



THE
DRAWING
CENTER

Len Lye
Motion Sketch

115

The Drawing Center
Drawing Room | The Lab
April 17–June 8, 2014

Len Lye

Motion Sketch

Curated by Gregory Burke *and* Tyler Cann

DRAWING PAPERS 115

Foreword by Brett Littman

Essays by Gregory Burke, Tyler Cann, *and* Len Lye

Foreword

The Drawing Center is pleased to present *Len Lye: Motion Sketch*. The first solo exhibition of the work of Len Lye in an American museum, *Motion Sketch* is curated by Gregory Burke, Executive Director/CEO of the Mendel Art Gallery and Remai Art Gallery of Saskatchewan, and Tyler Cann, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Columbus Museum of Art and formerly Len Lye Curator at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

Born in New Zealand and based in New York City from 1944 until his death in 1980, Lye is widely recognized as a leading member of the vanguard of experimental film. His method of “direct filmmaking”—creating images by scratching, marking, and otherwise manipulating the film stock itself—places him within the tradition of drawing as well.

Len Lye: Motion Sketch is part of a larger, ongoing exploration undertaken by The Drawing Center of the role of drawing within the cinematic medium. *Drawing on Film*, 2008, a film program curated by João Ribas, which featured Lye, highlighted the now more than seventy-year-old tradition of “direct filmmaking.” More recently *Alexis Rockman: Drawings from Life of Pi*, 2013, charted the dialogue between director Ang Lee and artist Alexis Rockman as they developed the visual world of Lee’s film *Life of Pi* through sketches, drawings, and watercolors—some of which were later used as the basis for animated sequences in the movie.

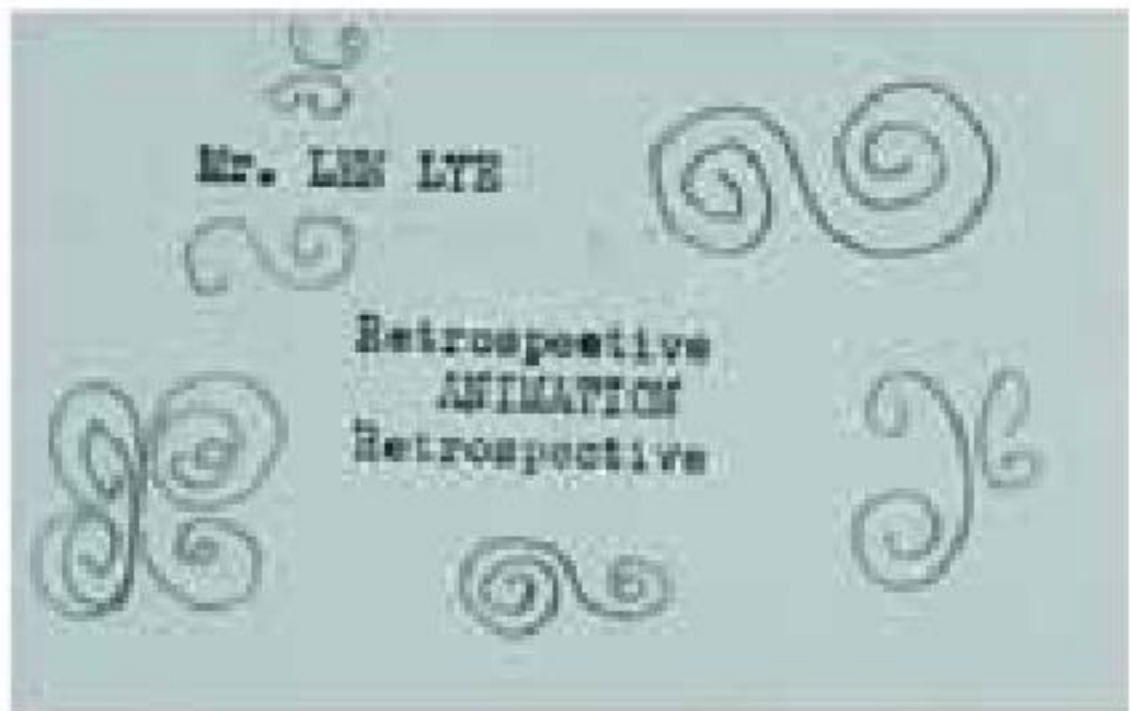
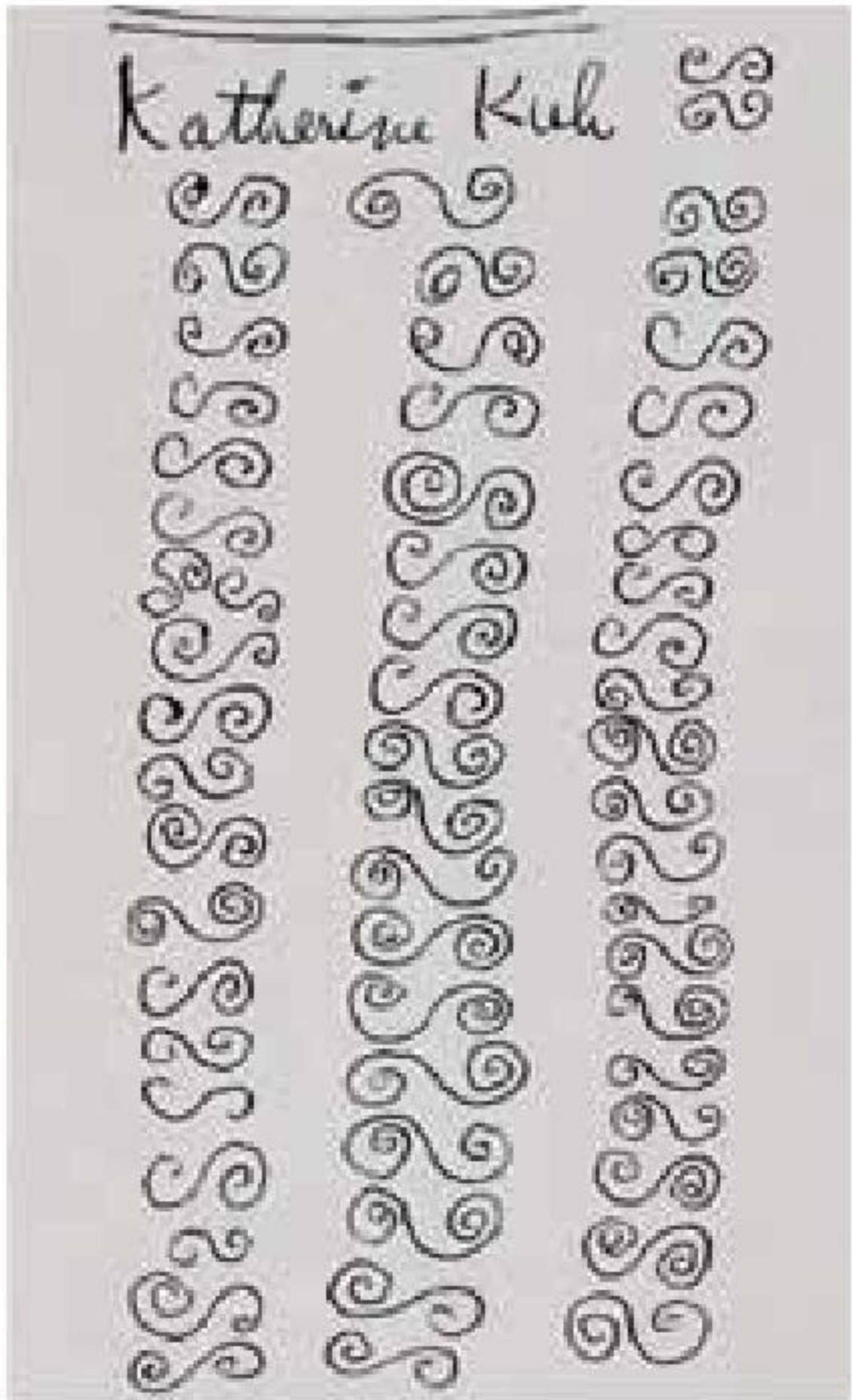
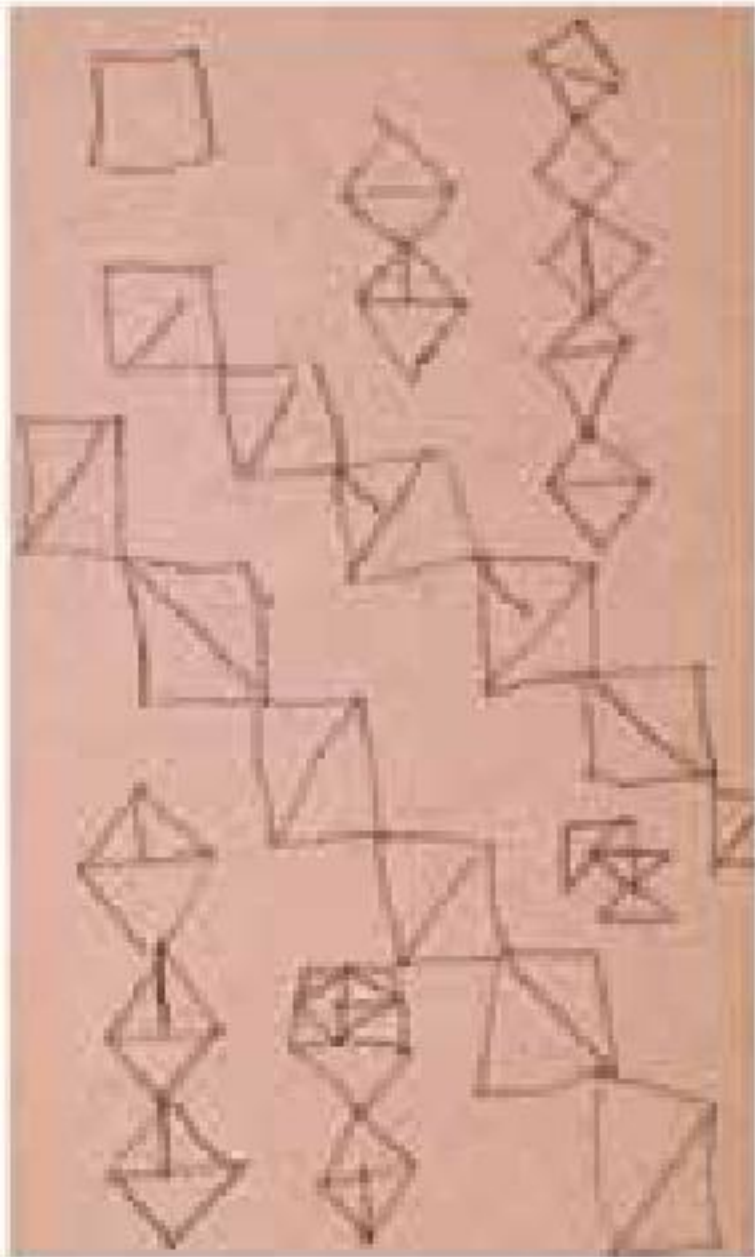
Motion Sketch reveals how Lye's concept of "doodling" underpinned his approach to a range of media. The exhibition features a selection of paintings, drawings, and photograms that have never before been seen in the United States, alongside ephemera, written texts annotated with doodles, book covers, and film strips that demonstrate Lye's "direct filmmaking" techniques. In The Drawing Center's Lab gallery, viewers will find an extensive program of Lye's films (transferred to video), including such landmarks as *Tusalava*, 1929, *A Colour Box*, 1935, and *Free Radicals*, 1957/1979.

The Drawing Center extends sincere thanks to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery as well as the organizers of this exhibition: Gregory Burke and Tyler Cann and Paul Brobbel, Len Lye Curator at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. Special thanks go also to our wonderful staff at The Drawing Center, including Nova Benway, Curatorial Assistant; Molly Gross, Communications Director; Anna Martin, Registrar; Dan Gillespie, Operations Manager; Nicole Goldberg, Deputy Director, External Affairs; Margaret Sundell, Executive Editor; Joanna Ahlberg, Managing Editor; and Peter J. Ahlberg/AHL&CO, Designer. Finally, we are deeply grateful to Creative New Zealand for their support of this exhibition.

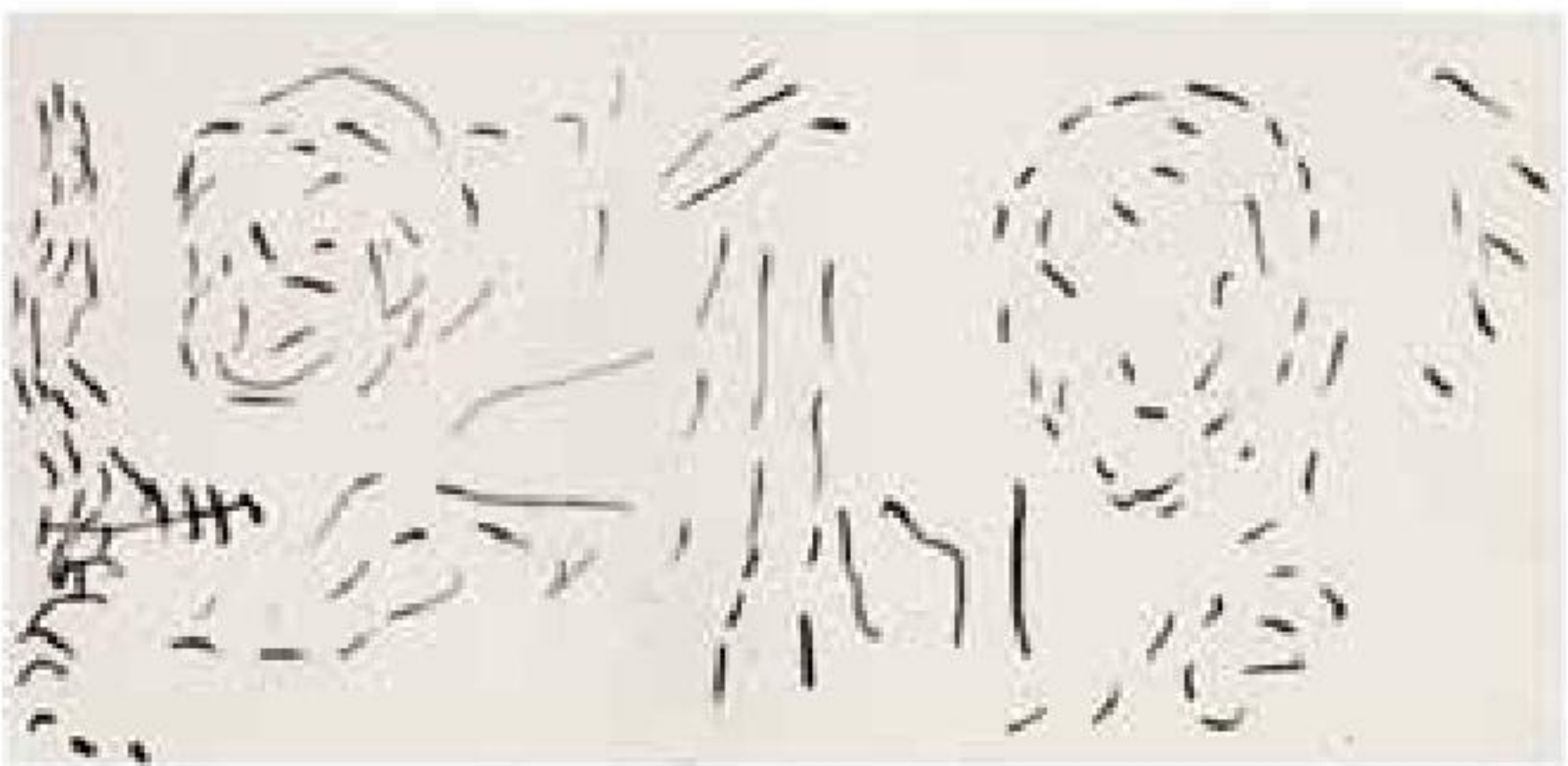
—Brett Littman, *Executive Director*, The Drawing Center



PL. 1
Len Lye in film studio, c. 1950s



PL. 2
Various small doodles, 1920s–1970s



Len Lye: Motion Sketch

Gregory Burke *and* Tyler Cann

All my drawings stood for the way things moved...

—LEN LYE, 1960

On the streets of New York City, the artist and experimental filmmaker Len Lye was attentive to the fleeting trace of other people's noses and ears as they walked by, but paid equal mind to the geological forces opening cracks in the pavement.¹ As a teacher at New York University in the late-1960s, Lye exhorted his students to study such things as the arc of a swinging door, the sway of a leaf on a branch, and the rise fall of their own chests as they breathed during class.² Fascinated by motion and its relation to the human body, Lye brought movement into the heart of his work. In various ways, he treated it like an artistic medium over the course of his six-decade-long career in drawing, film, painting, and sculpture.

In 1920, while still living in his native New Zealand, Lye began to make the "motion sketches" for which this exhibition is named. In these "spaghetti-looking sketches," he strove to render the wing beats of seagulls, curling waves on the ocean, wind-swept ponds of water, creases and folds in people's clothing, and other kinetic phenomena. As recounted in his 1960 text "My Model," many of these early works were lost when his sketchbook mysteriously disappeared as

¹ Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye: A Biography* (Auckland: Auckland University Press), 105, 293.

² *Ibid.*, 319. See also unpublished mss. "NYU Lectures October 13, 1966," Len Lye Archives, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, LEC 2 Folder 13.

he dived into a harbor to save one of his unwitting models from drowning (a feat that was reported in the local paper).³ But despite the lacuna in his oeuvre, it is clear that the energy and aesthetic potential of movement drove Lye's wide-ranging career as an artist. Drawing, or "doodling" as he called it, was not simply a significant part of Lye's practice; it was inherent in its every aspect. For Lye, drawing represented a nexus between the body and the outside world, a point of transit between the external and internal fields of sensation. He made a habit of empathizing with things in motion, saying:

I, myself, eventually came to look at the way things moved mainly to try to feel movement, and only feel it. This is what dancers do; but instead, I wanted to put the feeling of a figure of motion outside of myself to see what I'd got. I came to realize that this feeling had to come out of myself, not out of streams, swaying grasses, soaring birds; so, instead of sketching lines and accents described by things in motion, I now tried to tie and plait their particular motion characteristics into my sinews—to attach an inner echo of them to my bones.⁴

Describing the sensation he aspired to when drawing, Lye wrote, in his own carefree and imagistic prose, that the act "cultivates a vacuous seaweed-pod state of kelp as a skull which is attached to a pencil betwixt the arm and the fingers held doodling in turn 'twixt you and the paper in a rather bemused, empty, *harmonious* state of an attitude, eyes periphering said paper."⁵ An expression of Lye's empathy with the world around him, as well as his own free-floating kinesthesia, the action of the drawing hand became a touchstone for his thinking about movement in other media.

Not limited to works on paper, the exhibition *Len Lye: Motion Sketch* suggests that Lye's kinesthetic approach to drawing—related

³ Len Lye, "My Model," in *Happy Moments: Text and Images by Len Lye*, ed. Roger Horrocks (Auckland: The Holloway Press, 2002), 31–4. (A copy of Lye's text also appears in this volume.)

⁴ Len Lye, "The Art that Moves," in *Figures of Motion: Len Lye Selected Writings*, eds. Wystan Curnow and Roger Horrocks (Auckland and Oxford: Auckland University and Oxford University Press, 1984), 82.

⁵ Len Lye, "Somewhat Autobiographically," unpublished mss., Len Lye Archives, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, CW2, folder 22, 7.

to Surrealist automatism and anticipating aspects of Abstract Expressionism—informed the gamut of his practice in painting, photography, filmmaking, and, ultimately, the “tangible motion,” or kinetic, sculptures he began making in the late 1950s. Doodling, as Lye noted, is a mind/body activity not restricted to one medium. “I always do doodle-type images when I’m fishing for something to kind of feel at most one with myself. I doodle with pen and pencil; or bits of steel I waggle; film I scratch,” he said.⁶ While this corporeal impulse clearly informs his late work with sculpture, *Len Lye: Motion Sketch* traces its application from Lye’s early to mid-career in drawing, painting, photography, and film.

• • •

A fixture in his West Village neighborhood, Len Lye lived, created, and exhibited his work in New York City from 1944 until his death in 1980. In this sense, *Motion Sketch* represents a homecoming of sorts. Still, his colorful biography requires introduction. Lye was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1901, and was by all accounts a buoyant personality despite his family’s relative poverty. Lye’s childhood years on a remote corner of the South Island, where his stepfather was a lighthouse keeper, made a deep impression. Trained as a commercial artist, Lye was also an occasional farmhand, working odd jobs in New Zealand and Australia to support his itinerant travels in the South Pacific. In 1925, he was deported from Samoa by its colonial administrators for living as a guest in a Samoan community. Lye landed in Sydney and the following year, worked his way to London by shoveling coal in the boiler of a steamship. In London, he settled on a barge in the Thames and into a number of artistic circles: he joined the Seven and Five Society, which included Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, and Henry Moore; befriended writers like Dylan Thomas, Robert Graves, and Laura Riding; and had truck with Surrealism, showing work at the London Gallery and in the landmark *International Exhibition of Surrealism* in 1936.

Given his interest in movement, Lye was naturally drawn to motion pictures. His first film, *Tusalava*, 1929, was composed of thousands

⁶ Len Lye, “Considering a Temple” in *Figures in Motion*, 94.

of individually photographed drawings of biomorphic abstractions configured in a loose, cyclical narrative. *Tusalava* took two years to make and was screened only once at the London Film Society. Lye, however, gained wide attention for his innovative short animation, *A Colour Box*, 1935, which dispensed entirely with the camera. Instead, he painted directly on the celluloid itself and with the help of his sound editor, Jack Ellitt, matched the vibrantly-colored abstract forms to the rhythms of rumba and jazz. Sponsored by the General Post Office (GPO) Film Unit, *A Colour Box* bore a sequence advertising “cheaper parcel post” and was screened to a general audience in cinemas throughout Britain. Lye continued to develop his experiments in film during the 1930s. During World War II, he also directed wartime propaganda and training films, several of which feature abstract “direct” animation and experimental techniques of film editing and processing.

