

REDER

DIPARTIMENTO DI STORIA
E CRITICA DELLE ARTI

UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI
DI VENEZIA



BERNARD REDER

RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF DRAWINGS AND PRINTS

OCTOBER 17 - NOVEMBER 18, 1961

WORLD HOUSE GALLERIES

987 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK

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Keder
1959

Drawings and Prints by Bernard Reder

Enjoyment of Bernard Reder's drawings and prints depends in no way on our familiarity with the artist as one of the most original sculptors of his time. Far less than the drawings of other prominent sculptors of the twentieth century do these graphics of Reder's refer us to concepts thought out in another medium. In fact, one of the strongest first impressions of this artist is that he completely dominates his media in a way that is exceptional in modern art. At a time when most artists deal only with the content that emerges out of the handling of a medium or is identified with it, Reder gives priority to imagination itself. The surging tide of his fantasy is sometimes channeled simultaneously into painting, sculpture, drawing and print making. An overflow of less pictorial concepts finds expression in designs for buildings and ocean going vessels. He has tackled city planning in addition to these, in much the same spirit as the Renaissance master who turned from painting and sculpture to designing architecture, jewelry or fortifications.

Two decades of work unfold an astonishing phantasmagoria. Is he a mystic? poet? a seer? a cabalist? Is he sympathetic with baroque sensuality (the War of the Amazons Series)? Is he an evangelist (the Biblical themes)? In effect, Reder's answer is that he encompasses a bit of all of these as do most human beings and especially the vivid, earthy, persecuted but often transfigured natives of his birthplace, Czernowitz (he was born there in 1897 when this town of 70,000 was in Austria-Hungary; it is now Russian).

Since we are always being told by psychologists of the decisive impact on the first years of life, we can appreciate the vivid impression made on the artist by the folkways and personalities of his native town. This exuberantly Hassidic and most non-conformist community bred earthy, vital types about sixty years ago. It fostered in young Reder a humanism laced with humor and compassion, untouched by sentimentality. Here the legends and heroes of the Old Testament came to life in the inspired utterance of the Hassidim and entered the subsoil of his consciousness to nourish his developing instinct for art. His youth also saw the beginnings of the Jewish persecution that was to harry him from country to country through most of his lifetime.

In exile his work was fed by the most diverse cultural streams. At the Academy in Prague he achieved the mastery of the figure so evident in all of his subsequent work. For years during and after World War II he was in flight, his studio the space of an arm's length around a bench in an internment camp or refugee train. Drawings he made on scraps of paper kept alive his visionary world and his sense of mission.

A sojourn in Paris brought him into contact with expressionist and abstract innovations, perhaps more important, it brought his friendship with Aristide Maillol, a sculptor whose earthy classicism and humanism were so sympathetic to his own outlook. By a series of miracles and hair-breadth escapes, Reder escaped into Spain as the Nazis entered France and after a stint in jail, made his way to Cuba and eventually to New York.

Reder's intoxication with Baroque space and energies reached a climax in the early forties. From a time when his own life was hunted and furtive came the brilliantly voluptuous gouache series of "The Battles of the Amazons," with roseate colors swept across the turbulent vortex of massed figures. Equally opulent was the woodcut series of about the same time celebrating long-pondered themes from Rabelais. But as a foil to this kind of lusty romanticism he could turn out a composition endowed with such classical repose as "Still Life with Cherries" or a quietly haunting study of a child.

Reder is not a whimsical artist. No forms conceived simply out of diverting caprice could pack the visual wallop or produce the terrifying psychological insights that we get in his minotaurs, Amazons, snakes with birds and other fantasies. His creatures are often part bird or horse and part human and his perverse cats are more than half human. The playfulness of the artist's invention is simply the most direct and effective means of communicating a truth that eludes the fixed categories of things. By dislodging forms from their ordinary matrix, in fact, by making them pictorially loose-jointed and ambivalent, Reder can reveal their astonishing and often disquieting relationships.

His storied images would be dangerous to another artist. Cellars are full of work by obscure hacks who turned to such literary motifs out of academic habit. It takes genius to invest with fresh emotion and urgency, forms already so burdened with association. It can be done only by a Picasso or a Reder, artists whose everyday joys and agonies can be pressed into the patterns of these archetypes.

Reder once revised the legend of the Good Samaritan to include a horse lifted on human hands to his leafy supper. The image of a bull lifted high in the hands of a woman that occurs in a recent woodcut may have a similar origin in homespun myth. But one does not have to know this folklore to respond to the pungency and barbed humour of the print. Like so many of Reder's motifs, it is less an illustration of a legend than the launching of a freshly coined myth. His subjects are not concerned with action but with being.

(continued)

In the late series of black and white prints and color woodcuts, flamboyant fantasy is often expressed in extravagant headdresses and costumes. A new brusqueness of execution and audaciously condensed effects heightens their mystery. We are surprised at the combination of such contemporary directness with oddly romantic themes.

To dominate hard, tough materials is a challenge that has led Reder in his sculpture, to carve when he could model, to cope with the hardest, most obdurate materials. In his graphic work he had found the most satisfying expression in a unique form of woodcut which demands his muscular control. On solid blocks of wood the image is carved with lines gouged out sometimes with impulsively improvised tools—a nail served as the means of cutting the terse, charged lines of "Head of Man in Bewilderment."

From colored and carved blocks Reder makes but a single print, not caring to duplicate exactly again the effects arrived at so spontaneously. These are unique prints. In the late woodcuts he avails himself of every prerogative of the modern abstract artist by contrasting stark simplifications with opulent textures. Lines are alternately slashing and severe, exploding in bursts of strokes or hatchings or tautly controlled. In their thrust and bite we read the gesture of the artist's hand, discharging feeling as it conjures forms.

