

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IMAGE:
A VISUAL EXPRESSION OF MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO:
THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN & C. S.
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

FACULTY OF FINE ART
DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING

BY

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APRIL 1981

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INTRODUCTION

This essay is intended to clarify an aspect of art not fully explored—the autobiographical image. It is unavoidably human by its very nature and I hope to focus on its function and context, in art. Here the term autobiographical image refers to the art product—the end product. I have chosen the artists Picasso, Bacon and Bearden, because I feel their “image” can be related to their actual experience especially with regard to environmental and social influences.

Picasso's ‘Blue Period’ concentrates on the hunger and isolation of the Paris of the early 1900's. Along with the fact that he allowed the social conditions to dominate his work during this period, there is also the highly subjective element that Picasso had suffered through the same squalor himself. The image here is a result of a combination of many influences. Bacon's personal isolation is present in his emphasis on the single portrait figures; these are not only distorted but are also surrounded by large blank spaces, where nothing appears on the canvas to distract and give relief to the viewer. Bearden's ghetto world of Harlem is not only a very subjective one but he has selected his own repetitive themes (musical instruments, rituals) which read like a life story across his canvas.

The development of an individual from conception to adulthood is a slow process. We may take an instance from an individual's life and discuss it as a particular happening but it is only within the context of that person's life that the action becomes relevant. So when we speak of the personalised image we must accept that the work may be

(a) not immediately legible

(b) subjective

Taking (a) first

The language the artist uses may be personalised and may only be understood in relation to the subjective experience of the artist. In the work of Picasso for example, it is possible after some studying to translate the symbols into a language (he shows man's nearness to nature by including an ape in “Acrobats family with ape”. I use the word translate in order to reinforce the need for the viewer to abandon his own language and learn how to read the language of the piece of work. There is a need to emphasise here that there is no

easy formula — for example; understanding Bacon's isolated figures is helped by having some knowledge of the artist's life style (isolation) yet one feels that there is another dimension to his work which transcends the autobiographical. This other dimension, is what under heading (b) I have called subjective. These artists do not try to interpret the world they live in but attempt to create a dialogue between themselves and the world. Their physical interaction with the rest of the world, while it is a facet of the dialogue, is tolerated only because the business at hand is not to work out a new theory of existence, but to come to terms with the problem of survival. The dialogue they sustain revolves around living, dreaming, understanding. They travel from the objective to the subjective, in search of, in E. Fromm's words,

'New solutions for the contradictions' 1

Fromm suggests that this "necessity" to search "is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man of all his passions, affects and anxieties". It is not a search of the universe but a search of the self, subjective, that is being consistently initiated with each new autobiographical work. Fundamental to all aspects of the search is medium. The traditional medium of visual expression is limited by line, colour and tone. I want to examine each of these elements briefly. Firstly, line is used as an instrument for measurement, in Bacon's work he uses lines, in the form of metal frames to define the space in which his figures are contained—Head Series; Pope Series. He does not use flat planes or colour to define his interiors but by a simple line achieves his effect. Colour cannot be measured nor weighed, it is an entity in itself, (Klee). 2. Colour can be seen in terms of quality. Colour can convey mood, this aspect of medium may be the most dynamic. Colour can become an index to many artists—Picasso's Blue Period is haunting in the way it conveys misery and sorrow. Tone expresses weight, heavy areas juxtaposed to light areas. In Portrait of Henrietta Moraes (1963) the figure is weighed heavily to the left-hand-side of the picture, the darker side.

In the first chapter I will discuss the work of Picasso under the following headings;

1. his early work in Paris from 1901—4 (covering the Blue Period and the rejection of a subjective view of the world).
2. The period he spent preoccupied with his own sexuality.
3. Guernica; a culmination.

I will also take a more general approach to Beardens paintings, under the heading;

1. portrayal of Black experience in American ghetto life
2. His exploration of Black ritual and music
3. Statements on the contrast between rural and city life.

In the second chapter I will consider the work of Francis Bacon which

1. developed outside any tradition of painting
2. have a subjective view of the world
3. The images that influenced his work.

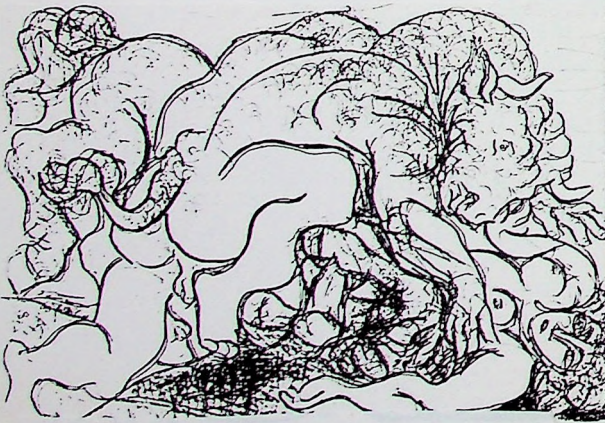
In this introduction I have attempted to propose a definition of the autobiographical image. In my definition I have tried to cover all its complexity from the very subjective human dimension to the actual product that one sees on the gallery wall. While I feel that I have covered many areas it is necessary to say that I have come to realise that there is no definitive autobiographical image. The artists I have chosen show a strong contrast not only among themselves but with respect to other artists. They reflect the way in which an autobiographical image may in many ways be easy to define yet may finally contain many complexities. This paper does not attempt the enormous task of studying, in great detail the lives of these three giant artists nor does it have the pomposity to establish standards or values for the judgement of the autobiographical image, it intends, as already stated, to clarify the rather murky area around the autobiographical image.

FOOTNOTES

1. Erich Fromme The Sane Society London Henly Routledge and Kegan Paul P. 15.
2. Herbert Read Intro. Paul Klee on Modern Art. Faber Pub. 1948.



Frugal Meal fig. I



Assault by Minotaur ,etching fig 4



Girl and Sleeping Minotaur, etching fig 5



Woman Ironing Fig.2



Acrobats family with Ape fig 3

CHAPTER I

Human and Social experience found in the work of Romare Bearden and Picasso.

During the years 1901–04 Picasso was interested primarily in human values. This interest manifested itself in his preoccupation with the figure. During this time he did not produce any still-life. He painted two views of Barcelona but otherwise landscape is only occasionally introduced into the background of his paintings. In his 'Frugal Meal' 1904 (Fig.1) he shows man in a demoralized state, hopelessness is exaggerated to the point of self-pity, no hope for the future seems possible. He used a predominantly blue palette for the portrayal of figures and themes of suffering. His figures are the reflection of the joyless humanity of the Paris of that time. They are generally marked by profound morbidity, and deprivation. Picasso experienced this type of hardship while attempting to establish himself in Paris. The misery of those years along with a deep seated sympathy for the suffering of others were his main preoccupations. In 'Woman Ironing' (Fig. 2) he carries the theme far beyond sympathy and understanding. He seems to create a monument out of this emaciated desperately exhausted woman. She is a symbol of all the underprivileged and exploited. In 1905 he totally abandoned, his earlier work, in spirit, subject, and colour. The chroma of the Blue Period was followed by quieter canvases. It was with the introduction of Acrobats to his work that he found some hope of breaking free of the misery of the city. He extended his vision of the outside world to circus people and strolling players. They were a people who lived a romantic life, their grace and skills were a token of the purity of spirit unattainable in the city. He shows their nearness to nature by including an animal with them in the paintings as in 'Acrobats family with ape' (Fig. 3).

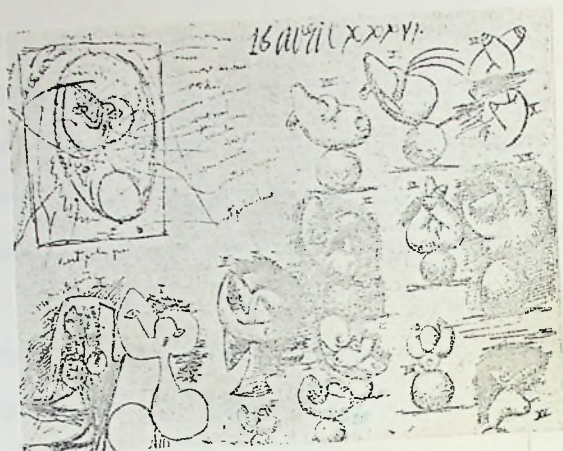
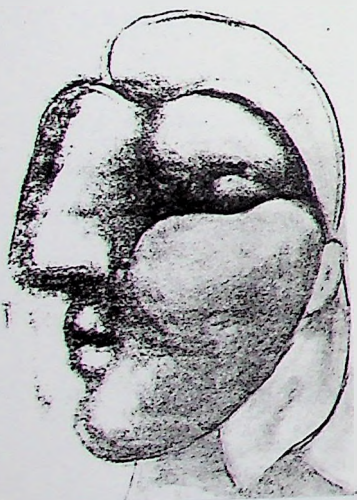
As he freed himself of his physical environment he became more aware of his own instincts; his sexuality became a predominant theme for most of his later work. He became preoccupied with physical sensations between the years 1930–44. These feelings were so strong and deep that they destroyed all objectivity and reassembled reality to reflect pain or pleasure. In his etchings of the Suite Vollard he used the images of the bull, the horse, the woman and the Minotaur, images deeply rooted in Spanish mythology as the basic language, to express, his desires, frustration and sexual fulfilment. Picasso clearly identifies himself as the minotaur. He is seen not as a pathetic creature but rather as a king. He has his own power and strength, he is not afraid of his own instincts; his sexuality (Fig. 4). The Minotaur is an



Head of Woman fig 6



Head of a Woman. [Paris]
February 16, 1933
Drypoint, 12½ x 9" (31.7 x 22.9 cm)
Geiser 288, IV. Musée Picasso, Paris