In early 1941—the midst of the London Blitz—Lye devised an aesthetic and political philosophy he termed “Individual Happiness Now” (IHN). For Lye, the three words represented interconnected values of self-presence that he felt could form the basis of a humane society transcending nationalism, political ideology, and religious difference. Certain that a film could be made about his utopian theory, Lye went to New York in hope of gaining support from the erstwhile presidential candidate and author of *One World*, Wendell Willkie. (Willkie had expressed an interest in IHN to a mutual friend who had passed him Lye’s prospectus.) Although the project ended with Willkie’s premature death in 1944, Lye remained in New York and never abandoned his home-grown philosophy. Frequenting New-York-School hangouts like the Cedar Tavern and “The Club” at 39 East 8th Street, where he showed his films, Lye “met all the abstract expressionist boys before they expressionisted. ... We’d meet and talk art, then dance and dance ... I liked their work and I think they liked mine.”⁷ Lye’s focus on individualism, growing out of the war years, paralleled American art’s contemporaneous emphasis on subjectivity and the expressive gesture.

⁷ Horrocks, *A Biography*, 231.



PL. 3
Wind Wand, 1960

Lye became a US citizen in 1950 and continued to make experimental films. His *Free Radicals*, 1958, and *Particles in Space*, 1957–79, extended the technique of “direct” animation; instead of painting onto film, Lye created images by gauging or scratching the black emulsion of 16mm film leader with various utensils. Also in 1957, Lye began making kinetic, or what he called “tangible motion,” sculptures. They ranged in scale from the three-foot *Fountain I*, 1960, to the monumental *Wind Wands*, realized, first, in 1960, in the West Village, as a thirty-six-foot work and, subsequently, in 1967, in Toronto, in a ninety-foot version [PL. 3]. (Lye’s dream, unrealized in his lifetime, was to construct a *Wind Wand* at a height of 150 feet.) Following Lye’s death in 1980, his estate passed to the Len Lye Foundation and the contents of his studio were shipped from New York to New Zealand. This collection and archive is regularly exhibited at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, one of the country’s foremost art museums. Lye’s pioneering hand-painted and scratched abstract films have become fixtures in the history of the moving image and institutions like the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Berkeley Art Museum, among others, have acquired his kinetic sculpture. His work in painting, photography, and drawing, however, is largely unknown. Presenting pieces never before exhibited in the United States, *Motion Sketch* is also the first substantial solo presentation of Lye’s work in his adopted city in nearly fifty years.

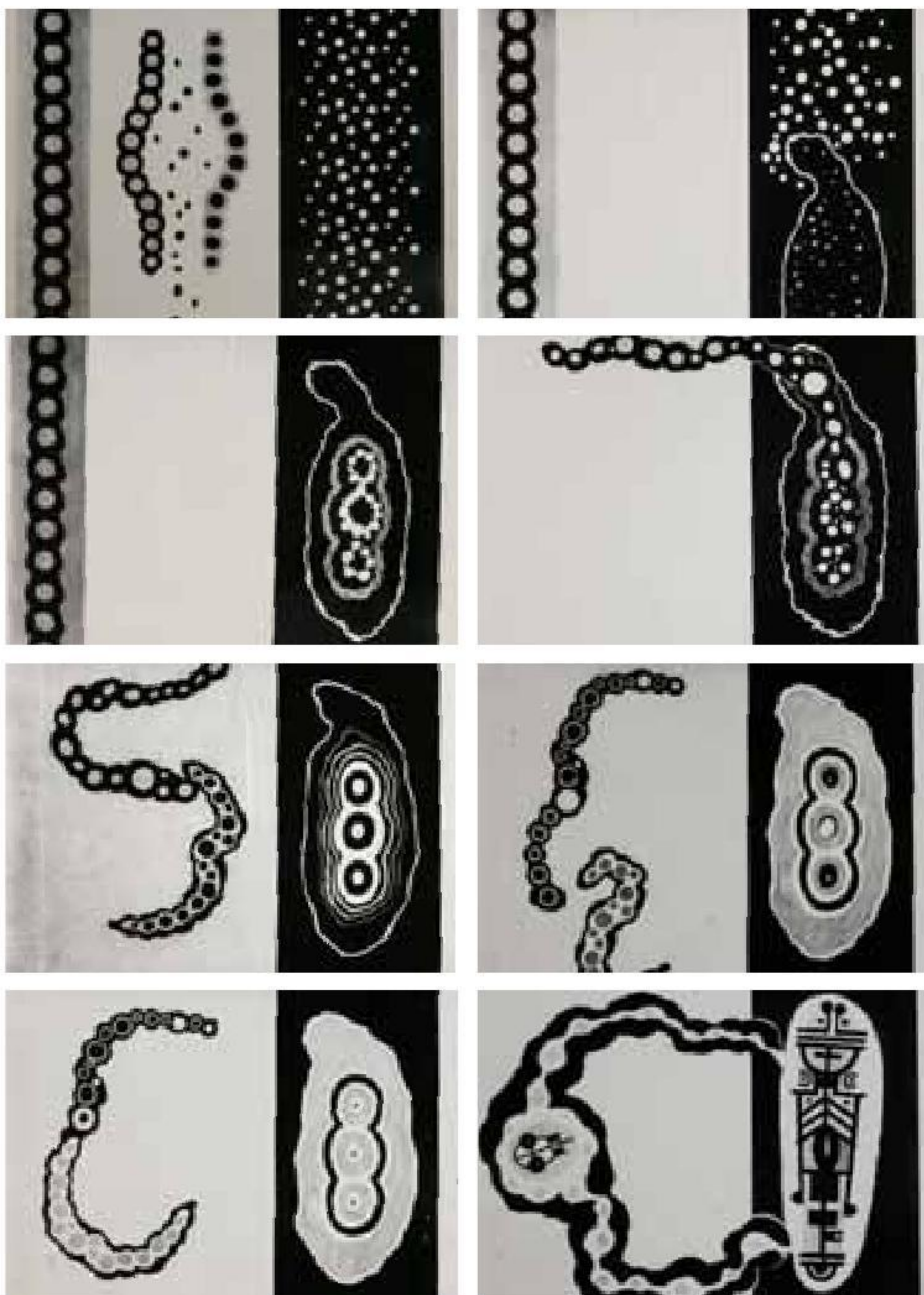
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Some of the earliest drawings in the exhibition relate to Lye’s film *Tusalava*, whose Samoan title he described as “a circumspect Polynesian word inferring that eventually everything is just the same.”⁸ The film represented, for Lye, “the beginnings of organic life up to an anxiety all human.”⁹ It opens with a blank screen vertically divided into black and white segments. In each, a chain of cells appears that evolves into a humanoid form Lye called a “self” shape and a “grotesque octopus head” respectively.¹⁰ Over the course of the film, the monstrous “head” devours the “self” and then explodes

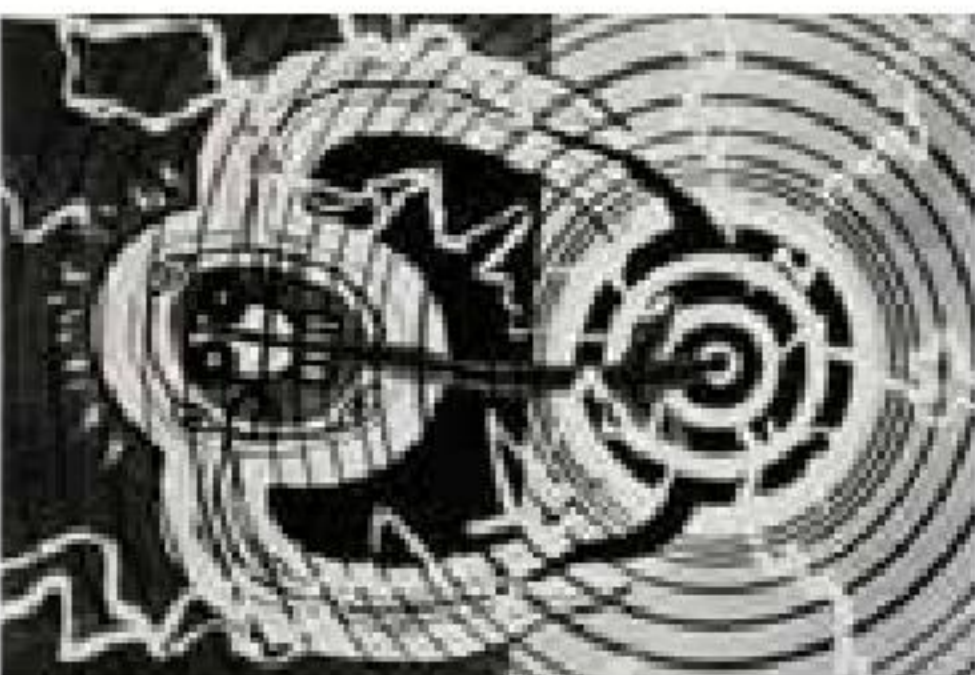
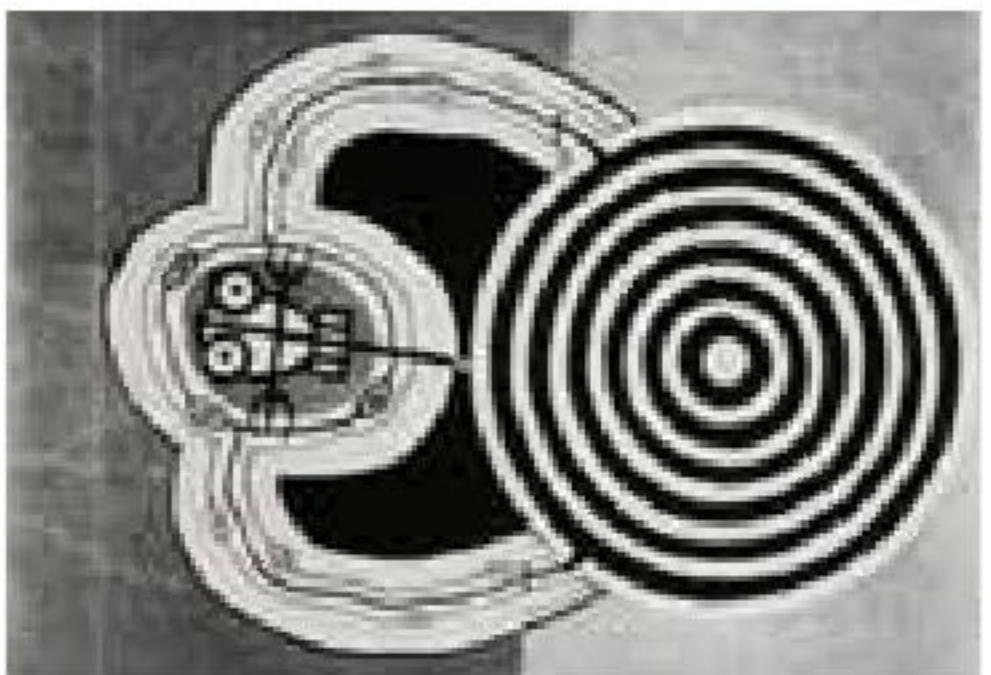
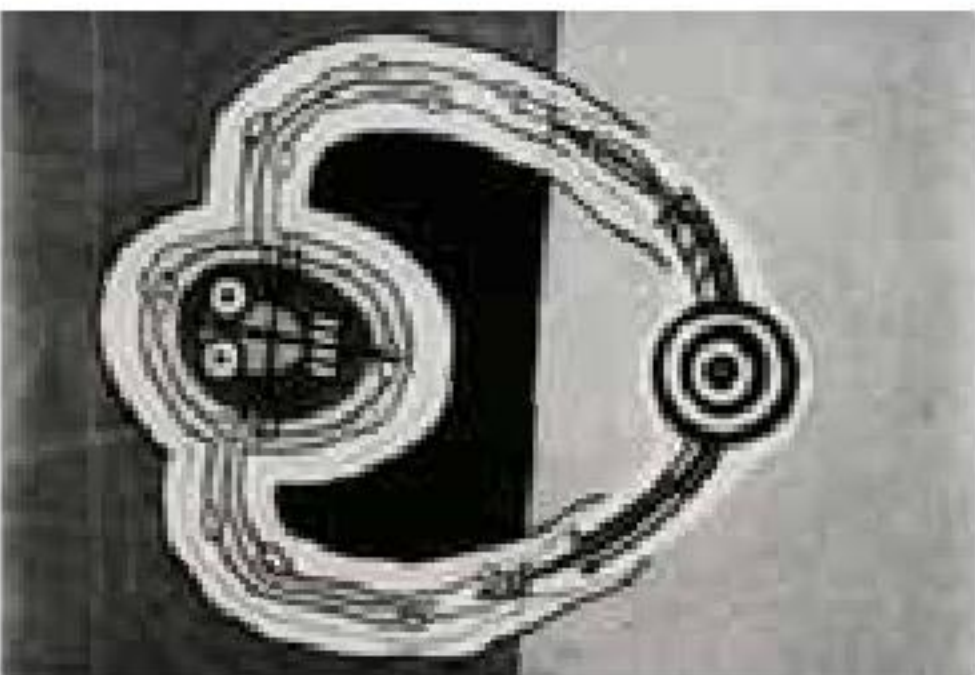
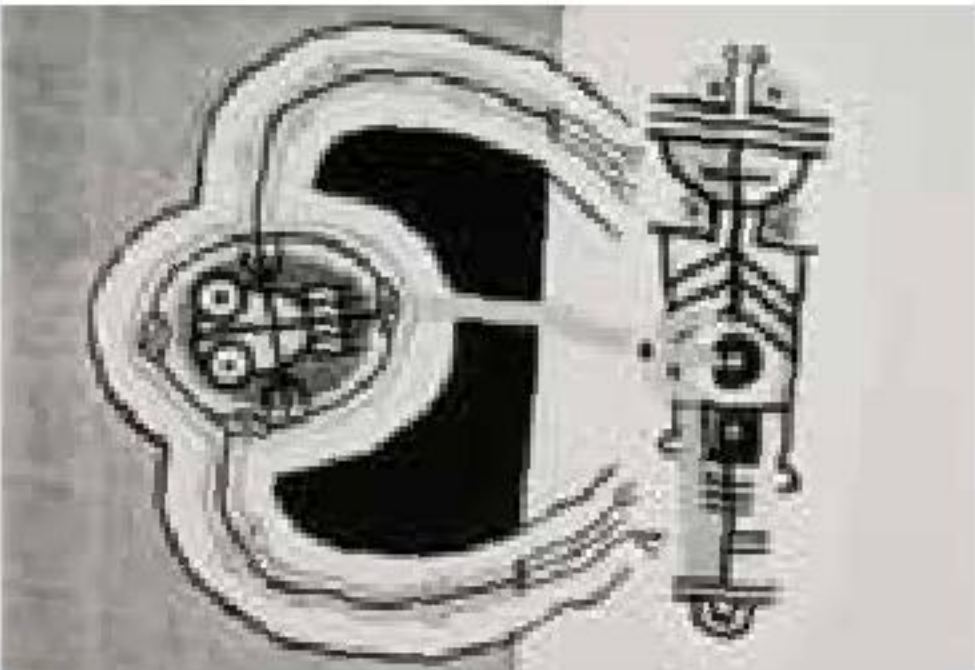
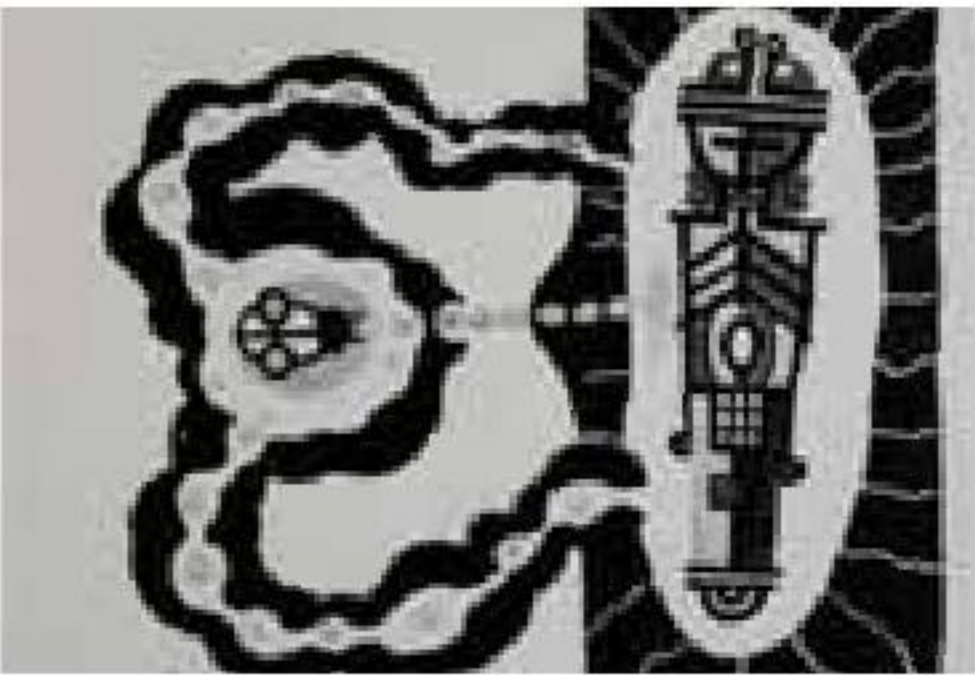
⁸ Len Lye, *No Trouble* (Deya, Mallorca: Seizin Press, 1930), 12.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.



PL. 4
 Stills from *Tusalava*, 1929



into a series of concentric circles welling out from its center, before collapsing back into a single point [PL. 4]. The writhing figures are equally indebted to Australian Aboriginal art and the work of Europeans like Joan Miró, both of which Lye strongly admired.

Lye worked with his friend, composer Jack Ellitt, on a now-lost two-piano score for *Tusalava*. (A piece by Eugene Goossens that Lye suggested in its place has been adapted to accompany the film.) Lye and Ellitt imagined further film sequences featuring abstracted geological forms depicting “the conflict of land and water shapes,”¹¹ accompanied by the sounds of rushing water, tap drums, and high-frequency electric currents. Lye was no doubt familiar with Man Ray’s rayographs, which were made by placing objects directly on photosensitive paper and then exposing them to light.¹² In 1930, Lye began experimenting with his own version, which he dubbed “shadowgrams.” One, *Marks and Spencer in a Japanese Garden*, 1930 (later retitled *Pond People*), is represented at The Drawing Center [PL. 5]. About this same time, just weeks after *Tusalava* was screened, Lye travelled to Mallorca, Spain, at the invitation of Robert Graves and Laura Riding, where he made an evocative series of drawings on the themes of “Air,” “Sea,” and “Earth.” In these examples of Lye’s doodles, charged amoeba- and plant-like forms attack and absorb one another in a kind of sexual combat. As with *Tusalava*, Lye understood these images, such as *Head Man of the Seed World*, c. 1930, to be enacting a primordial myth of creation [PLS. 6–7].

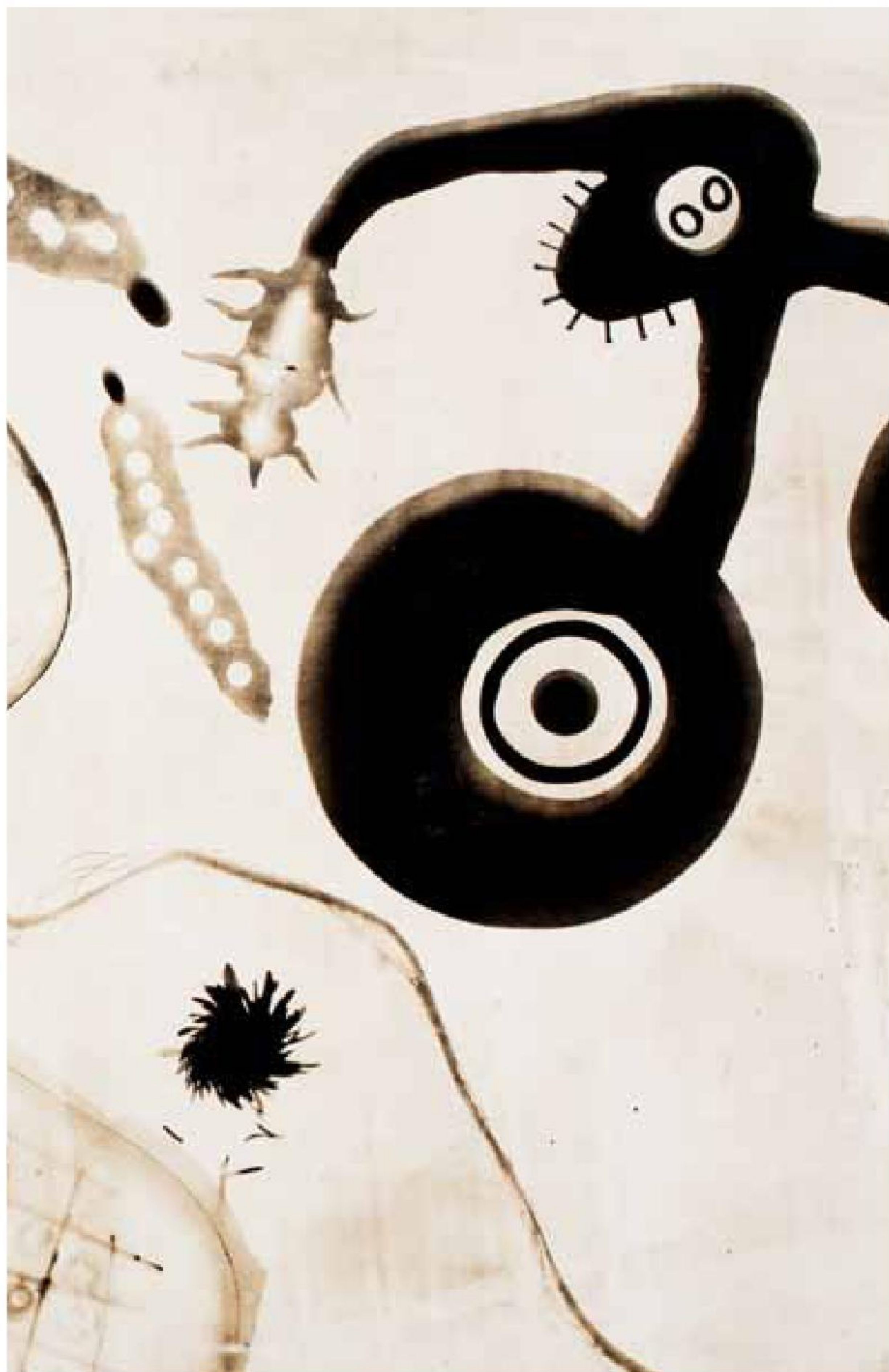
As the decade progressed, Lye began making more gestural and abstract drawings and paintings, such as *Snow Birds Making Snow*, 1936 [PL. 8]. The latter, like the equally fancifully titled, *Marks and Spencer in a Japanese Garden*, was included in the “International Exhibition of Surrealism.” *Snow Birds Making Snow* contains a number of motifs directly inspired by Lye’s encounter with images of prehistoric art in the library of the Victoria and Albert Museum. He would repeatedly copy the reproductions in books on subjects like the Paleolithic caves in southern Spain and rock paintings of

¹¹ *No Trouble*, 12.

