

DAVID SMITH

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IdOL

naming

My first name isn't David. It's my middle name, I was called by it as a child, and it stuck. My surname evokes associations, some positive and some negative. It is the most common Anglo-Saxon surname. It denotes a trade, working with one's hands to shape obdurate matter into something useful, something of value.

Under my mother's influence, I knew (or decided) from an early age that I was going to be a visual artist. She involved me in pottery-making when I was in my early teens, and I was really hooked. Here was something uncommonly difficult, and I became good at it.

I attended Haystack-Hinckley, a summer craft school for high school-age kids in Maine, where I met two instructors whose impact on my development as an artist, and as a person is immeasurable: David Cohen, an expat American who had become a leading ceramic artist in Scotland, and George Greenamyre, a metal sculptor out of Massachusetts.

George Greenamyre set up a furnace for melting down aluminum at the school, next to the outdoor pottery kilns. This guy really knew his stuff, and he made these amazing, sand-cast aluminum sculptures of railroad locomotives that were the embodiment of industrial grit, power and energy. My name caught his attention, because George was an avowed acolyte of "David Smith, the famous artist," as he put it, and I took it to heart.

Apart from this foolishness (well, because of it), I spent time absorbing the oeuvre of my famous namesake, adopting some of his compositional methods for my own work. I later came to study Abstract Expressionist and precursor artists, which provided the art historical context that framed his work, along with the notion of heavy industry as integral to the human experience, and thus worthy of artistic apprehension.

(so there's that)

Naming has unexpectedly turned out to be a driver of my recent artistic output, a series of photo books (including this one) that sometimes incorporate images of my earlier works in various media to complete the design-art-craft circle. Prior to this, I rarely named my art work except literally as an afterthought.

It seemed unsatisfactory that everything should be 'untitled;' some works demanded an explanation or at least a clue regarding what they were supposed to be about. Even though I like the unknown in art.

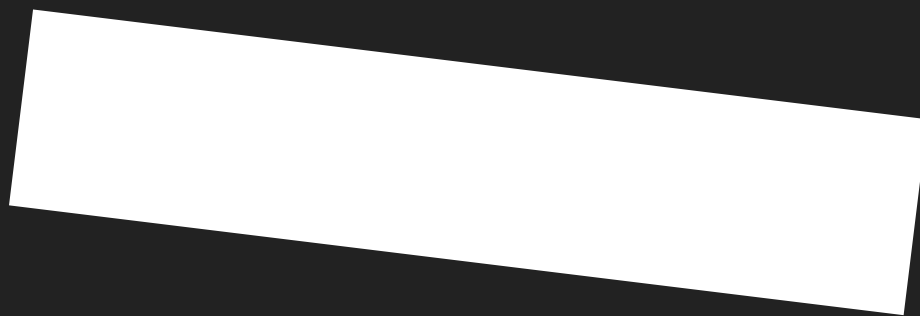
My projects are now spawned by imagining a title in a typographic composition, as a basis to select and build out thematically related (-ish) images and layouts. I remember having seen a quote regarding the genesis of early straight-to-video

'B' movies in the 1980s, proposed projects green-lit solely on the basis of cover art, to meet exploding demand for the nascent home VCR market.

Some of my book titles are derived from words that hold special significance to me personally, for reasons I can't quite fathom. Until I have a title, I can't proceed. Well I can, but by groping in a directionless fashion until one suggests itself. What I like are titles with multiple, ambiguous or contradictory meanings. I don't want to be pinned down by narrowly defined concepts that can limit the scope of imagination.

I've had some professional training and experience as a graphic designer. Despite this, and my background working in various visual media for several decades, I am ill-suited to it as an occupation (thankfully I've been spared). Nevertheless, I have adopted design methods to art-making, using typographical treatments to introduce and focus my concepts. The typography is informed by vernacular advertising, publications, product labels, signage and so forth, encountered at work, in everyday life and street photography.

