

# MUSÉE

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE



## APR 9 GOTTFRIED JÄGER AND THE FOUNDERS OF GENERATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY | SOUS LES ÉTOILES GALLERY

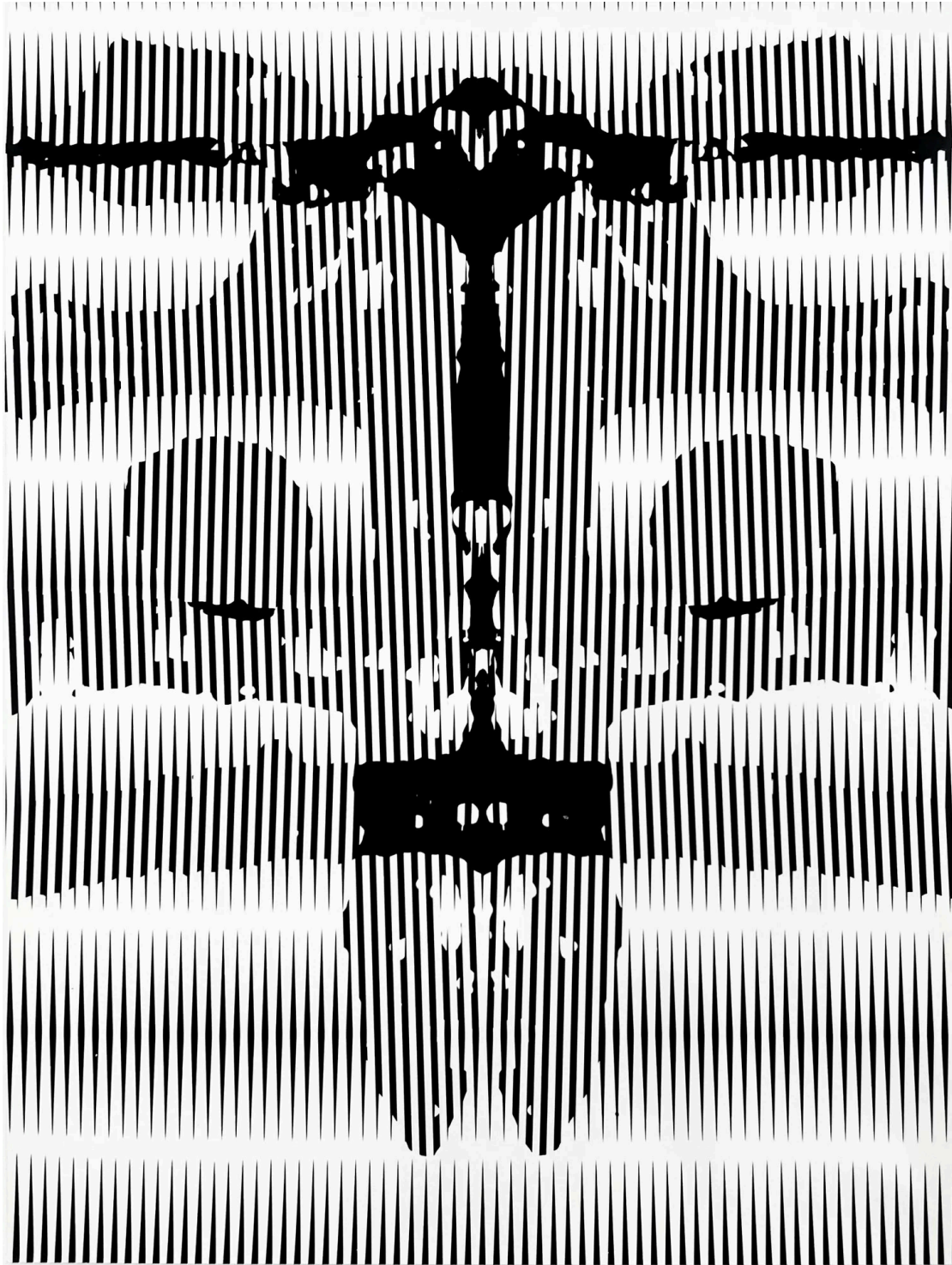
REVIEWS (/CULTURE/CATEGORY/REVIEWS)

