



ISTITUTO DI STORIA
DELLE ARTI

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ISTITUTO DI STUDI
DI VENEZIA

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI GENOVA
DIPARTIMENTO DI STORIA DELLA CULTURA DELL'ARTE



DIPARTIMENTO DI STORIA E CRITICA DELLE ARTI
UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI VENEZIA

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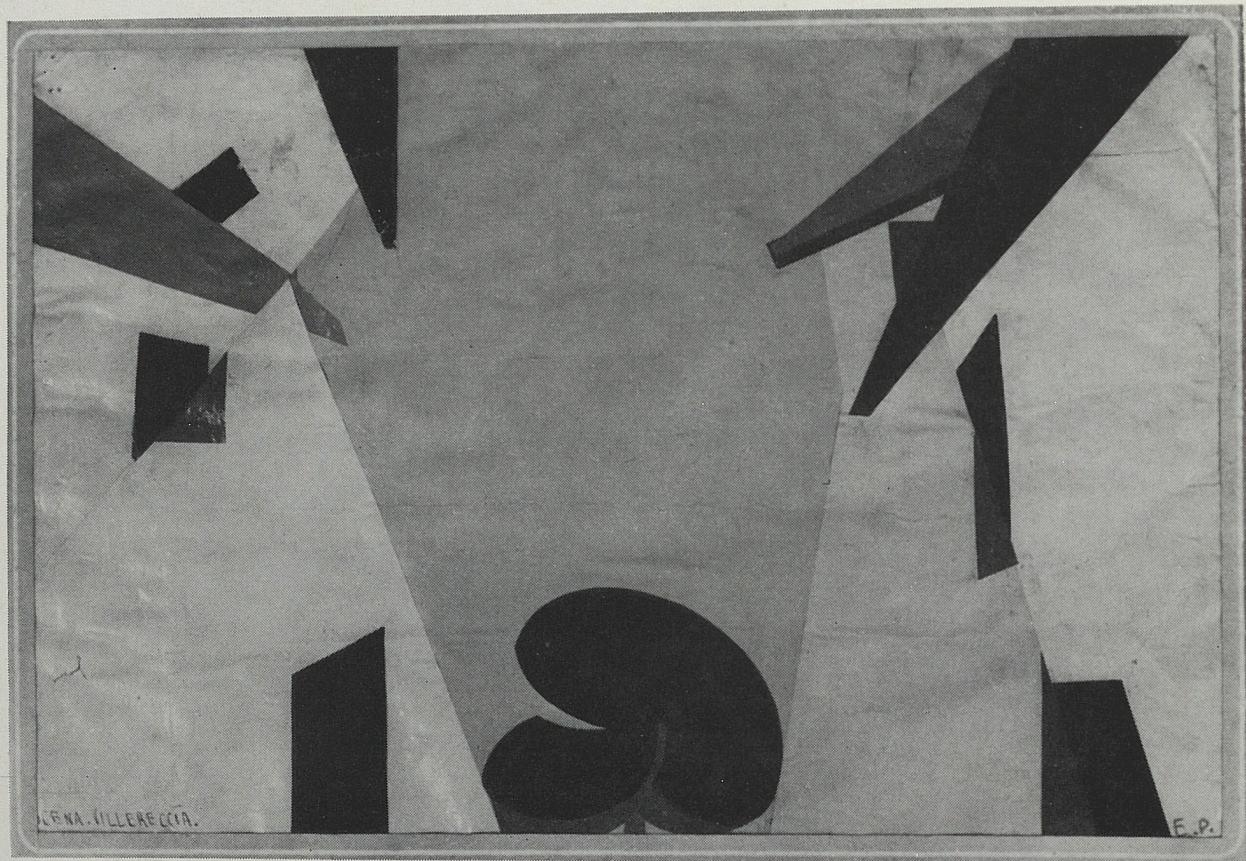
enrico **prampolini**
1895-1956

a selection of paintings and collages from 1914 to 1934

October 6 - October 31, 1959

World House Galleries





2 Scene of Peasants 1914-1915

by
lionello venturi

Introduction This exhibition presents Enrico Prampolini to the American public. He deserves to be appreciated for many reasons. Although born in Modena in 1894 and approximately ten years younger than the founders of Futurism, he participated in the Boccioni movement even before the First World War and until 1956, the year of his death, he never abandoned his futurist principles. He never returned to the representation of nature as did Severini and Carrà, but continued to evolve along the same lines. Thereby his work possessed a rare coherence which permitted him to extend his style beyond painting alone into such areas as that of stage design with notable success.