David Smith

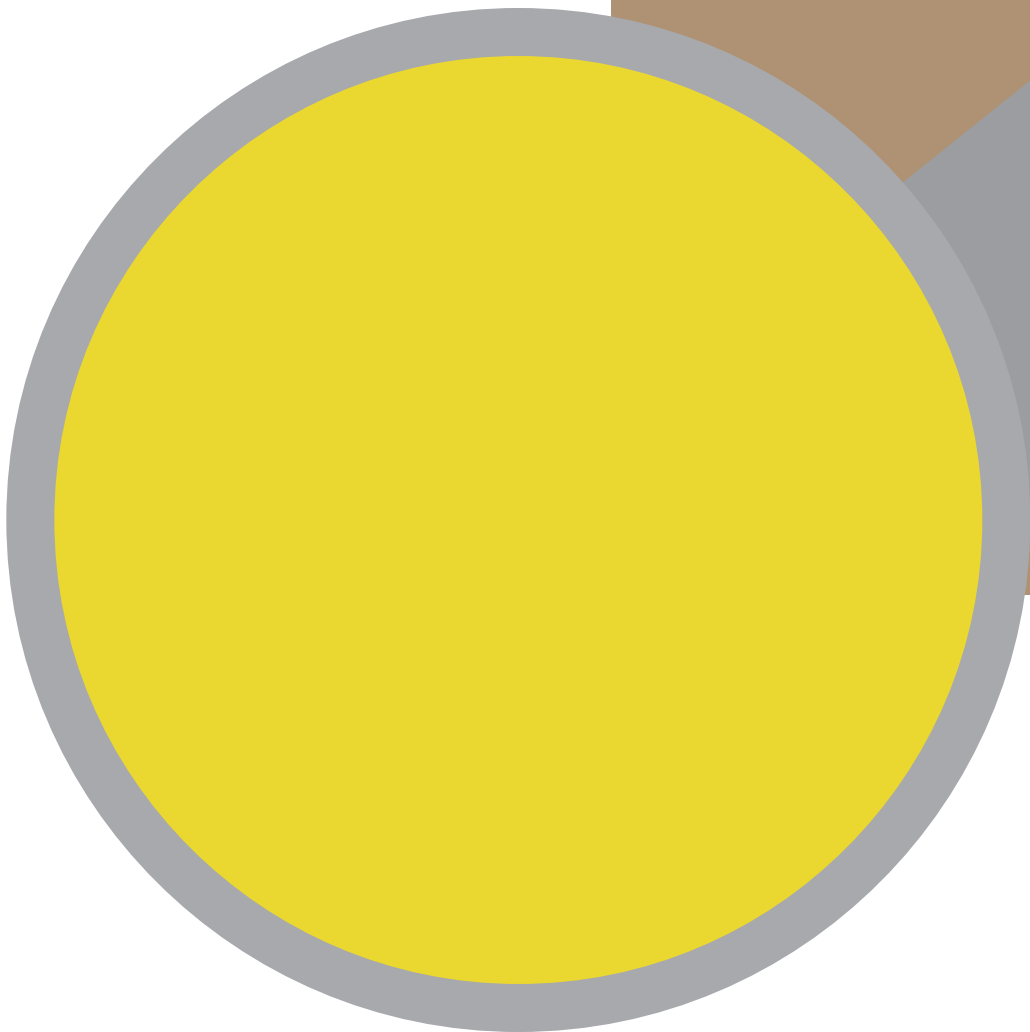