Written by Maria Movsesyan



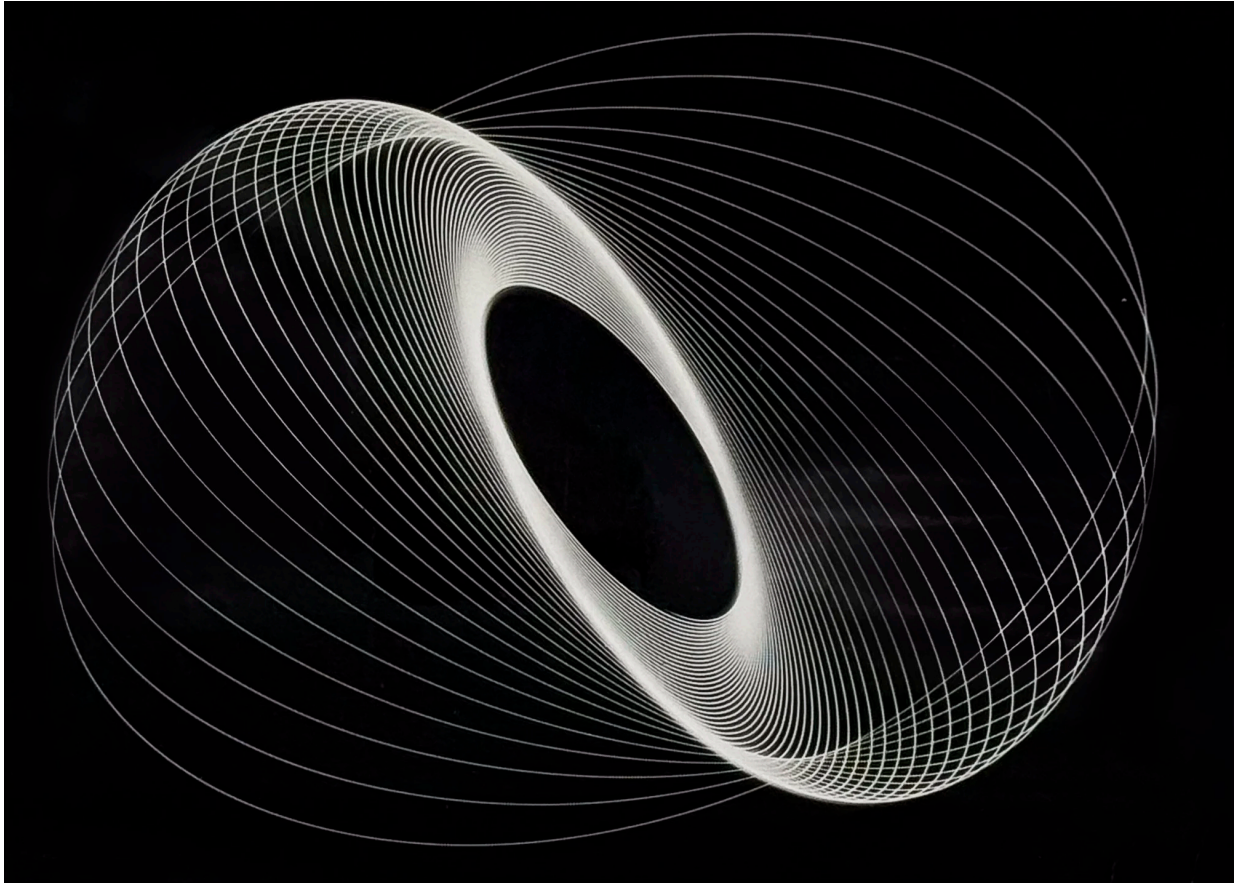
Gottfried Jäger, *Polarization 6/2/03, 1965*, 1965 | C-Print 7.6 x 6.4 in. GJ-POLA-166 | © Gottfried Jäger

