

FOUND

AT THE GETTY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURENCE SALZMANN



Found at the Getty

Photographs by Laurence Salzmann  
copyright © 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from the publisher and author.

Cover Design Aki Shigemori  
Book design & digital renderings by W. Keith McManus

Foreword Miles Orvell

Cataloging Data:  
Laurence Salzmann, 1944-  
ISBN\_\_\_\_\_

1. Photography
2. Getty Museum
3. Pareidolia
5. – Abstractions

A Blue Flower Book   
BlueFlowerPress.com

Photographs made with Olympus Stylus Tough TG 4 at Getty Museum

Pigment prints of images included in this book are available from the photographer:  
LaurenceSalzmann@gmail.com

# FOUND

## AT THE GETTY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURENCE SALZMANN

# FOUND AT THE GETTY

The J. Paul Getty Museum in Brentwood, California, is well known for its extraordinary collections, ranging from antiquity to the present. While most visitors are gazing at the artworks in the galleries, some of the most stunning wonders of the Getty are found underfoot, on the very floor you stand on—Travertine tiles made of natural limestone, a sedimentary rock that is formed in warm springs from mineral deposits. Quarried for over two thousand years, travertine takes its name from the ancient city of Tibor, now Tivoli, in modern Italy. The infinitely rich textures and shapes of this natural stone suggest an equally infinite range of forms that seem like recognizable things, made visible in the viewer’s imagination—a process of seeing known as pareidolia.

In Salzmann’s travertine photographs, the subject is the motion of mineral forms frozen in time long ago and given a different kind of permanence by the camera, giving hope for the photographer’s legacy to endure beyond the present. In that sense, Laurence Salzmann’s photographic practice over a lifetime, has been guided by his longstanding appreciation for Goethe’s thought—“*Was glänzt, ist für den Augenblick geboren, Das Echte bleibt der Nachwelt unverloren*” [That which glitters is born for the moment; The genuine remains intact for a future time. *Faust*, part I]

The photographs in *Found at the Getty* evoke both permanence and impermanence and reference Salzmann’s current concerns about life and photography and are, in his own words, “a metaphor of a life’s journey where nothing remains the same except for memories from the past which more often than not remain in sharper focus than events of yesterday.”

When Salzmann reveals the hand of the artist—literally, or indirectly,

in the many images that are linked, mirrored, replicated we shift our attention from the travertine subject matter to the creative and joyful travail of the artist, who like all photographers is also a *trouvère*, a poet and finder of things, an artist of found art. No two of these subjects are alike, and their juxtaposition on the pages of this volume change them into yet another new perception.

It is in seeing the forms of things that lurk in the imagination as much as in the thing itself, that Salzmann fulfills the promise of the pareidolian method, a creative process that is doubtless as old as human perception, though illustrated most concisely in the obsequiously Polonius, who remarks that the clouds are indeed “very like a whale, if my Lord Hamlet wills it so.” This tendency to see things in random shapes was at last given a name in the 19th century by K.L. Kahlbaum, in his celebrated article on delirium, *Die Sinnesdelierien* (1866). Fittingly, Kahlbaum was a psychiatrist, since pareidolia exists across a full spectrum from normal perception to the symbolic transformations of the artist to the terrified hallucinations of the mentally ill. Salzmann’s travertine series travels across the range of this spectrum and beyond.

*Found at the Getty* enlarges on recent works by Salzmann that make use of the abstract to explore the impermanence of life by focusing on changes that take place in the natural world. (See: *Misk’i Kachi/Sweet Salt, Sight Unseen, Aegean Stones* and *Coral*.) In all of these works, time and erosion help to create the beauty and mystery that the viewer is invited to see in the representation of real things in the real world.

Miles Orvell, author

*Empire of Ruins: American Culture, Photography, and the Spectacle of Destruction* (Oxford, 2021)

In place of the usual “Artist’s Statement,” Salzmann offers the following “explanation” for the genesis of this series and how he has thought of it. [Ed.]

## From a recent edition of AHA! the Art History Almanac

Recently discovered at the J. Paul Getty Museum, at Brentwood, a collection of Italian mezzo-like-tints engraved on travertine slates, dating to the late 17th Century. They were attributed to an artist named Lorenzo Umo di Sale born in 1744, near to the town of Bagni di Tivoli where travertine has been quarried for over two thousand years.

Lorenzo’s works were not widely known in his lifetime, possibly because he did not follow the accepted traditions used by his contemporaries, who imitated early Roman and Greek statuary as motifs in their works. Lorenzo was doubtless aware of Leonardo Da Vinci and was inspired by his equal genius for observation, invention and fantasy.

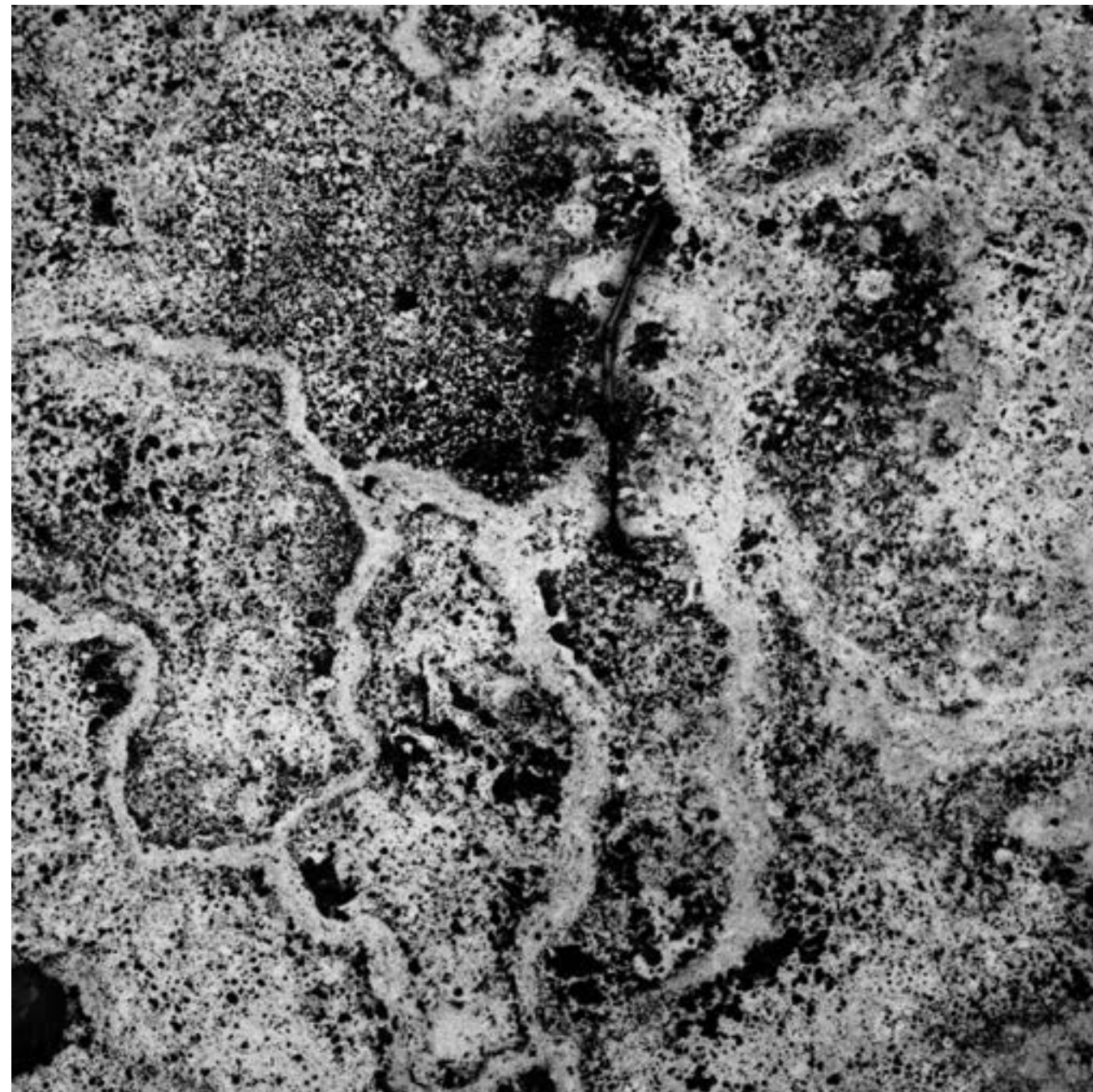
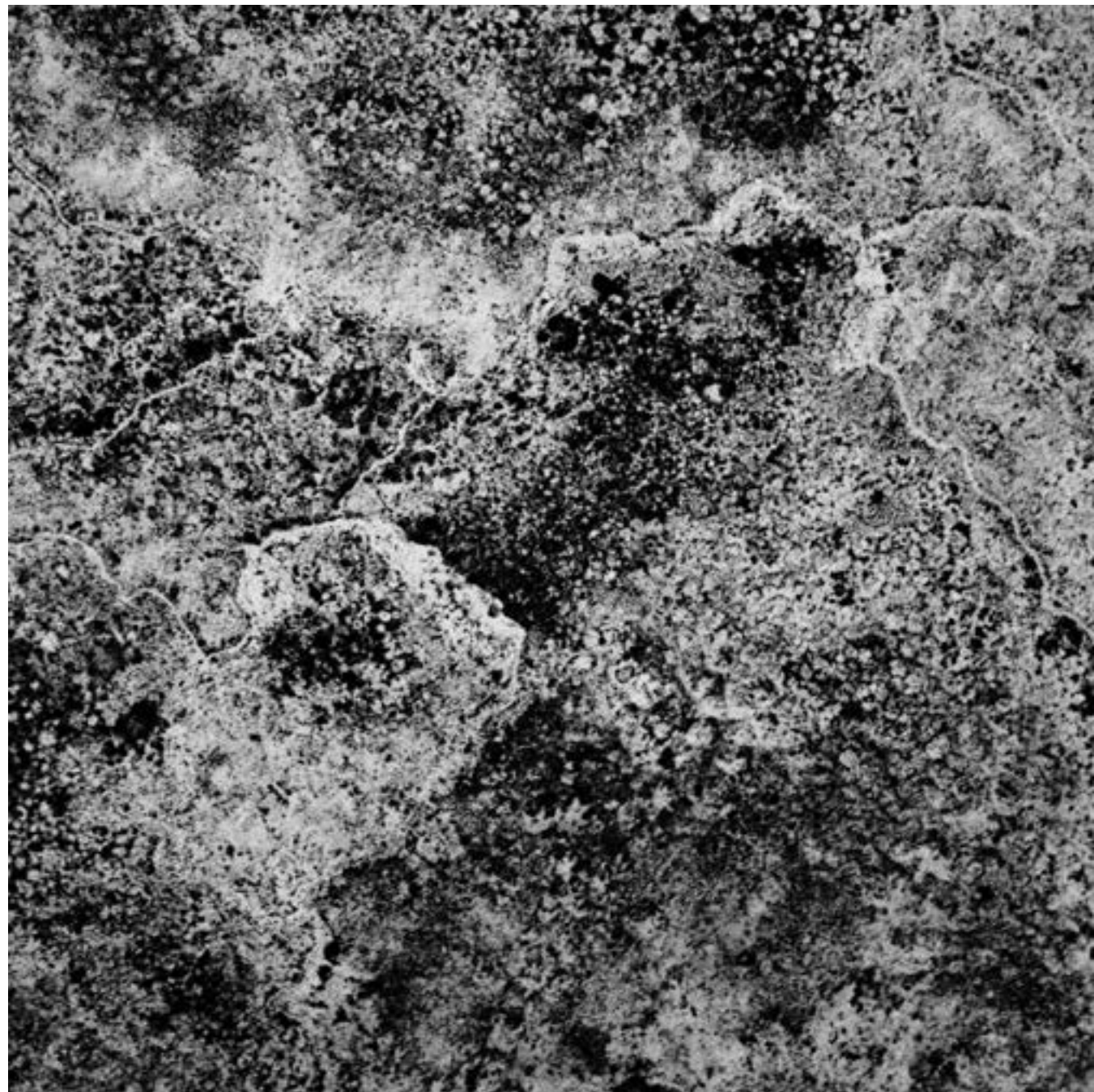
Lorenzo’s impressionistic visions in his travertine work have a playful movement, where shapes are layered, inviting the viewer’s perception of a multitude of forms. His semi-formalistic abstractions leave every viewer free to assign their own meaning and interpretations to his work. Like many artists past and present, Lorenzo Umo di Sale was more or less forgotten after his death. Hopefully, the Umo Di Sale mezzo-like-tints about to be published will make possible the recognition they have so long deserved.

They were discovered by the photographer Laurence Salzmann, who came upon them quite accidentally on a visit to the Getty Museum in 2022. Given the number of visitors to the Museum, it’s odd that they were not noticed earlier. But countless artists are discovered years or centuries after their work, waiting for curatorial insight and vision before they enter a museum like the Getty.

In this case, Umo di Sale’s work has been here since the Getty’s beginning, under the feet of millions of visitors, until recognized at last in this record of their discovery.

Laurence Salzmann - 2023

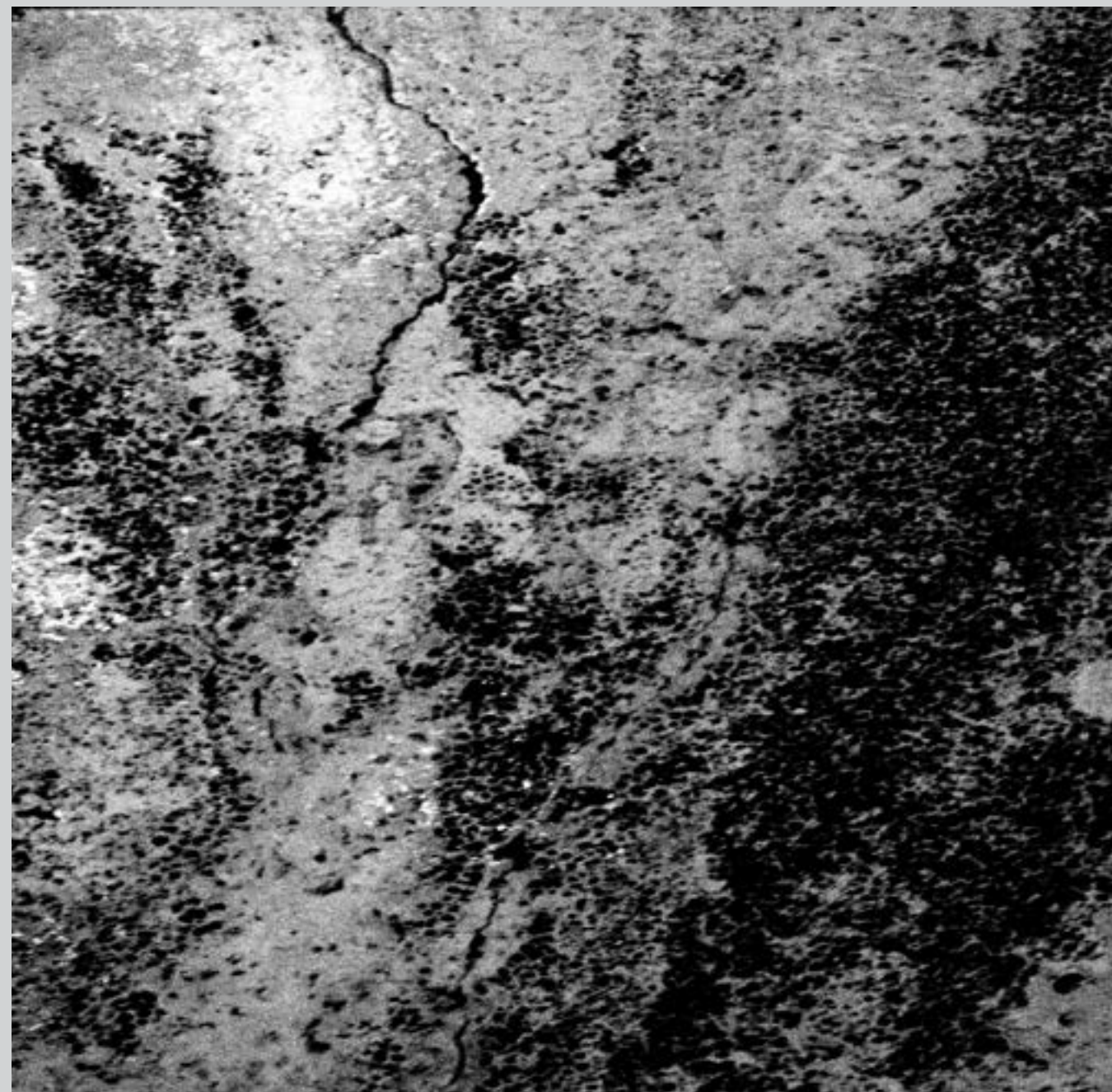
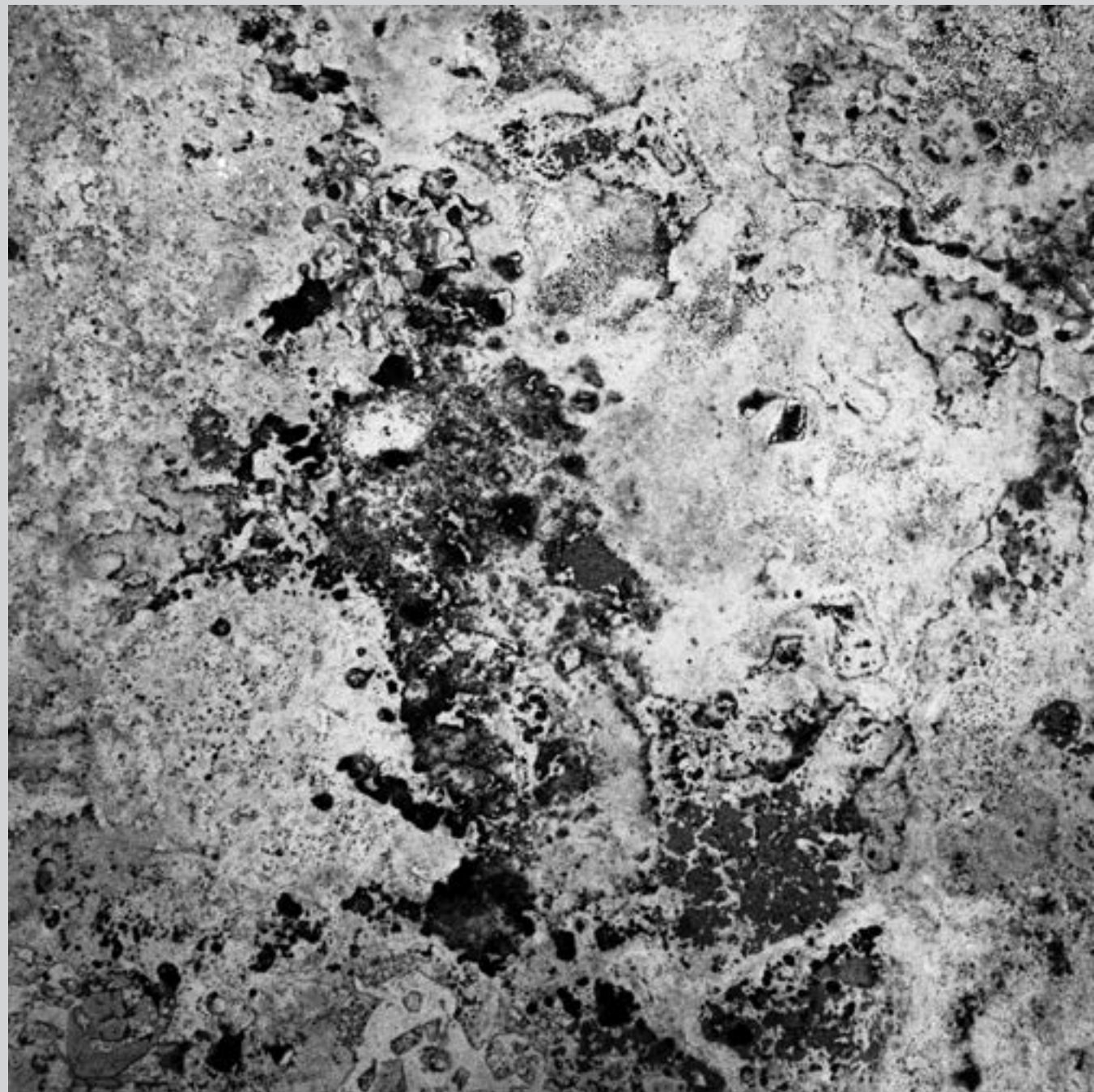