¹² Known generically as a “photogram,” the first image created through this process was made in the 1830s by Henry Fox Talbot, who called it a “photogenic drawing.”



PL. 5
Marks and Spencer in a Japanese Garden (or Pond People), 1930





PL. 6
Drawing for Head Man of the Seed World, c. 1930s



PL. 7

Drawing for Head Man of the Seed World, c. 1930s



PL. 8
Snow Birds Making Snow, 1936

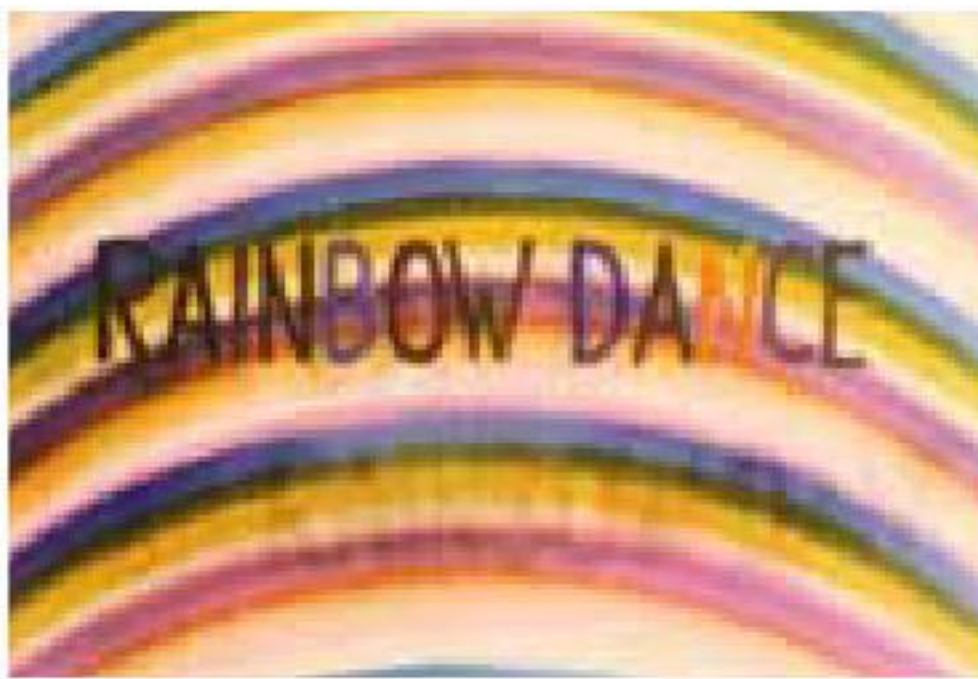


southwest Africa. Through this repetition, Lye attempted to create a muscle memory of the act of drawing, which he would then tap to form new images, going so far as to label some of his works “cave” or “mine” so that he could distinguish which were his own. Lye felt that linking the movement of his drawing hand to the forms of prehistoric painting could in some way collapse the temporal distance between the two, allowing him access to what he termed the “old brain,” a bodily unconscious conceived as much in biological as in psychological or primitivist terms.

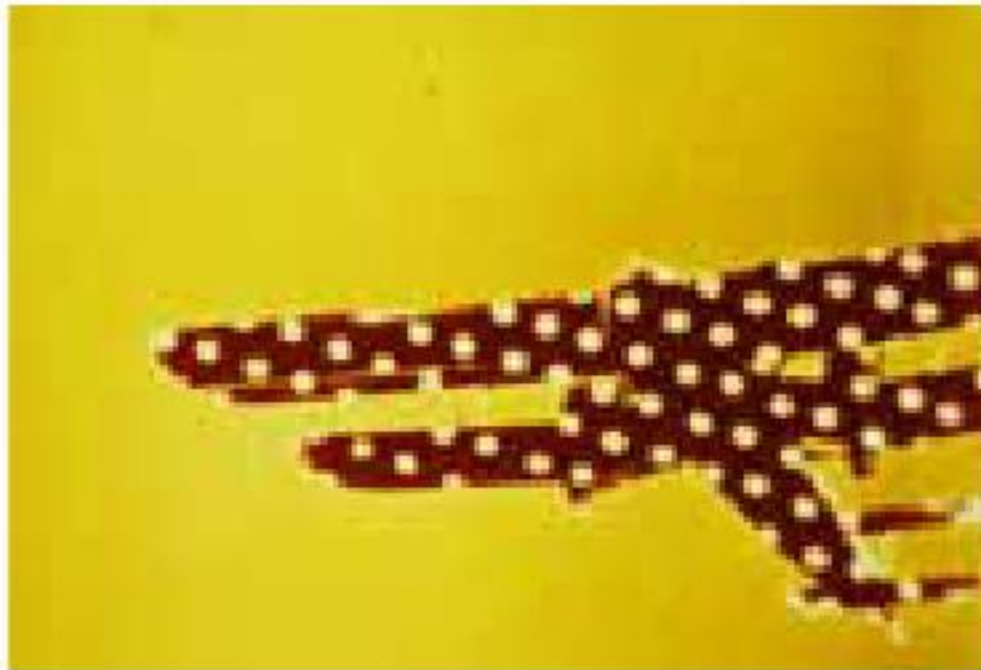
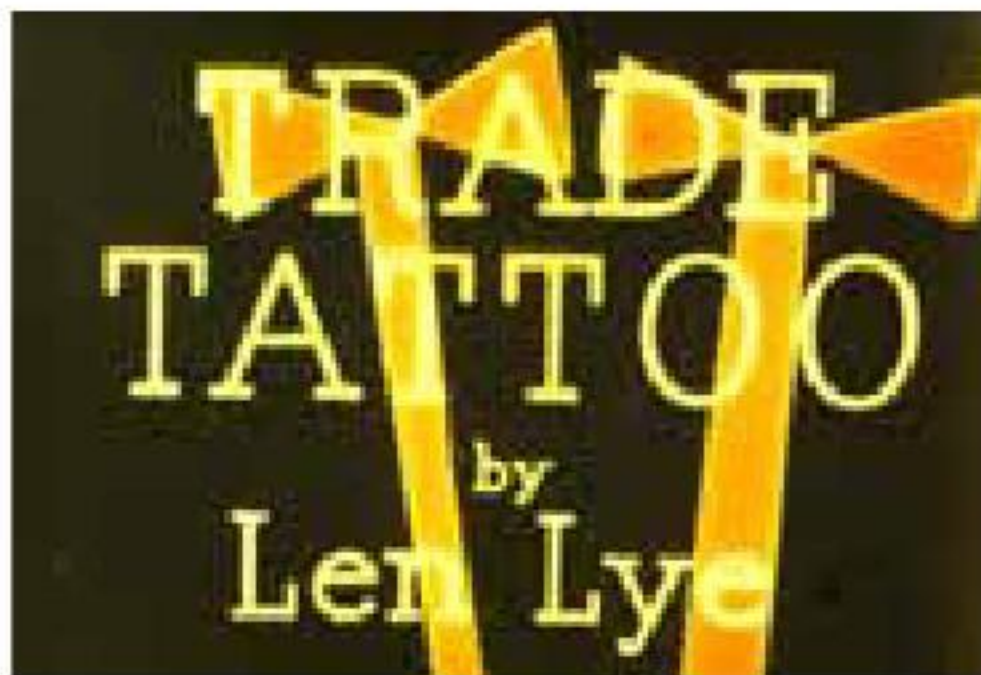
The untitled ink drawings in this exhibition dated March 24, 1938, similarly recall images that Lye would have seen in books of prehistoric art [PL. 41–42]. While the precise conception of these drawings is unclear, they retain a strong sense of immediacy. With their insistently specific date (unusual for Lye’s “doodles”), they suggest a transition in his motion sketches; from an attempt to render the movement of some animal or object, they shift toward a form of drawing more concerned with the moment of its own creation—the “seaweed-pod state of kelp as a skull which is attached to a pencil.” The bands that weave across the surface of the paper, containing a procession of hatched lines or abstract motifs, also suggest strips of film.

It is worth noting here that the original 35mm strip of celluloid used to make *A Colour Box* had no frame lines to mark the edges of what would be projected on screen and there are almost no splices, or edits, in the film. Lye would often pull combs or sticks through a layer of enamel on celluloid, scumbling a line in a manner akin to drawing. The immediacy of these gestures is repeated each time the film unspools in the projector; what the audience witnesses passing through its gate is a line in the process of becoming. In Lye’s films where the line traverses the boundaries of the frame, film no longer consists of a series of static images sutured together, but a continuous flow created by a moving hand.

Of course, Lye was also interested in the composition within the frame of the film and used guides and stencils to achieve a measure of control over the movement and flow of images. Some of his stencils were made by drawing a wavering line down the middle of a



PL. 10
Stills from *Rainbow Dance*, 1936



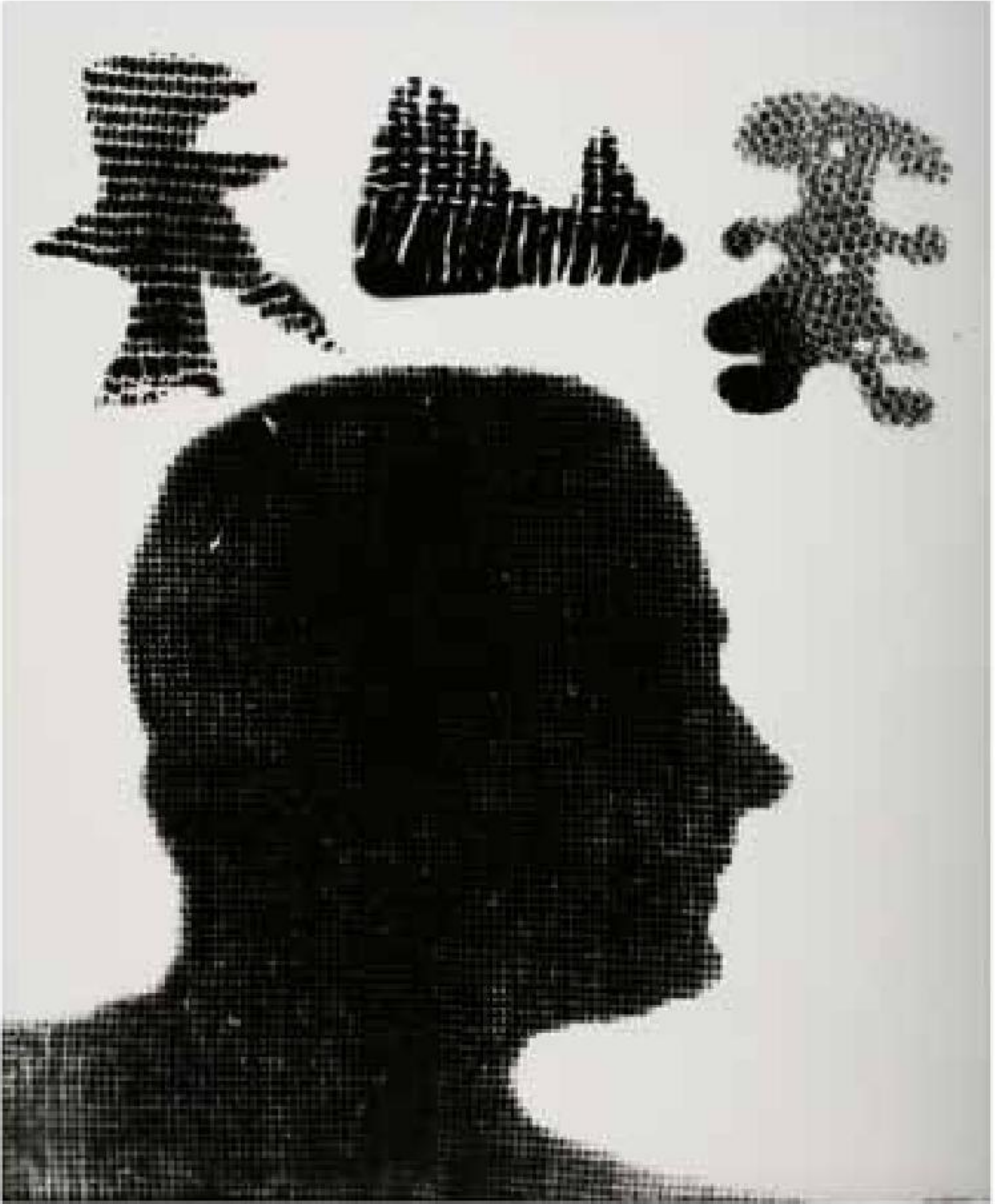
PL. 11
Stills from *Trade Tattoo*, 1937

strip of paper, cutting along it, and separating the two halves. Lye would then airbrush within the negative space defined by the line to create the image on celluloid. Other stencils were painstakingly cut into cards whose measurements and shifting movement Lye geared precisely to the twenty-four-frames-per-second projection speed of sound film. In works like *Rainbow Dance*, 1936, and *Trade Tattoo*, 1937, Lye combined stencils, live action, and found footage [PLS. 10, 11]. Both the found and newly-shot footage were monochromatic, but Lye used color film stock and processed it in unorthodox ways, manipulating the three-color substrates in the emulsion of Gasparcolor and Technicolor film to create these works' high-keyed, saturated tones.

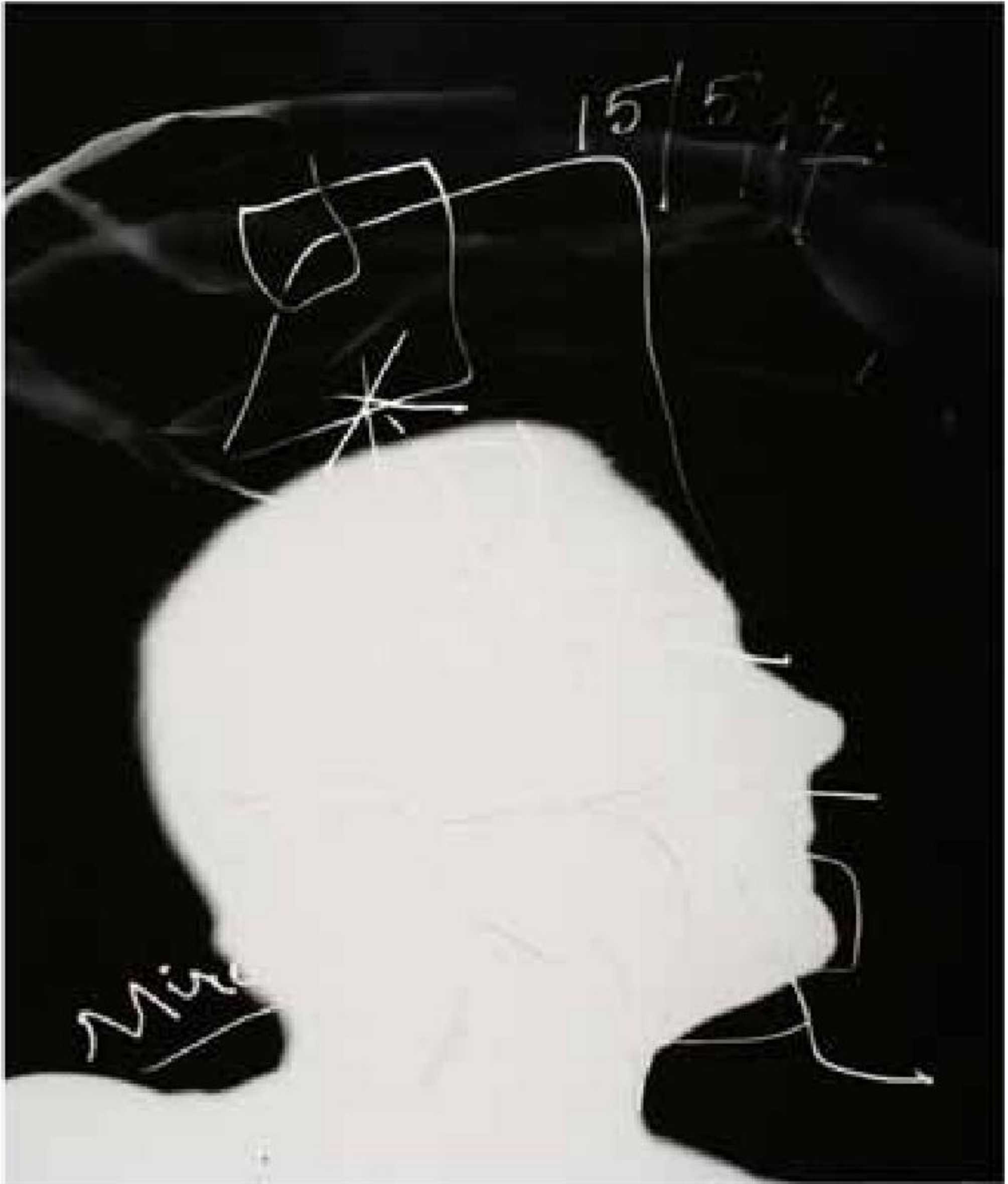
With the war, Lye's work for *The March of Time*, and his growing preoccupation with Individual Happiness Now, the 1940s were a relatively lean period for Lye's artistic production. He returned to art-making in 1947 with a series of profile portraits created with the photogram/shadowgram technique. Several capture prominent figures in the arts: painters Georgia O'Keeffe and Joan Miró [PLS. 12–15]; poet W.H. Auden; architect Le Corbusier; the filmmaker Hans Richter; and jazz drummer Baby Dodds among them. In photography as in film, Lye favored the tactile and unmediated process of placing objects on photographic paper and exposing them to light. Lye would produce silhouettes of his subjects and then layer them with other images, textures, writings, and drawings in a manner that echoed the masking and layering of the stencil work used in *Rainbow Dance* and *Trade Tattoo*. In his portrait photograms/shadowgrams, Lye worked in near-darkness until a flash of light fixed the image. As Wystan Curnow has written, "[t]he instant of visibility is equally the instant of consciousness, the instant of being, of becoming somebody."¹³ This physical immediacy is akin to what Lye sought to achieve in his practice of drawing.