Drawings for Head of Woman fig 7

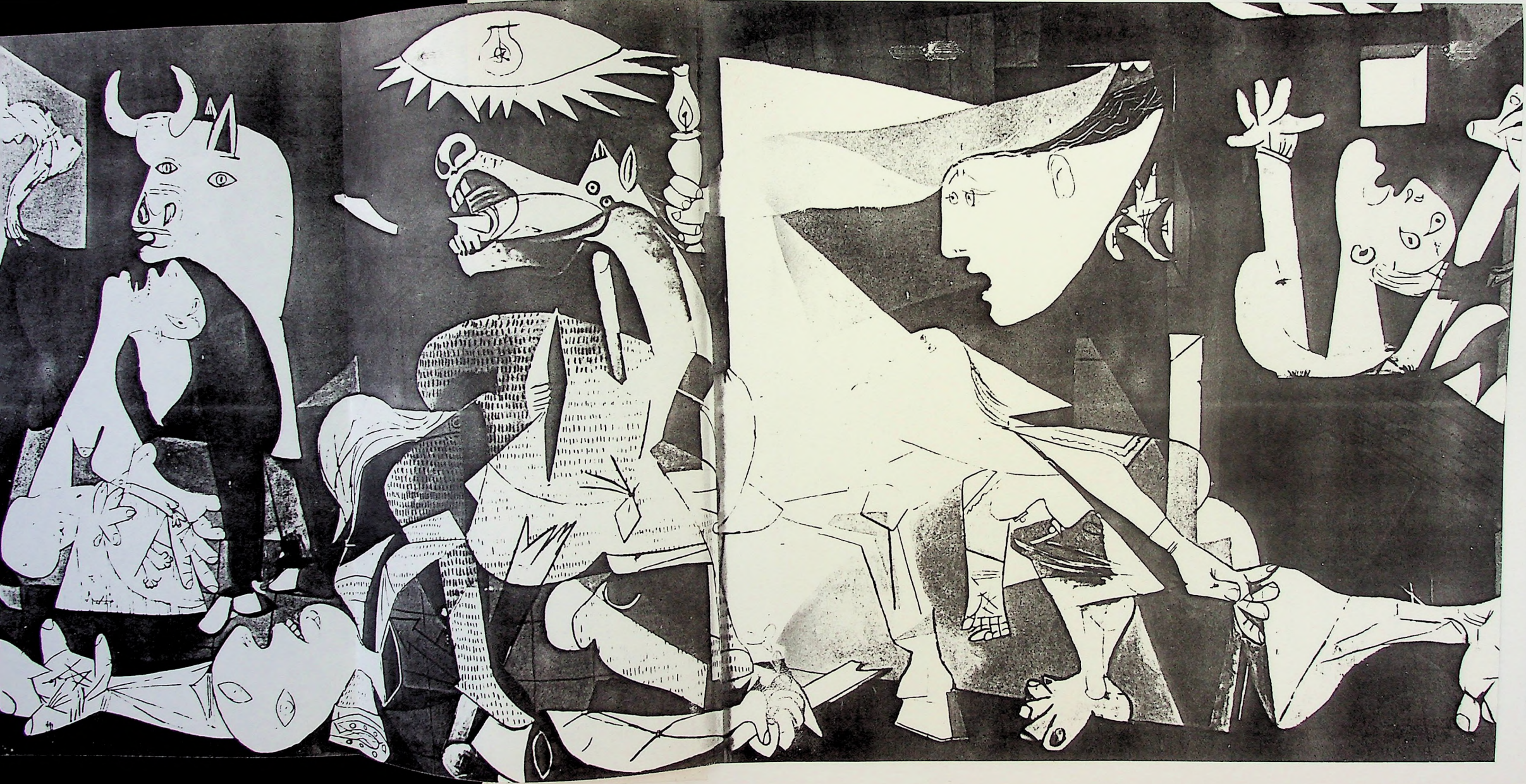
Study for Giernica fig 9



invader in these etchings seeking some kind of emotional knowledge. In 'Minotaur and Woman Asleep' 1933 (Fig. 5) he is presented as a creature who has been tamed, he shows tenderness not aggression. The woman is asleep and so excludes the Minotaur. Sleep may be for Picasso a symbol of the innermost self. Picasso's interest in the wake—slumber theme derives from at least three distinct impulses; from his private life, from the psychic concerns of his generation, and from his native culture". I. Picasso always worked at night so he was very much aware of the fact that others were sleeping. Western Science was concerned with sleep at the beginning of the 20th cent. ie. marginal states of consciousness, sleep and dreaming. Spanish culture exploits the sleeping state, it is believed in Spain that while one is asleep here, one is awake else where, in this way every man is two men. In "The Embrace" 1933 the female body is fully possessed by the Minotaur. He has attained the total knowledge he was seeking throughout the Suite Vollard; an expression of love.

In the sculpture 'Head of Woman' 1931 (Fig. 6) we see the representation of a face. Yet this face is reduced to two features; the nose and mouth. These two features emerge from three rounded forms which have been formulized from the cheeks and bun of hair at the back of the head. The scale he used is very much larger than that of a normal head. The nose and mouth are metaphors for the male and female sex organs; the rounded forms for buttocks and thighs. This face or head embodies the sexual experience of two lovers. Picasso may have arrived at this image unconsciously but afterwards he deliberately played with the idea of transforming a head into sexually charged component parts. We can see the process that took place in a sequence of his drawings for the piece. (Fig. 7).

On April 26th 1937 the Basque town of Guernica was destroyed by the Germans under the orders of General Franco. In less than a week Picasso began his painting (Fig. 8). It was a painting about how Picasso imagined and felt suffering, because it was a profoundly subjective work. It is from this that it derives its power. Picasso did not try to imagine the actual event. There is no town, no explosion, no reference to the time of day or to the part of Spain it happened in. One cannot distinguish an enemy or any heroes, yet the work is a protest which lies in what is happening to the bodies; to the horse, and the mothers breasts. It is a suffering of sensations, felt by the flesh. We are made to feel the pain with our eyes. The suffering seen in the bodies is how he makes his protest. He appeals to our instinct for survival at an intense level of physical subjectivity. The scene takes place in darkness, in an



open space surrounded by what would be indications of some type of buildings. The figures fall into two groups, the three animals — the bull, the wounded horse and the winged bird. Then there is the second group; the human figures — the dead soldier, a woman above on the right, who leans out of a window and holds up a lamp. These are accompanied by three women; the mother carrying a dead child on the left and above her another woman falling from a house which also appears to be collapsing and in flames.

The horse, Picasso said in an interview, represents the people and the bull brutality and darkness. The central theme is the conflict between the horse and the bull as he would have seen in Spain. Since the horse stands for suffering humanity it seems possible that the wound in his side may refer to the wound in the side of Christ, pierced by a spear, which appears in Picasso's compositions of the Crucifixion. He has heightened the effect of agony by turning the horse's tongue into a sort of dagger protruding from its jaws (Fig. 9). This symbol is used not only for the horse but also for the screaming mother on the left of the painting. The horse expresses its fear by throwing up its head in a gesture taken from nature but exaggerated and stylized to emphasize the length and almost tubular form of the neck. It is clear from early examples of his work ie. 'Gored Horse 1917, The Bull-fight 1934, The Crucifixion 1930' that the symbols used in Guernica were not suddenly invented for this painting. They evolved over many years. The bull; is a symbol of violence and brutality. The bird represents the spirit of the horse which shall live on after his death. The entire painting is lit up by the lamp in the apex of the main structural triangle. It is held in position by the clenched fist of a vertically upraised arm, one of the traditional symbols of truth. Above this lamp to the left is an almond shaped lamp which could also suggest an eye. The 'eye-lamp' is a symbol of power for Picasso as in his earlier work. Under the impulse of the Spanish Civil War Picasso used images he had developed for personal and private happenings. He used these images in Guernica to give expression in a visible form to his abhorrence of the evil which he saw in the world. It may be seen as a culmination of most of his earlier work, through the documentation on the painting. It is probably more completely documented than any other painting in the history of art. It was also photographed at various stages of development. Even though the painting changed structurally throughout its development the basic concept remained the same.

An artist who also creates out of personal experience is Romare Bearden, a black

American painter. His work constitutes a portrait of black experience in general and individual black lives within the environment of New York City. There is no private space in the tenement life he depicts, he created works that overflow with multiple images (Fig. 10). He incorporates a sense of randomness and the arbitrary aspects of ghetto life. Human beings spill out of houses and cluster in the streets in front of us. In "Black Manhattan" (Fig. 17) he creates a feeling of humans confused by the space they occupy. The work is filled with the fire-escapes of apartment dwellings and the streets are filled with waiting. Faces in the windows watch the action below on the streets.

Bearden was born in North Carolina and graduated from New York University with a science degree. He later studied with George Gross and was introduced to artists like Kollwitz and Daumier, whose work is mostly social commentary. He said of his own visual experience, "Every man must make his statement He must say Here I am know me. Hate me, love me, I will no longer be ignored, I will be counted". 2

Many of his canvases seem to feature faces. They peer out of the planes of the canvas as though looking right through the viewer. His paintings are more than just faces. Once a song-writer he is close to music. He constantly uses images of figures holding musical instruments. Music is very close to the culture of black people especially Blues and Jazz (Fig. 13). It is the personal and group experience common to the black community. Ritual is also a traditionally strong occurrence in black community life. A number of his paintings are called 'The Prevalence of Ritual' (Fig. 11), they depict Baptism, funerals and other ceremonies (Fig. 14).