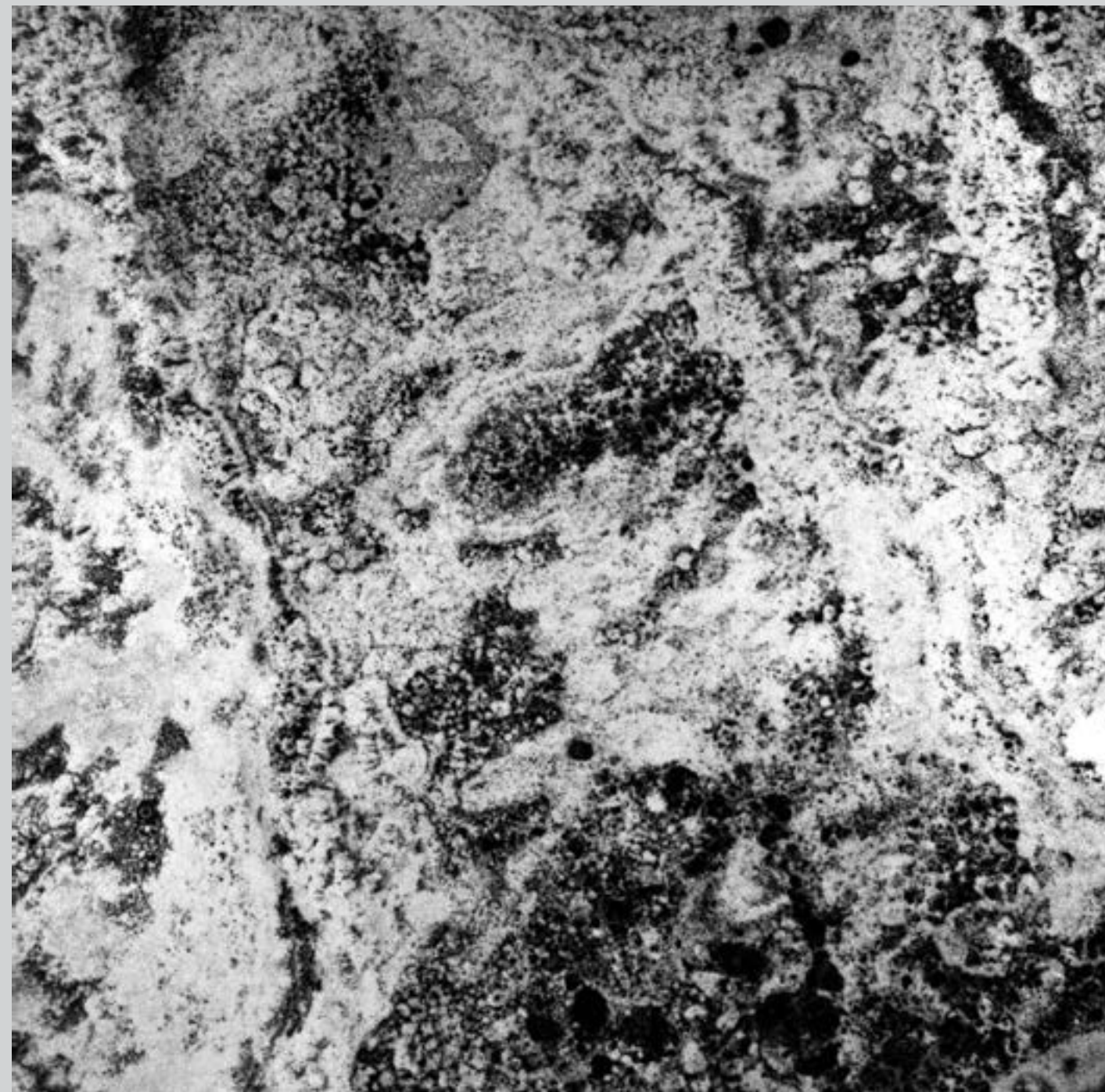




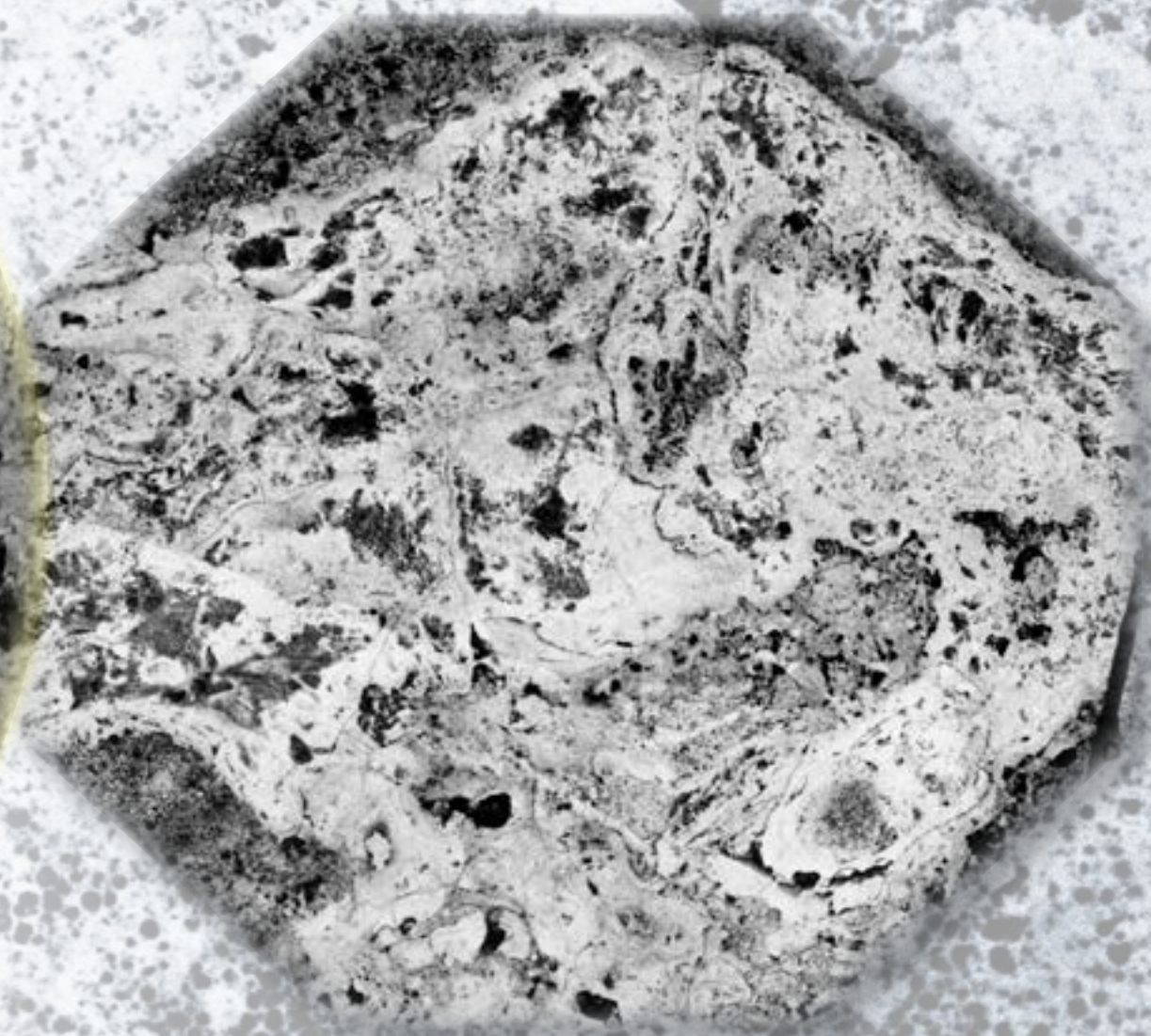
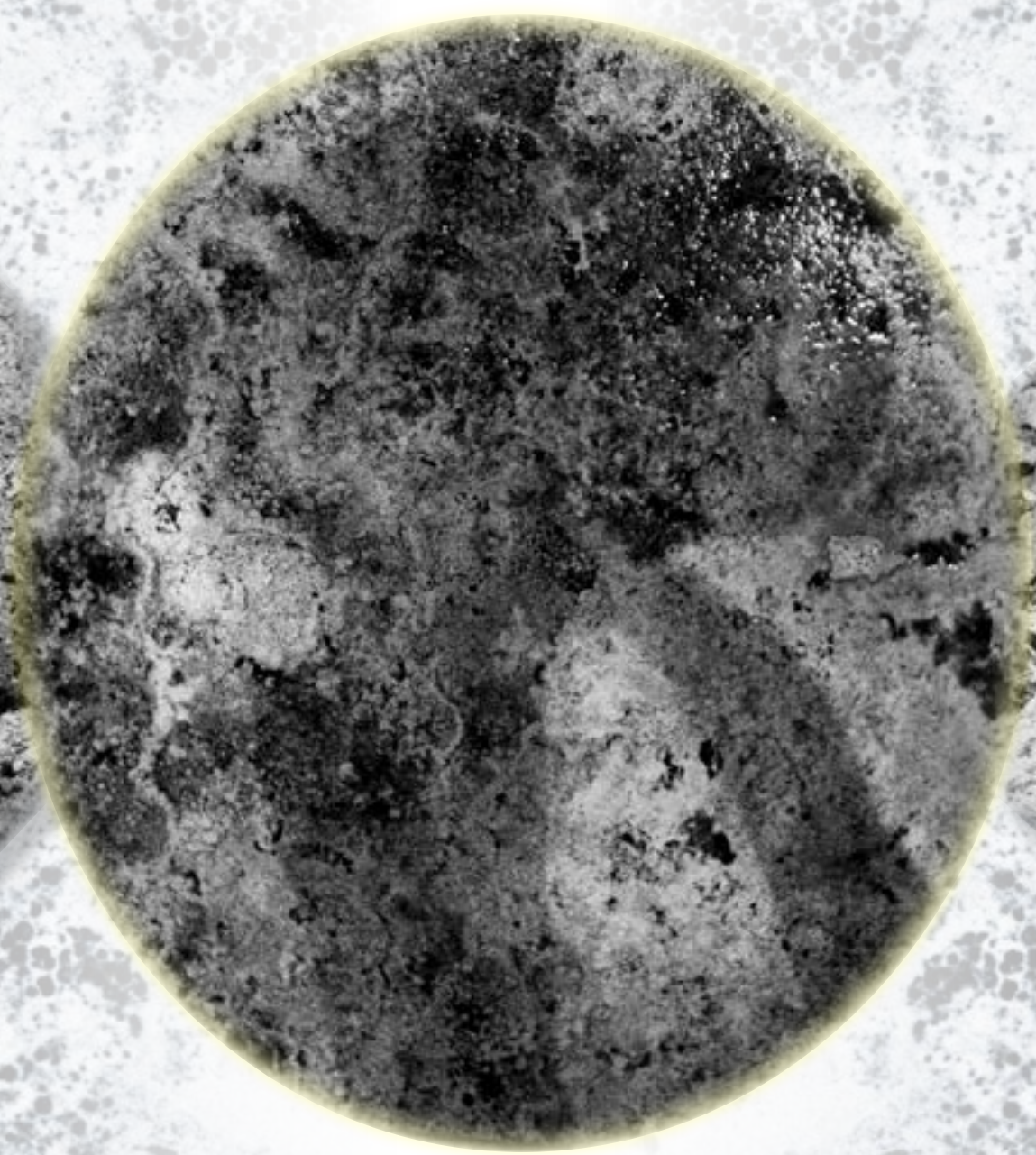
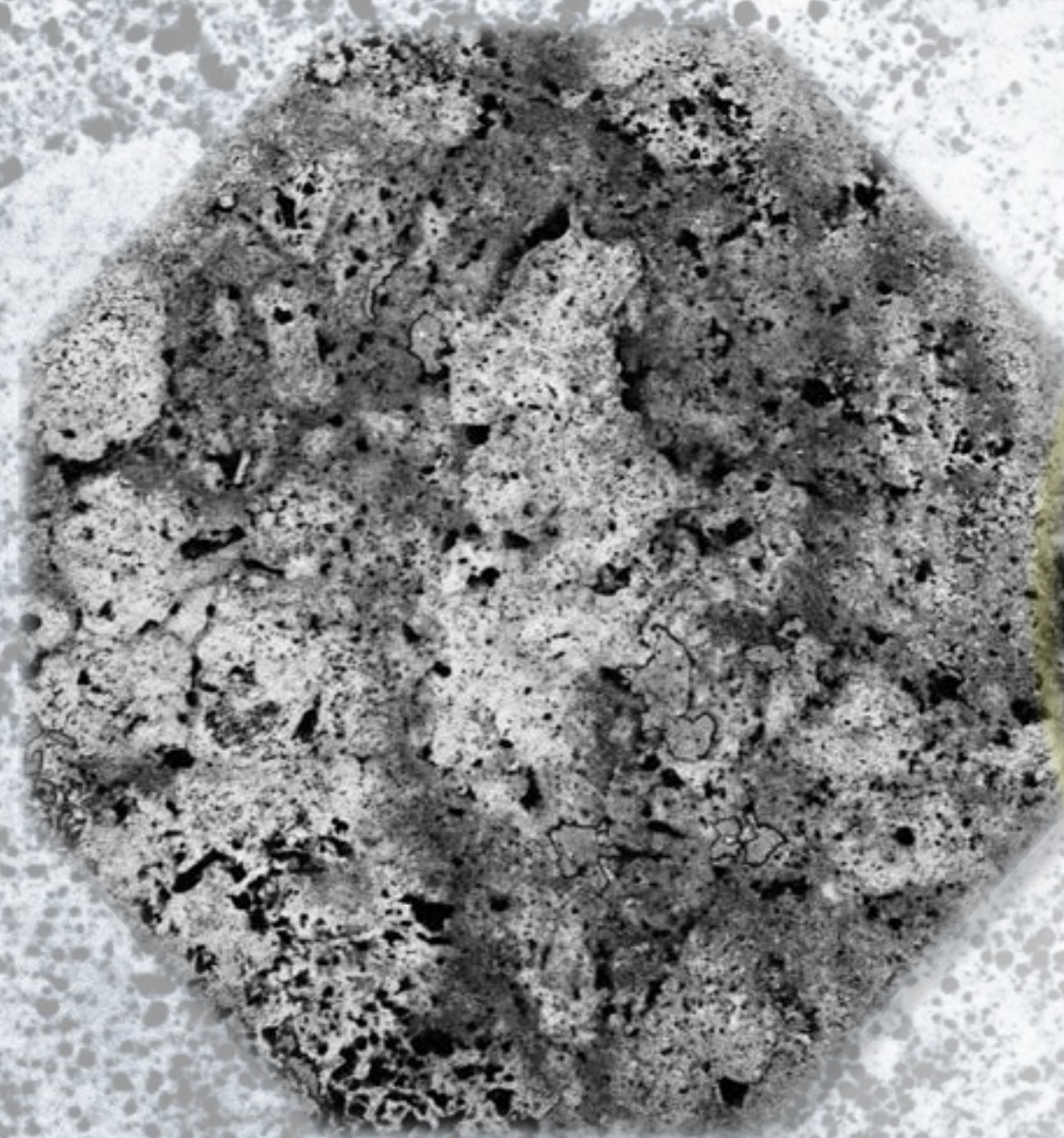




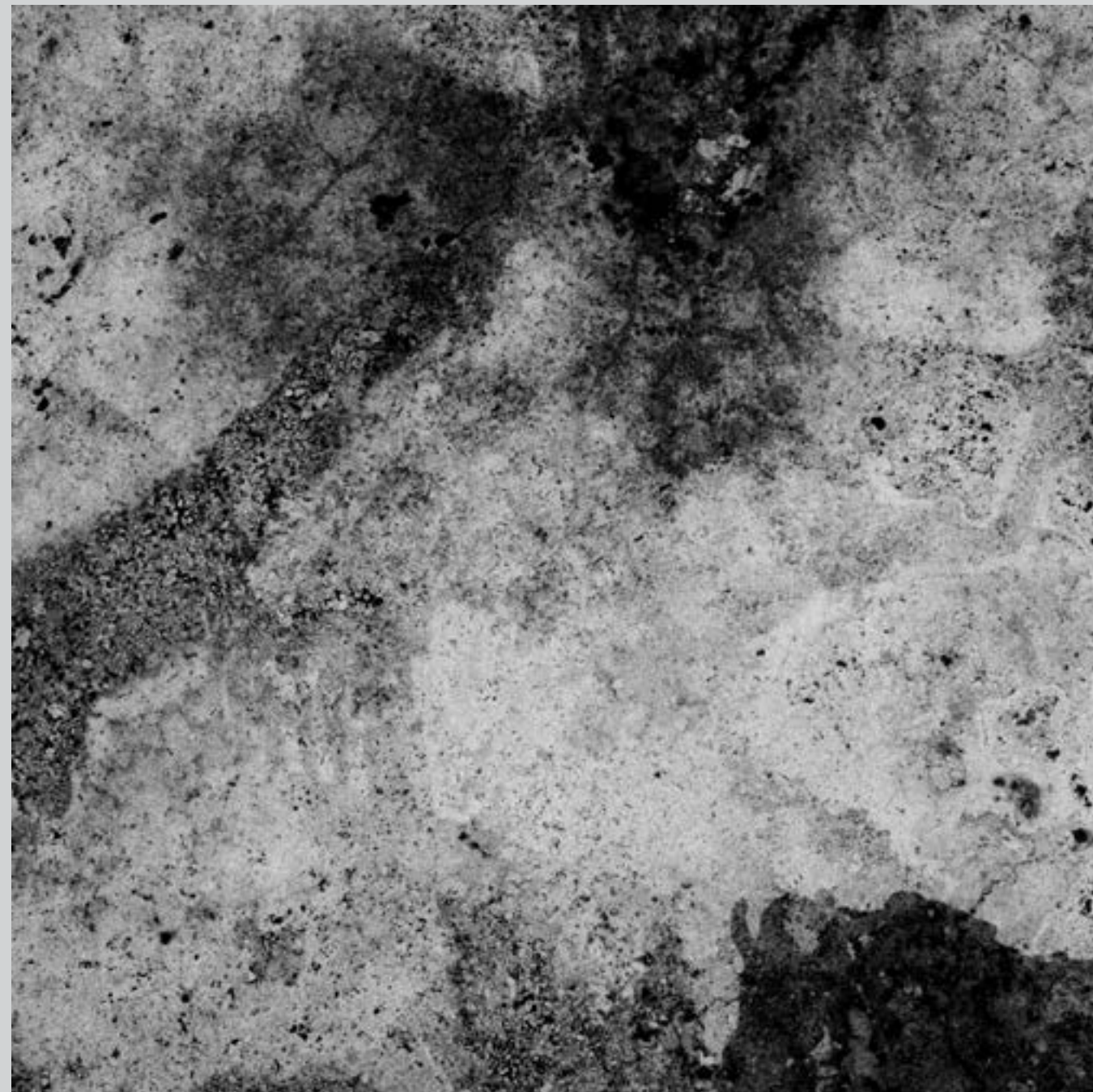
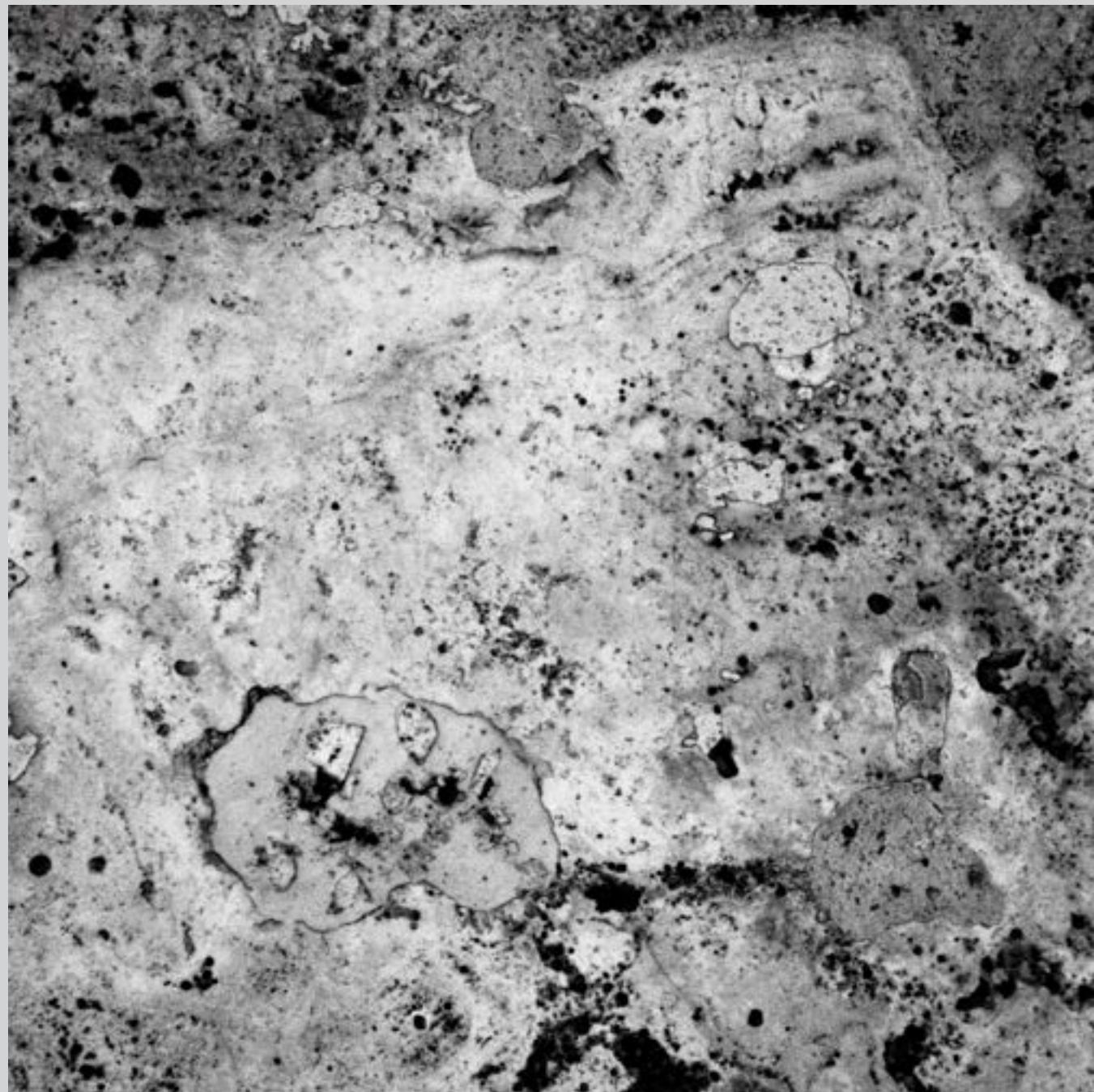