The works that perhaps best distill Lye's kinesthetic conception of drawing are his scratch films begun in 1957, *Free Radicals* and *Particles in Space*. Among his most celebrated creations, they

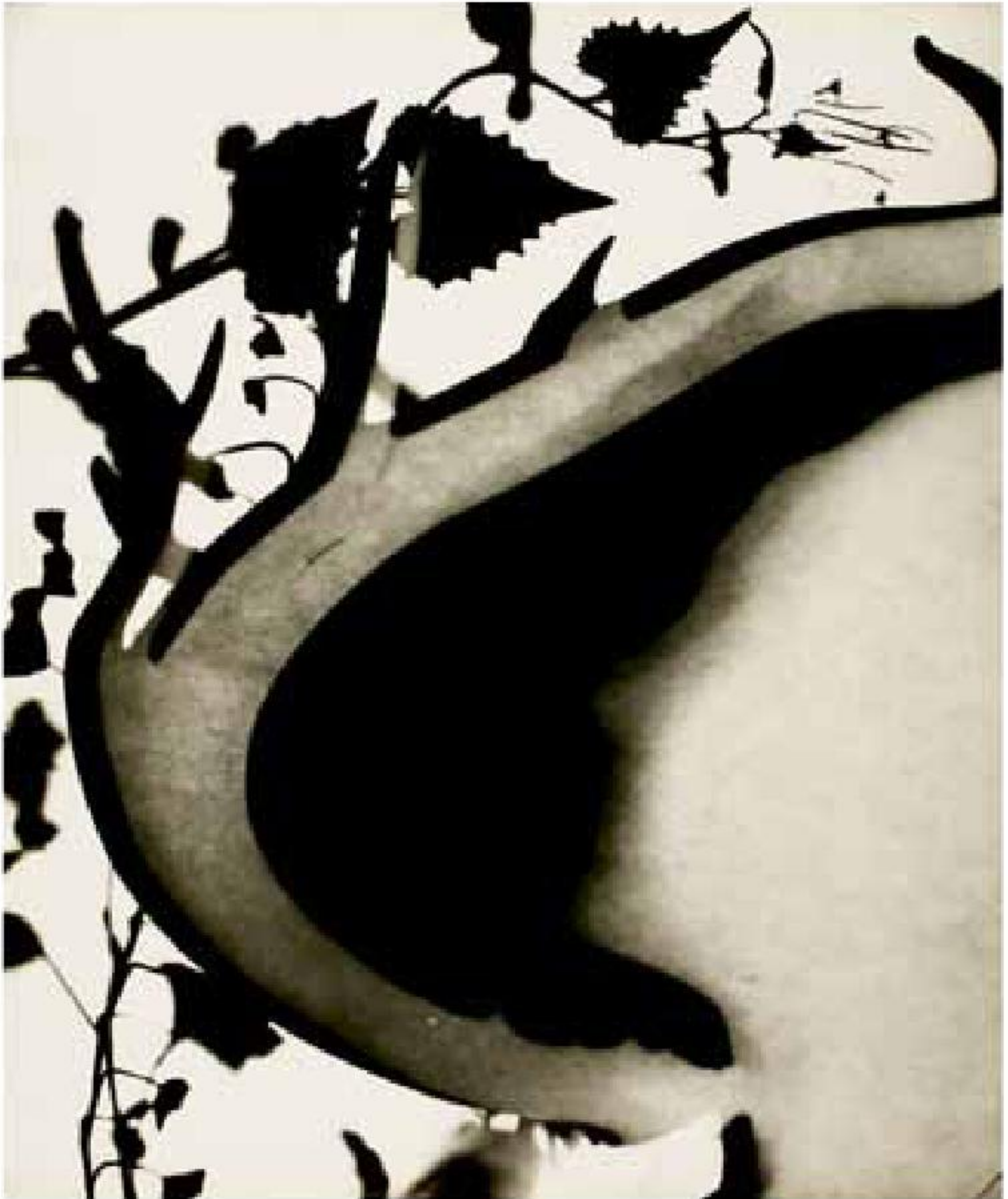
¹³ Wystan Curnow, "Len Lye's Portrait Photograms" in *Len Lye*, eds. Tyler Cann and Wystan Curnow (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 2008), 121.



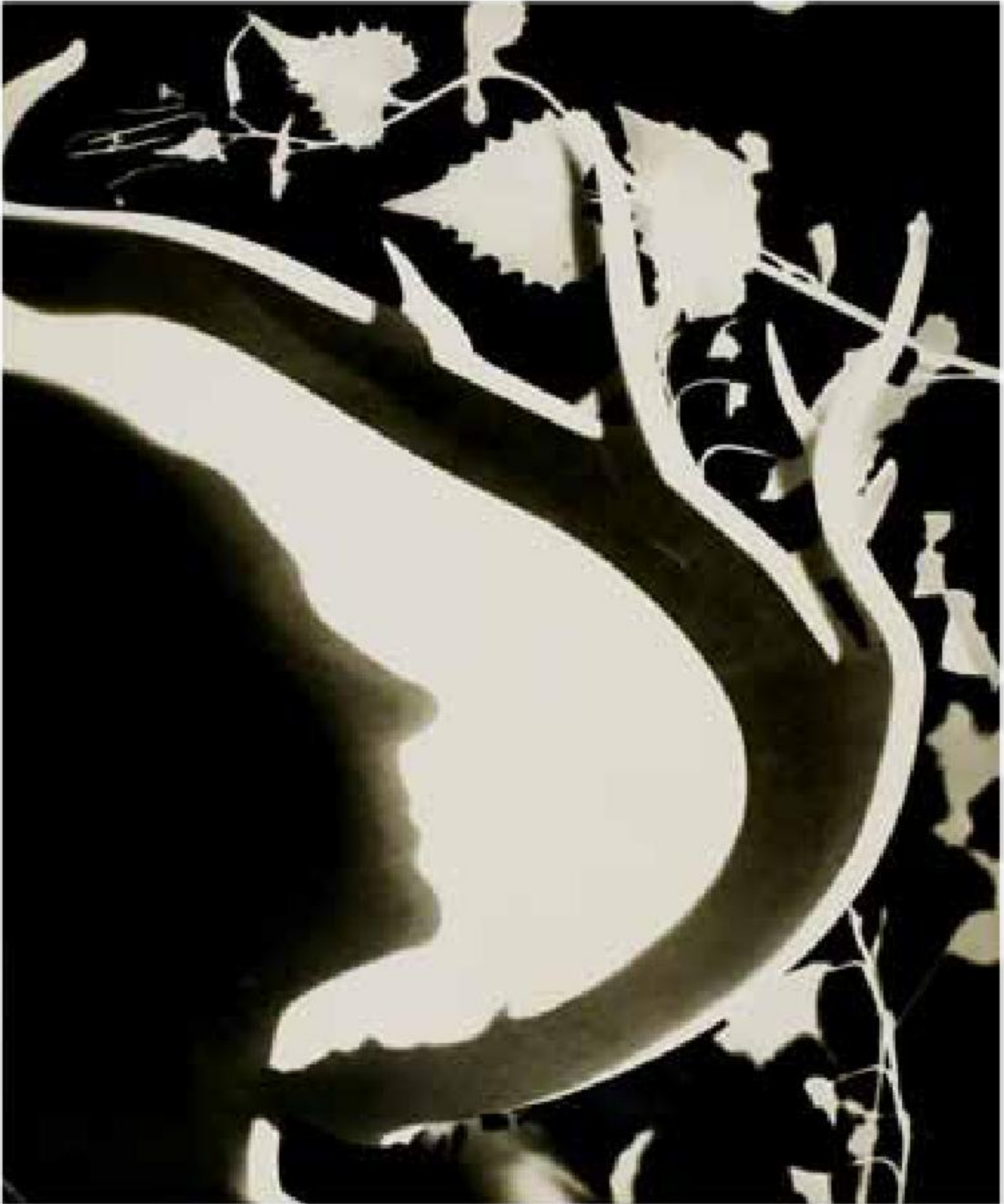
PL. 12
Joan Miró, 1947



PL. 13
Joan Miró, 1947



PL. 14
Georgia O'Keeffe (White on Black), 1947



PL. 15
Georgia O'Keeffe (Black on White), 1947

look back to his “motion sketches” as well as his flip book studies of motion. In these quick, abstract sketches, such as the fourteen shown here (all dated January 3, 1938), several compositional motifs expand, loosen, and ultimately dissolve into a tangle of lines [PLS. 16–29]. In *Free Radicals* and *Particles in Space*, Lye used dental picks, nails, adapted saw blades, and other tools to inscribe the figures that turn, twist, and scatter on black 16mm film leader [PLS. 51, 58]. Unable to see the small images as he made them, Lye compared his work on *Free Radicals* to writing “pictographic signatures” over and over while blindfolded.¹⁴ In both *Free Radicals* and *Particles in Space*, movement, drawing, light, and sound are paired with the syncopated rhythms of African drum music; the result is a strikingly physical experience of cinema. Lye’s scratch films mark the culmination of his early motion sketches, realized in the medium of film. They also point toward his resonant kinetic sculptures, also first conceived in 1957, which extend the films’ vocabulary of space, movement, and sound into three dimensions.

The exhibition *Motion Sketch* makes no attempt to render more than a sketch of Len Lye’s artistic practice, nor is it even a comprehensive survey of his drawing. Rather, it presents a facet of work that is little known, even to those familiar with Lye’s films, and demonstrates the conceptual coherence of his seemingly disparate work in drawing, painting, photography, and film. As Lye once remarked, “It’s a small, spinning world I live in.”¹⁵

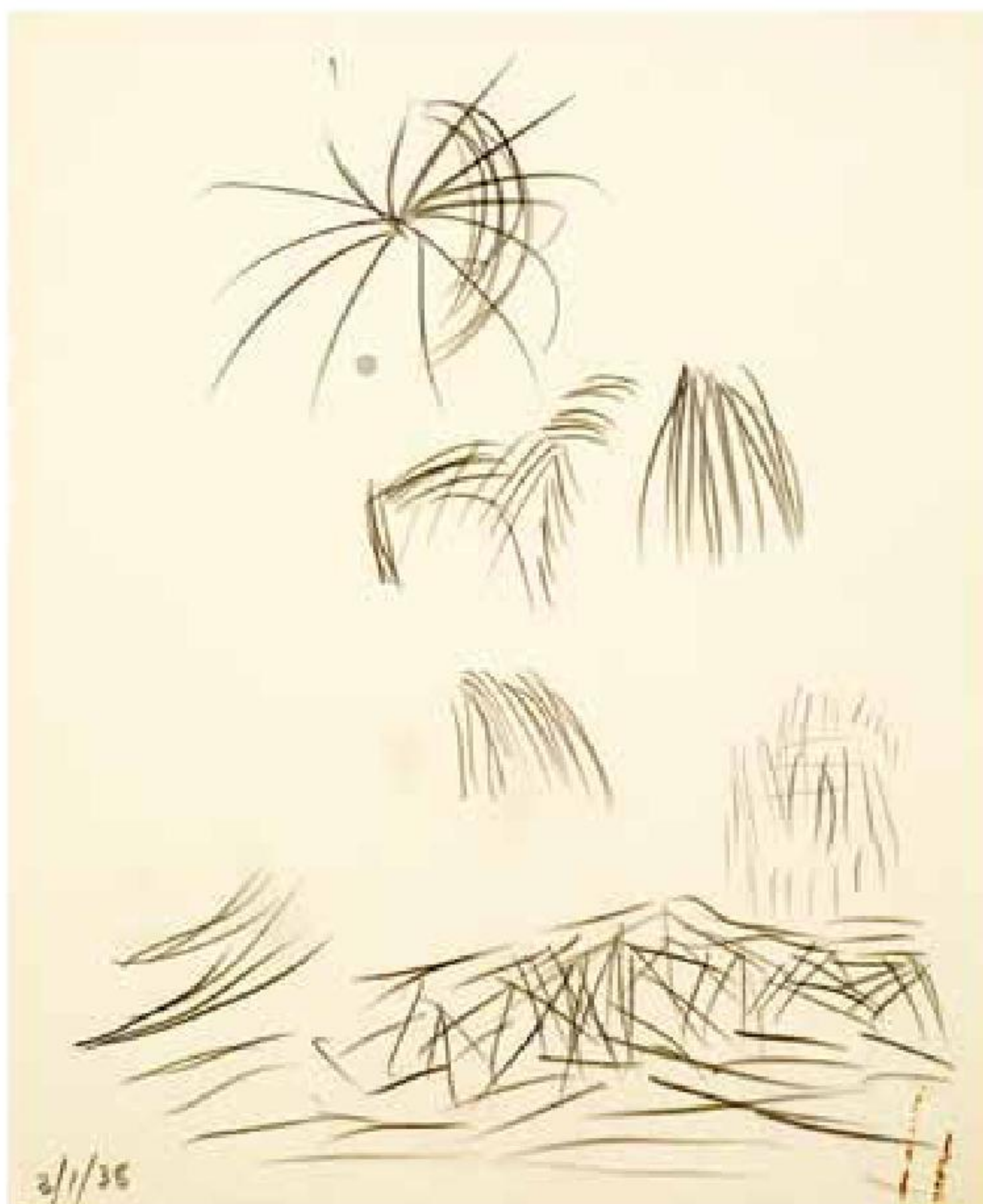
¹⁴ Horrocks, *A Biography*, 264.

¹⁵ Len Lye, “A Kinetic Biography,” unpublished mss., Len Lye Archives, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, np.



PL. 16

Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938



PL. 17

Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938









PL. 21

Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938









PL. 25

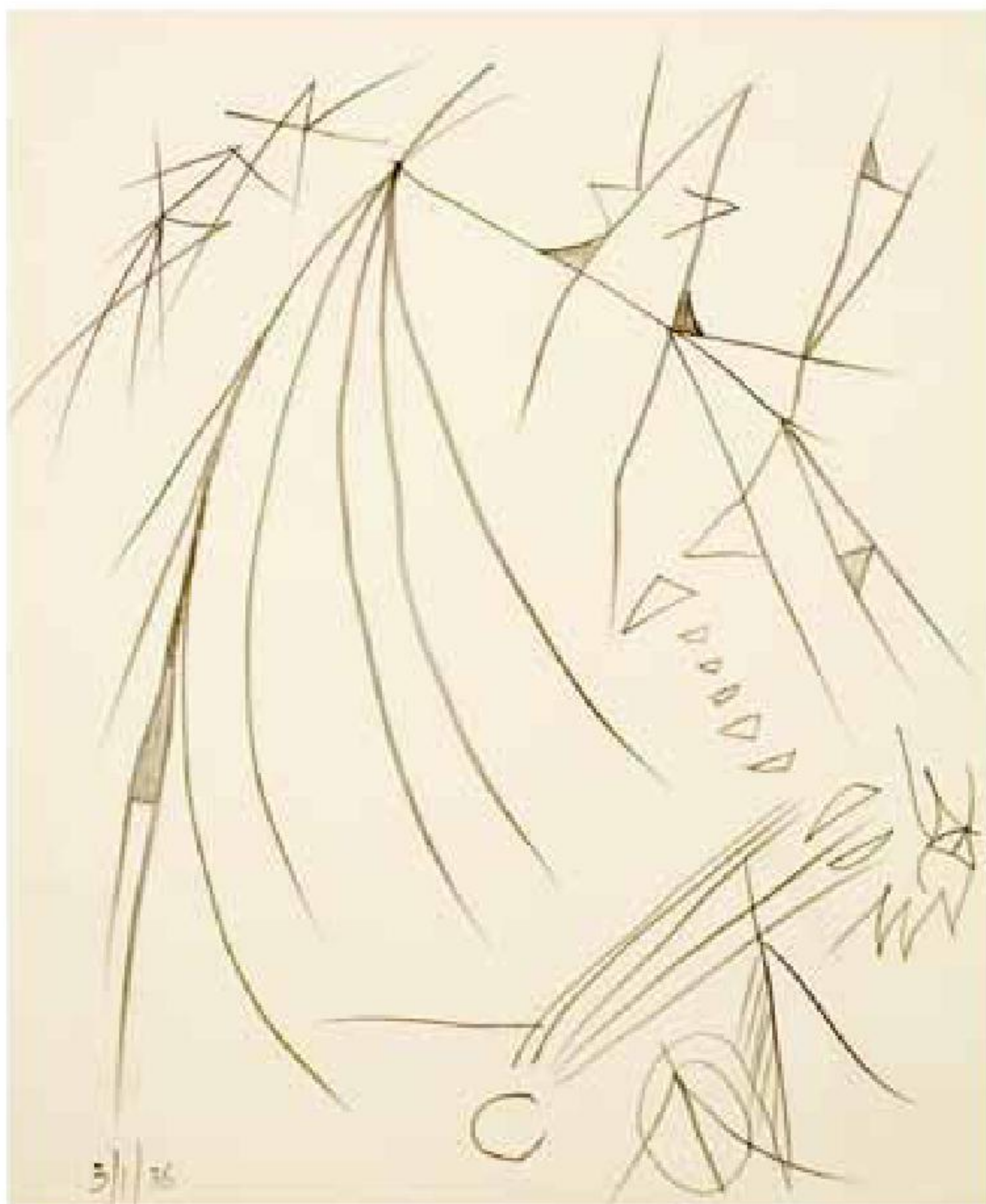
Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938





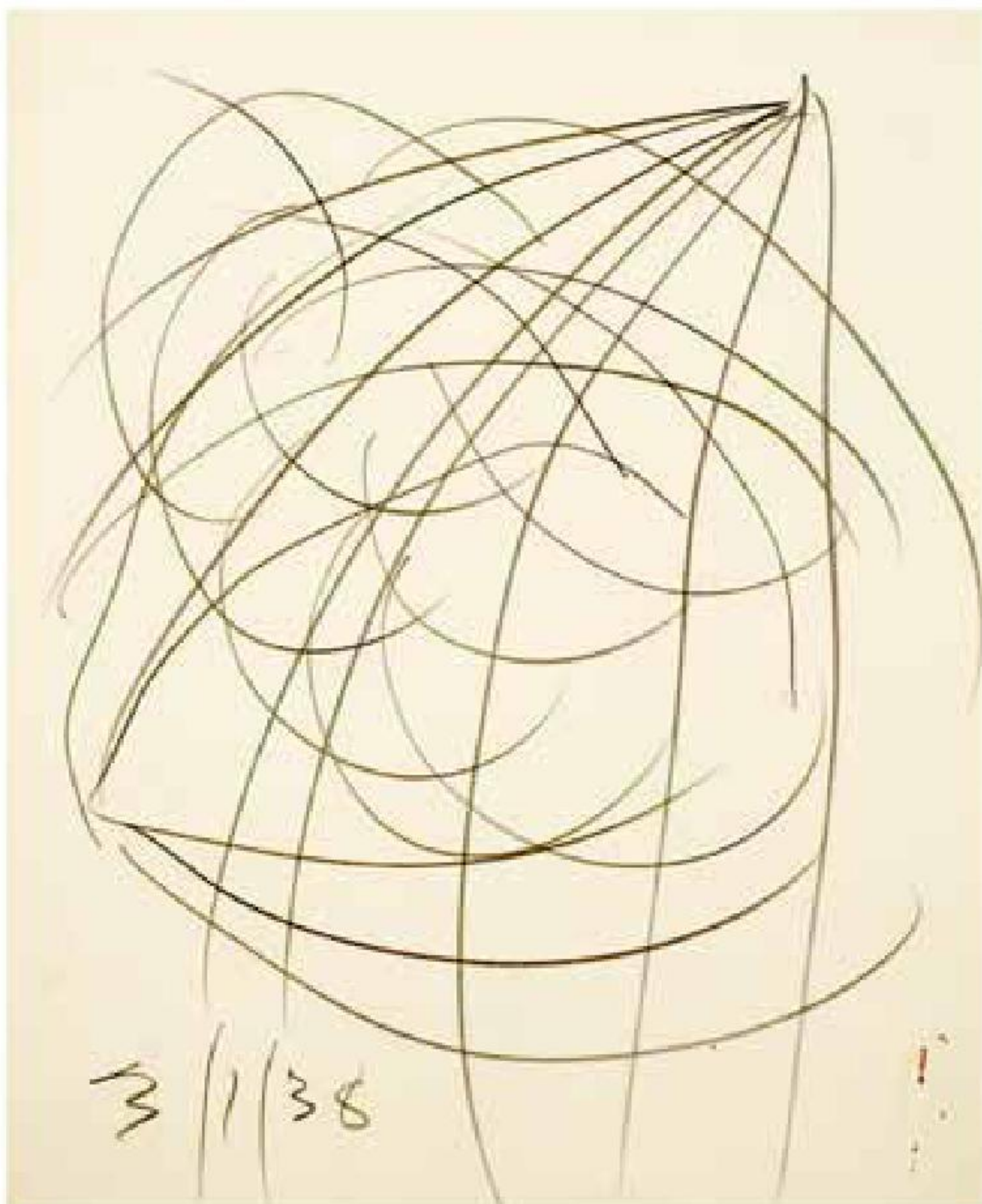
PL. 27

Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938



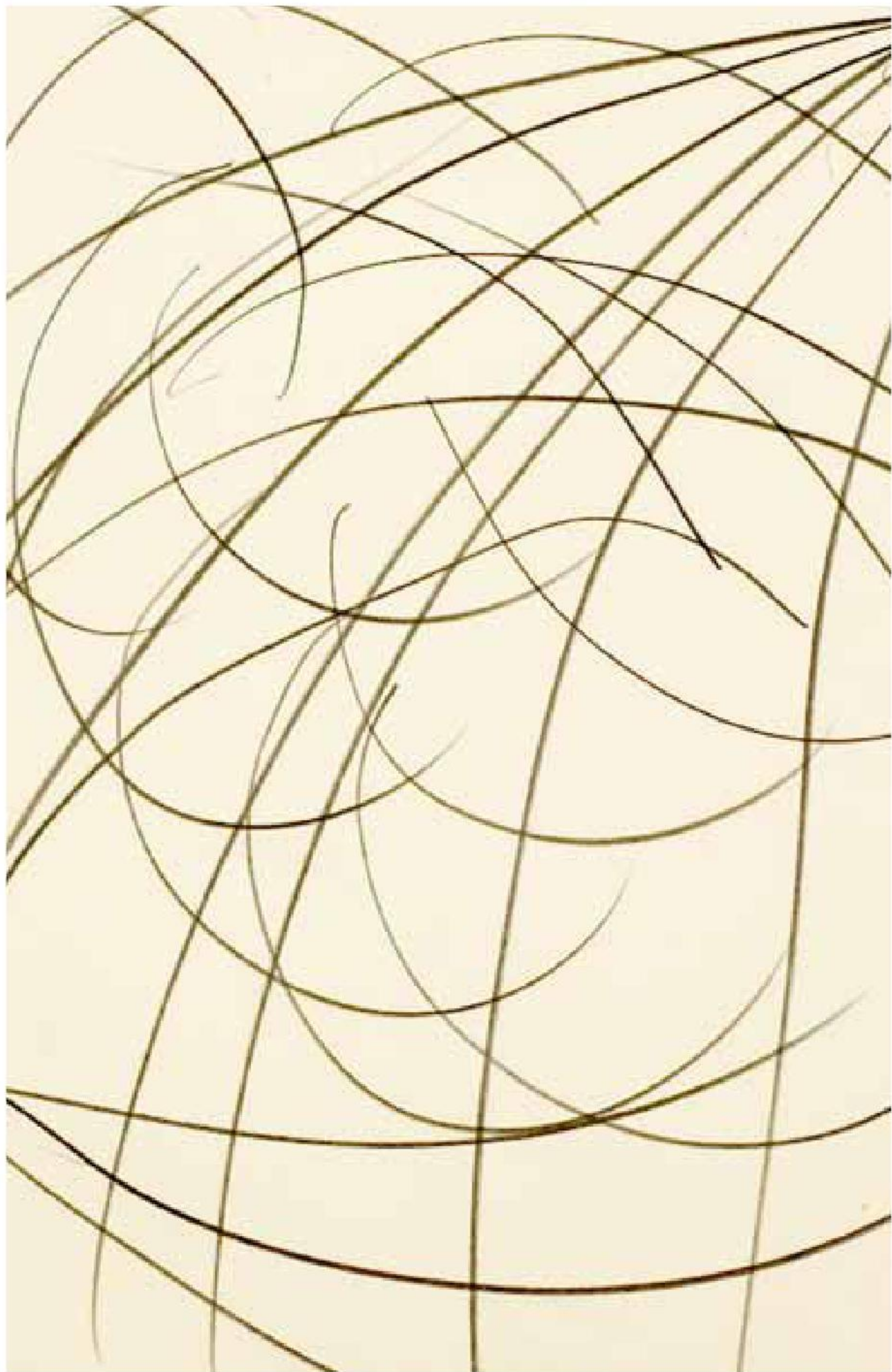
PL. 28

Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938



PL. 29

Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938



My Model

Len Lye

I was an artistic crackpot and one of the early cracks started when I made sketches of motion. All my drawings stood for the look of the way things moved. My notions about motions made my work look crazy to anyone unless they were given some explanation so I soon quit bothering to show it. The explanations were far more difficult to make than the sketches. The sketches showed shapes of motion made by the lines of flight of both low and high flying gulls, squiggly lines of movement seen when ropes and masts are reflected in undulating water, the direction of currents seen on the eddies of brooks, the curling top of a comber at various stages of its downward curlings, the surface patterns of rifflings on water ponds, the wind patterns made on a field of green oats when seen from up in a tree, and endless other things. And I would sketch all these motions in my various systems of scriggles and scaggles.

