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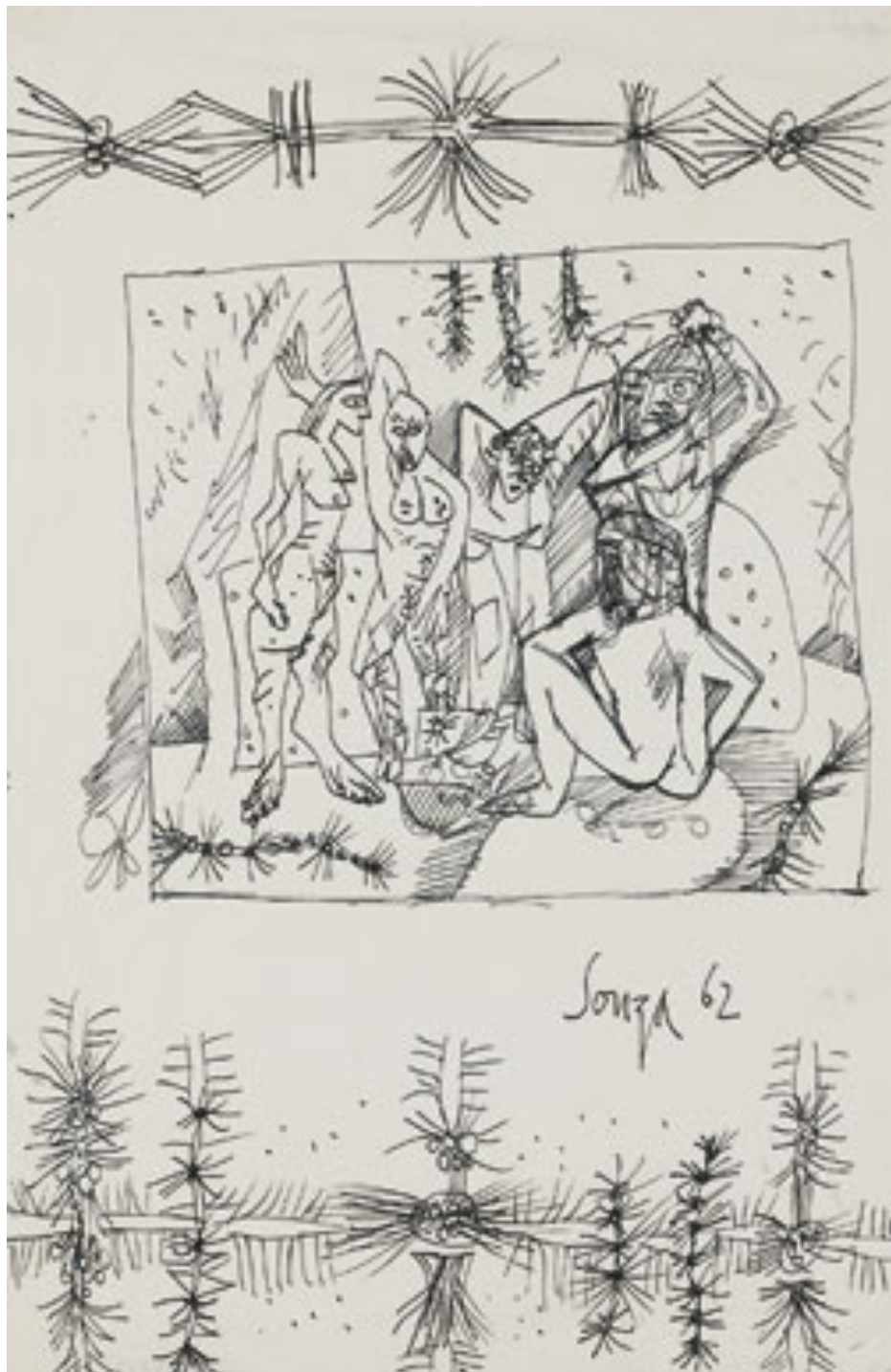
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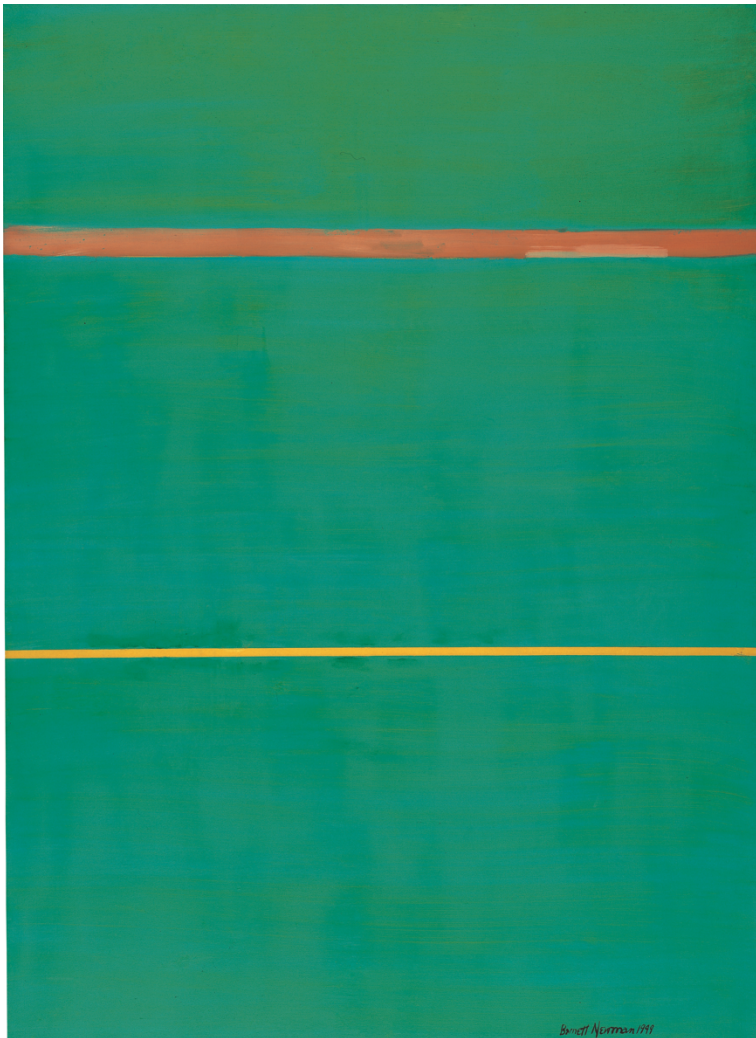
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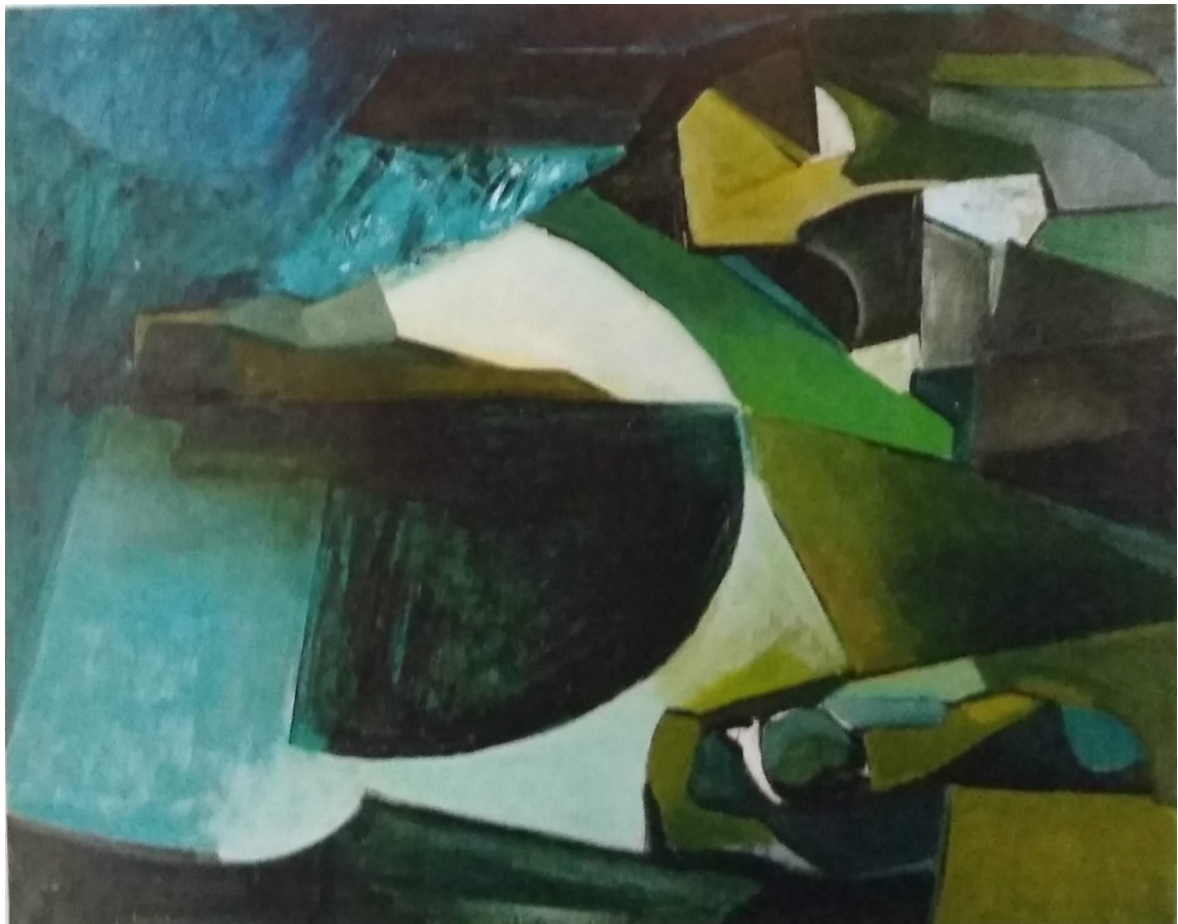
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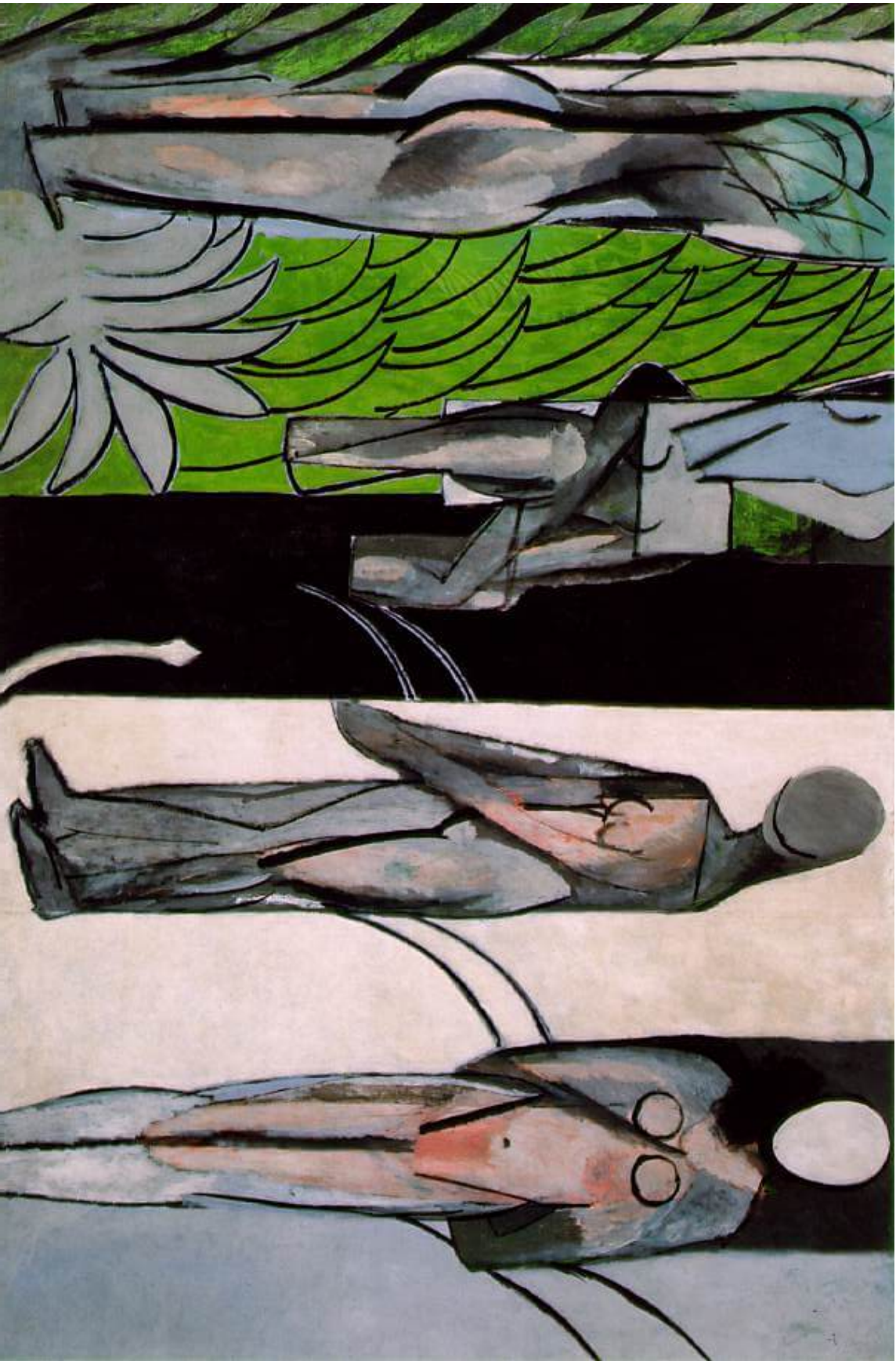
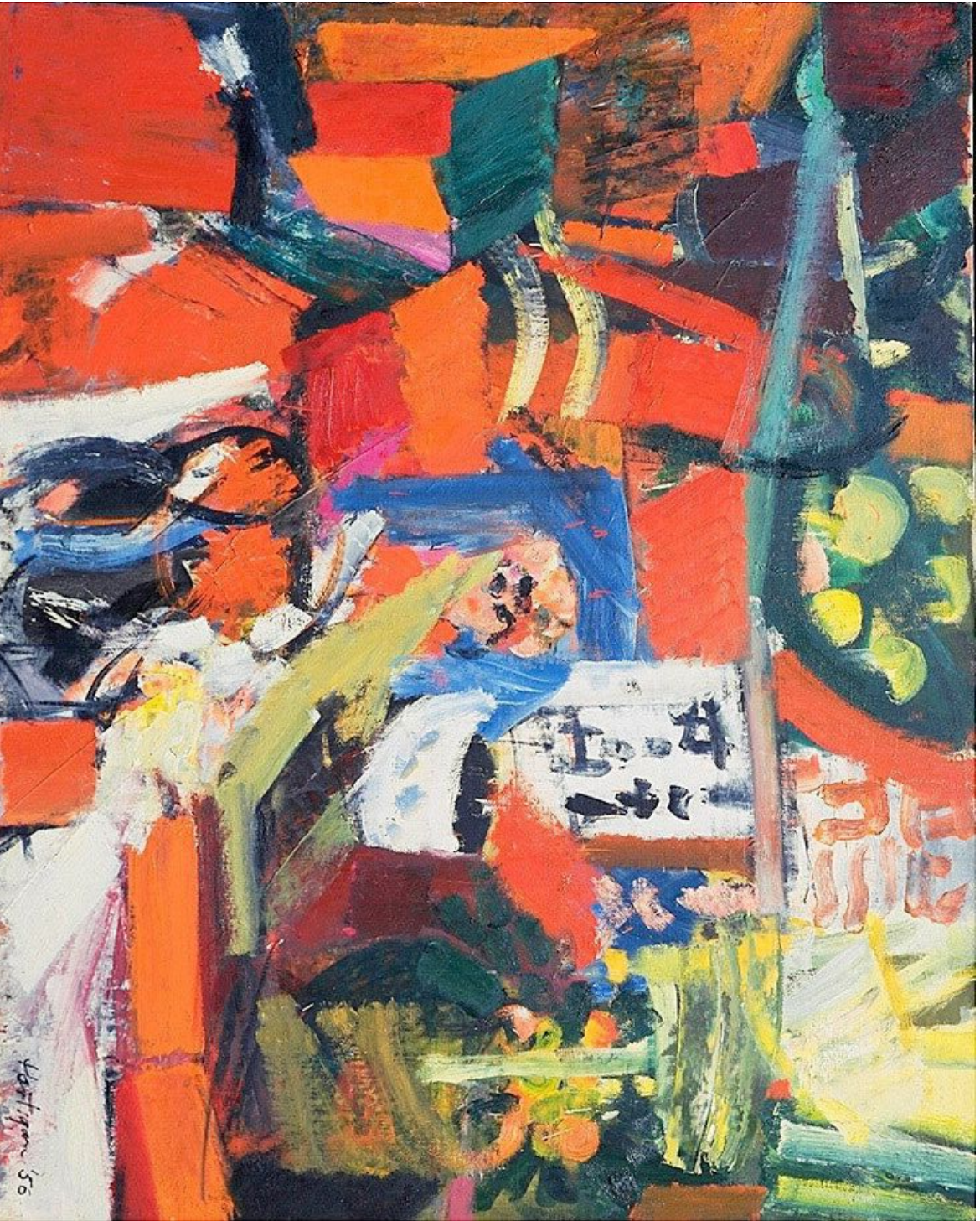


