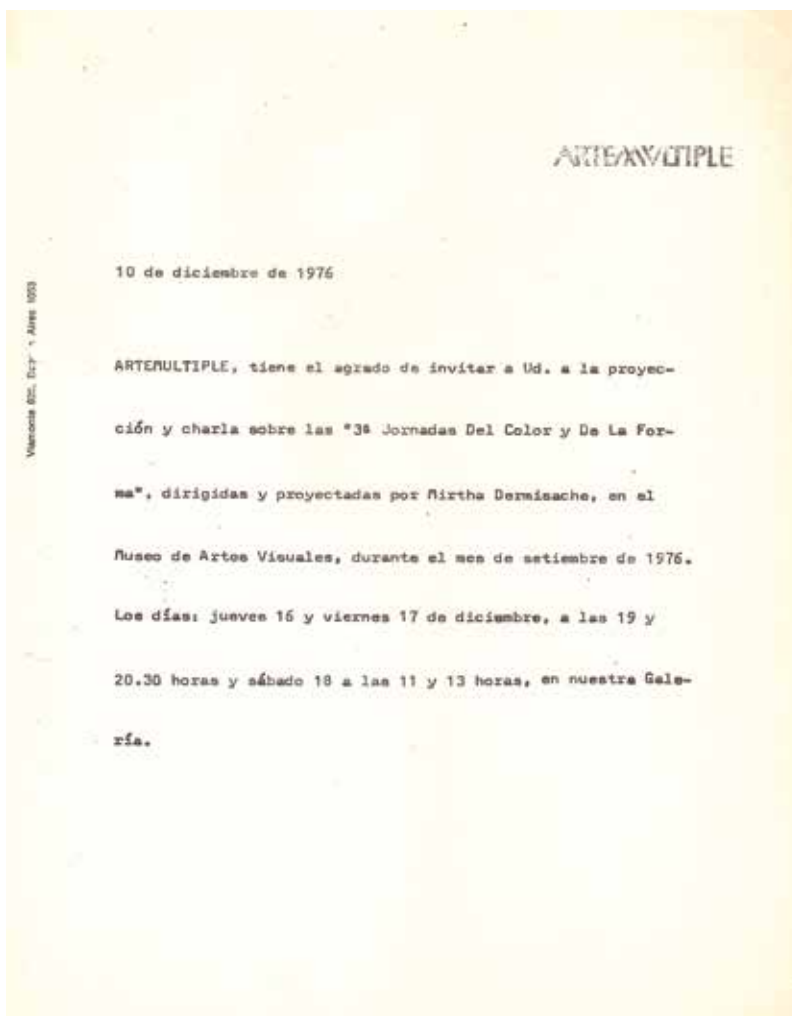
42 This edition of the event was held from November 12 to 15, November 19 to 22, and November 26 to 29 at the recently founded Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires (today the Centro Cultural Recoleta), where the Museo Sívori was housed. These gatherings came to be known as the “final Jornadas,” not because they were intended to be the last, but because, as former students report, the project did not continue due to lack of funding. The AMD contains correspondence with Nelly Perazzo and with the management of Aerolíneas Argentinas regarding the Séptimas Jornadas, but there is no documentation on why they were never held.



Top left  
*Muro por sumatoria* [Wall by Summation]  
 at the Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma,  
 Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires,  
 Buenos Aires, November 1981



Top right  
 Poster for the Cuartas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, August 1977



Bottom  
 Program for the Terceras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Artemúltiple gallery, Buenos Aires, December 10, 1976

were once again sponsored by Aerolíneas Argentinas. The credits read, “Idea and direction by Mirtha Dermisache” and “Supervision and coordination by Jorge Luis Giacosa.” Giacosa recalls:

At the tAC, we were bound by a mystique, a magic, that later made itself felt on a much larger scale at the Jornadas. The Jornadas—especially the last ones at the Centro Cultural Recoleta, where everything was larger than life—were a celebration. [At Recoleta], there was an eight-ton mound of clay! ... The event was a sort of “art nursery school,” where the idea was to play, to have fun with art supplies. The aim was not to turn you into an “artist,” in fact that happened to very few, if any, of the participants. What those of us who had been students and later worked as coordinators did was to facilitate in others the freedom that we ourselves had experienced ... There were two truly remarkable things at Mirtha’s studio, where I first went at the age of twenty-five. The first was how time was handled; it was important to be on time so that everyone could start together and be there when the technique was explained; the session usually started out with joint work, but each individual would decide when to leave. As Mirtha put it, “The class comes to an end when each person’s need to express himself comes to an end,” and that could take until midnight. The second key feature was that there was no verbal assessment or analysis of the work produced or instance where participants would share what they had felt—it was purely a question of making. I also learned the endless value of order from the standpoint of coordination—that was central to the Jornadas. For that expansive and free creative work to flow, for that total celebration of color and form to ensue, a seamless structure was required, and all of us who worked behind the scenes—and there were over one hundred and fifty of us—acted as a sort of clock at the service of the other’s expressive freedom—and, at Recoleta, there were so many!<sup>43</sup>

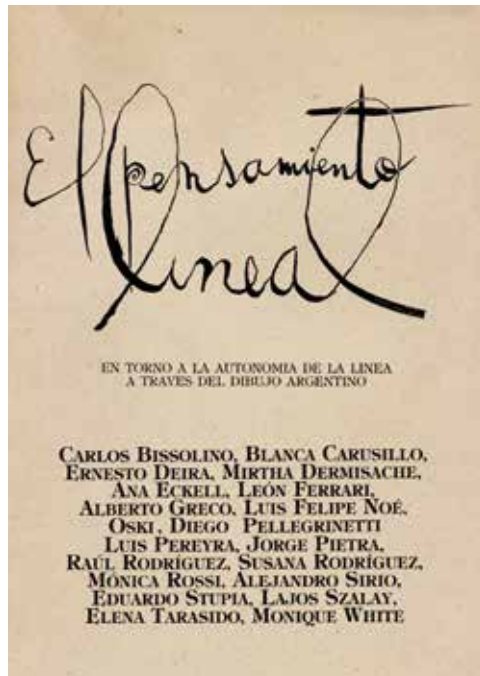
Thanks to the dimensions of the space, it was possible to include other techniques, such as video (participants were given cameras). They worked with wet sheets of paper, sponges, aniline dye, benzene, black and white and color monotypes, clay in groups and individually, tempera in groups, finger paint, and brick carving. It is estimated that some eighteen thousand people participated; the media covered the event widely. The next year, Mirtha, Lucía Capozzo, and Carlos Donnelly reflected on the experience in an interview in *Summa* magazine:

There are individual and group techniques, and others, such as carving on brick wall and the clay table, that I would not call



MD and the coordinators of the Primeras Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Centro de Arte Di Tullio, Bariloche, January 1980

<sup>43</sup> Interview by the AMD staff with Jorge Luis Giacosa, Buenos Aires, October 17, 2015.



Catalogue to the exhibition *El pensamiento lineal. En torno a la autonomía de la línea a través del dibujo argentino*, Buenos Aires, Fundación San Telmo, October 17 – November 13, 1988

44 “Mirtha Dermisache,” in *Summa. Revista de arquitectura, tecnología y diseño*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa S.A., no. 178/179, September 1982, pp. 69–80.

