THE WALTER K. GUTMAN COLLECTION

BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

THE WALTER K. GUTMAN COLLECTION

BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

1966

Cover: Marcia Marcus, *Portrait of Walter K. Gutman,* lent by Mr. Gutman.

1,000 COPIES

Printed by The Anthoensen Press, Portland, Maine

FOREWORD

Before I met Walter Gutman, I frankly never dreamed that there were any Bowdoin alumni like him. That he was in Wall Street was, of course, conventional enough; but that he had been an art critic (for the *Nation,* the *New Republic, Art in America,* and *Creative Art*) put him in a class all by himself right off the bat. And that he avidly collected contemporary (that is to say, Abstract Expressionist!) American painting, and, in fact, painted himself (very much in the modern idiom) confirmed his uniqueness.

It was Bowdoin's Capital Campaign (oddly enough) that put me on to Walter in the first place. President Coles and Ed Tevriz (Bowdoin, Class of 1926) had told me that Walter had some pictures that he might be interested in giving to the College as his contribution to the Campaign. In the Fall of 1963 Walter and I got together, and, happily got along famously from the beginning. In the three years that ensued, the College gradually fell heir to the pictures that are being exhibited here for the first time.

There were a couple of somewhat ticklish moments in our negotiations, however. Walter at first insisted that the photograph of Aneta Vargas and him (by William Robinson) would have to be exhibited with the pictures. When this was consented to, Walter (surprised a bit, perhaps) turned around and said we didn't really have to show the photograph after all, although he still thought it would be a nice idea. But I thought Walter's reasons for wanting the photo shown were such good ones (cf. pp. 12-14), that I have included it.

In addition to works by Gorky, Tworkov, Kline, Guston, Drexler, Katz, et al., there are three by Walter himself in the collection. Two of these came as gifts, because I asked for them, and one I purchased from a recent show of his work in New York—not to please Walter, but because I thought it was good.

In a very real sense, this exhibition is as much about Walter as it is about the pictures he has given us—and even with the pictures of and by him, it is incomplete without Walter himself. Hence, the following essay by Bowdoin's "Proust in Wall Street,"* which I trust you will find as interesting as I do.

MARVIN S. SADIK, *Director*

* The title of a "Profile" of Walter by John Brooks which appeared in the June 20, 1959, issue of *The New Yorker*.

INTRODUCTION

I give this fairly sizable and ranging collection of small paintings to the Bowdoin College Museum with feelings of affection. These days, as everyone knows, one often gives with profit, and this collection has been quite a profitable gift for me because of its income tax impact, even though it is also given with affection. I say this because there is no need for gratitude, and this is one advantage of income tax giving. Gifts really should induce pleasure and not gratitude—gratitude is the first step in making someone not like you too much, and so I say this so as to make sure that I have not taken this step.

The collection is ranging rather than representative because it doesn't include examples from a large part of the art scene. It has neither Pop nor Op, for example, but it ranges from the first painting I owned to several bought very recently.

The first is the "Wooden Soldier" painted by Guy Pène du Bois in 1924 and given to me that year for my twenty-first birthday.

That was the year I graduated from Bowdoin. My parents wanted to give me a watch, but I liked Guy's painting. I was fascinated by painting in many ways, and since he owed my father $75, I suggested that my father add a bit and get a painting. The status of American artists then can be dug from that figure, for Guy was well known. He was an exceptionally good friend of Mrs. Whitney, who later founded the Whitney Museum, and several of his paintings were in the Metropolitan Museum because of her. He may have been a bit lenient on the price because of my mother, who was monitoring his class, and that, judging by my mother's character, must have been a tempestuous relationship. But even so, most artists, at that time, unless they had money in the family, were rather poor. I took Guy out for lunch or dinner several times, even though I was a not too pecunious young squirt, and he a somewhat renowned painter and savoiyard. I may have coined that word—if so, apologies to the French Department. I mean that he knew a lot. You could call him sophisticated—he was that—but he was warmer than a sophisticate. Like most artists he wasn't very verbal—our lunches were rather silent—but when he spoke you felt there was a meaning there. It was like painting—you feel there is a meaning in paint but you can't really say what it is. Guy—to explain him a little better to you—was the son of a French litterateur—a man who had apparently come to America with considerable means—among them a large library—as well as considerable culture. He died, I gathered, broke. Guy was always very bitter about his father's publisher, whom he felt had taken the old man when the library was sold.