When he arrived in New York City he found life very different to that of North Carolina. He found people dehumanized by material greed. Trains intrude the scenes of his paintings (Fig. 15). They have for him a double meaning. They represent the invasion by technology of the rural community, they also represent the vehicles which will take the negro from the cotton fields to the city. He shows the contrast between the black and white environment by using both American faces and African masks (Fig. 12). It is evident that he was influenced by cubism (in 1950 he studied in Paris and met Picasso and Braque). But his use of planes are more simplified than Picasso's. His use of the African mask is more direct and primitive. His use of colour is similar to that of Matisse's style. He has fused values found in

African, European and American art to express a very personal statement. His statements are without bitterness. He is not excessive nor sentimental but proud. He said of his work;

"This work represents some consolations of some memories, of some direct experience from my childhood to the present." 3

His work is primarily about city life and its conditions; the quality of silent suffering experienced by his people (Fig. 16). The need for a sense of identity reinforced by signs and symbols. The need for confirmation of existence has been given shape in the work of Picasso and Bearden.



fig.10 The Street

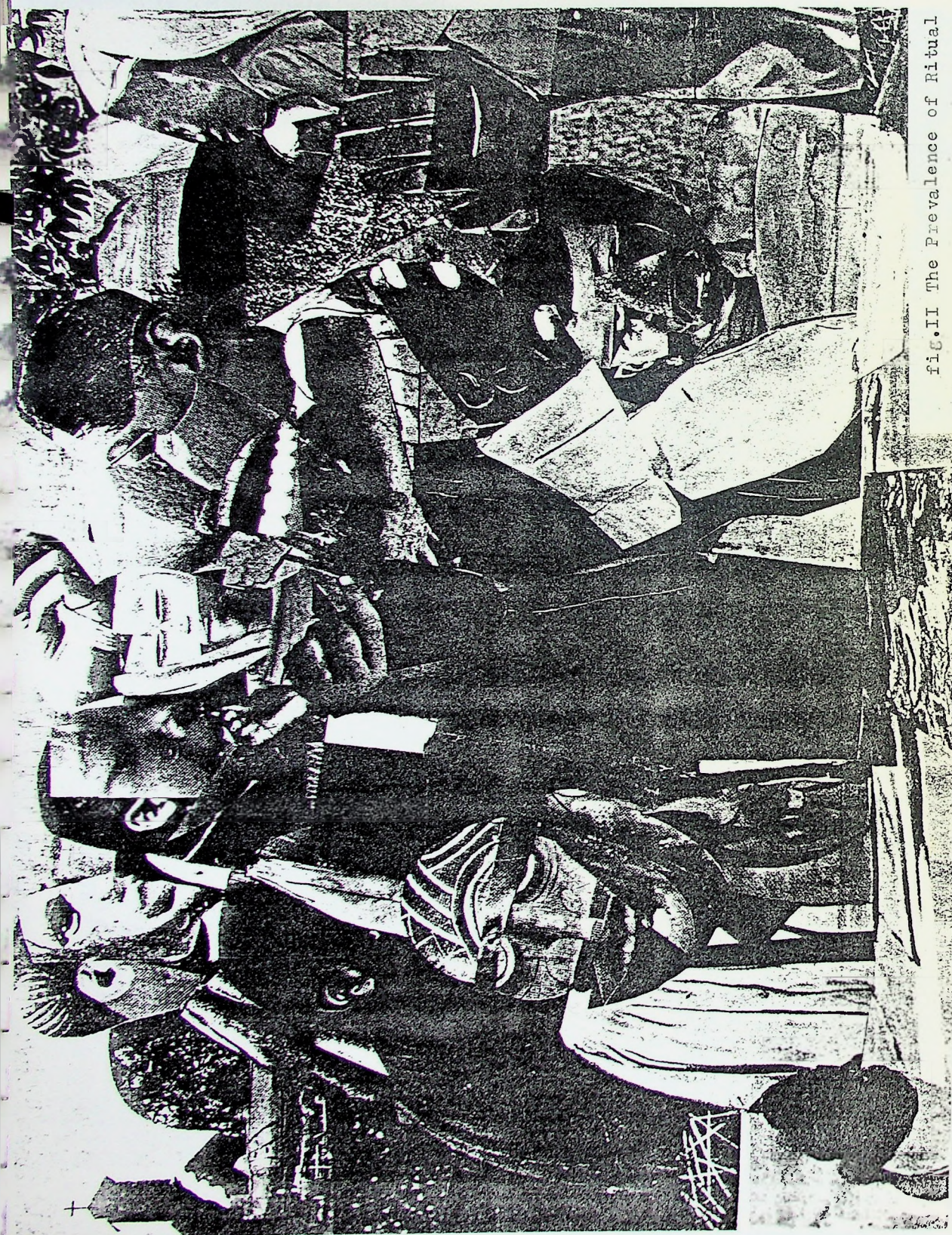


fig.II The Prevalence of Ritual

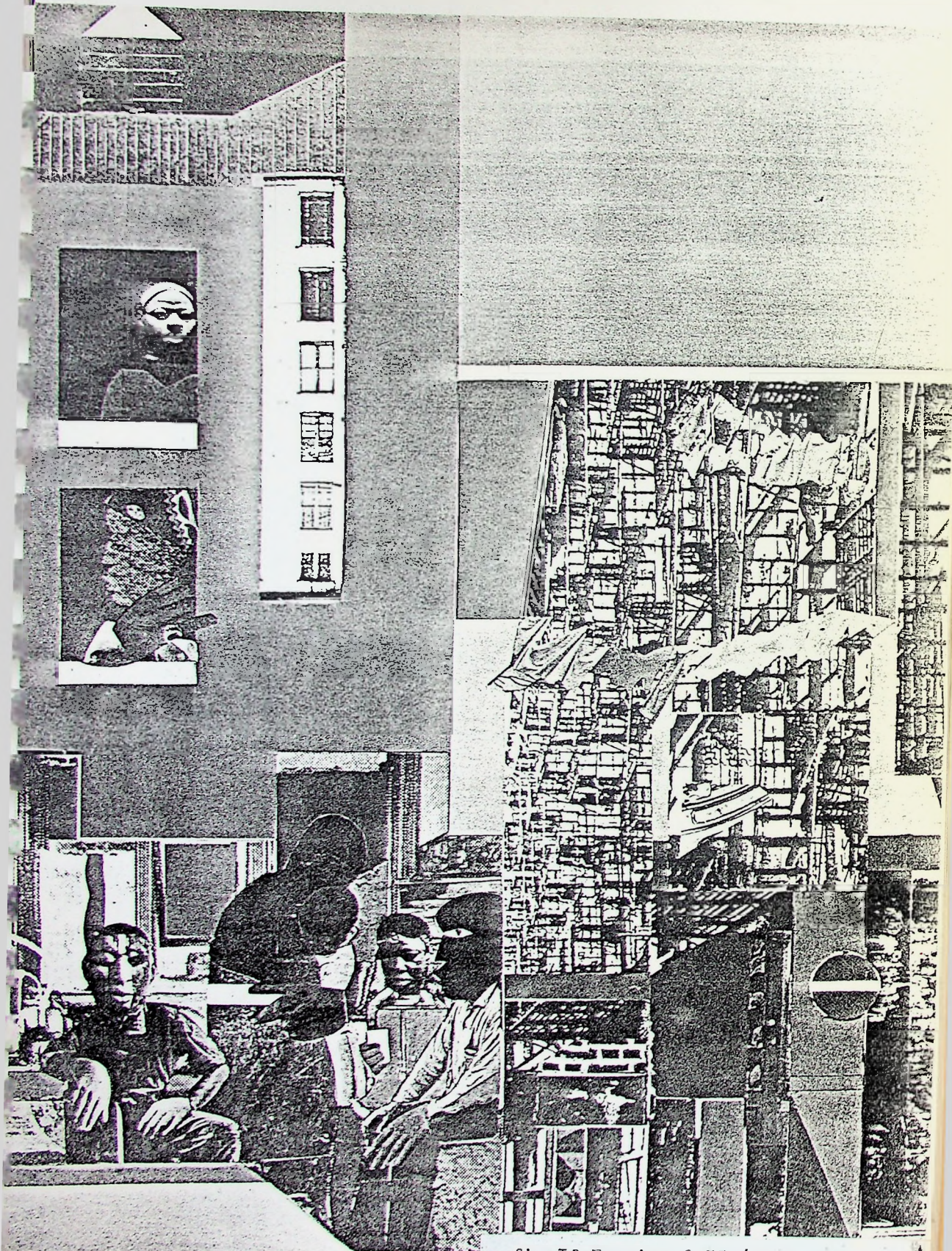


fig.I2 Evening 9:15:417 Lenox Ave.



