

# Paul Klee, Mar.13-April 2, 1930

Author

Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)

Date

1930

Publisher

The Museum of Modern Art

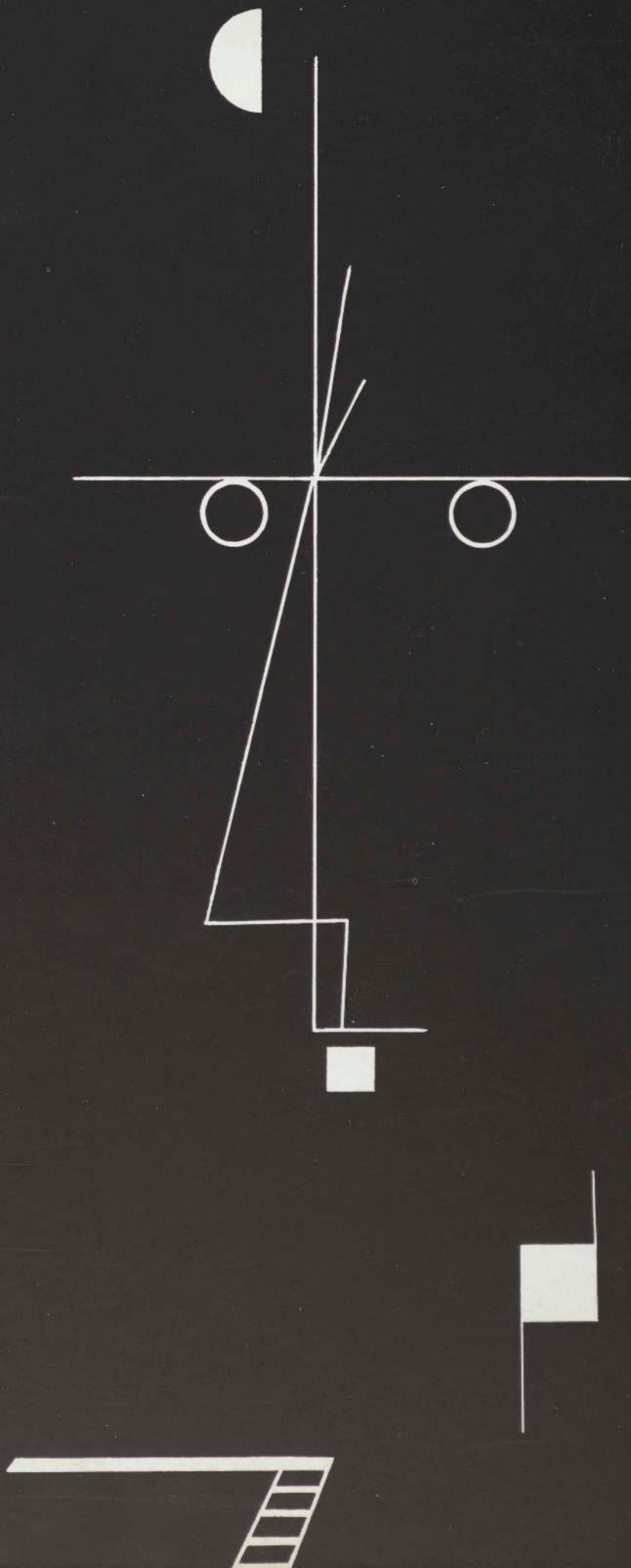
Exhibition URL

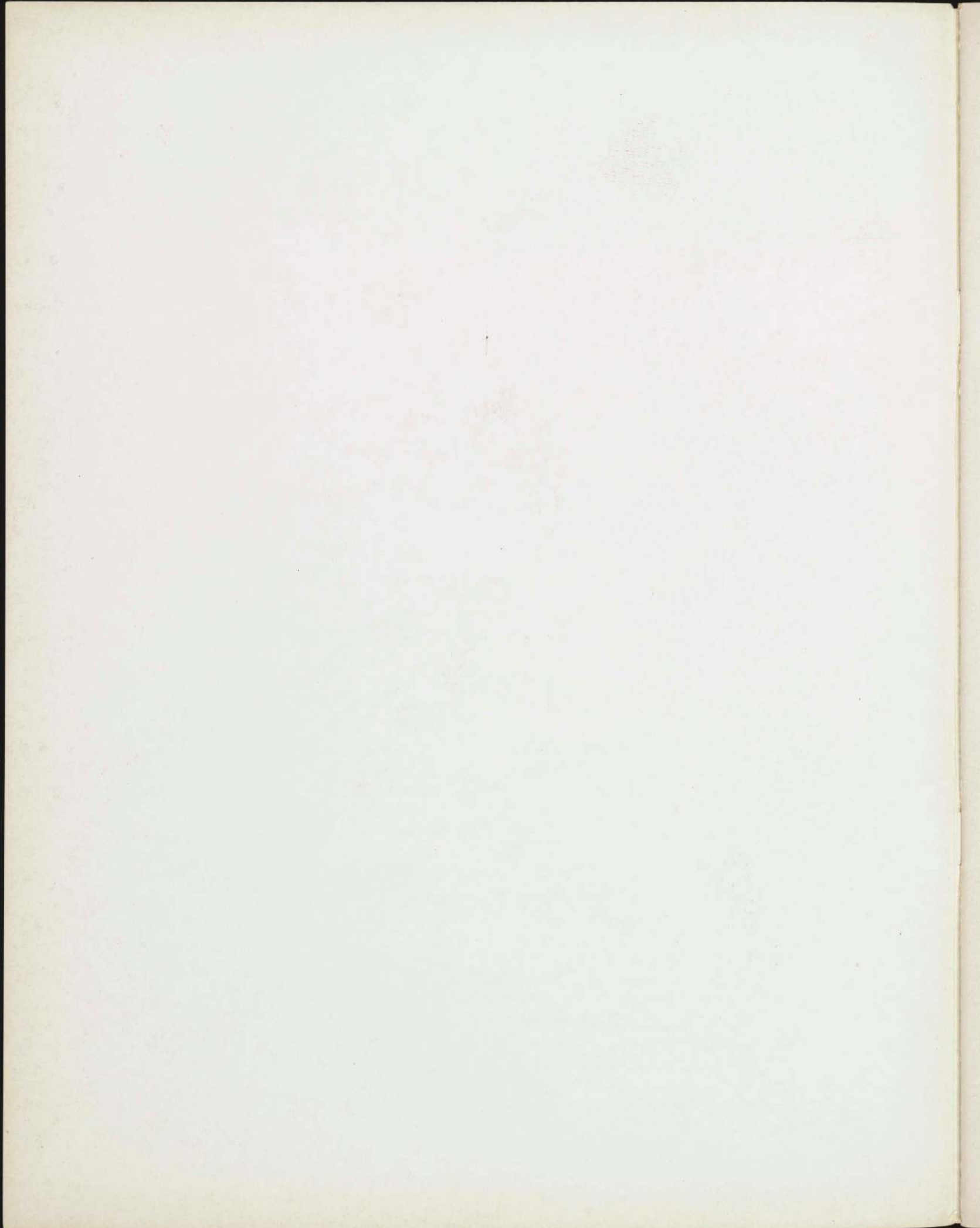
[www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1766](http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1766)

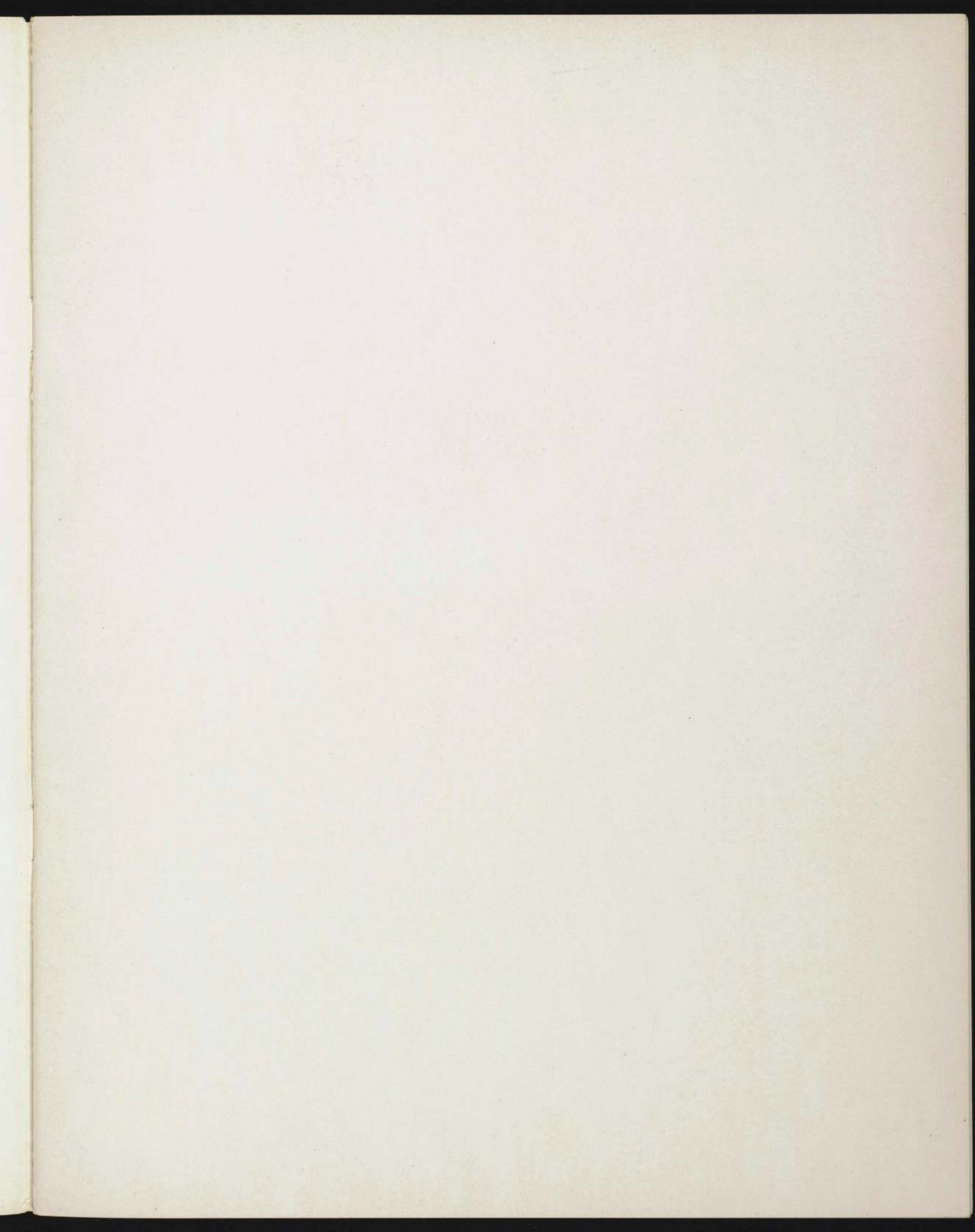
The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—  
from our founding in 1929 to the present—is  
available online. It includes exhibition catalogues,  
primary documents, installation views, and an  
index of participating artists.