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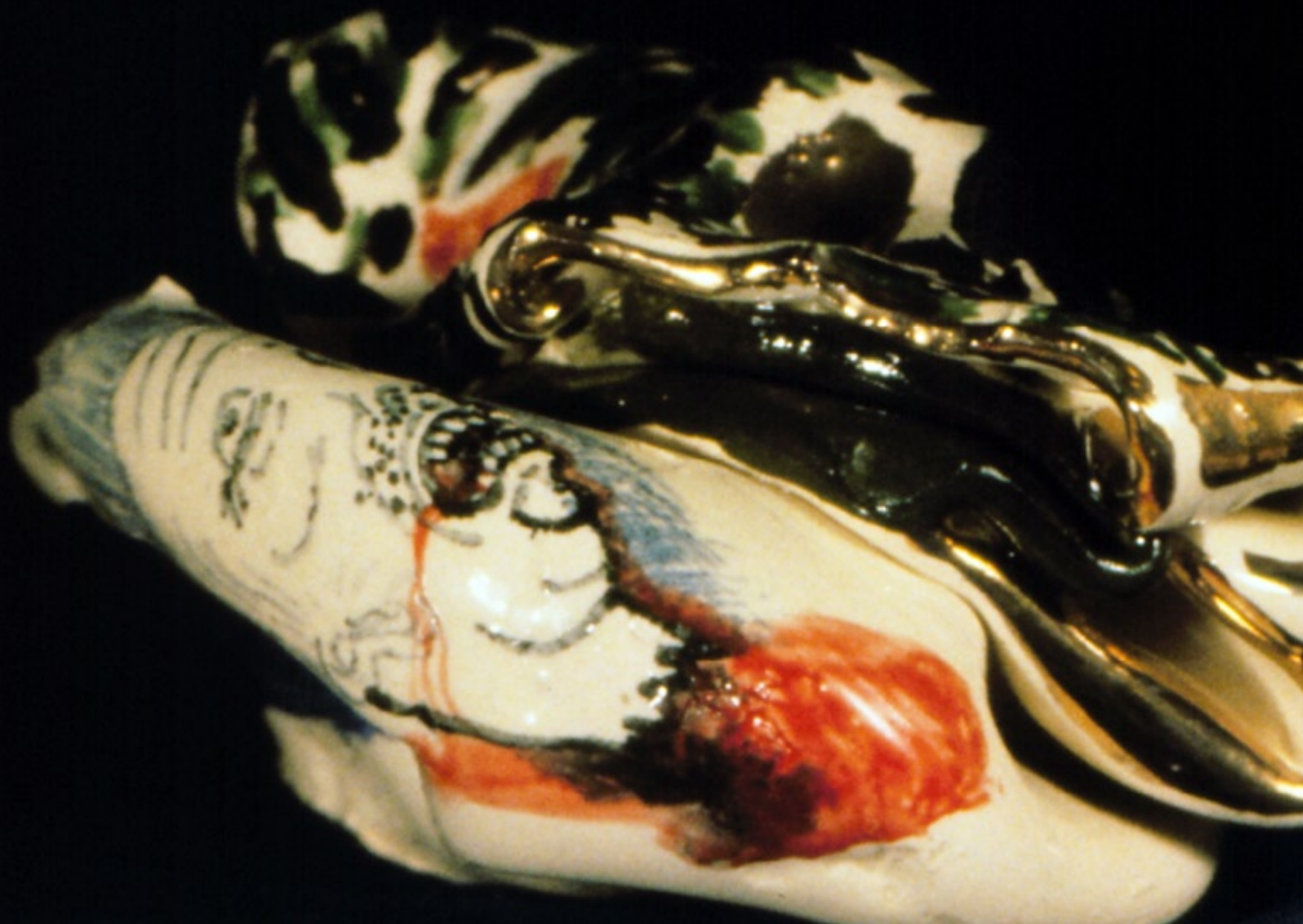