fig. I3 Jazz



fig I4.The Funeral

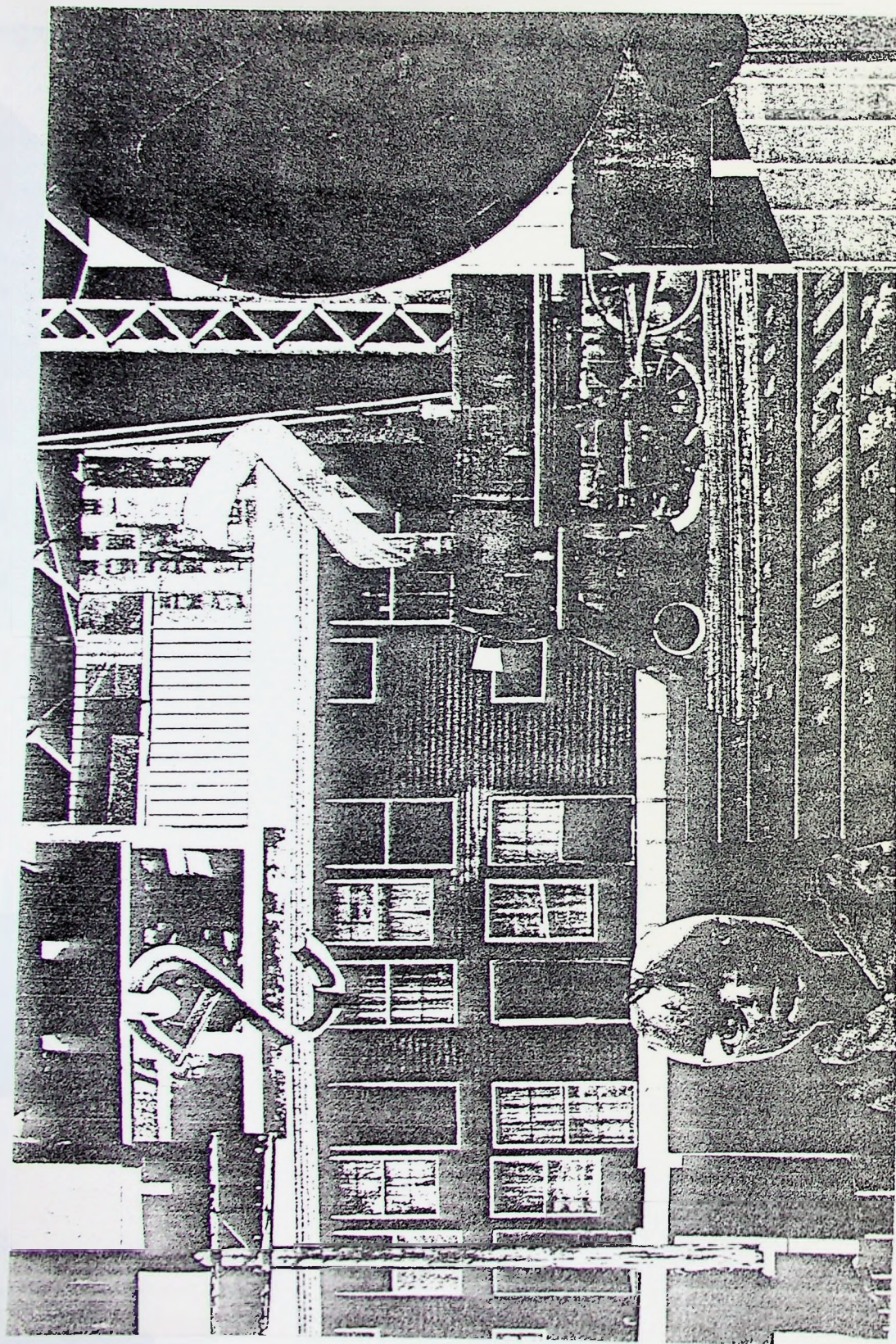


fig.15 Pittsburg

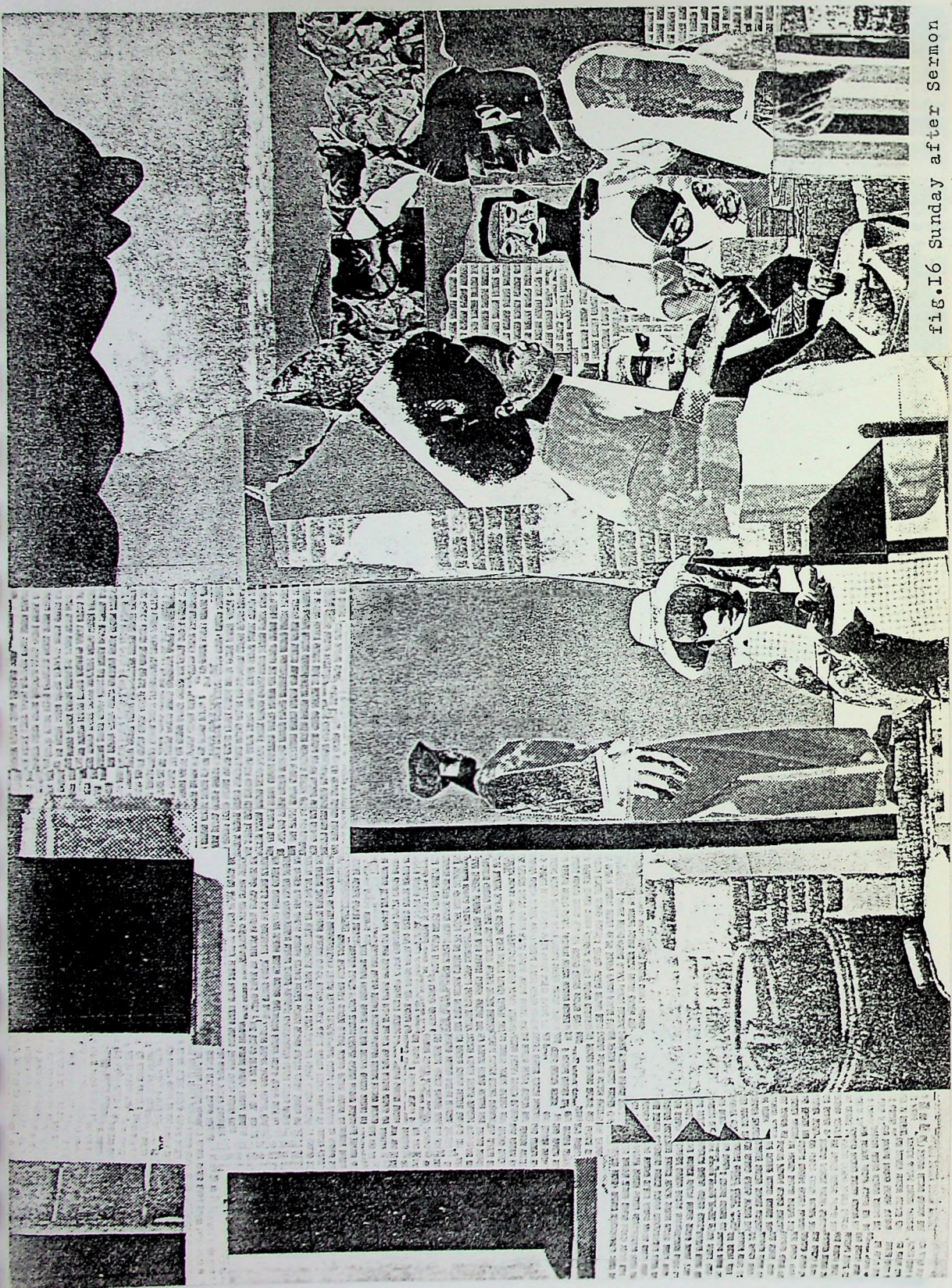


fig.16 Sunday after Sermon

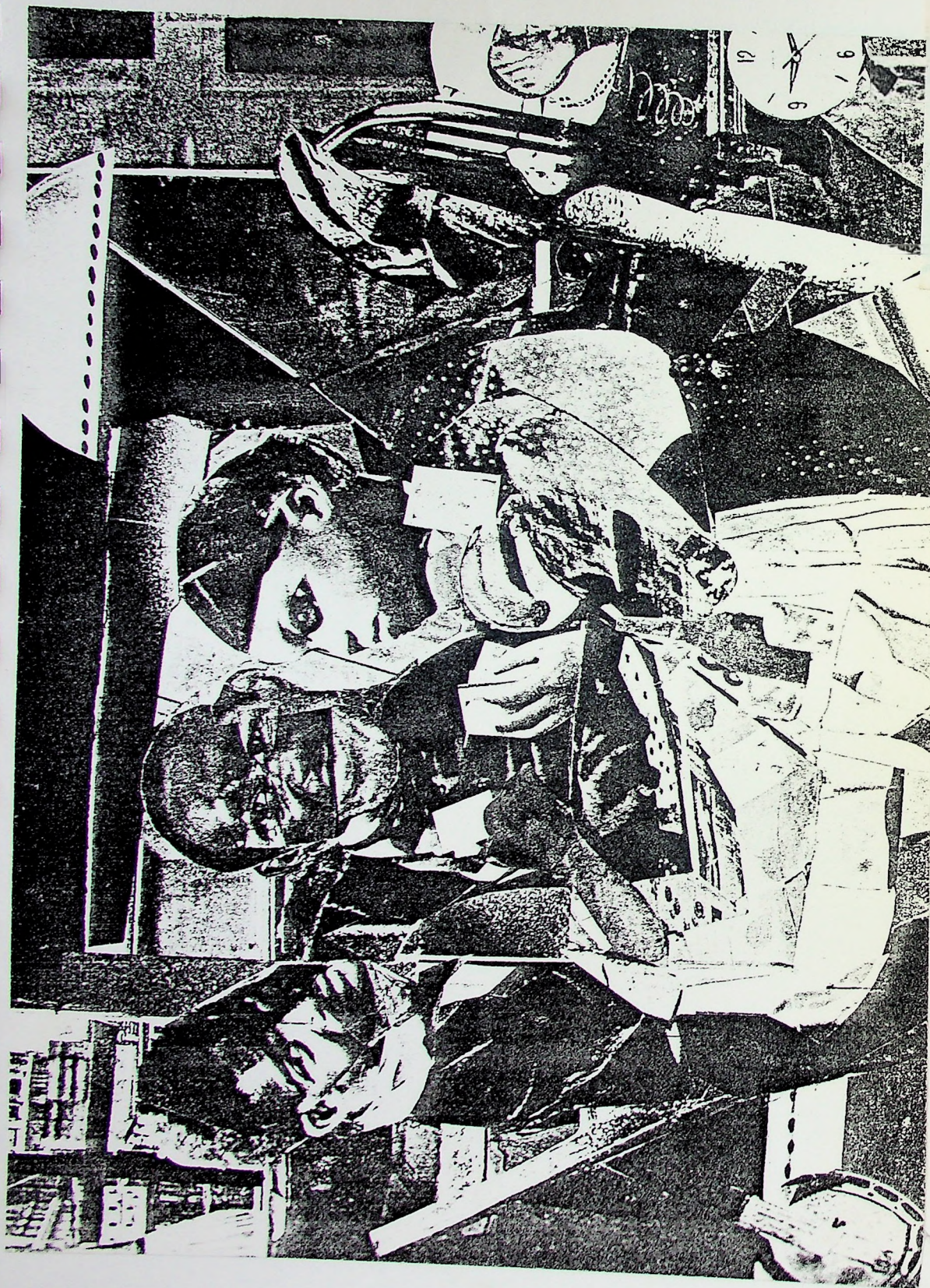
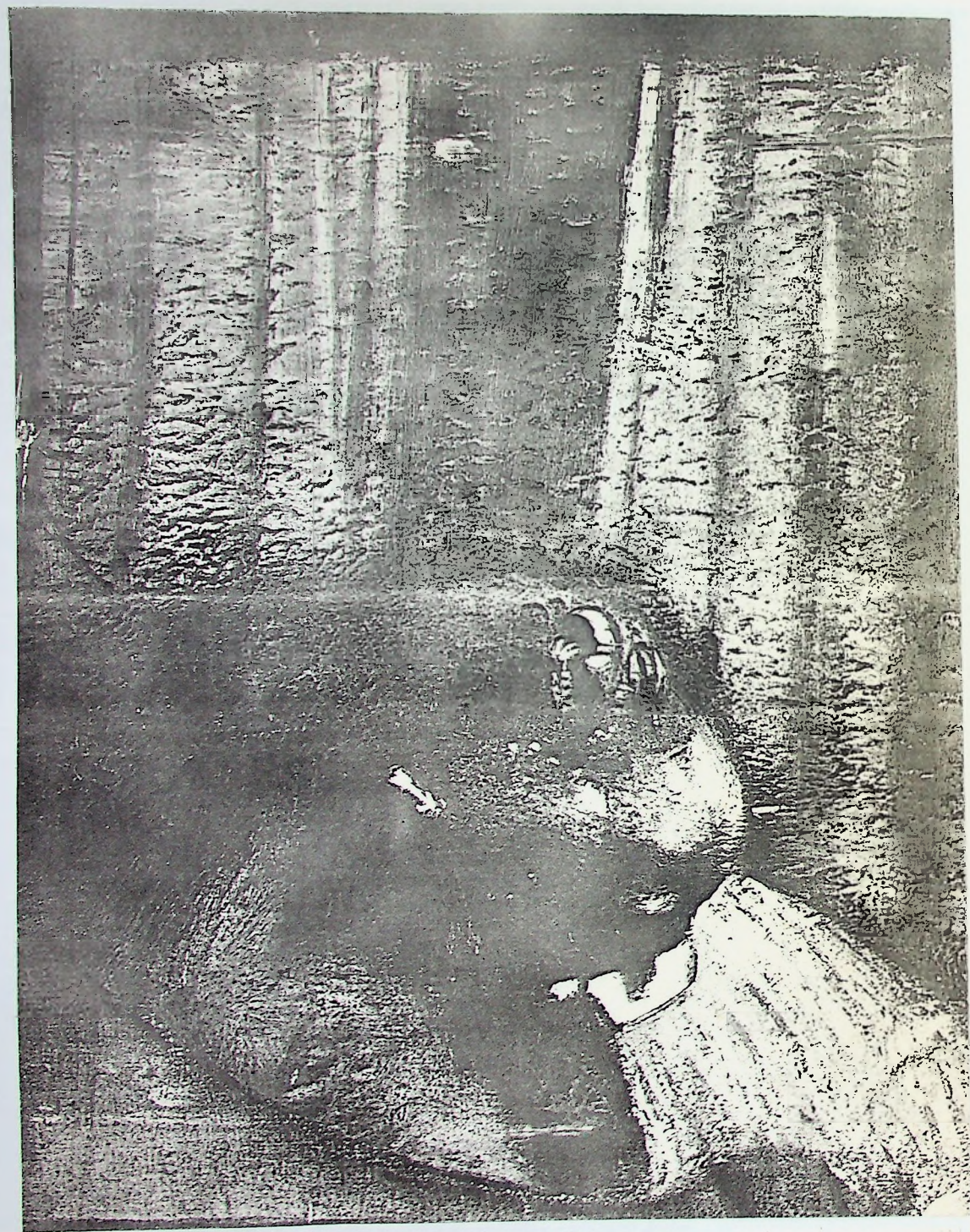