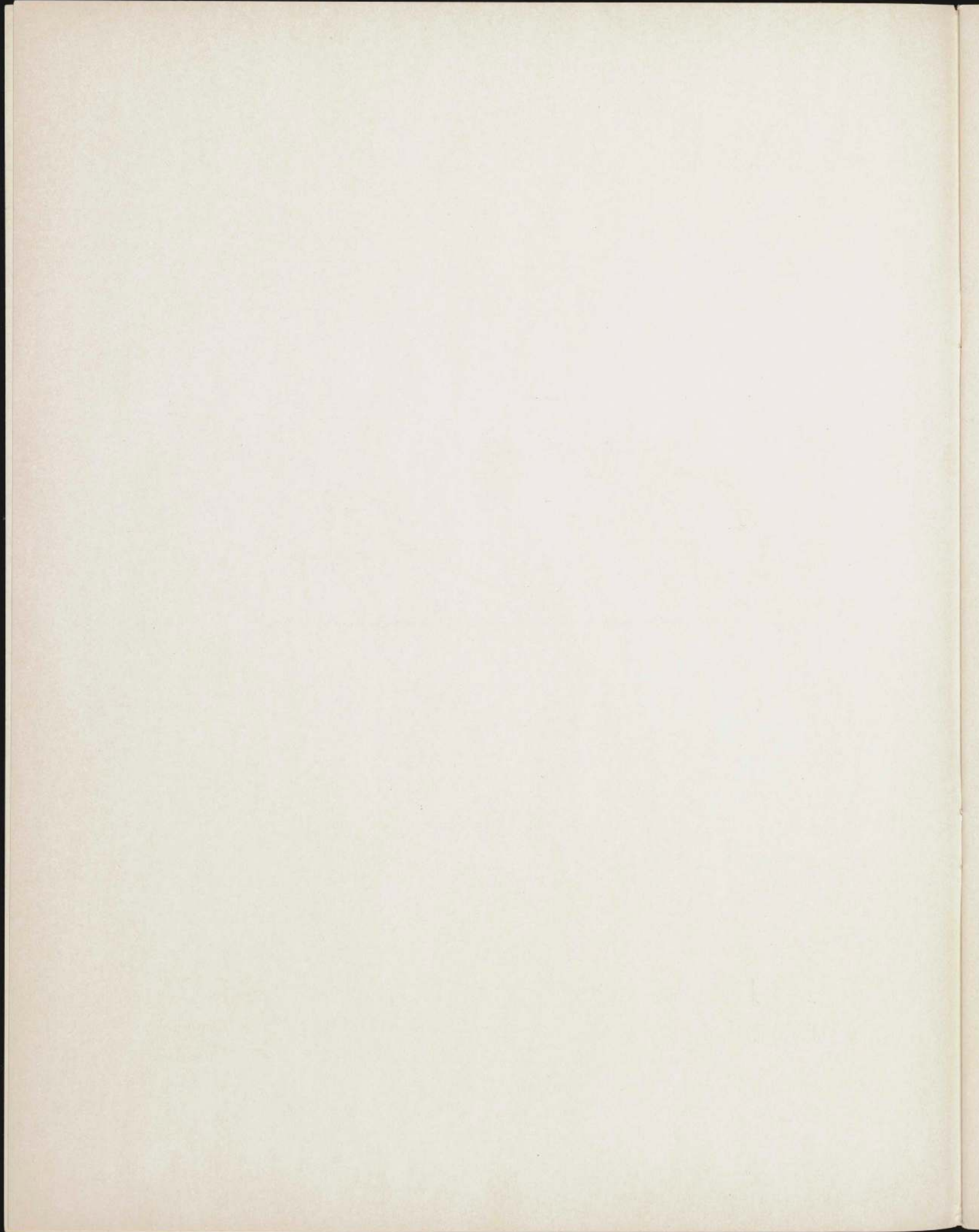
# PAUL KLEE

MUSEUM OF  
MODERN ART  
730 FIFTH AVE  
NEW YORK











# PAUL KLEE



MARCH 13

1930

APRIL 2

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

730 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

Archives

MoMA

4(2)

C.2

The Museum of Modern Art  
Library

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The exhibition has been made possible primarily through the generous co-operation of the artist's representatives, The Flechtheim Gallery of Berlin, and the J. B. Neumann Gallery of New York. The following have also generously lent pictures: Mr. Philip C. Johnson, Cleveland; The Gallery of Living Art, New York University; The Weyhe Gallery, New York.

Thanks are extended to them on behalf of the Trustees and the Staff of the Museum of Modern Art.

## TRUSTEES

A. CONGER GOODYEAR, PRESIDENT  
MISS L. P. BLISS, VICE-PRESIDENT  
MRS. JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR., TREASURER  
FRANK CROWNINSHIELD, SECRETARY  
WILLIAM T. ALDRICH  
FREDERIC C. BARTLETT  
STEPHEN C. CLARK  
MRS. W. MURRAY CRANE  
CHESTER DALE  
SAMUEL A. LEWISOHN  
DUNCAN PHILLIPS  
MRS. RAINEY ROGERS  
PAUL J. SACHS  
MRS. CORNELIUS J. SULIVAN

ALFRED H. BARR, JR., DIRECTOR

JERE ABBOTT, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



NOTE—On the front cover of this Catalog is a simplified zinc cut of Klee's *Portrait of an Equilibrist*. The back cover is taken from Pages 6 and 7 of Klee's *Pedagogical Sketch Book*. The diagrams illustrate variations on an "active" line.

## INTRODUCTION

His father a Bavarian, his mother Southern French, Paul Klee was born, with singular appropriateness, in Switzerland near the town of Berne, in the year 1879. His childhood was passed in an atmosphere of music for his father was a professional musician and conductor of the orchestra in which his son at an early age played the violin. His mother, too, came of a musical family so that for a time he expected to become a musician. However, after much debate, he was finally sent in 1898 to Munich to study drawing, at first at the Knirr school, and then with Franz Stuck at the Academy. Stuck was an academic painter of bizarre and macabre subjects, at times coarsely banal, but with considerable imaginative power. In 1901 Klee made the orthodox journey to Italy, but quite unorthodoxly he preferred early Christian art to that of the quattrocento, Baroque to High Renaissance painting, and the Naples aquarium to the classical antiquities of the Naples Museum.

For the next few years Klee lived with his parents, producing very slowly a remarkable series of etchings which he exhibited in Switzerland and Munich. Though he visited Paris he did not at first become aware of the post-impressionist and *fauve* revolutions. He found himself more concerned with drawing and caricature than with painting. Goya's fantastic *Caprichos* interested him as did the other-worldly engravings of Blake and Fuseli. Of more recent draughtsmen he found Kubin's weird humor, the quaint pathos of James Ensor, and Redon's visionary lithographs most to his taste. He read the tales of Hoffmann and of Poe, the prose and poetry of Baudelaire. His admirations both in graphic art and literature were clearly fantastic.

He moved to Munich in 1906. In the next four years he came to know through exhibitions vanGogh, then Cézanne, and finally Matisse, who opened the eyes of the young artist to the expressive (as opposed to the descriptive) possibilities of color and to the charm of the apparently artless and naïve.

In Munich he became acquainted with three other young painters, Kandinsky, a Russian who had also studied under Stuck, Franz Marc, and August Macke, the last two, both of them men of great promise, lost to German art during the war. The four formed the famous group of *der Blaue Reiter* which raised the banner of revolt in staid academic Munich and won a considerable success even in Berlin. It was the Blue Rider group which first made the word Expressionism known throughout Europe. Marc painted compositions of animals, using brilliant, pure color, a line of great style and a somewhat cubistic technique. Kandinsky's abstract *Improvisations* were among the first to disregard entirely all vestiges of representation. But



Klee, while he experimented with abstract design, continued his researches in the realm of fantasy.

In 1912 Klee visited Paris, where he stayed for over a year. Guillaume Apollinaire, Picasso, Delaunay, became his friends. A journey to Tunis (Kairuan) in 1914 seems to have been equally important in discovering himself to himself.

Shortly after the war the town of Weimar had formed an extraordinary institution called the Bauhaus Academy, placing at its head the architect, Walter Gropius. It was primarily a technical school devoted to the study of materials and design in architecture, furniture, typography, and other modern industrial arts. As a "spiritual counter-point" to these scientific-utilitarian activities Gropius invited three painters to live at the Bauhaus and give instruction in drawing and painting. They were the Russian Kandinsky, the American Feininger, and the Swiss Klee, three of the most gifted as well as most radical artists at work in Germany. Since 1920 Klee has been at the Bauhaus, moving with it to Dessau in 1926.

In the same year Feininger, Javlensky, Kandinsky, and Klee, formed the Blue Four which sent exhibitions throughout Germany and even to America. Klee also sent paintings to the Société Anonyme exhibitions in New York and Brooklyn.

Klee was "claimed" by the *Sur-réaliste* group in Paris but found (as did Picasso, Braque, and Chirico) that he was not especially interested. His work is, however, perhaps the finest realization of their ideals of an art which appears to be purely of the imagination, untrammled by reason or the outer world of empirical experience.

Klee, when one talks with him, seems the opposite of eccentric, in spite of his amazing art. He lives in Dessau in a house designed by Gropius as a *machine à habiter* near the factory-like Bauhaus building. He is a smallish man with penetrating eyes, simple in speech and gently humorous. While one looks over his drawings in his studio one can hear his wife playing a Mozart sonata in the room below. Only in one corner are their curiosities, a table littered with such ornaments as shells, a skate's egg, bits of dried moss, a pine cone, a piece of coral, fragments of textiles, a couple of drawings by the children of his neighbor, Feininger. These serve to break the logical severity of the Gropius interior and Bauhaus furniture—and perhaps also serve as catalytics to Klee's creative activity.

Very much has been written in German and French about Klee's art. Indeed few living painters have been the object of so much speculation. For a work by Klee is scarcely subject to methods of criticism which follow ordinary formulae. His pictures cannot be judged as representations of the ordinary visual world. Often they defy the laws of design and cannot be



judged as formal compositions, though some of them are remarkably interesting to the aesthetic purist.

Their appeal is primarily to the sentiment, to the subjective imagination. They have been compared, for this reason, to the drawings of young children at an age when they draw spontaneously from intuitive sources rather than from observation. They have been compared to the fantastic and often truly marvelous drawings of the insane who live in a world of the mind far removed from circumstantial reality. Klee's work sometimes suggests the painting and ornament of primitive peoples, especially palaeolithic bone carvings, Eskimo drawings and Bushman paintings, the pictographs of the American Indian. Drawings made subconsciously or absentmindedly or while under hypnosis occasionally suggest Klee's devices. In fact Klee has himself at times made "automatic" drawings with some success. The child, the primitive man, the lunatic, the subconscious mind, all these artistic sources (so recently appreciated by civilized taste) offer valuable commentary upon Klee's method.