The works in this exhibition comprise two distinct periods: early Futurism and what Prampolini himself called *Cosmic Idealism*.

In 1913 Boccioni's attention was drawn to a new and ardent recruit for Futurism named Prampolini, a former student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome who had been expelled for writing a manifesto entitled "Let Us Bomb the Academies." From that time on Prampolini's paintings bore the futurist characteristics—abstraction of forms, their composition in movement, content as a state of mind, and motif included in the reconstruction of the theme. After the interruption of the First World War the artist resumed his work, as exemplified by the paintings *Architecture of the Tarantella* 1922 and *Geometric Forms of Voluptuousness* 1923.

From the beginning Prampolini had applied himself to the problem of combining the various materials to be contained in a painting in order to derive the maximum emotive reaction from their accord or disaccord. During the last years this problem became the core of his painting.

Prampolini's activity was prodigious. He applied his energies not only to painting, but to the decorative arts, especially theatrical design, and to the organization of exhibitions. Theoretical and critical activity always accompanied his practical work, and in 1917 he wrote a perspicacious and objective thesis on Cubism and Picasso, a rarity indeed for a futurist.

In 1925 he moved to Paris, where he remained twelve years. There, his futurism became freer of geometric forms and more attentive to psycho-physical effects. During the same year, Picasso too was responding to the effect of surrealism.

One of the most characteristic paintings of this new tendency is *Metamorphosis of the Gods* 1929, also known as the *Triumph of Mechanical Civilization*. The significance of the subject here is evident: those who are the masters of the world today no longer resort to lightning, love or swords, as did the ancient gods, but to mechanical objects or technical projects.

As far as the manner in which this allegory was presented, one must observe that the geometric forms and lines of Prampolini's preceding works have been supplanted by curved lines and by gradations of light and shade—in a word, by pictorial as opposed to architectural values. Naturally this new importance assigned to psychological significance called for "nuances", for allusions, for magic. Another painting, probably of the same year, is actually entitled *Magic Vision* and is filled with insinuations about the life of the senses.

During this period Prampolini executed numerous portraits, such as the *Plastic Synthesis of a Portrait*, done around 1925, which represents Mussolini. As usual, Prampolini sought to depict interior energy rather than an externally apparent physiognomy, and therefore the real subject is the manifestation of the full force of that cruelty which we attribute to the objects of a mechanical order.