From this painting of Guy's there is a very long gap in the collection to the artists of the 1940's and 1950's and of more recent years. Well, this isn't quite true—Arshile Gorky painted in the

late 1920's—I knew him when I was an art critic—he didn't like me and I didn't like him. I had the impression that he thought I was one type of phony—I thought he was another. We each proved to be all right, but we would probably each be suspicious of the other now—were he alive. In those years Gorky wasn't much of a painter—his great work came later. It is a mistake, I think, to believe that one can foresee the development of a great talent. Some people are undoubtedly much more sensitive about this than I, but my opinion is that what is later called foresight is really some type of accidental involvement coming out of friendship or business. One can be aware of a talent, but to predict that it will be great—that depends, I think, on insights which may come much later. The early landscapes of Mondriaan were good, but his greatness came later; Kline's early conventional figure pieces were quite conventional, and neither greatly inspired nor skillful—the extraordinary insight which released his full talent came after quite a few years of struggle. When the talent and work of an artist somehow becomes combined with insight, one can often recognize it rather instantly. Not always—this after all depends on you as well as him. I have often failed to recognize a great artist even after it was very clear to others. It took me a long time, for instance, to appreciate Picasso—but it came to me suddenly when it did. This insight that a painter has or that a person who looks at paintings has is not, in my opinion, a product of verbal education or experience—it is a product of direct experience. When it comes to understanding art, one can, in my opinion, throw all the books away, except the reproductions. But then, now and then one does read something that is elucidating—especially in the few things that artists themselves have written. And sometimes what writers write is interesting to read. Harold

Rosenberg's book on Gorky, for instance, is good reading. I didn't learn anything about Gorky, but I shared a common experience with Harold. Writing is a different art. You learn about painting by looking, and you may share whatever experience you have had by reading or also writing. One doesn't understand everything or appreciate everything no matter how much experience one has —one shouldn't try—it's really enough to understand a lot.

I got to know the abstract expressionists—whose work forms the core of this collection—quite accidentally. I had long since ceased to be an art critic. Now when I read what I wrote—which I rarely do—this was one of the luckiest things that ever happened to me—I don't say this to put myself down—art criticism is fully as clumsy today as when I did it—it is after all a very difficult literary task—impossible when it is performed weekly or monthly. So I didn't go around to the galleries for a good many years and I might not have known—certainly not intimately—about the great burst of insight which had engulfed American art had not my wife been studying the piano. One of those she met was Vivian Fine—who has become a composer of some note—especially for the music she has written for Martha Graham. Vivian was a well-built, warm-hearted, enthusiastic woman whose husband, Ben Karp, was a sculptor. Ben was giving classes in art appreciation once a week to raise a few dollars, and since, for certain reasons, I had to spend a part of the week lonely in New York, I went around to the class, even though I felt I knew more about art appreciation than he did. But Ben's method was different. He made us draw as well as listen. He was and no doubt still is a fantastic teacher. He glows at practically everything the clumsy, idiotic student does. You have to be as happy about teaching as a painter is about painting or a bank robber is about robbing, or you'd give

it up. In other words, every human being has to have his illusion. Usually it remains a small illusion but sometimes it becomes also a real big fact and it becomes the illusion of others—like when a collector aches to pay $6 million for a Da Vinci. One could buy a great many fine works of art for $6 million—even those of famous artists of the last hundred years. It is doubtful if a single painting of Da Vinci is that great—but the Da Vinci illusion is a very great one. Ben had the great teacher's illusion. It worked on me. It was sort of like starting a cold diesel engine with low-grade fuel. Once enough heat is put into that engine and it starts, it can't stop as long as the low-grade fuel supply lasts.

It also just was one of those accidents that Ben was a friend of Jack Tworkov and that Tworkov's studio was in the rear of the same floor that De Kooning had his studio and that when Ben got the teaching job and moved away, he sent me to Tworkov, who had a number of evening pupils also.

