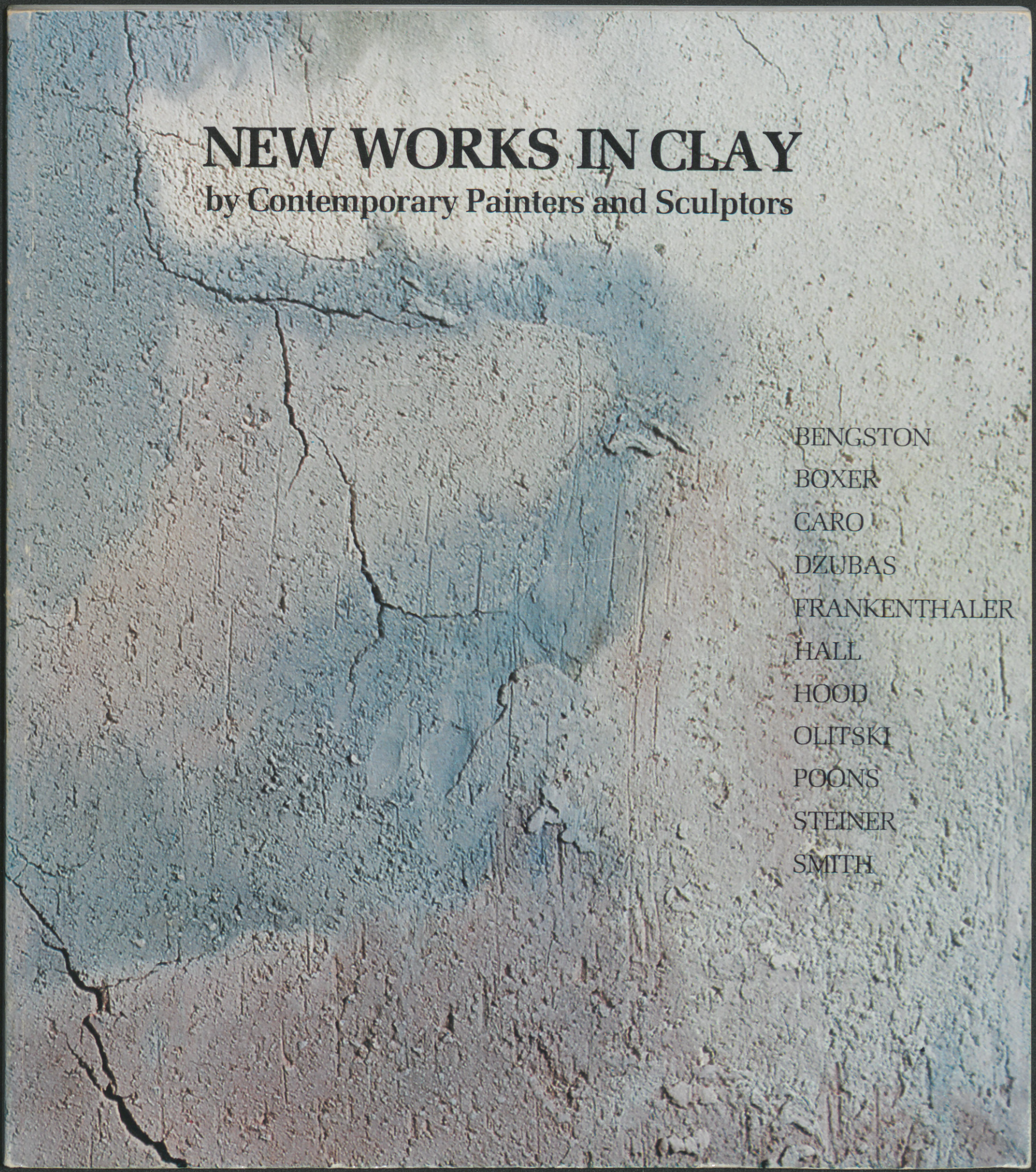

NEW WORKS IN CLAY
by Contemporary Painters and Sculptors
BENGSTON
BOXER
CARO
DZUBAS
FRANKENTHALER
HALL
HOOD
OLITSKI
POONS
STEINER
SMITH

Dorothy Hood

Born in Bryan, Texas in 1919, Dorothy Hood has lived and worked in Houston, Texas since 1961. She received her formal art training at Rhode Island School of Design and the Art Students League in New York.