But there are in Klee's work qualities other than the naïve, the artless, and the spontaneous. Frequently the caricaturist which he might have been emerges in drawings which smile slyly at human pretentiousness. Often he seduces the interest by the sheer intricacy and ingenuity of his inventions. At times he charms by his gaiety or makes the flesh creep by creating a spectre fresh from a nightmare.

Of course he has been accused of being a "literary" painter. For the person who still insists upon regarding painting as decorative, or surface texture, or merely formal composition the accusation is just. But Klee defies the purist and insists as do Chirico and Picasso upon the right of the painter to excite the imagination and to consider dreams as well as still life material for their art.

For those who are not acquainted with Klee's work, notes on a few characteristic pictures may not be amiss.

Klee's abstract designs have little to do with cubism for they are pure inventions rather than abstractions of things seen. *Variations* (No. 20) is a title drawn from musical terminology. The "theme" is stated in the center square of the picture and varied in the adjoining squares, the original center plaid becoming simpler and more horizontal nearer the edges of the design. In *Artificial Rock* (No. 18) patterns in red lines emerge ominously from a smoky chiaroscuro. *Steps* (No. 48) and *Monuments* (No. 50) are studies in horizontal banding. *The Sacred Island* (No. 17) in which architecture is suggested, is more subtle and more poetic in sentiment.

Klee has made a study of masks in theatrical and ethnographic museums, and has experi-



mented with their power to startle and bind the imagination. *Actor's Mask* (No. 12) reminds one of Melanesian ceremonial masks in its startling, uncanny effect. Similar is *The Second Glance* (No. 60) with its spiral eyes and sinister fascination. Comparable in its psychological power is the extraordinary *Cat and Bird* (No. 39). The bird is placed symbolically between the eyes of the cat. A few minutes' exposure to this hypnotic stare very nearly reduces the spectator to the condition of the bird. And who can look at the *Goat* (No. 9) without suspecting a devil?

Another mask, the *Portrait of an Equilibrist* (No. 24) is most ingeniously contrived. At the bottom of the design are the steps and taking-off platform. The delicate displacement and adjustment of weights in balancing are suggested by the verticals which swing from the fulcrum in the center. The two balls at the end of the tight-rope walker's rod seem to roll along beneath the horizontal line like drops of water on the under side of a wire. The whole makes a face.

The arrow is a motive which frequently occurs in Klee's compositions. It is used to indicate the movement and direction of forces as in the diagram on the title-page. In *Slavery* (No. 14) a heavy red arrow points down. In *Mixed Weather* (No. 47) it sweeps along the earth like a tempest beneath the dripping moon. In *Just Missed* (No. 36) it is more literally a missile.

Klee is a master of a line which seems negligent but is curiously expressive. *The Harbor of Plit* (No. 29) is at first glance a child's scrawl but upon study gives a remarkable effect of ships dancing on water, seen through hazy moonlit atmosphere. The flower *Quadrupula Gracilis* (No. 30) is suggested by the most sensitive calligraphy. The *Zoo* (No. 37) presents no earthly animals but creatures of the imagination drawn with the finality of hieroglyphics. The humor of *She moos, we play* (No. 35) is evident. But more important to the Klee enthusiast are such pure inventions as the figures in the *Abstract Trio* (No. 3). Here are forms which live and breathe with convincing actuality, though their like has never been seen. In such conceptions Klee appears in his most personal style.

Nothing is so astonishing to the student of Klee as his infinitive variety. But variety is naturally to be expected of one whose forms and compositions are born of the mind.

A. H. B., JR.



## CHRONOLOGY

- 1879 Born near Berne, Switzerland. Father a Bavarian music teacher and conductor. Mother of southern French stock.
- 1898 To Munich. Studied drawing at the Knirr school and at the Academy under Franz Stuck.
- 1901 To Italy with Hermann Haller.
- 1903-06 With parents at Berne. Trips to Paris, Munich and Berlin. Exhibited etchings in Switzerland and Munich.
- 1906 Settled in Munich where he lived until the war.
- 1908-11 Came to admire the work of vanGogh, Cézanne, and especially Matisse.
- 1912 Formed with Kandinsky, Franz Marc and August Macke the group called *Der Blaue Reiter* (the Blue Rider) which held exhibitions in Munich and Berlin.
- 1912-13 Paris. Knew Apollinaire, Picasso, and Delaunay. Exhibited.
- 1914 Tunis.
- 1915-19 The war.
- 1920 Invited by Walter Gropius to become a professor at the Bauhaus Academy, Weimar, together with Kandinsky and Feininger.
- 1924 First one-man exhibition, New York, Société Anonyme.
- 1926 Moved with the Bauhaus to Dessau. Formed with Feininger, Javlensky, and Kandinsky the group called the Blue Four which exhibited in Germany and America.
- 1928 Visit to Egypt. First one-man show in Paris.
- 1929 Fiftieth birthday exhibitions in many German and Swiss Museums.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

PAUL KLEE by H. v. Wedderkop, Leipzig, 1920

PAUL KLEE by Leopold Zahn, Potsdam, 1920

KAIRUAN ODER EINE GESCHICHTE VON MALER KLEE by W. Hausenstein, Munich, 1921

PÄDAGOGISCHES SKIZZENBUCH by Paul Klee, Bauhausbücher, No. 2, Munich, 1925

PAUL KLEE by Will Grohmann, Paris, 1929

## IN OTHER MUSEUMS

Paintings and drawings by Klee are in collections of the following museums. The number of works, if known, follows the name of the museum.

- BARMEN, RUHMESHALLE (4)
- BERLIN, NATIONAL GALLERY (2)
- BERNE, ART GALLERY
- COLOGNE, WALLRAF-RICHARTZ MUSEUM (8)
- DETROIT, INSTITUTE OF ARTS (2, LOANS)
- DRESDEN, PICTURE GALLERY (3)
- DUSSELDORF, ART MUSEUM (4)
- ESSEN, FOLKWANG MUSEUM (5)
- FRANKFORT, STÄDEL INSTITUTE (6)
- GENEVA, MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY
- HALLE, MUSEUM (7)
- MANNHEIM, ART GALLERY (9)
- MOSCOW, MUSEUM OF MODERN WESTERN ART (2)
- NEW YORK, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, GALLERY OF LIVING ART (1)
- STUTTGART, ART GALLERY (10)
- WEIMAR, STATE ART COLLECTION (11)
- WIESBADEN, NEW MUSEUM (12)
- ZURICH, ART GALLERY



# CATALOG

The pictures are arranged chronologically regardless of medium. The painter uses such various media that the catalogers have little confidence that they have given a correct description in every case. The original German title follows the English translation except when the two would be nearly identical. An asterisk before a title indicates that the picture is illustrated by the half-tone reproduction which bears the same number. Unless otherwise indicated the paintings belong to the artist and are exhibited by arrangement with his representatives.

1 ESCAPEMENT

Tempera on canvas, 1919  
Collection E. Weyhe, New York

2 LANDSCAPE WITH THE BLUE BIRDS

Gouache, 1919  
Collection Gallery of Living Art, New York University

\*3 ABSTRACT TRIO (*Abstraktes Terzett*)

Ink drawing and watercolor, 1923

4 SCENE PLAYED TO A HAND ORGAN (*Kleine Handlung zur Drehorgel*)

Ink and watercolor, 1923

5 UPPER AND LOWER CASE (*Buchstabenbild*)

Color on paper strips on board, 1924

6 PORTRAIT OF MRS. P. IN THE SOUTH (*Bildnis der Frau P. im Süden*)

Gouache and watercolor, 1924

7 COOKIE PICTURE (*Lebkuchenbild*)

Oil on fibre-board with wax reliefs, 1925

8 PERSPECTIVES (*Perspective Figuration*)

Tempera (?) on cardboard, 1925

\*9 GOAT (*Bock*)

Pen and air brush with watercolor, 1925  
Private Collection, New York

10 CATHEDRALS, II (*Kathedralen, II*)

Oil on canvas on board, 1925

11 STILL LIFE WITH FRAGMENTS (*Stilleben mit Fragmenten*)

Air brush on waxed cardboard, 1925



- \*12 ACTOR'S MASK (*Schauspielermaske*)  
Oil on canvas on fibre-board, 1925
- 13 THE BIRD PH. FEEDS UR WITH THE SNAKE (*Vogel Ph. füttert Ur mit der Schlange*)  
Ink drawing and gouache, 1925
- 14 SLAVERY (*Sklaverei*)  
Ink drawing and gouache, 1925
- 15 PALACE PARTIALLY DESTROYED (*Palast teilweise zerstört*)  
Watercolor, 1926
- 16 SNAILS (*Schnecken*)  
Ink drawing and air brush, 1926
- 17 THE SACRED ISLAND (*Heilige Inseln*)  
Ink drawing and watercolor, 1926  
Collection: Philip C. Johnson, Cleveland
- 18 ARTIFICIAL ROCK (*Künstlicher Fels*)  
Oil on fibre-board, 1927
- 19 LIGHTNING (*Blitz*)  
Gesso (?) on fibre-board, 1927
- \*20 VARIATIONS (*Variationen*)  
Oil on canvas, 1927
- 21 THREE GOBLETS AND OTHER THINGS (*Drei Gefässe und Anderes*)  
Oil on cardboard, 1927
- 22 PASTORALE  
Tempera on canvas on board, 1927
- 23 DEPARTURE OF THE SHIPS (*Abfahrt der Schiffe*)  
Oil on canvas, 1927
- 24 PORTRAIT OF AN EQUILIBRIST  
Oil on fibre-board, 1927
- \*25 DRAGON OF THE AIR (*Luftdrache*)  
Oil on canvas, 1927
- 26 MEGANTHEMUM  
Oil on wood panel, 1927
- 27 A PHANTOM BREAKS UP (*Ein Phantom bricht zusammen*)  
Ink drawing and gouache, 1927