My sea gull motion would come out looking like a tangle of fishing lines, and the boat masts like a bunch of snakes. I squiggled away knowing that my snakes were the several positions of the same thing, that is, the extreme left and right of a mast's reflection on water, with the curvy line down the middle for the backbone of the action. I was agog with the notion that I was getting a toehold on the fleet-footed feeling of motion.

I graduated to more ingenious curricula. One was the horse and cart course which meant jumping up with both hands ready to take the weight of my spring as I sailed up into the air and twisted in mid-flight to land with my seat on the flat tailgate of the back of the cart.

While I faced out back, I sketched the changing folds made in the garments of people walking in the direction the cart was going, and noted various kinds of folds for various kinds of walking speeds. If the horse ambled along fast I sketched the folds in the clothes of the wearer who walked along fast; if slow, then the slower shaped folds of the clothes that walked alongside. Sometimes I would be more or less face to face with my motion clothes-horses. While they stared at me I stared at such things as the folds coming from their armpits across their chests, or the diagonal lines in their flapping overcoats as they swung along walking, and the transition of smooth areas of creased-up folds. Later I knew from my sketches whether they were fast or slow action folds. Sometimes I'd be up front with a tolerant driver drawing the behind aspect of some skirt walking ahead, and all the driver would see in my sketchbook would be a bunch of criss-crossed lines formed on the skirt by the owner's motion. I had more samples of clothes in motion in my sketchbook than a second-hand clothes dealer had hanging up static in his shop.

Thinking about the feeling of motion is easy outdoor work when doing repetitive action like picking fruit and making packing-cases, but I now had a job as a commercial artist. At lunchtime I would leave the art department of the Charles Haines Advertising Company to its jam labels and eat my lunch of health-bread sandwiches down at the nearby wharves of Wellington Harbor and get on with my spaghetti-looking sketches.

It was an ideal day for light. Everything stood out stark. The net-like skeins of motion formed by the sun on the water riddled brightly on the sterns of the ships. The wharves stood way up on their piles with the water way down, very green and full of light with little green seaweedy stuff where the piles went into the water. I was sitting on a big bulwark that ran along parallel to the warehouses on the wharves with my sketchbook and decided that the man sitting bunched up further along on the same beam was the model for me. He didn't seem to breathe. He was a rock.

I had been sketching the action quality of clothes so much that the static sculptural quality of the folds in my seated model's clothes got me. I had just been reading what Cézanne had to say about the

artistic value of three-dimensions—he certainly put emphasis on the rounded quality of his apples and bottles, and in the folds of clothes, napkins, tablecloths. Immobility is the opposite of motion yet part of it, as silence is part of sound.

My model of perfect stillness sat facing the sea, arms propping up head, elbows on bended knees—just a great hunk of immobile granite. I had just mapped out some very good rock-veins of clothes-folds when, you wouldn't believe it, this rock began to topple, thought he veins remained the same. It swayed a little forward, and then a little back, hesitated, and a little forward again. My brain worked in the same slow-motion as the rock. I couldn't adjust to the motion, to the image of immobility changing to an inverted pendulum swinging back and forward with an increasing accent on the lurch forward. And then it dawned on me that my model was sleeping, dreaming of some swing under some faraway tree. I snapped out of my open-mouthed static stance to stop him before he finally lurched forward, but I only managed to stretch out and touch the tail of his coat as he changed from a rock into a slowly spinning propeller-seed spinning down into the sea, then a great spread-eagled splash.

I stood above watching in a disbelief shared by the splasher below. A few people gathered to watch. One sensed I had some connection with the splasher and asked me if I was going in after him. I was beginning to think of it and said, "I'm waiting to see if he can swim first." My model didn't call for help, but by the time he was going down for the last time, I had my coat and shoes off and was into the briny after him. I told him to relax but he was scared and got a stranglehold on my tie, so I gave him a good punch in the gob to show him the power of friendship, and he let go and gurgled around more scared than ever. He had a big face and a big walrus moustache straggling into his mouth.

A lot of people had gathered up top and they nearly womped this Father Neptune and me with a huge cork lifebuoy that landed an inch from my head and frightened the lights out of me. It was useless because I could neither get into it nor hang onto it. I think my model thought I was trying to drown him. I no sooner got hold of him than he would grab me and down we'd both go and up we'd come with

him spluttering to get the watery walrus moustache out of his mouth. Eventually a heavy rope came swishing and flopping all around us and the people up top dragged us to some iron rungs that ran up one of the piles. They pulled and I pushed my ineffectual Neptune up. He was a drunken old salt without his trident. He was O.K. and ambled off. I found my coat but not my sketchbook, which slightly peeved me, and I went back home to change my clothes.

When I got back to the office I was late and sneaked in the side door and had settled down at my drawing board when a fellow came in from another room and rushed over to congratulate me. He had come up in the lift with someone who had seen the lunch time aquatics and he was very effusive about it with his hand stretched over me across my drawing board. He kept it held out but I didn't take it. It began to droop but he went on making speeches. It was getting embarrassing for both of us. At last I took it and said, "Don't be silly."

Saying "Don't be silly" saved me from feeling smug over mock heroics. The motto on any medal for me is: "Don't overdo it." Better still would be: "Give me back my sketchbook."

"My Model" (c. 1960) previously published in Len Lye, *Happy Moments*, ed. Roger Horrocks (Auckland: The Holloway Press, 2002)



PL. 30

Motion Sketch, 1930s (recto/verso)

* The bird wakes

movements: — outstretch of leg with
down stretch of wing either side
huge yawn & mouth flat
up stretch of arm. Eye rub if
wing joint possible

Toilet: — cat wash teeth
brush gargle.

Crow.

Song

Dance.

Now watch reasons.

early bird time: warm



PL. 31

Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933 (recto/verso)

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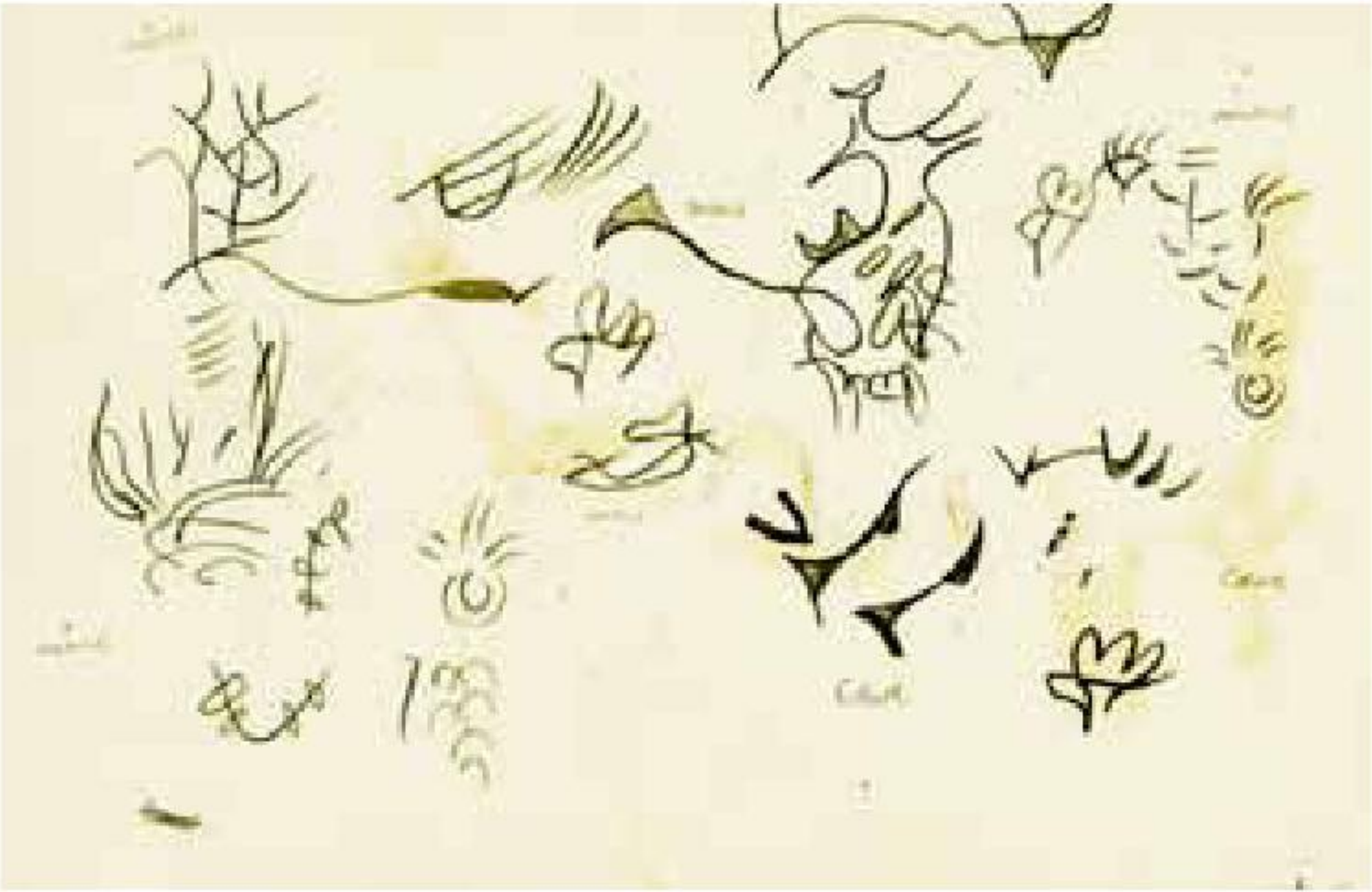
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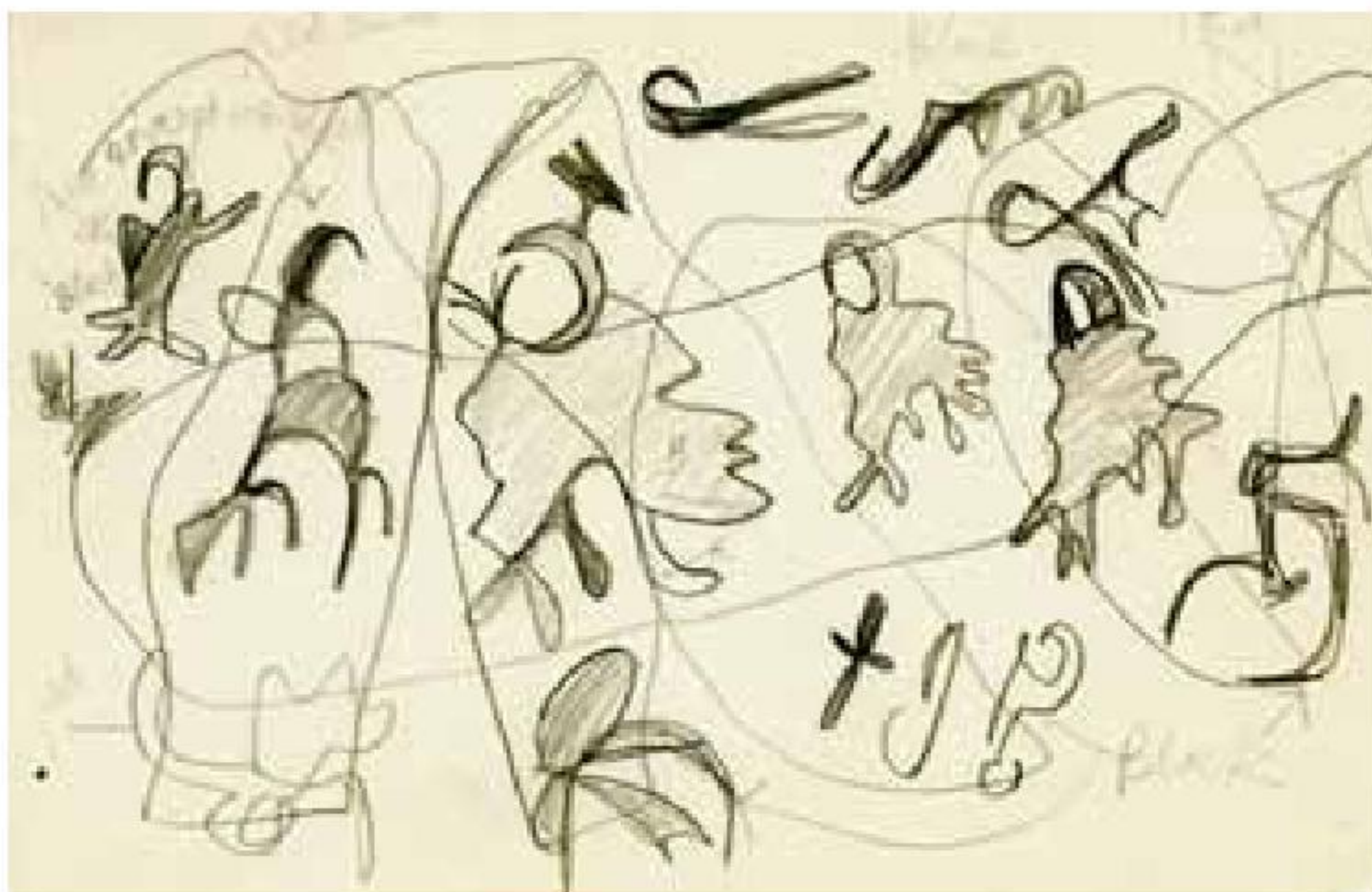
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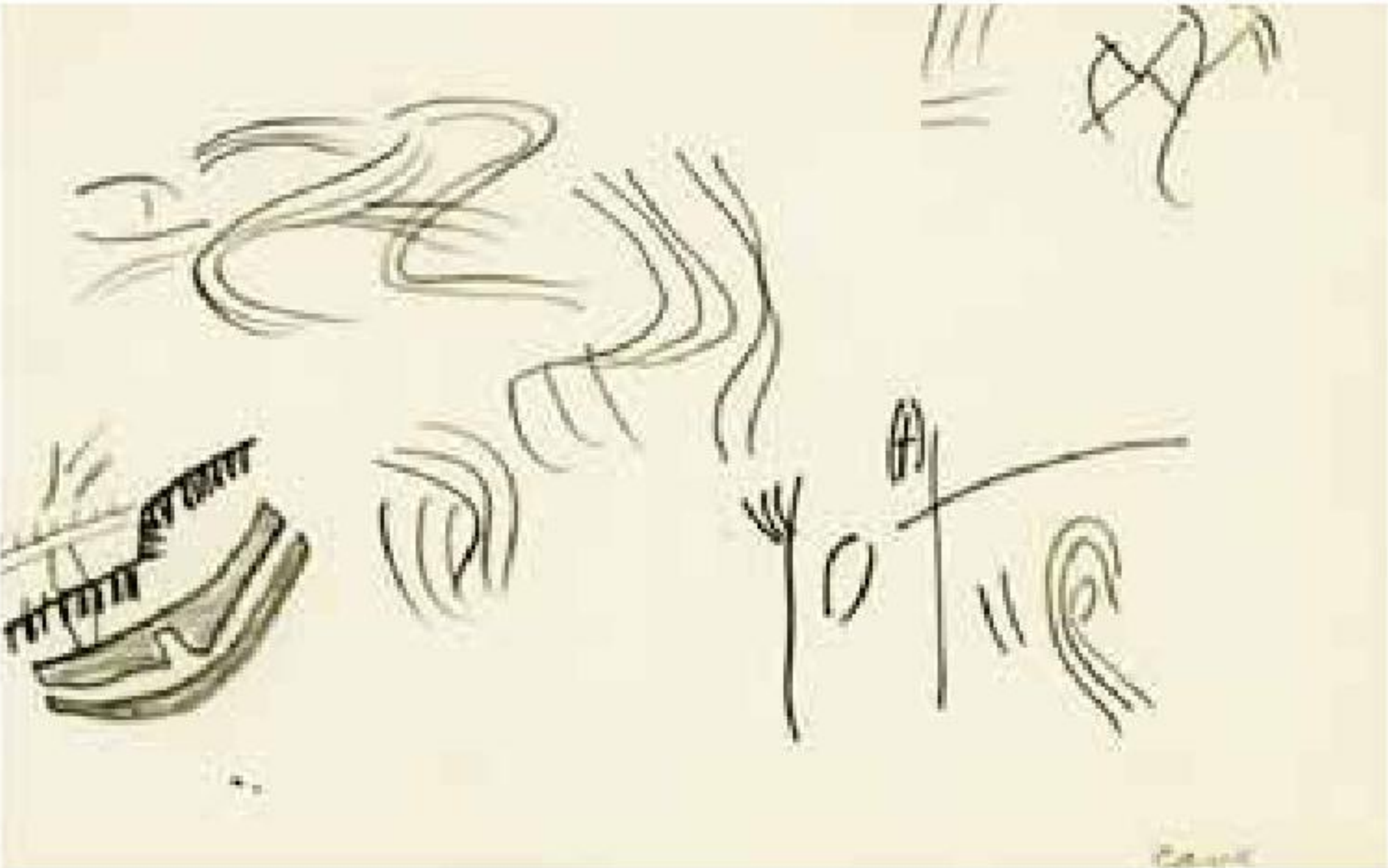