I realized when I opened the door and met Tworkov's stern eyes that I would either become a painter or not. Tworkov really didn't have much enthusiasm for pupils. He was much more a real painter, but like most artists he couldn't make it all by painting. De Kooning was teaching too—at Yale once a week. One day I bought a sketch of his—it, as many, was lying on the floor. They were all beautiful. I said "Don't throw them away." He said "Do you want to buy one?" I said "Sure—how much?" He said "$25." He was a little sorry later after it was framed, but even so, at that time it wouldn't have been much. It isn't in the collection because I gave it to my wife after we were divorced. It was the one painting that I bought during our marriage that she really liked, and I gave it to her in memory of those times. De Kooning and Tworkov both showed at the tiny Egan Gallery, as did Kline, Guston,

Nakian, and others now famous, and so in this accidental way I landed right in the midst of a great movement.

After that I slowly became a painter. It is hard to say why I really did this. It had never been one of my ambitions. Much as I was excited by painting and long as I had dabbled in it in small ways, it had never occurred to me that I, too, might paint. Undoubtedly a great deal was due to Ben Karp, but a great deal also is due to my fetish. Fetishes, to my mind, are underrated in their creative possibilities. Or put it another way—the force of a fetish is overrecognized in the sexual area and underrecognized outside of it. Regardless of what word is used to describe an intense and long-lasting force which sometimes drives individuals and groups of people to extended efforts, the results of this effort are because of what they are—long searches into the nature of reality—likely to lead to products and other results which were not envisioned when the force was first felt and the search started. I felt the force of my fetish when I was about four years old. It wouldn't be mete to describe my fetish here except that it is concerned with a certain manifestation of woman—the sort of manifestation one sees most often in circuses, in the ballet, or in a strange place—the wrestling ring. The search took me from model to model, and I had to paint them.

As a result of the search, I had a one-man show of my india-ink drawings at the Poindexter Gallery in 1958. It was a rather campy affair in the back room, and due as much to an old friendship with Ely Poindexter and a shrewd guess on her part that I would throw a big party, as any penetrating admiration for my art. However, it was pleasantly reviewed. The party was a great one. There were models from "Li'l Abner" and "West Side Story"; my mistress of a year or so before who, I secretly called "the storm"

—everything could have exploded, but the bomb stayed in its case. John Cage had an exhibition of notes from his musical scores at the Stable Gallery the same night. Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Merce Cunningham, and Tworkov had arranged the show to try to raise a bit of money for Cage. Times have changed—who knew Rauschenberg then—let alone Johns and Cunningham? Tworkov as a matter of fact was one of the most knowledgeable—looking back now at Jack's perception I realize that he has a true gift for seeing an important talent. I guess that's one of the inherent reasons why he later became head of the Yale art department. I bought two of Cage's drawings that night and gave them to Dorothy—in other words my ex.

The Poindexter opening had an important relation to this little collection because it was through that party that I met a whole group of the younger artists. Some of them had been members of the Hansa Gallery, one of the focal points of new development, and many also had been students of Hans Hoffman during the richest period of his teaching. I bought pictures from them because I liked them and what they did. With the exception of the Gorky drawing, every piece in the collection was made by someone I knew and liked, and also at the time I bought it, it was not famous. Some aren't now. I should tell you about one. It is a little landscape done with magic markers. When Marvin Sadik was picking what he wanted from my collection, I told him to take what he liked and not care whose signature it was. Marvin was quite resolute about this, considering that the Ford Foundation was giving the College one-third of the value of a gift such as these paintings. In other words, the right signature is worth money to the College, it's not just prestige. He came across this little drawing and asked "Is this German expressionist?" "No," I said, "it's

by my ex-wife Dorothy Darrow, but take it if you really like it." Dorothy was an artist when I met her—she had the gift of an extraordinary close relationship of manual statement and visual perception. But art was not her great illusion—music was much greater even though her facility in this was far less. It used to bug me that she spent so much time on what she could do only with great struggle and followed her gift so little. But of course I realize it was best the way it was. One must follow one's illusion, whatever satisfaction there is lies along that way. One is very fortunate indeed to be caught up in the great illusions of nature, but I haven't met anybody who was fully sustained by the confidence that he would again have the pleasure of a pretty day. The report card always intrudes. But to some extent this collection does represent such a momentary confidence. Dorothy's drawing has no commercial value—its only value is art—it is the opposite from Da Vinci—yet no one can deny that it is a charming little landscape. I am very glad to have it in the safekeeping of a museum which, too, is charming but also not widely known. There is a reality in fame but also a strong reality in its opposite, as Emerson once pointed out.