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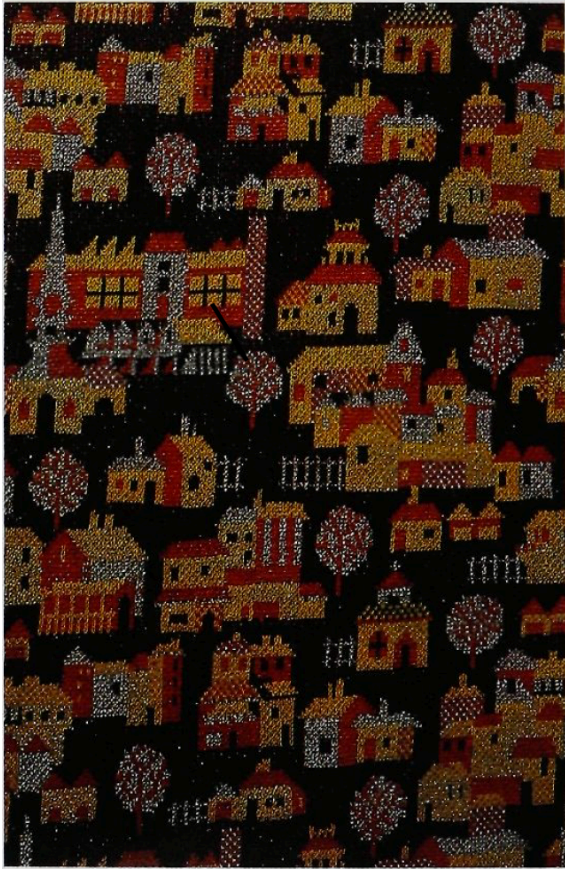