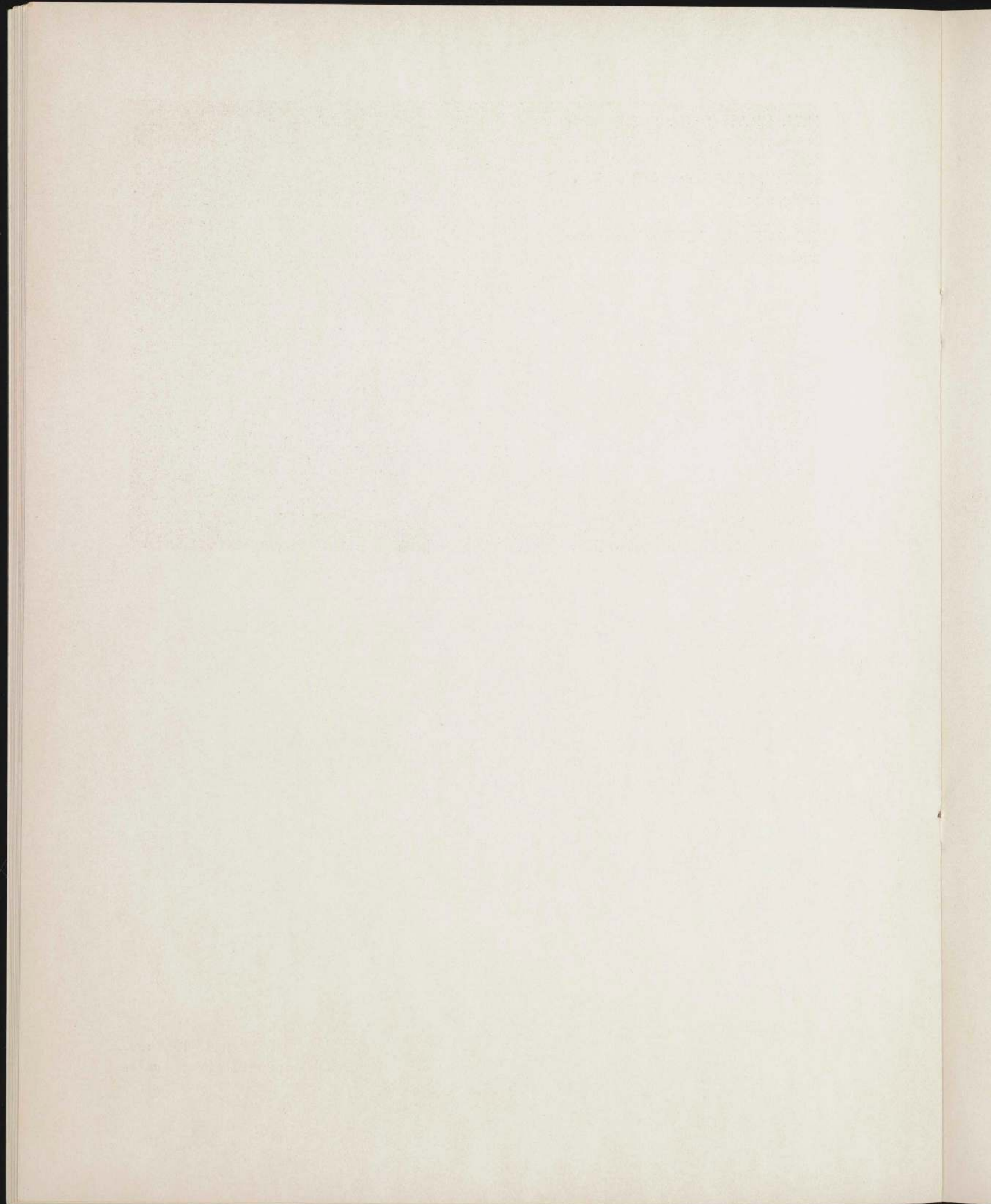
- 28 FIGURINE "THE OLD WOMAN" (*Figurine "die Alte"*)  
Oil on canvas on paper, 1927
- \*29 THE HARBOR OF PLIT (*Der Hafen von Plit*)  
Ink drawing, 1927
- 30 QUADRUPULA GRACILES P. K.  
Ink drawing, 1927
- 31 PORTRAIT OF A RATHER EXTRAORDINARY MAN (*Geringer Ausserordentlicher, Bildnis*)  
Ink and brush drawing, 1927
- 32 FIGURINE "DEATH" (*Figurine "der Tod"*)  
Oily ink spattered on paper, 1927
- 33 A LITTLE FOOL IN A TRANCE (*Kleiner Narr in Trance*)  
Ink drawing, 1927
- 34 CITY AND SUN (*Burg und Sonne*)  
Tempera and oil on canvas, 1928
- 35 SHE MOOS, WE PLAY (*Sie brüllt, wir spielen*)  
Oil on canvas, 1928
- 36 JUST MISSED (*Fast getroffen*)  
Oil on canvas on board, 1928
- \*37 ZOO (*Tiergarten*)  
Oil on wood panel, 1928
- 38 RADIATING LANDSCAPE (*Landschaft im Drehpunkt*)  
Tempera on cheese cloth on board, 1928
- \*39 CAT AND BIRD (*Katz und Vogel*)  
Oil on canvas on wood, 1928
- 40 GIFTS FOR T. (*Gaben für T.*)  
Tempera on gesso on canvas on wood, 1928
- 41 GROUP FROM A PARK (*Gruppe aus einem Park*)  
Ink and watercolor, 1928
- 42 FLOWERS IN A ROOM (*Blumen im Zimmer*)  
Oil on canvas on paper, 1928
- 43 AEOLIAN RACE (*Aeolisches Rennen*)  
Oil on canvas on paper, 1928
- 44 SCENE WITH FOUR FIGURINES (*Handlung mit vier Figurinen*)  
Pencil drawing, 1928

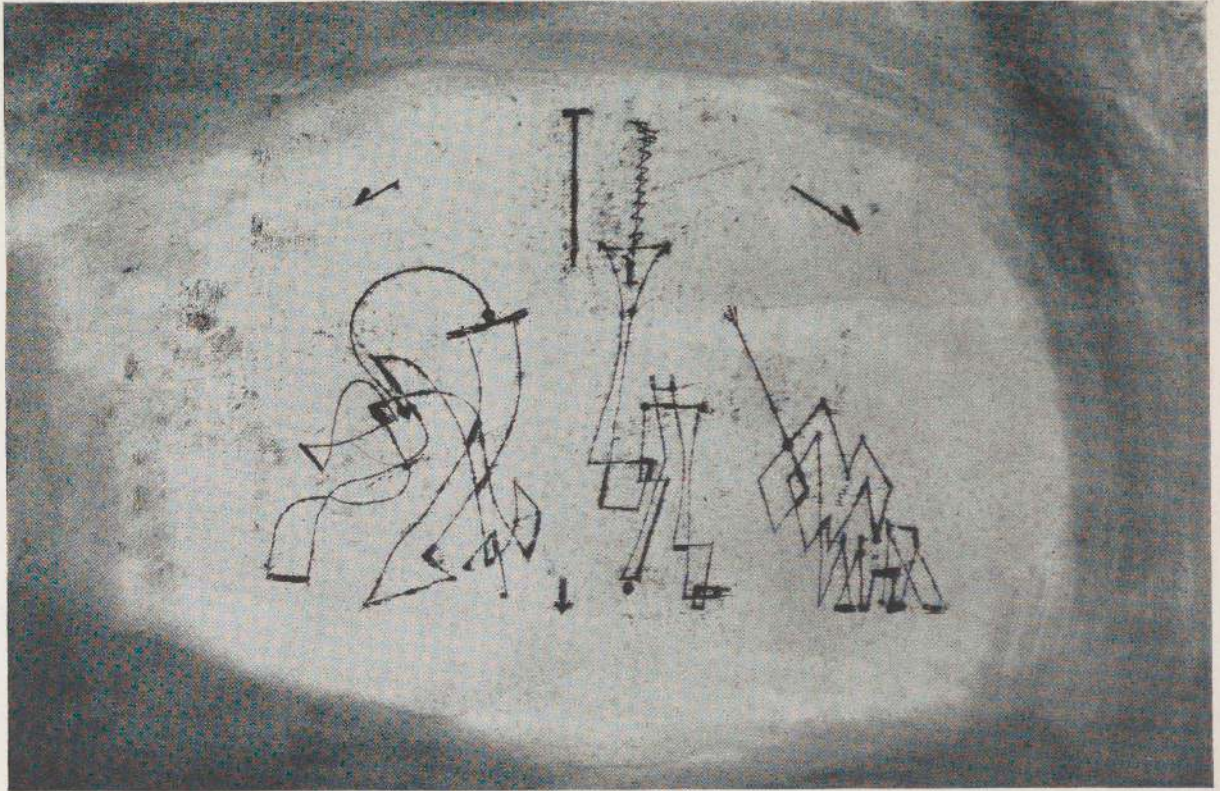


- 45 BEFORE AND BEHIND THE BRIDGE (*Vor und hinter der Brücke*)  
Ink drawing, 1928
- 46 HAPPY MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE (*Heitere Gebirgslandschaft*)  
Tempera on fibre-board, 1929
- \*47 MIXED WEATHER (*Gemischtes Wetter*)  
Mixed medium on canvas, 1929
- 48 STEPS (*Stufen*)  
Oil on canvas, 1929
- 49 NECROPOLIS  
Tempera on wood panel, 1929
- 50 MONUMENTS NEAR G. (*Denkmäler bei G.*)  
Oil on canvas, 1929
- \*51 HURRYING SPIRIT (*Fliehender Geist*)  
Oil on canvas, 1929
- 52 ARROW IN A GARDEN (*Pfeil im Garten*)  
Tempera on canvas, 1929
- 53 DISPUTE (*Disput*)  
Tempera on canvas, 1929
- 54 SOLITARY RIDER (*Versprengter Reiter*)  
Tempera and gesso on canvas, 1929
- 55 LOADED DOWN (*Beladene*)  
Tempera and gesso on panel, 1929
- 56 LEMON ORCHARD (*Citronengegend*)  
Gouache, 1929
- 57 NEAR THE HARBOR (*Stadtteil am Hafen*)  
Watercolor, 1929
- 58 LANDSCAPE WITH A WHEEL (*Landschaft mit dem Rad*)  
Gouache, 1929
- 59 FEMALE DWARF (*Zwergin*)  
Gouache, 1929
- 60 THE SECOND GLANCE (*Der andere Blick*)  
Oil on canvas, 1930