Throughout the decades surveyed by this exhibition, persisting through all polarities of mood and variations of style, one feels a single unifying force. Reder, himself, has located this life-force in the blood. It is through the blood rather than the brain that one grasps one's own identity in the constantly intermingling stream of good and evil, of base passion with sublime aspiration. And this is surely the key to Reder's power of transposing his life experience into the timeless archetypes of bird and beast, harlot and saint. For this insight Reder did not have to go to Freud or Jung—although the viewer may find confirmation from his own response in their analysis. But Reder has not theorized. His characters and motifs have their genesis in the same deep layers of the self that have always been accessible to poets and mystics.

A. R. KRAKUSIN





Redox. 1930.



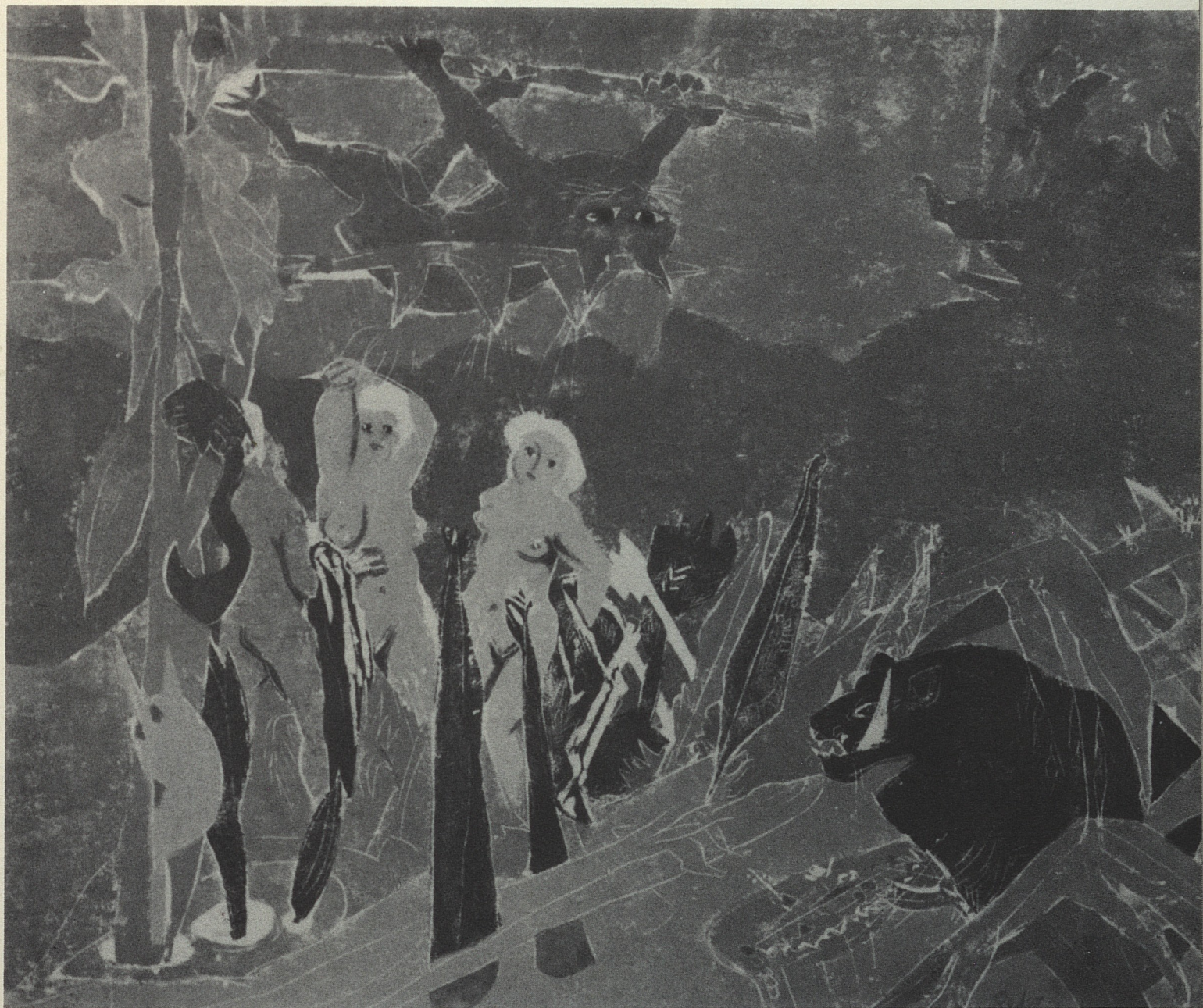


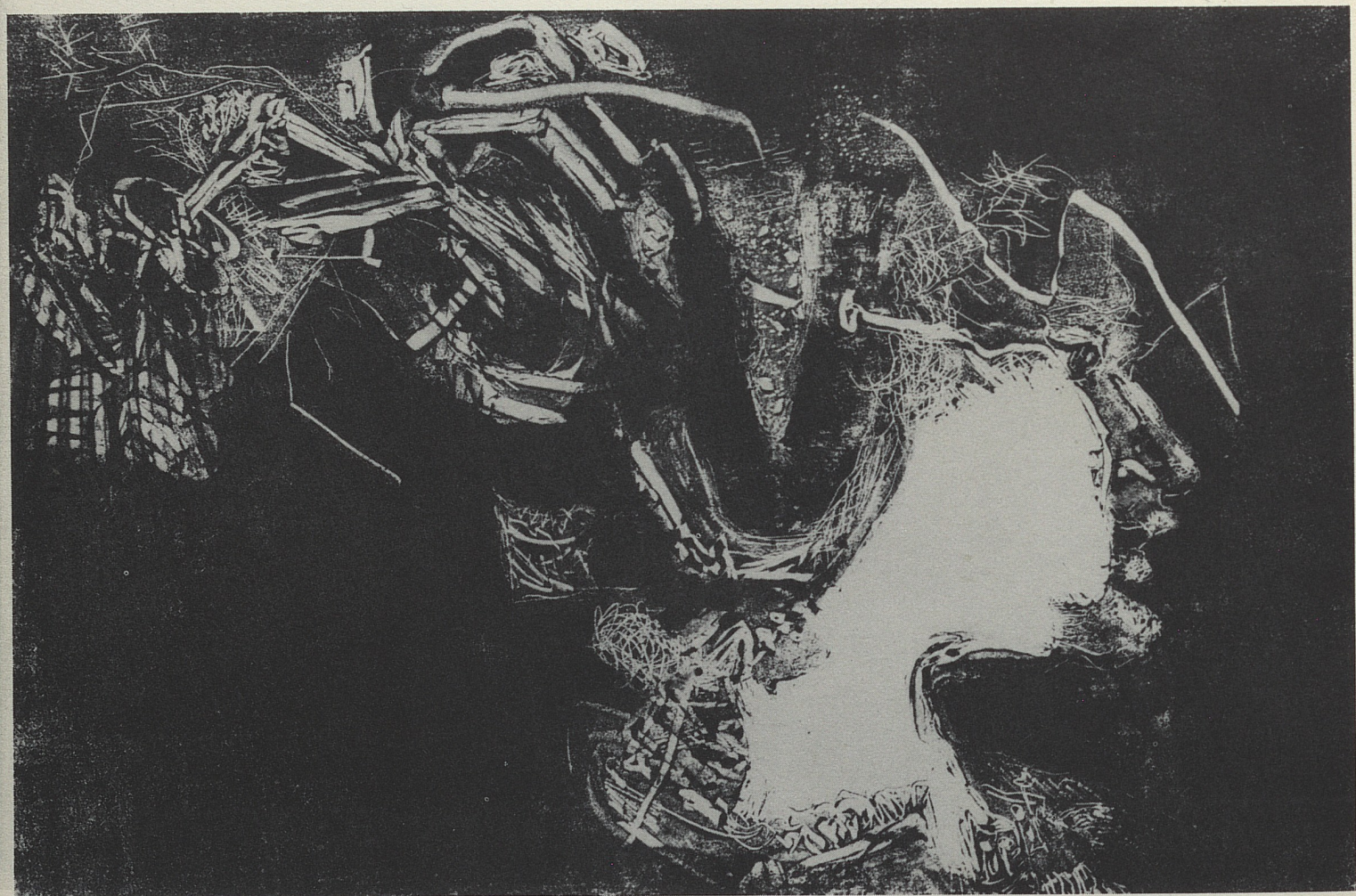
















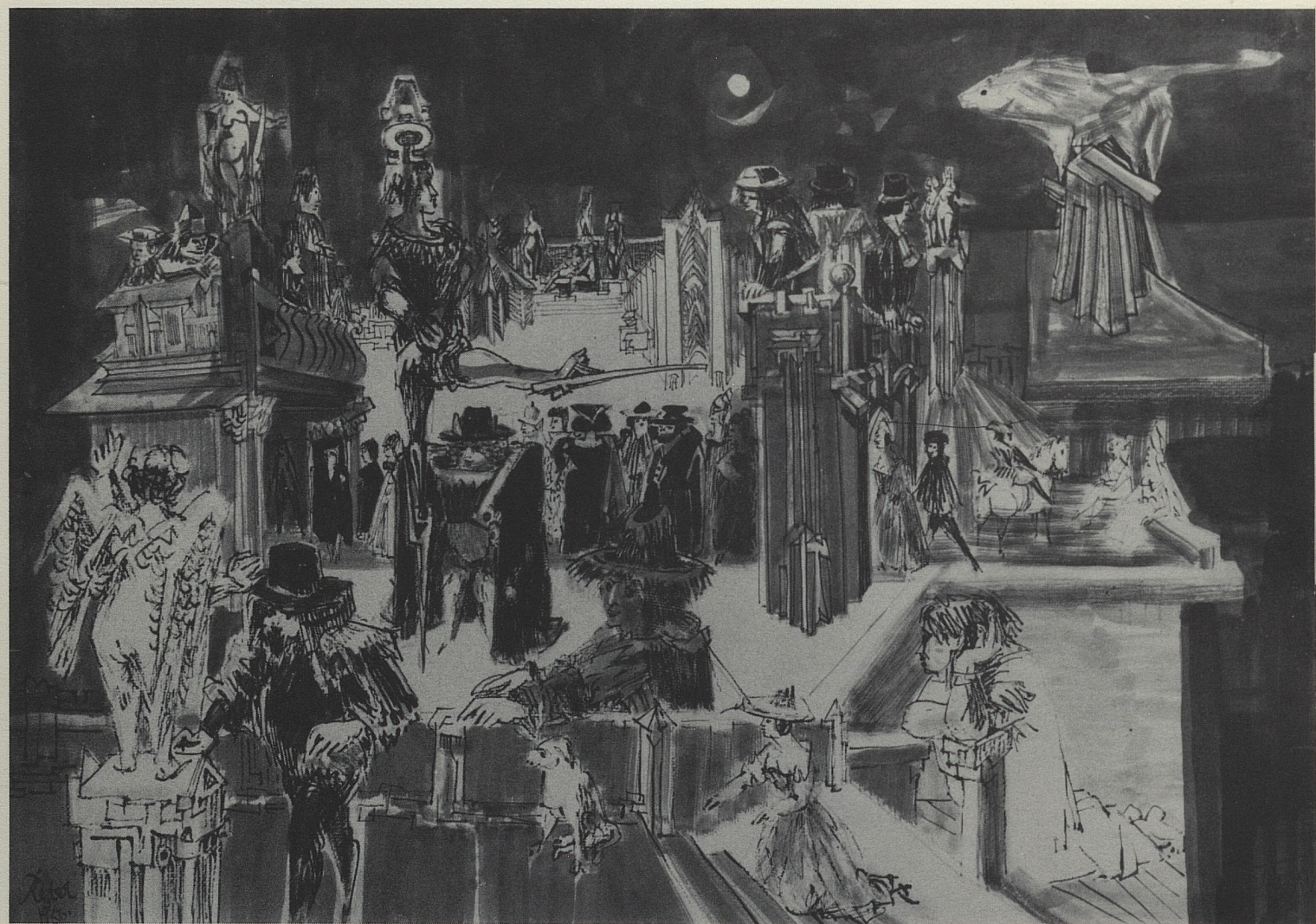






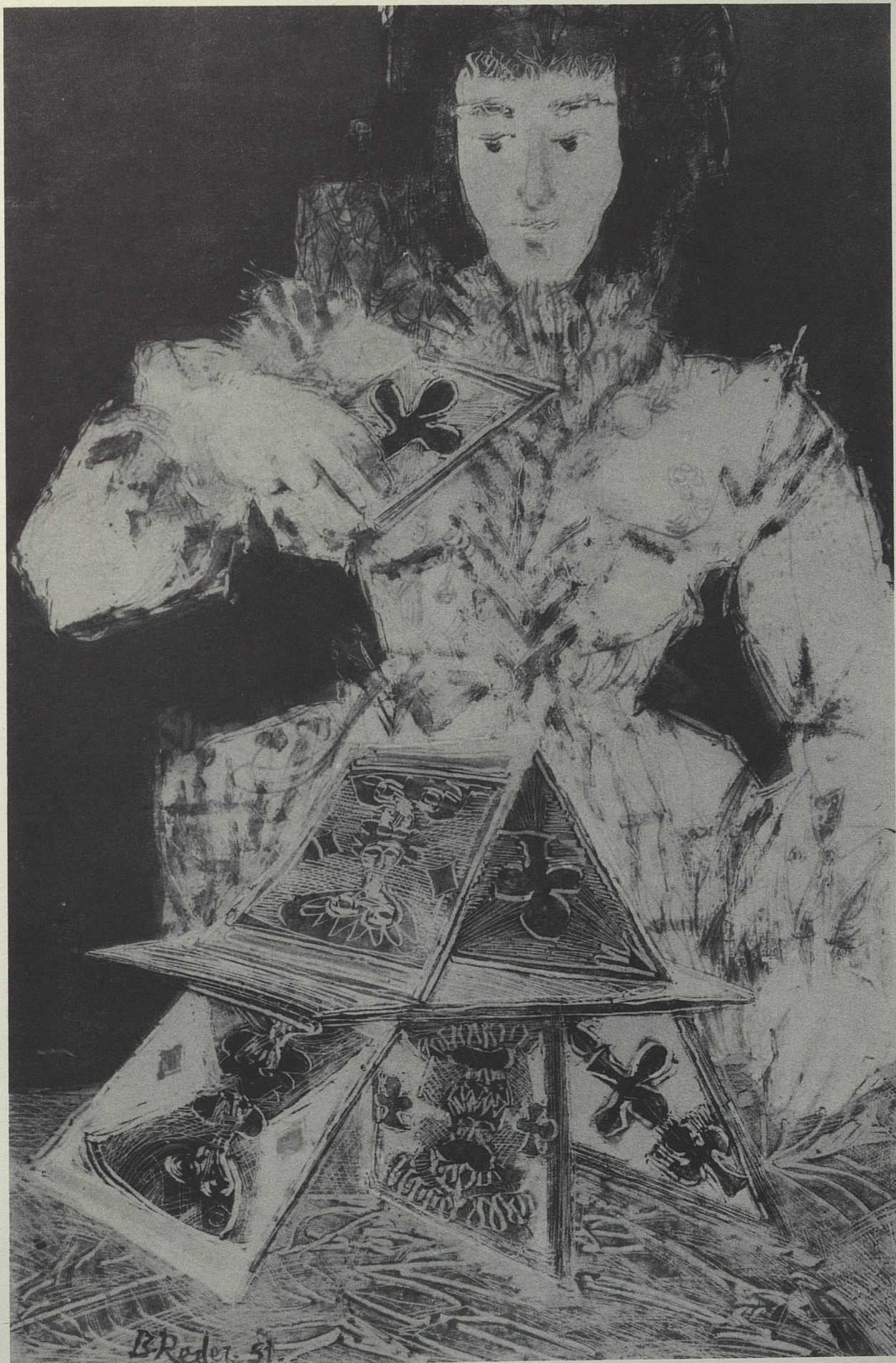




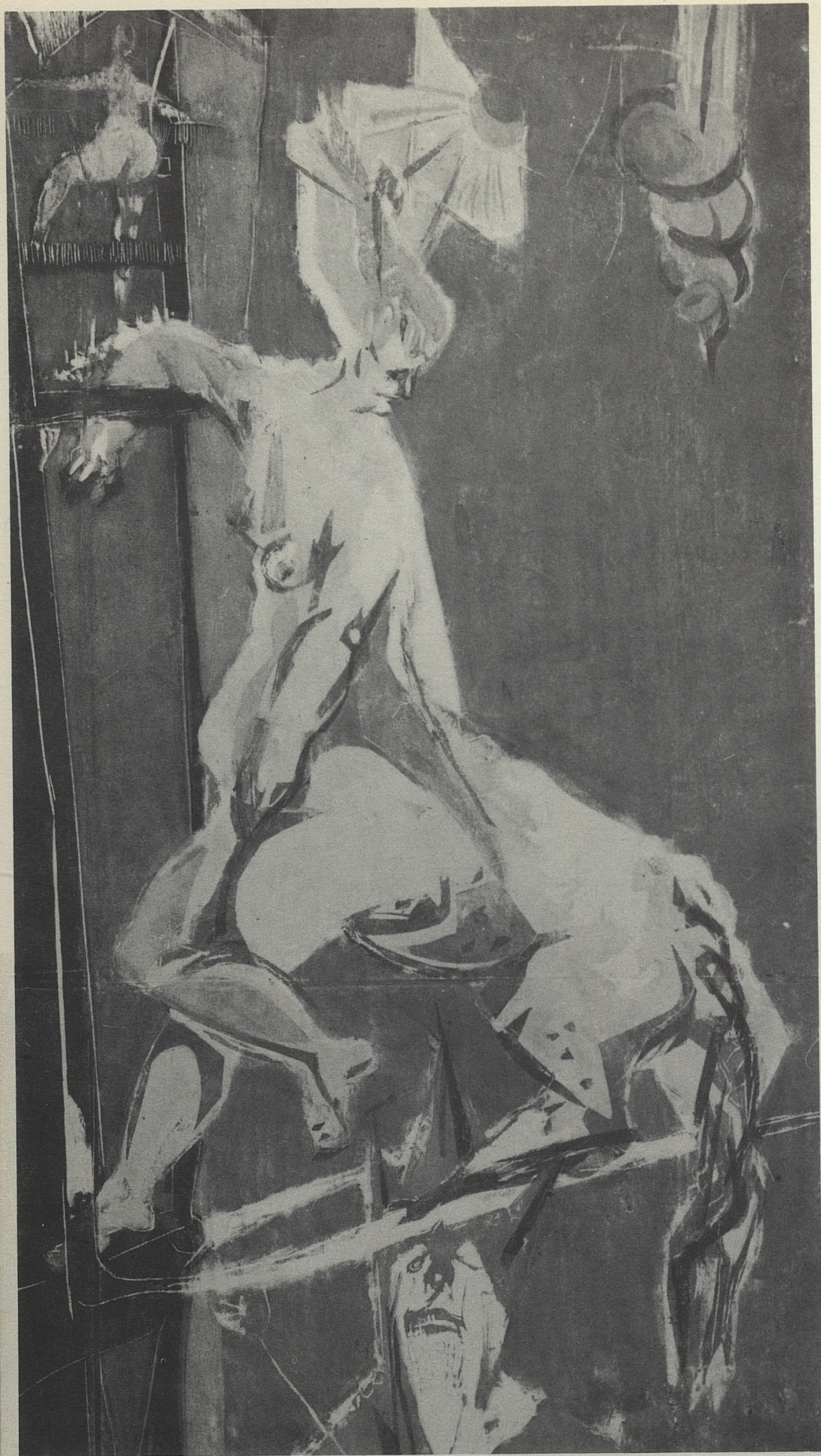