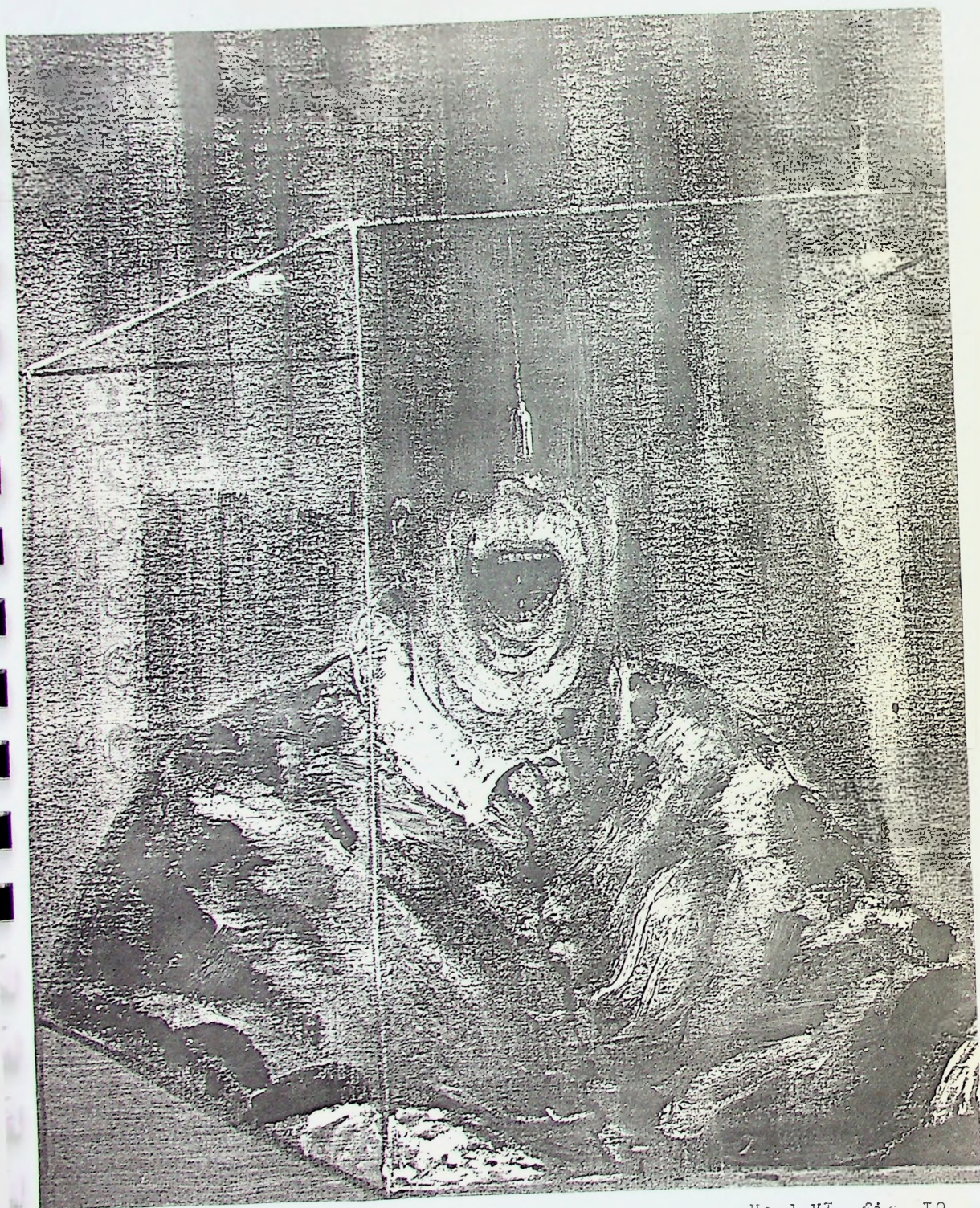
fig.17 Black Manhattan

FOOTNOTES

1. Leo Steinberg *Other Criteria Confrontation with 20th cent. Art.* Oxford University Press 1972 P. 102
2. M. Bunch *The Art of Romare Bearden* Harry Abrams Inc. Rib. New York 1977. P. 24
3. *Ibid* P. 25 Note: no intervening reference.