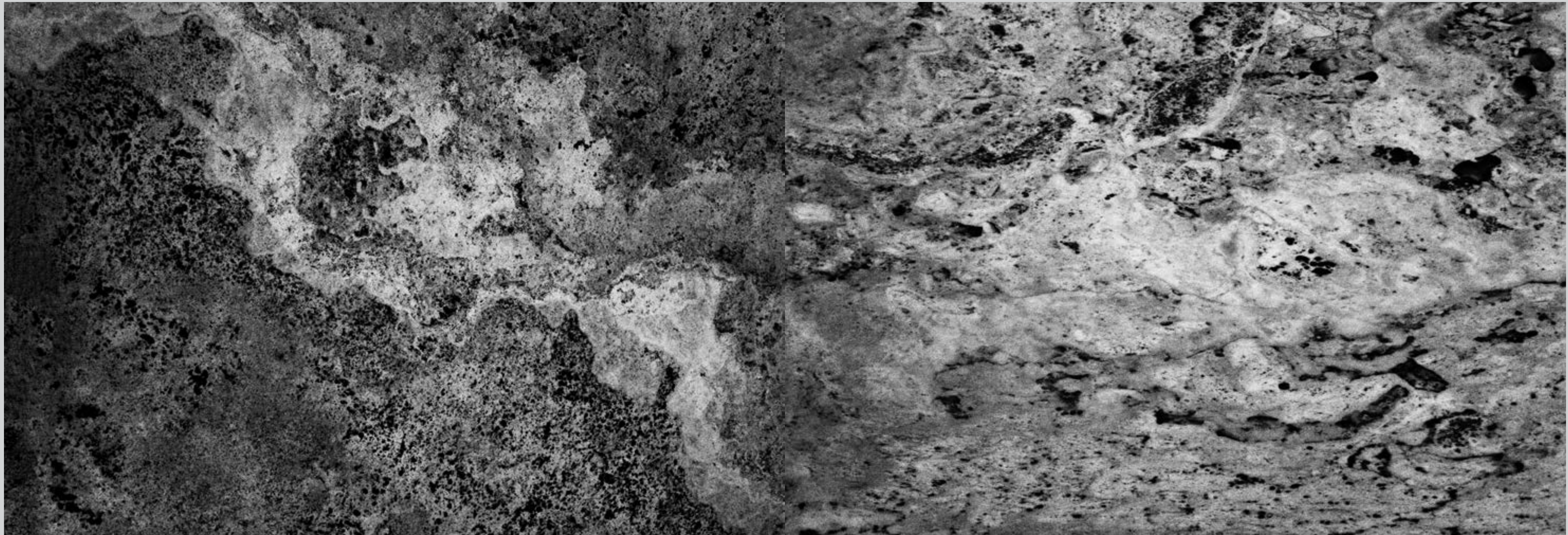




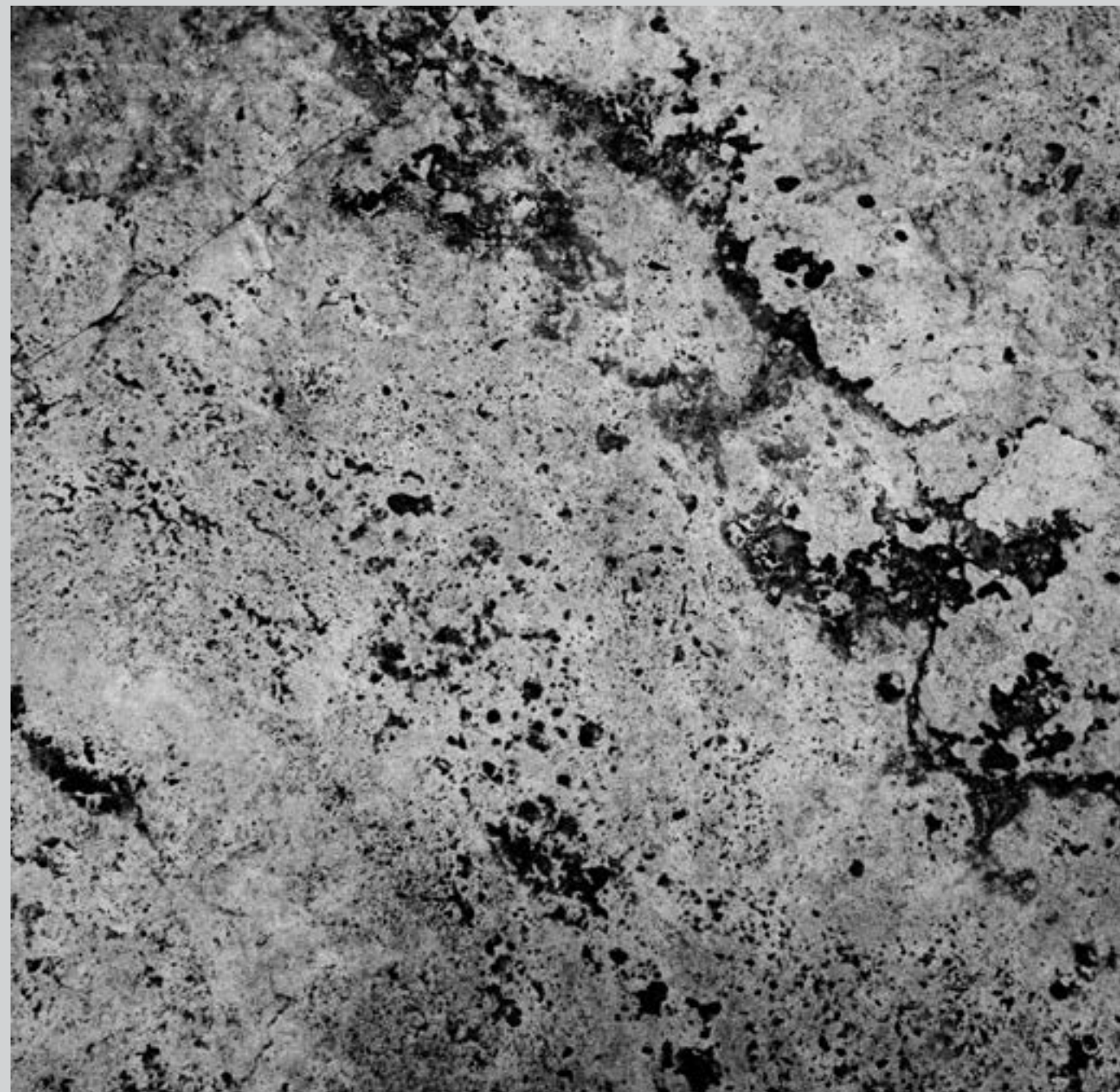
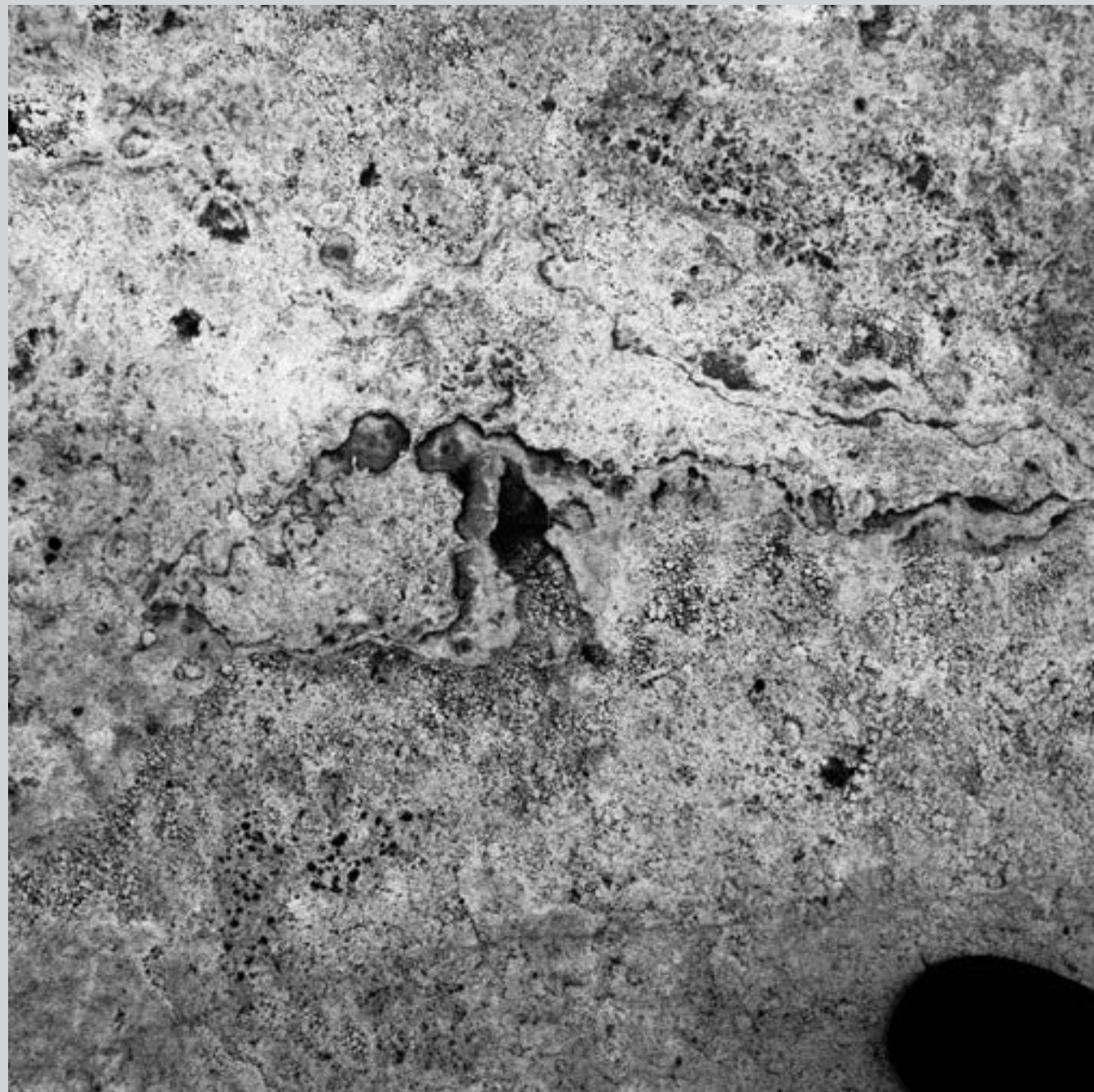








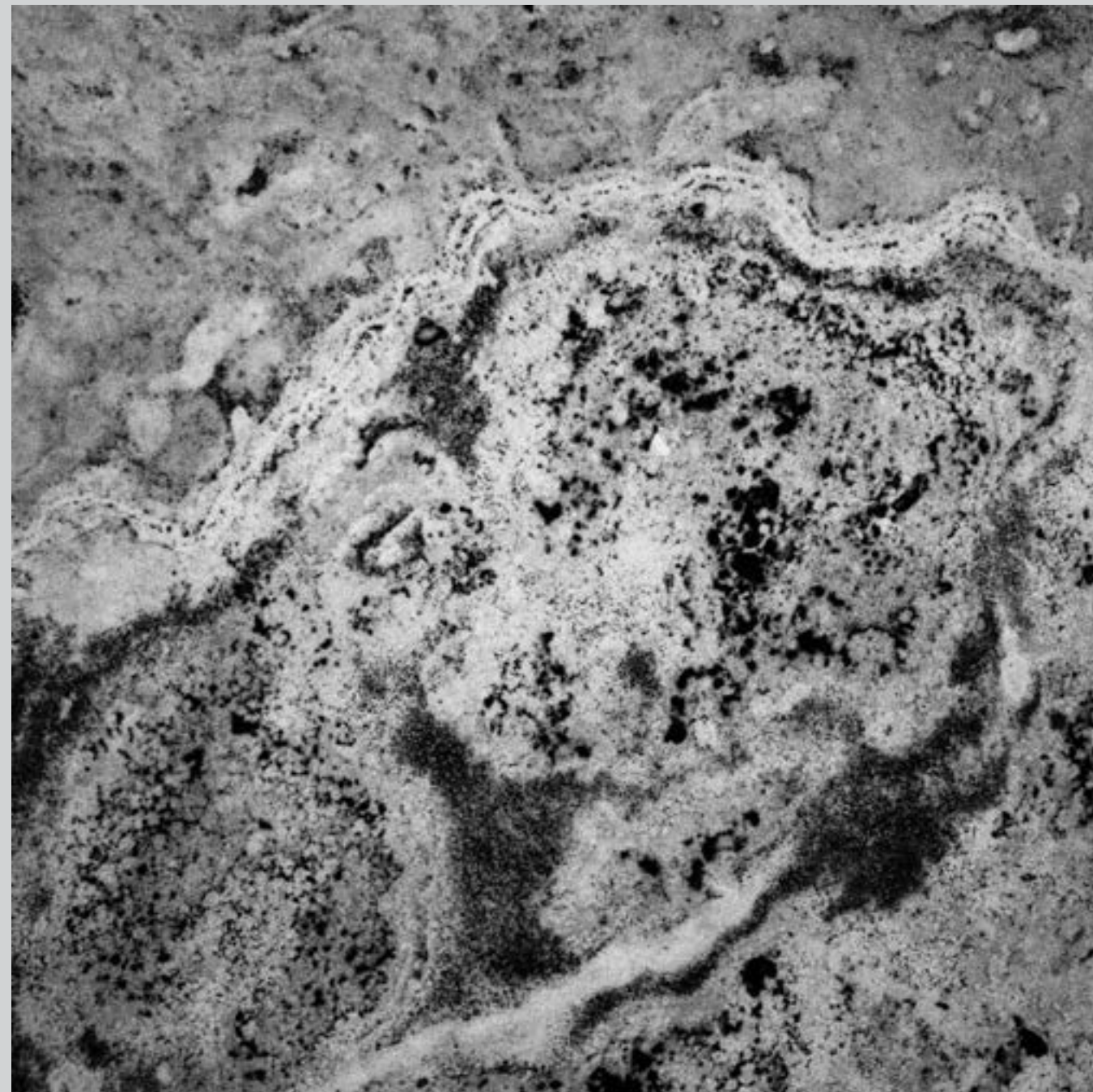
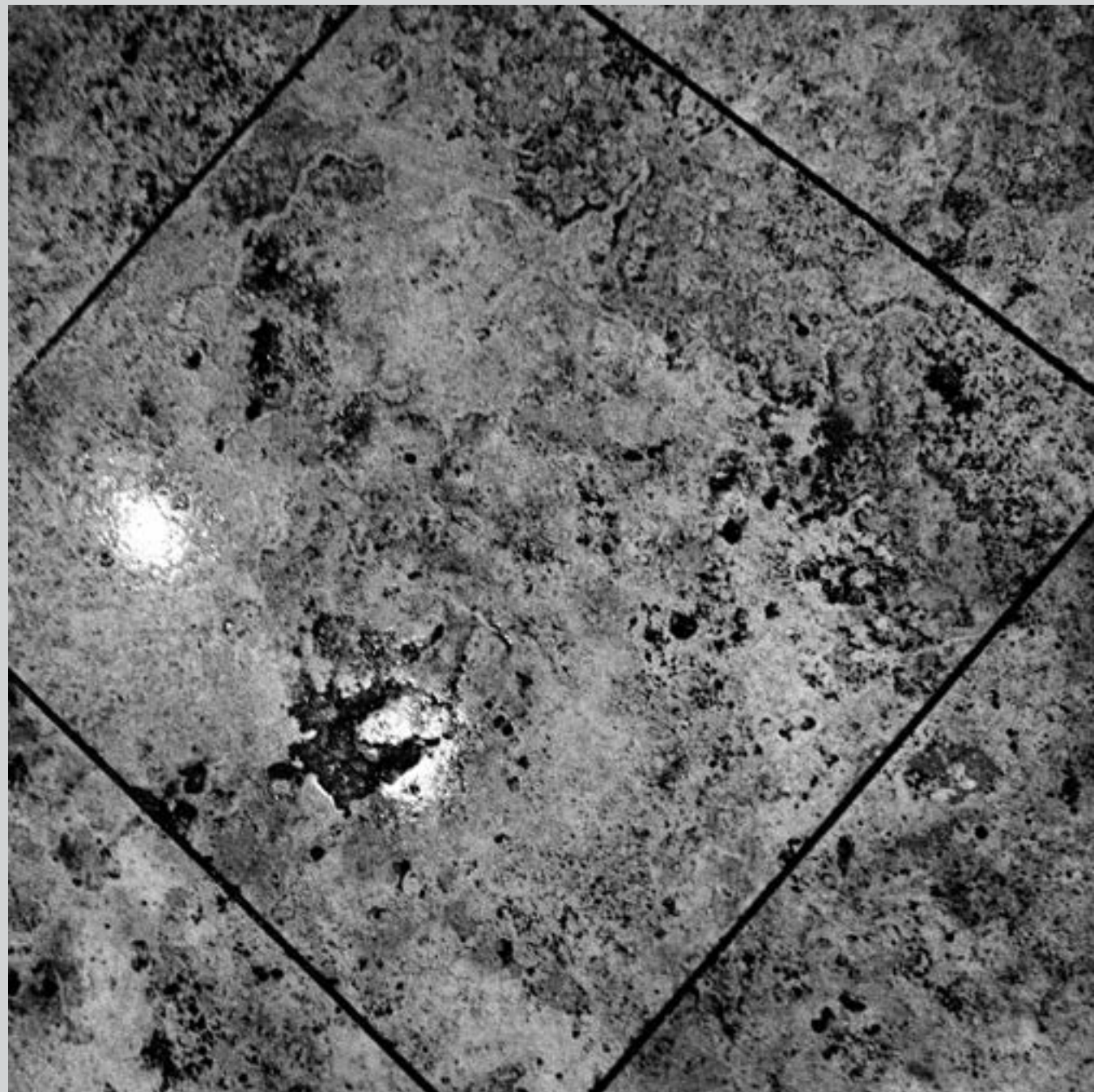