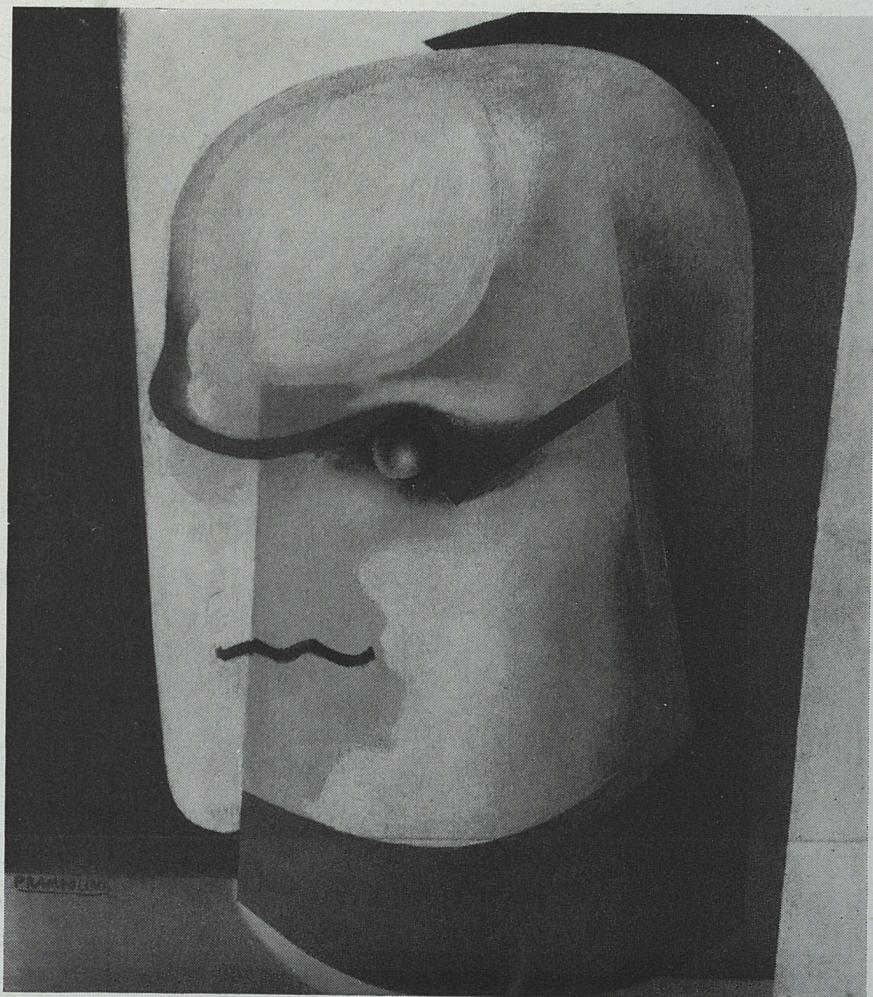
Prampolini himself described his art during this period as *Cosmic Idealism*, that is, the representation of an all-embracing ideal, absorbing the human into the universal, abolishing distinctions between spirit and nature, without detracting anything from the purpose of science. It is said that Guglielmo Marconi perceived the affinity between his own research and the intuitions of Prampolini's art.

Futurism and Surrealism were the two essential experiences of his life; during his last years he experimented successfully with a synthesis which he called *bioplastic*, where the vitality of surrealism is added to the plastic power of futurism. Few painters have been as avant-garde as he and have responded as well to the exigencies of the continuous evolution of civilization. Nevertheless he was entirely himself, even in his first works, proving a continuous coherence. This coherence does not consist in attacking the same problem again and again, for this would signify an estrangement from the development of the artistic problems of the moment, but lies rather in the way in which such problems, succeeding each other in time, are treated.

Prampolini always applied himself fully to whatever he did; he rapidly perceived the significance of new problems and had a ready solution at hand. His way of painting is typical of the avant-gardist, of the pioneer, of the cultivator of new lands; and as such he must be remembered and appreciated.