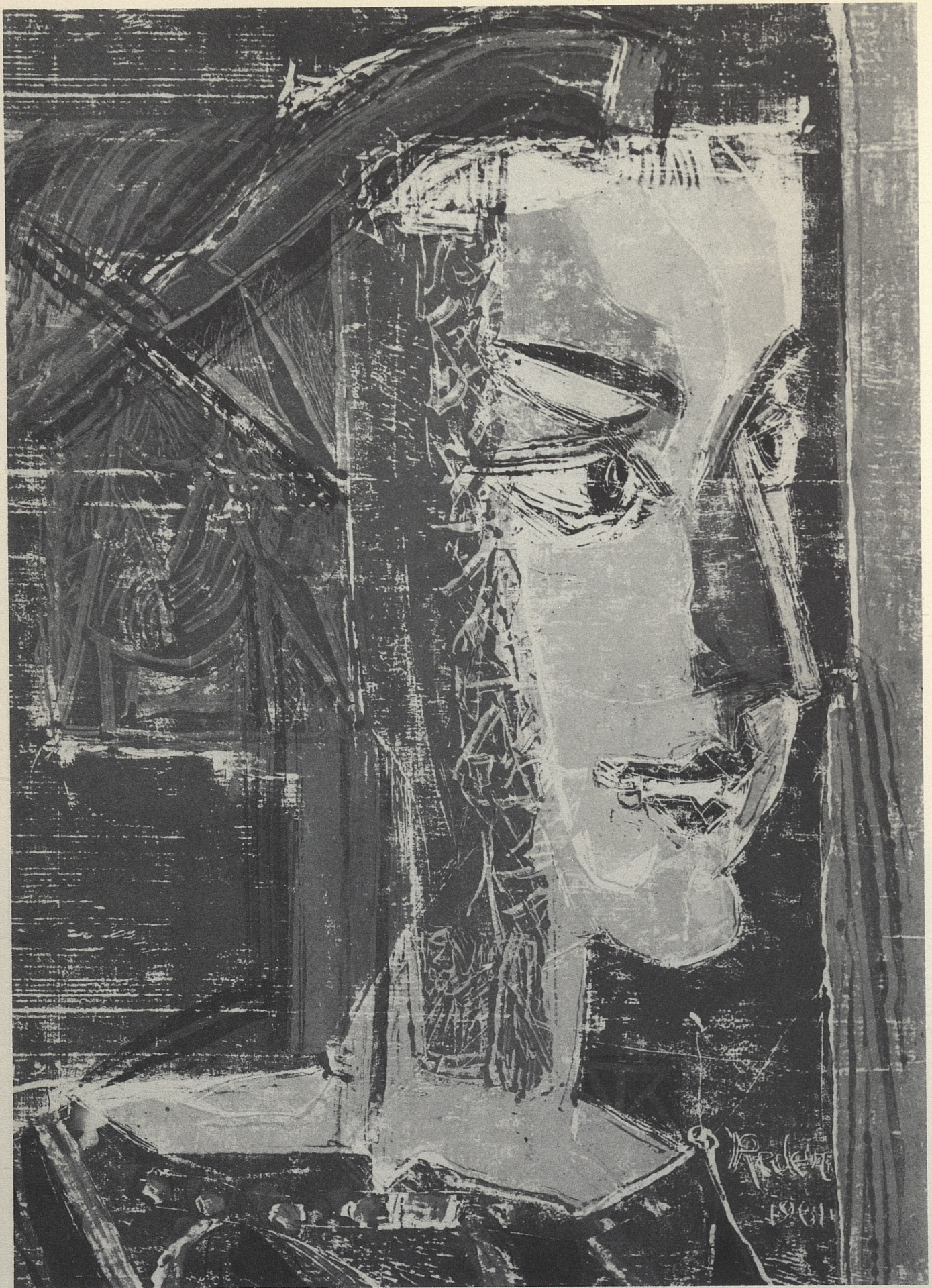


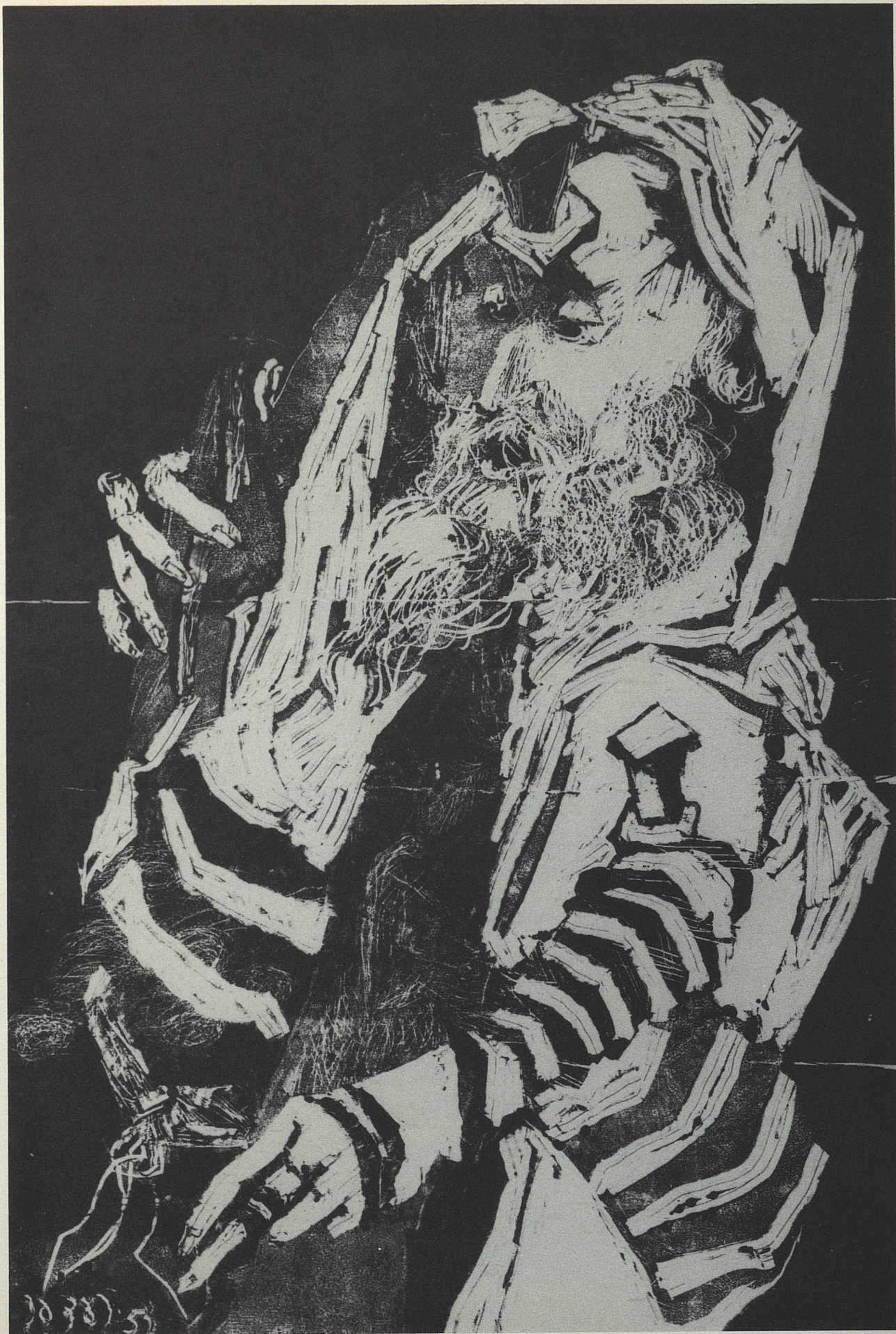


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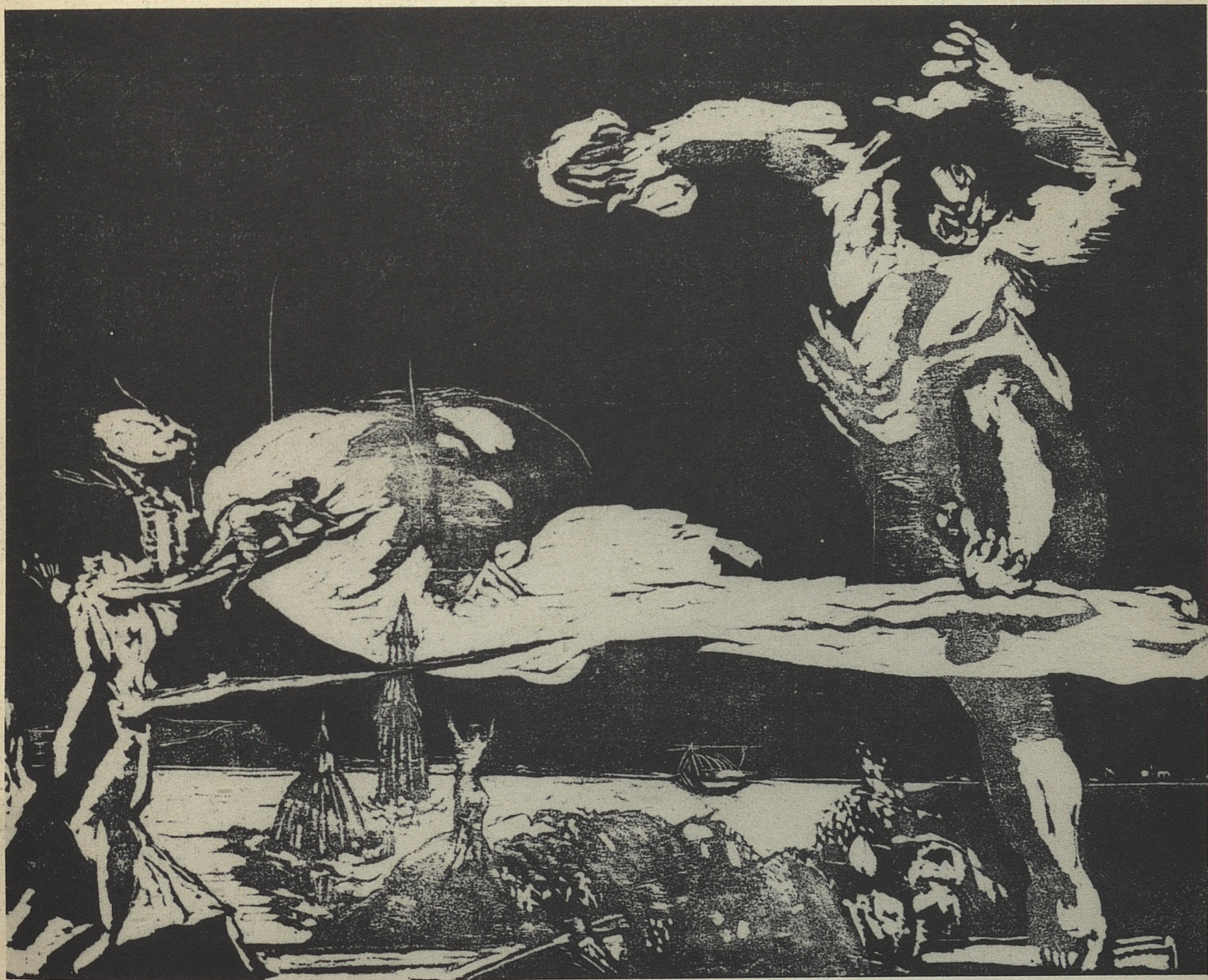






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DRAWINGS

- 1 Two Nudes 1928 $9\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$
- 2 Two Nudes 1928 $5\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$
- 3 Two Nudes in Bister 1930 $16\frac{3}{4} \times 15$
- 4 Women 1942 $14\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$