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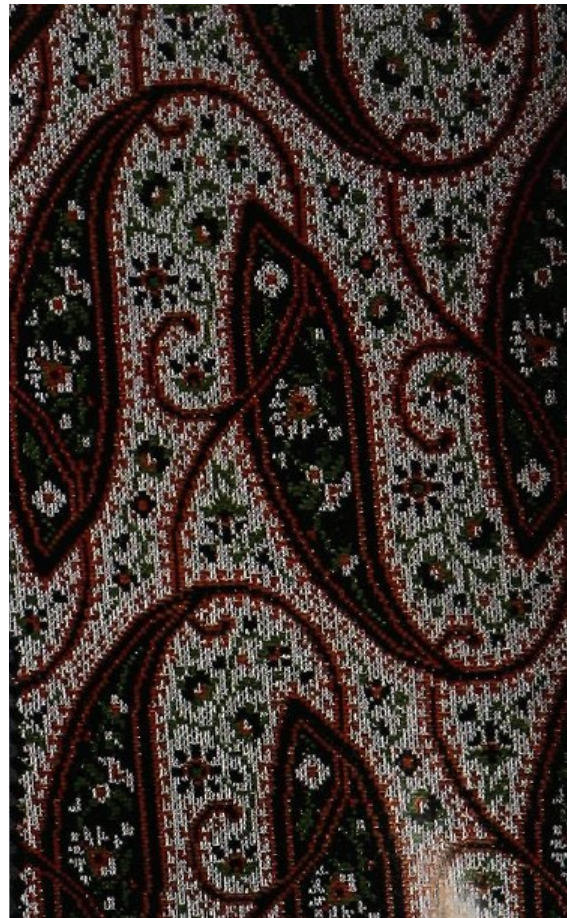
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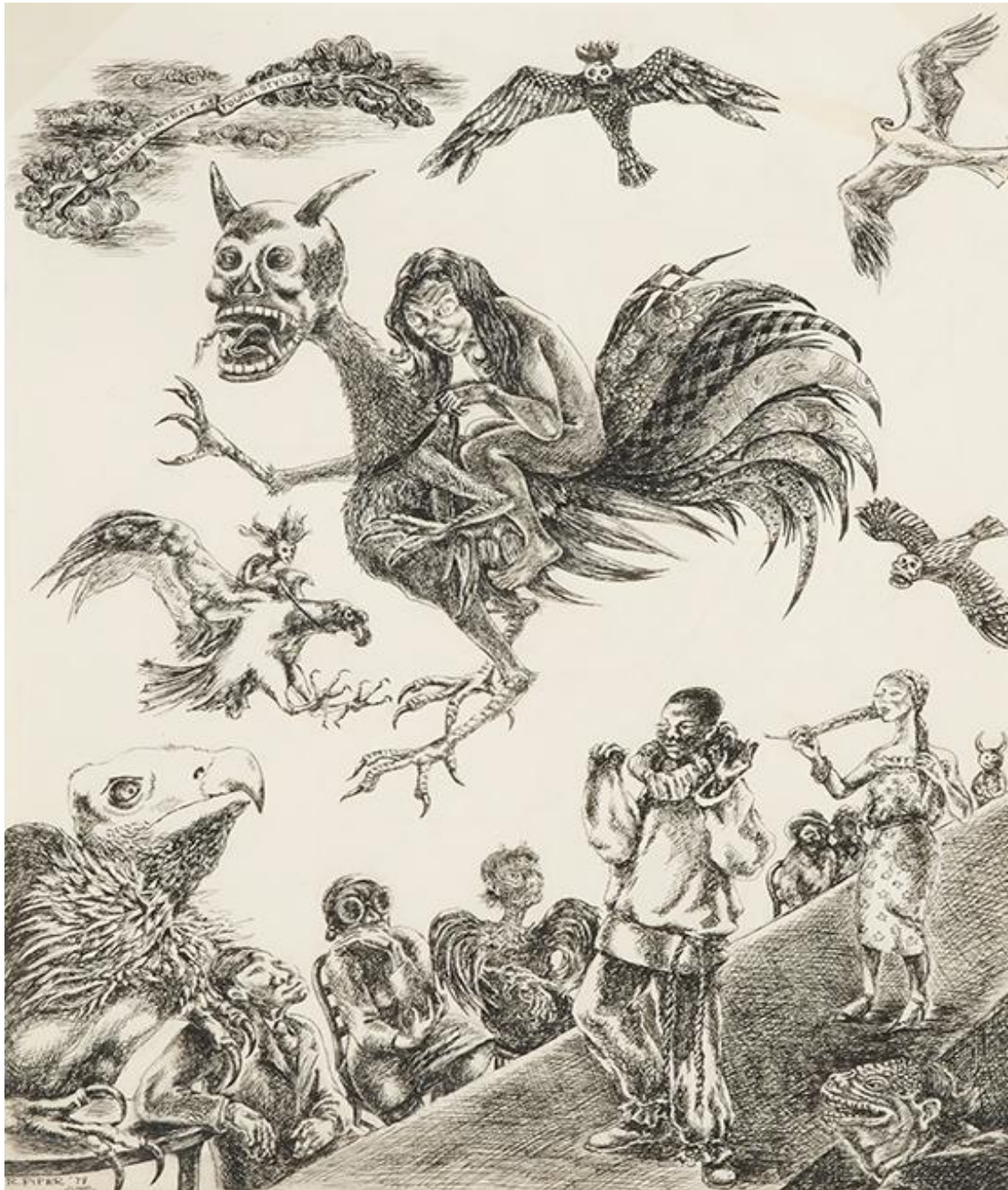
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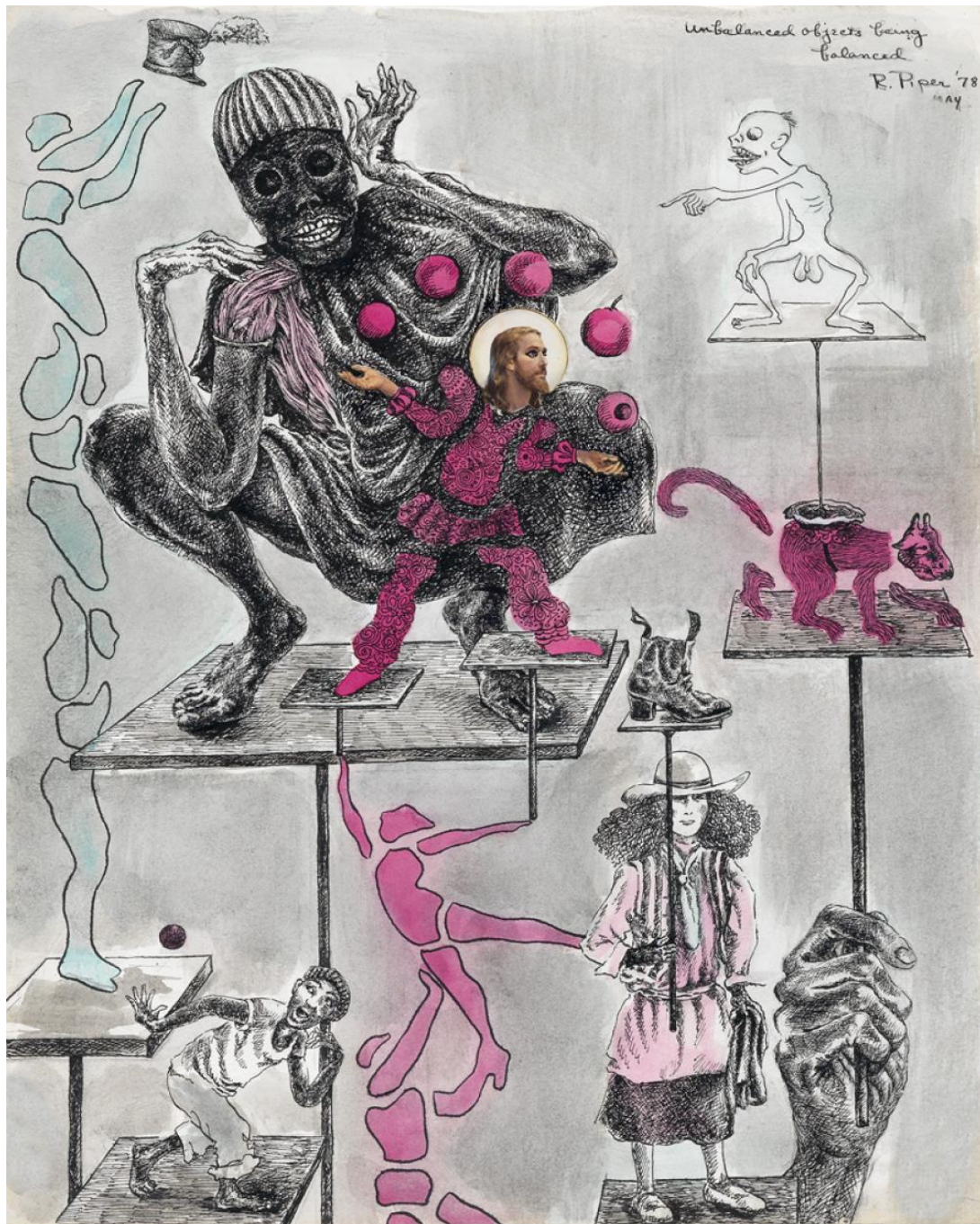
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**Fig.5.1** Barnett Newman, *White and Hot*, 1967.