45 Program: Friday: screening of *Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma*, a short sound and color film in Super 8 by Carlos Garcarena; roundtable—broadcast live on VCR monitors—coordinated by Emilio Stevanovich with the participation of Jorge Romero Brest, Gregorio Klimovsky, Silvia Puente, and Emilio Renart; exhibition of photographs by Antonio Zaera. Friday to Sunday: screening of the short film by Carlos Garcarena. Screening in loop of a video on the Jornadas by Carlos Dulitzky. Tape of the roundtable. Saturdays and Sundays: workshop using some of the Jornada’s techniques to get a direct sense of the experience; promotion of attendance by media figures.

group techniques, but rather “summation techniques”: people add their work onto a total work that is created through the addition of all the small—and not so small—individual efforts ... The aim of including video was to enable participants to come into contact with that system and to learn to express images in that medium or language ... The Jornadas are really a sort of work-revelation whose breadth is limited solely by the creative capacity of each of the individuals that takes part. It’s like tossing seeds. Where they take, the true aim of the Jornadas will bear fruit; I provide the foundations, the materials, and the space for an inner adventure. Each individual responds as he wants, discovering the pleasure of being able to express his true inner self with a piece of clay, on a sheet of paper, or on a wall ... When I say work-revelation, I mean that the audience does not come to see a work, but that that audience, working, is the work.<sup>44</sup>

## Episode 4

1982–1997

### *A time between times*



Musical selection for this episode

Vangelis, *Spiral*, 1977

Empire Centrafricain, *Musique Gbáyá / Chants à penser*, 1980

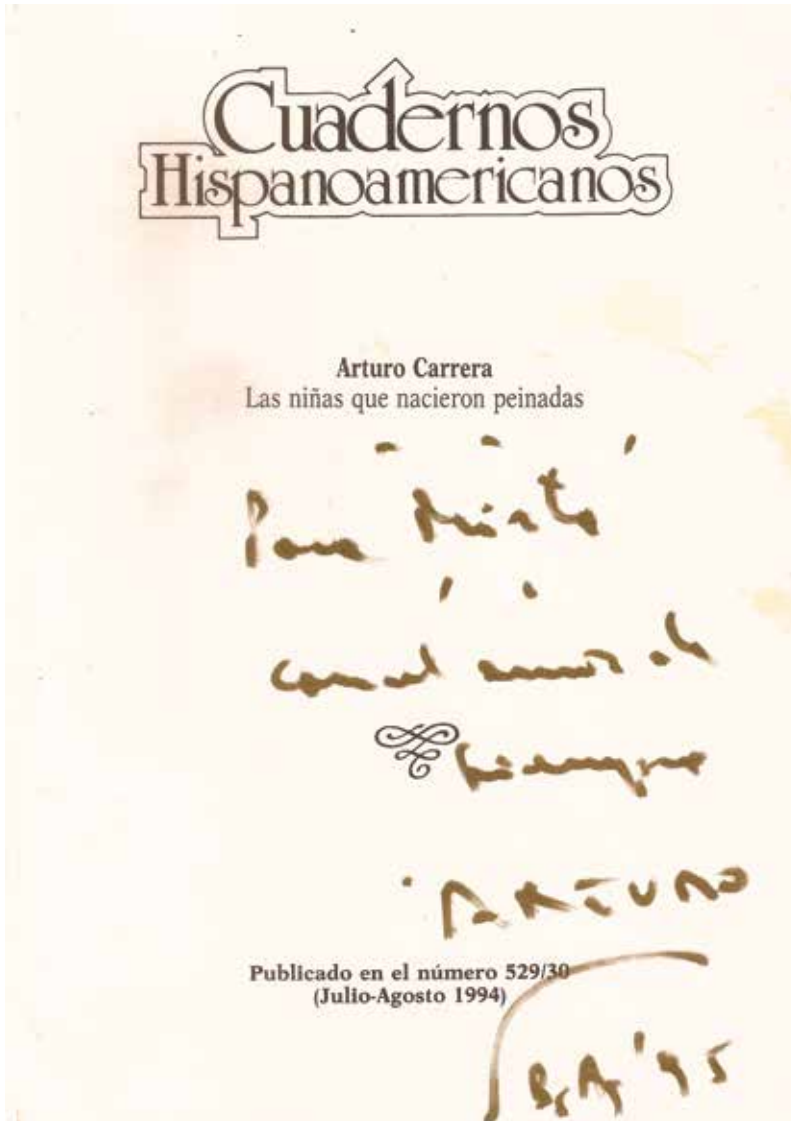
UDU Chant / Mickey Hart, *Planet Drum*, 1991

On April 29, 1982, the Asociación Civil Taller de Acciones Creativas was founded, and from July 2 to 11 an encounter on the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma was held at the Fundación San Telmo. The event was described as a “multiple and multidisciplinary ‘Color - Form - People - Now’ occasion with screenings, roundtables, and a photography exhibition.”<sup>45</sup> The aim of the event at the foundation was to assess the achievements of the Sextas Jornadas. Participants included Jorge Romero Brest, Gregorio Klimovsky, Nelly Perazzo, and Emilio Renart. The debate revolved around whether or not the Jornadas could be considered an artistic event, and whether or not they could be envisioned as a form of knowledge.

The tAC began holding children’s birthday parties in an action that, once again, turned out to be ahead of its time. While Dermisache continued to develop her art and to teach in these years, she did so at a slower pace; she took part in many exhibitions and projects, but put her own production on hold. Those close to her mention her husband’s health problems and sheer exhaustion from the Jornadas as possible reasons.

Over the course of the eighties, she engaged in group projects, like the *Muestra internacional de libros de artistas* at the Centro





Top left  
Arturo Carrera, "Las niñas que nacieron peinadas," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, Vanguardias Iberoamericanas, no. 529/30, ICI, July–August, 1994

Top right  
Catalogue to *Kunstenaarsboeken*, Provinciaal Museum Hasselt, February 26 – March 28, 1990

Bottom  
Invitation to the exhibition of photographs by Antonio Zaera on the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, Fundación San Telmo, July 1982.

Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires (1984); *Rencontres autour de la revue Luna-Park* at the Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris (1987); and *El pensamiento lineal. En torno a la autonomía de la línea a través del dibujo argentino* at the Fundación San Telmo, Buenos Aires (1989).

During the period, Guy Schraenen continued to play an important role in the publication and communication of her work. He invited the artist to take part in a number of projects in Belgium, among them *Je est un autre* at the Galerij van de Akademie, Waasmunster (1986); *Kunst Enaars Publikaties* at the Centrale Bibliotheek Rijksuniversiteit, Ghent (1988); *Mirtha Dermisache* at the Archive Space, Archive for Small Press & Communication (ASPC),<sup>46</sup> Antwerp (1989); *Kunstenaarsboeken* at the Provinciaal Museum Hasselt; *Van Boek Tot Beeld* at the Cultuur- en ontmoetingscentrum de Warande; and *Livres d'artistes* at the Provinciaal Museum Hasselt (1990).

In the early nineties, Héctor Libertella made reference to Dermisache's work in his study of the death of linguistics and the limits of pure orality or pure graphism. Regarding *Diario 1 Año 1*, he stated:

On the basis of a declared act of written communication, she empties out the receptor's classical expectations by means of an operation that takes the medium apart, showing it as the issue zero of what a newspaper might have been, and taking the bases of her work—the use of graphism—to its limit: zero function, embryo, mockup of a newspaper, which means mockup of language conceived as an element only possible in relation to communication.<sup>47</sup>

Later, in 2000, *Diario 1 Año 1* was used as the back cover of Libertella's book *El árbol de Saussure. Una utopía*,<sup>48</sup> in 2006, he published *La arquitectura del fantasma. Una autobiografía*,<sup>49</sup> and printed a set of graphisms entitled "Mirtha Dermisache lee a Libertella" [Mirtha Dermisache reads Libertella] and "Libertella lee a Mirtha Dermisache" [Libertella reads Mirtha Dermisache].<sup>50</sup> He describes Mirtha's writing as work organized on the sole basis of "a-semantic graphism," which he—like Arturo Carrera—considers "legible insofar as practice that disregards knowledge, and illegible insofar as 'result of the visibility' of thought."<sup>51</sup>

In 1992, the tAC regained its former strength as it expanded and brought in new coordinators. On her time away from the tAC and later return, Mirtha wrote the following letter:

Hello! I'm sending this letter to everyone who was involved in my studio at some time ... when we were putting together the "taller de Acciones Creativas, de Mirtha Dermisache y otros."