While Marvin was picking what he wanted, I made a condition about the gift which has since been relaxed. This condition was that whenever the collection was put on exhibition—now and then, throughout eternity—the photograph of me and Aneta Vargas be shown with it. This occurred to me as we were walking through my rooms and I saw the photo now on display with my paintings, lying against a wall. Aneta, who is one of the world's great acrobats—one of only a few—maybe only two—who can do a one-armed handstand on a slack wire—is a supreme example of the force that has driven me along. I felt the collection should

have a picture of the donor and that this was it. I had some doubts, however, that the College would entirely sympathize with my feelings, and so I wrote Marvin as follows.

"Perhaps I should say a word why I am insistent on the co-exhibition of the photograph by William Robinson. These are simple ways of saying it—one of which is to say that merriment can coexist with dignity—something that is very likely to be forgotten in a museum. But there is also a deeper meaning in the photograph, which is the reason people react so strongly to it. Somehow it gives the feeling of bawdiness, lechery, and even passion. It sort of breaks the shell. The breaking of a shell can be an extremely significant moment, as De Kooning once said to me in the presence of a very beautiful Negro dancer. She asked him what his painting was about and he tried to tell her by this illustration:

> 'Suppose you threw an egg against a window.
> There would be a moment when it was breaking but
> had not broken.'

"There is that quality in this photograph. That is what people react to, I think. The combination of the photograph and the collection might give a sense of something that is more than has been found and yet exists because of what has been found.

"A more elaborate way of explaining what I mean is: The picture is interesting because it really is a very innocent picture, yet it gives a feeling beyond innocence. Miss Vargas is a member of the first Yugoslavian State Circus, and her act was farmed out to Barnum & Bailey where I met her several years ago. Her act requires great strength, an extraordinary sense of balance, and constant practice. She leads an extremely disciplined and moral

life. Her husband, who assists her, was with her every time she came to the studio, and in fact it was he who kissed me goodbye while she shook my hand. The man in the picture—me—has pursued and somewhat satisfied his fantasies in respect to this woman by the highly moral action of painting. The blue shirt is simply a work shirt—not, as some people thought, a pajama top. And it is open and exposes his hairy chest because the buttonholes were worn from age and washing and the day was hot—and not because of exhibitionism or lechery. But the picture is rather immoral in its implications and that is why I want it in the collection. If the factual background were immoral, I would not require this, because I realize a college cannot stand for immorality in fact. However, colleges do accept immorality when it is somehow turned into morality. For instance, they acquaint the student with the poetry of Coleridge—who, if he had been found smoking pot instead of opium and at Brandeis University instead of where and when he did, would have been arrested by the Massachusetts State Police as a friend of mine was. And they bring the student in touch with Lafcadio Hearn, Baudelaire, Rabelais, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, and others, who to various degrees led lives which would make it impossible for them to be professors at the college or even remain there as students. When I was at Bowdoin, a man in my dormitory got a dose of clap and was summarily dismissed. It he hadn't gotten that, he could have stayed there as long as he wished and made as much love as he could. And if he had become a V.I.P. later, some college would undoubtedly have given him an honorary degree. There is something strange about the relationship of culture to morality which needs more examination.