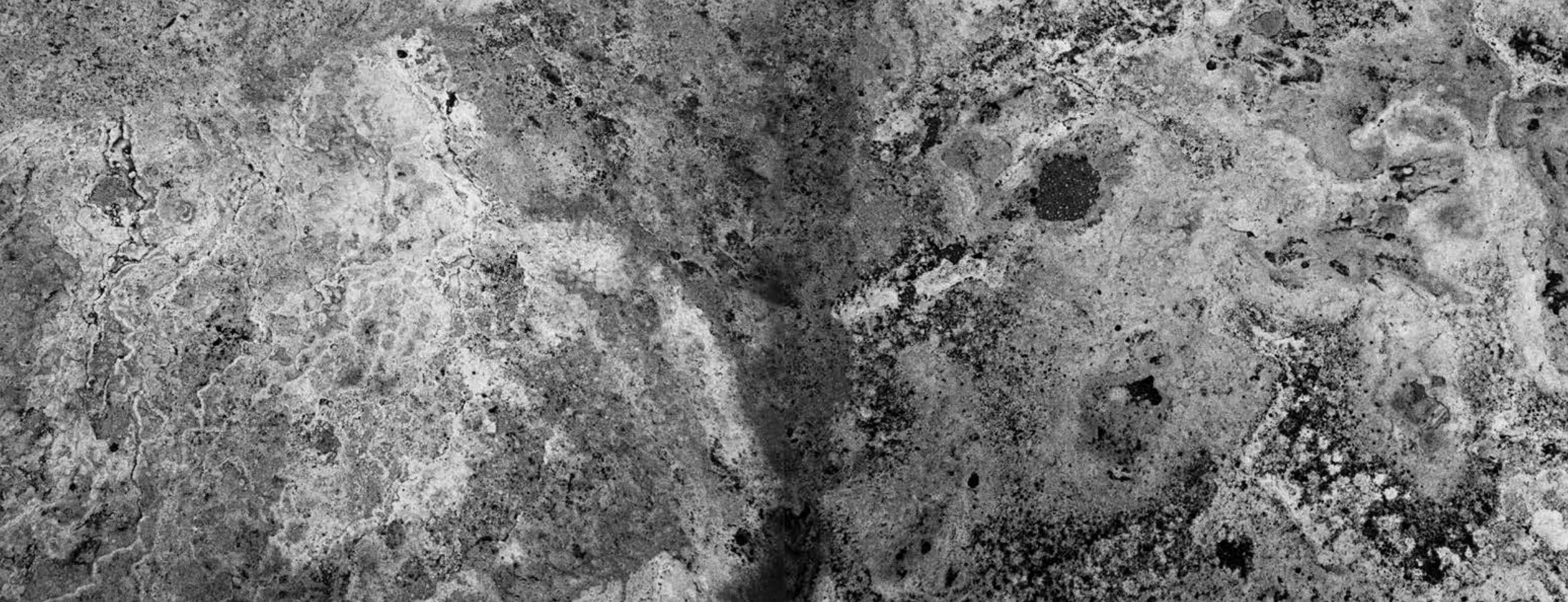




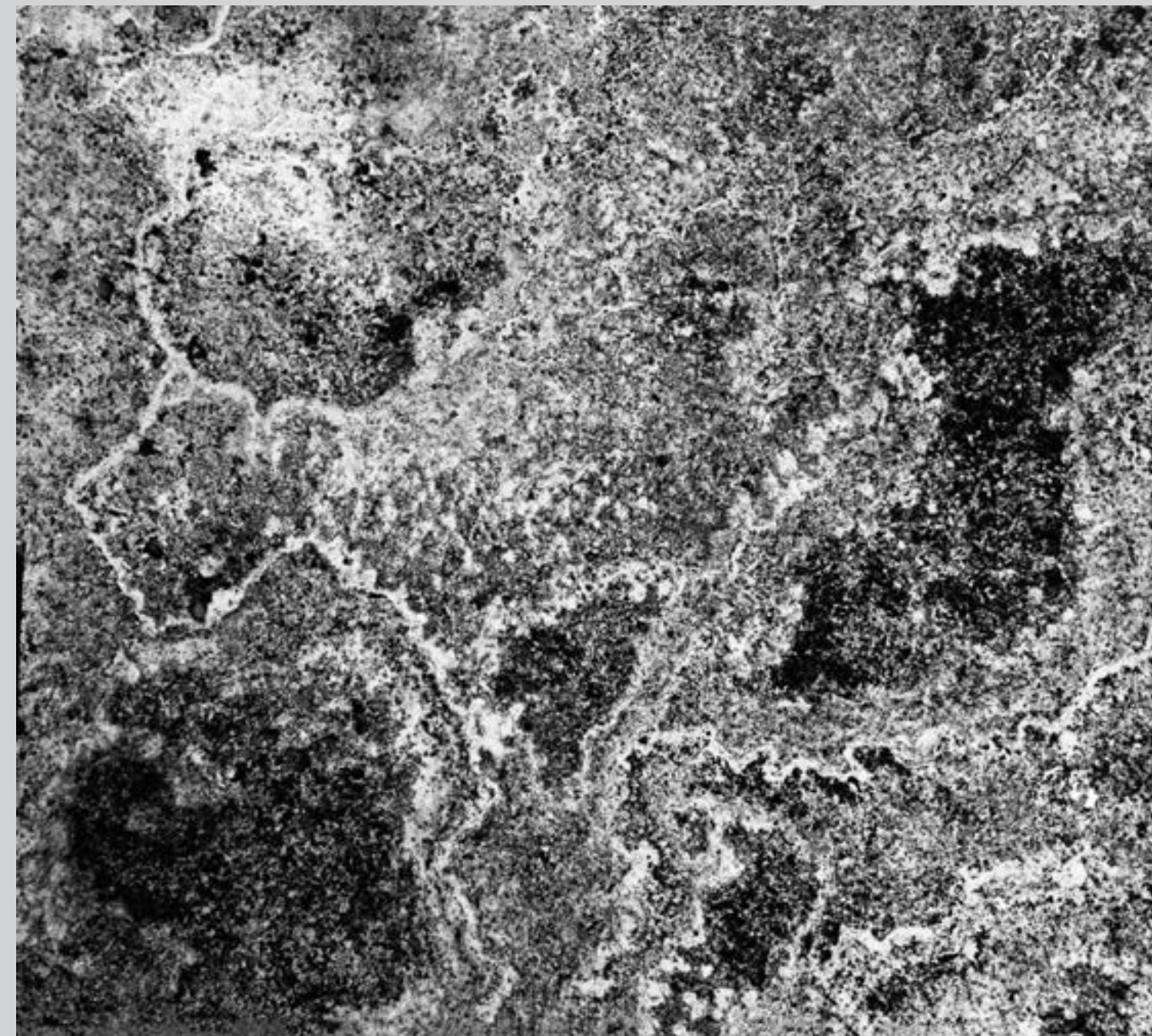
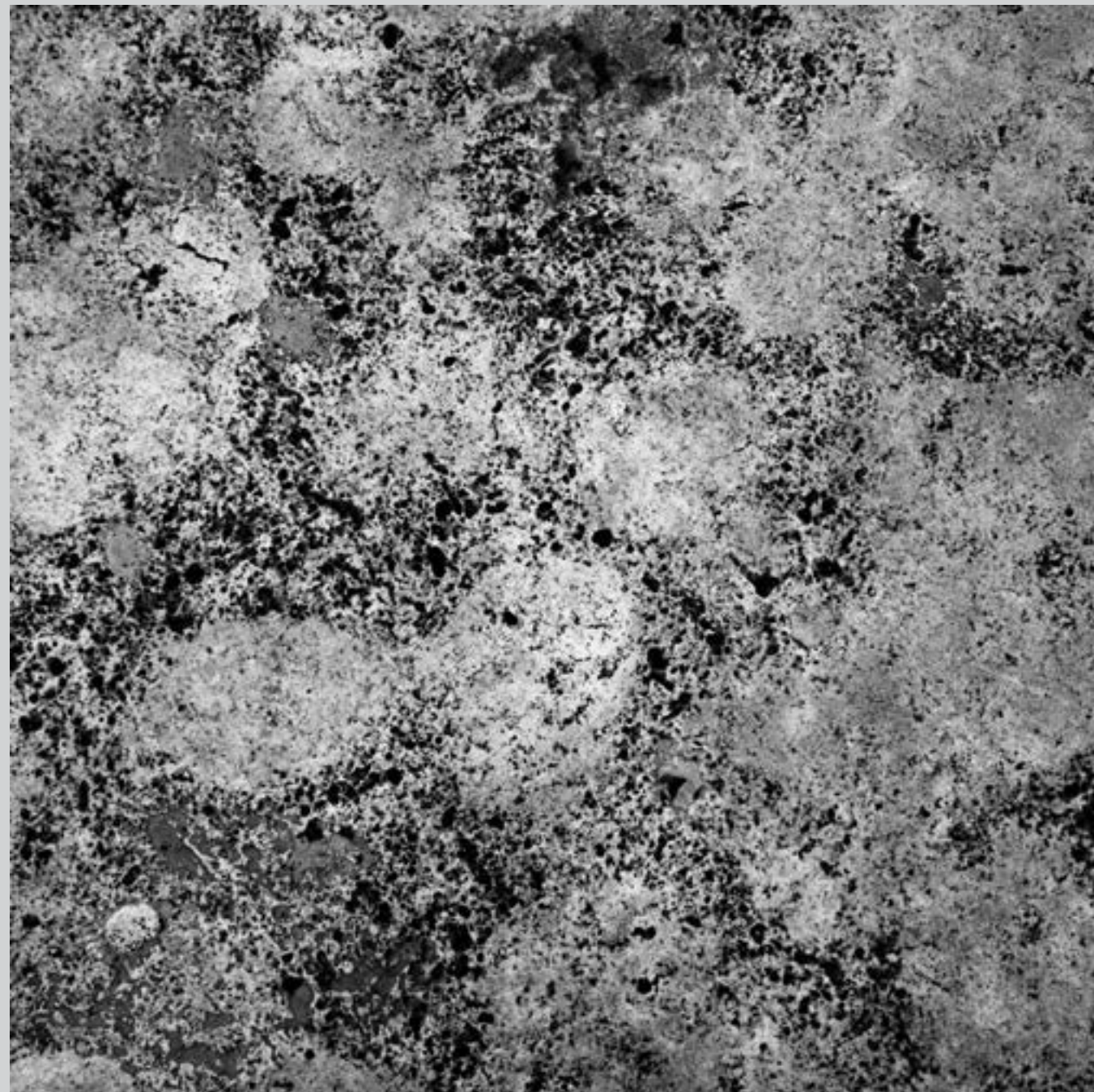




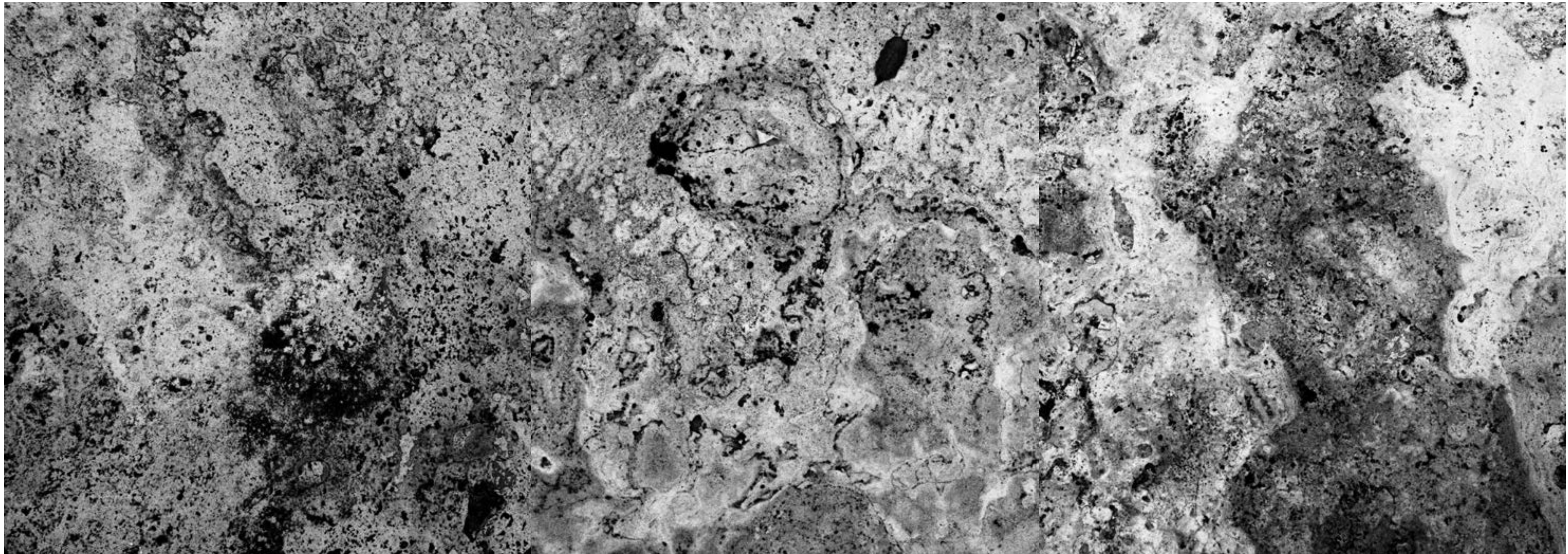




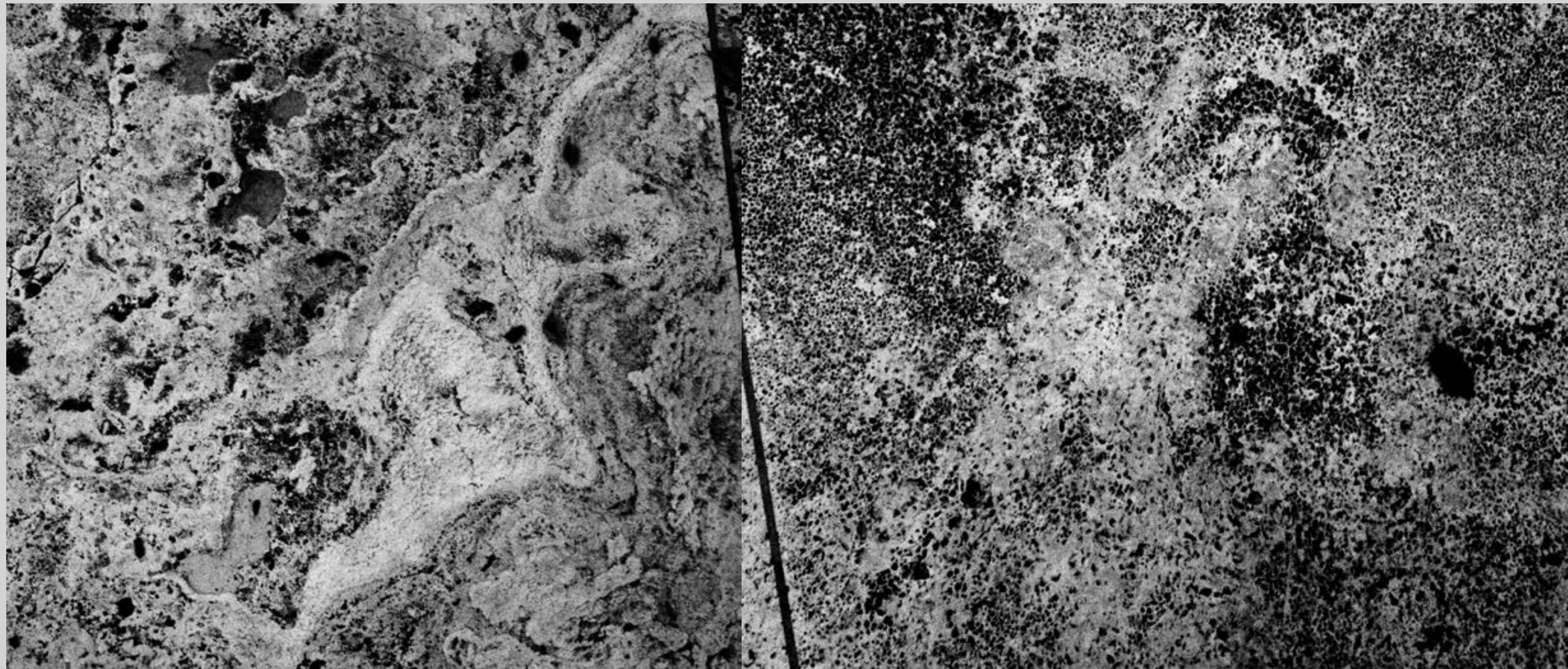




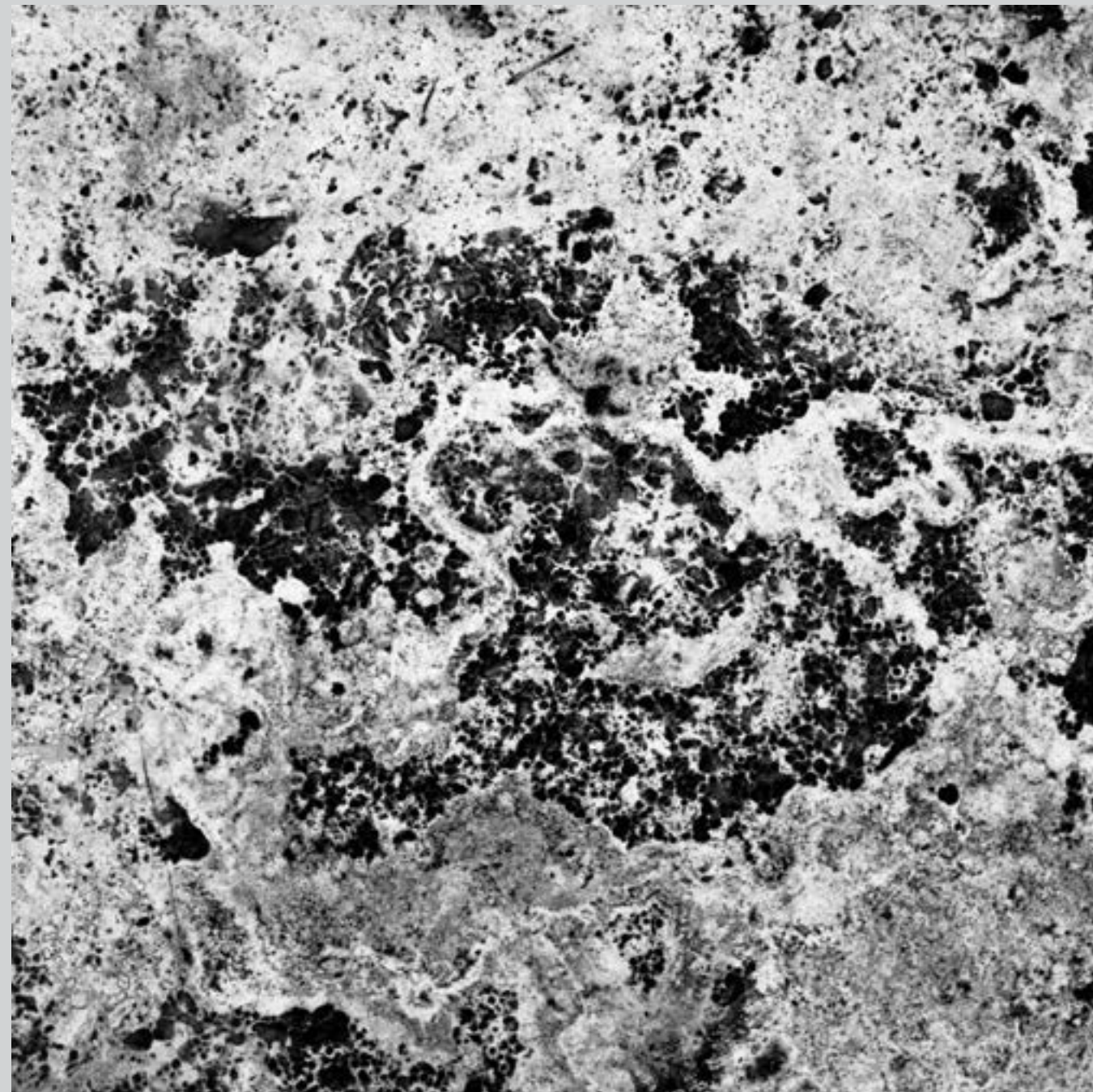
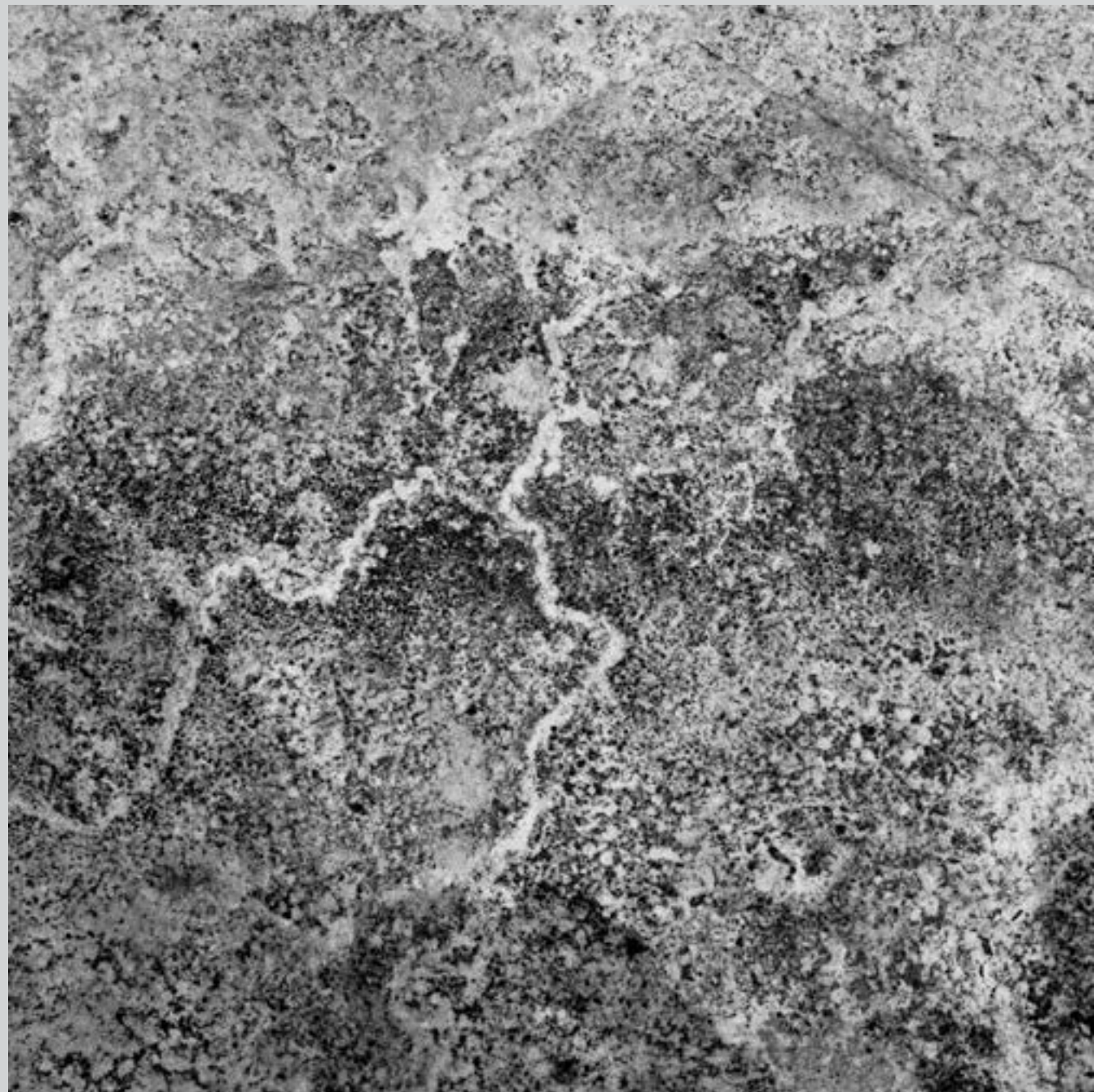