On display through April 11, 2026, at Sous les Étoiles Gallery, Gottfried Jäger and the Founders of Generative Photography is a special exhibition exploring the history, philosophy and application of Jäger's theory of generative photography. Bringing together key works by early pioneers of the movement, the gallery highlights the influential creativity and procedural approaches that laid the foundations for new models of contemporary image-making. In addition to presenting works by other major figures in early generative photography, the exhibition places special focus on the project Pinhole Structures, widely regarded as Jäger's most renowned and influential series.



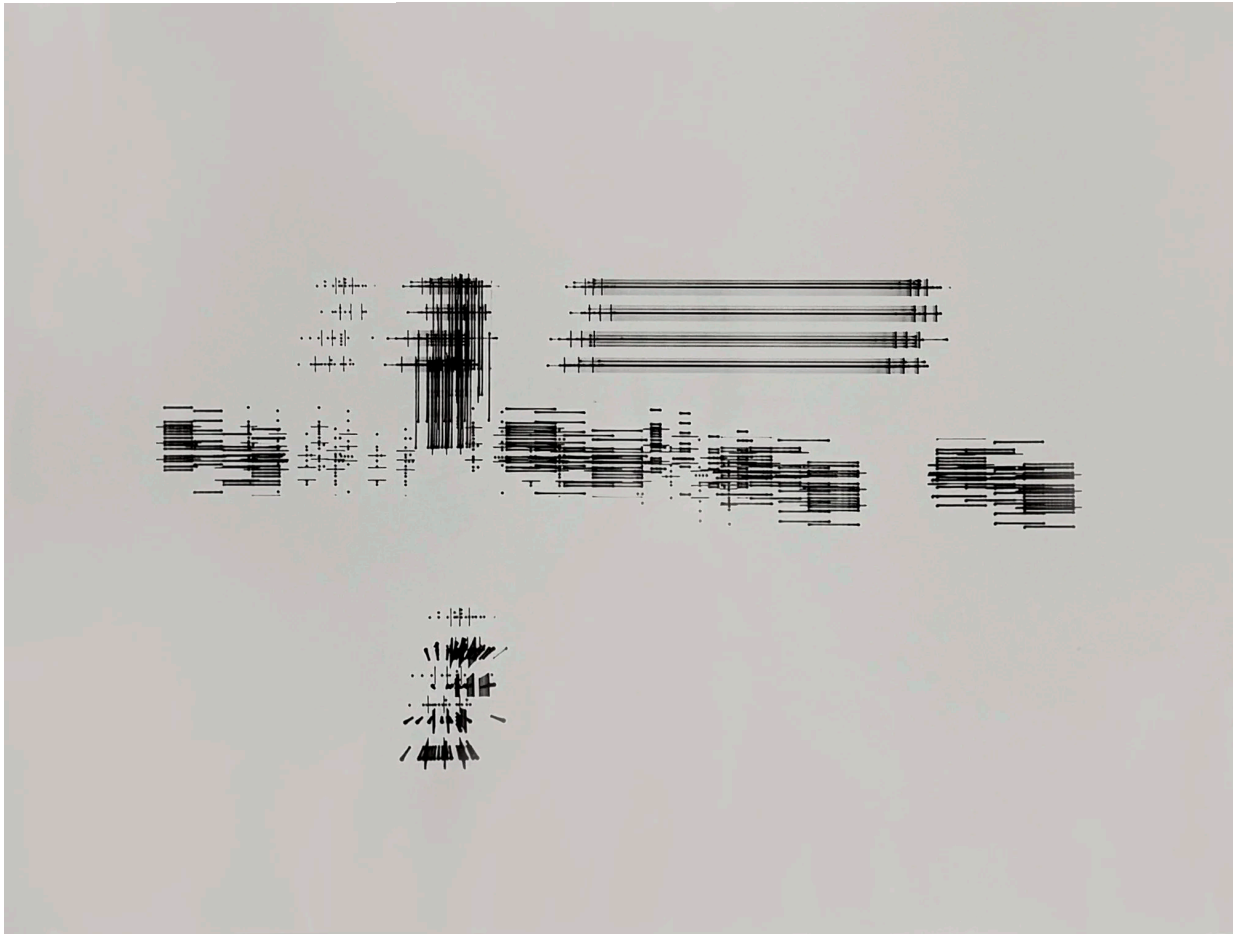
Gottfried Jäger, *Variation 2-161*, from the *crack series*, 1965 | Silver Gelatin Print 15 x 11.4 in. GJ-PSCO--000203 | © Gottfried Jäger