From 1941 to 1961, while traveling in Latin America and living in Mexico, Hood became friends with Jose Clemente Orozco, Mathias Goeritz, and Pablo Neruda and was friendly also with the surrealist group including her friend Remedios Varo from Spain. She became interested in Taoism and Zen.

Her paintings since the late sixties have been, for the most part, oil on large canvas. They are a realization of self, a psychological focusing translated into line, color, and space.

Hood had not worked in clay before the Syracuse project. In November of 1974 she came to the University for three days, being the first artist to work in the project. She modeled a couple of dozen small sculptures which, although related to her drawings, were rather more literal. These she later abandoned.

After traveling in Europe, Mexico, and within the United States, she returned to Syracuse, staying two weeks in August, 1975. In preparation for her experience, Hood had looked at clay, read about it and decided that the firing process of Raku very much fit into her psyche. Raku is a low-temperature technique of firing porous, low-bisque fired pottery, usually bearing a lead glaze. The technique involves putting the piece into a pre-heated kiln with tongs and removing it from the kiln—again with tongs—while the clay is still glowing hot. Raku developed as part of the Japanese tea ceremony (an aspect of Zen): allowing "the spirit to flow between form and maker."

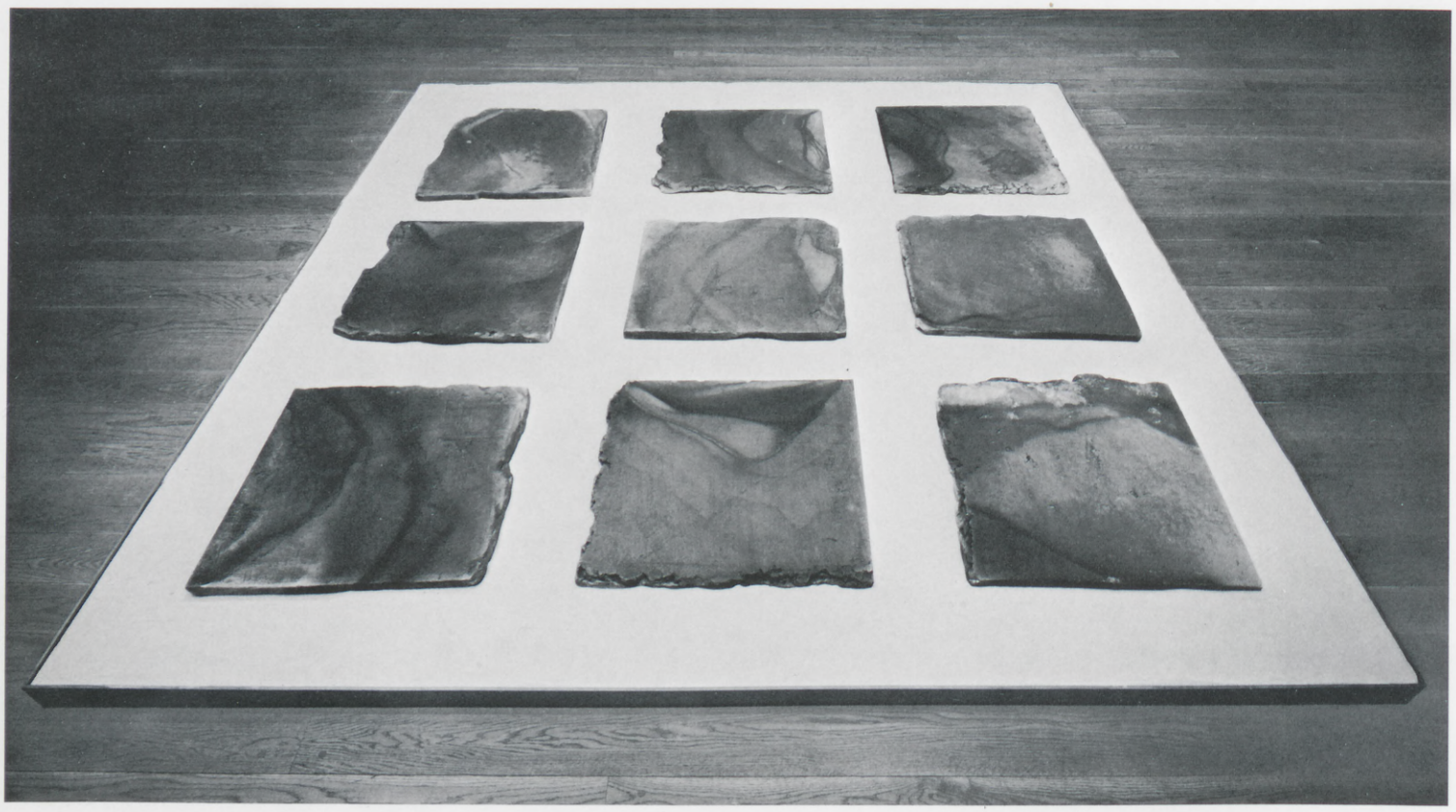
Hood also brought sketches for a series of slabs to be arranged in a circle, a motif suggested by ancient Mexican art. As her concept evolved, the circle arrangement was abandoned as too "magical." The slabs were later laid on sand in a square format in the sculpture, *Time Shift, Flame Shift.*

