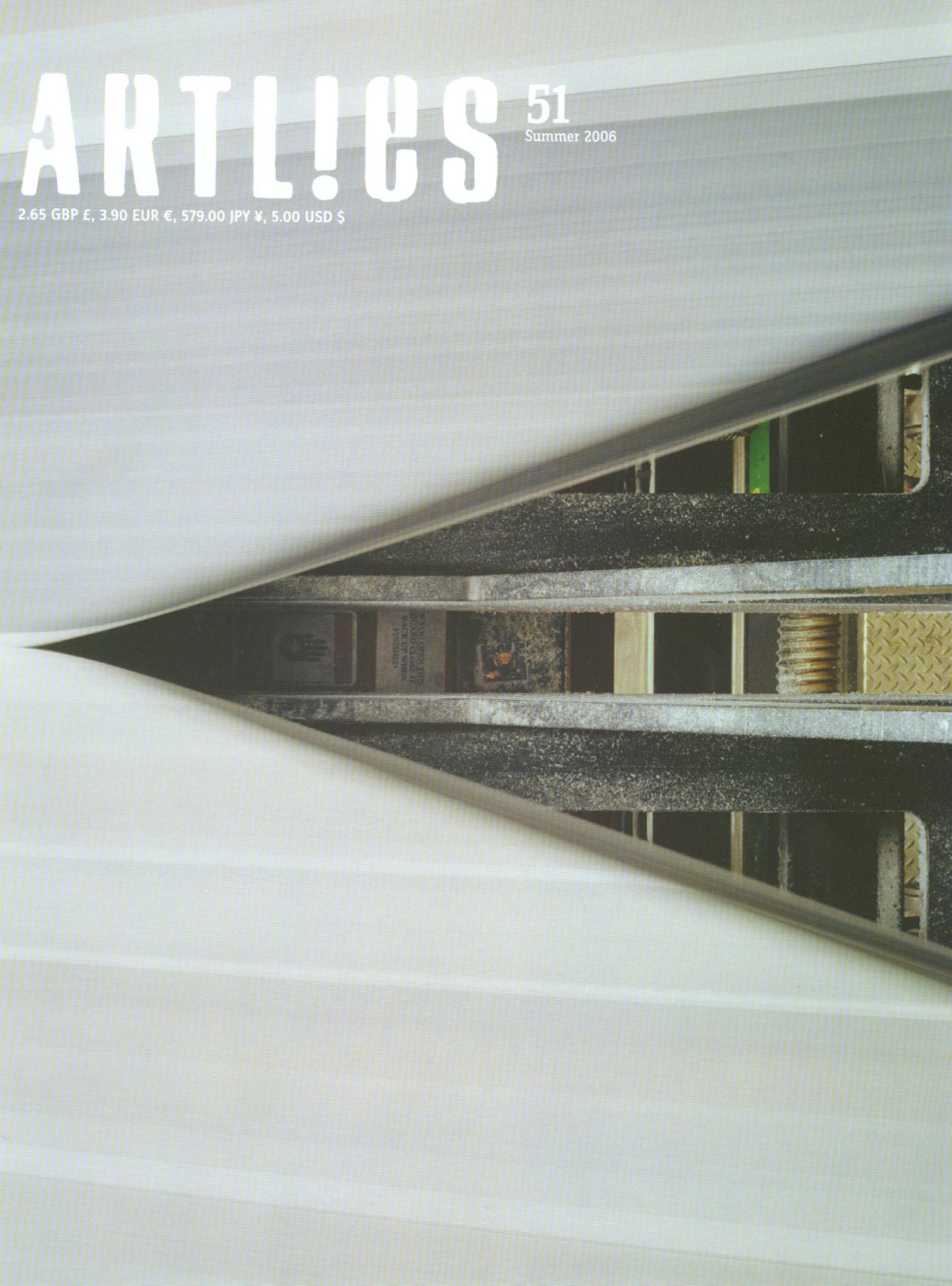


# ARTLIES

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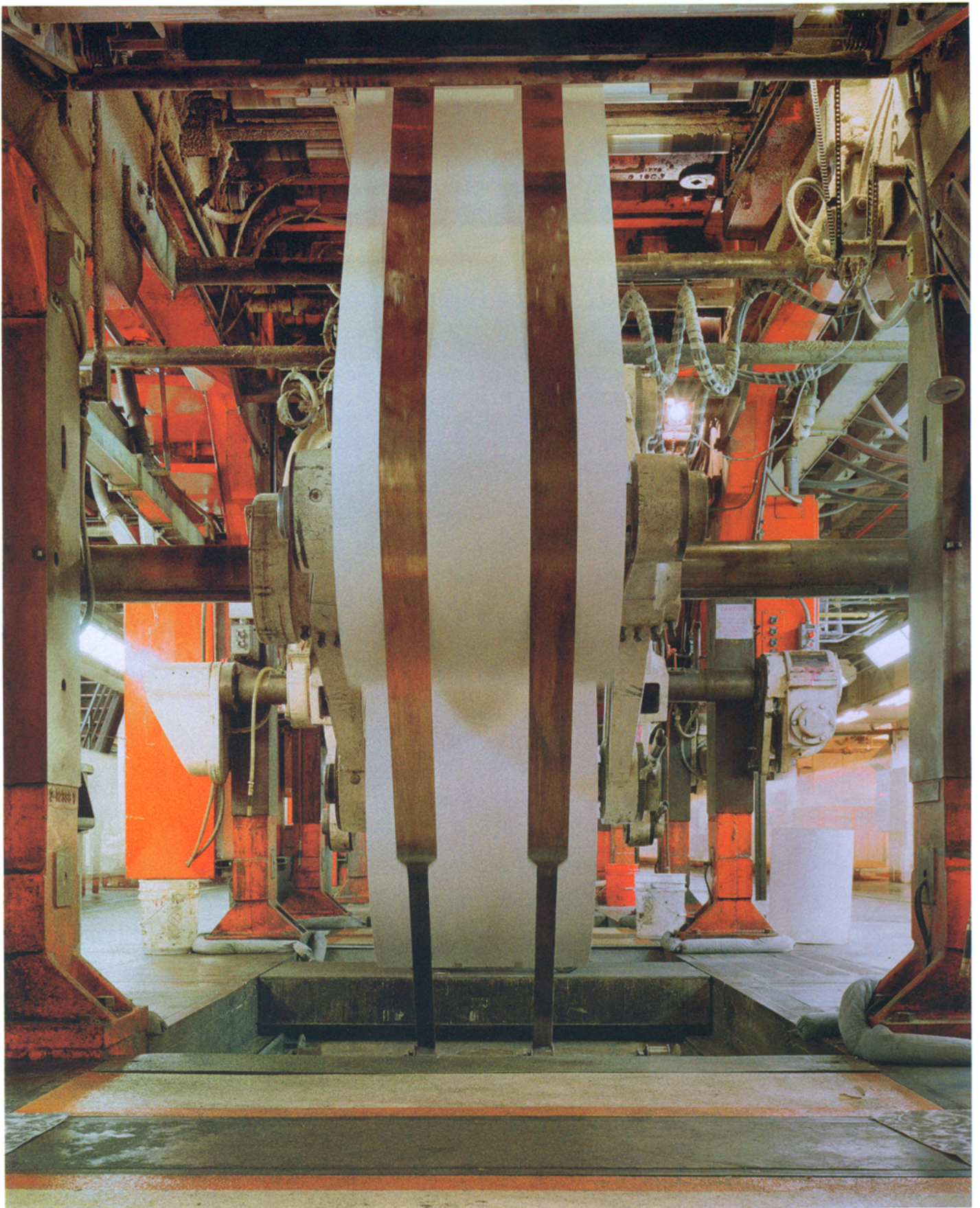
Summer 2006

2.65 GBP £, 3.90 EUR €, 579.00 JPY ¥, 5.00 USD \$



IF YOU OPEN THE DOOR PLEASE CLIMB TO THE BACK OF WHEN FINISHED





# Press Pictures

Caitlin Haskell

In December 2005, Mike Osborne began making photographs inside the *Austin American-Statesman* printing facility. Still in progress, his *Press Pictures* series comprises roughly a hundred images of the objects and processes contained within this industrial space. Marked by intense color and compelling geometries, Osborne's photographs comment on the physical production of language; more specifically, they document the manufacture of mass media texts, both verbal and pictorial. Within this language factory, inked rollers, colossal spools of paper and massive printing machines come to the fore as raw components of communication—components that have very little to do with subjects, objects or verbs.