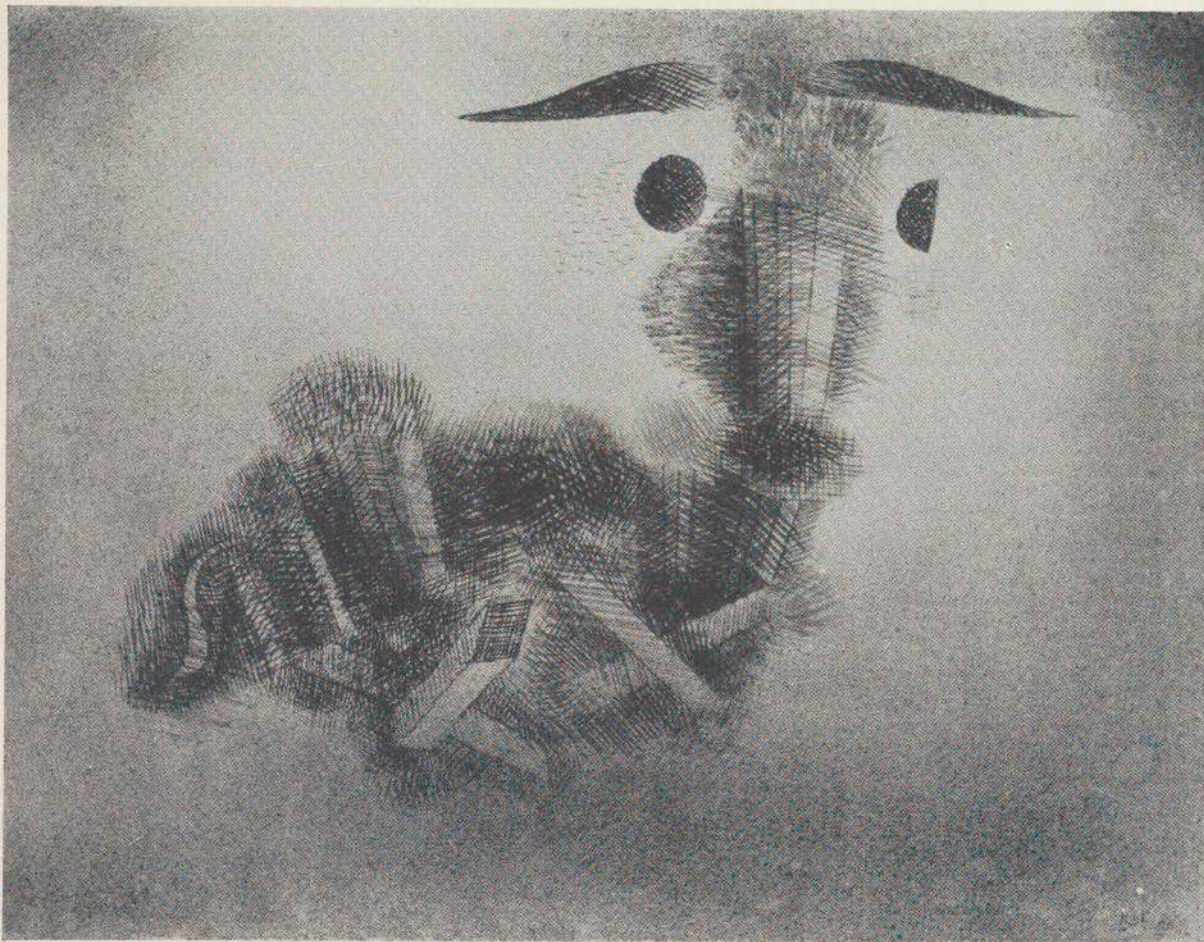
- 61 IN THE GRASS (*Im Gras*)  
Oil on canvas, 1930
- 62 DESERT TOWN (*Wüstendorf*)  
Gouache, 1930
- 63 FURNACE-MURDERER (*Mordbrenner*)  
Gouache, 1930