- 5 Nudes with Trumpets 1945 $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7$ (each)
- 6 Trumpet Player 1945 $6\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$
- 7 The Trumpettry 1945 $8\frac{1}{4} \times 9$
- 8 Bulls 1945 $8\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$
- 9 Siticines 1948 $11 \times 8\frac{1}{2}$
- 10 Lady of the Middle Ages 1949 18×12
- 11 Bull 1949 $11\frac{3}{4} \times 7$
- 12 Centipede with Nudes on his Back 1952 $21\frac{1}{2} \times 26\frac{3}{4}$
- 13 Cellist 1955 $10 \times 7\frac{5}{8}$
- 14 Stilt Walkers over Piazza 1956 $28\frac{1}{2} \times 40\frac{1}{2}$
- 15 Nude 1957 $38\frac{3}{4} \times 26\frac{3}{4}$
- 16 Nude with Unicorn 1958 $26 \times 19\frac{3}{4}$
- 17 Angel 1958 $27\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{3}{4}$
- 18 Portrait 1959 $21\frac{1}{4} \times 21\frac{3}{4}$
- 19 Woman with Bird in a Cage 1959 $44\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{1}{2}$
- 20 Nudes 1959 $18\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{1}{4}$
Lent by Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon, Greenwich, Conn.
- 21 Spanish Girl 1959 $24\frac{3}{4} \times 19$
- 22 Organ Player 1959 $28\frac{1}{2} \times 21$
- 23 Bride and Bull 1959 82×54
- 24 Aaron with Tabernacle 1959 44×28
- 25 Lady with Bell Play 1959 $44\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{1}{2}$
- 26 Centaur with Crab 1959 $44\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{3}{8}$
- 27 Trumpet Player 1959 $31 \times 28\frac{1}{4}$
- 28 Acrobats 1961 $28\frac{1}{4} \times 44\frac{1}{4}$
- 29 Dwarf 1961 $39\frac{1}{2} \times 27\frac{3}{4}$