46 Archive for Small Press & Communication (ASPC) was a center for the documentation, conservation, and exhibition of artists' publications founded in Belgium by Guy Schraenen in 1974.

47 Libertella, Héctor, "La muerte lingüística," in *Ensayos o pruebas sobre una red hermenéutica*, Buenos Aires, Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, Escritura de Hoy collection, 1990, p. 24.

48 Libertella, Héctor, *El árbol de Saussure. Una utopía*, Buenos Aires, Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2000.

49 Libertella, Héctor, *La arquitectura del fantasma. Una autobiografía*, Buenos Aires, Santiago Arcos Editor, 2006.

50 Libertella, Héctor, "Mirtha Dermisache lee a Libertella," in *La arquitectura del fantasma. Una autobiografía*, chapter "Lo que se cifra en el nombre," op. cit., pp. 70–71.

51 Libertella, Héctor, "La muerte lingüística, Los límites de la pura oralidad y Los límites del puro grafismo," in *Ensayos o pruebas sobre una red hermenéutica*, op. cit., p. 31.

We spent ten years fostering free expression in adults in the visual arts on both individual and group levels—and even on a mass scale when, with all of your help, I held the various editions of the “Jornadas del Color y de la Forma.”

The work we began in 1972, when no one was using this method with adults, came to an end with the closing of my studio in '82. That period was followed by a time of reflection and rest, and of inner work, a time I spent mulling over other ideas in the sphere of art education.

The reason I am writing to you today is to tell you that I have relaunched the t.A.C. (located, once again, on the upper floor of an old mansion, this time near the corner of Cerviño and Ugarteche streets, in Palermo); the crux of the work will, of course, be essentially the same as it has been since the beginning.

This time, though, I will coordinate all of the classes myself; there will be both individual and group options. At the same time, drawing and printmaking teachers will be available to anyone who wants to investigate those specific techniques. The idea is to further pursue one's own path, one's own graphic world.

Available as well is a children's studio; its style is like the other studio, but emphasis is placed on painting ...

If you want more information, if the project interests you, or if you simply want to come by and see my new space, give me a call ... It will be a pleasure, as always, to get together and talk again.

In any case, I send my greetings out to you all after all this time.

Love, Mirtha Dermisache

Taller de Acciones Creativas <sup>52</sup>

As part of the expansion of activities with the “new” tAC, different guest teachers gave theoretical and hands-on seminars; in November 1993, the “Mirtha Dermisache & otros, taller de Acciones Creativas. IV Encuentro Caminos de Crecimiento” was held at the Centro Cultural General San Martín, an event also geared to furthering creative capacity.<sup>53</sup>

In 1994, Arturo Carrera published “Las niñas que nacieron peinadas,” an essay in which he analyzes work by Oliverio Gironde and Antonio Edgardo Vigo, as well as Dermisache's illegible writing. He states:

Writing. Voluminous graphs. Black on white or white on black. This serenely illegible writing suggests a “form” of “visible” thought; its spongy silence goads us toward writing itself, its secret state of stability.<sup>54</sup>



Untitled (illegible text), 1995

Ink on paper  
27.5 x 22.4 cm

52 Letter from Mirtha Dermisache, taller de Acciones Creativas, n.d.

53 The coordinators were Alicia Machta, Armando D'Angelo, Adriana Alesanco, Eugenia Cudisevici, Clarisa Szuszan, Natalia Kazah, Maya Ballen, Silvia Gennaro, Sandra Plitt, Ivana Martínez Vollaro, and Lucía Cardin.

54 Carrera, Arturo, “Las niñas que nacieron peinadas,” *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, no. 529/30, July–August 1994, n.p. ([http://bibliotecadigital.aecid.es/bibliodig/es/catalogo\\_imagenes/imagen.cmd?path=1005722&posicion=1&registrardownload=1](http://bibliotecadigital.aecid.es/bibliodig/es/catalogo_imagenes/imagen.cmd?path=1005722&posicion=1&registrardownload=1)).



Untitled (card), ca. 1990–2000 (detail)  
Ink on paper  
2 pieces in white paper envelope  
20 x 15 cm

<sup>55</sup> For further information, see Carrera, Arturo, “Sobre signos y esencias,” *Artinf* journal, Noticias de Aquí y Allá section, Buenos Aires, year 19, no. 92, spring 1995, p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> Mirtha never exhibited her *legible* or *incomprehensible texts* or her *notebooks*. According to Olga Martínez in an interview with the AMD staff held in Buenos Aires on November 20, 2016, the artist showed her those works only once; “she kept them in secret, hidden from view even in her studio.” The work was first seen when the AMD was organized.

In 1995, Mirtha republished her *Diario 1 Año 1* twice: in facsimile form in *Artinf* journal and, later, a fifth edition that the artist produced personally for the show *Mirtha Dermisache* at Galería de Arte Bookstore in Buenos Aires. A roundtable in which Arturo Carrera, Silvia de Ambrosini, Roberto Elía, and Eduardo Stupía participated was held in the context of the show.<sup>55</sup> That same year, she produced another series of *textos ilegibles* [illegible texts], a body of work she would continue to explore until approximately 2006. She took part in group shows organized by Schraenen in Germany and in France.

## Episode 5

1998–2011

### Multiple writings and public readings



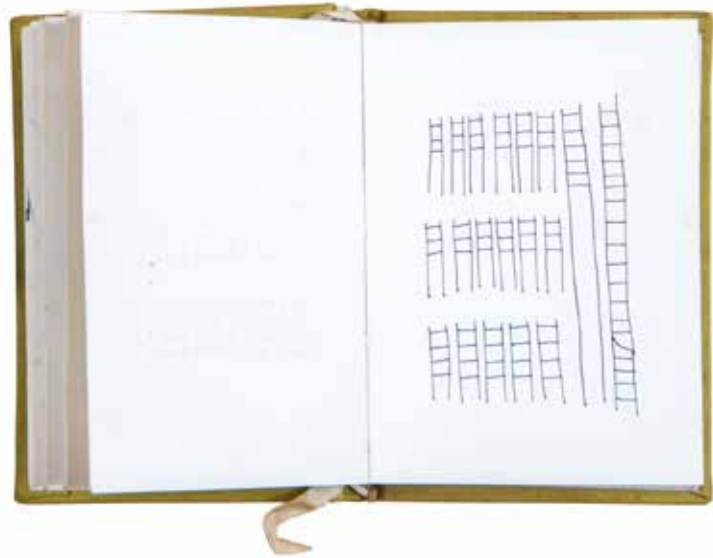
Musical selection for this episode

Schumann / Grieg, *Piano Concertos*, Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Krystian Zimerman

Bach, *Air* and other orchestral suites, Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Karl Münchinger

Starting in 1997, Mirtha returned to her work with renewed vigor. She produced *books* and *illegible texts* with new graphisms and attempted to return to some of her graphic production from the seventies. She also created more *notebooks*.<sup>56</sup>