Rome 1959

6 Plastic Synthesis of a Portrait (Mussolini) 1925

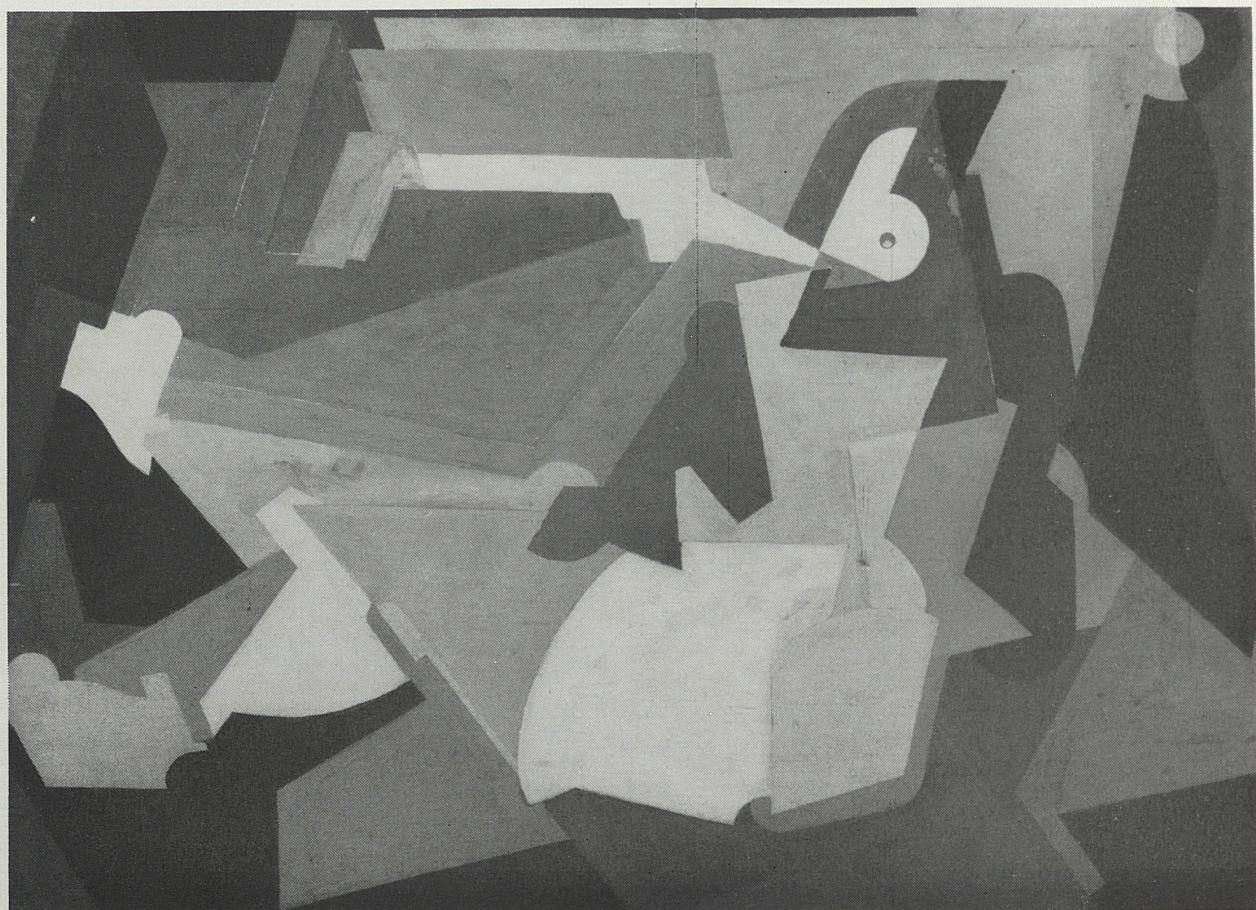




9 **Cosmic Material** 1929

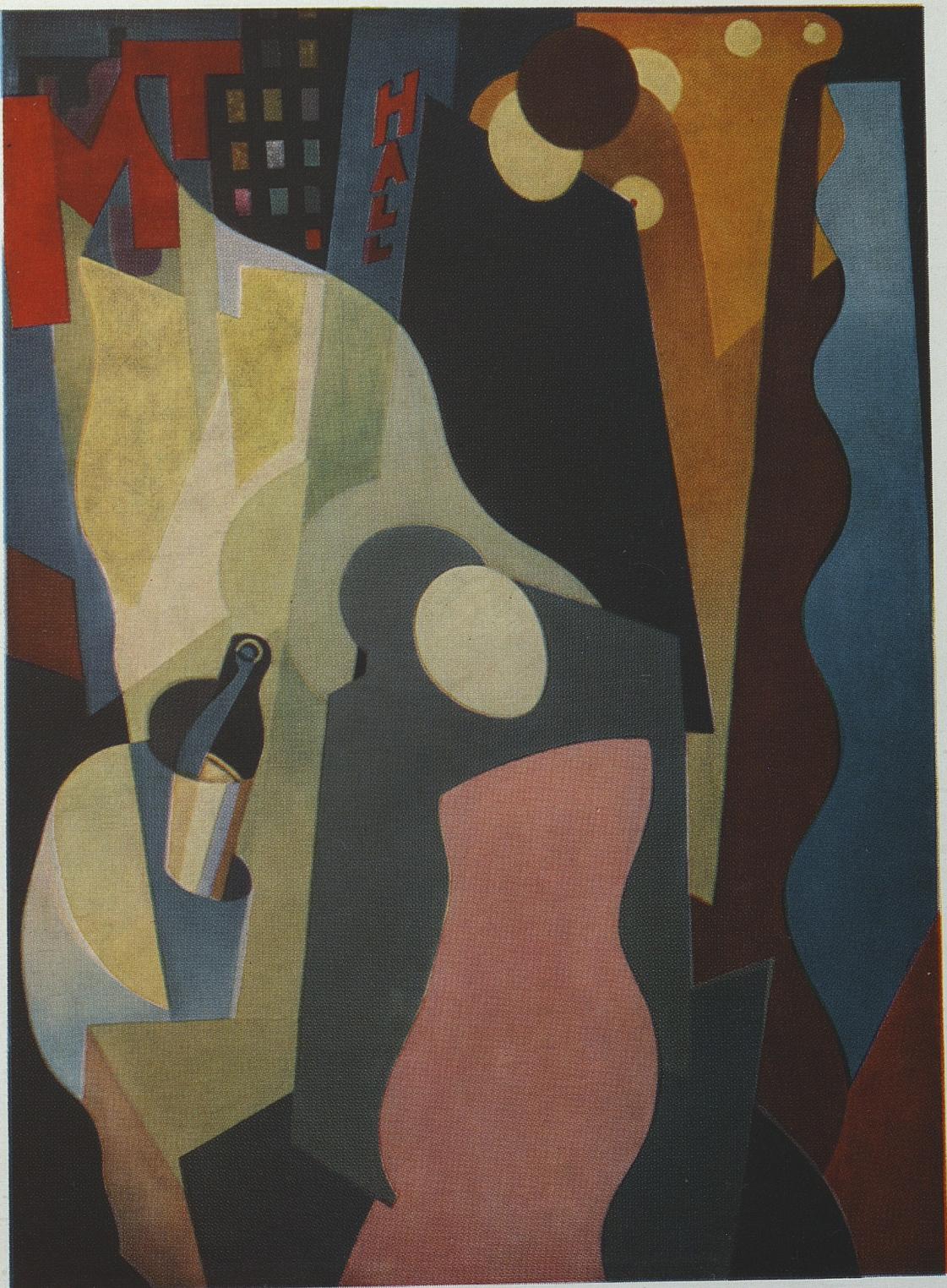


15 The Funeral of Romanticism 1934

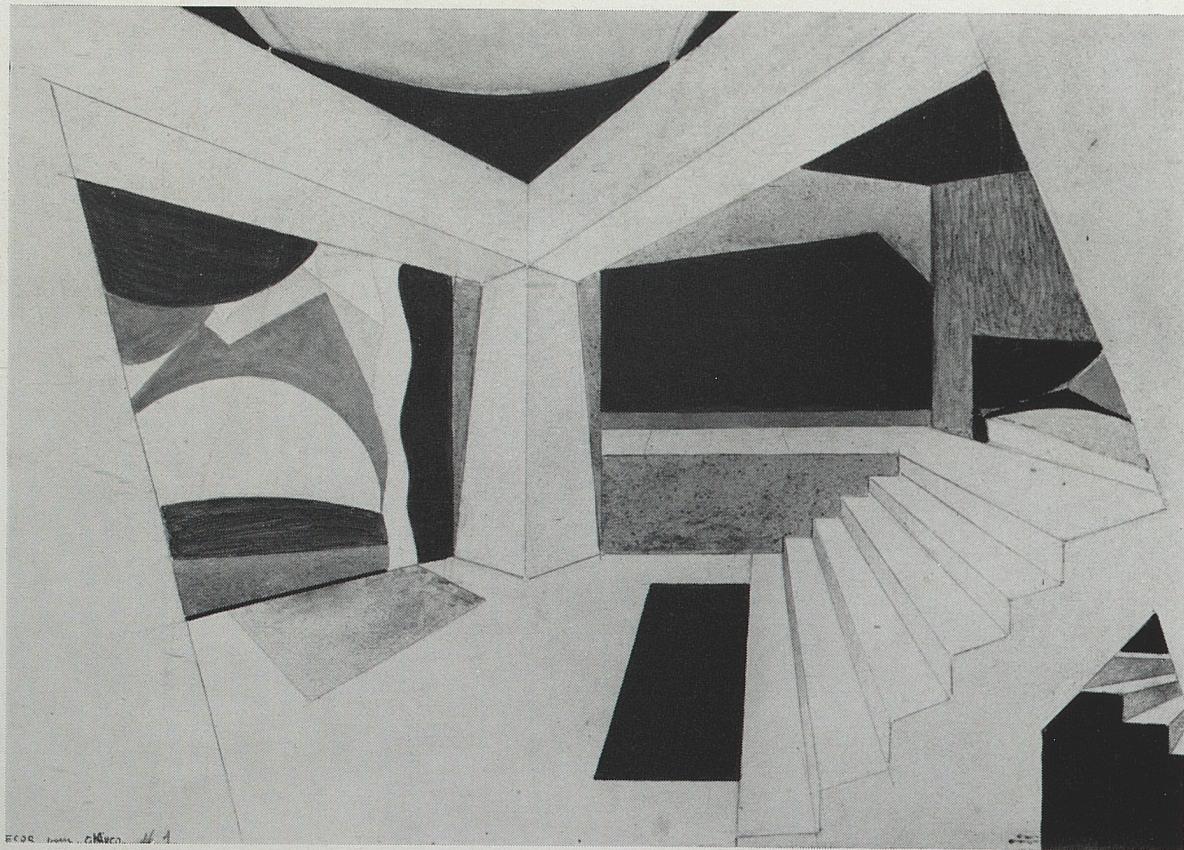


3 Architecture of the Tarantella 1922

7 The Gymnasium of the Senses 1925



4 Decoration 1922



ECOR. 1922. 11. 1



5 The Geometry of Voluptuousness 1923

catalogue

- 1 Multimater** **ca. 1914**
collage 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
- 2 Scene of Peasants** **1914 - 1915**
collage 12 x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
- 3 Architecture of the Tarantella** **1922**
watercolor 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
- 4 Decoration** **1922**
watercolor 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
sketch for a scene from the opera GLAUCO by E. L. Morselli performed April 1922 in Naples.
- 5 The Geometry of Voluptuousness** **1923**
oil 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 59 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
- 6 Plastic Synthesis of a Portrait** (Mussolini) **1925**
oil 26 x 23 inches
- 7 The Gymnasium of the Senses** **1925**
oil 53 x 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
- 8 Decoration** **1927**
watercolor 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches
sketch for a scene from the ballet DRAMME DELLA SOLITUDINE by Folgore and Sommi-Picenardi produced at the Théâtre de la Madeleine, Paris, by "Pantomima Futurismo", and directed by Prampolini.
- 9 Cosmic Material** **1929**
oil 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches
- 10 Bioplastic Composition** **1929**
oil 45 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 35 inches
- 11 Triumph of Mechanized Civilization or Metamorphosis of Gods** **1929**
oil 39 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 52 inches
- 12 Cosmic Organisms** **1930**
oil 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 39 inches
- 13 Magic Vision** **1931**
oil 34 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 45 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
- 14 Plastic Infinity** **ca. 1932**
oil and collage 13 x 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches
- 15 The Funeral of Romanticism** **1934**
oil 45 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 35 inches

Prices on Request



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