9

GOAT, 1925

Gouache, 8½ x 11 inches

Private Collection, New York

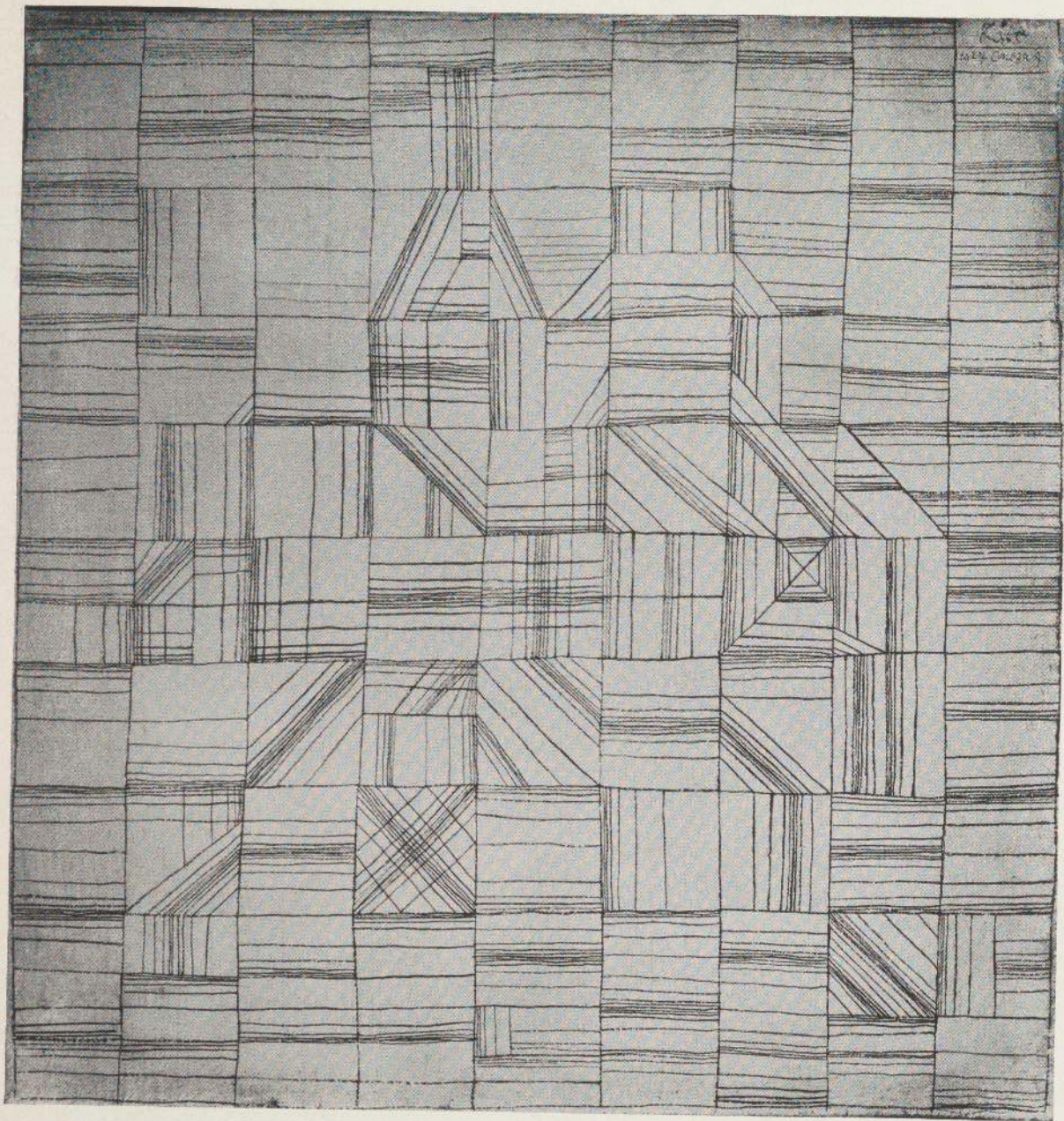




12

ACTOR'S MASK, 1925  
Oil, 13½ x 12¾ inches



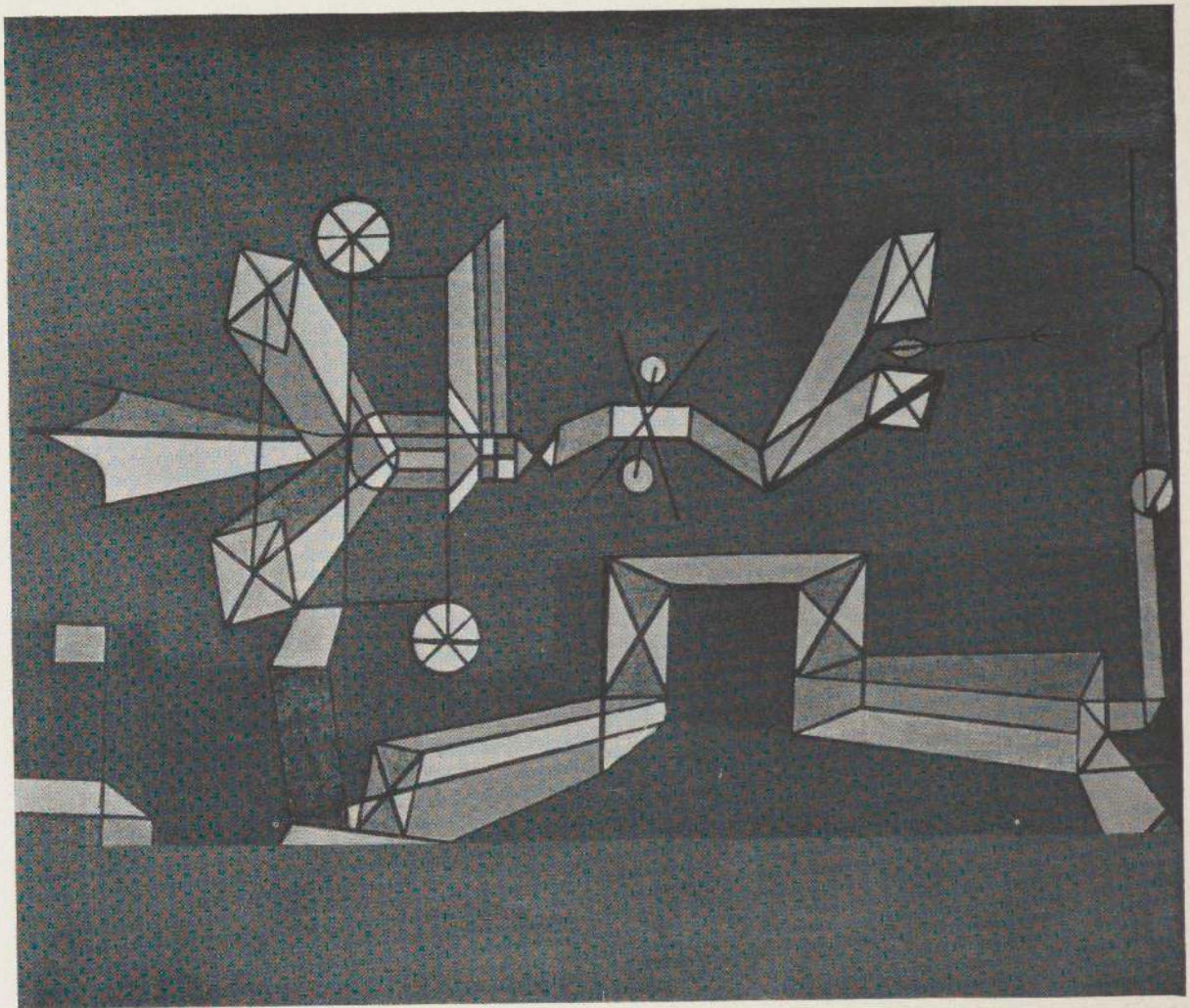


20

VARIATIONS, 1927

Oil, 16 x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

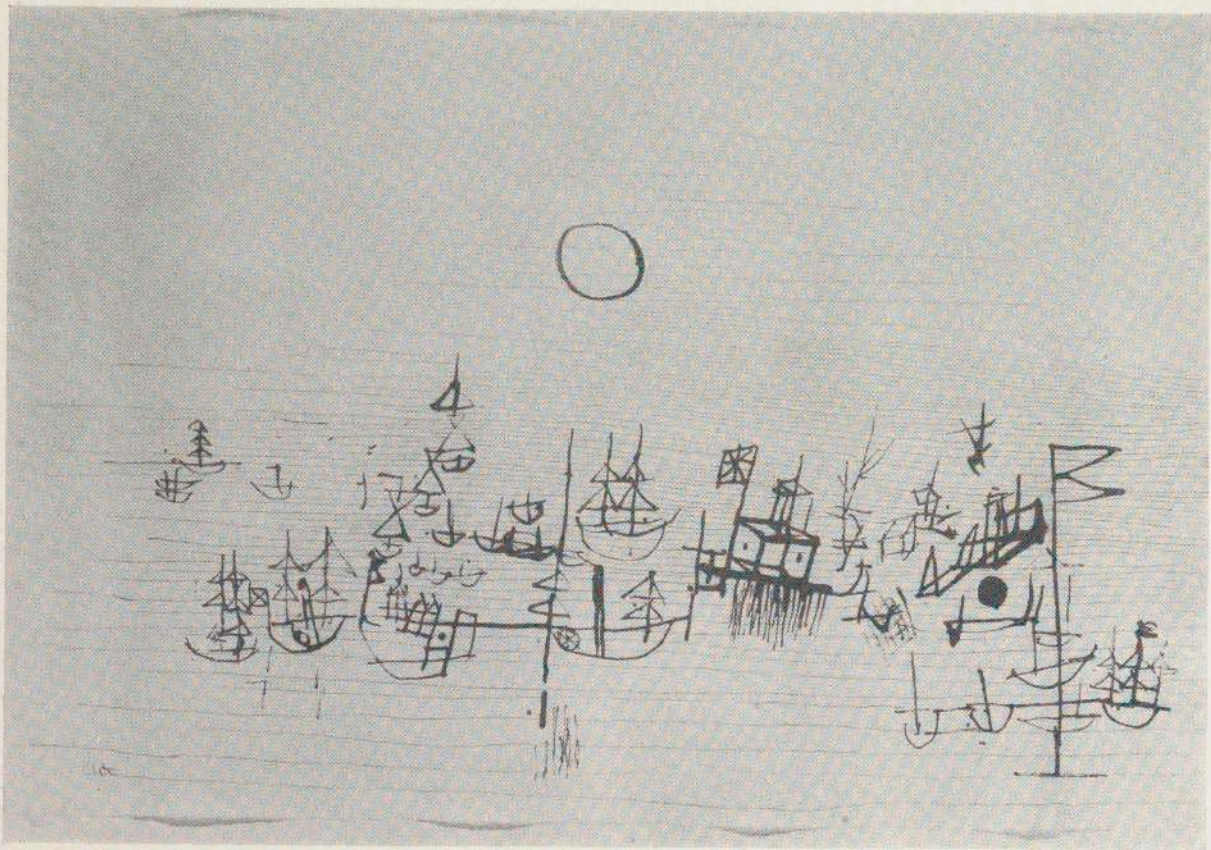




25

DRAGON OF THE AIR, 1927  
Oil, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches



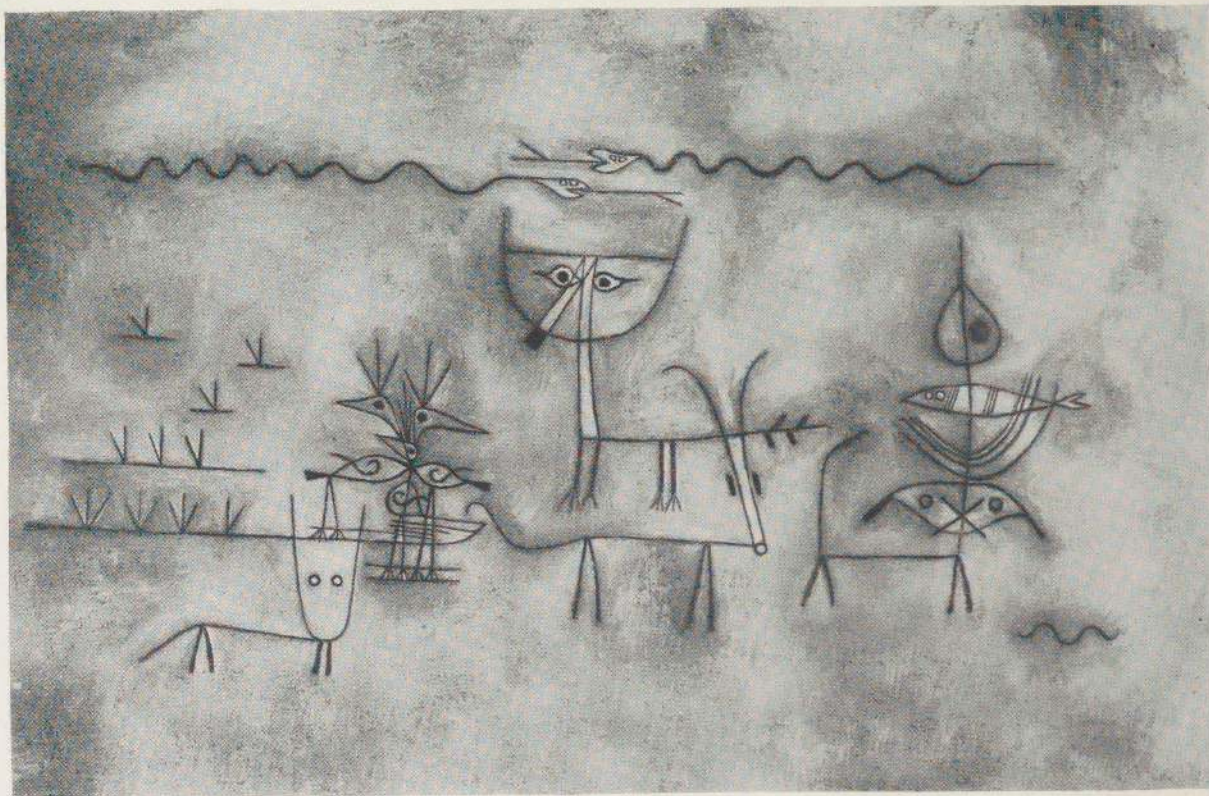


29

THE HARBOR OF PLIT, 1927

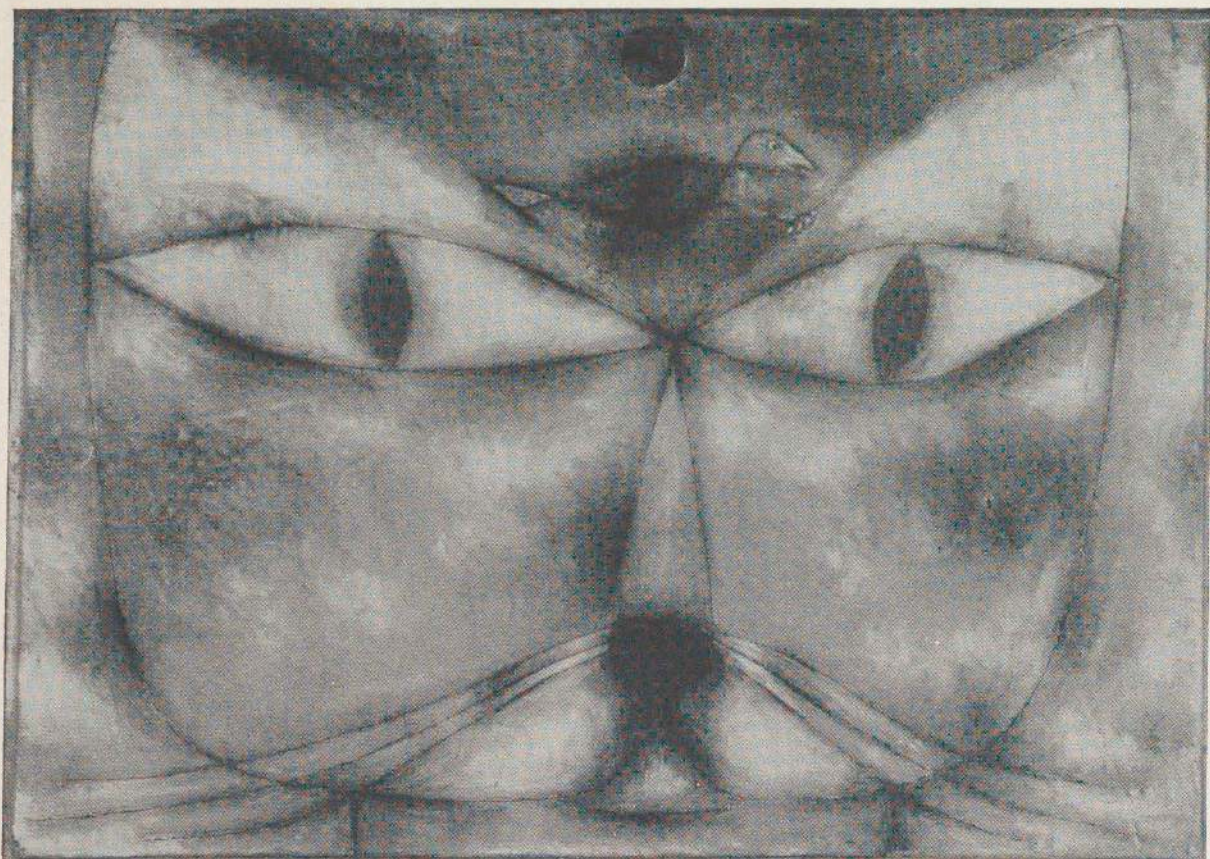
Ink, 12¼ x 18½ inches





37  
ZOO, 1928  
Oil, 16 x 23 1/2 inches



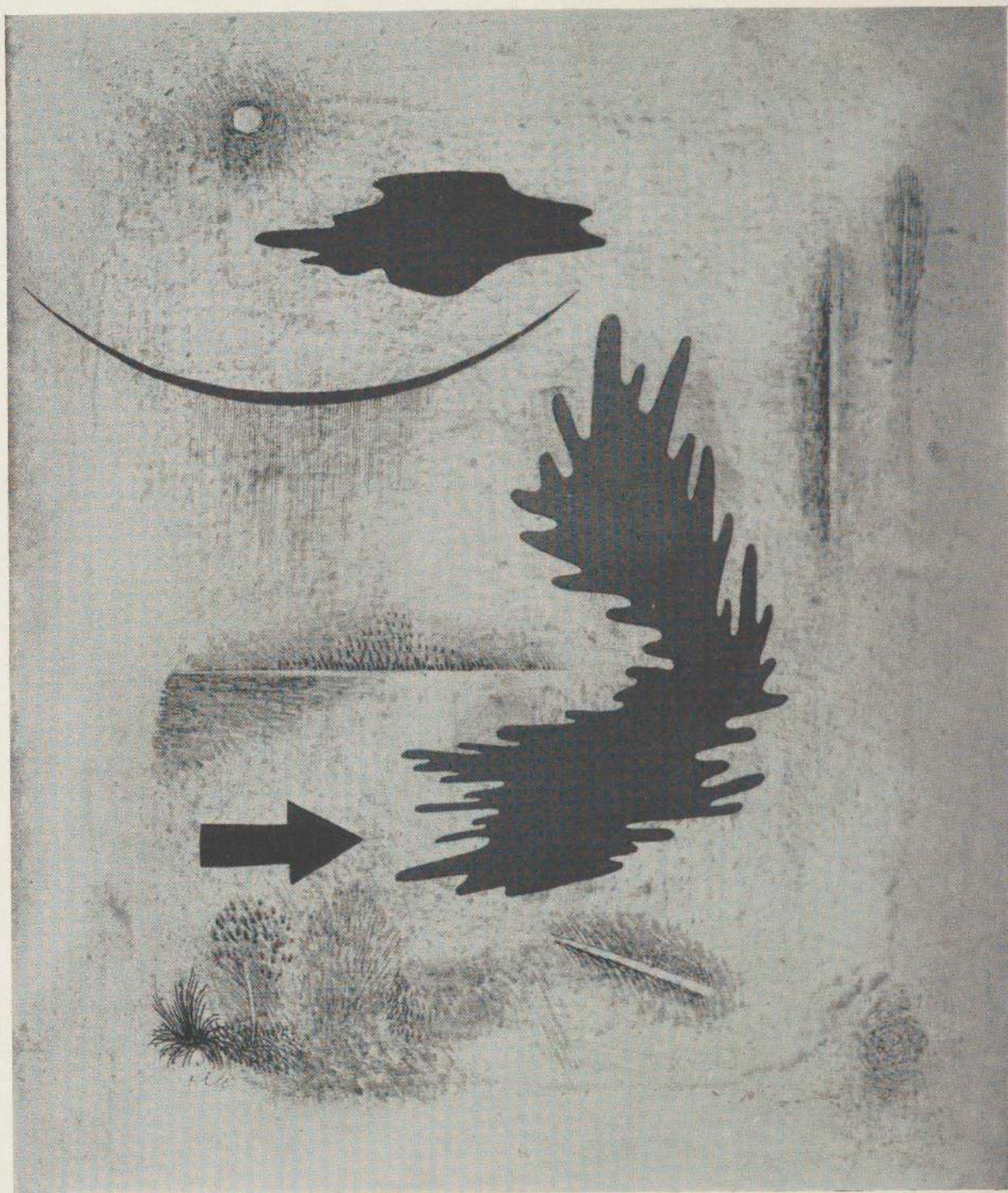


39

CAT AND BIRD, 1928

Oil, 15 1/4 x 21 inches

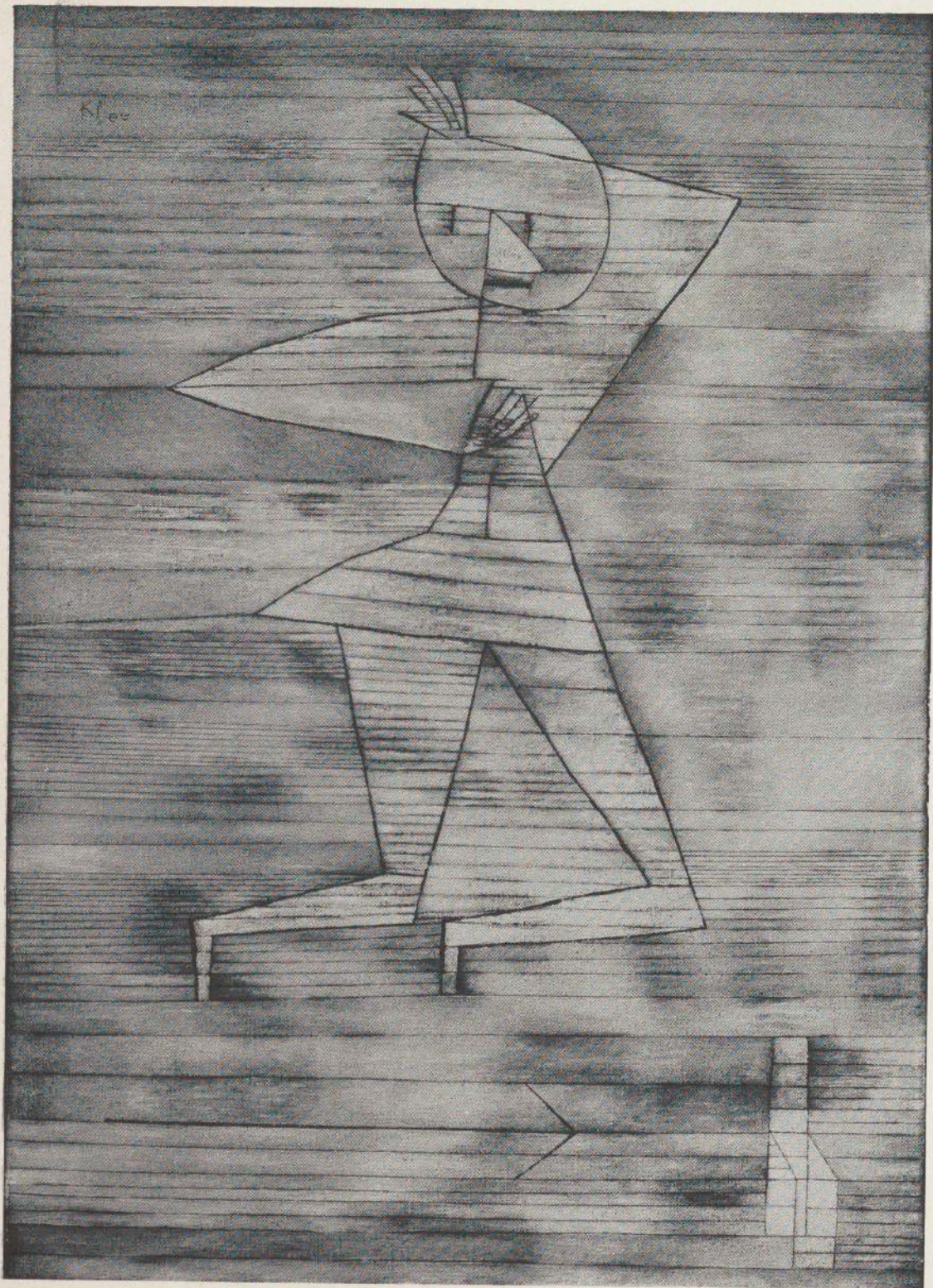




47

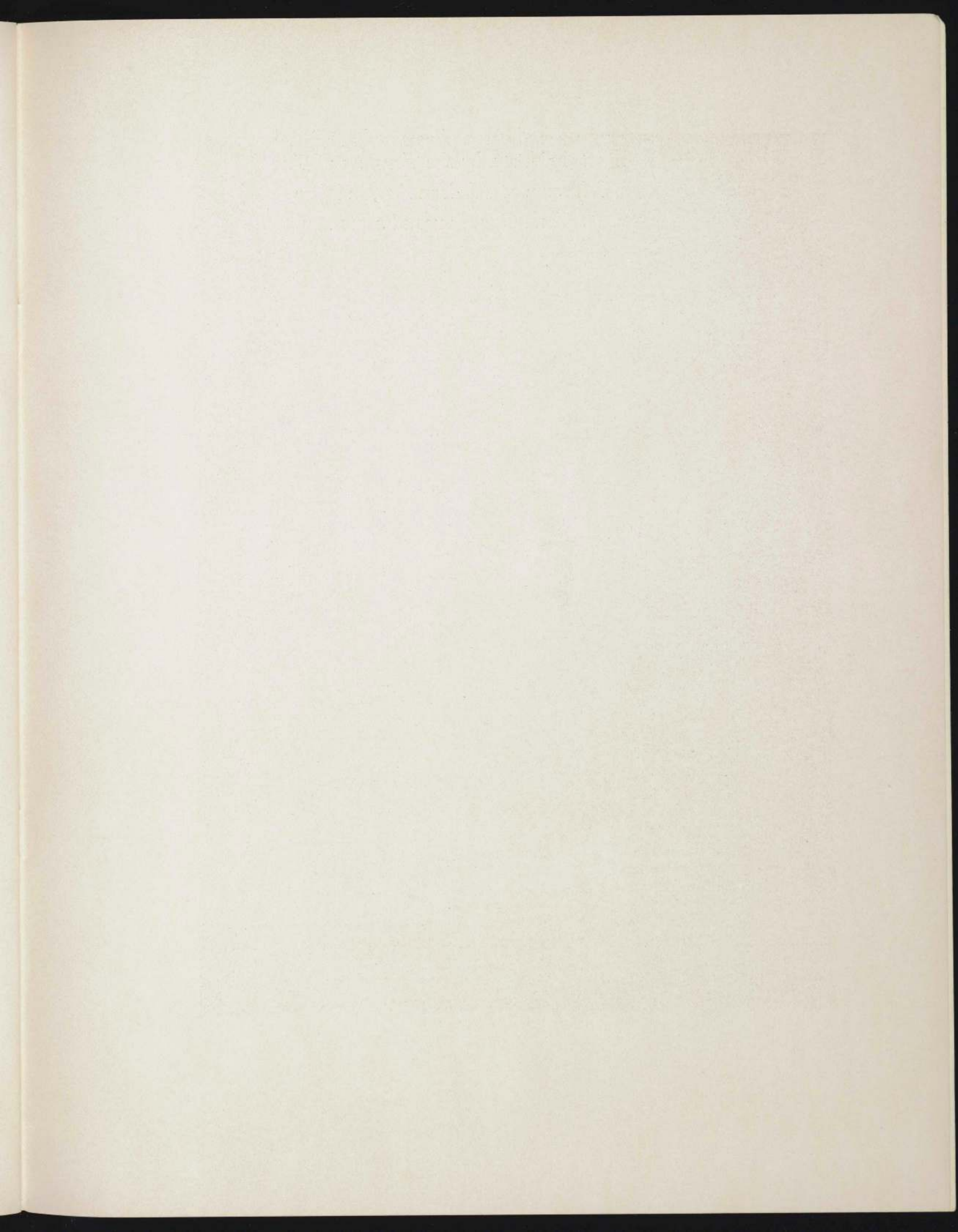
MIXED WEATHER, 1929  
Mixed Medium, 19½ x 16¼ inches