In 1998, she produced two books and a great many *postcards*, as well as matrices for possible future editions. In 1998 and 1999, she took part in group projects geared to legitimizing the artist book as art form, events like *Libros de artistas III*, curated by Juliano Borobio Mathus, Enrique Horacio Gené, and Pedro Roth, Biblioteca Nacional, Buenos Aires; *Books from the End of the World. Artists's Books from Argentina in Philadelphia*, Foundation for Today's Art/NEXUS; *Libro de artista*, Fundación Telefónica, Chile; *Libros de artistas IV*, Museo Eduardo Sívori, Buenos Aires; and *Studienzentrum für Künstlerpublikationen*, Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen. Two exhibitions held in Mexico and curated by Martha Hellion—Ulises Carrión's wife—evidence not only the couple's interest in Mirtha's work, but also their determination to disseminate the artist's book genre and its universe in Europe and Latin America. The shows were *El arte de los libros de artistas*, held at the Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca and at the Biblioteca Francisco de Burgoa del Centro Cultural Santo Domingo, Oaxaca, Mexico (1998); and *Ulises Carrión. Cuatro décadas. El arte de los libros de artistas*, held at the Biblioteca de México, Mexico City, Mexico (1999). Also in 1999, she produced *tarjetones* [large cards], works in a format somewhat larger than her *postcards*, and brought



Top left  
Catalogue to the exhibition *Palabras perdidas*.  
*Escrituras y caligrafías en el arte argentino*,  
Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires,  
November 29 – December 30, 2001

Top right  
*Libro de apuntes N° 2* [Notebook No. 2], 1997

Bottom  
View of the exhibition *Mirtha Dermisache*.  
*Escrituras [:] Múltiples*, El Bordo Arte  
Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires, 2004





View of the exhibition *Mirtha Dermisache. Escrituras [:] Múltiples*, El Borde Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires, 2004

57 Romero, Juan Carlos, *Andes*, Santiago, Chile/Buenos Aires, p. 7.

58 *El Surmenage de la Muerta* (*San Sartres en artes*), Buenos Aires, year 2, no. 6, December 2002, and year 3, no. 7, May 2003. Mirtha's intervention consisted of replacing a whole page with one of her *illegible texts*. For issue 7, 2003, she intervened on the cover and other sections by placing illegible texts on them without altering their structure.

an entirely new format, the *newsletter*, into her production. She published one of her postcards in *Artinf* and produced 7 *Tarjetas postales* [7 Postcards], a set of seven works, each with a large print run; for each model, there were seven signed original copies. The conception, first insinuated in *Cahier n° 1*, was akin to the idea of the “split edition” that the artist would later develop.

The book *Andes*,<sup>57</sup> by Juan Carlos Romero, was the culmination of a collective publication project on which Mirtha worked. At the dawn of the new century, she participated in a number of group shows in Buenos Aires, among them *Siglo XX argentino. Arte y cultura*, Centro Cultural Recoleta (1999–2000); *Libros de artista*, Arcimboldo gallery (2000); *Instantes gráficos. El libro de artista*, Fundación Rozemblum (2001), and *Palabras perdidas. Escrituras y caligrafías en el arte argentino* (2001), Centro Cultural Recoleta. Fellow participants in that last show included Ernesto Deira, León Ferrari, and other contemporary artists who together interrogated the meaning of the relationship between word and image, or the loss of meaning in the space between them; the works on exhibit made use of an array of formats (paper, canvas, object, installation, video, etc.). At the same time, Mirtha took part in an edition of stamps organized by Vórtice Argentina for the “Día del Arte Correo,” an event held at the Palacio Central del Correo Argentino.

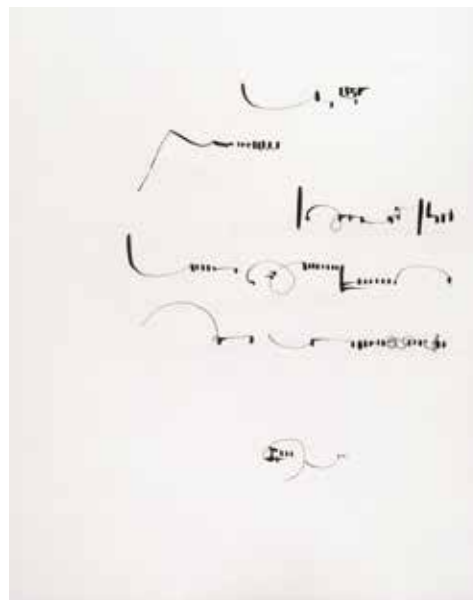
She continued to show work in exhibitions abroad, among them *Out of Print. An Archives Artistic Concept*, held in Belgium, France, Spain, Slovenia, Croatia, Portugal, and Germany (2001), and *Verlage-wie keine anderen / Publishers as No Others*, Teil 5, Eine Ausstellung (2002), both curated by Schraenen; she participated in *Outside of a Dog. Paperbacks and Other Books by Artists*, curated by Clive Phillpot for the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2003–2004). In Buenos Aires, her work was featured in group shows like *Las camitas* at the Centro Cultural Recoleta (2002–2003), where five hundred artists were given a small metal bed on which to intervene. Proceeds from the show, which was organized by the Asociación de Artistas Visuales de la República Argentina (AAVRA)—members included artists Elda Cerrato, Diana Dowek, Margarita Paksa, Nora Correas, Ana Maldonado, Leo Vinci, Ricardo Longhini, and Marcelo Cofone—went to help the Hospital Paroissien in La Matanza, a working-class Buenos Aires neighborhood, buy medical supplies. Mirtha used the opportunity to apply the concept of *por sumatoria* (by summation): she invited thirty-three artists to do interventions on the bed's small sheets. The printer Latingráfica joined the effort, printing five hundred postcards with images of bed-works; the postcards were also for sale as a means to raise funds. In these years, Mirtha's work was featured in publication projects like *El Surmenage de la Muerta*<sup>58</sup>

and “Página de Artista,” the section of the *Diario de Poesía* that Eduardo Stupía, the journal’s art director, coordinated.<sup>59</sup>

In 2003, three events affected the course of the artist’s graphic production and the visibility of her work in Buenos Aires—a context where Mirtha was largely forgotten. First, she wrote two books—her last bound, titled, and signed works in that format. Second, she came into contact with Geneviève Chevalier, Florent Fajole,<sup>60</sup> and Jorge Santiago Perednik, editors with whom Mirtha worked to create new formats that challenged traditional forms of publication and exhibition. Together, they produced *Libro N° 8, 1970* [Book No. 8, 1970] (2003), where the information about the edition is located on a sticker attached to the plastic covering around the book, letting the reader choose whether to keep the device or to throw it away. They also presented *Libro N° 1, 2003* [Book No. 1, 2003], where the concept of the “split edition”—a format that included an original sheet *between copies*—was introduced. In 2004, they published *Nueve newsletters & un reportaje* [Nine Newsletters & an Interview] (1999–2000), occasion for Mirtha’s first solo show in Argentina. Entitled *Mirtha Dermisache. Escrituras [:] Múltiples*, the show was held at El Borde Arte Contemporáneo gallery and curated by Olga Martínez, the gallery’s director. It was in that context that the “editorial device” emerged as concept and exhibition format. Fajole recalls:

In 2004, Olga Martínez approached Mirtha Dermisache about holding a show ... Rather than put together a traditional exhibition, she arranged a common print run of four hundred copies on ten tables, one for each of the works published; there were twelve chairs that could be moved around. In attempting to describe this form of installation, I associated the words device and editorial. Device because tied to both the act of laying out and the publication as object. Like any other publication, this one is a space-time configuration that circulates in a defined context. [I chose] the word editorial, meanwhile, because it is not a question of exhibiting originals but rather of witnessing the final stage of the work’s production. This protocol also means that the reader can be directly engaged in the end of the work’s process. People can circulate freely between the tables, take a seat, leaf through the editions, go somewhere else, that is, they reconfigure the edition as they like when they leave the venue with their own selection/edition.<sup>61</sup>

The only prior publication of her works in the *interview* format was by Gabriel Levinas in the monthly *El Porteño* (Buenos Aires, year 1, no. 3, May, second period, El Porteño press). In the same line



*Diez cartas* [Ten Letters], 2007/2009 (detail)  
Print on Starwhite Hi-Tech Tiara paper  
in white folder and tracing paper wrapping  
28 x 23 cm  
Malba, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano  
de Buenos Aires Collection

<sup>59</sup> “Página de Artista,” in *Diario de Poesía. Información. Creación. Ensayo*, Buenos Aires/Rosario, quarterly journal, no. 62, December 2002, p. 26, and no. 71, December 2005 to April 2006, pp. 1, 11–20. Mirtha’s intervention, featured among articles by other authors, consisted of her illegible texts and reproductions of the *Diario 1 Año 1*.