"Indeed, there is something strange about the concept of the

contemporary world in relation to what might be called the anti-concept. A college has a number of reasons for existence; but one reason, and one that I found at Bowdoin, was that of a heightening of experience. The College proved to me to be not just a further step in learning but an entirely different experience than high school had been. It opened up an extraordinary world which I had not known existed. It seems to me a college should stand as far as possible for this sort of thing, but the fact is a college has a strong tendency to stand for only one part of experience—the existence of the mind. A trouble with our contemporary world, as I see it, is that an illusion has grown up that the mind can conquer all, that with sufficient disciplined effort and understanding all things can be explained and that all people can be satisfied with an existence that is dominated by logic. But this concept, it seems to me, ignores the body. It ignores the body because the body is the rival of the mind. It is sort of another battle between Jehovah and Satan, in which Jehovah is now the rational and Satan the nonrational. But if the mind could conquer the body, it would only bring death. Our ancestors had a clearer idea of this. They did not think that life would be possible on earth if removed from the influence of either Satan or God. Only after death, they thought, could one live wholly with Satan or wholly with God. We seem to think that human life can exist wholly under the control of one force. The reason I want the exhibition of the Robinson photograph is that it is a polite message from Satan to be shown along with various not so unusual messages from God. I have lived at times a very happy life with Satan, but I don't want to live with him all the time. I think the life with God is very nice too. That is human life as I see it."