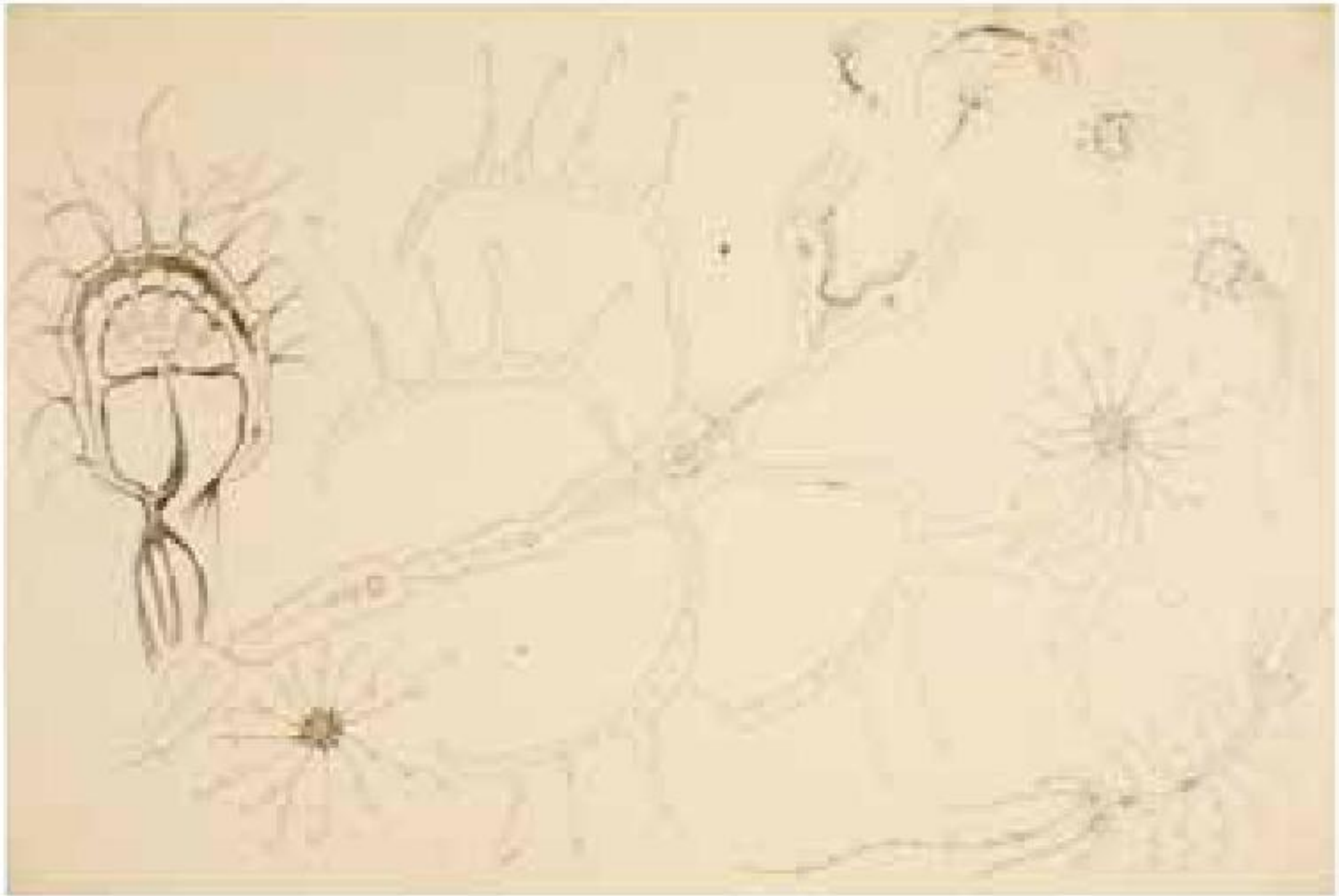




PL. 35
Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933

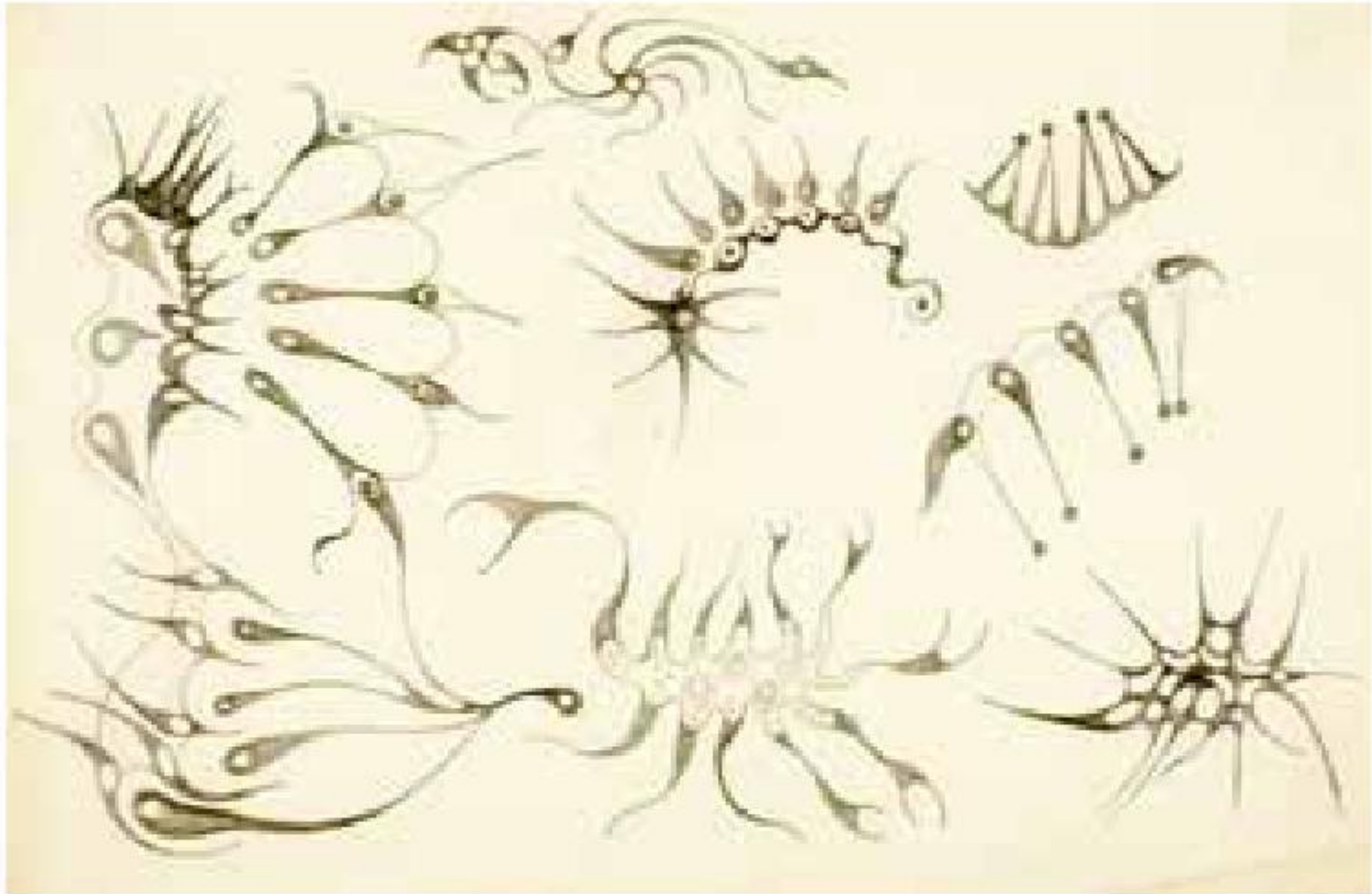


PL. 36
Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933





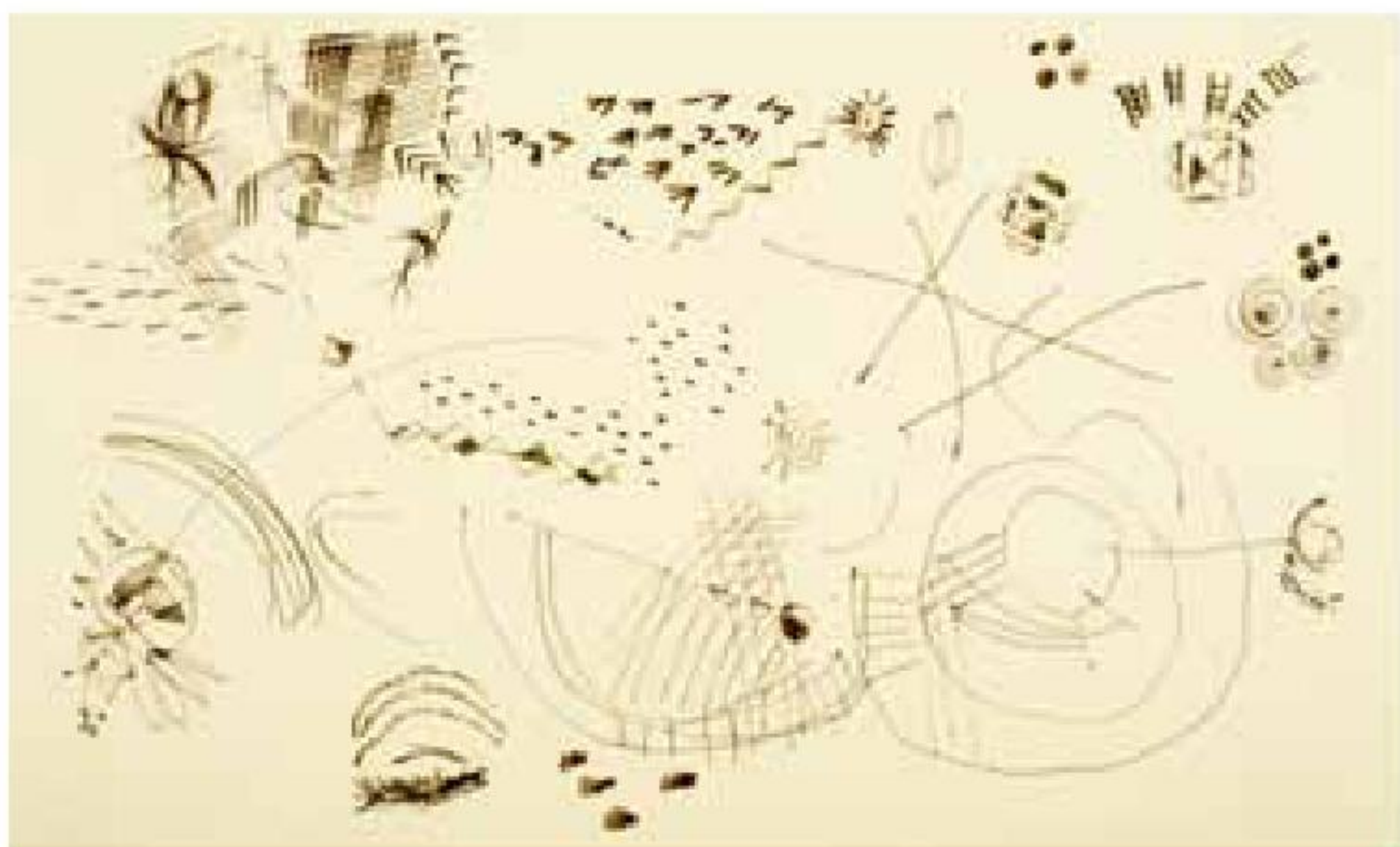
PL. 38
Untitled (Sea), c. 1930s



PL. 39
Untitled (Sea), c. 1930s



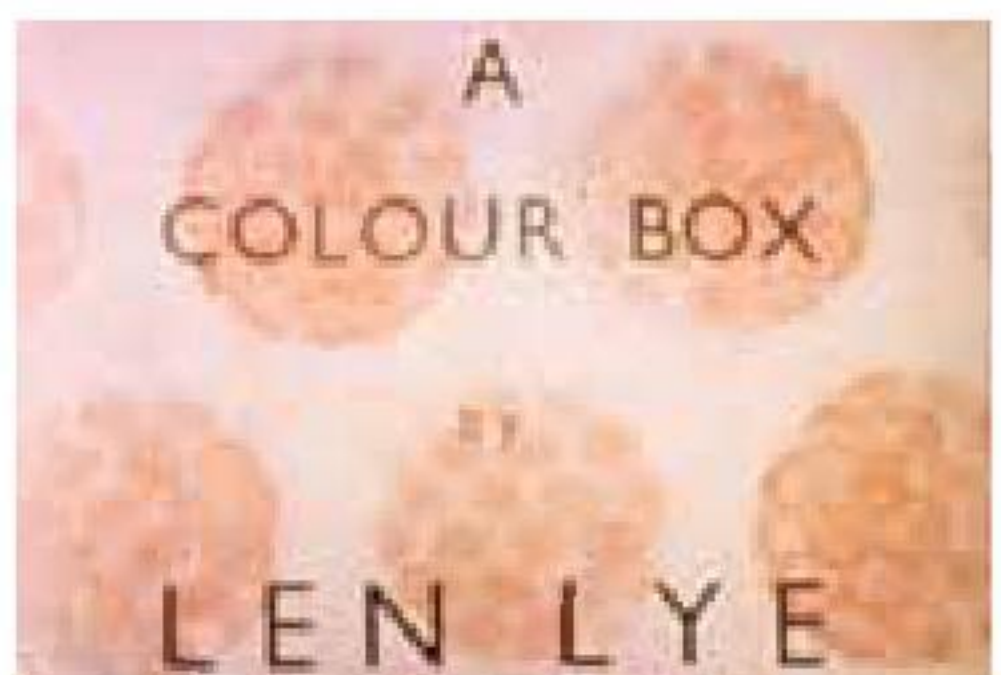
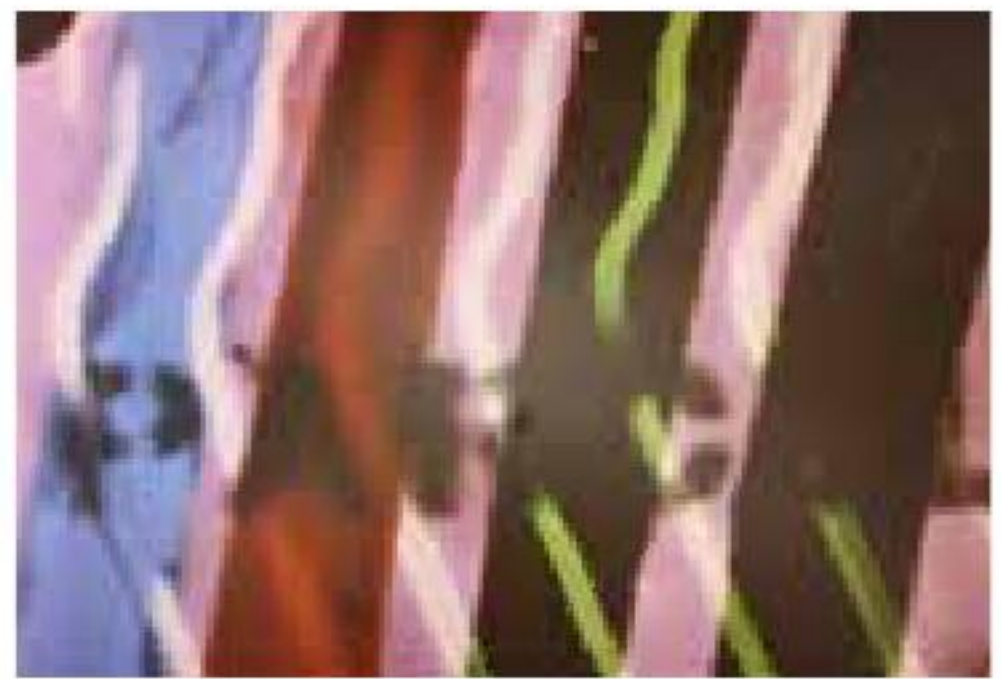
PL. 40
Sun Fish and Sea Slugs, 1937



PL. 41
Untitled, 1938



PL. 42
Untitled, 1938

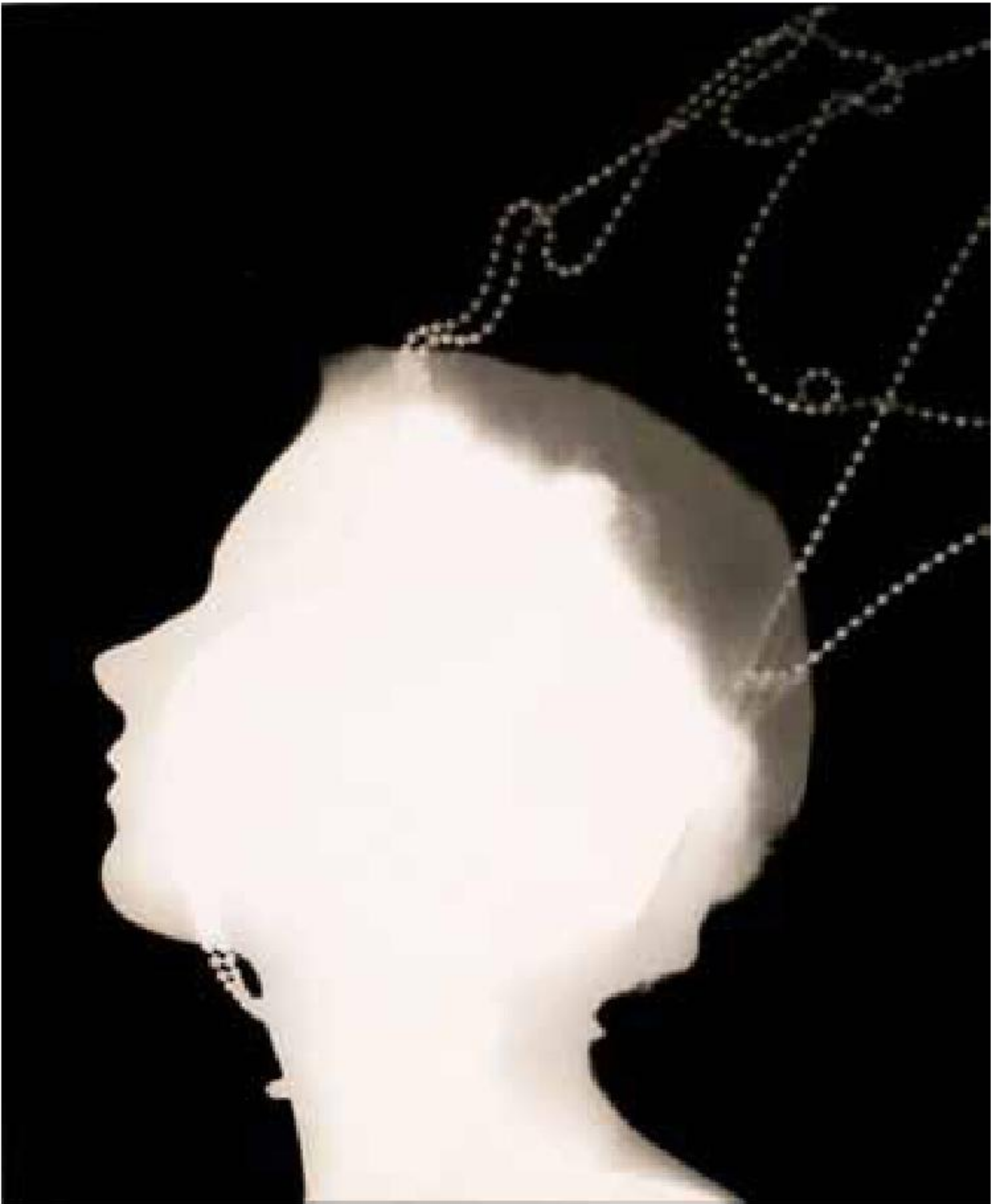




PL. 44
Still from *Colour Flight*, 1938



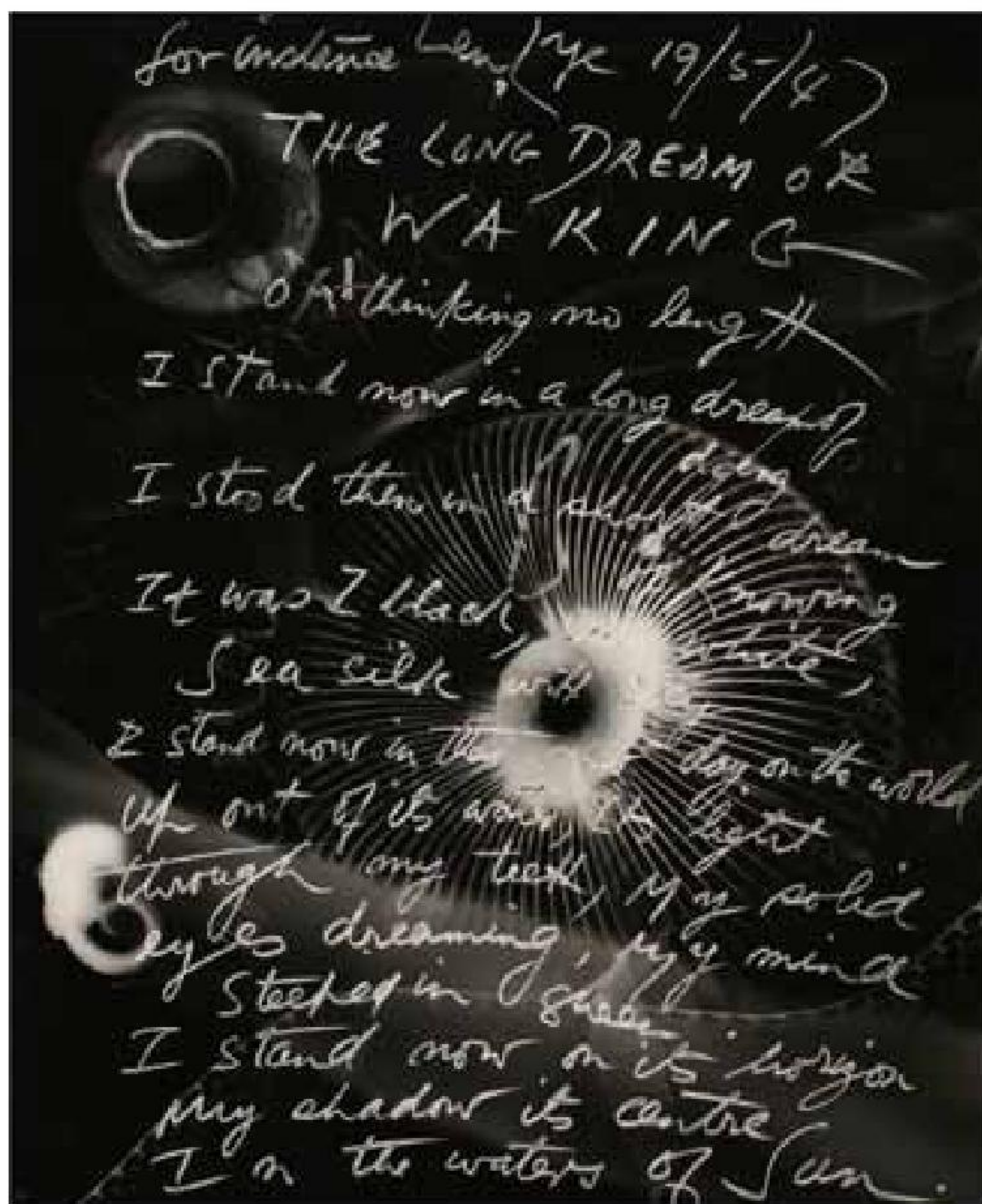
PL. 45
Self-portrait (with Night Tree), 1947