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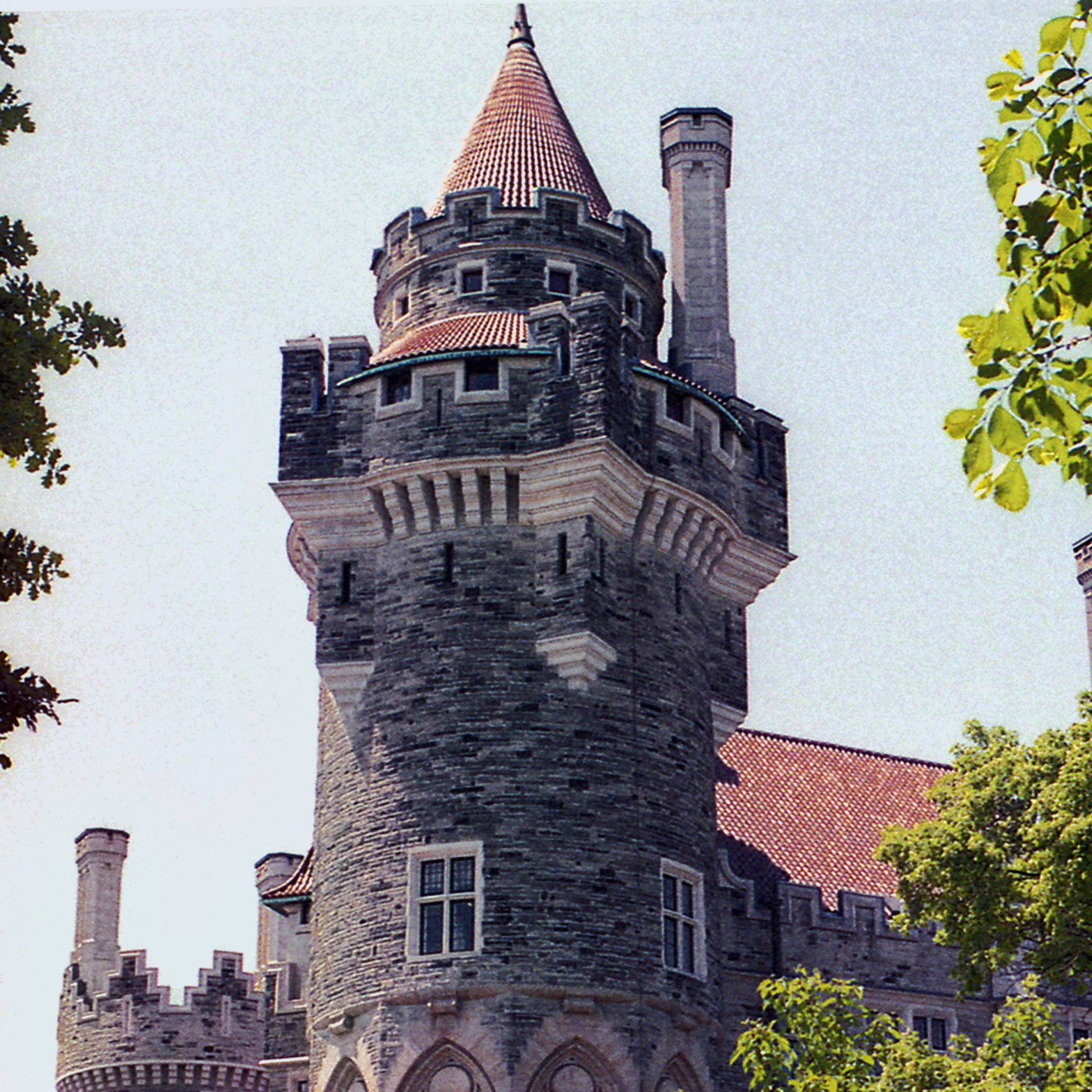