As a fundamental pillar of contemporary art, generative photography first emerged in the mid-20th century when photographers began experimenting with procedural systems, rigid rules and repetition instead of subjectivity. This methodology traded personal choice and creative spontaneity for strict process and constructive design, transforming the camera into a generative tool that could operate on prompted conditions rather than intuition or individual perspective alone. This experimentation asked the fundamental question: What images can we capture that we cannot see on our own?



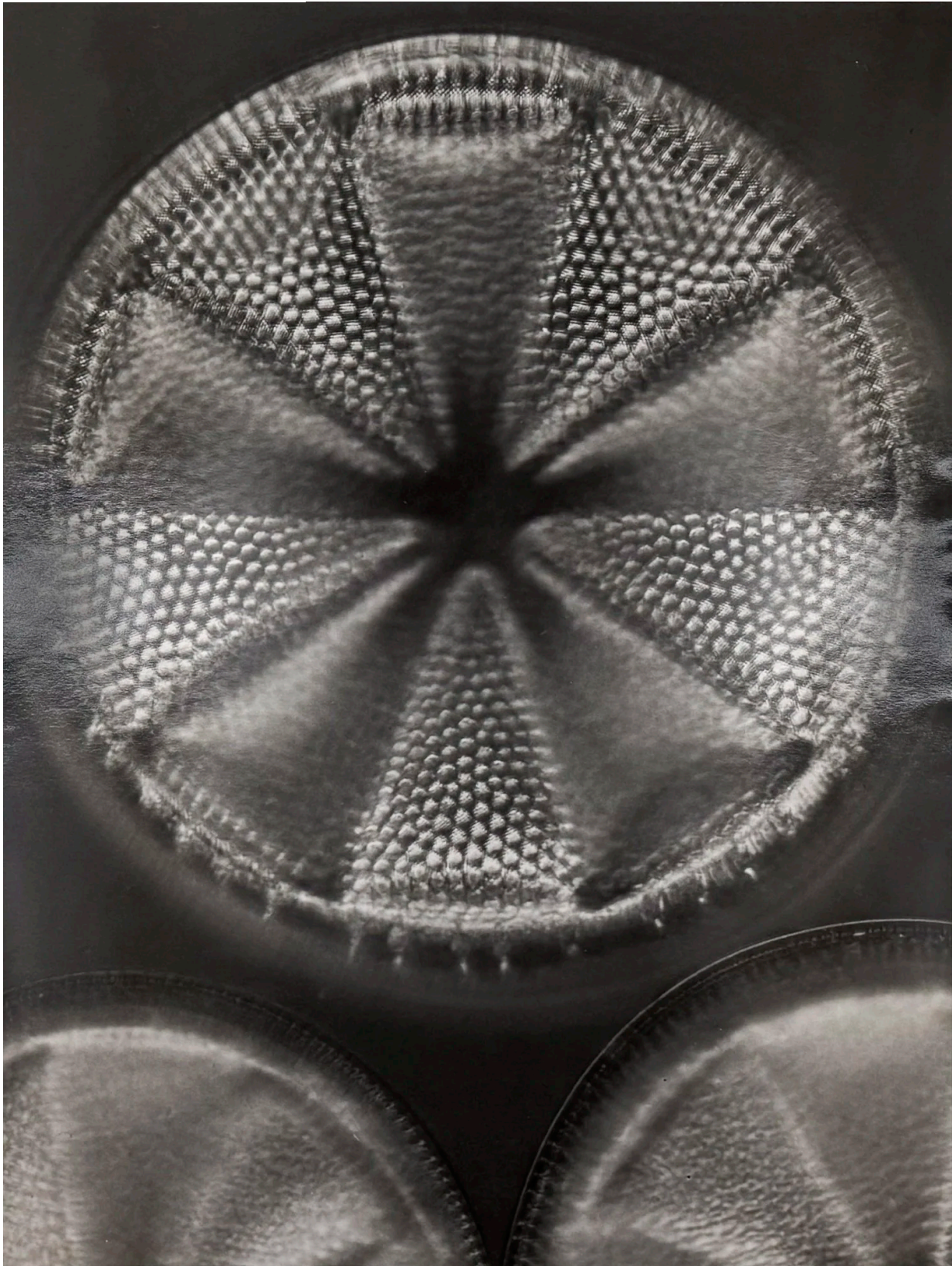
Peter Keetman, *Vibration Figure 990, Camera Luminogram (One-dimensional, damped oscillation; continuous exposure)*, 1951 | Silver gelatin baryta paper. Type 1, high gloss, n 6.7 x 9.12 in. PK2-000001 | © Peter Keetman