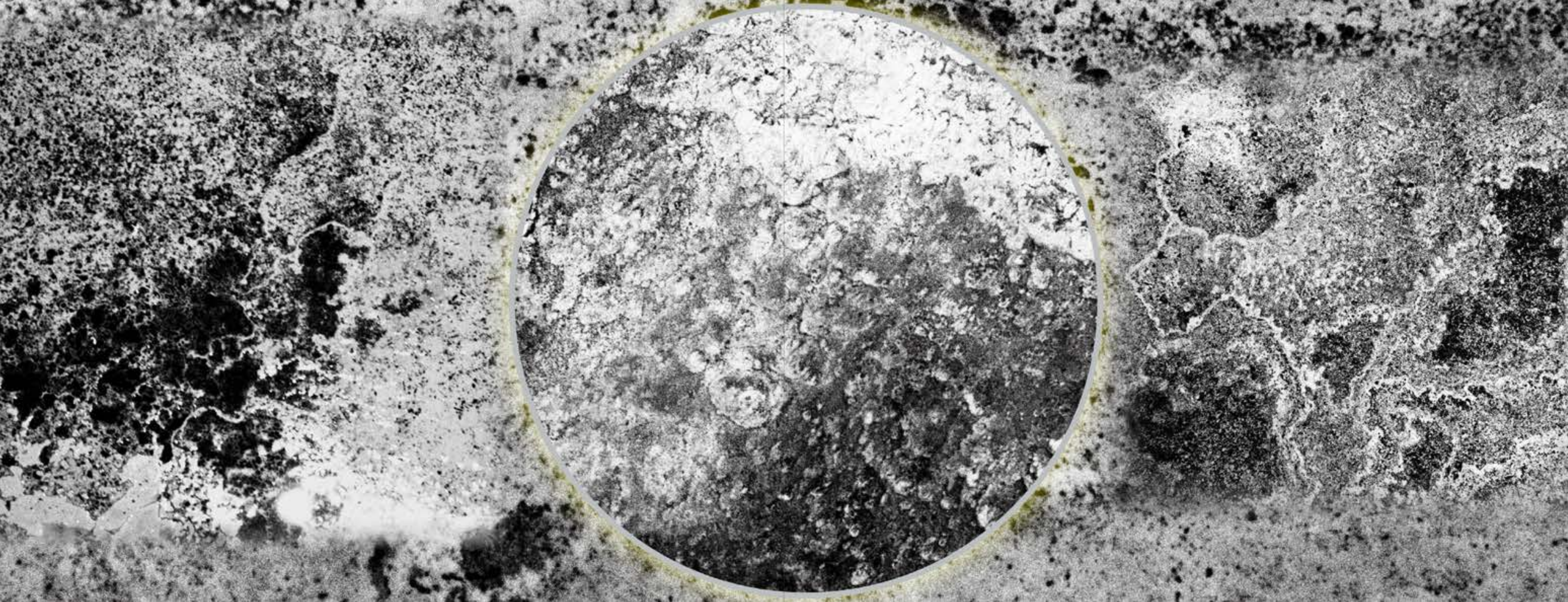




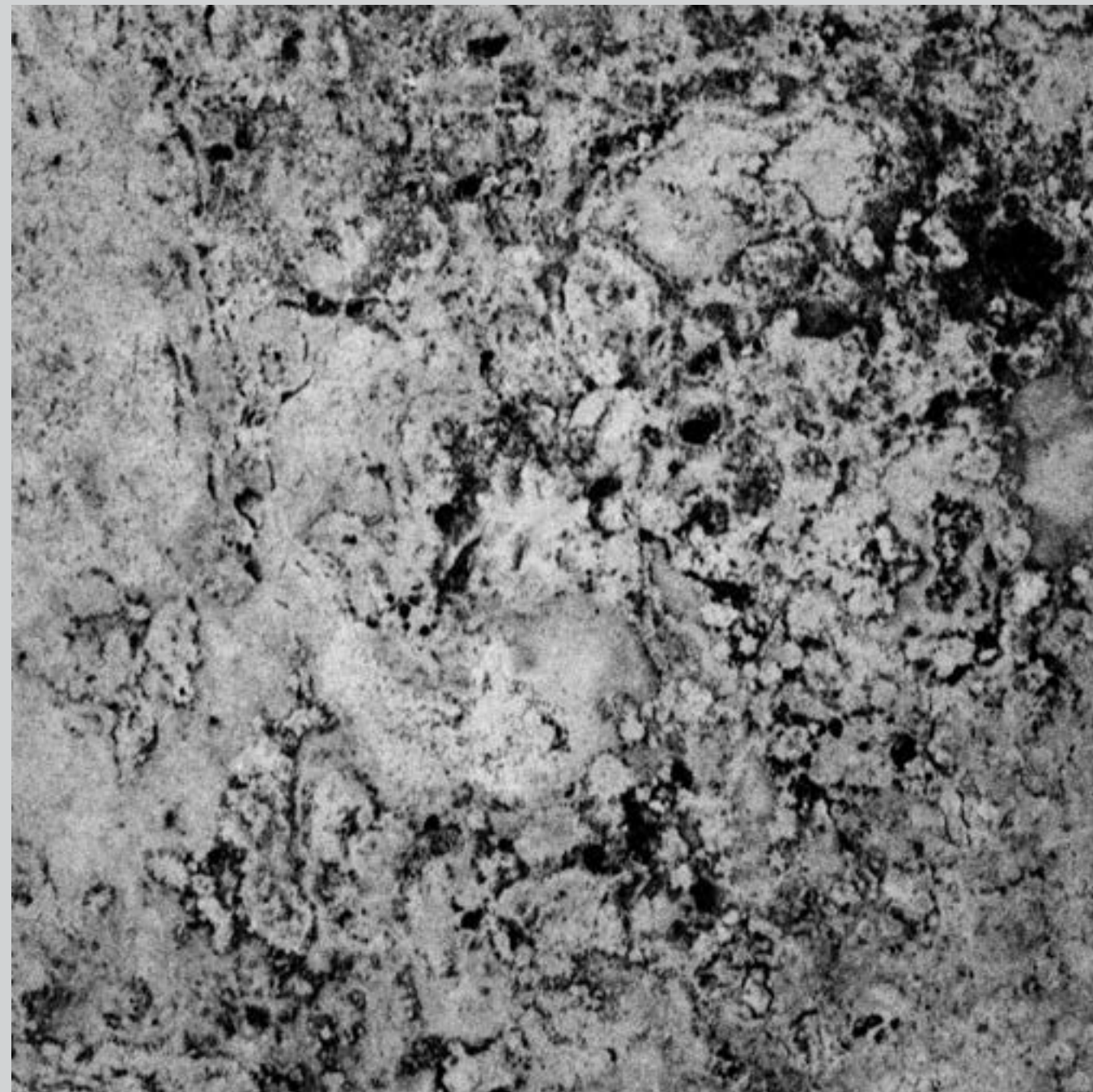
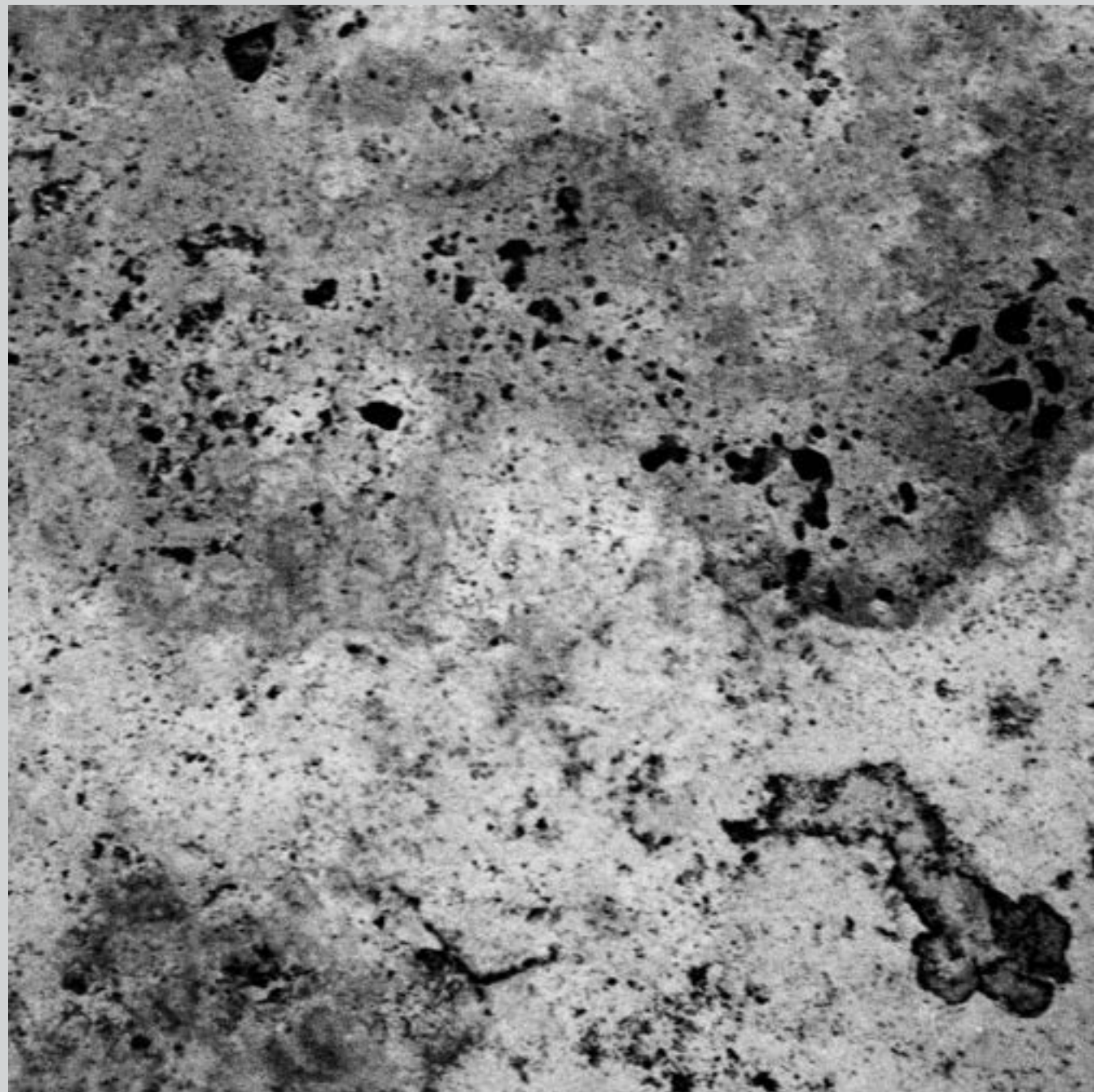








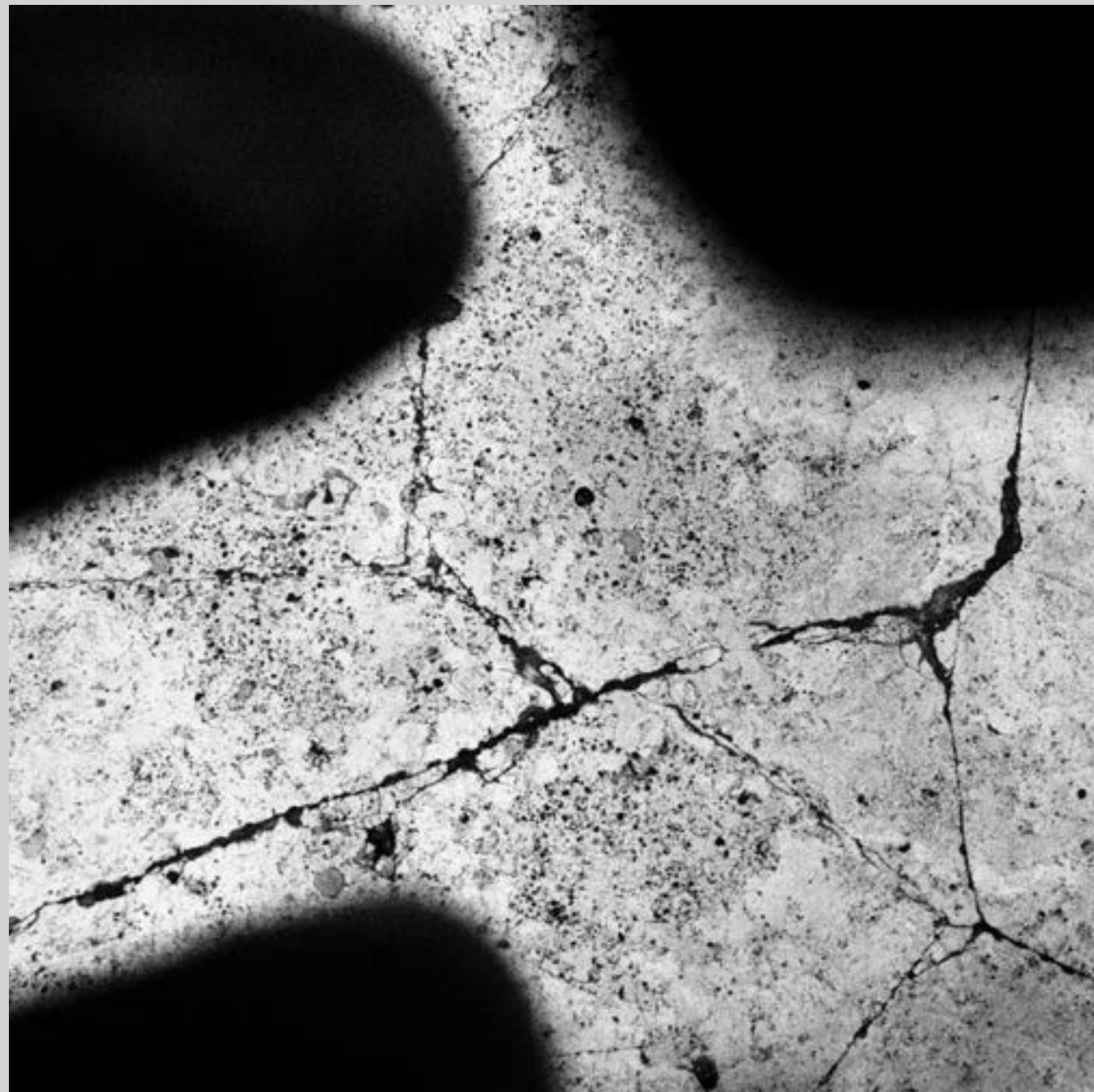




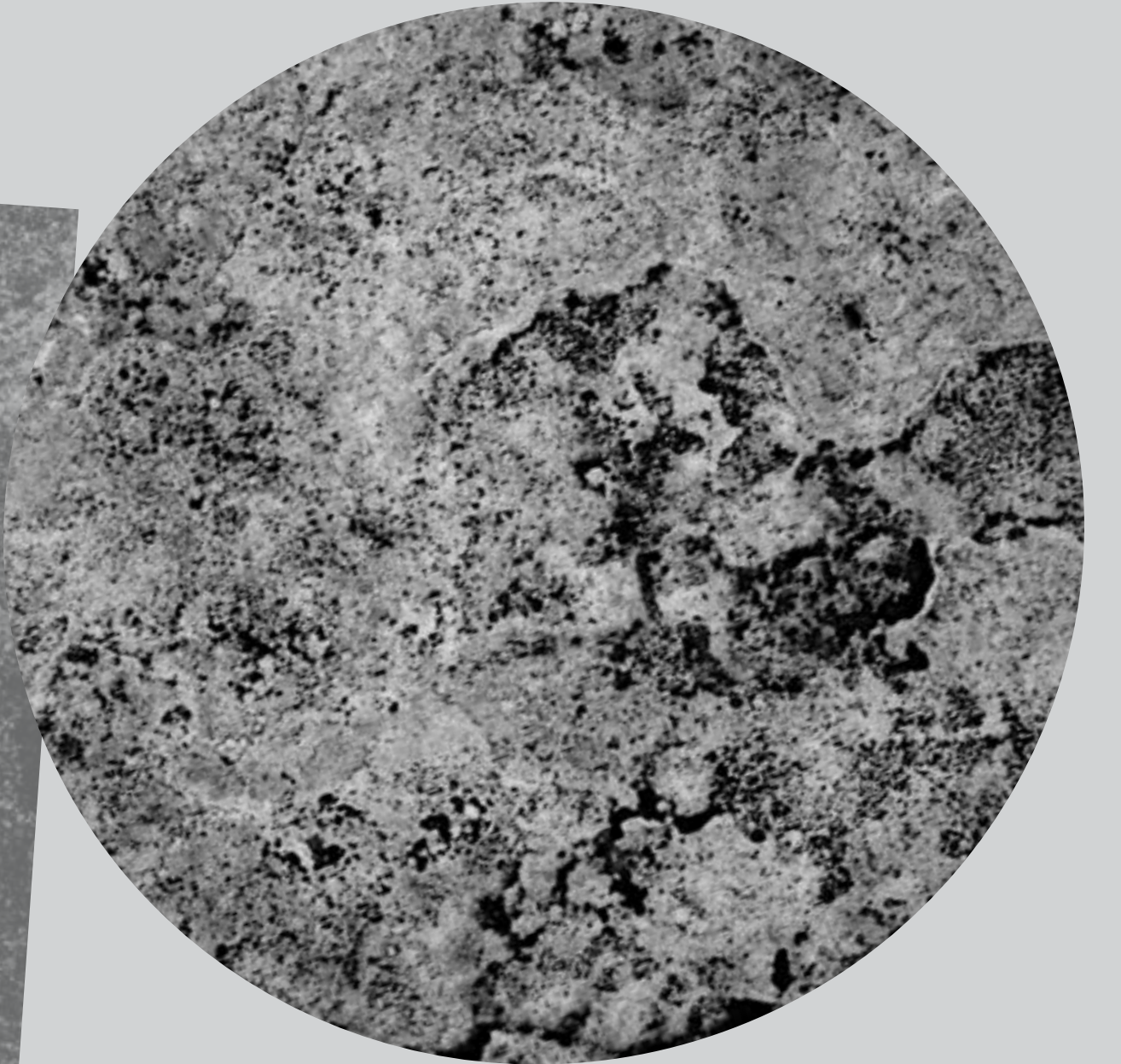
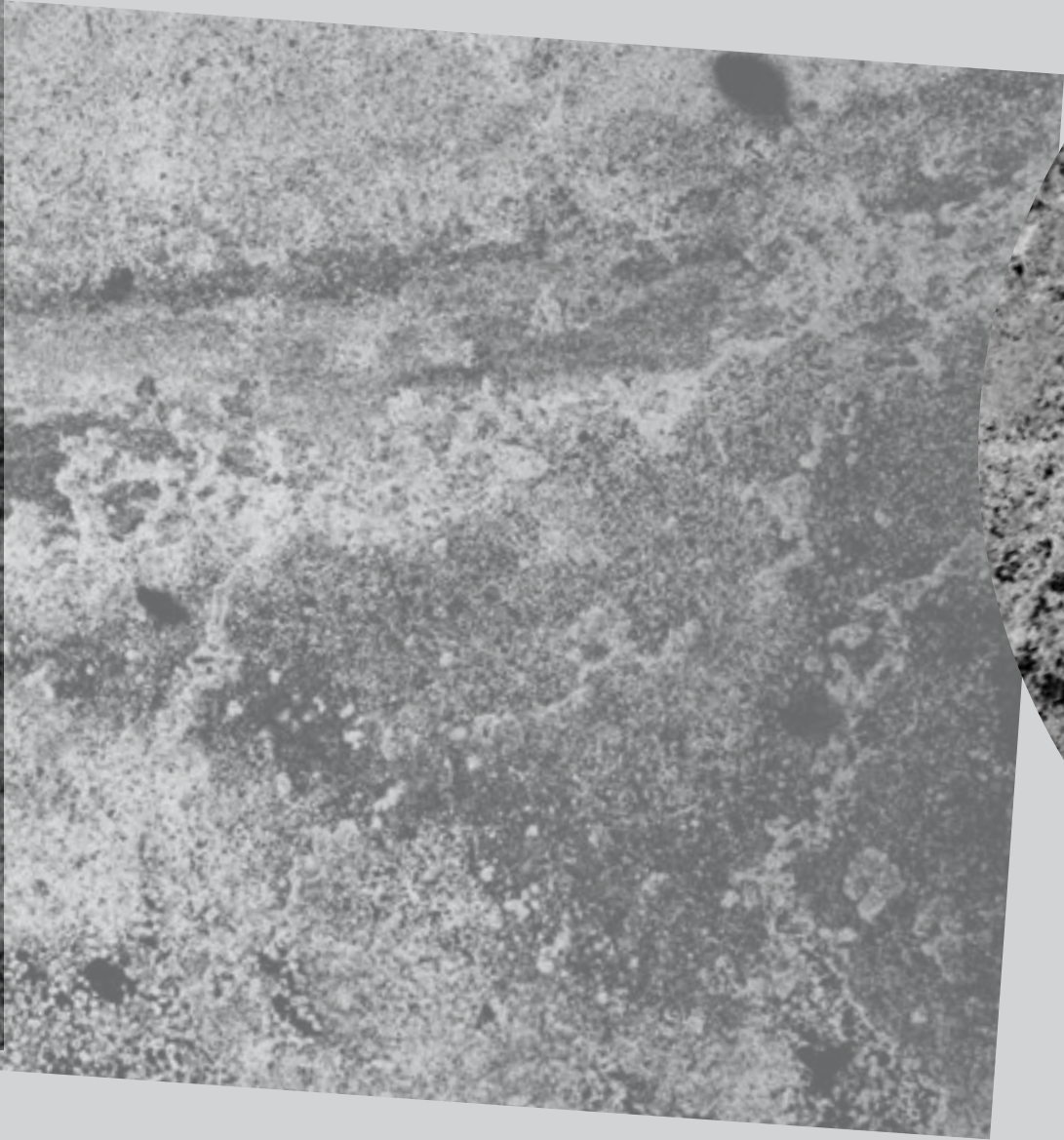