to Mrs. Horace Havemeyer from Mary Cassatt and four hundred Impressionist paintings which were absolutely unsaleable in Europe."  
—HOWARD JUNKER

**Barney**

Barnett Newman looks like a blend of distinguished statesman, jovial brigadier and imposing bank president. His suits are usually dark herringbone, his speech has a professorial articulateness and he wears, on a velvet string, a steel-rimmed monocle that he occasionally pops into his eye to underscore a point while he plays with his whitish walrus mustache.

But Barnett Newman is now 64 and has had little to do with the Establishment. For the past quarter of a century he has been one of the world's most avant-garde artists and one of the most abstract of the abstract expressionists, dedicated to the absolute in art, which should be, according to him, a "truth as real as your belly and brain without preconceived ideas or gray-beard dogmas, a truth I have to face each time I face the canvas. Art should be ethics and not esthetics."

To defend this uncompromising position Newman has become a fiery philosopher and polemicist. Through treatises and talk he has championed the new in art and criticized Establishment art critics, museums and galleries. He has had very few gallery shows, however, for the "art-gallery bosses treat us artists like workers in a candy factory where we're supposed to turn out the nougats, chocolate cherries and butter crunches they ask for." But New York's Knoedler Gallery lets him make the sweets he wants and is now staging Newman's first gallery exhibit in ten years, seventeen paintings and three sculptures done since 1960.