Despite the literalness of images like 1 and 15 (all untitled), Osborne's *Press Pictures* are marked by the fundamental confusion of their most basic elements: ink, motion and text. Consider image 16, a stable composition consisting of three rectangular sections: a large wash of charcoal, irregular in its intensity, a narrow band of white above it and a large wash of light grey at the top.<sup>1</sup> Though there is little to observe in this image beyond the relationship of its tonalities, the photograph contains more linguistic content than any other in the series. Any pigment put on newsprint was necessitated by the presence of a word—a word that a writer was paid a few cents for and whose accuracy will determine the informational value of the page. But, photographed during its transmission from author to public, this word whirs past mutely, without communicative merit. We are accustomed to such distortions when they happen digitally—when words turn into ones and zeros—but *Press Pictures* demonstrates temporary oscillations between communicative states in a purely mechanical environment. It doesn't matter whether the words move at the speed of light or at a few hundred feet per second. Once they have surpassed the speed of perception, we have lost access to them—at least in a state that depends on resemblance for recognition. Paradoxically, we return to a pre-photographic moment: a time when images could not keep pace with life.

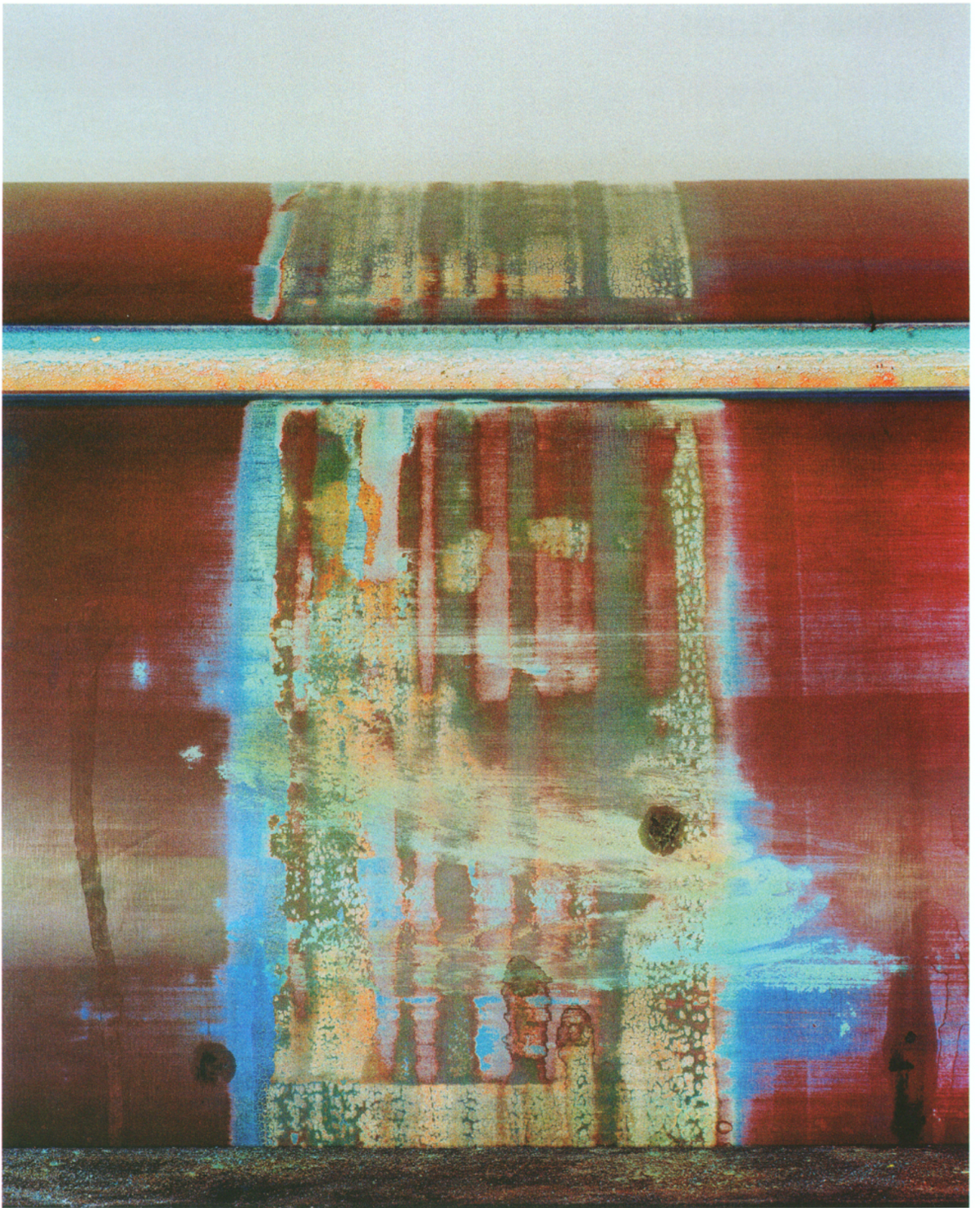
But with what, specifically, must a photograph keep pace? Roland Barthes famously found photography a remarkable medium because it is "only perceived verbalized."<sup>2</sup> Verbalized perception, however, depends upon the objects in a photograph being presented recognizably, which is only sometimes the case in Osborne's work. Verbalization gets blocked by speed and scale in *Press Pictures*, as the images recover only their subjects' most basic properties. At this accelerated tempo and magnified degree, there is little difference between the unstructured pigments in 11 and 6, neither of which is perceived in a state of verbalization more developed than "red" and "wet," or "stripes" and "triangle."