WALTER K. GUTMAN

CATALOGUE

CATALOGUE

1
GUY PÈNE DU BOIS
(1884–1958)
Wooden Soldier, 1924
Oil on panel, 25 x 20
1966. 37

2
ARSHILE GORKY
(1905–48)
Untitled Abstraction, 1944
Colored crayon drawing,
19½ x 25½
1964. 63

3
JACK TWORKOV
Untitled Abstraction, 1949
Oil on paper, 28 x 26
1964. 62

4
JACK TWORKOV
Untitled Abstraction, 1950
Oil on paper, 25½ x 38
1964. 61

5
JACK TWORKOV
Untitled Abstraction, 1951
Oil on canvas, 36 x 42
1964. 59

6
JACK TWORKOV
Untitled Abstraction, 1954
Oil on canvas, 19 x 22
1964. 60

7
FRANZ KLINE
(1910–62)
Untitled Abstraction, 1952
Brush drawing, 8½ x 11
1964. 66

8
FRANZ KLINE
(1910–62)
Untitled Abstraction, 1955
Brush drawing, 19¾ x 14¾
1964. 65

9
PHILIP GUSTON
Untitled Abstraction, 1954
Brush drawing, 23½ x 18
1964. 64

10
GEORGE SEGAL
Untitled, 1957
Pastel drawing, 18 x 12
1966. 35

11
REUBEN NAKIAN
Untitled
Brush drawing, 11¼ x 14
1965. 44

12
REUBEN NAKIAN
Untitled
Brush drawing, 11¼ x 14¼
1965. 46

13
JOHN GRILLO
Untitled Abstraction
Oil on canvas, 26½ x 30¾
1965. 35

14
JOHN GRILLO
Untitled Abstraction, 1960
Oil on board, 12½ x 12½
1965. 36

15
JOHN GRILLO
Untitled Abstraction
Oil on board, 9¼ x 10½
1965. 37

16
EMILIO CRUZ
Untitled, 1963
Pen and brush drawing,
18 x 23¾
1965. 40

17
EMILIO CRUZ
Nudes
Pastel drawing, 10¾ x 13¾
1966. 36

18
SHERMAN DREXLER
Mud Wrestlers, 1961
Encaustic on board, 20 x 24
1965. 41

19
SHERMAN DREXLER
Nude
Watercolor, 18½ x 10¾
1966. 34

20
DOROTHY DARROW
Woodland Scene
Colored pen drawing, 11¾ x 9
1965. 42

21
WALTER K. GUTMAN
Venus
Pastel drawing, 25½ x 20
1965. 11 (Museum Purchase)

22
WALTER K. GUTMAN
Strong Woman, 1964
Oil on canvas, 18 x 14
1965. 45

23
WALTER K. GUTMAN
Nude, 1966
Pastel drawing, 26 x 20
1966. 40

24
PETER AGOSTINI
Collage III
Collage, 11¾ x 17¾
1966. 32

25
MILES FORST
Untitled, 1963
Watercolor, 17¾ x 23¾
1965. 38

26
MICHAEL GOLDBERG
Untitled Abstraction, 1963
Oil on paper, 15 x 14¼
1965. 39

27
ALEX KATZ
Landscape
Oil on board, 13½ x 14½
1965. 43

28
ALEX KATZ
Beach Scene
Collage, 4 x 6
1966. 31

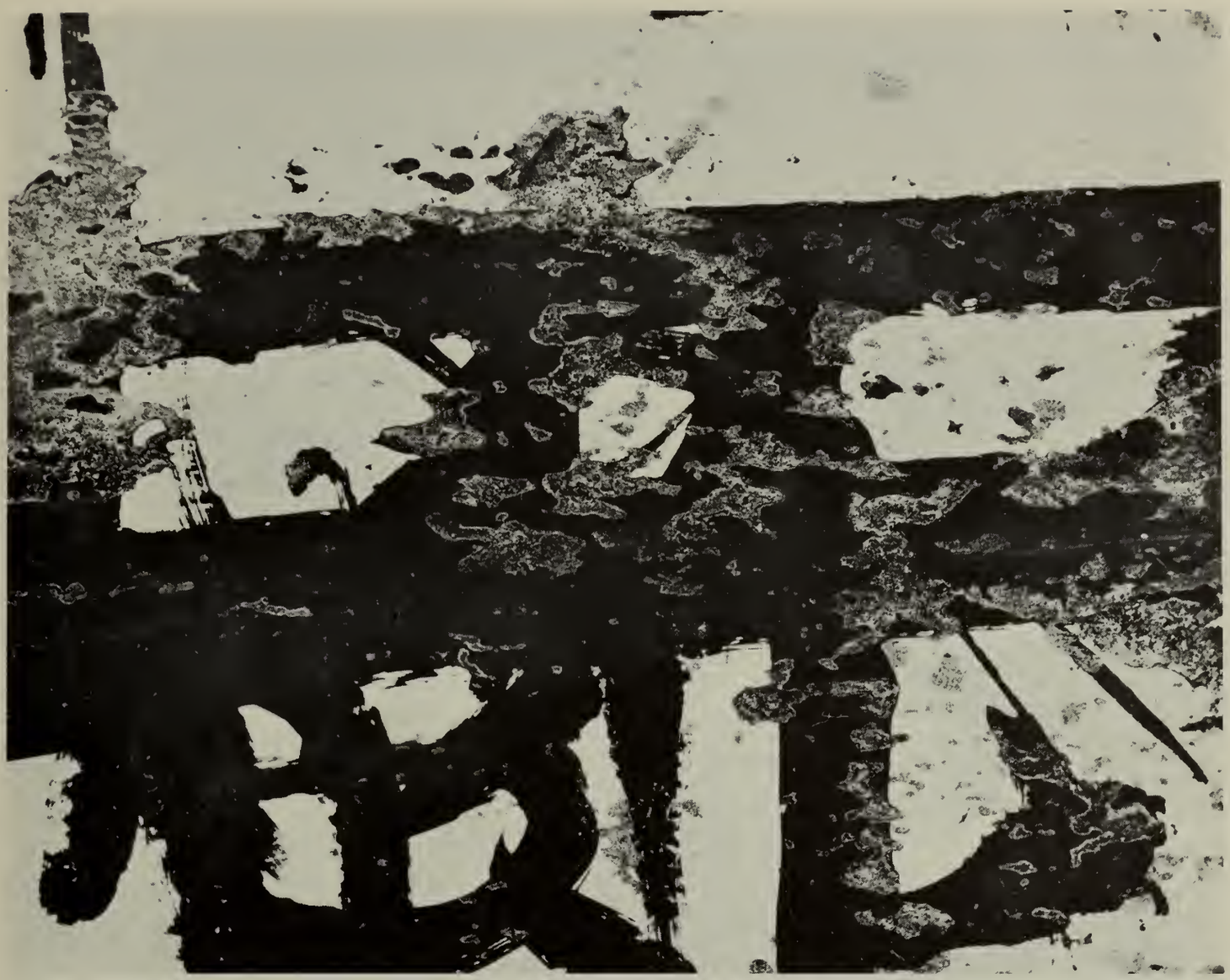
29
ALEX KATZ
Edwin Denby
Cut out figures, 24 x 24
1966. 30

30
PETER GOURFAIN
Rubber Tires
Drawing, 10 x 10¼
1966. 33

PLATES

2

6



7

NAKAN

18

21

29