**Adult:** Undoubtedly the show will prompt the critical controversy Newman has become used to. A critic once suggested that Newman should be "hanged from the museum rafters" for his "pretentious yardage," and another claimed that his work "offers too little engagement for an adult sensibility." His pictures often trigger the cliché "my kid could do that," to which Newman congenially retorts, "Must be a pretty good kid." When others ask him how long it takes him to finish a painting he might answer, "A minute but that minute's a lifetime."

On the surface, his canvases are nothing but vast areas of one color, usually red, blue, black, yellow or white, cut by a stripe or stripes, sometimes thin and sometimes wide, of another color. But through their monumental monochromatism and giant physical presence, they thrust themselves powerfully upon the viewer. "Anna's Light," 180 square feet of blazing cadmium red, engulfs anyone who nears it like a cosmic configuration, and "White and Hot," its smaller sister, reduces the burn to that of an atomic explosion. The vertical "Profile of Light," with its broad bands of ultramarine blue and white, is as terrifying and exhilarat-



Barnett Newman in front of his 1967 'White and Hot'

ing as a sudden launch into infinite space. Newman has carried to its logical extreme the credo of Maurice Denis, which has become the central tenet of contemporary art: a "painting is nothing more or less than a surface with paint arranged on it." "Color is absolute," says Newman. "It is my subject matter. It is my experience." Newman found that "massive color" was his key while painting "Osmement" in 1948. "I looked at it for nine months," he says. "I saw it could reach, get fuller—so I stretched it. It was a planet and grew into a world."

Barnett Newman's world is a tension of equilibriums and disequilibriums, controlled by his stripe or, as he calls it "the zip, which gives dynamic motion to the canvas. The color field rushes in, throwing itself off balance, but the zip also puts it back on its feet." In "Jericho" Newman splits a black triangle with a red zip down the center. "The colors associate and dissociate at once," says Newman, and the same is true of his "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue I." "They're only colors and can be used any way," he says. "If I get the wheat I

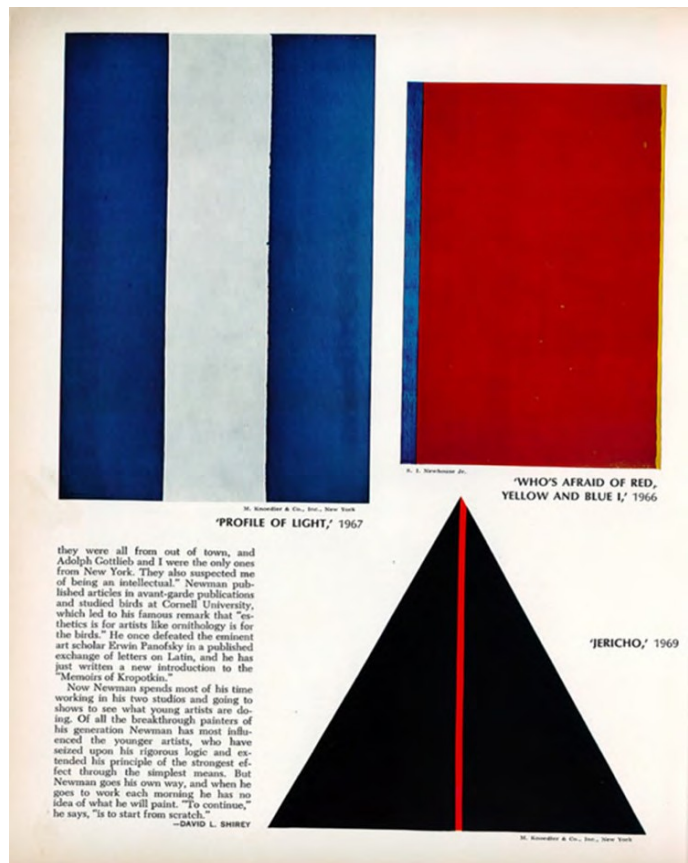
make the bread my way," Newman has, in recent years, translated the tension of the zip and the triangle into steel sculpture like the magnificent rust-colored "Broken Obelisk," which stands in front of Washington's Corcoran Gallery.

Newman's first appreciations of art as a boy were not stirred by museum masterpieces but by the "Formations of the tar I saw in my neighborhood." After studying at the Art Students League and getting a B.A. from City College of New York, Newman went to work in his father's clothing business. "The cuttings on the floor gave me a sense of plasticity. The women's dresses were like paintings and the men's suits like sculptures." In 1933 he ran for mayor of New York on the "Artists-Writers" ticket, demanding such things as a municipal art gallery, a city opera and sidewalk cafés, and during the Depression he started an underground paper, *The Answer*.

**Birds:** In the '40s Newman met most of the other abstract expressionists, such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. "We weren't a close-knit group," he says. "They felt closer to one another because

**Fig.5.2** Recto of David L. Shirey, 'Barney', *Newsweek*, 14 April 1969.

**Fig.5.3** Verso of David L. Shirey, 'Barney', *Newsweek*, 14 April 1969.



they were all from out of town, and Adolph Gottlieb and I were the only ones from New York. They also suspected me of being an intellectual." Newman published articles in avant-garde publications and studied birds at Cornell University, which led to his famous remark that "esthetics is for artists like ornithology is for the birds." He once defeated the eminent art scholar Erwin Panofsky in a published exchange of letters on Latin, and he has just written a new introduction to the "Memoirs of Kropotkin."

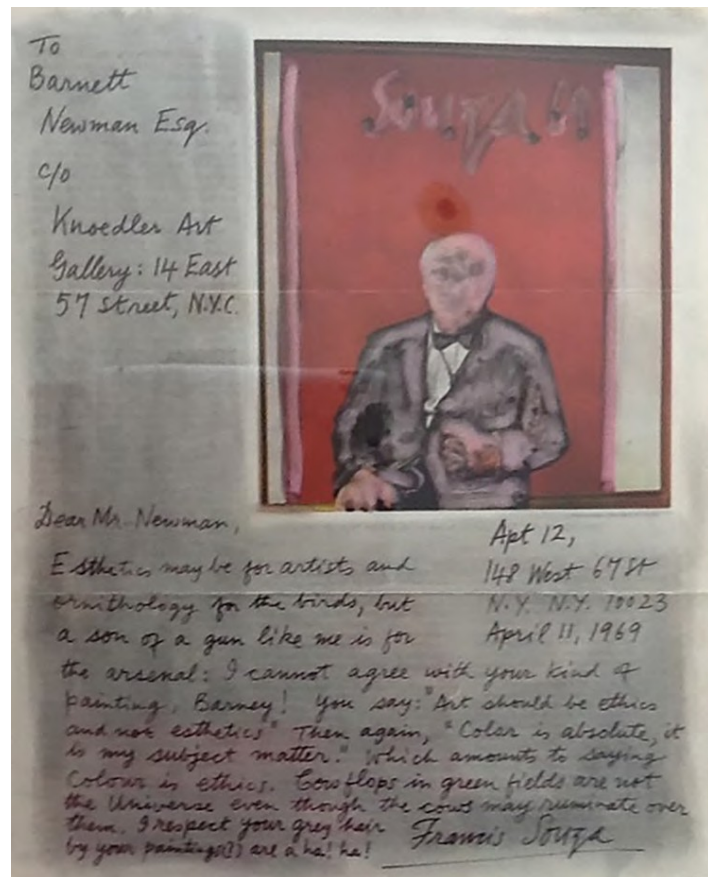
Now Newman spends most of his time working in his two studios and going to shows to see what young artists are doing. Of all the breakthrough painters of his generation Newman has most influenced the younger artists, who have extended upon his rigorous logic and ennobled his principle of the strongest effect through the simplest means. But Newman goes his own way, and when he goes to work each morning he has no idea of what he will paint. "To continue," he says, "is to start from scratch."