<sup>60</sup> French editor Florent Fajole came to Buenos Aires at the beginning of the new millennium; he first saw Mirtha Dermisache and Horacio Zabala’s work at the Abraham Vigo Archive.

<sup>61</sup> Fajole, Florent, “El trabajo de Mirtha Dermisache editado por Florent Fajole. Aspectos de una relación creativa,” article in the AMD, n.d.



Poster for the exhibition *Sintonías*. Elba Bairon, Alejandro Cesarco, Mirtha Dermisache, Esteban Pastorino, Alejandra Seeber, Fundación PROA, Buenos Aires, January 23 – March 31, 2010

of production, the newsletter and interview devices were exhibited once again in 2004, in a show curated by Fajole and Nicolas Tardy for the Centre International de Poésie Marseille. The notion of “editorial device” was central to Mirtha’s production in these final years as her work veered towards publications, which had always been her main objective. From 2004 to 2006, she took part in group shows in Argentina, Italy, France, and Portugal. Her newsletters were featured in *New Magazine. International Visual and Verbal Communication* in 2004;<sup>62</sup> *Luna-Park* journal published *Livre n° 1*, 1978 in 2006;<sup>63</sup> issue 10 of *OEI* was dedicated to her art.<sup>64</sup>

In 2005, she began work in the *lecturas públicas* [public readings] format, which consisted of large columns of text. This was the first of what would be many series of large works, among them *textos murales* [mural texts] (starting in 2007), *instructivos* [instructions], and *afiches explicativos* [explanatory posters], the last of which was envisioned in 2010 as an intervention in the public space.<sup>65</sup> She and Florent Fajole produced a number of other publications—*Lectura pública 1* [Public Reading 1], for instance—on the occasion of solo shows like *Mirtha Dermisache. Dispositivo editorial 2. Lectura pública*, Centro Cultural de España en Buenos Aires, and *Lectura pública 3* [Public Reading 3], featured at a show of the same name at El Borde gallery.

In 2006, the artist, along with Fajole and Guillermo Daghero, published *Libro N° 2, 1968* [Book No. 2, 1968], which was featured in the show *Mirtha Dermisache. Editorial Device No. 3*, Bookartbookshop, London. In 2007, Fajole published *Diez cartas* [Ten Letters] as part of the show *Mirtha Dermisache. 10 Cartas (y otras escrituras). Dispositivo editorial 4*, Instituto Italo-Latino Americano, Rome; in 2008, *Libro N° 2, 1972* [Book No. 2, 1972] was exhibited at *Mirtha Dermisache. Livres. Florent Fajole. Dispositif éditorial*, a project curated by Didier Mathieu at the Centre des livres d’artistes de Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche.

In 2009, *Libro N° 1, 1972* [Book No. 1, 1972] was exhibited at the Centre d’art Le 19, Crac, Montbéliard, and *Diez cartas* was re-released in an editorial project coordinated by Olga Martínez. This time, the letters came with envelopes so that they could be dispatched and, hence, their meanings determined by the sender and the recipient. The group of works is known as *Cartas para mandar* [Letters to Send]. Pertinent to this production are Mirtha’s words, “I am not trying to say anything. [The work] becomes meaningful when the individual who engages it expresses himself through it.”<sup>66</sup>

In 2010, the letters were presented by Mercedes Casanegra and Edgardo Cozarinsky at the Centro Cultural de España, Buenos Aires.<sup>67</sup> At the invitation of Guy Schraenen, Dermisache’s work was featured in group shows: in 2009, at the Museo de

<sup>62</sup> *New Magazine. International Visual and Verbal Communication*, Belgium, no. 1, August 2004, pp. 124–135.

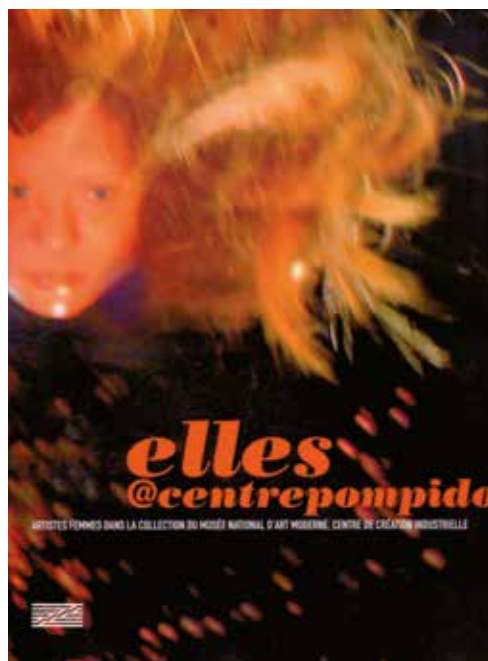
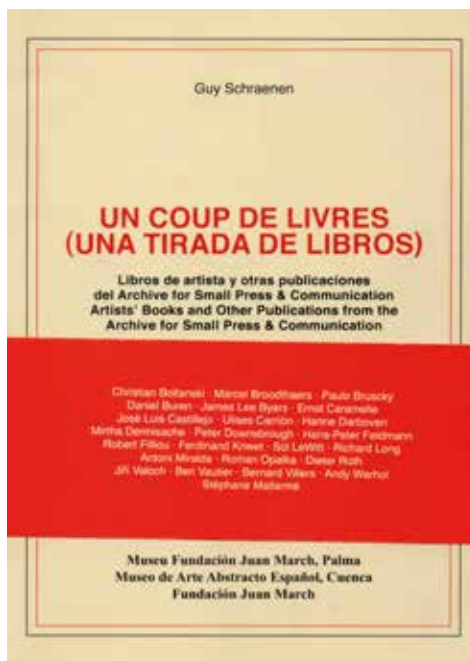
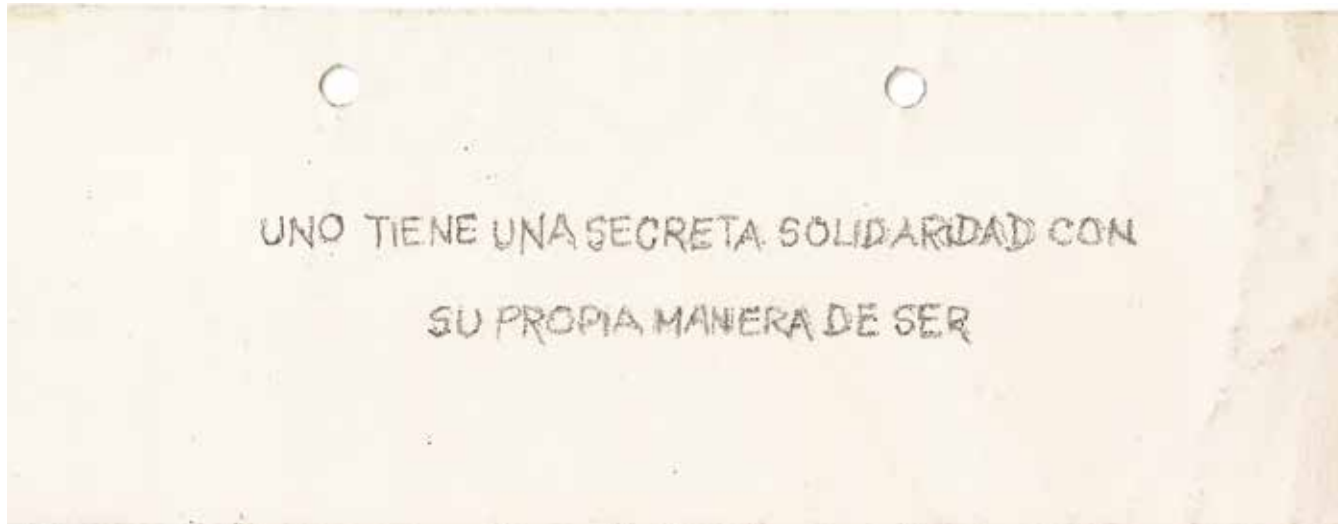
<sup>63</sup> “Livre n° 1, 1978,” in *Luna-Park*, Paris, no. 3, Nouvelle série, fall, pp. 153–173.