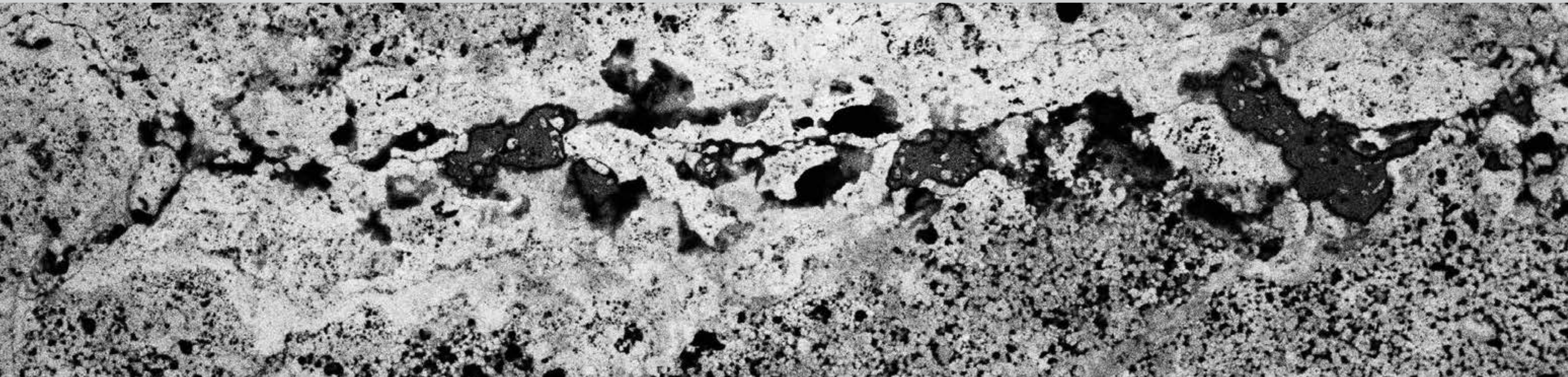




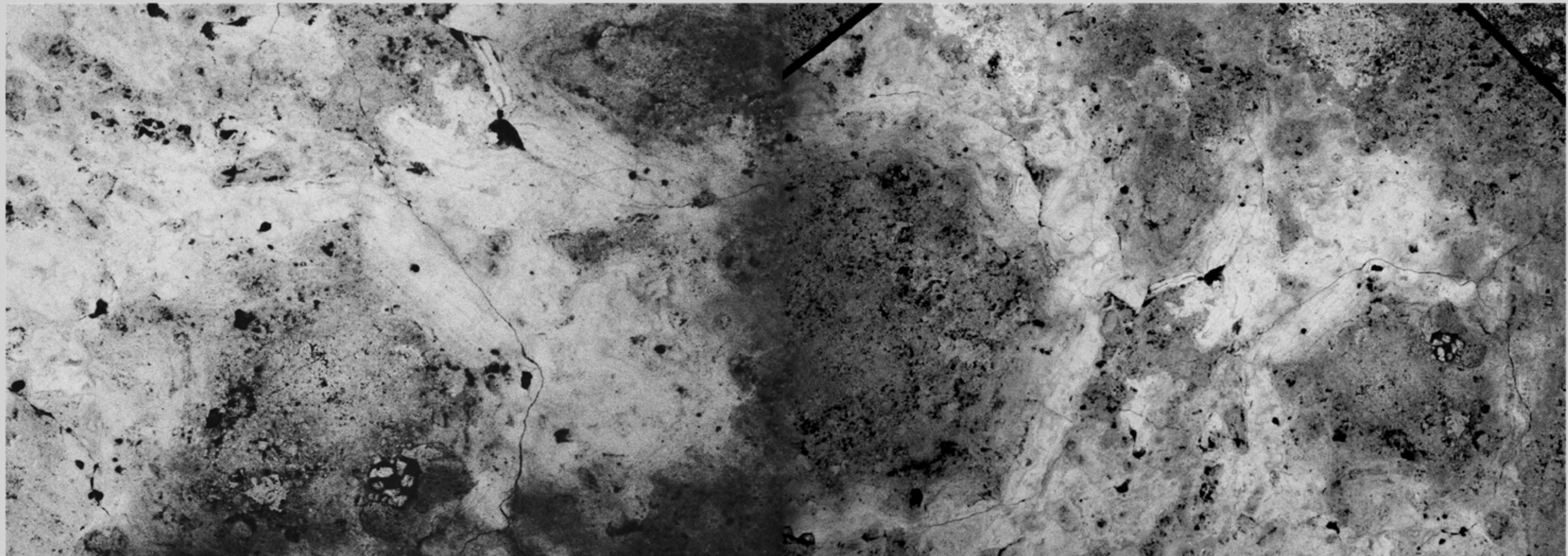




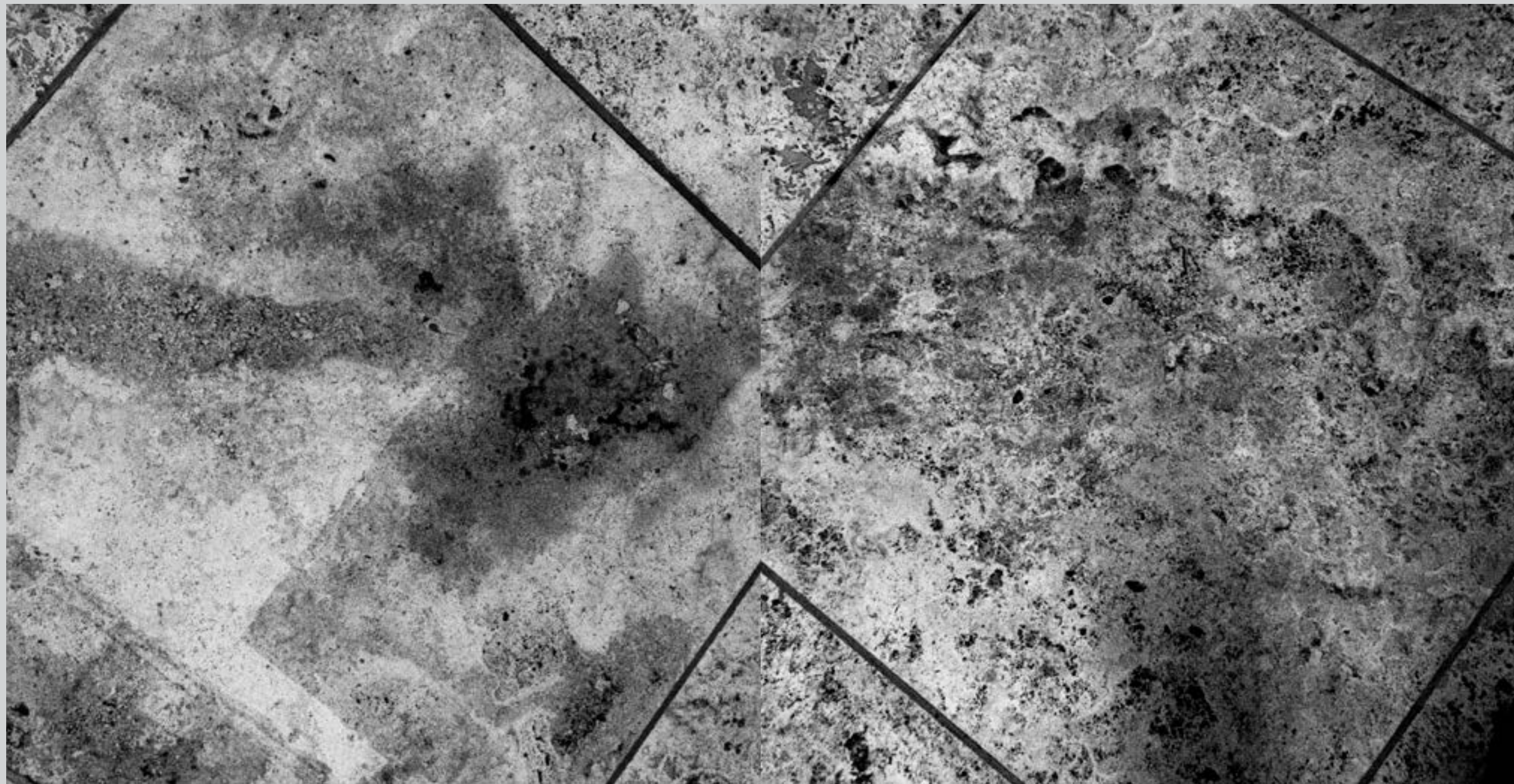




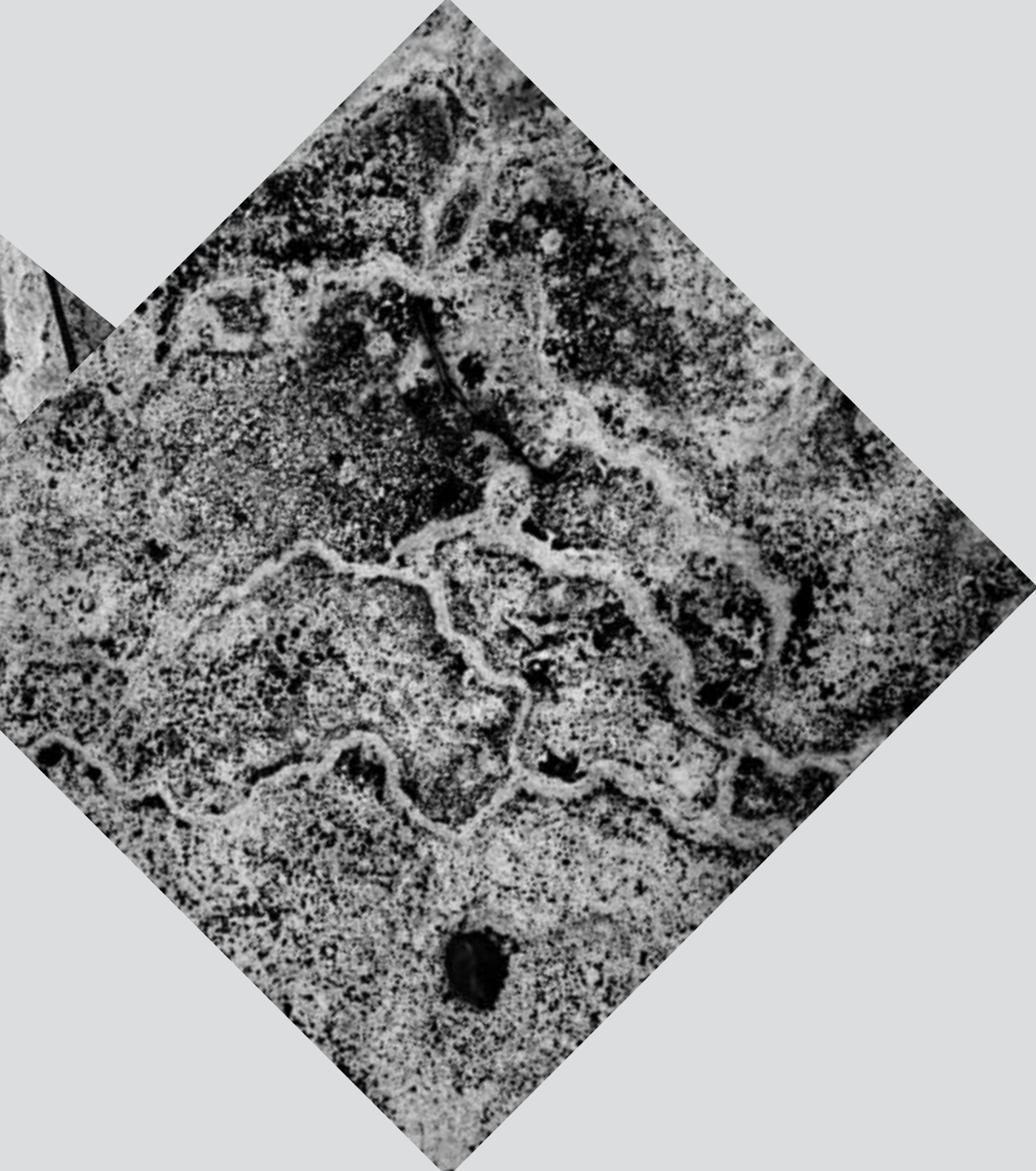
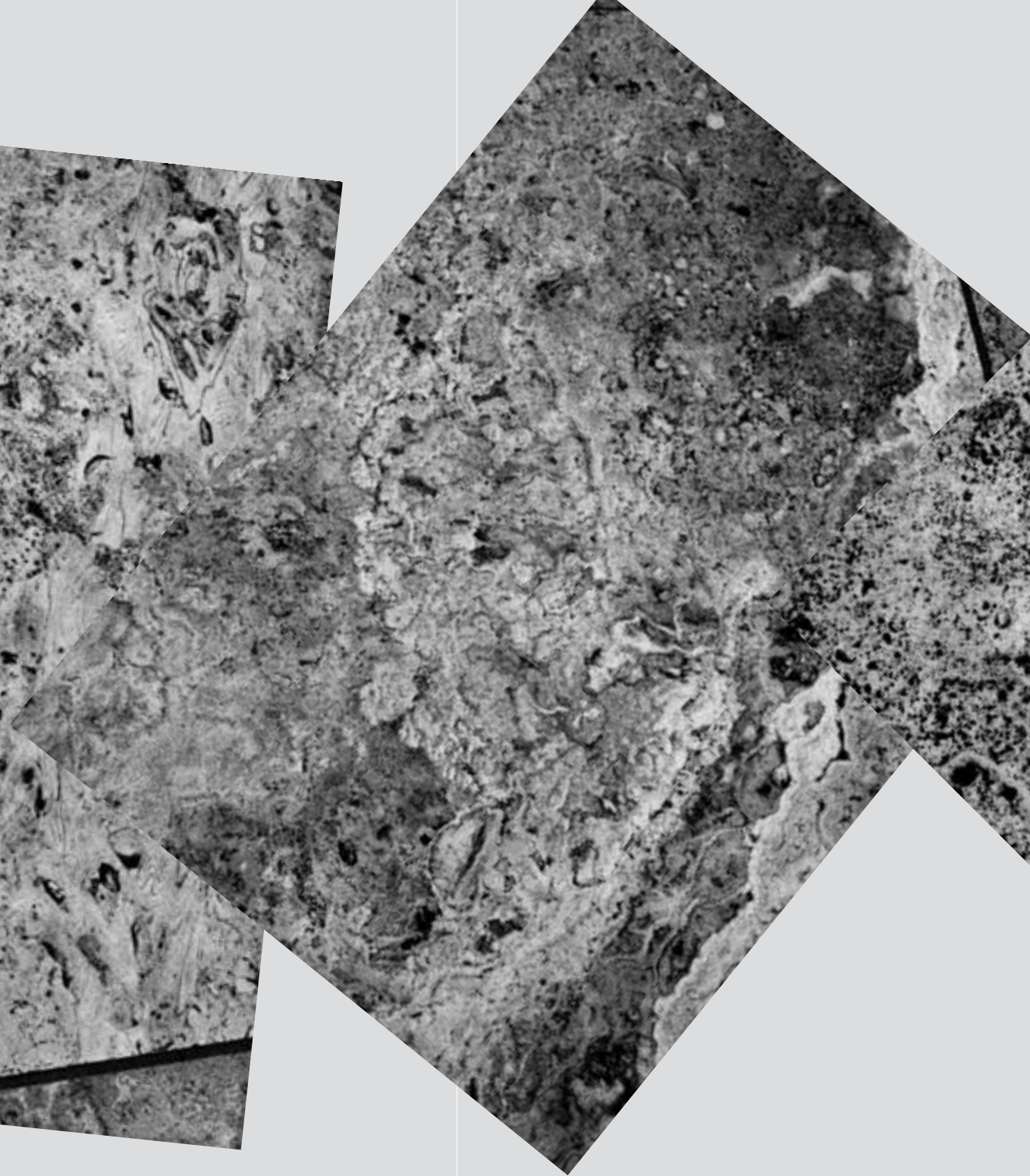
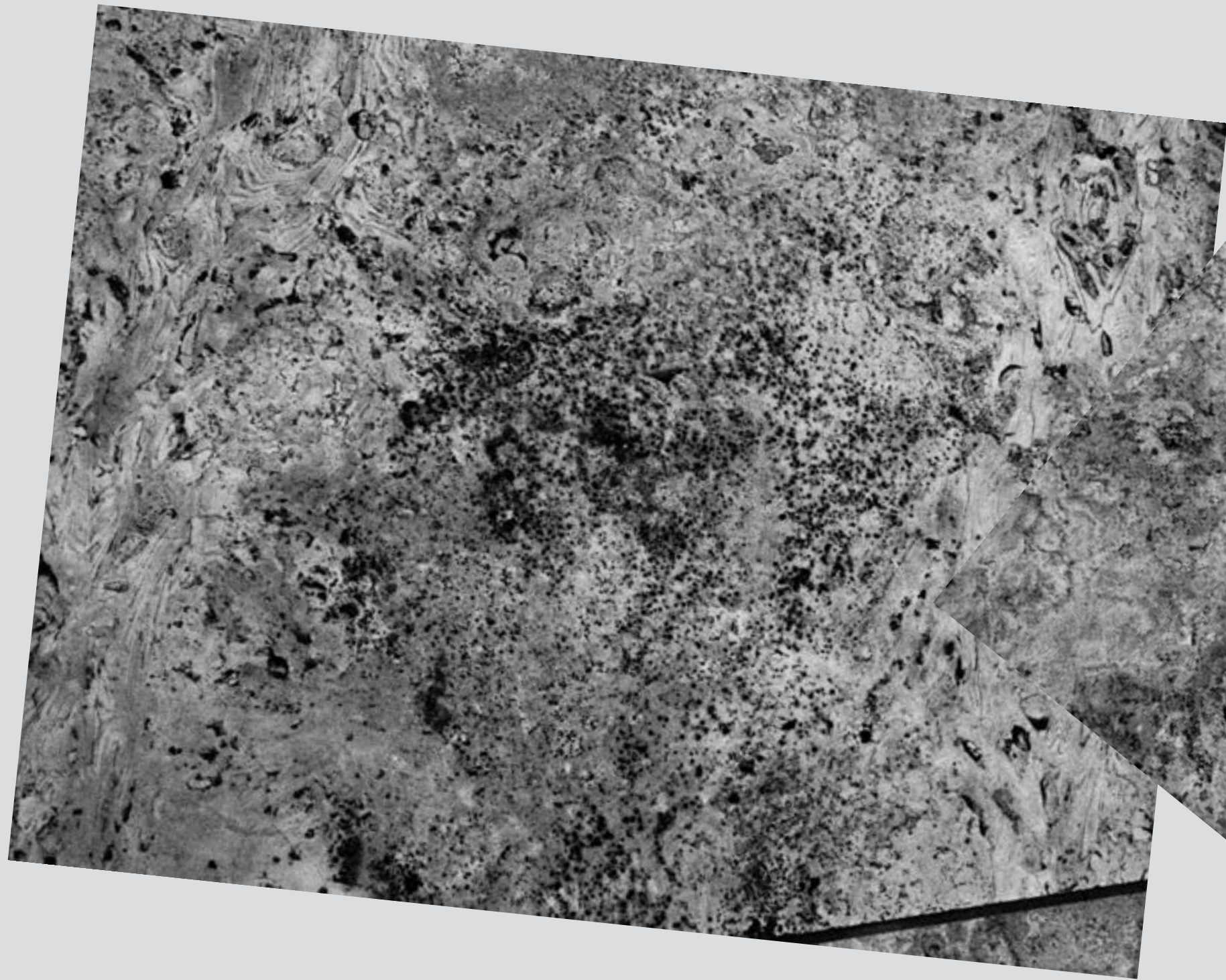