—DAVID L. SHIREY

**Fig.5.4** Jack Wilson, *F.N. Souza* and *Elizabeth II* at the Opening of the Commonwealth Institute, 1962.

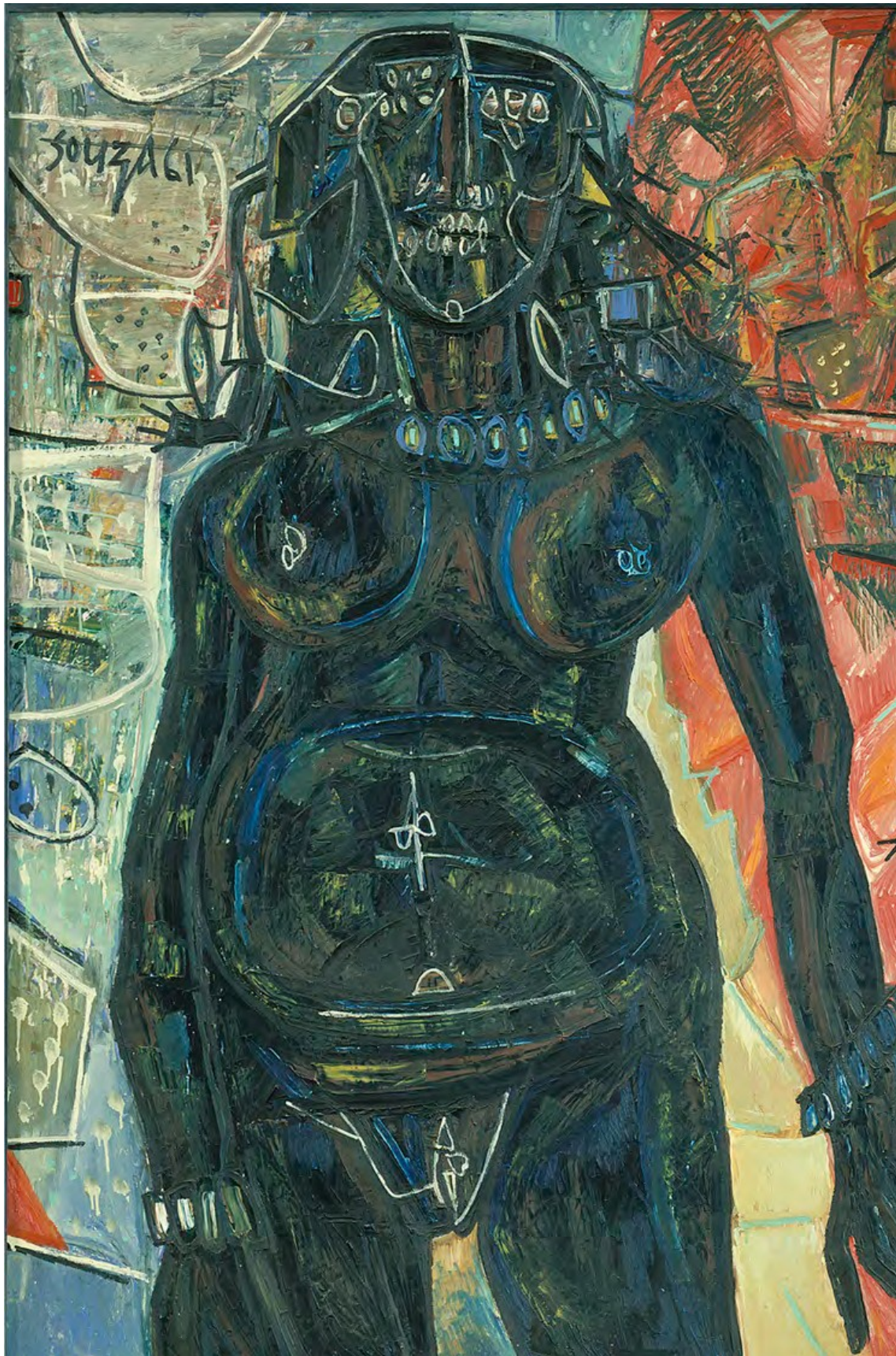


**Fig.5.5** Recto of letter from F.N. Souza to Barnett Newman, 11 April 1969.



**Fig.5.6** Verso of letter from F.N. Souza to Barnett Newman, 11 April 1969.

**Fig.5.7** F.N. Souza, *Black Nude*, 1961.



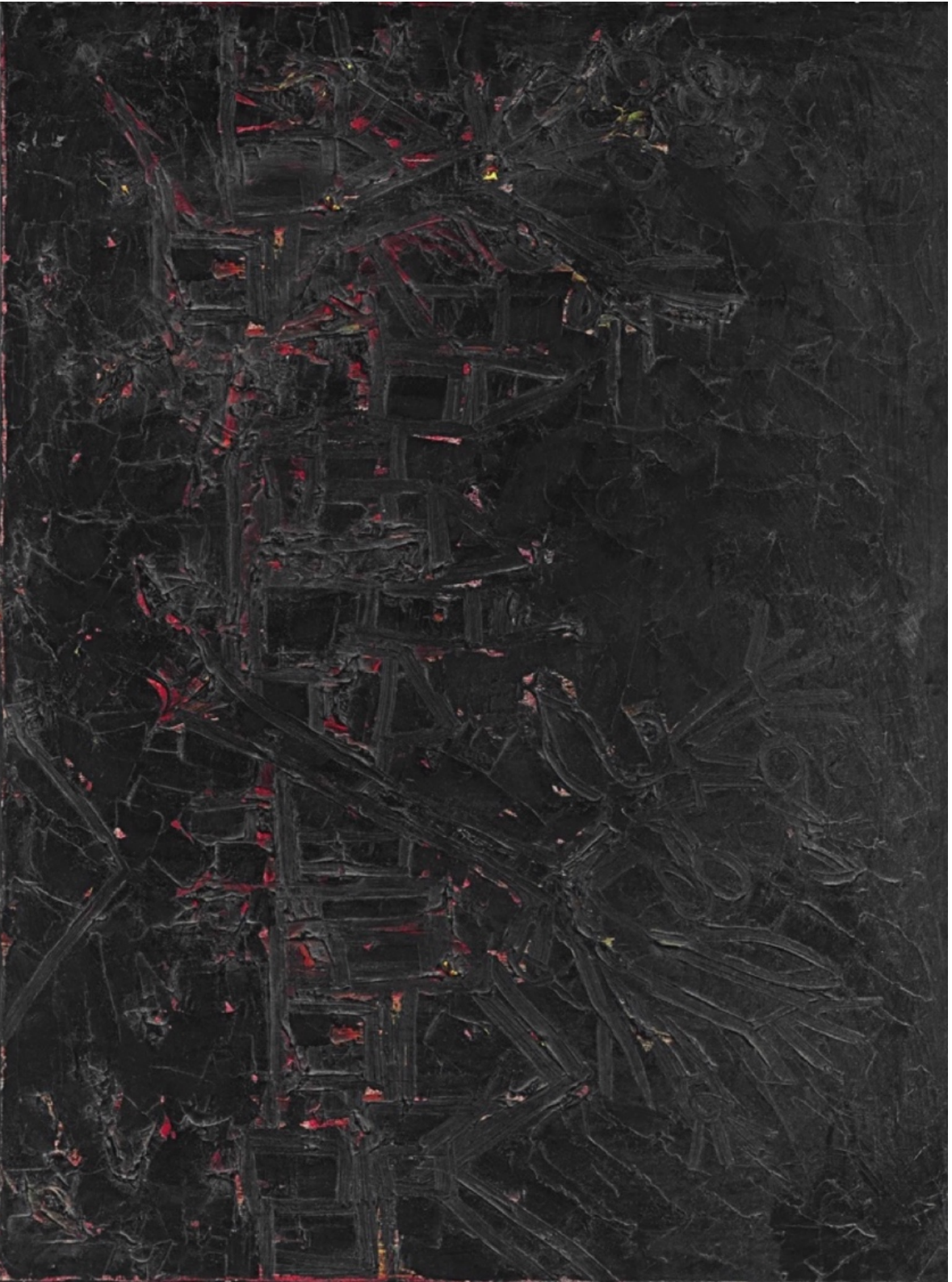
**Fig. 5.8.** F.N.  
Souza, *Lovers*,  
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**Fig.5.9.** F.N. Souza, *Black Pope*, 1965.



