

# MASSACHUSETTS

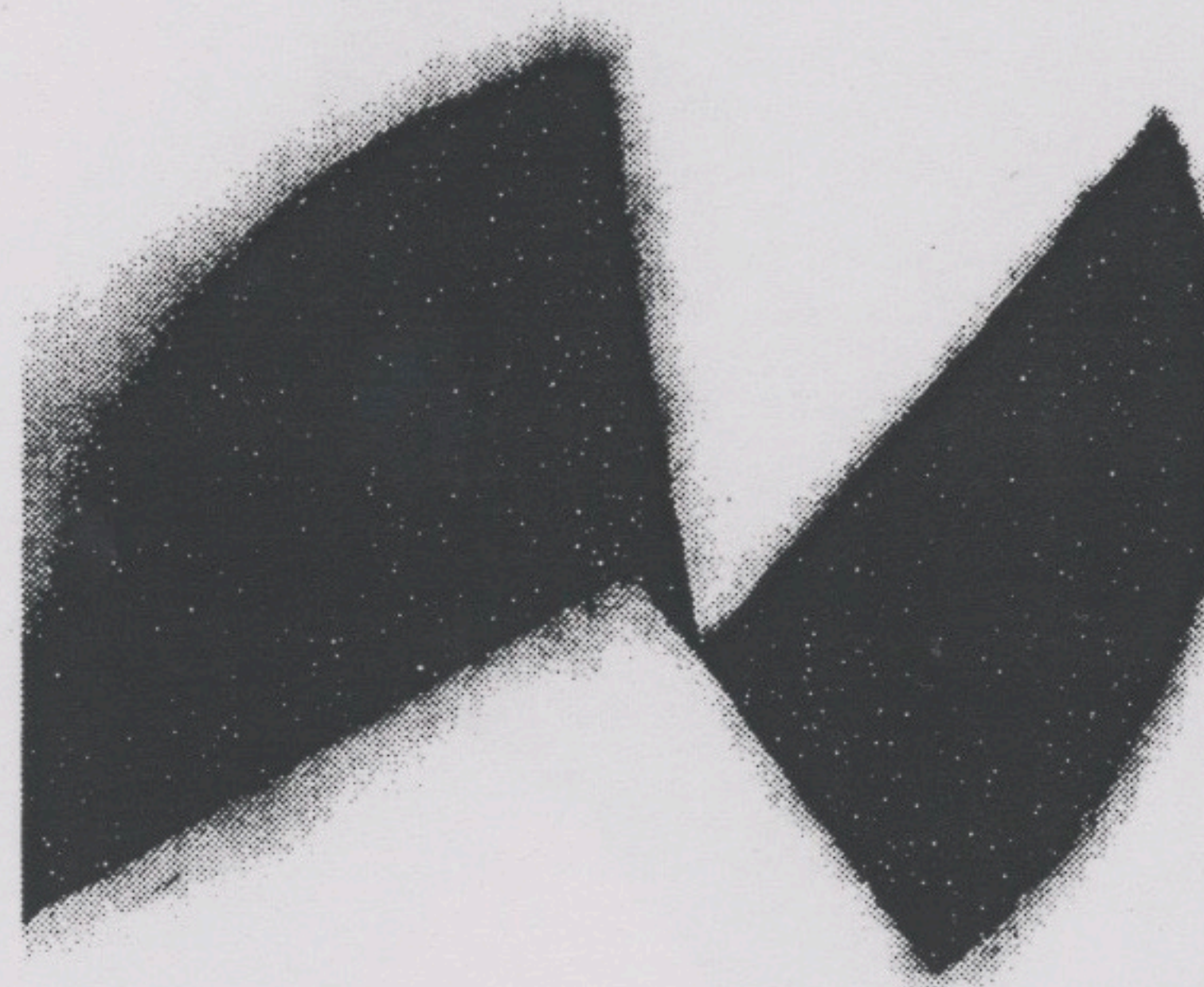
AkIn Gallery/Boston  
Nan Tull: *New Work*

Nan Tull's drawings and paintings demand examination through both their graphic presence and their power as objects. Five large charcoal drawings, three large oil paintings, and a long wall of 12 x 12" encaustic paintings comprise this solo exhibition of the artist's recent work.

Always, Tull presents the object, and in this respect her sensibilities are more keenly attuned to the sculptor's than the painter's. Her flat works do not strain for three-dimensionality in terms of chiaroscuro, physical projections, or atmospheric reading of space. Rather, their affinity to singular objects with self-contained integrity invites comparison to Brancusi, or to ancient musical instruments and monumental vessels.

The tension of these works depends not so much on a taut interlocking of figure and ground as on the point on which the object rests on a conceptual base. In *Point*, the object, placed low in the vertical paper's field, pulls against itself with centrifugal force. Two unequal halves, rounded and sliced, touch uneasily and momentarily. The two shapes attract and repel themselves toward, then away from the vast space beyond their own boundaries, only temporarily contained by the paper's edges.

Positioning is key, too, in the drawing, *Sway*. Moving in a slow diagonal from its narrow stem-like base to a fanned-out arc of solid, heavy black that crowds the paper's upper right corner, the object sets its own slow rhythm in an impending sway toward the opposite direction. At the same time, the big black shape swells and breathes in motion borne of its forceful containment.



Nan Tull—*Movements #27: Point*

Despite the ghosts of stable vertical grids in the three large oils from the artist's *American Garden* series, the big shapes refuse to be stilled. Like bulky forms suspended in a mobile, they tumble through space, both challenging and acknowledging the points of connection. These nameless objects suggest shell formations (again, the link is made to musical instruments, hollowed out for sound), vessels, human organs, gourds, and even shields or garments.

Color in the large paintings is chalky and subdued. Black is used as color, too, with density and weight. The smaller paintings are thicker in surface, with a greater concentration of primary hue. At times the objects turn emblematic, but at their best, they too are given thickness and volume as objects perched tensely on an invisible base or breaking out of an underlying grid to push forth into space.

Movement and time, as controlled and shaped by visual pacing, are key to all the works. The implication of sound, possible as a function of the objects themselves, or of their colliding and falling in space, is also integral to the works and contributes to their singularly powerful and poetic nature.

—Meredith Fife Day