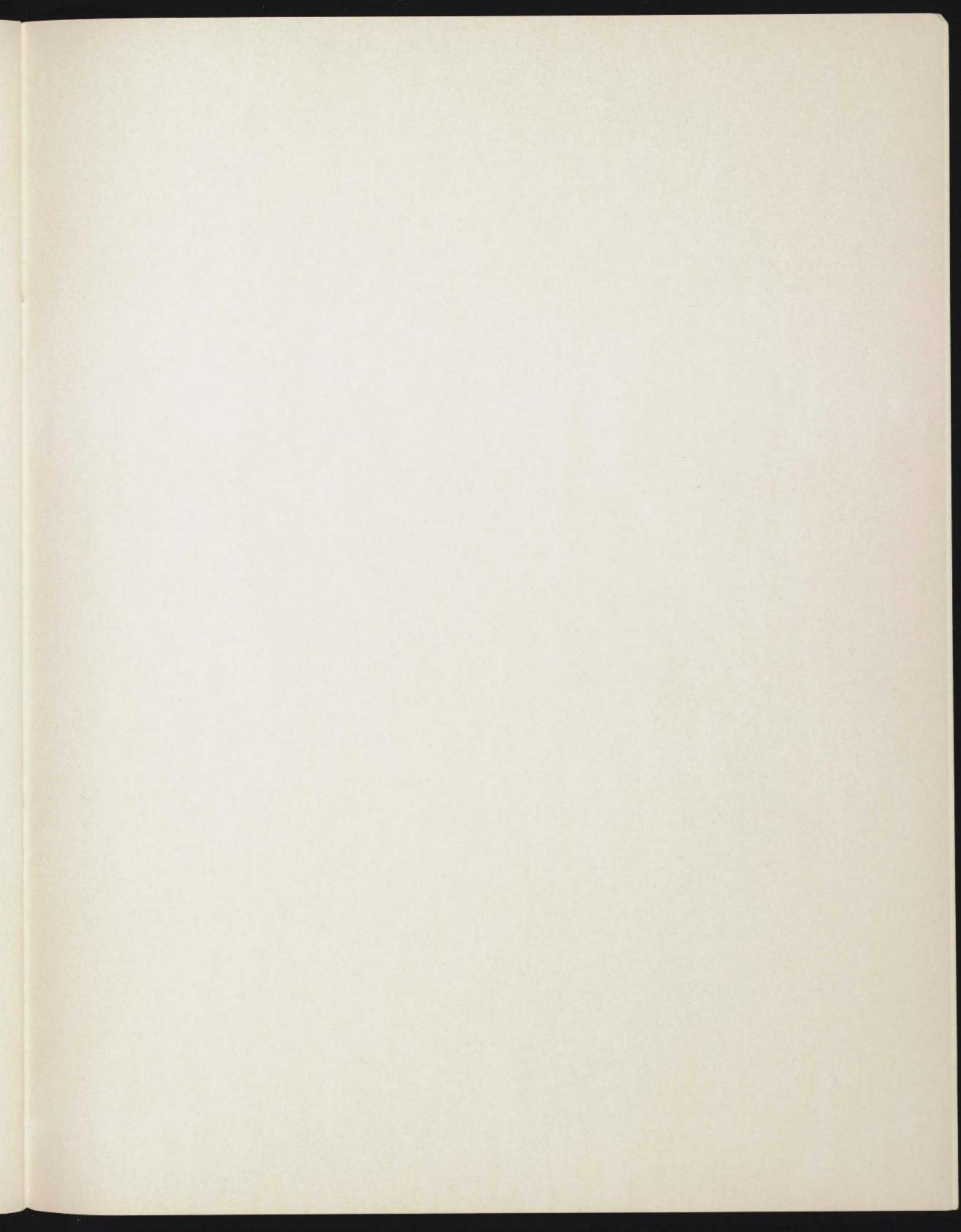
51  
HURRYING SPIRIT, 1929  
Oil, 35 x 25 inches



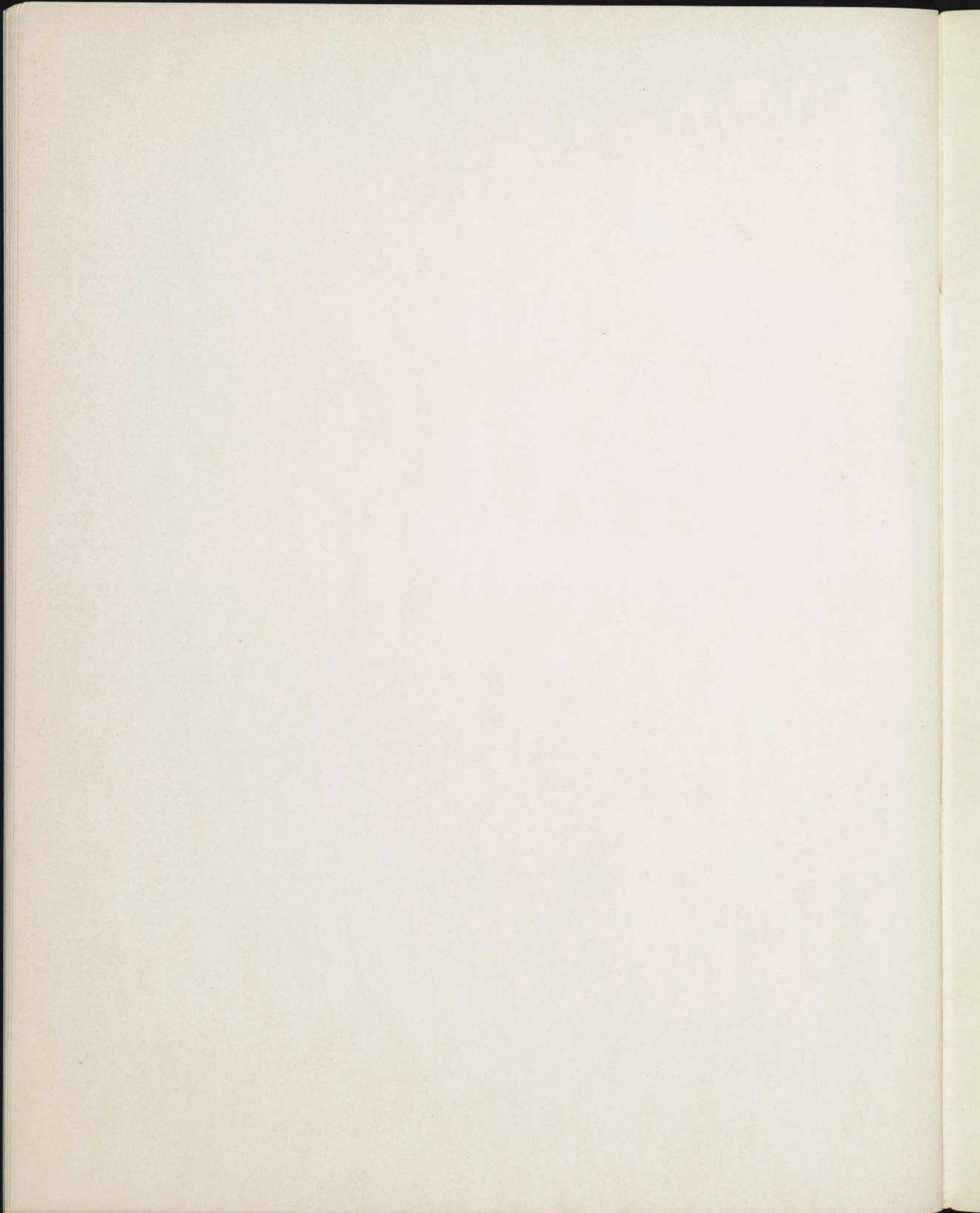


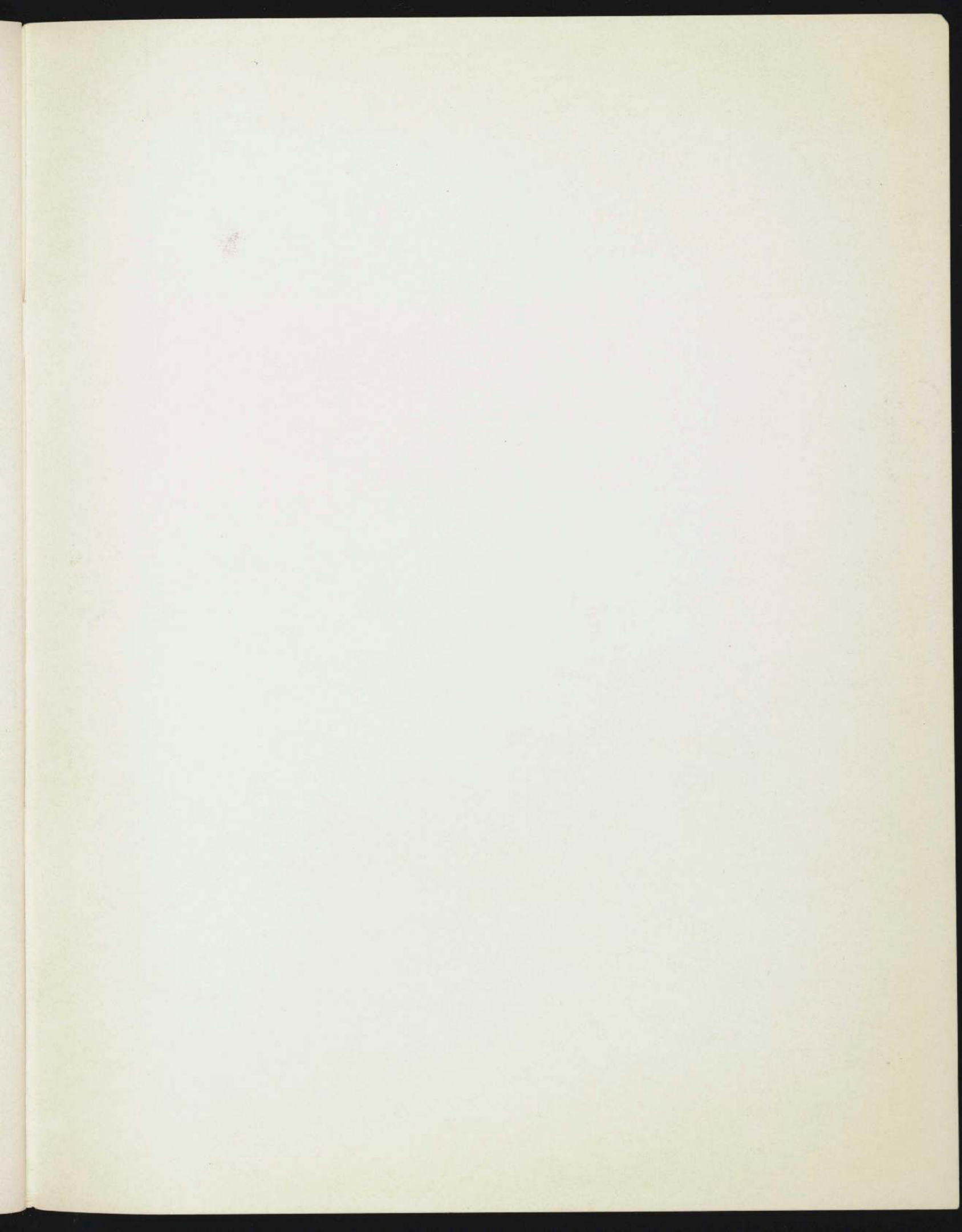


*This catalog was issued March eleventh  
nineteen thirty, by the Trustees of The  
Museum of Modern Art, in New  
York. One thousand copies.*

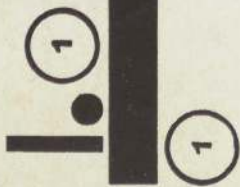












Dieselbe Linie, sich umschreibend (Fig. 4):



Fig. 4

Eine **aktive** Linie, die sich frei ergeht, ein Spaziergang um seiner selbst willen, ohne Ziel. Das agens ist ein Punkt, der sich verschiebt (Fig. 1):



Fig. 1

Dieselbe Linie mit Begleitungsformen (Fig. 2 und 3):



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Zwei Nebenlinien, die Hauptlinie imaginär (Fig. 5):



Fig. 5