Head II fig 18



Head VI fig I9



Pope Innocent X fig 20

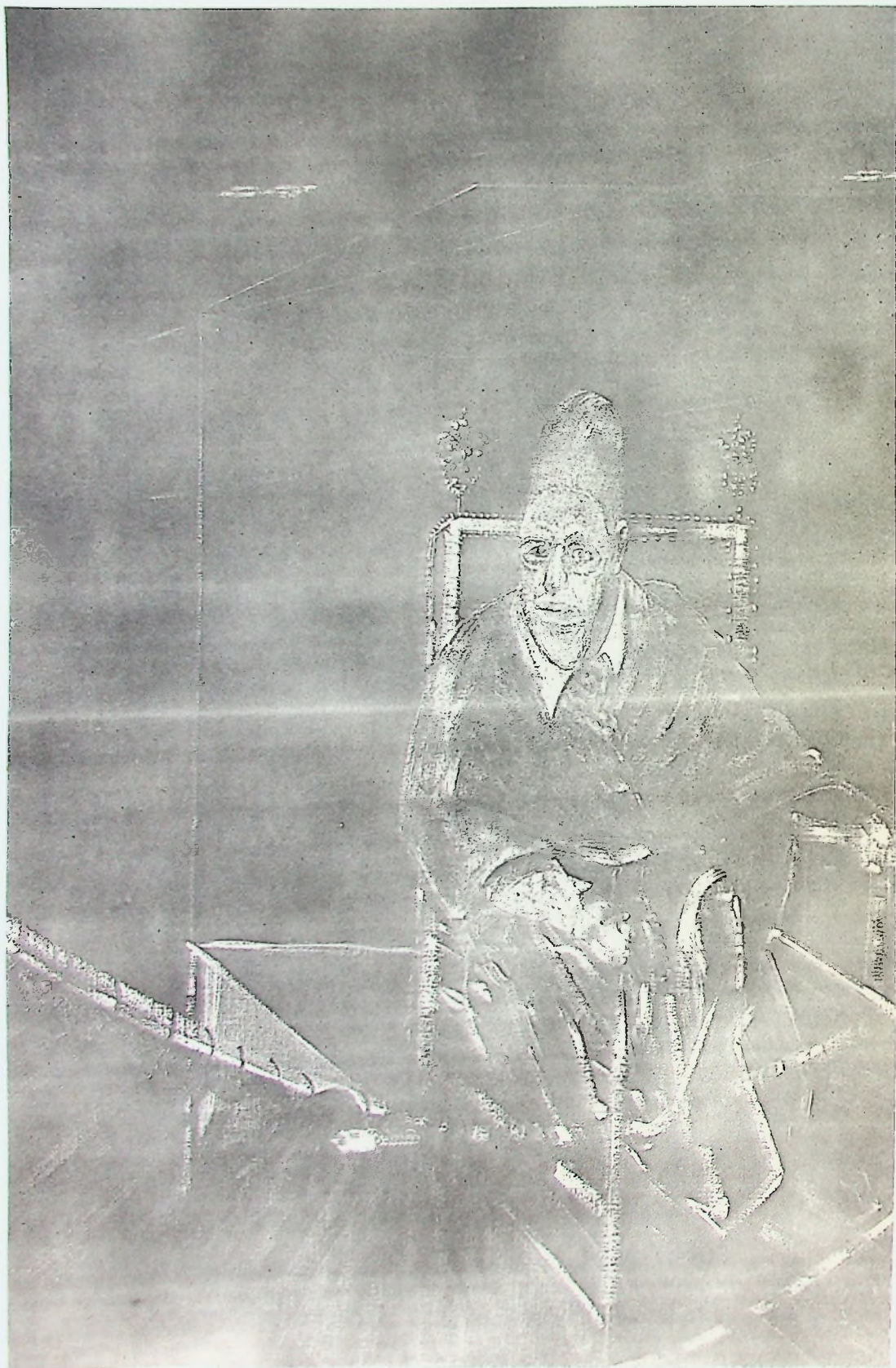
CHAPTER II

A personal vision of the world as seen in the works of Francis Bacon

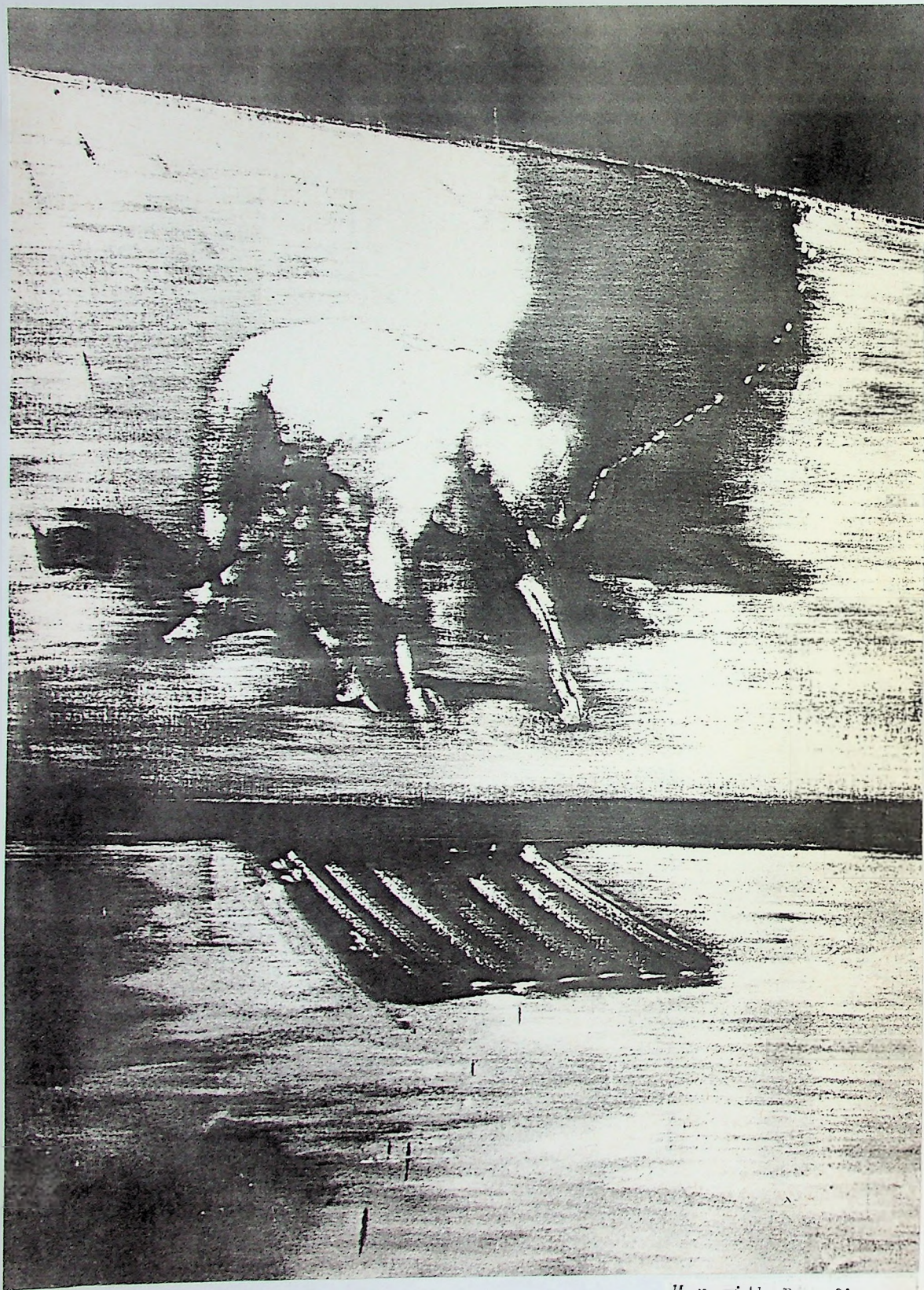
Francis Bacon was born in Dublin in 1909 and spent most of his early life isolated from his peers. He had asthma as a child and never had a coherent schooling. Instead he was tutored by the local clergyman, and left to his own devices for long periods at a time. In 1926 he was sent away from home by his father who found him trying on his mother's underwear. This began for him a life of drifting, which took him further away from any kind of conventional existence.

His painting emerged in a way which is contrary to the general trend and traditions of preceeding art, however he does not reject traditional techniques. One could not place him within the avant-garde, whose aims were to bring about formal changes, based on new techniques, new materials and new solutions to problems of space. Bacon neither illustrates nor narrates—he records and documents. He is interested in the facts, not the preliminaries or the consequences. One of his remarks explains this attitude: "I wanted to paint the scream more than the horror". I. The scream can be recorded because it is fact. The horror can only be described or evoked, for it is a state of mind. Thus he attaches great importance to gestures and positions in his work.

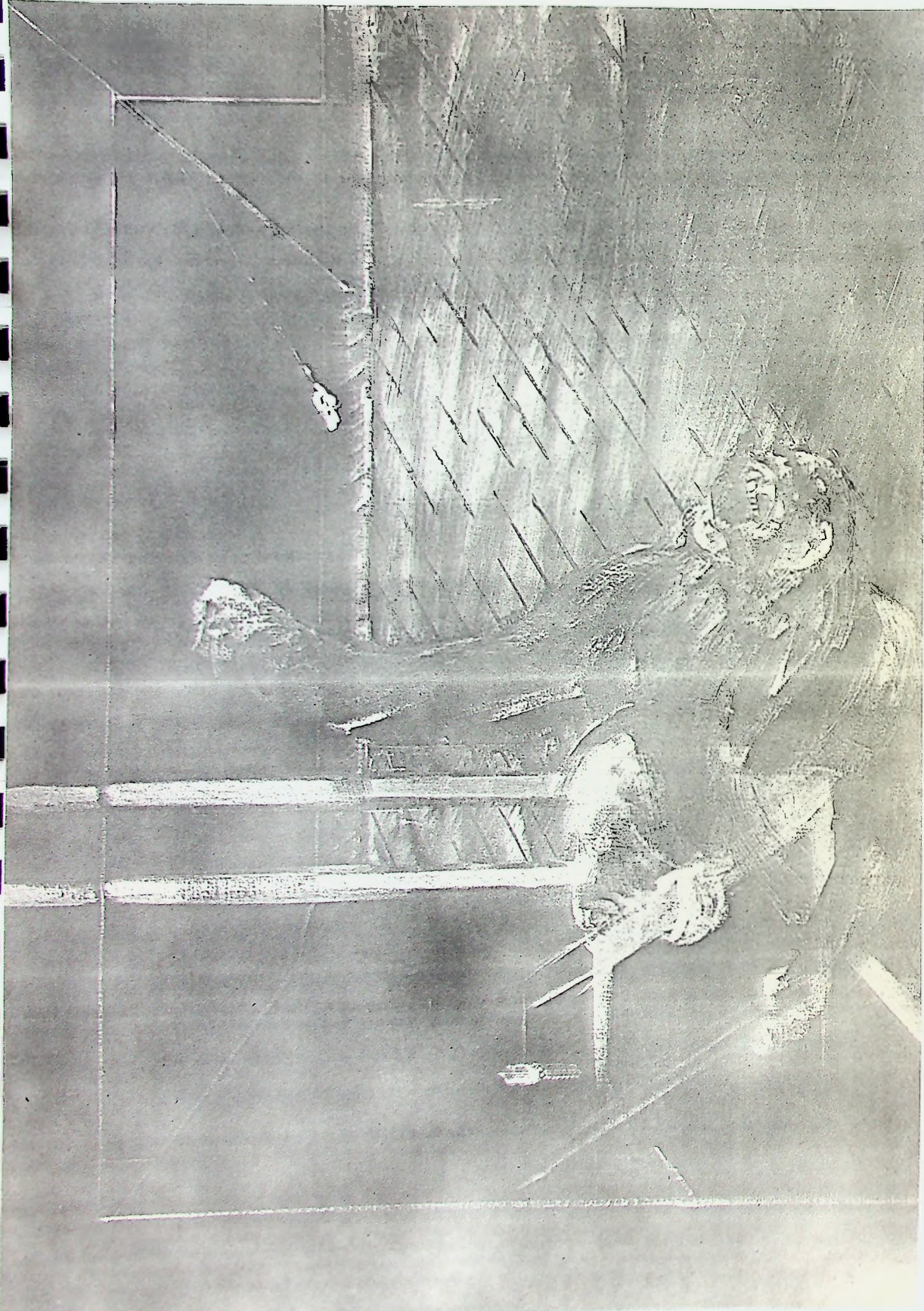
In his first show at the Hanover Gallery 1949 he exhibited six 'Heads' — they are simply statements on what it feels like to be alone in a room, and the disintegration of that person that takes place in such a situation. These faces are placed in an artificial environment as non-descript as possible; a room. The room is borrowed space in Bacon's work; it is a space rented for a day or two. In the painting *Head II* (Fig. 18) the figure is placed in an enclosed windowless space of isolation and is in a state of disintegration, we can just distinguish teeth, eyes, ears and nose; a fragment of a face. In *Head VI* 1949 (Fig. 19) the figure is much more developed and naturalistically portrayed. The work is based on the painting by Velazquez's *Pope Innocent X* (Fig. 20). Velazquez painting represented perhaps the most powerful man in the world. Everything in the painting points to this, the throne, the robes, the ring, the state-paper in the left hand and the rite of perfectly balanced and incorruptible authority which is set, by the relaxed way in which the Pope's arms rest lightly on the throne. To someone like Bacon this painting has quiet different overtones. The Pope's lace-trimmed white shirts are those of a man in drag, — a man who is immuned to the social conventions



Pope I fig 2I



Man with Dog fig 22



Chimpanzee fig 23

of dress, by the licence granted to him in the uniform of his position as Pope. In Pope I (Fig. 21) the figure is pushed towards us, and is held in place by a tubular construction, half of an unpadded throne. The tubes do come from my own metal furniture. Bacon once said "but fundamentally they are an attempt to lift the image outside its natural environment". The Pope is therefore, cut off, exposed, held up for scrutiny. It may appear that he has lost his legs as if he were an invalid in the process of rehabilitation. In these earlier works the figure is seated in the classical sense, as if bolted to the chair. The attitude usually that of a man waiting judgement. The space occupied by the figure has no need for broad horizons. It is the space of an event, a closed space. External nature does not interest Bacon. He sees man and nature as two different dimensions, man is alone, nature indifferent and remote. I (Lorenza Truchi).