LITHOGRAPHS

- 30 Woman with Hat 1951 $18\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$
31 Woman and Owl 1952 $13\frac{5}{8} \times 17\frac{1}{4}$
Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y. (Given Anonymously)

TEMPERA

- 32 Amazons and Horses 1943 $21\frac{3}{4} \times 28$
33 Battle of Amazons I 1943 $22\frac{1}{2} \times 19$
34 Battle of Amazons II 1943 $22\frac{1}{2} \times 28$
35 The Fall of the Amazons 1943 $22\frac{1}{2} \times 27\frac{3}{4}$

BLACK AND WHITE WOODCUTS

"Gargantua and Pantagruel" by Rabelais (from the series, 3/6)

- 36 The Rape of Women 1939 $11\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$
37 Gargantua, Nude and Sunflowers 1939 $4\frac{3}{4} \times 4$
38 Gargantua taking the Bells of Notre Dame 1939 4 x 5 (each)
Gargantua Sleeping on the Towers of Notre Dame 1939
39 Little Gargantua Fed by the Cow 1939 $3\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ (each)

"Apocalypse" (from the series, 1/6)

- 40 False Prophet 1940 $10\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$
41 Salvation of the Child 1940 $9\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$
42 One of the Seven Plagues 1940 $9\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$

"Legends of Noah" (from the series, 1/6)

- 43 Still Life after the Flood 1948 $14\frac{1}{2} \times 11$
- 44 The Angels on Earth 1948 $14\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{4}$
- 45 Giant Escaping the Flood 1948 $12\frac{1}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$
- 46 Woman with Veil 1951 $26\frac{1}{2} \times 17$ unique print
- 47 Cow on the Trapeze 1951 $17\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$ unique print
- 48 Rabbi 1952 $27\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{1}{4}$ unique print
- 49 Woman with Necklace 1952 21×15 unique print
- 50 Woman with Black Gloves 1952 $27 \times 14\frac{3}{4}$ unique print
- 51 Woman Ornated with Flowers 1952 $27\frac{1}{4} \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ unique print
- 52 Smiling Woman 1953 $6\frac{1}{2} \times 7$ unique print
- 53 Woman with Sunflowers 1953 $21\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{1}{4}$ unique print
- 54 Head of Girl in Profile 1953 11×16 unique print
- 55 Chess Player 1953 $26\frac{1}{4} \times 21$ unique print
- 56 Hassid on Horse 1953 $28 \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ (1/2)
- 57 Head of a Man in Bewilderment 1953 $15\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$ unique print
- 58 Woman with Flute of Pan 1953 18×15 unique print
- 59 Sholem Alechem 1953 $27\frac{1}{2} \times 18$ unique print
- 60 Meal of Amazons 1953 18×27 unique print
- 61 Ornated Woman 1954 $23 \times 19\frac{3}{4}$ unique print
- 62 Girl with Marionette 1955 $32\frac{1}{4} \times 22$ unique print
- 63 The Goat with Moon 1961 $18\frac{7}{8} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ unique print
- 64 Bird with Snake 1961 $19 \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ unique print
- 65 Don Quixote 1961 24×15 unique print
- 66 Clown 1961 $23\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$ unique print

- 101 Portrait of K. 1956 20 x 26 unique print
- 102 Bird and Flowers 1961 28 x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ unique print
- 103 Lady and Marionette II 1961 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ unique print
- 104 Still Life with Bust 1961 16 x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ unique print
- 105 Head of a Woman 1961 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ unique print
- 106 Woman on Horse 1961 21 x 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ unique print
- 107 Legend Goat and Moon 1961 21 x 24 unique print
- 108 Goat and Man 1961 21 x 23 $\frac{7}{8}$ unique print
- 109 Woman and Plant 1961 20 x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ unique print
- 110 The Piano 1961 24 x 15 unique print
- 111 The Flower Bouquet II 1961 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ unique print
- 112 Siticine, Nude and Flowers 1961 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 24 unique print
- 113 Three Legendary Birds 1961 16 x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ unique print
- 114 Circus Scene II 1961 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ unique print
- 115 Fruit Eater 1961 21 x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ unique print
- 116 Woman with Folded Hands 1961 24 x 15 unique print
- 117 Piano Player 1961 24 x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ unique print
- 118 Woman with Hat 1961 24 x 21 unique print
- 119 Goat and Butterfly 1961 24 x 21 unique print
- 120 Centaur and Centauresse 1961 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ unique print

All dimensions are given in inches. Height precedes width.

In addition to Mr. Reder's one-man shows of sculpture, exhibitions of his drawings and graphic works have been held at:

The Weyhe Gallery—arranged by John Rewald in 1943

The Art Alliance in Philadelphia in 1949

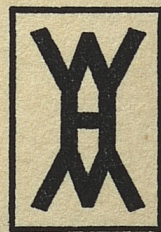
The Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1949
(one room devoted to Reder's woodcuts)

The Print Club in Philadelphia in 1950

The Chicago Art Institute in 1953.

The Borgenicht Gallery in New York held one-man exhibitions of Bernard Reder's graphic works in 1951, 1952 and 1953. Furthermore Mr. Reder's drawings and prints were shown in group exhibitions in museums and galleries, in circulating exhibitions in the U.S.A. and Europe, and were purchased by numerous museums and private collectors.

The Galleries are open Monday through Saturday 10-5:30



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