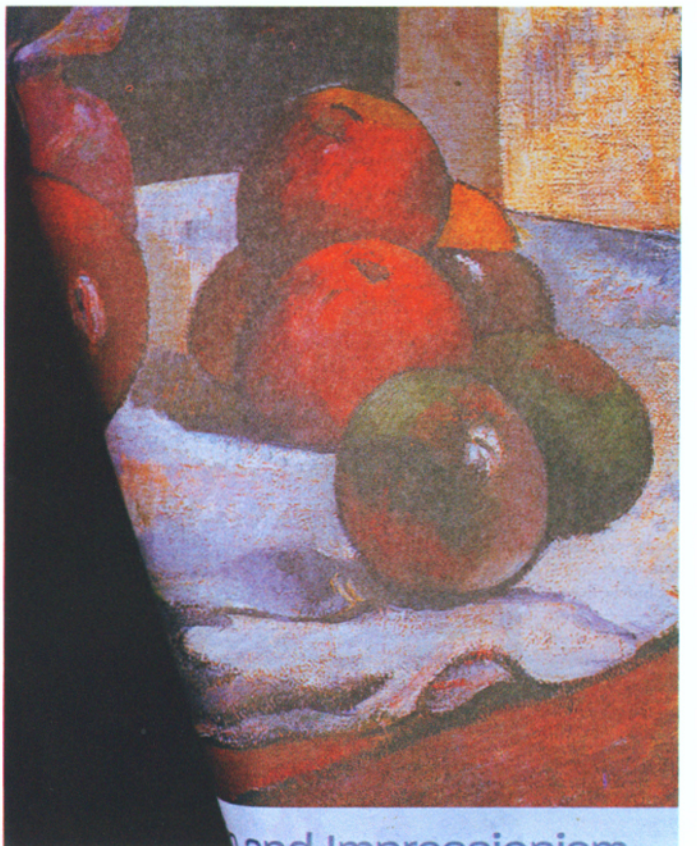
Perhaps a bit of melancholy comes with knowing that the ink in image 16 was once structurally significant, or that the ink in 2 will become meaningful—but not to us. This somber frustration is a marker of communication denied—our inability to recode a crude state. From this vantage, printed language appears to be the recovery of information through remediation. Osborne's photographs are both a tool of vision and a stab at recoding—a hope that faster eyes (organic or otherwise) can recover reconcilability from a stream of lost meaning.