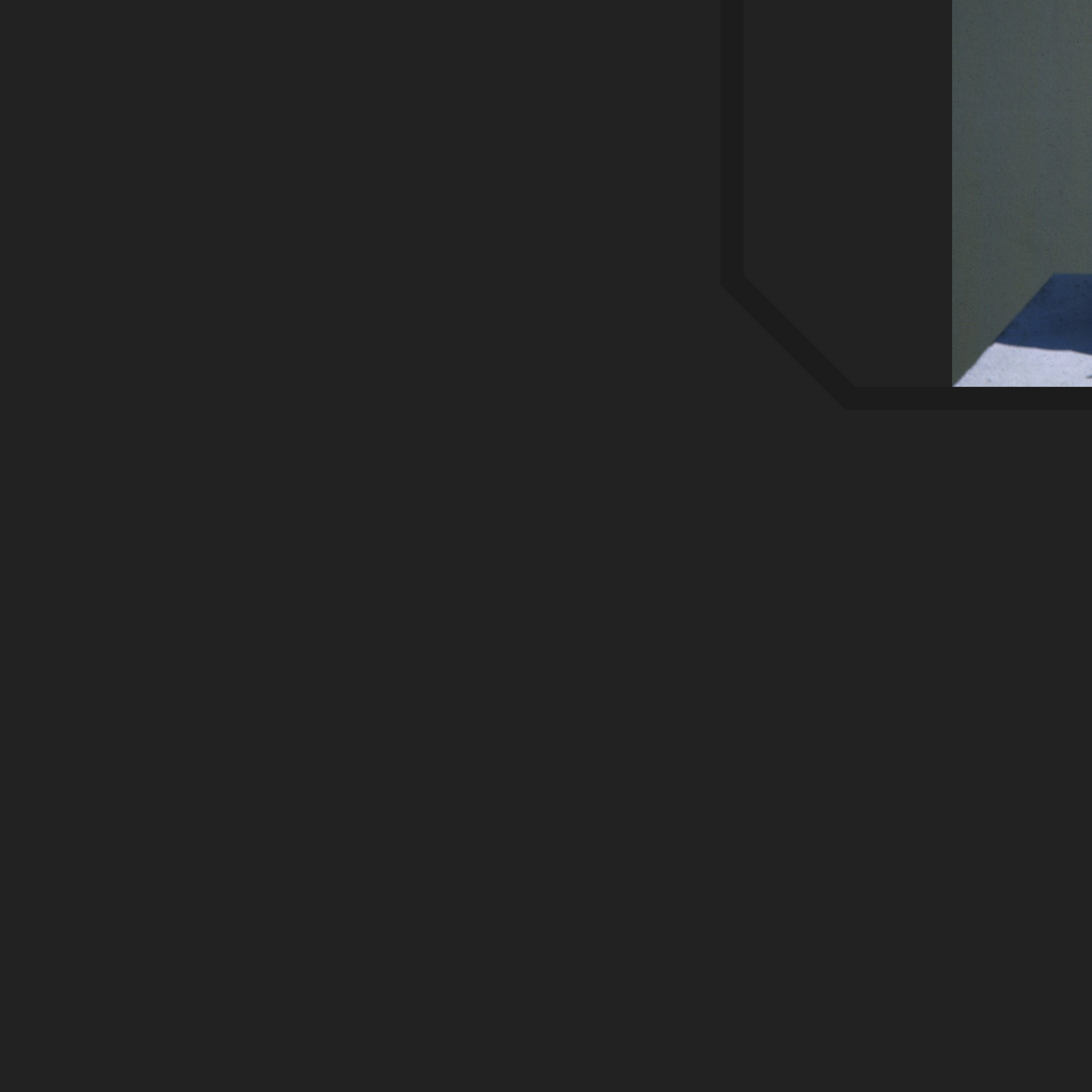














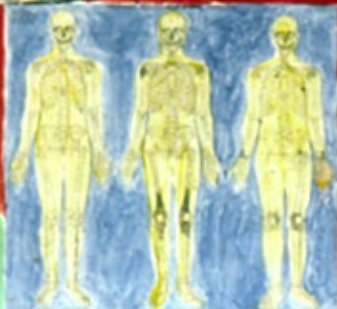


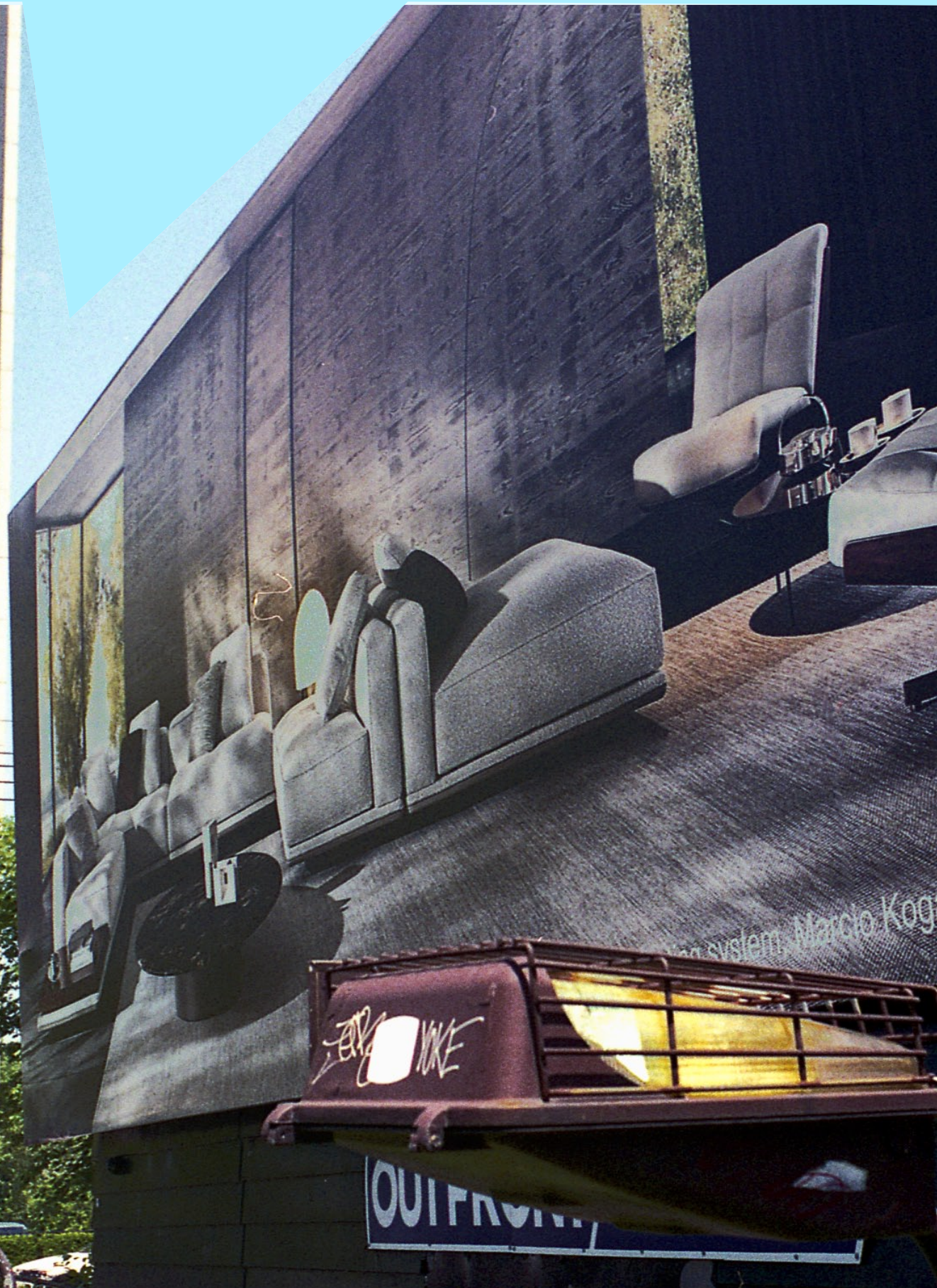


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Lip service





EVERY ONE

OUT FRONT

Marco Kogel