The clay body and the raku-like firing process were developed by John Fonda, graduate student in ceramics at Syracuse University. Eleven slabs were executed, slowly dried and bisque-fired. For the final firing, a kiln, constructed outdoors of high-fired bricks, was built around a vertically standing slab. It was then heated to over 1000 degrees Fahrenheit and combinations of wet and dry sawdust were piled over the slab. The highly porous surfaces absorbed the carbon, recording the contours of the successive sawdust piles.

With the assistance of Fonda, Hood was able to control the color of the pieces and their range in value. Weather, fineness of the sawdust, and wetness or dryness of the sawdust, the temperature of the slabs, all played a part in the development of the patterns on the slabs.

Along with her Raku pieces, Hood completed three other sculptures consisting of slabs using colored clay imbedded and drawn inside the larger slab. In this series, she worked closely with Jo Buffalo and Margie Hughto. All were constructed of the same clays, yet variations in temperature and fire determined the final color and surface of the pieces. *Tiara Way* utilizes low-fire to maintain whiteness in the clay and pink from the iron oxide, grays from the iron chromate, and blue from the cobalt. The other two sculptures, *Floral Footfalls I and Floral Footfalls II,* were salt-fired to bring the pieces into an evenness of grays and browns and produce a slight sheen.

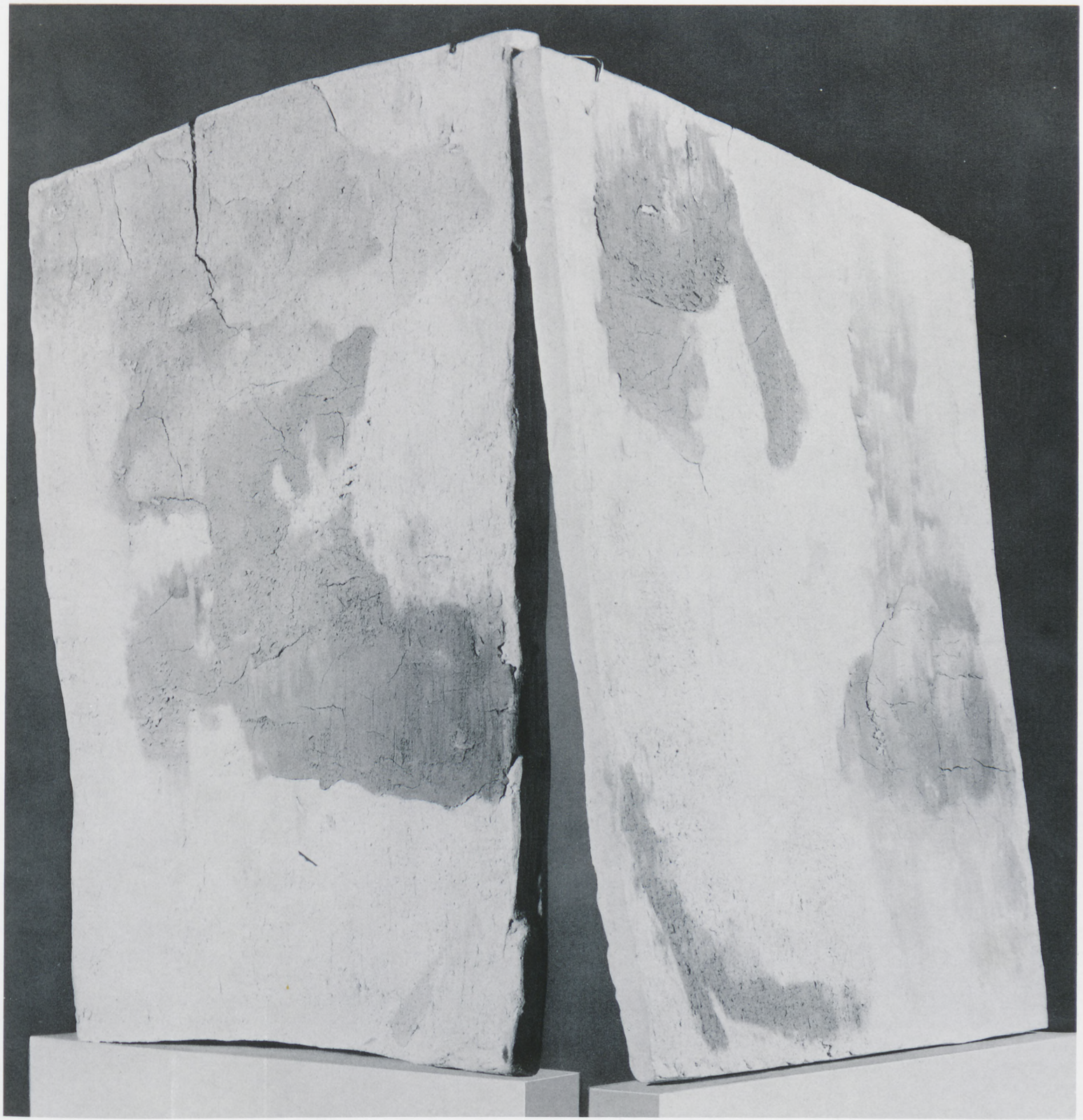
Working with clay was a continual process of discovery for Dorothy Hood. *"To put hands in clay for the first time and to find that was as natural as breathing—a primordial instinct—a discovery, earth-involved and direct, easing to the psyche even beyond the power of painting, gathering together with the earth, which is clay, the aspirations and the senses which often lose out to the complexities of civilization. From the first, the clay became for me a medium expressing Time. I have yet to know why."*



40. Dorothy Hood
Flame Shift, Time Shift, 1975
120 x 120 x 4

41. Dorothy Hood
Detail, Flame Shift, Time Shift, (detail), 1975
27½ x 27 x 2

42. Dorothy Hood
Floral Footfalls II, 1975
24 x 24 x 31



43. Dorothy Hood
Tiara Way, 1975
24 x 24 x 31