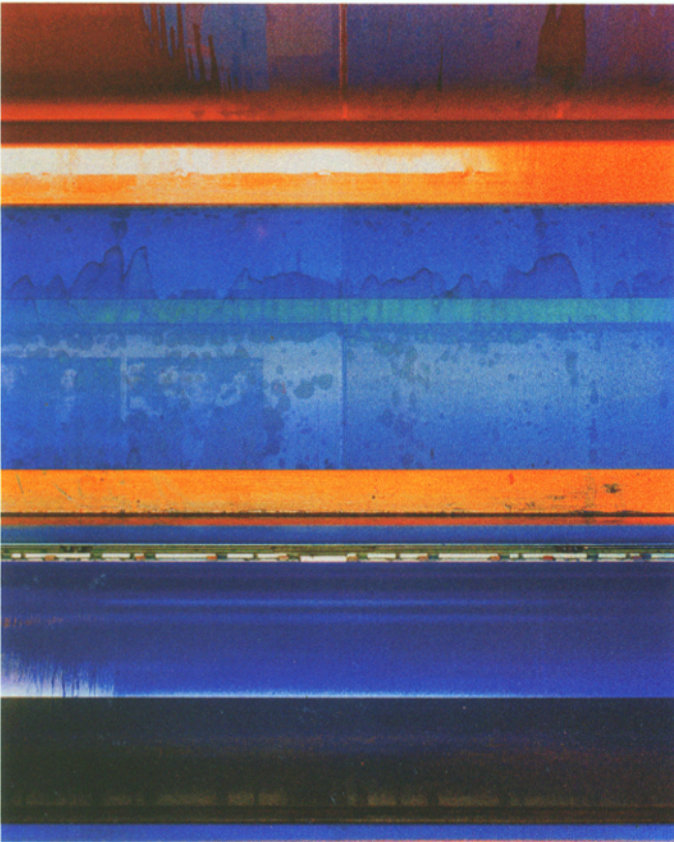
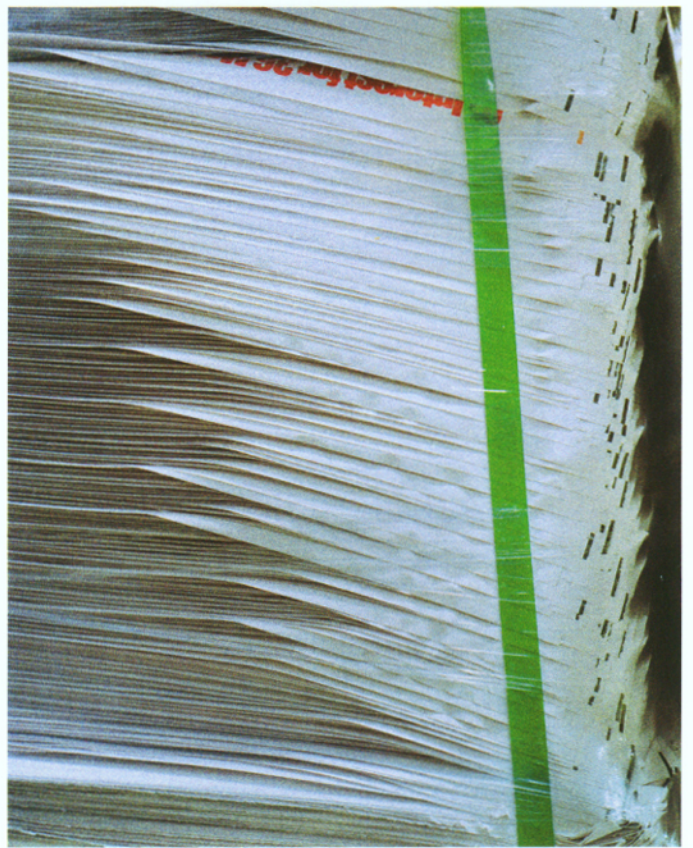
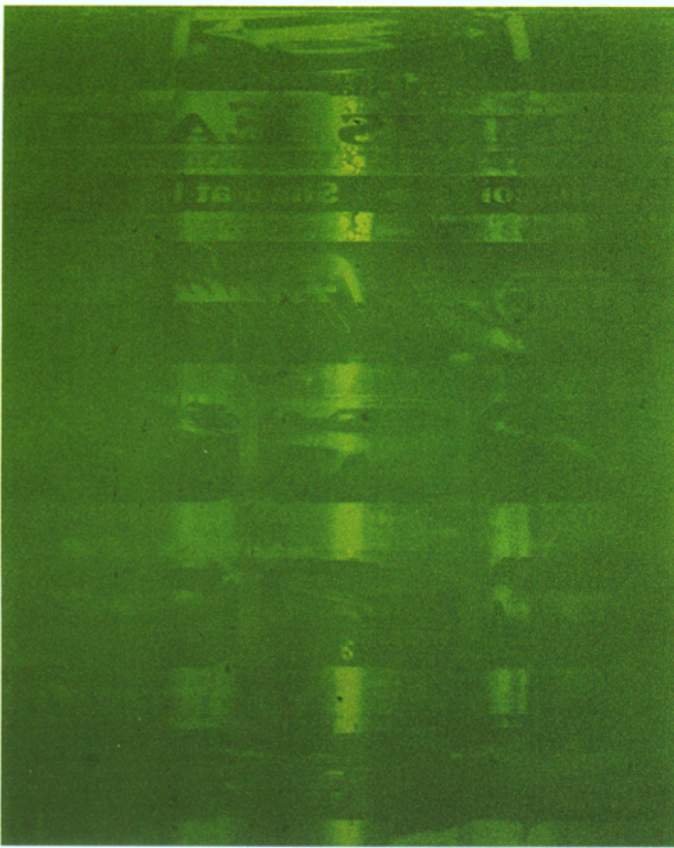
*Image 1 appears on page 22; image 2 on page 24; images 3–6 on page 25 (clockwise from upper left); images 7–10 on page 26 (clockwise from upper left); image 11 on page 27; image 12–15 on page 28 (clockwise from upper left); and image 16 on page 29.*