By 1953 Bacon had had enough of the controlled grandeur of the seated figure; the figure that sits still and does nothing. "I've always been more interested in what is called behaviour and life than in art". 2. If my pictures come off it is because of a chance conjection between actual living and art. Painting makes me more aware of behaviour, and it is easier for me to say what I want to say about behaviour with the methods of art than it is for me to say them in conversation" 3. The first introduction of movement in Bacon's pictures was in 1953-5 with the paintings 'Man with dog' (1953) (Fig. 22) and Chimpanzee (1955) (Fig. 23). The chimpanzee whirls around on his hunkers and the dog moves towards the drain across the pavement. Later the human figures also begin to twist and turn. The act of turning is also included in the title of one of his pieces; 'Turning Figure'. The figure in this painting is shown wound round and round itself.

When he painted portraits they were the portraits of his friends. He said "If they were not my friends, I could not do such violence to them". His paintings are usually from memory or photographs. He said in an interview with David Sylvester "If I like them, I don't want to practice the injury that I do to them in my work before them, I would rather practice the injury in private by which I think I can record the facts of them more clearly". He is not interested in people who are in retreat from life. The earliest portrait he painted was of Lucien Freud (1951). The painting was based on a photograph of Kafka as a young man. Freud's life was quite similar to that of Bacon's in so far as he owned nothing, lived nowhere, but at the same time he was at home in all society.



Three Studies of the Human Head fig 24



fig.25 Three studies for
portrait of Henrietta
Morae's

In his portraits of the 1960's the distorted image and the normal image are simultaneously presented, laid each on top of the other. Facts, and Bacon's perception of facts are put before us at one and the same time and in a single image. In 1953, 'Three Studies of the Human Head' (Fig. 24) inaugurated a form much used by Bacon in later years that of the three heads, set together in one frame, that between them comprise a complete pictorial, situation. As in many other paintings of the '50's the light falls on the heads in vertical folds as if reflected through tall blinds. The group can be read sequentially. The left-hand head stands for a quiet and easy sociability; the centre one for the 'public man' in full flood and the right-hand one for the dissolution of the public mask which comes when the great man falls asleep. Single head portraits from 1961 onwards were the scene of some of Bacon's most ferocious investigations. The great portraits of the past, Bacon once said 'always left me with a single-image as well as a direct image . Every image casts its shadow into the past, and I could never dissociate myself from the great European images of the past and by "European" I mean to include Egyptian, even if the Geographers wouldn't agree with me'. 4 His painting "Three Studies for portrait of Henrietta Moraes" (Fig. 25) of 1963 is a close up, the head fills the canvas, there is no need for the bare surface, which in large canvases, serves to trap the image in a severe and non-logical surround. The choice of named individuals served to focus on the central problem that is to convey fact in a non-illustrational way. "Once you know how to do it, it becomes illustration", the essential thing was therefore to remain within the area of the unknown, in technical terms, while concentrating on people known as minutely as one human being can know another. The features in the portraits are not so much distorted as contorted. We do not feel, as we do with some of Picasso's rearrangements of the female head that the features could never reassume their conventional appearance. We feel rather that we have penetrated to the inmost nature of human behaviour. The portrait heads grew consistently more and more violent as the 1960's progressed; to the point, in fact, at which disappear altogether, leaving behind it an eye-socket or the deep cave of a nostril, or a patch of hair, as tokens that somewhere among the build-up of paint on the canvas a named individual was portrayed. As if we had a close up view of features and the rest of the world was blocked out.

There was a time in the 1960s when Bacon made sculptures in his head. This idea was to simulate human flesh as vividly as possible, either by painting the figure or by pouring a



Man with Child fig 27



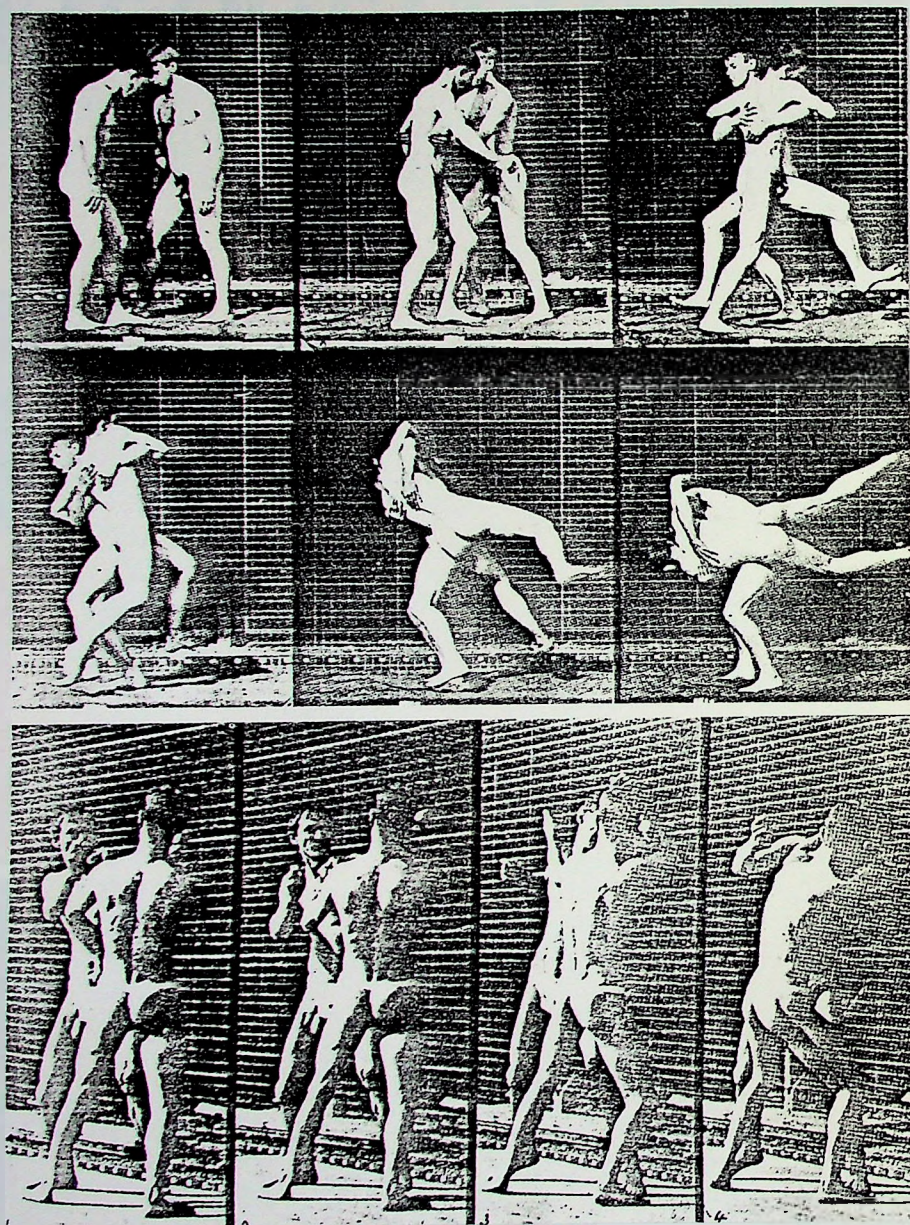
Man with Arm Raised fig 26

bucket of flesh-coloured whitewash all over it. But by 1968 nothing more was heard of the idea. David Sylvester in his interviews why he never carried out these ideas in sculptures he replied:

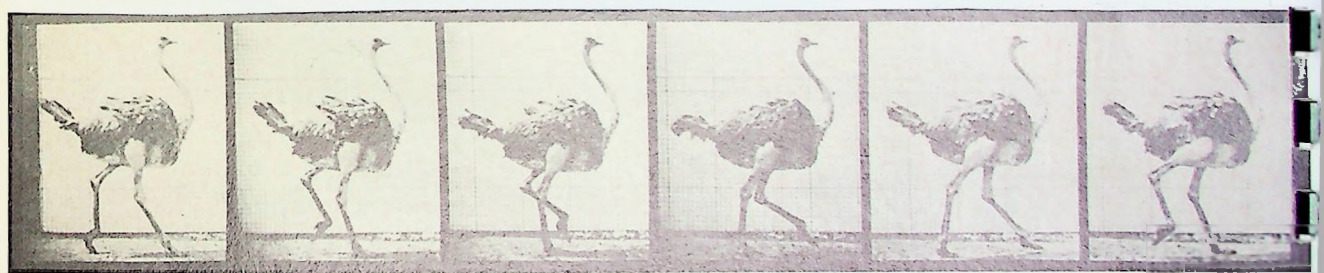
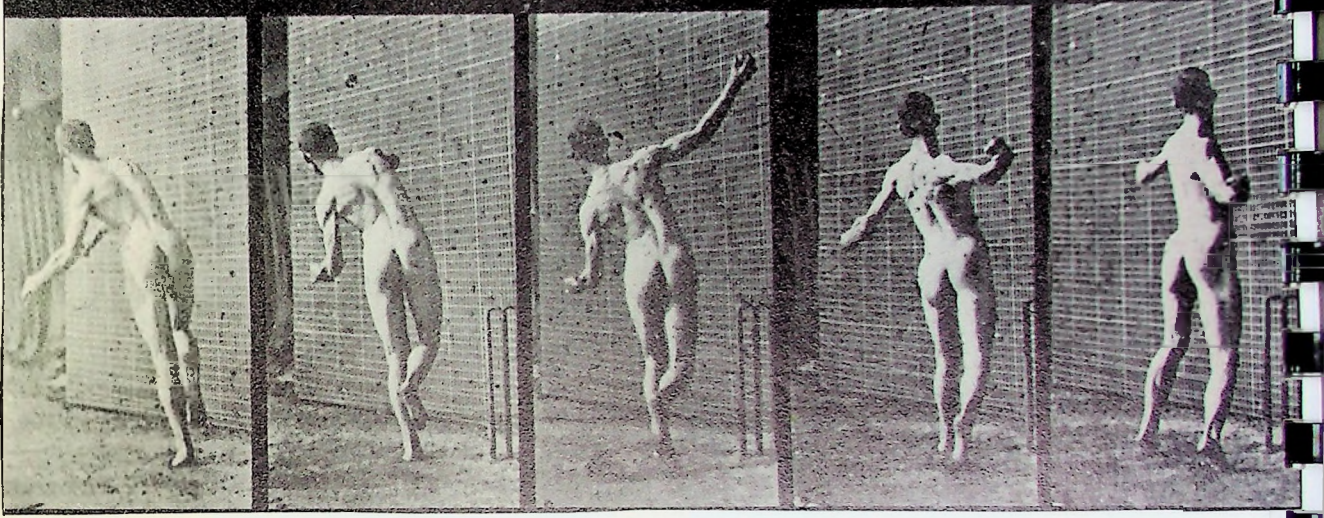
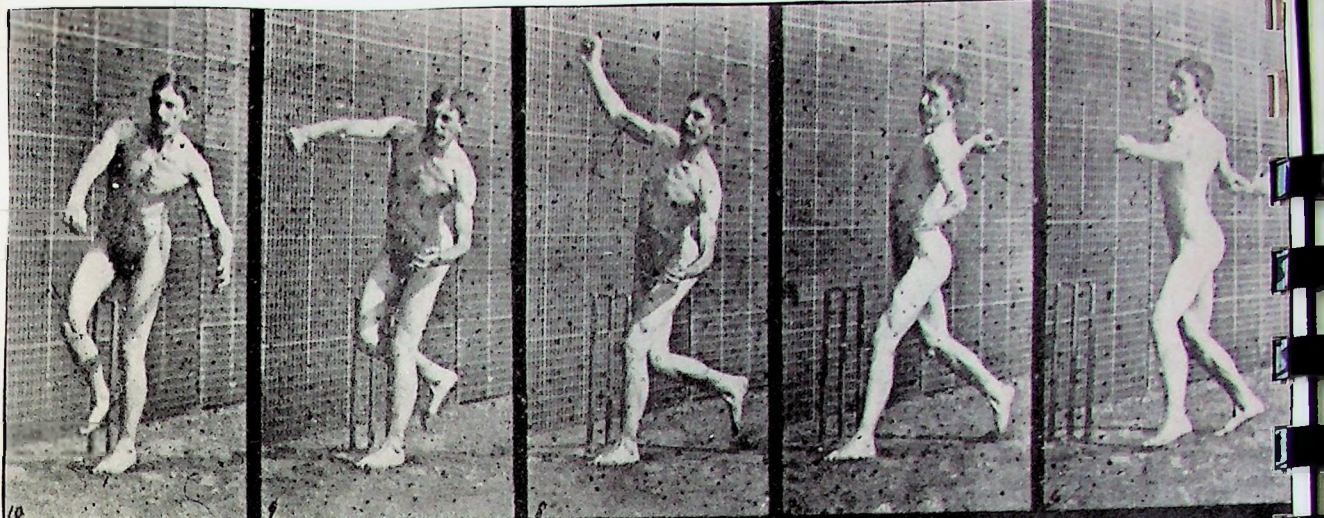
"I don't think I will do them, because I think I have now found a way by which I could do the images, I thought of more satisfactorily in paint than I could in sculpture. I haven't started on them yet, but through thinking about them as sculptures it suddenly came to me how I could make them in paint, and do them much better in paint. It would be a kind of structured painting in which images, as it were, would arise from a river of flesh. It sounds a terribly romantic idea, but I see it very formally." 5. In 1970 he painted a triptych of three single female figures which had something of the sculptural ideas which he had been considering for years. In particular, the chunky central figure put many in mind of a torso cut off at the top of the thighs. Above the massive breasts and shoulders was an umbrella, bottle-green, against the palest of mauve background. Where the face could have been Bacon puts in an ambiguous form.

There had been a consistent change in his work since the beginning of the 1960s. With the group of single heads of 1961 there began a period during which the paint and the image interlock more and more closely. In the work of the 1950's there had been times when the image came out front and the paint did its best to keep up; and there had been times when the paint looked very sensuous; but had gone somewhat adrift from the image. In the close up heads of 1961 the image was often twisted and yet the image and the paint coalesced in a way that was both apt for the painting in question and the person portrayed. Bacon has, in fact, been aiming since 1960 to polarise his images by making them more factually like the person portrayed and less generally reminiscent of their image. Bacon in his earlier work used a simple way of isolating the figure; the room, and ensuring for it our full attention but towards the end of the '50s he began to work on ideas which demanded a different presentation. As his work progressed we realise that this particular compositional device is no longer adequate for Bacon's ambitions.

In the painting 'Man with Arm Raised' (Fig. 26) 1960, the space was hinged. The figure itself moved into an articulated space and this space is more ambiguous than in the earlier — cage or box like structures. An element of doubt and instability entered into the painting, where one is not sure where the figure has come from or what it intends to do in the space



Photographs by Muybridge fig 28



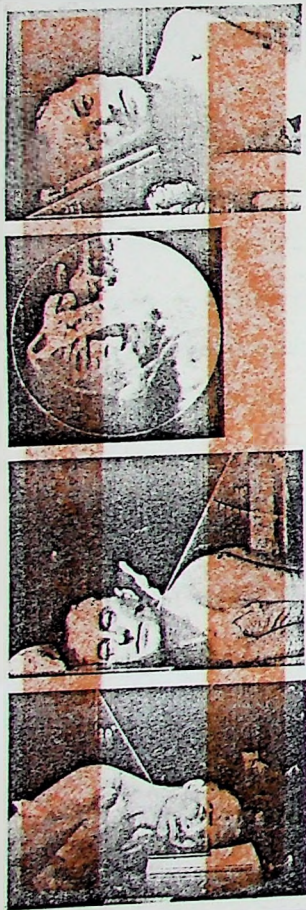


fig 29 photographs:
Positioning in Radiography

Equal uncertainty belongs to the painting 'Man and Child' (Fig. 27) of 1963. Bacon does not use the geometrical foreground of his earlier paintings. In its place is a carpeted area of floor. This area is not entirely flat, as the chair is set on a platform which looks to be about a foot off the ground. The man's head stands out against a white area. It could be a window or some kind of screen. The setting itself is quite ambiguous, as also is the relationship between the man and the girl. The picture is complete in itself, and the last thing Bacon wants is for us to read it as story-telling.

His pictures stand-up therefore, as representations of known persons. They do not offer us a study of all sides of these people, as the cubists did, nor do they show us a series of poses, as would be seen in a series of movie stills. They offer instead a superimposition of states, in which certain characteristics of the person concerned appear with exceptional intensity. It is impossible to know exactly what is happening in the paintings nor does it matter. In his painting of heads he carried off the most complex of achievements; he invented an entirely new way of portraying the human head. He does not simply rearrange the structures of the head. The image is nowhere fixed, or descriptive yet it tells us more fully than any conventional portrait what it is like to be a human being. He suggests to us that earlier portraits have been bland in their presentation of human nature and he also suggests that this particular new kind of presentation is something that only painting can do.

Bacon lived very much between four walls. He has a predominantly indoor vision of the world and this is a very private vision. But the source for most of his work came from images he has gathered from the outside world, photographs, newspaper cuttings, other paintings. Photography for Bacon was both a stimulating accident and a confirmation that every situation could be caught by an image that is not prearranged. He used the photographs of Muybridge (Fig. 28) to study human and animal movement. He also studied medical illustrations (Fig. 29) of final stages of particular diseases of the mouth. He also "reproduced" paintings by Velazquez's Innocent X, and Van Gough's Self-Portrait. Because he is so isolated he sees these images in a heightened emotional way. He has a perception of human life which is pushed to its very limits. This feeling we get from the images he made and also from his use of paint. The paint is manipulated in such a way that it is expressionistic yet controlled. His application of paint is very sensuous yet the figures are very tortured in their presentation. This dual presentation of states of mind is comparable to Bacon's state of mind in isolation

yet aware of the outside world. He is free to do as he wishes and yet feels compelled to bring in images from outside his room. Painting has reclaimed its ability to communicate in such a way that is impossible in any other form of language. It has allowed Bacon to express emotions which otherwise it would have been impossible to express – the feeling of loneliness and the conflict between his isolation and his need to function socially.

FOOTNOTES

1. Lorenzo Trucchi Francis Bacon Translated by John Sheepley. Harry N. Abrams Inc. Pub. New York P. 75
2. John Russell Francis Bacon Themes & Hudson 1971 P. 48
3. Ibid P. 50 Note: no intervening reference
4. Ibid P. 39 Note: no intervening reference
5. David Sylvester Interviews with Francis Bacon. Themes and Hudson 1975. P. 14

CONCLUSION

The existence of the autobiographical image has been highlighted in this paper. The reader may come to share my views: (a) that the autobiographical image is not restricted by the limits of traditional techniques. These artists have used these techniques as a form of expression ie Bacon's use of line to create spacial illusion (b) that the greatest motivating force for the production of art is a heightened realisation of oneself, ones environment and one's materials, ie Picasso's 'Suite Vollard' was motivated by these three factors. (c) that the three artists I have discussed: Bearden; Picasso and Bacon are only representative of many more who's work is equally relevant to the production of autobiographical work.

All works of art may be autobiographical in content as man (the artist) is at its centre. Art history has offered us art on purely esthetic terms. A prime example of this is abstract expressionism. Tom Wolfe has highlighted this misleading preoccupation:

"Realism does not lack its partisans, but it does rather conspicuously lack a persuasive theory to lack a persuasive theory is to lack something crucial — the means by which our experience of individual works is joined to our understanding of the values they signify" I To suggest as in the '50s and '60s that if a work of art does not have a theory it was lacking, would be to eliminate an entire section of the art world which did not conform to the "art theory syndrome". Art had become camouflaged with theory and effect. In some cases to the stage where the artist was a legend, separate from the work itself. Art does function on a visual level, but in order to understand it, it is important to relate its production to the artist himself, ie. Bearden's images are a statement of New York life. This work would have very little relevance to someone who had no experience of that life style. Although there have been many attempts to create mass appreciation of visual art, it does not relate to mass audiences. It offers personal involvement that is not communal. It is personal because the visual artist is a loner, his art is almost always made in solitude. Yet art critics will continue to try and evaluate work within an established acceptable system. Artists depend on the art system for patronage and marketing, they have compromised themselves within art movements. The theory of art movements falls short of their actual statements. Art loses something by becoming part of the system. Throughout history are movements who have come and gone, established by art critics in hindsight but there has always been artists who

have not conformed to fashion. Autobiographical image making has been in existence longer than any art movement, it will continue for as long as artists remain self motivating.

FOOTNOTES

1. Tom Wolfe *The Painted Word* A Bantam Book 1978 P 4.

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