<sup>64</sup> “Mirtha Dermisache,” in *OEI*, Marseille, éditions du VELO, no. 10, October 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Rimmaudo, Annalisa and Lamoni, Giulia, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Jorge Glusberg, “Organización y proyecto de arte de sistema,” in *Artinf*, Buenos Aires, year 17, no. 86, 1993. Special issue on the Bauhaus.

<sup>67</sup> For a video of the presentation, see <http://www.cceba.org.ar/v3/ficha.php?id=62#modulo171>



Top  
MD, studio document, Buenos Aires, n.d.

Bottom left  
Catalogue to the exhibition *Un coup de livres (Una tirada de libros)*, Cuenca, Archive for Small Press & Communication, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español - Fundación Juan March, June 18 – October 31, 2010

Bottom right  
Catalogue to *elles@centrepompidou*, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, October 27, 2009 – February 21, 2011

Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona (MACBA), and in 2010, at the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español - Fundación Juan March in Cuenca.

From 2009 to 2011, she took part in two exhibitions that would prove essential to gaining her work greater conceptual, as well as commercial, recognition, and earning it a place on the local and international contemporary art market. The first was the international exhibition *elles@centrepompidou. Artistes femmes dans les collections du Musée national d'art moderne*, curated by Camille Morineau. Second, a section of the show *Sintonías. Elba Bairon, Alejandro Cesarco, Mirtha Dermisache, Esteban Pastorino, Alejandra Seeber* dedicated solely to her work; curated by Olga Martínez, that section of the show at Fundación PROA consisted of publications by Mirtha on display in PROA'S bookstore alongside other books—just as the author had always wanted. As Martínez says:

This is where the work takes on its full meaning, reaching a point where the publication displaces the original—manuscript—to begin its route through the channels of the publishing world. It is as such that in the PROA bookstore the artist's recent publications will be sold, made available to the visitor to touch, read, and buy, and as such creating a space to link the publication and the viewer/reader.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Martínez, Olga, *Más allá de la escritura*, Buenos Aires, Fundación PROA, 2010. (Available at <http://www.proa.org/esp/exhibition-sintonias-mirtha-dermisache-1.php#1>).

After those events, Mirtha's work was in demand at art fairs; museums wanted her pieces for their collections. It was at this time that Mirtha and Olga Martínez agreed to donate certain works to museums in order to heighten interest in her production and further its dissemination.

In 2010 and 2011, Mirtha, in conjunction with Fajole and Daghero, published *Fragmento de historia de 1974* [Story Fragment from 1974], 2010; *Texto de 1974* [Text from 1974], 2011; and *Cuatro textos* [Four Texts], produced between 1970 and 1998. Those final two are limited-edition works made using the “cromopaladio” technique, which, as Florent Fajole explains, is “a mixed photochemical process that sets out to explore a certain dimension of the process by evidencing the gap between reproducing and copying without compromising the quality of the print run in order to create multiple singularities.”<sup>69</sup>


<sup>69</sup> Fajole, Florent, op. cit., n.p.

In 2011, the retrospective *Mirtha Dermisache. Publicaciones y dispositivos editoriales*, curated by Cecilia Cavanagh, was held at the Pabellón de las Bellas Artes of the Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina (UCA). The show, which explored different phases of Mirtha's production, was the last one to be held before the artist's death in January 2012.



## Episode 6

### Mirtha after Mirtha

 To be read in silence

Mirtha Dermisache died on January 23, 2012. Her final work was left on her drawing table and inspirational phrases on her blackboard as efforts to organize her archive got underway.

Five years later, French critic Philippe Cyrrounik, editor of the five hundred explanatory posters for the show *PLC Punto, línea y curva* (Centro Cultural Borges, 2011), explained:

It is thanks to the subtlety and rigor of her writing with no words, her typography with no texts, and her drawings with no images that Mirtha Dermisache is a crucial figure not only in Argentine art, but in what is known around the world as visual poetry.<sup>70</sup>

In 2012, she was awarded the Premio Konex a las Artes Visuales,<sup>71</sup> and in 2013 work on cataloguing her art and organizing her archive—now the Archivo Mirtha Dermisache (AMD)—began. Alejandro Larrumbe, the artist's nephew, explains:

As her nephews, creating the archive is a way of honoring our extremely talented aunt in order to enable her work to be seen around the world and to live on. We feel that her graphisms are a message to humanity; it is not until a person beholds them that they take on meaning in a highly personal and free process of re-creation. The archive is a way of recognizing a life of steadfast and inspiring work.<sup>72</sup>

Mirtha Dermisache's work continues to gain prestige in Argentina and beyond. Curators and artists have requested it on loan for a range of projects. Her art, now represented by the Henrique Faria gallery in Buenos Aires and New York, has been featured in exhibitions and art fairs such as *Solo Project* at ARCO in 2014, where she also represented Argentina in 2017. In 2014, her work was included in the group show *Drawing Time, Reading Time* held at the Drawing Center in New York; it was with that show that the AMD began enacting its loan policy as part of its mission. In 2015, the process of cataloguing and organizing the AMD was completed. In 2016, her work was featured prominently in the show *Poéticas oblicuas. Poesía concreta, escritura automática, conceptualismo*, curated by Fernando Davis and Juan Carlos Romero for Fundación OSDE.

By way of closing and farewell, Leonor Cantarelli, Mirtha's friend and executor of her will, reflects:



MD and Florent Fajole at the exhibition *Mirtha Dermisache. Publicaciones y dispositivos editoriales*, Pabellón de las Bellas Artes, UCA, Buenos Aires, 2011

<sup>70</sup> Quote in María Paula Zacharías, "Mirtha Dermisache. La esencia de la escritura," *La Nación* newspaper, Sunday, January 15, 2017. (Available at <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1975292-mirtha-dermisache-la-esencia-de-la-escritura>).

<sup>71</sup> Diploma al Mérito. Arte Conceptual: Quinquenio 2002-2006; Fundación Konex, Buenos Aires.

<sup>72</sup> Interview by the AMD staff with Alejandro Larrumbe, Buenos Aires, March 12, 2016.