In 1968, Jäger coined the term “generative fotografie,” giving conceptual clarity and theoretical structure to this procedural tendency. The exhibition also features key figures associated with the movement, including Roger Humbert, Carl Strüwe, Heinrich Heidersberger, Peter Keetman, Hein Gravenhorst and Karl Martin Holzhäuser. Their practices established principles that Jäger later articulated in 1968. Each artist explored the application of seriality, automation and creative abstraction through analog methods long before the advent of modern computational technology. The works presented here demonstrate that generative photography was already well defined by both artists and theorists prior to the current technological era.



Roger Humbert, *Photogram Untitled*, 1965 | Glossy silver gelatin baryta paper, unique print. Type T19 16 x 12 in. RH2-000002 | © Roger Humbert

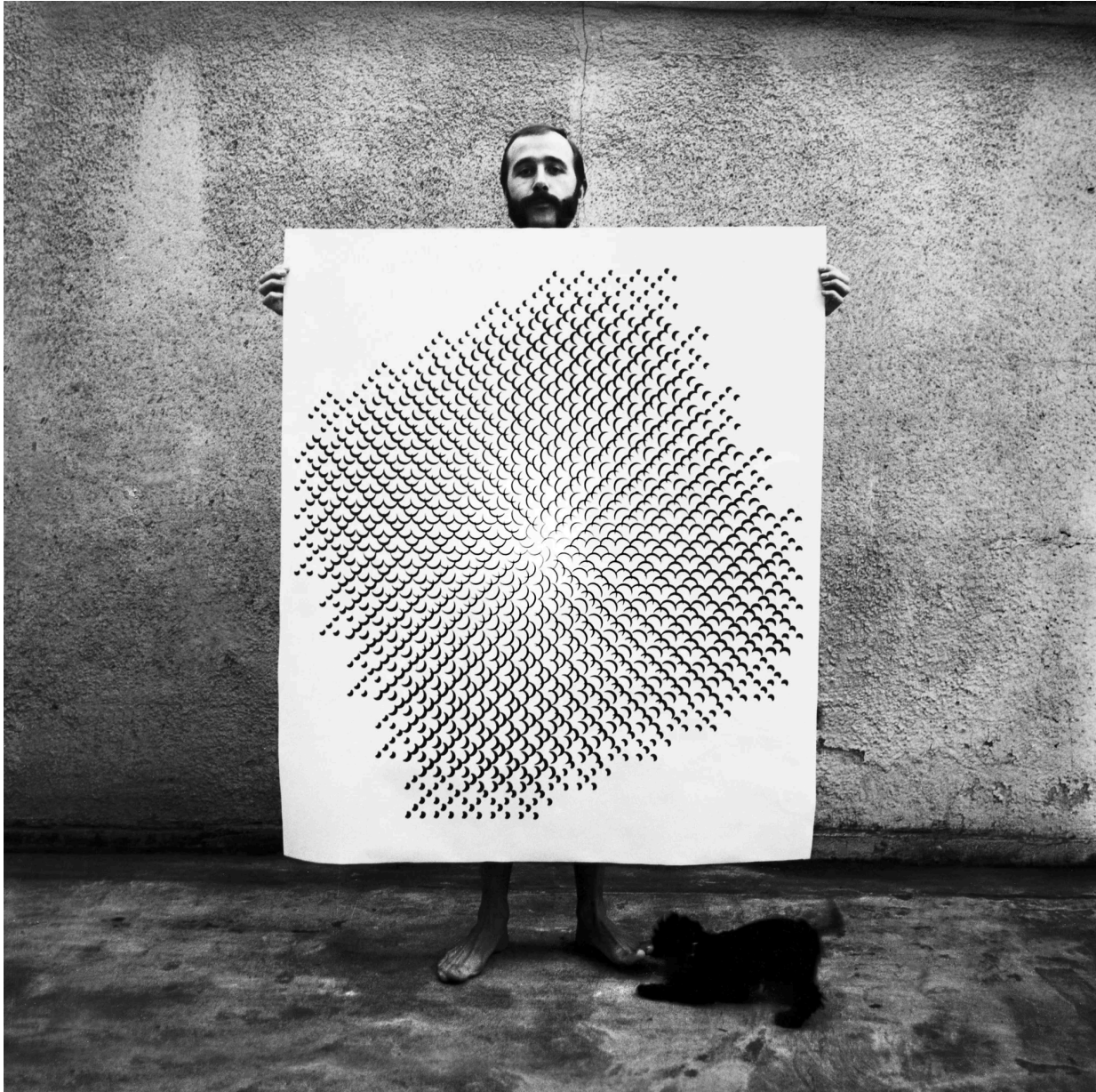
Artists such as Humbert and Strüwe achieved abstraction by isolating natural or material forms until they became autonomous visual systems. Heidersberger produced rhythmograms through precisely controlled light movement and exposure, establishing a mechanical and time-based generation of form. Keetman photographed the Volkswagen factory, transforming industrial aesthetics into serial configurations. Gravenhorst explored typology and sequence as organizational principles. Uniting these diverse practices and methods is a decisive shift away from subjectivity toward procedural authorship — forms generated through controlled structure and technological variables. Photography, in this case, is not about a single image or act of expressive capturing; it is a product of computational frameworks shaped by procedural or algorithmic inputs.



Carl Strüwe, *Microphotography*, From the series "Forms of Construction and Movement": *Diatom with extraordinary, mathematically precise structure*, 2000:1, 1928, 1928 | Later silver gelatin baryta paper print. Type III, white, glossy, heavy card stock 15.1 x 11.7 in. CS-000002 | © Carl Strüwe

While this exhibition examines the history of generative photography, it dually serves as a meditation on the expansive capabilities that emerge when artistic vision is paired with technological application. But more importantly, it also stands as a

solemn reminder of the importance of maintaining human agency in the current age of artificial intelligence — technology's greatest potential lies in enhancing the capacities of human creativity, not replacing it. After all, the human mind is an enigma, capable of pushing the boundaries of its own imagination by creating tools to accomplish paradigm-shifting innovations. Although this collection largely spotlights the power of technology at centerstage of the contemporary creative theater, it equally underscores the role of the backstage team: the artists who envisioned new possibilities for the show at hand.



Gottfried Jäger, Ursel Jäger: *Gottfried Jäger präsentiert seine Lochblendenstruktur* (G. J. presents his Pinhole Structure) 3.8.14 F 2.6, 1967, 1968, 1967 | Printed in 1979 Gelatin Silver Print 20 x 20 in. | © Gottfried Jäger