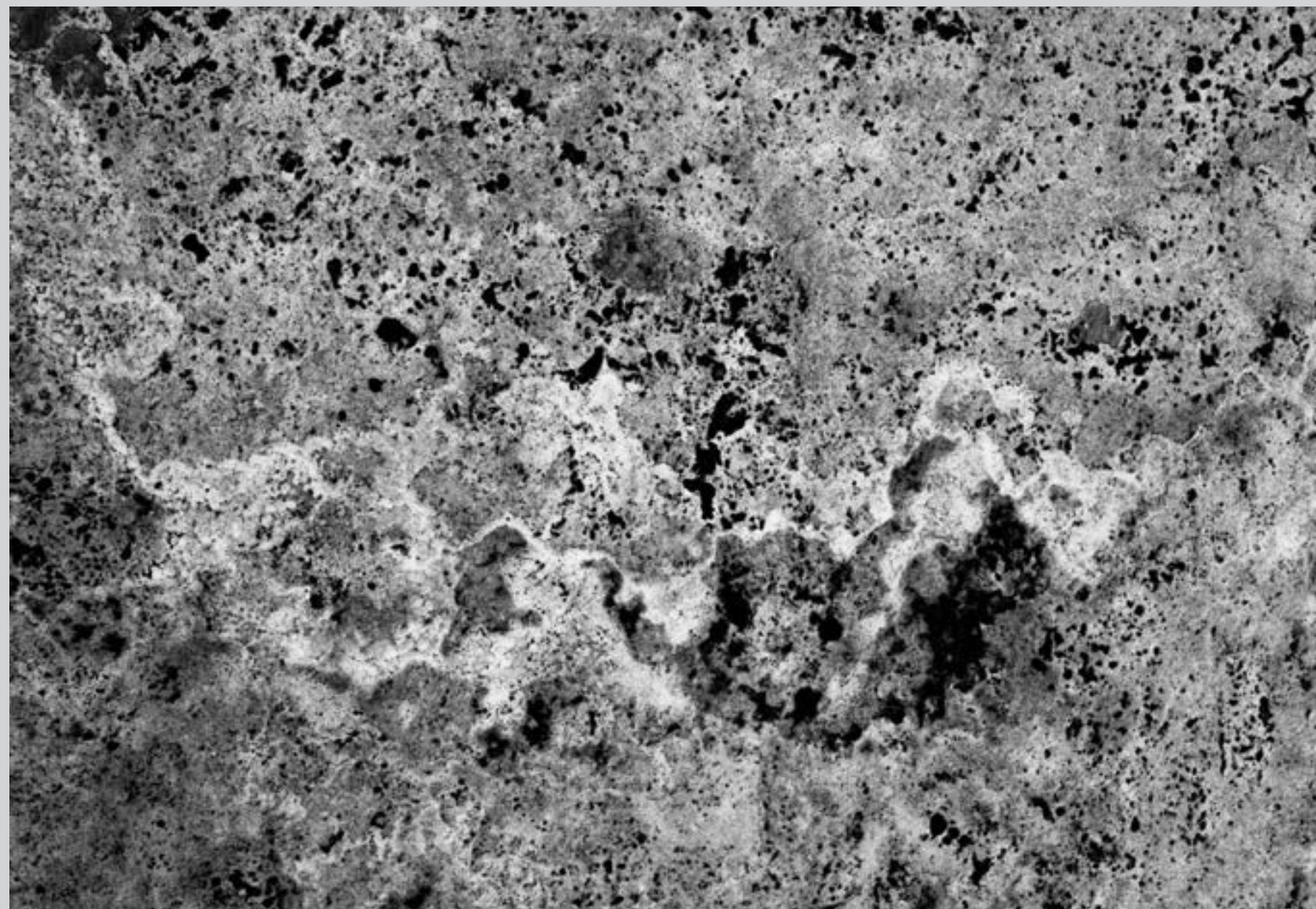




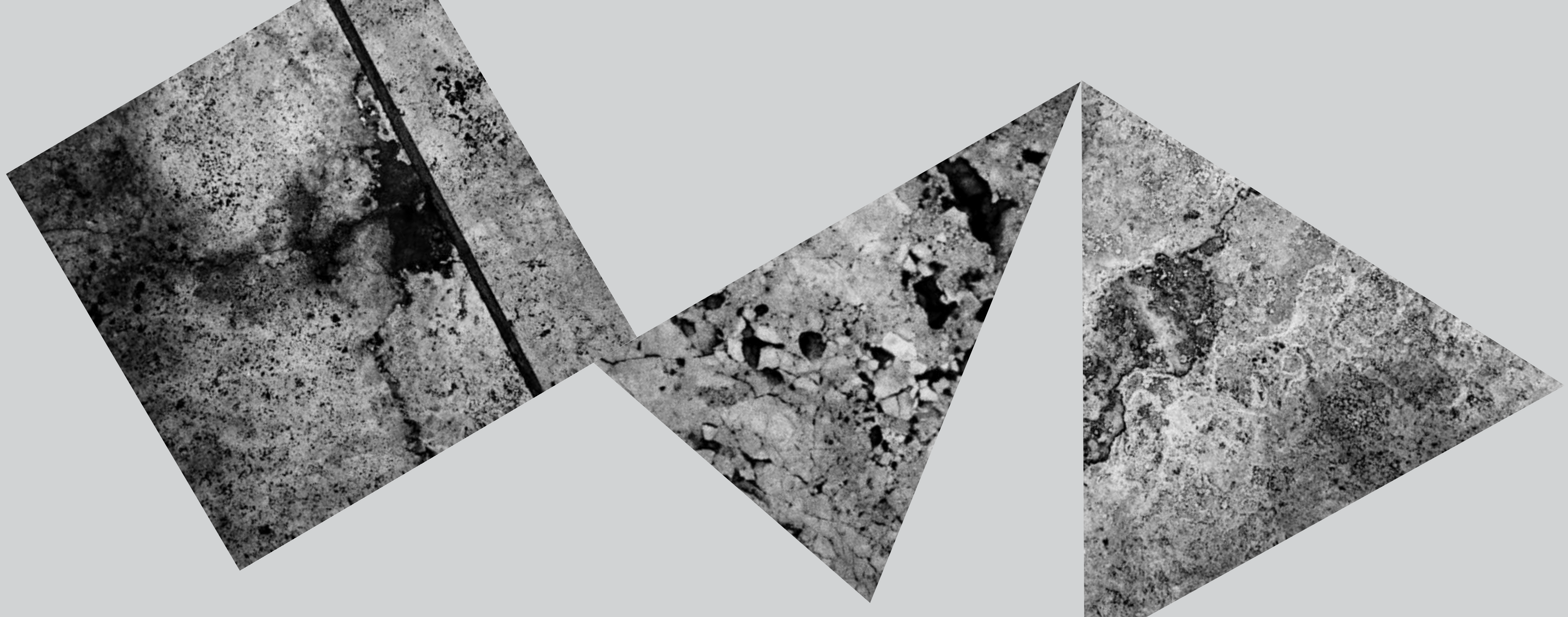




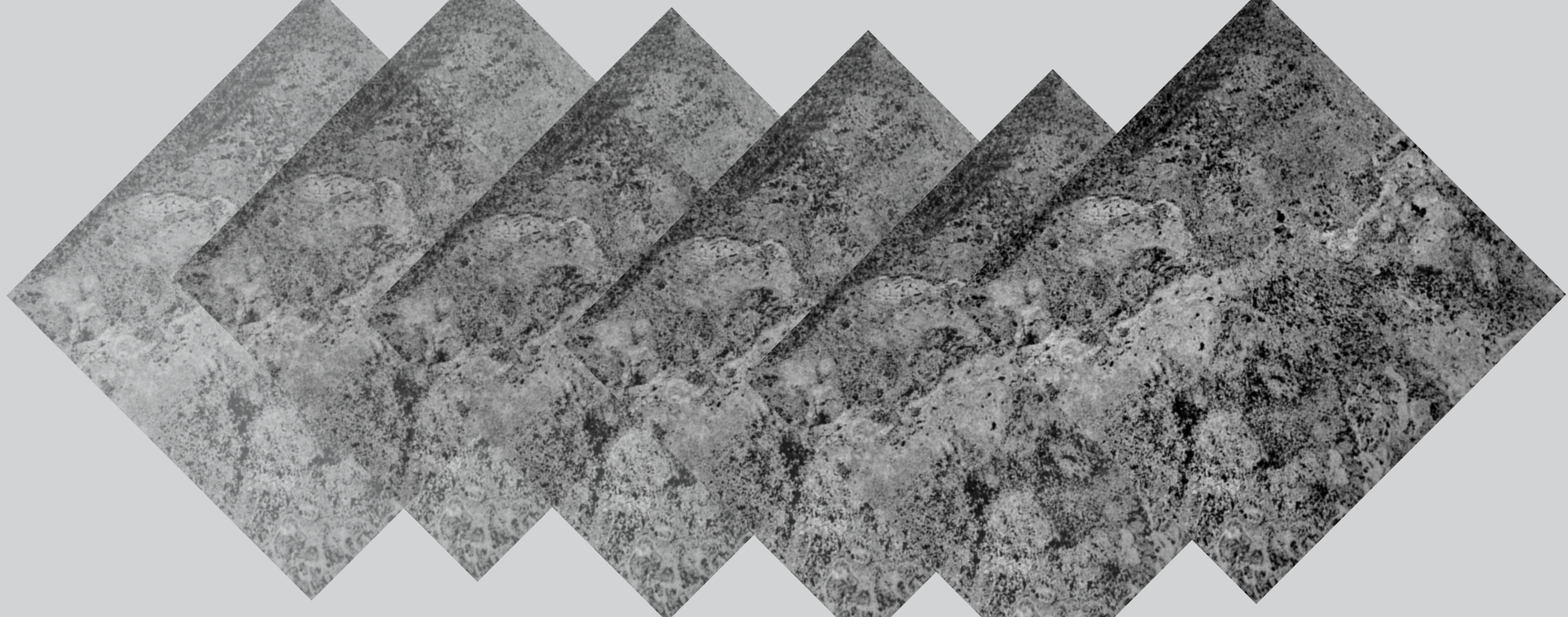




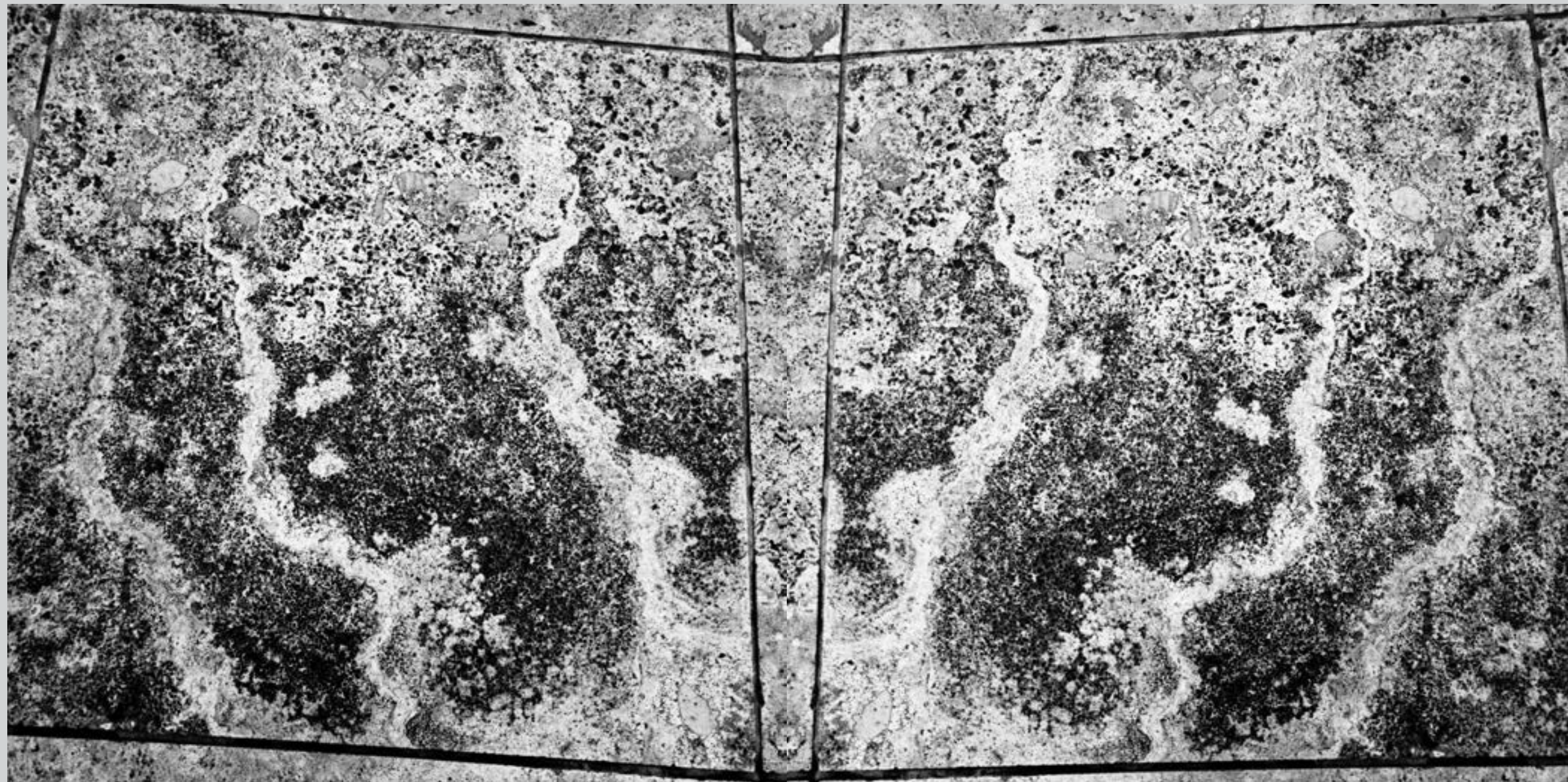




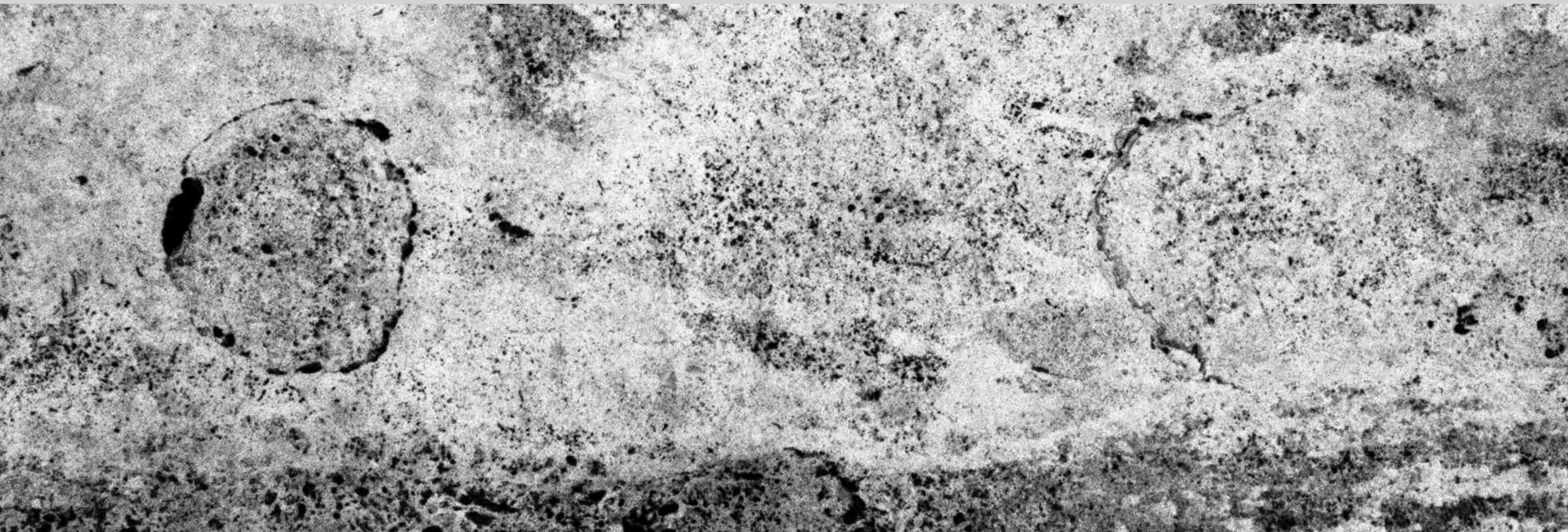




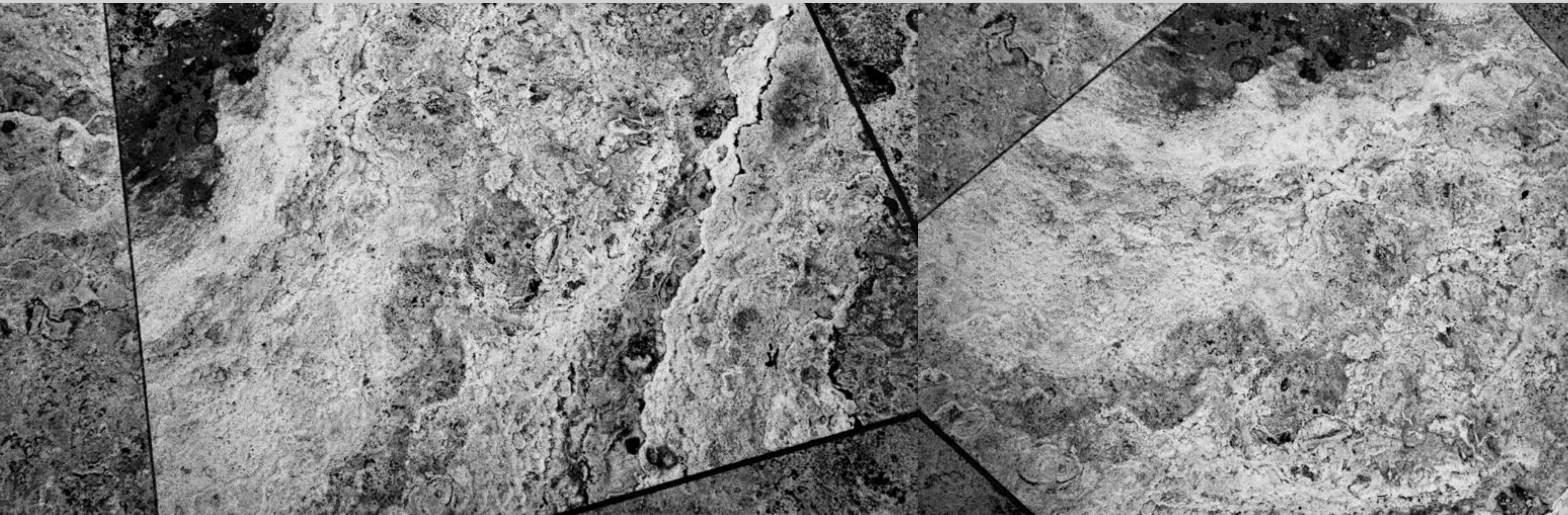




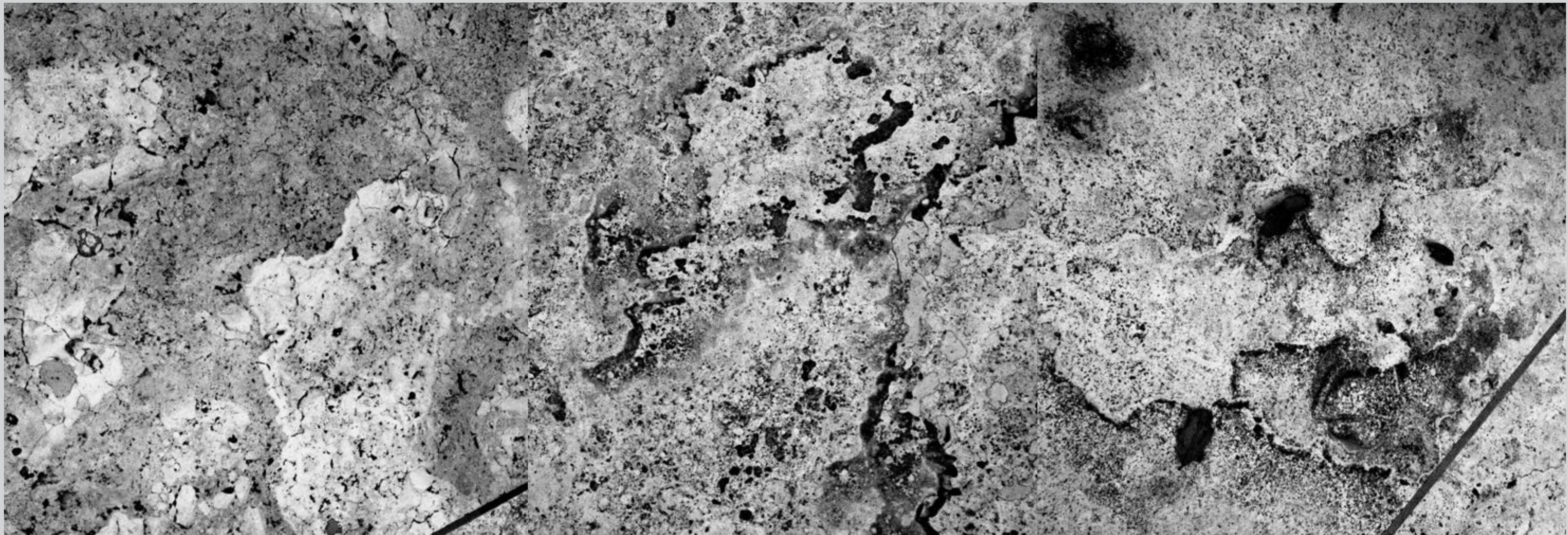




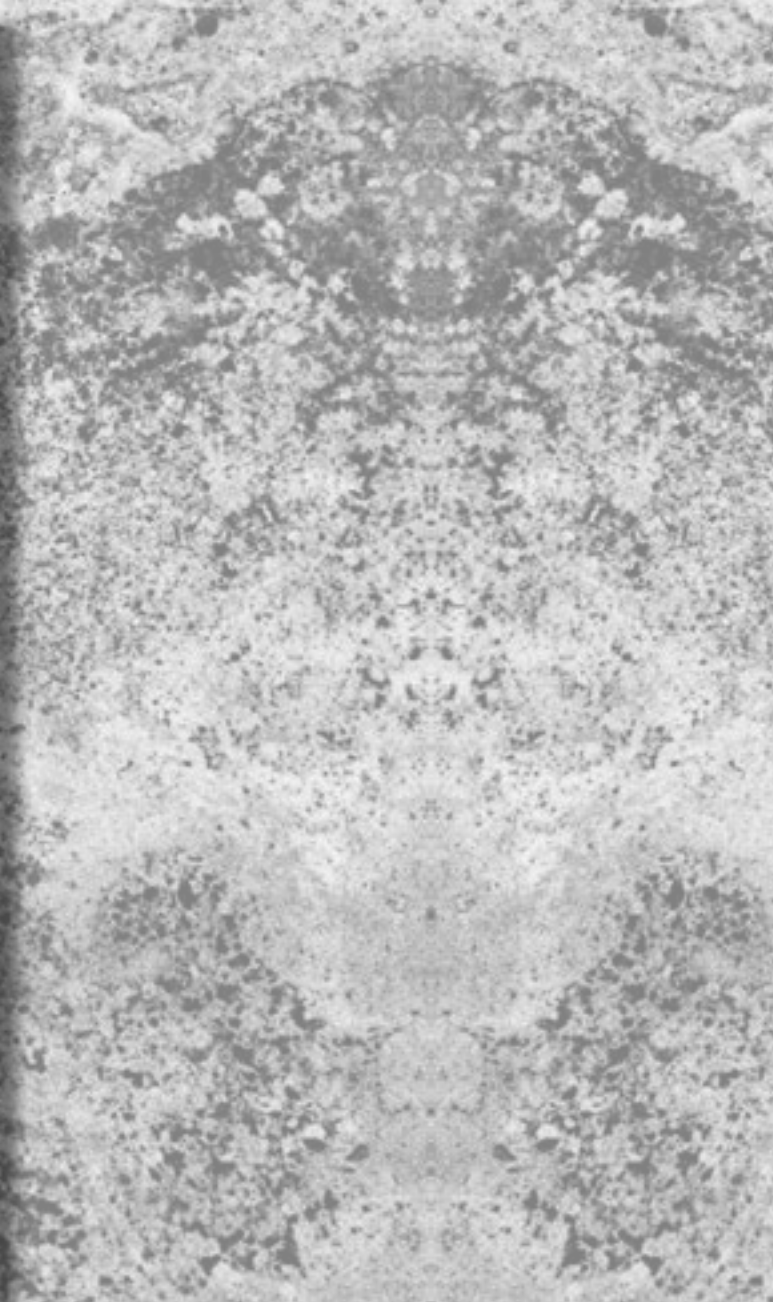
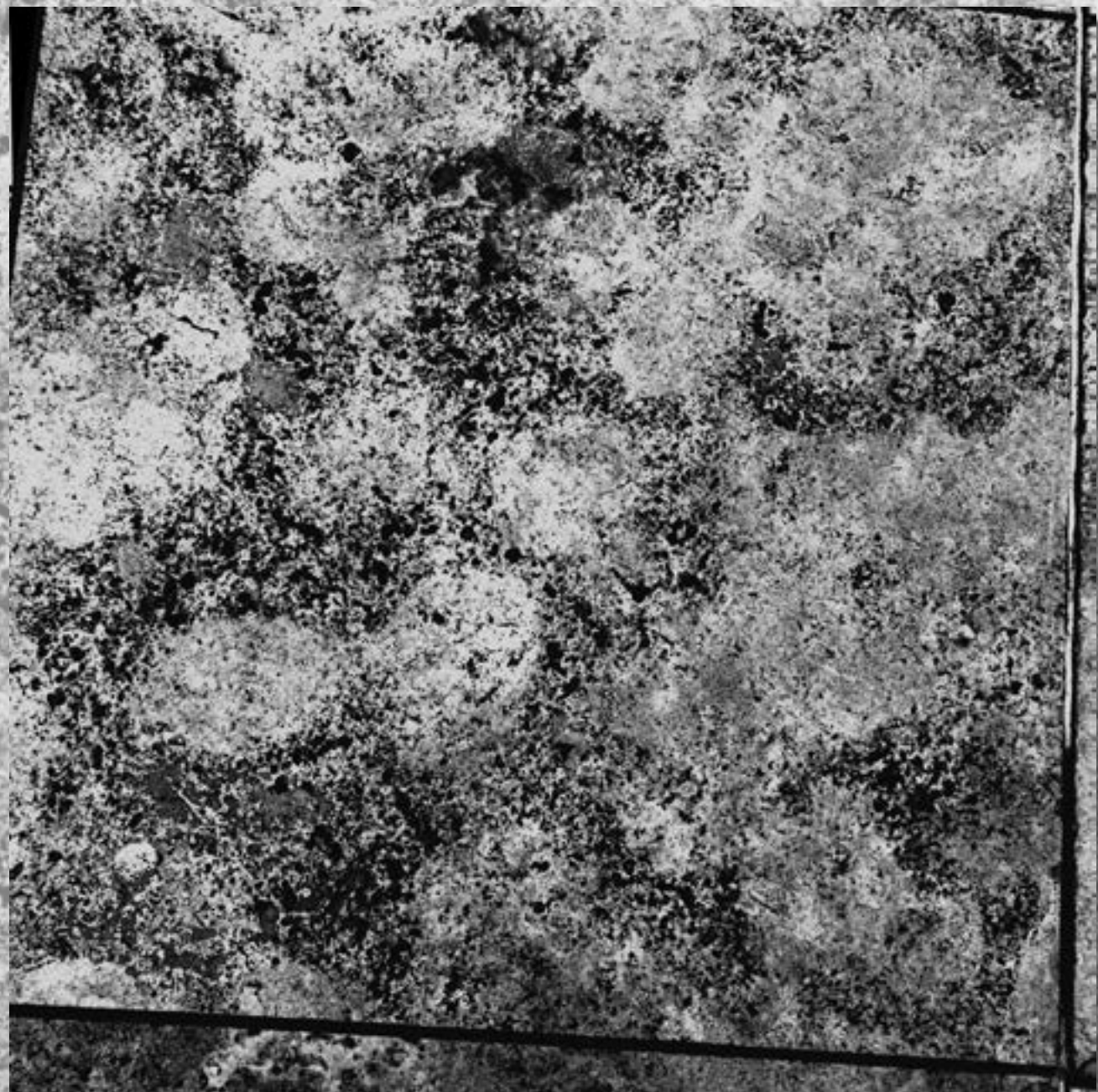








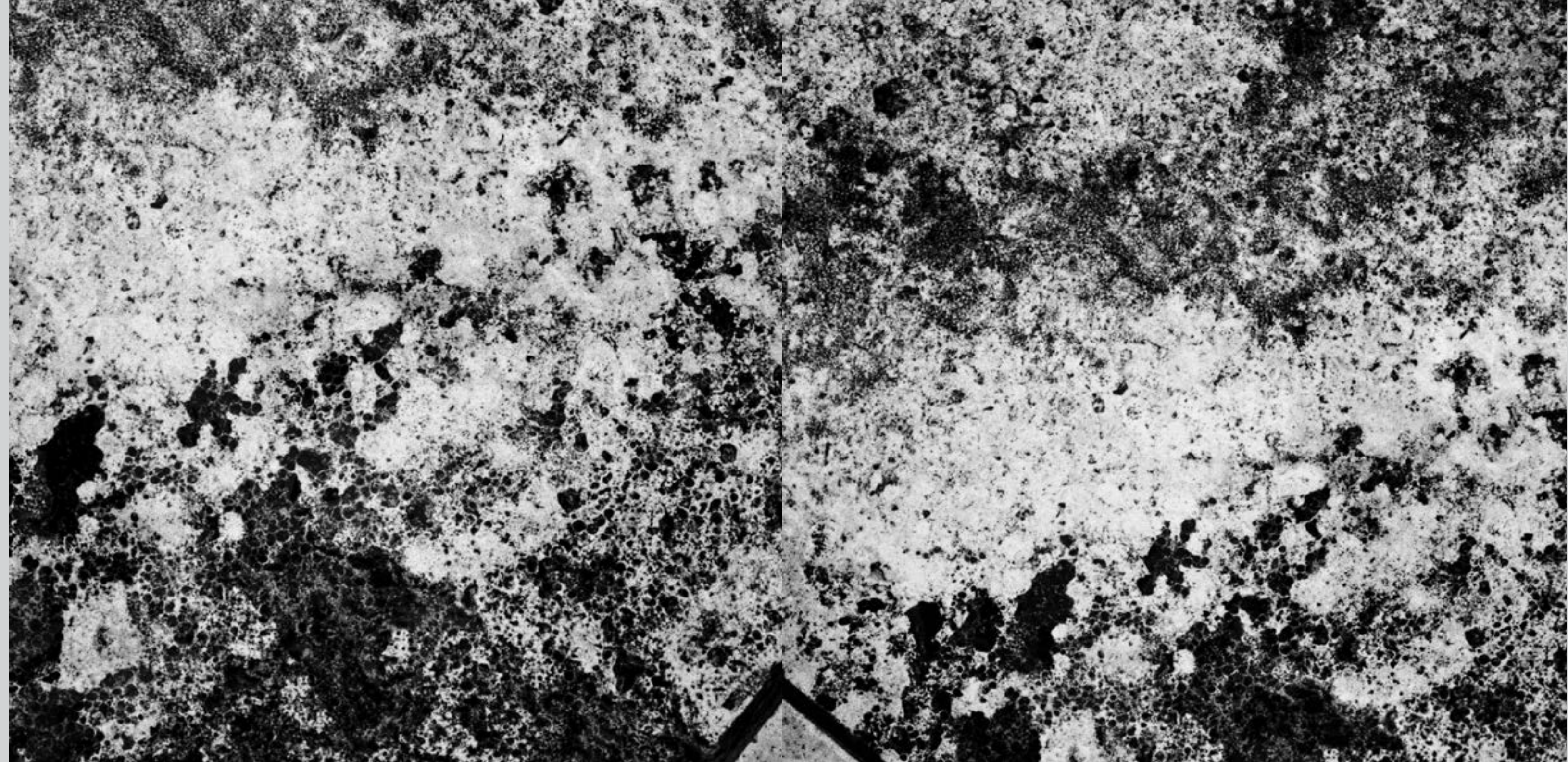




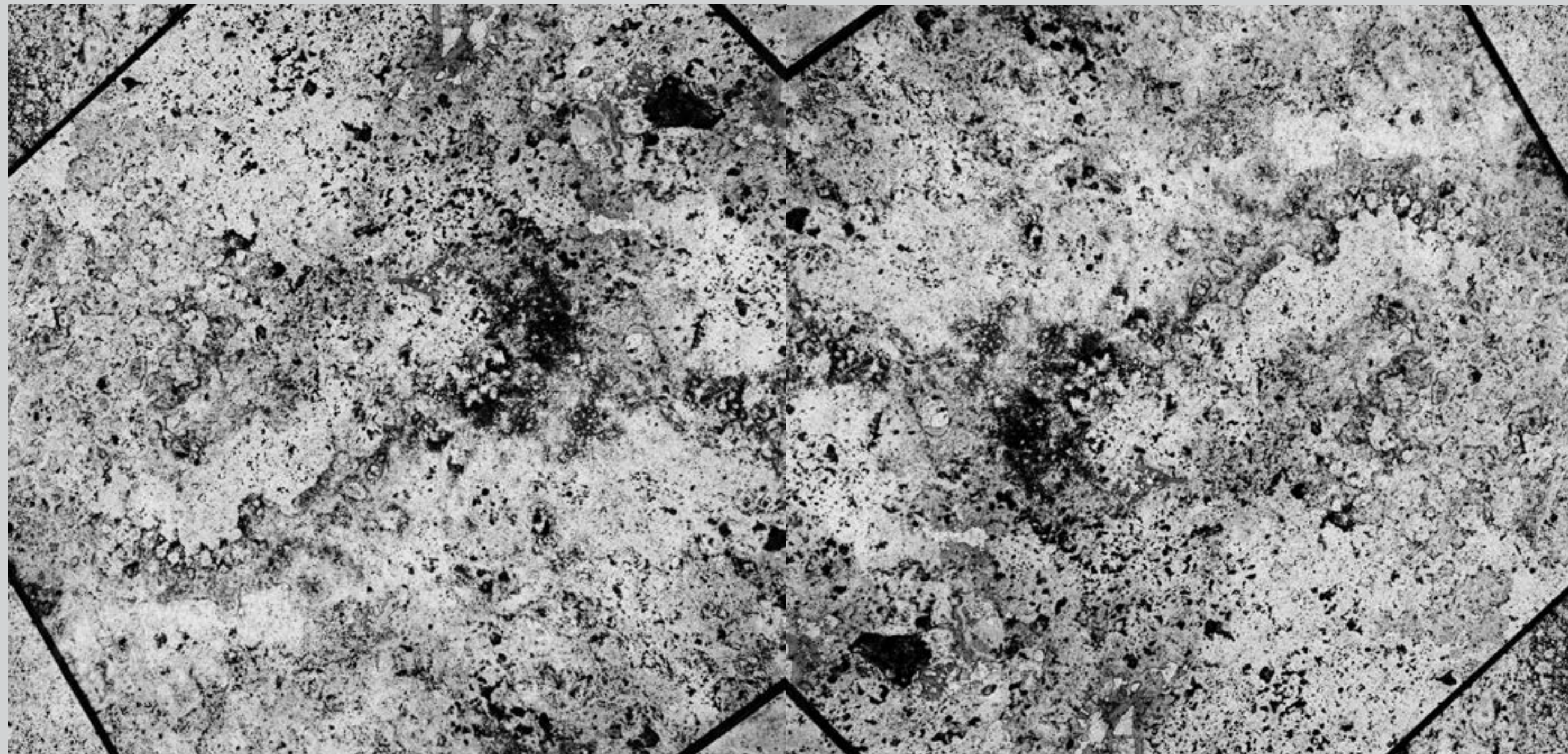




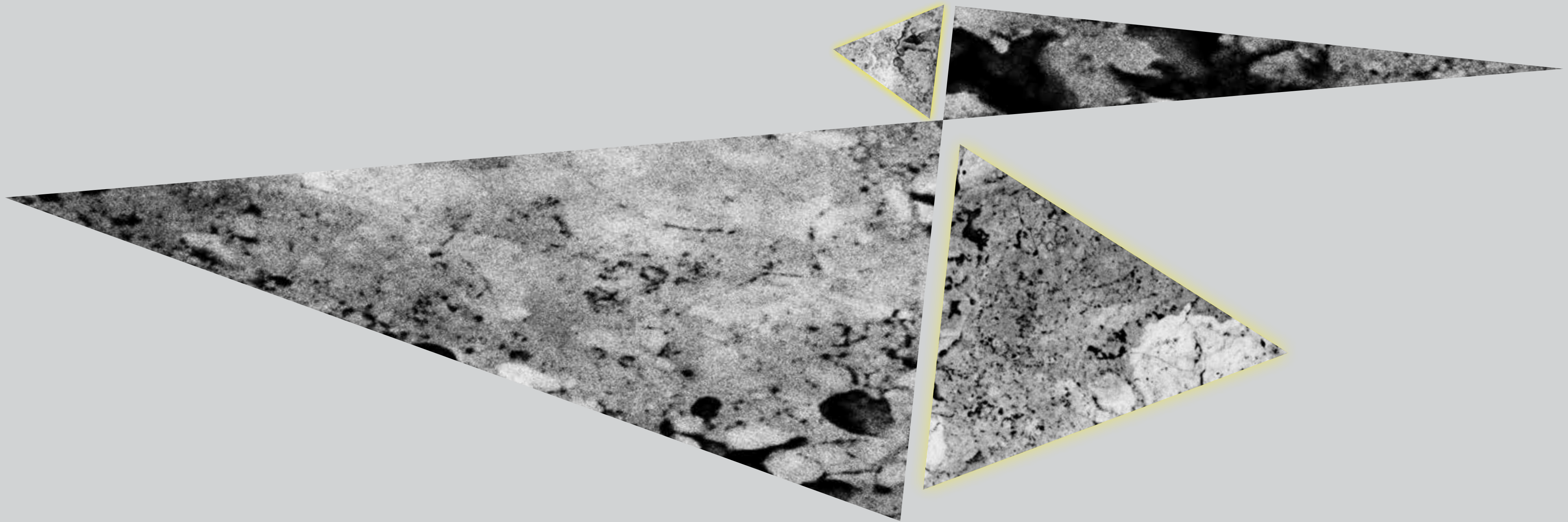














# FOUND AT THE GETTY

Salzmann's most recent collection of photographs, *Found at the Getty*, reveals the photographer's continuing obsession with abstraction and his belief in the Zen idea that all existence is in flux and all things are part of a cycle of birth, decay, and rebirth. Departing from his better known documentary style, Salzmann here offers the viewer images to contemplate for their intriguing forms and the enigmatic messages they embody. Salzmann's eye for the shocking beauty of reality—whether figures in real life or things found underfoot—remains the hallmark of his vision.