Mirtha and I were bound by a friendship as strong as it was mysterious. Our lives were not always in synch and our tastes not always the same. But we were always tied by humor—I liked making her laugh. Like her graphisms, she was delicate and her taste exquisite, but austere. She was a creature of rituals, from the way she would make coffee and herbal teas to the way she would set the table, prepare techniques for her students, welcome them and bid them farewell at her studio classes. She loved technology, but she was always afraid of losing data, passwords, and archives, which is why she carefully wrote down the steps to access them in her notebooks and calendars. Every situation was, for her, worthy of respect and care. Mirtha was a fragile person; what moved her was the desire to help others. She didn't seem made for this world ...<sup>73</sup>



# Works Reproduced

## Books

pp. 80–83

*Libro N° 1* [Book No. 1], 1967

Ink and colored markers on paper

Sole copy, 108 pages; 108 images

25.7 x 20.8 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 84–87

Sin título (libro)

[Untitled (book)], 1967

Indian ink, marker, oil pastel, and pencil on paper, bound with white hard cover

Sole copy, 192 pages; 98 images

Signed, titled, and dated

25.1 x 20.1 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 88–91

*Libro N° 2* [Book No. 2] or

*Obra de teatro* [Play], 1968

Colored ink on paper, bound with white hard cover

Sole copy, 38 pages; 30 images

Signed, titled, and dated

27.6 x 20.8 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 92–95

*Libro N° 3* [Book No. 3], 1968

Pencil and colored marker on paper, unbound

Sole copy, 26 pages; 21 images

Unsigned, titled, and dated in attached note

28.2 x 23 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 96–99

Sin título (libro)

[Untitled (book)], ca. 1968–1979

Colored ink on paper, unbound

Sole copy, 16 pages; 15 images

Unsigned, untitled, no date

23 x 21.4 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 100–103

*Libro N° 2* [Book No. 2], 1969

Indian ink and sepia ink on paper

Signed, titled, and dated on the inside cover

30.2 x 26.8 cm

Private collection, New York

pp. 104–107

*Libro N° 2* [Book No. 2], 1970

Indian ink on paper

Signed, titled, and dated on the inside cover

28.6 x 23 cm

Private collection, New York

pp. 108–111

*Libro N° 3* [Book No. 3], 1970

Purple ink on paper

28.6 x 23 cm

Signed, titled, and dated on the inside cover

Private collection, New York

pp. 112–115

*Libro N° 5* [Book No. 5], 1971

Marker on paper

Signed and dated

29.3 x 26 cm

Private collection, Buenos Aires

pp. 116–119

*Libro N° 6* [Book No. 6], 1971

Marker on paper

25 graphisms; 18 pages

30 x 27 cm

Malba, Museo de Arte

Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires Collection

pp. 120–123

*Libro N° 8* [Book No. 8], 1971

Ink on paper, bound with white hard cover

Sole copy, 74 pages; 34 images

Signed, titled, and dated

29.5 x 26.4 cm

Eduardo F. Costantini Collection, Buenos Aires

pp. 124–127

Sin título (libro)

[Untitled (book)], 1971

Colored ink on paper, bound with black hard cover

Sole copy, 48 pages; 36 images

Signed and dated, untitled

30 x 27 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 128–131

*Libro N° 1* [Book No. 1], 1972/2010

Offset print on paper, bound with white hard cover

Edition of 44 pages; 37 images

Unsigned

Philippe Cyroulnik (ed.),

Montbéliard; Le 19, Centre régional d'art contemporain (CRAC), 2010

29 x 23.6 cm

Private collection, Buenos Aires

pp. 132–135

*Libro N° 4* [Book No. 4], 1972

Blue ink on paper

30 x 27 cm

Bound, hard black cover, 41 pages;  
71 graphisms  
Signed, titled, and dated  
Eduardo F. Costantini Collection,  
Buenos Aires

pp. 136–139

*Libro N° 5* [Book No. 5], 1972

Ink on paper

Black hard cover

Original book, signed and dated;  
re-bound in 2000

30 x 26.7 cm

Private collection, Buenos Aires

pp. 140–143

Sin título (libro)

[Untitled (book)], 1973

Ink on paper, unbound

Sole copy, 170 pages; 83 images

Signed and dated, untitled

28.5 x 23 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 144–147

*Libro N° 7* [Book No. 7], 1974

Colored ink on paper, unbound

Sole copy, 14 pages; 7 images

Signed, titled, and dated

28.1 x 23 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 148–151

Sin título (libro)

[Untitled (book)], 1974

Colored ink on paper, unbound

Sole copy, 30 pages, 13 images

Dated, unsigned, untitled

28.2 x 23 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 152

*Libro de vidrio* [Glass Book], 1975

Glass, glue

28 x 24 cm

Private collection, Buenos Aires

p. 153

*Libro de espejo*

[Mirror Book], 1975

Mirror, glue

28 x 23.2 cm

Private collection, Buenos Aires

pp. 154–157

Sin título (libro)

[Untitled (book)], 1970s

Ink on paper, unbound

Sole copy, 28 pages; 12 images

Unsigned, untitled, no date

24.6 x 18.3 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 158–161

*Libro N° 3* [Book No. 3], 1978

Indian ink on paper

32.5 x 25 cm

Unbound; signed and dated

on the first page

Private collection, New York

pp. 162–165

*Libro N° 1* [Book No. 1], 1997

Indian ink on paper, bound with  
white hard cover

Sole copy, 42 pages; 16 images

Signed, titled, and dated

34.5 x 29 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

## Letters

p. 166

Sin título (carta)

[Untitled (letter)], 1970s

Ink on paper. Sole copy

27.9 x 22.2 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 167

Sin título (carta)

[Untitled (letter)], 1970s

Ink on paper. Sole copy

24.4 x 18.2 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 168

Sin título (carta)

[Untitled (letter)], 1970s

Ink on paper

Sole copy. 28.3 x 20.3 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 169

Sin título (carta)

[Untitled (letter)], 1971

Letter by Mirtha Dermisache for  
the show *Arte de sistemas* (CAyC),

Museo de Arte Moderno de

Buenos Aires

Offset print on paper

29.5 x 21 cm

Private collection, Buenos Aires

p. 170

Sin título (carta)

[Untitled (letter)], 1974

Ink on paper

Sole copy

Dated, unsigned, untitled

21.8 x 16 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 171

Sin título (carta)

[Untitled (letter)], ca. 1970

Ink on paper

Sole copy. 28.5 x 20.2 cm

Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 172–173

*Diez cartas, 1970–2010. Cartas para  
mandar. En homenaje a la idea*

*original del arquitecto Amancio*

*Williams* [Ten Letters, 1970–2010.

Letters to be sent. Homage to the  
original idea of architect Amancio

Williams] (fragment), 2012

Print on paper



Edition 41/100  
1st edition, Reims, 2007; 2nd  
edition, Buenos Aires, 2009.  
Original project and editor: Mirtha  
Dermisache. Editorial coordinator:  
Olga Martínez. Designer: Florencia  
Reina for Ambiente 3  
Malba, Museo de Arte  
Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires  
Collection

### Illegible texts

p. 175  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Ink on tracing paper  
Sole copy  
19.1 x 25.5 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 176  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28.1 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 177, top left  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
28.1 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 177, top right  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Sepia ink on paper  
Sole copy. 24.3 x 18 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 177, bottom left  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s

Ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 177, bottom right  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 178, left  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Markers on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 178, right  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Colored inks and oil pastels  
on paper  
Sole copy. 28.2 x 23.1 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 179  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Colored ink on paper  
Sole copy. 29.8 x 20.8 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 180  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Colored inks on paper  
Sole copy. 28.2 x 23.1 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 181, left  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Marker on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 181, right  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Colored inks on tracing paper  
Sole copy. 25.5 x 19.2 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 182  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Pencil on paper. Sole copy, image  
on front and back. 28.1 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 183  
*Texto 17* [Text 17], 1974  
Colored ink on paper  
Sole copy  
Signed, titled, and dated  
28.3 x 23.2 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 184  
Sin título (texto)  
[Untitled (text)], 1970s  
Markers on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 185  
*Cuatro textos* [Four Texts], 1978  
Ink on Fabriano paper  
Sole copy, 4 pages; 4 images  
Signed and dated  
32.6 x 25 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 186  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1997–2006  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy. 32.3 x 24.4 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 187  
*Texto 1/1* [Text 1/1], 1998