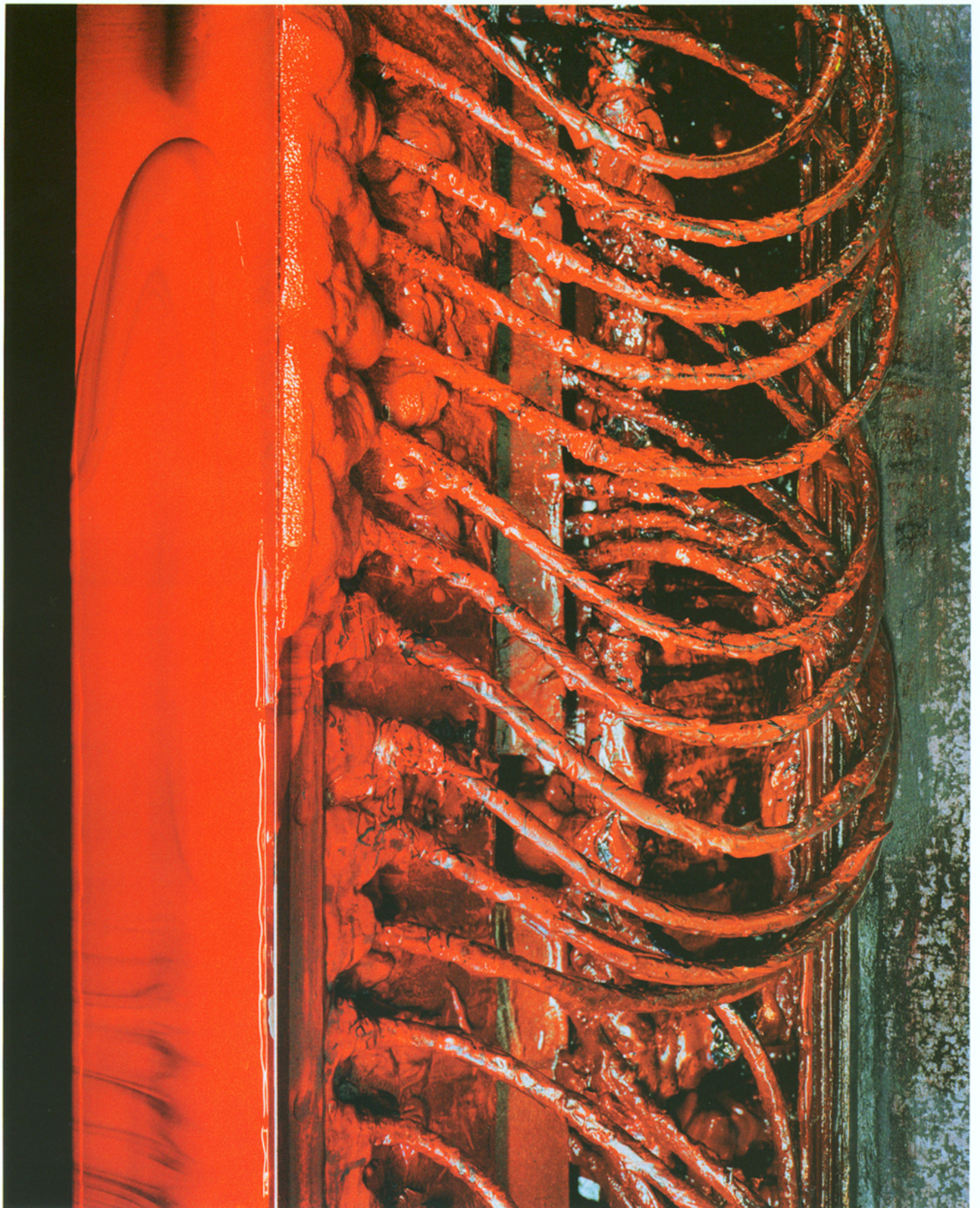
1 The word "wash" implies a painterly technique and as such begs for an explanation of Osborne's process. Within 16 we see the results of the rotary off-set lithographic process presented through a hybrid of photographic and inkjet media. Though the image looks something like a watercolor, Osborne's inkjet printing method applies pigment in such a way that the image rests on the surface of its support as opposed to permeating its fibers in the way that a chromogenic print does.