PL. 46
Ann Lye, 1947

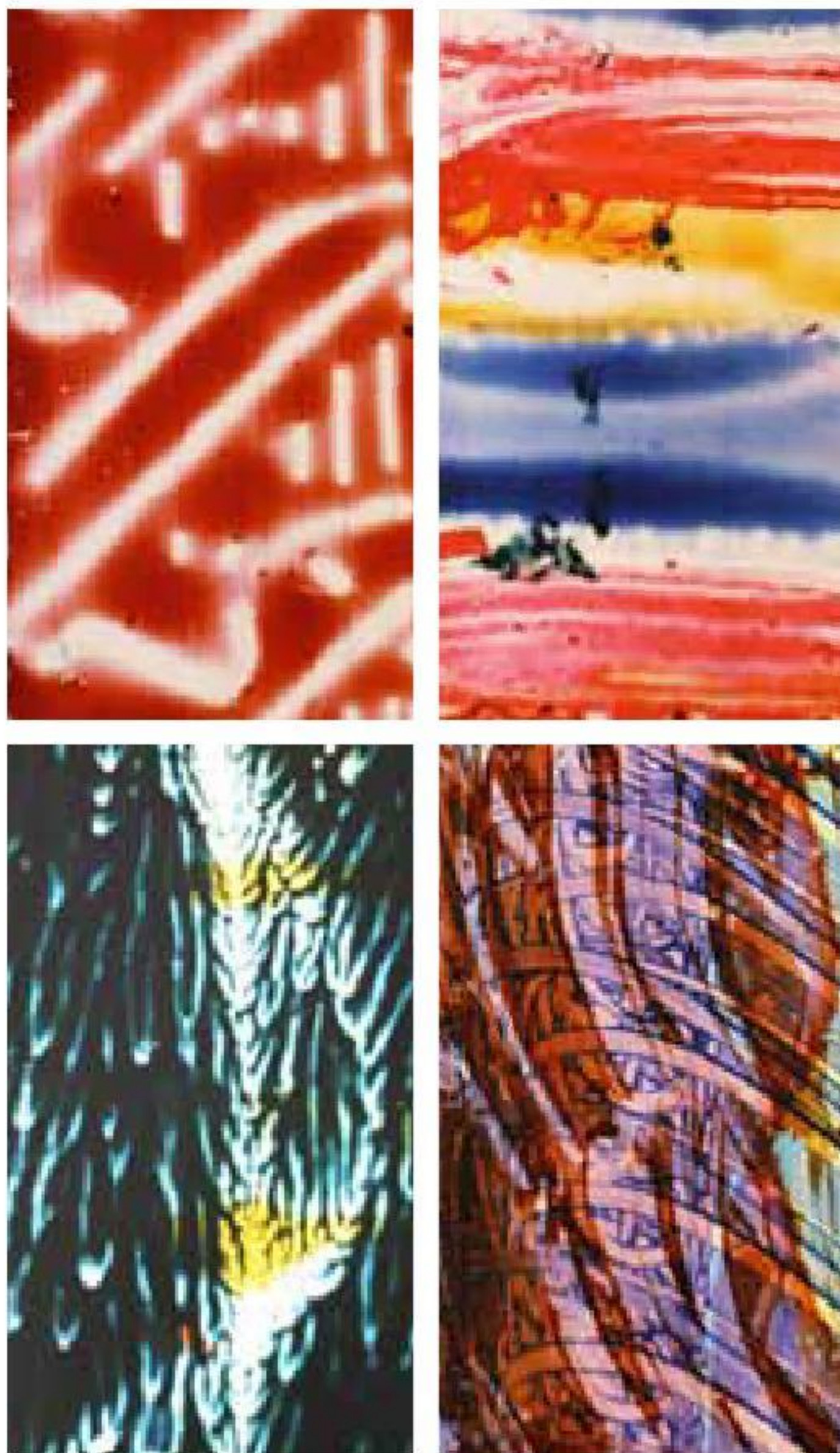


PL. 47
Trick, 1947



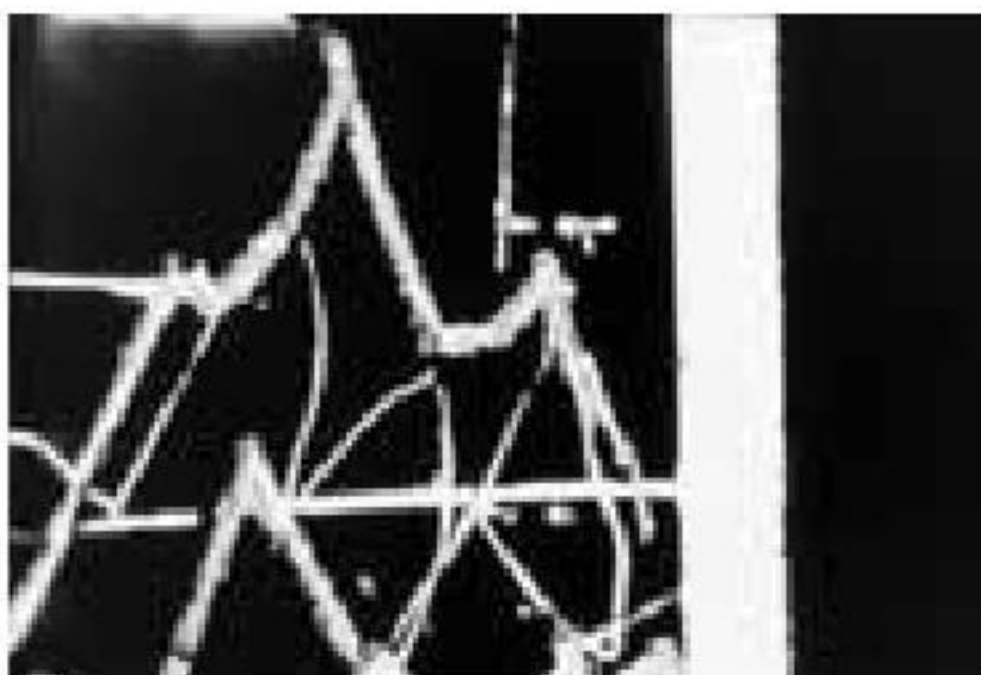
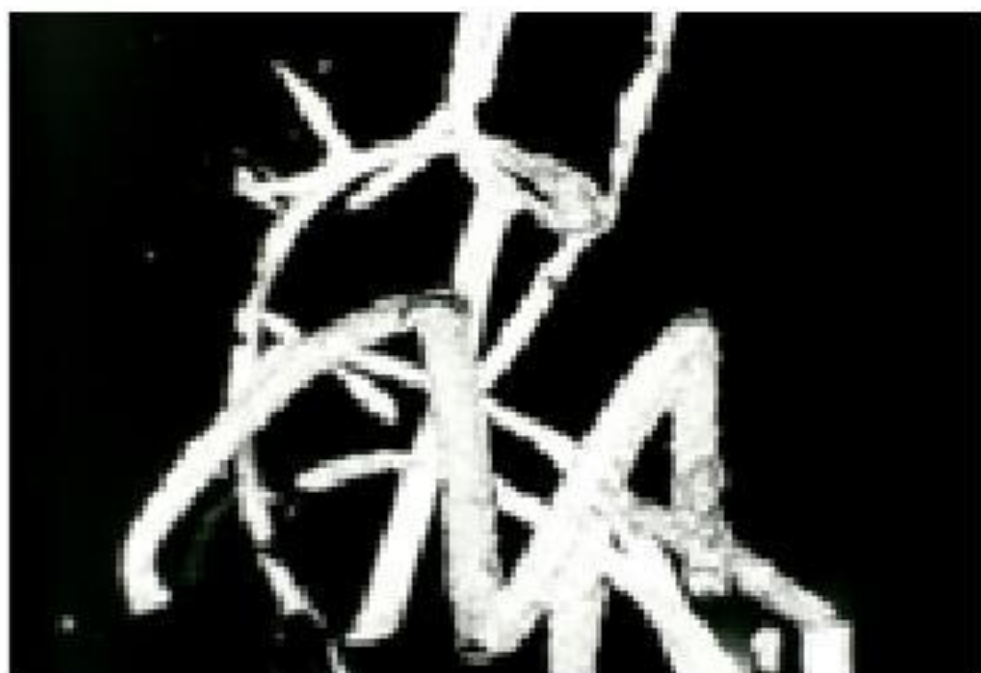