**Fig.5.10.** F.N.  
Souza, *Black  
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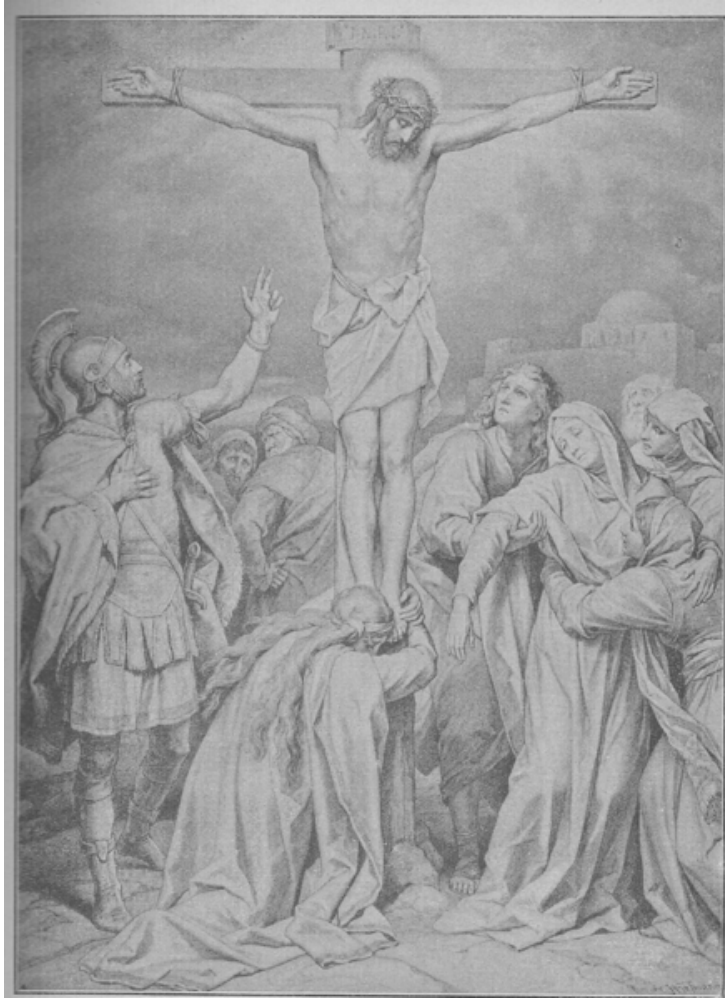


**Fig.5.11** F.N. Souza, *The Man Born Blind*, 1959.





**Fig.5.12** F.N. Souza, *Crucifixion*, 1959.



**Fig.5.13** Heinrich Hofmann,  
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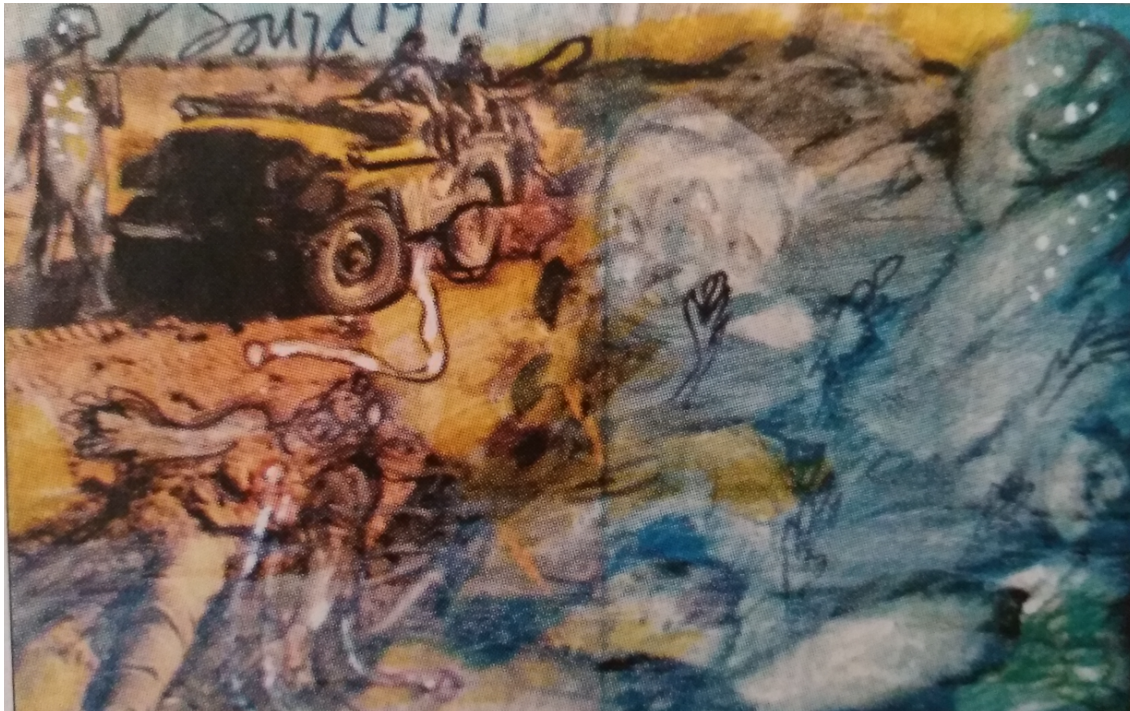


**Fig.5.14** Giovanni da Modena,  
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**Fig.5.15** Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*, 1962.