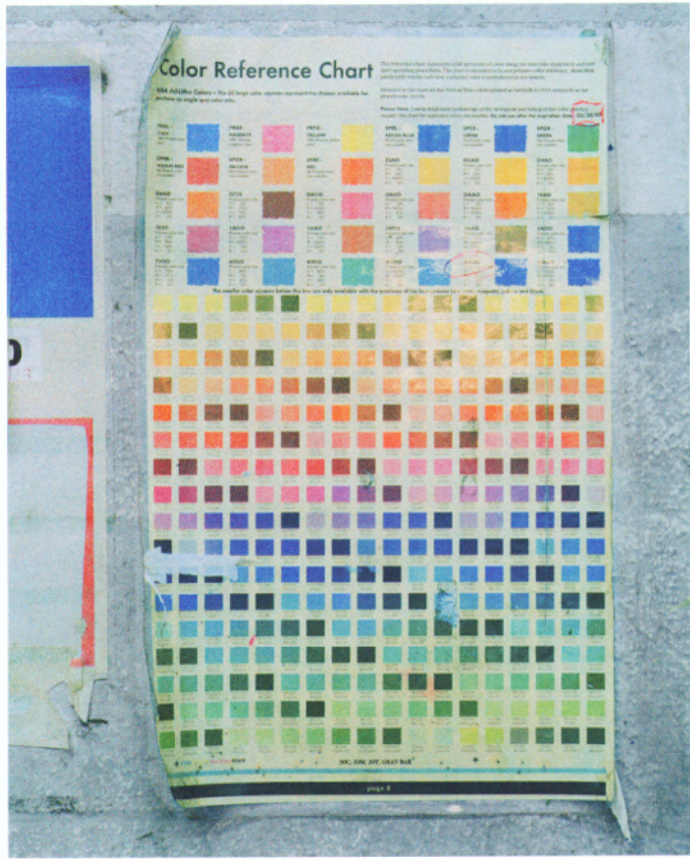
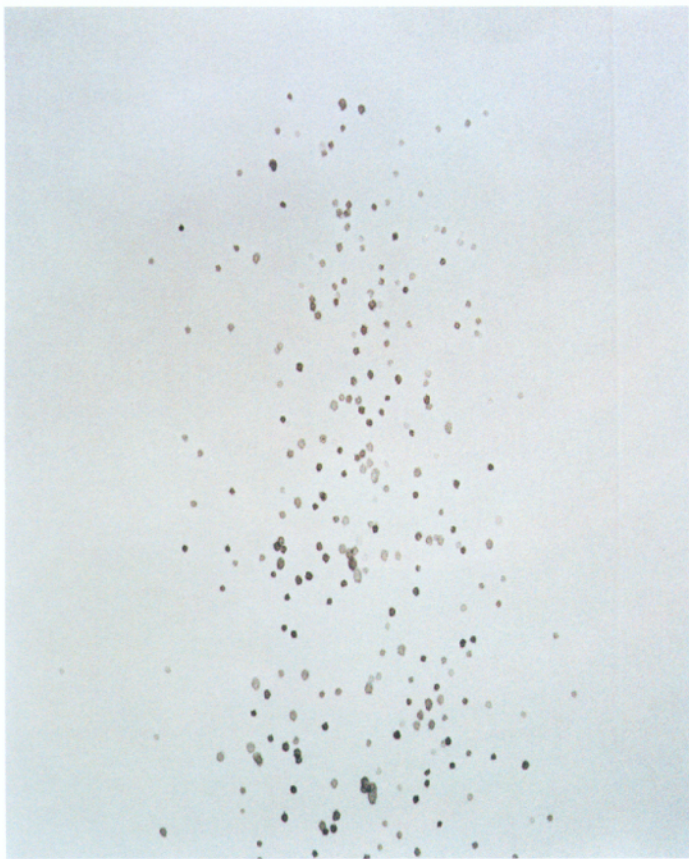
2 Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," *Image–Music–Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York, 1977) 28. "...the photograph is verbalized the very moment it is perceived; better, it is only perceived verbalized (if there is a delay in verbalization, there is disorder in perception ...). From this point of view, the image—grasped immediately by an inner metalanguage, language itself—in actual fact has no denoted state, is immersed for its very social existence in at least an initial layer of connotation, that of the categories of language."