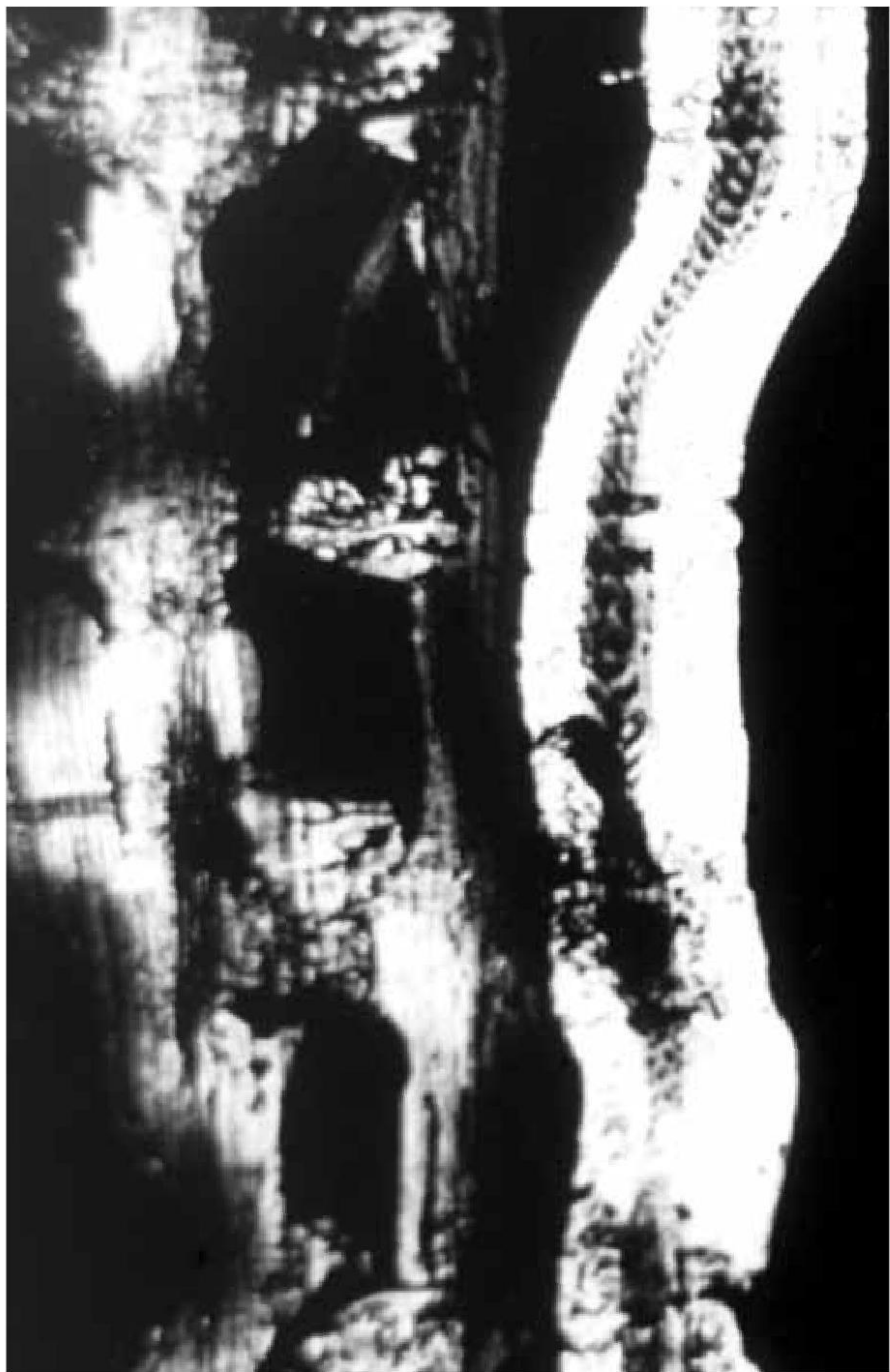


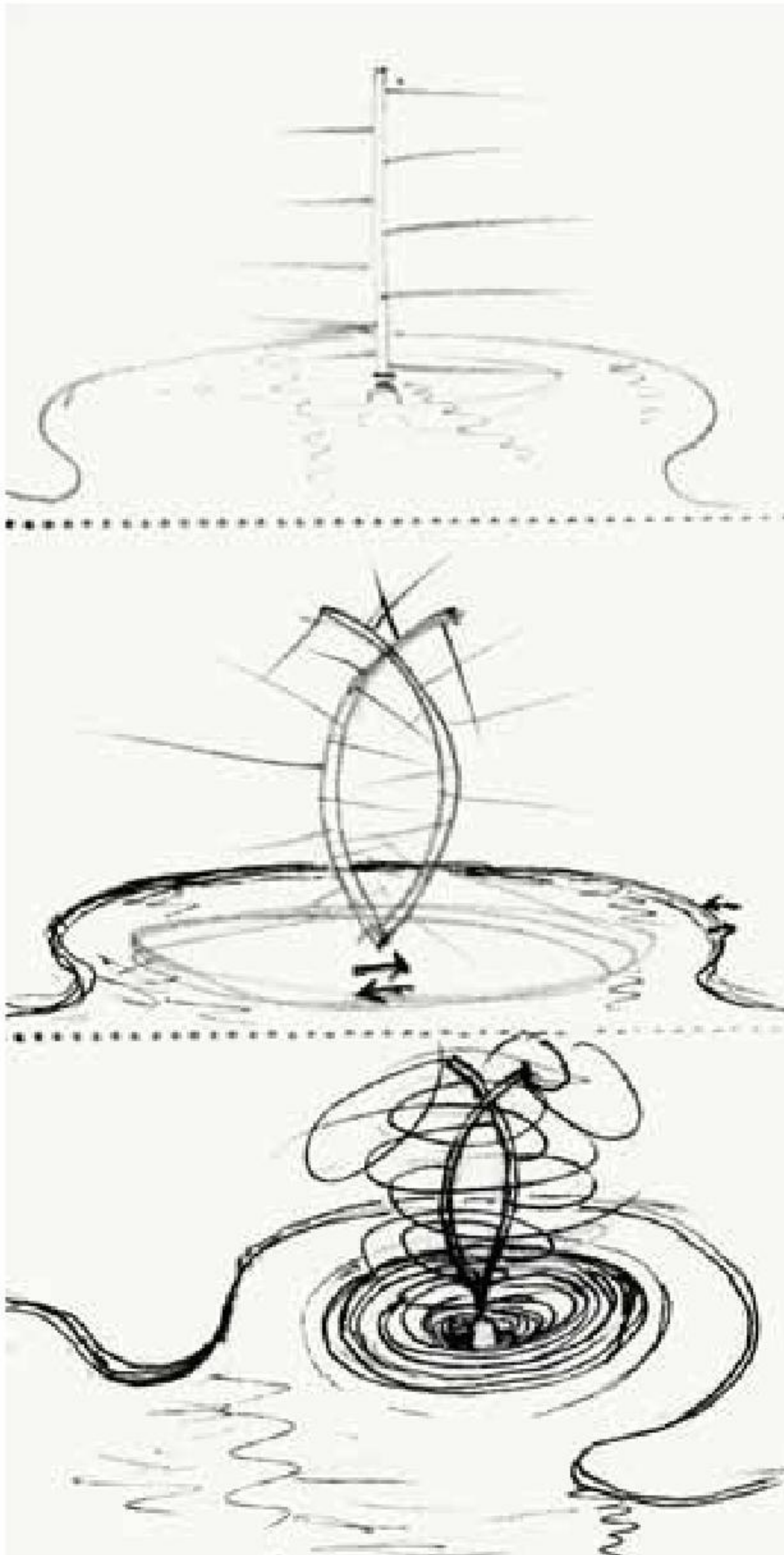


PL. 50
Film strip from *All Souls Carnival*, 1957



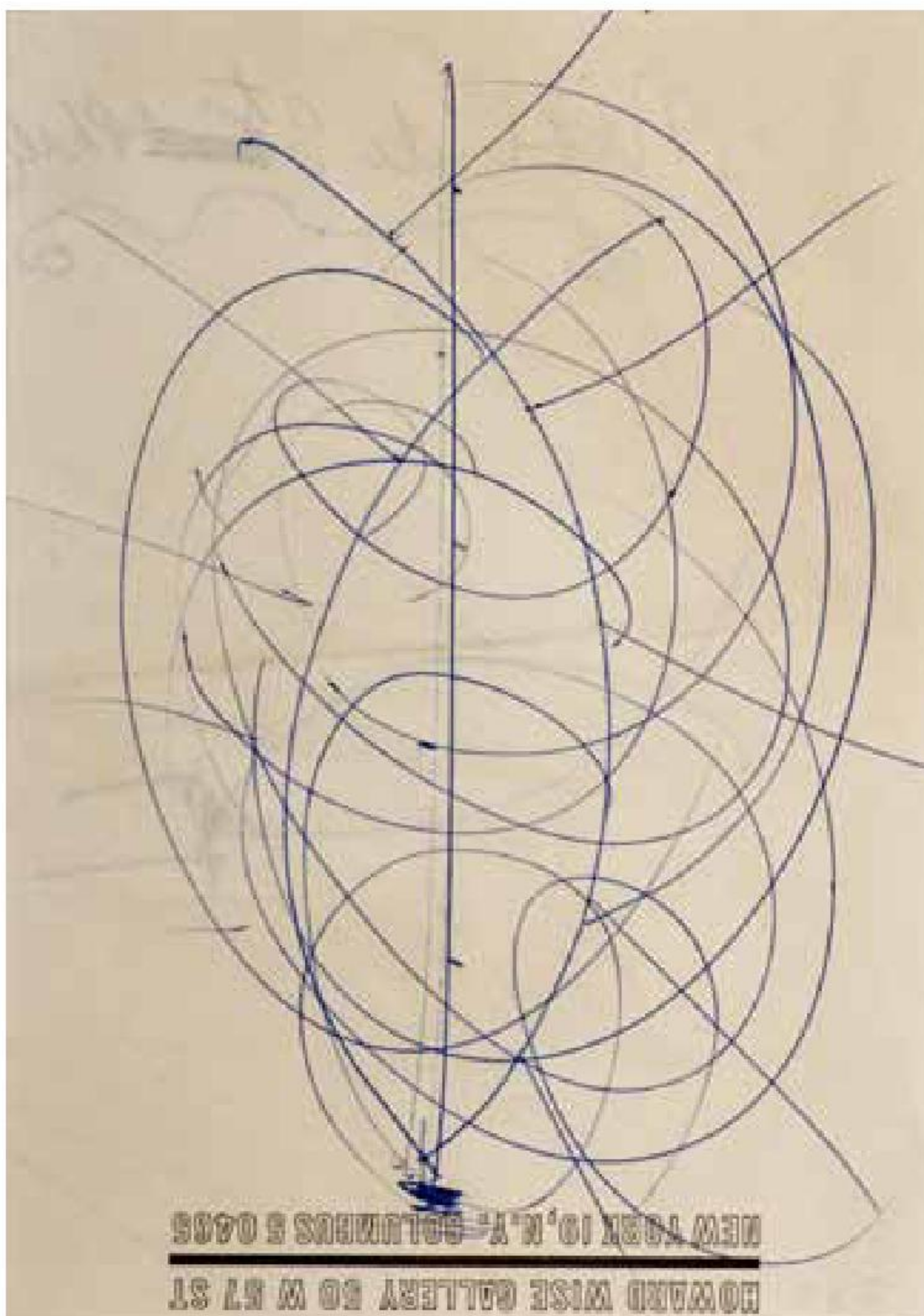


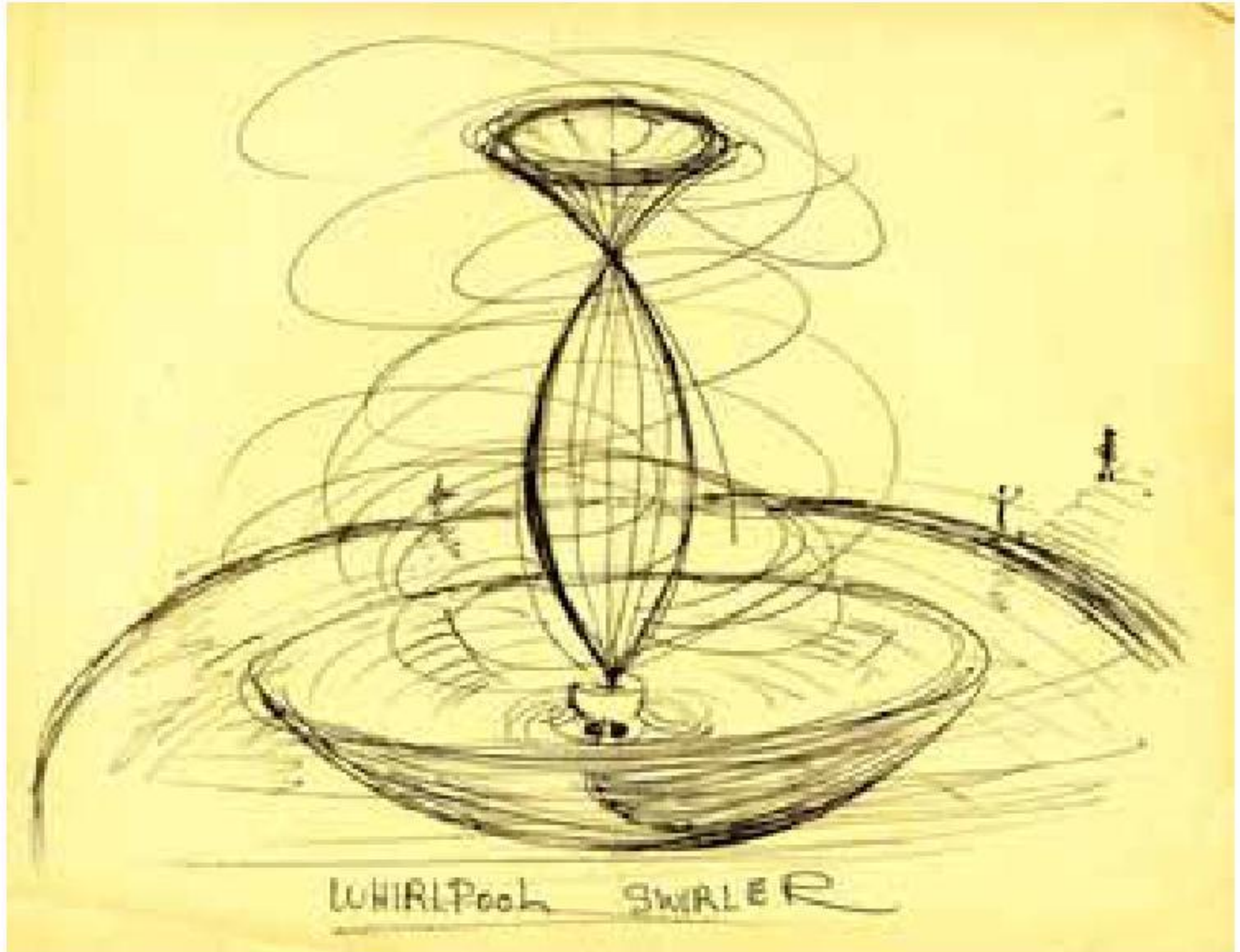




PL. 52

Sketch for Water Whirler, c. 1960s





PL. 54
Whirlpool Swirler, c. 1960s

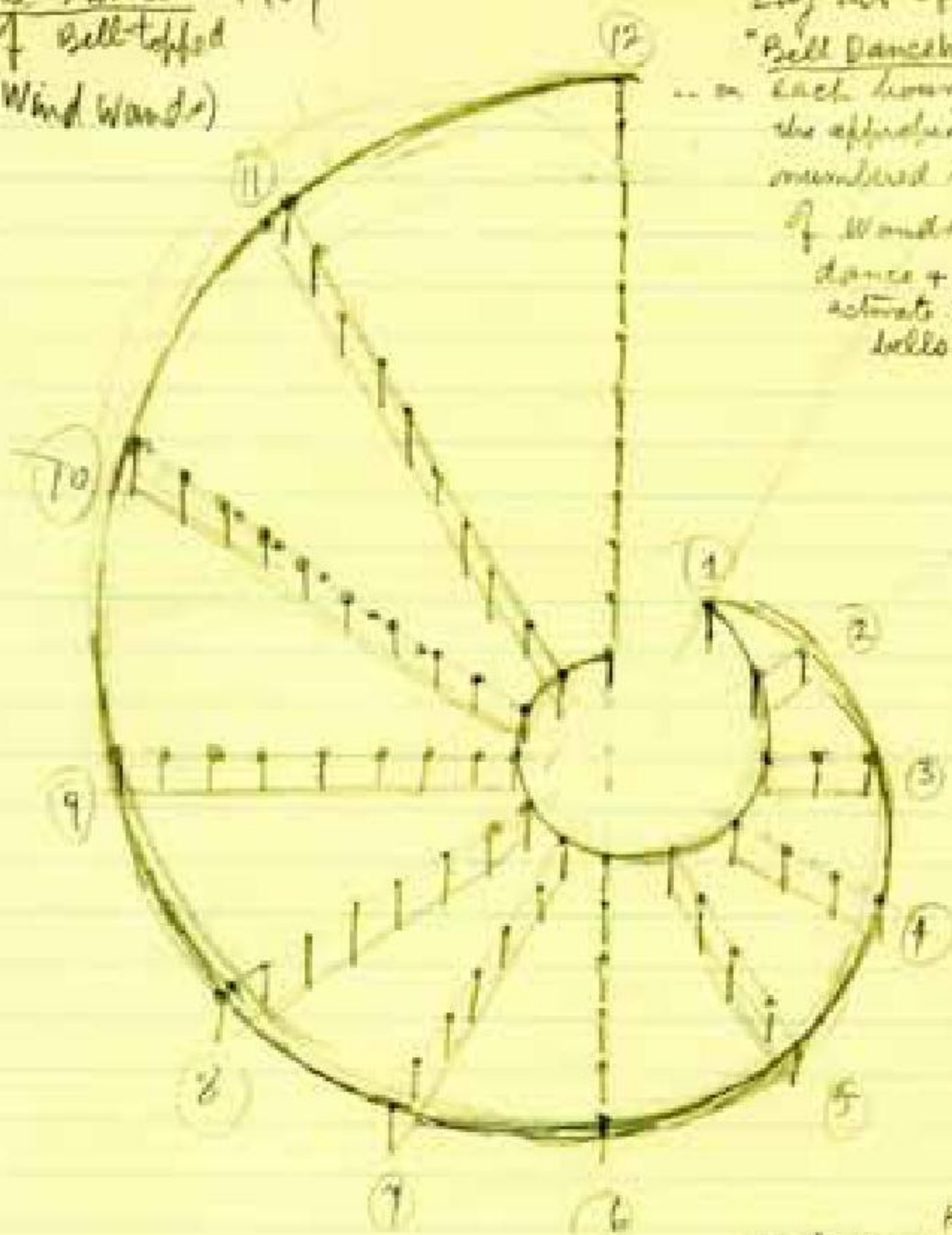


PL. 55

Rotating Harmonic, c. 1960s

Time Dance 1964
(of Bell-topped
Wind Wands)

Birds eye
Lay out of
"Bell Dancebands"
... on each hour
the appropriate
numbered line
of Wands
dance +
activate their
bells.



Wands of each line is animated
in unison. A 22' length is at least 12' apart



Wall Serpent

(Tined with industrial tinners)

The "Serpent" would consist of a ribbon of thin high tempered stainless steel of any length from forty to five hundred feet.

The continuous band of six-inch wide steel would be motivated by either rubber or toothed rollers. It would be held in convoluted shapes between thin roller-pins.

The "Serpent" would be held sideways to the flat of an interior or exterior wall surface.

Some roller-pins would travel in wall channels to give the "Serpent" an undulating and bulging action as it fed through the motivating rollers.

The action would occur in reverse when the rollers were reversed to take up the slack and tighten the bulging parts.

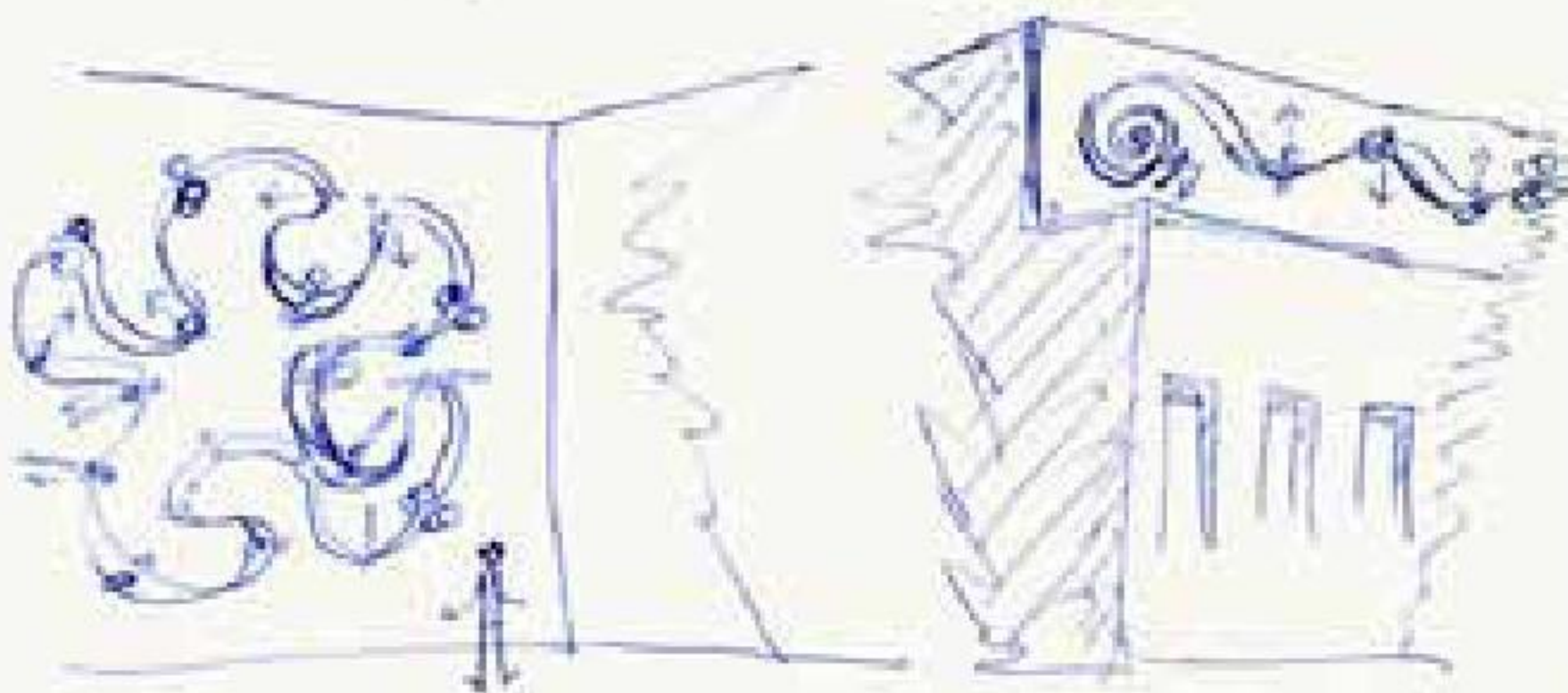
This "serpent" concept could serve as a motion sculpture mural or a motion sculpture frieze.

I would make a large practical model of the "Serpent". It would consist of a free-standing fifty-foot band of six-inch Harvet plastic. Rollers and pins would be set up between the stays of a frame to motivate and hold the shapes of the slowly undulating "Serpent".

The concept allows for a wide variety of applications to walls which might otherwise assume a blank two-dimensional quality. In this respect it would become a valuable aesthetic device for two-dimensional architectural planes.

Mural type

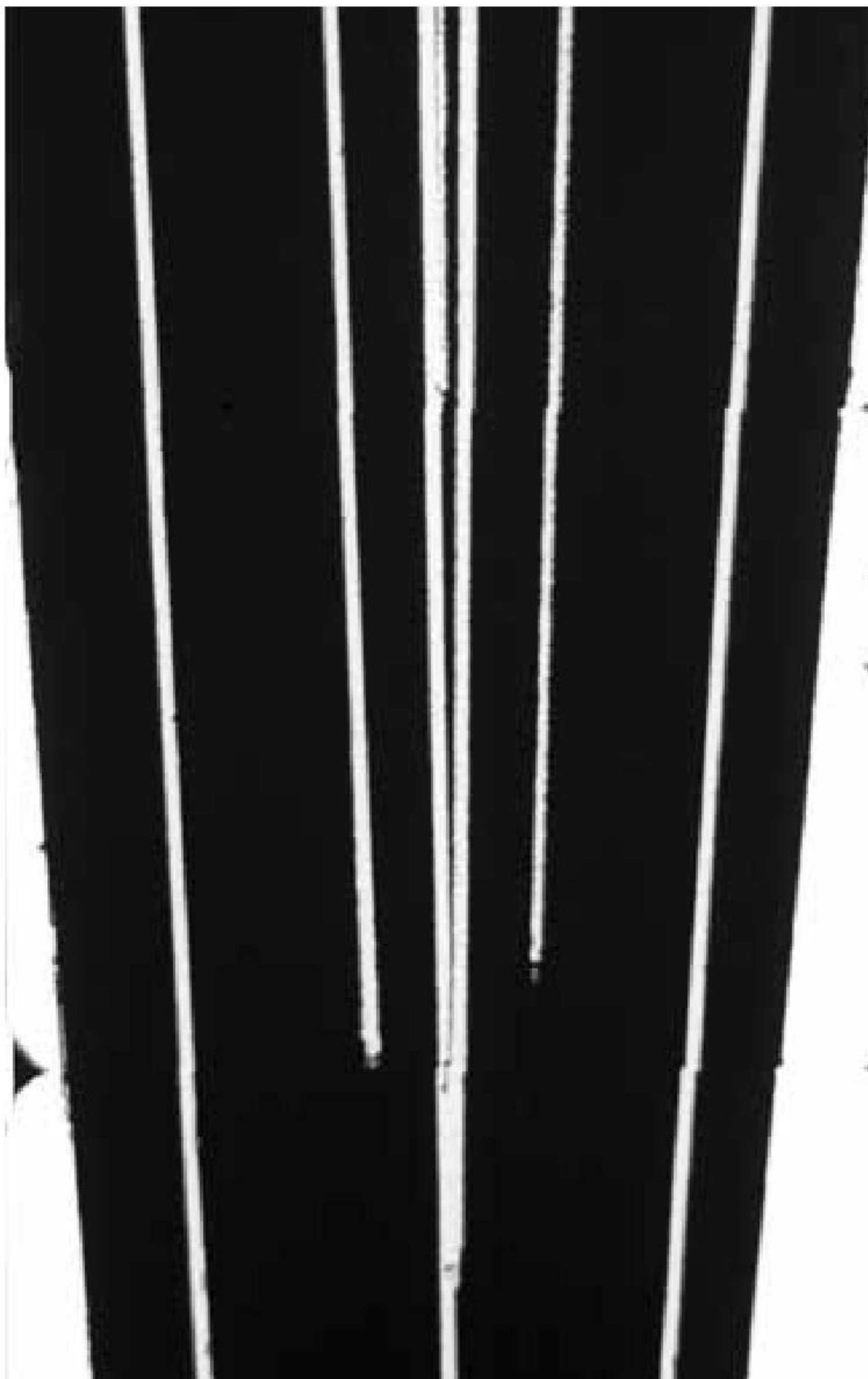
Frieze type





PL. 58

Film strip from *Particles in Space*, 1980



PL. 59

Film strip from *Tal Farlow*, 1980

LIST OF WORKS

PL. 1

Len Lye in film studio, c. 1950s
Black and white gelatin silver print
10 x 8 inches (25.4 x 20.3 cm)
Photo by Ginn Briggs

PL. 2

Various small doodles, 1920s–1970s
Various (pencil and ink on paper)
90 objects: variable dimensions;
4 5/16 x 5 11/16 inches maximum

PL. 3

Wind Wand, 1960
Black and white gelatin silver print
7 1/5 x 5 inches (182. x 12.8 cm)
Photo by Maurie Logue

PL. 4

Tusalava, 1929
Digital transfer of original 35mm silent film
(10 min)
Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation
From material preserved and made available
by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā
Kaitiaki O Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua

PL. 5

Marks and Spencer in a Japanese Garden
(or *Pond People*), 1930
Photogram
15 x 22 inches (38 x 56 cm)

PL. 6

Drawing for Head Man of the Seed World,
c. 1930s
Ink on paper
9 1/16 x 8 7/16 inches (23 x 21.5 cm)

PL. 7

Drawing for Head Man of the Seed World,
c. 1930s
Ink on paper
10 3/5 x 8 2/5 inches (27 x 21.3 cm)

PL. 8

Snow Birds Making Snow, 1936
Oil on board
37 1/8 x 57 inches (94.3 x 144.8 cm)

PL. 9

King of Plants Meets the First Man, 1936
Oil on plywood
40 15/16 x 53 15/16 inches (104 x 137 cm)

PL. 10

Rainbow Dance, 1936
Digital transfer of original 35mm
Gasparcolor sound film (5 min)
Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation
From material preserved and made available
by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā
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PL. 11

Trade Tattoo, 1937
Digital transfer of original 35mm Technicolor
sound film (5 min)
Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation
From material preserved and made available
by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā
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PL. 12

Joan Miró, 1947

Photogram

17 x 14 inches (43 x 35.8 cm)

PL. 13

Joan Miró, 1947

Photogram

17 x 14 inches (43 x 35.8 cm)

PL. 14

Georgia O'Keeffe (White on Black), 1947

Photogram

16 7/8 x 14 1/8 inches (42.9 x 35.9 cm)

PL. 15

Georgia O'Keeffe (Black on White), 1947

Photogram

16 7/8 x 14 1/8 inches (42.9 x 35.9 cm)

PL. 16–29

Sketch for Motion Composition, 1938

Pencil on paper

8 7/8 x 7 3/16 inches (22.5 x 18.3 cm)

PL. 30

Motion Sketch, 1930s

Pencil on paper

4 1/2 x 6 3/4 inches (11.5 x 17.3 cm)

PL. 31

Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933

Pencil and ink on paper

4 1/2 x 6 3/4 inches (11.5 x 17.3 cm)

PL. 32

Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933

Pencil and ink on paper

4 1/2 x 6 3/4 inches (11.5 x 17.3 cm)

PL. 33

Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933

Pencil on paper

4 1/2 x 6 3/4 inches (11.5 x 17.3 cm)

PL. 34

Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933

Ink on paper

4 1/2 x 6 3/4 inches (11.5 x 17.3 cm)

PL. 35

Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933

Pencil on paper

4 1/2 x 6 3/4 inches (11.5 x 17.3 cm)

PL. 36

Drawing (Cave Mine Card), c. 1933

Pencil on paper

4 1/2 x 6 3/4 inches (11.5 x 17.3 cm)

PL. 37

Untitled (Sea), c. 1930s

Pencil on paper

10 x 15 3/16 inches (25.4 x 38.5 cm)

PL. 38

Untitled (Sea), c. 1930s

Pencil on paper

10 x 15 3/16 inches (25.4 x 38.5 cm)

PL. 39

Untitled (Sea), c. 1930s

Pencil on paper

10 x 15 3/16 inches (25.4 x 38.5 cm)

PL. 40

Sun Fish and Sea Slugs, 1937

Paint on paper

8 1/16 x 12 13/16 inches

PL. 41
Untitled, 1938
 Ink on paper
 8 x 13 inches (20.3 x 33 cm)

PL. 42
Untitled, 1938
 Ink on paper
 8 x 13 inches (20.3 x 33 cm)

PL. 43
A Colour Box, 1935
 Digital transfer of original 35mm
 color sound film (4 min)
 Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation
 From material preserved by the BFI National
 Archive and made available by the New
 Zealand Film Archive Ngā Kaitiaki O Ngā
 Taonga Whitiāhua

PL. 44 / COVER
Colour Flight, 1938
 Digital transfer of original 35mm
 Gasparcolor sound film (4 min)
 Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation
 From material preserved and made available
 by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā
 Kaitiaki O Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua

PL. 45
Self-portrait (with Night Tree), 1947
 Photogram
 16 x 13 inches (40.5 x 33.5 cm)

PL. 46
Ann Lye, 1947
 Photogram
 16 x 13 inches (40.5 x 33.5 cm)

PL. 47
Trick, 1947
 Photogram
 16 7/8 x 14 inches (42.8 x 35.4 cm)

PL. 48
The Long Dream of Waking, 1947
 Photogram
 16 x 14 inches (40.5 x 35.5 cm)

PL. 49
Untitled (Doodle), 1947
 Photogram
 16 x 14 inches (40.5 x 35.5 cm)

PL. 50
All Souls Carnival, 1957
 Digital transfer of original 16mm
 color silent film (16 min)
 Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation
 From material preserved and made available
 by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā
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PL. 51
Free Radicals, 1958/1979
 Digital transfer of original 16mm
 black and white sound film (4 min)
 Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation
 From material preserved and made available
 by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā
 Kaitiaki O Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua

PL. 52
Sketch for Water Whirler, c. 1960s
 Pencil on paper
 5 2/5 x 2 2/5 inches (13.1 x 6.1 cm)

PL. 53

Sketch for Water Whirler Sculpture, c. 1960

Ink on paper

7 x 5 1/16 inches (17.8 x 12.8 cm)

PL. 54

Whirlpool Swirler, c. 1960s

Ink on paper

11 x 8 1/2 inches (28 x 21.5 cm)

PL. 55

Rotating Harmonic, c. 1960s

Chromogenic print

5 1/10 x 3 1/2 inches (13 x 9 cm)

Photo by Albert Gruen

PL. 56

Time Dance, 1964

Pencil on paper

11 x 8 3/10 inches (280 x 210 cm)

PL. 57

Wall Serpent, c. 1960s

Ink on paper

11 x 8 1/2 inches (28 x 21.5 cm)

PL. 58

Particles in Space, 1980

Digital transfer of original 16mm

black and white sound film (4 min)

Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation

From material preserved and made available

by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā

Kaitiaki O Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua

PL. 59

Tal Farlow, 1980

Digital transfer of original 16mm

black and white sound film (1:30 min)

Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation

From material preserved and made available

by the New Zealand Film Archive Ngā

Kaitiaki O Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua

NOT PICTURED

Rotating Harmonic, c. 1960s

Black and white gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches (25.4 x 20.5 cm)

Unless noted otherwise, all works

courtesy Len Lye Foundation Collection,

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

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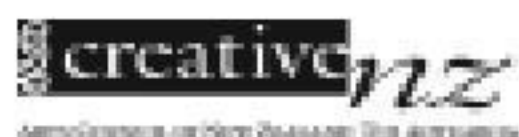
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EDWARD HALLAM TUCK PUBLICATION PROGRAM

This is number 115 of the *Drawing Papers*, a series of publications documenting The Drawing Center's exhibitions and public programs and providing a forum for the study of drawing.

Margaret Sundell *Executive Editor*

Joanna Berman Ahlberg *Managing Editor*

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