Graphite on paper  
Sole copy  
Signed, titled, and dated  
32.5 x 24.3 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Incomprehensible texts

p. 189, top  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Colored ink on paper  
Sole copy  
12.5 x 24.5 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 189, center  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
12.5 x 24.5 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 189, bottom  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
12.5 x 24.5 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 190  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Indian ink on paper  
Sole copy  
28 x 22.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 190–191  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Indian ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 22.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 191  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Indian ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 22.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 192  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Indian ink on paper  
Sole copy  
28 x 22.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 193  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
24.3 x 18 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 194  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Colored ink on paper  
Sole copy  
24.3 x 18 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 195  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1971  
Colored ink on paper  
Sole copy  
24.3 x 18 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 196  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 197  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
Signed, no date, untitled  
28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 198–199  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Colored ink on paper  
Sole copy, 3 pages; 3 images  
24.5 x 18.3 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Legible texts

p. 200  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 201  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 202–203  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy, 4 pages  
28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 204  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper

Sole copy  
28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 205  
Sin título (texto) [Untitled (text)],  
ca. 1970–1973  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Newspaper

p. 207  
*Diario 1 Año 1* [Newspaper 1 Year 1],  
5th edition, 1972/1995 (cover)  
Offset print on paper  
47 x 36.6 cm  
Private collection, Buenos Aires

pp. 208–214  
*Diario 1 Año 1* [Newspaper 1  
Year 1], 1972 (interior)  
Ink on paper  
47 x 36.3 cm  
Private collection, Buenos Aires

### Comic strips, fragments of comic strips and fragments of stories

p. 216  
Sin título (historieta) [Untitled  
(comic strip)], ca. 1972–1974  
Colored inks on paper  
Sole copy  
28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 217, top  
Sin título (historieta) [Untitled  
(comic strip)], ca. 1972–1974  
Colored inks on paper  
Sole copy, image on front and back  
28 x 23 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 217, bottom  
Sin título (historieta)  
[Untitled (comic strip)],  
ca. 1972–1974  
Colored inks on paper  
Sole copy, image on front  
and back  
28.1 x 23.2 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 218  
*Fragmento de historieta* [Fragment  
of Comic Strip], 1974  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy. 28.1 x 21.8 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 219  
*Fragmento de historieta*  
[Fragment of Comic Strip], 1974  
Offset print on paper  
Edition produced by the Centro  
de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC),  
*Fragmento de historieta* (exh.),  
CAyC, Buenos Aires, 1974  
30 x 22.2 cm

pp. 220–221  
*Fragmento de historia*  
[Fragment of a Story], 1974  
Ink on paper, unbound  
Sole copy, 8 pages; 6 images  
Signed, titled, and dated  
29 x 20 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Written pages

p. 222  
*Página de un libro*  
[Page from a Book], 1974  
Offset print on paper produced  
by the Centro de Arte y  
Comunicación (CAyC), GT-592,  
Buenos Aires, December 1, 1975  
Vintage edition

27 x 21.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 223  
*Página de un libro*  
[Page from a Book], 1974  
Offset print on paper produced  
by the Centro de Arte y  
Comunicación (CAyC), GT-592,  
Buenos Aires, December 1, 1975  
Vintage edition  
27 x 21.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Informational bulletins

pp. 224–225  
*Boletín informativo N° 1*  
(grafismos ampliados -  
fragmentos de una página)  
[Informational Bulletin No. 1  
(enlarged graphisms -  
fragments of a page)], 1974  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
59 x 86 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 226–227  
*Boletín informativo*  
(fragmento ampliado de una  
página) [Informational Bulletin  
(enlarged fragment of a page)],  
1974  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
74 x 109 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Cahier

pp. 228–229  
*Cahier n° 1* [Notebook No. 1], 1975  
Offset print on paper and carbon  
paper original  
Vintage edition, 20 images

Numbered and signed  
Edition by Guy Schraenen,  
Antwerp, Belgium  
27.8 x 21.5 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Postcards

pp. 230–231  
Sin título (postal)  
[Untitled (postcard)], ca. 1975  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy, image on front and back  
10.5 x 14.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

P. 232  
Sin título (postal) [Untitled  
(postcard)], ca. 1997–2011  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy, image on front and back  
9.8 x 15.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 233  
Sin título (postal) [Untitled  
(postcard)], ca. 1997–2011  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy, image on front  
and back  
9.8 x 15.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 234  
Sin título (postal) [Untitled  
(postcard)], ca. 1997–2011  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
9.8 x 14.7 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

p. 235  
Sin título (postal) [Untitled  
(postcard)], 2004  
Offset print on paper produced for  
*Mirtha Dermisache. Écritures* [:]

*Multiples*, Centre International de  
Poésie Marseille, September 10 –  
October 16, 2004, front and back  
10.5 x 11 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

pp. 236–237  
*7 Tarjetas postales*  
[7 Postcards], 1999  
Offset print on paper  
Edition of 7 postcards in white  
folder. Mirtha Demisache (ed.),  
Buenos Aires, 1999  
14.7 x 10.5 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Newsletters

pp. 238–241  
*Nueve newsletters y un reportaje*  
[Nine Newsletters and an  
Interview], 2004  
Offset print on Dutch opaline  
paper in white envelope  
10 pages; 10 images. Geneviève  
Chevalier, Florent Fajole, and  
Olga Martínez (eds.), Buenos  
Aires, Marseille, Nîmes; El Bordo,  
Mobile-home, Manglar, August  
2004  
35.2 x 27.2 cm  
Malba, Museo de Arte  
Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires  
Collection

### Public readings

pp. 242–243  
*Lectura pública 4*  
[Public Reading 4], 2006  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
Signed, titled, and dated  
70.3 x 100.5 cm  
José L. Puricelli Collection,  
Buenos Aires

pp. 244–245  
*Lectura pública 9*  
[Public Reading 9], 2007/2017  
Offset print on Rives Tradition  
White paper, 320 g  
Edition 1/100, Malba, Museo de  
Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos  
Aires, July 2017  
69.8 x 98 cm

pp. 246–247  
Sin título (lectura pública)  
[Untitled (public reading)], 2009  
Ink and graphite on paper  
Sole copy  
Signed and dated, untitled  
70 x 100 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Mural text

pp. 248–249  
*Texto mural 3*  
[Mural Text 3], 2007  
Ink and graphite on paper  
Sole copy. 66 x 101.6 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Instruction

pp. 250–251  
*Instructivo 4* [Instruction 4], 2010  
Ink on Fabriano paper  
Sole copy  
60.5 x 80.5 cm  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive

### Explanatory poster

pp. 252–253  
*Afiche explicativo*  
[Explanatory Poster], 2010  
Ink on paper  
Sole copy  
66 x 101.8  
Mirtha Dermisache Archive





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## **Exhibition**

**Mirtha Dermisache**

**Porque ¡yo escribo!**

**(Because I Write!)**

**August 11 – October 9, 2017**

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Agustín Pérez Rubio

*General Coordinator*

Victoria Giraudo

*Curatorial Assistant*

Josefina Barcia

*Installation Coordinator*

Mariano Dal Verme

*Installation*

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José Luis Rial

Andrés Toro

*Archive and Documents*

Verónica Rossi

*Conservation*

Victoria Filipelli

*Audiovisual Production and Editing*

El Pampero Cine

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Portrait of Mirtha Dermisache with  
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