## Spies and Spymasters

The NSA's wiretapping program is among the government secrets uncovered in James Rosen's book.

BY WALTER DIXON

**T**his explosive book opens with a scene that is at once amusing and yet also terrifying. President Bush is talking to the press on his father, who is described as the classic caricature of a man who has achieved success in the business world through a series of acquisitions of other people's companies. "Some of 'em" is a common expression, but it is not a common word, and it is not a common sight. In these regards, the anecdote is like the one in both *Washington* and *Confessions*. "Paul Ryan," who once, very close to his resignation, began to cry as he said, "I'm not a saint and I'm not a hero," is now, James Rosen says, having become the new "Woodward and Bernstein" in the White House. The New York Times reported, for better or worse, the government's national security wiretapping program. And now he has produced an "all the President's Men" made exclusively from anonymous sources.

It is hard to see the great questions of the past 70 years here for should we Americans be willing to go to the extent of permitting such wiretapping and torture, to fight terrorism? Rosen doesn't seem to think it is his job to probe too deeply into this, he said, he appears to feel that if something is secret and interesting, it should be reported.

The case seems more pertinent to still national security operations. What should the press cover itself in deference to national security interests? And how much should we know from anonymous sources? The best way to begin to answer these questions is actually to read the book rather than depend on the table of contents (usually about 10, or 100, or 1,000).

The book of Rosen's reporting deals with the kind of intelligence gathering that is carried out by intelligence agencies like the CIA, the NSA, and the FBI. It is a book that is not only a history of the CIA, but also a history of the NSA, the FBI, and the CIA. It is a book that is not only a history of the CIA, but also a history of the NSA, the FBI, and the CIA. It is a book that is not only a history of the CIA, but also a history of the NSA, the FBI, and the CIA.

Walter Rosen, the president of the Aspen Institute, is the author of *Washington* and *Confessions*. He is the author of "Washington: An American Life" and is working on a biography of Eisenhower.