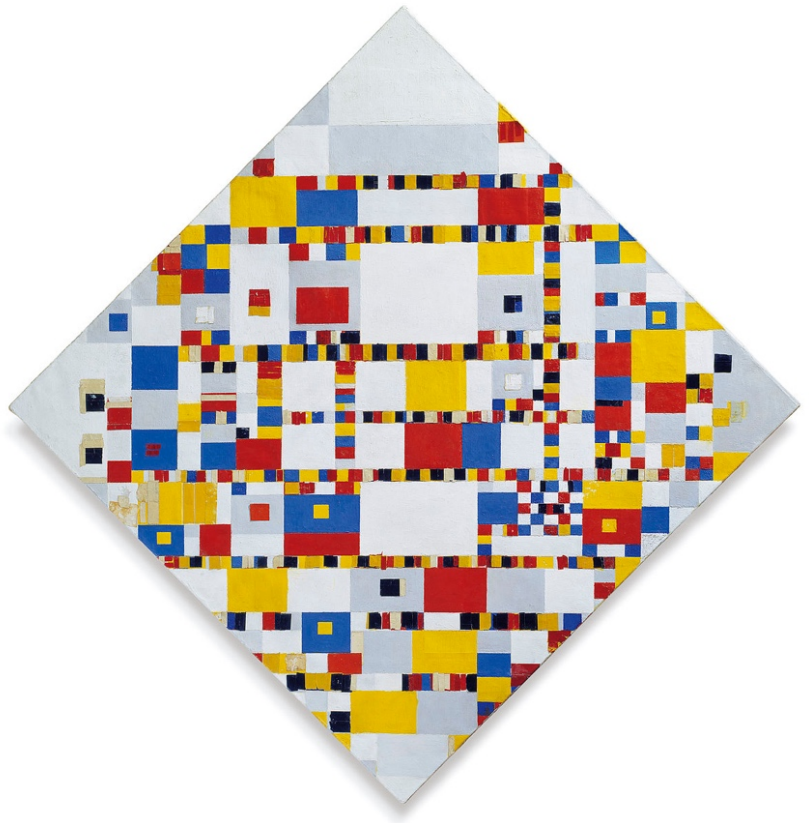
**Fig.5.16** F.N. Souza, *Chemical Painting*, 1971.



**Fig.5.17** Barnett Newman, *Lace Curtain for Mayor Daley*, 1968.

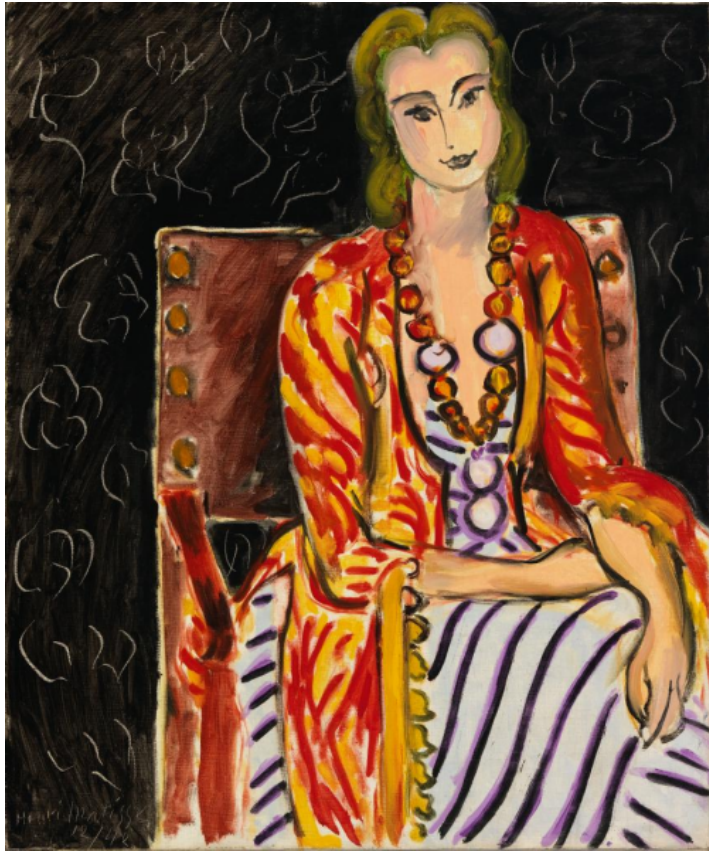


**Fig.5.18** Piet Mondrian,  
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**Fig.6.1** Grace Hartigan, *The Persian Jacket*, 1952.



**Fig.6.2** Henri Matisse, *Woman Seated before a Black Background*, 1942.

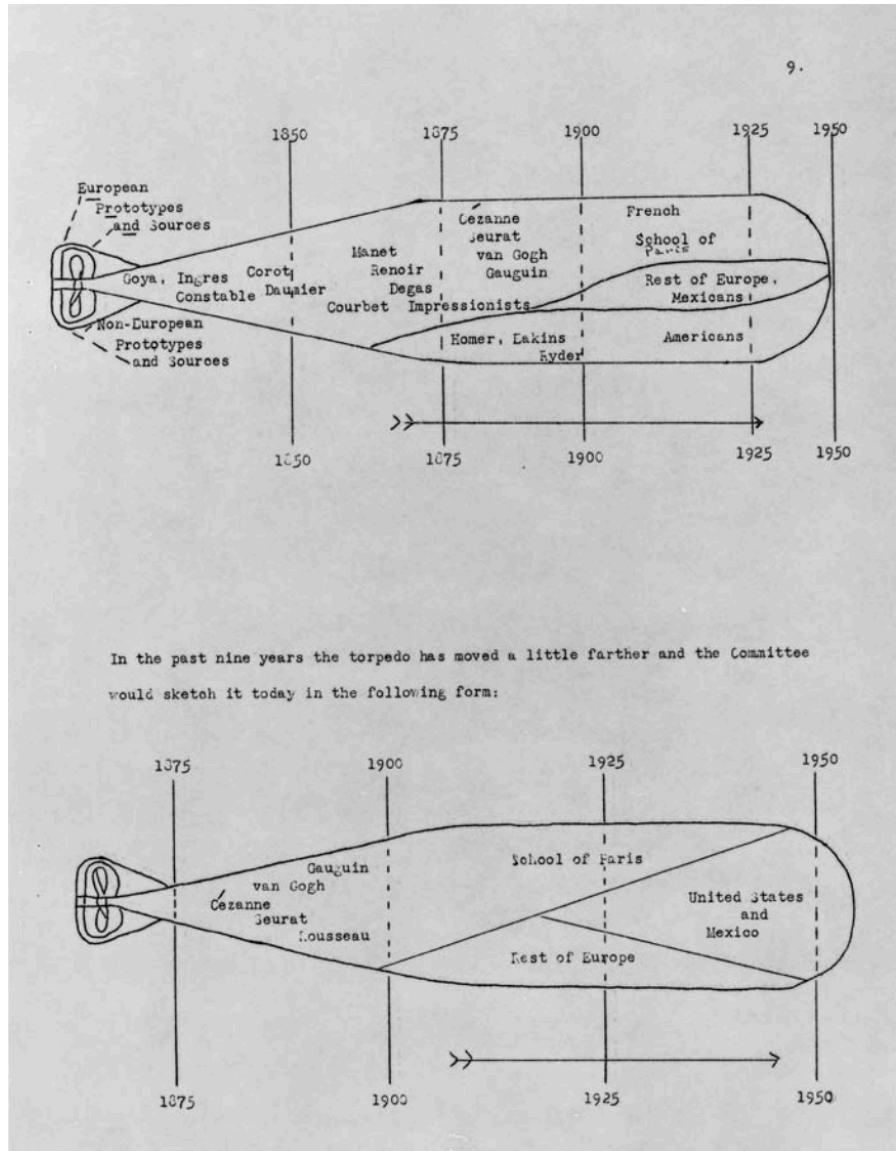
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**Fig.6.4** Andy Warhol, *Untitled* from *À la recherche du shoe perdu*, c.1955.



**Fig.6.5** Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Torpedo" *Diagrams of Ideal Permanent Collections*, 1941.



**Fig.6.6** Grace Hartigan, *Months and Moons*, 1950.



**Fig.6.7** Grace Hartigan, *Saint Serapion (After Zurbarán)*, 1952.

