

# **Gaston Lachaise, retrospective exhibition : January 30-March 7, 1935**

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York**

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**GASTON LACHAISE**

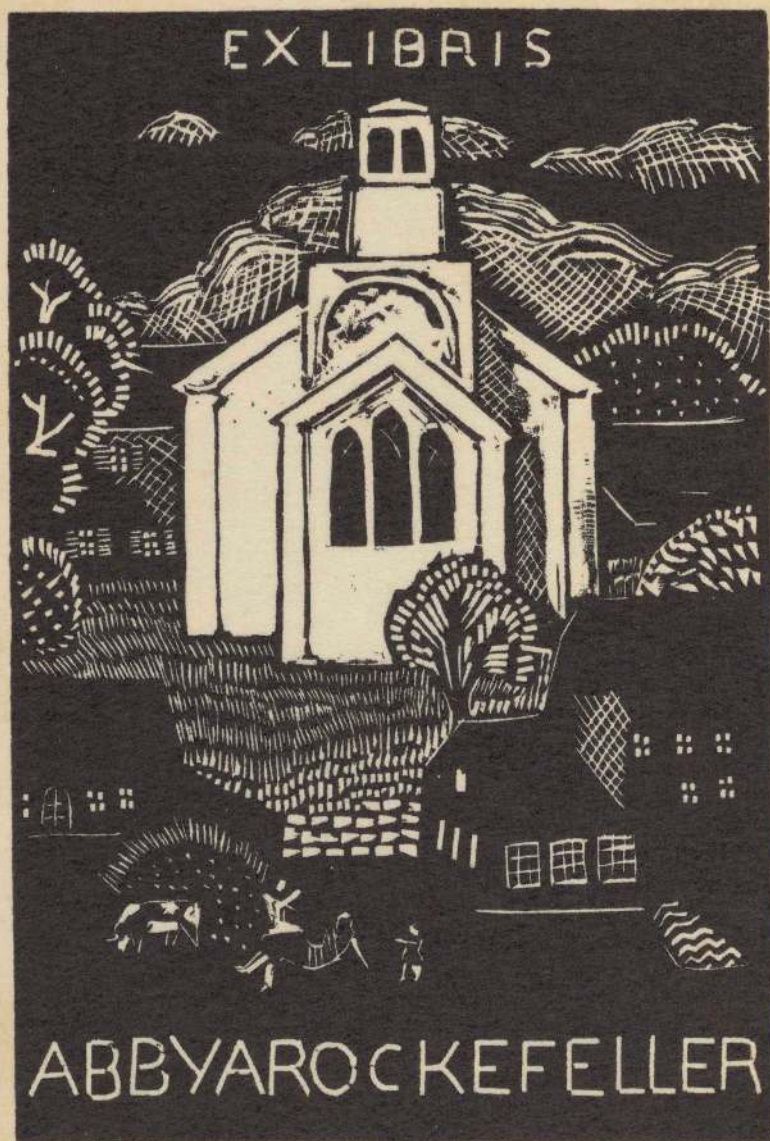
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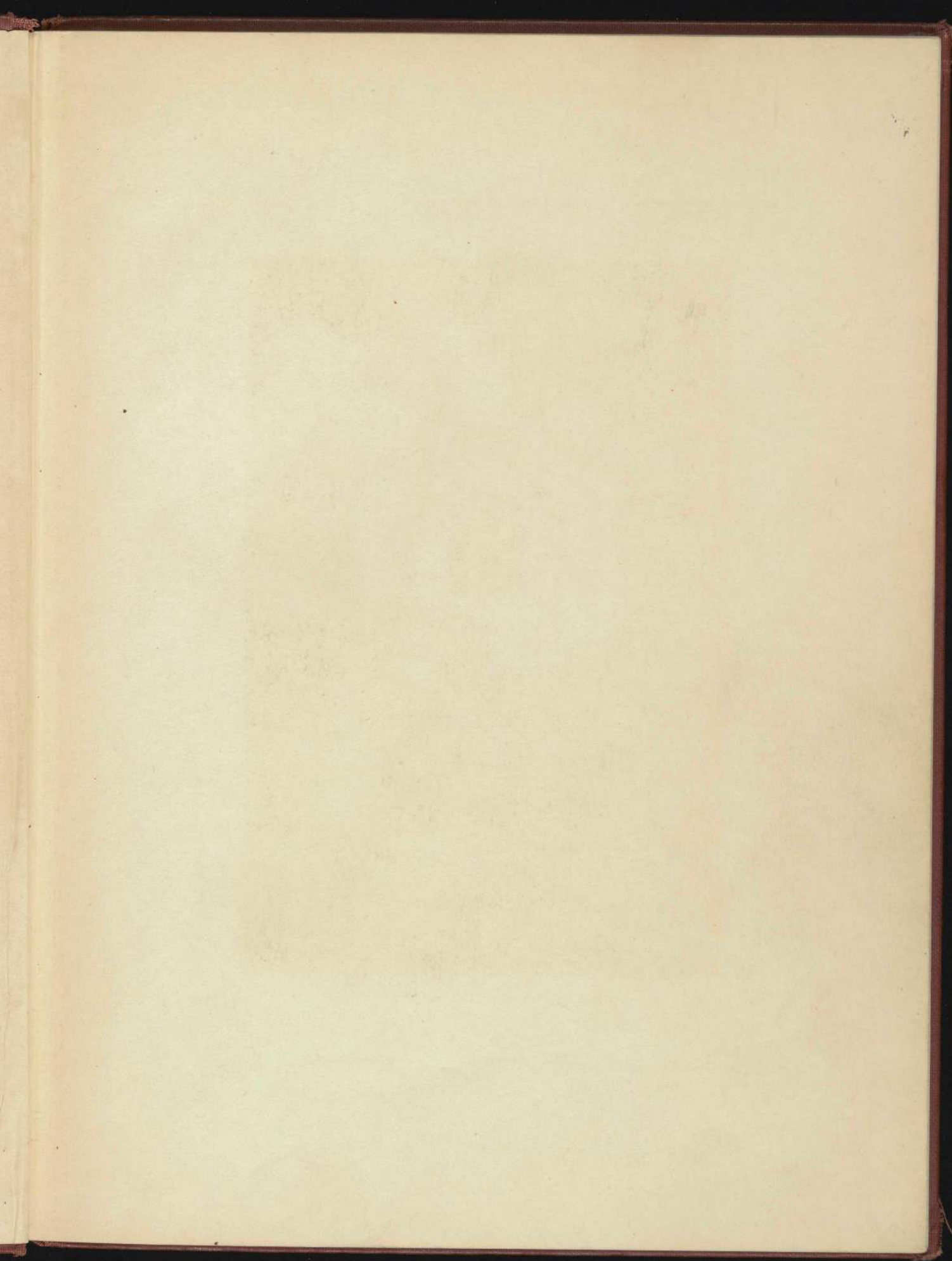
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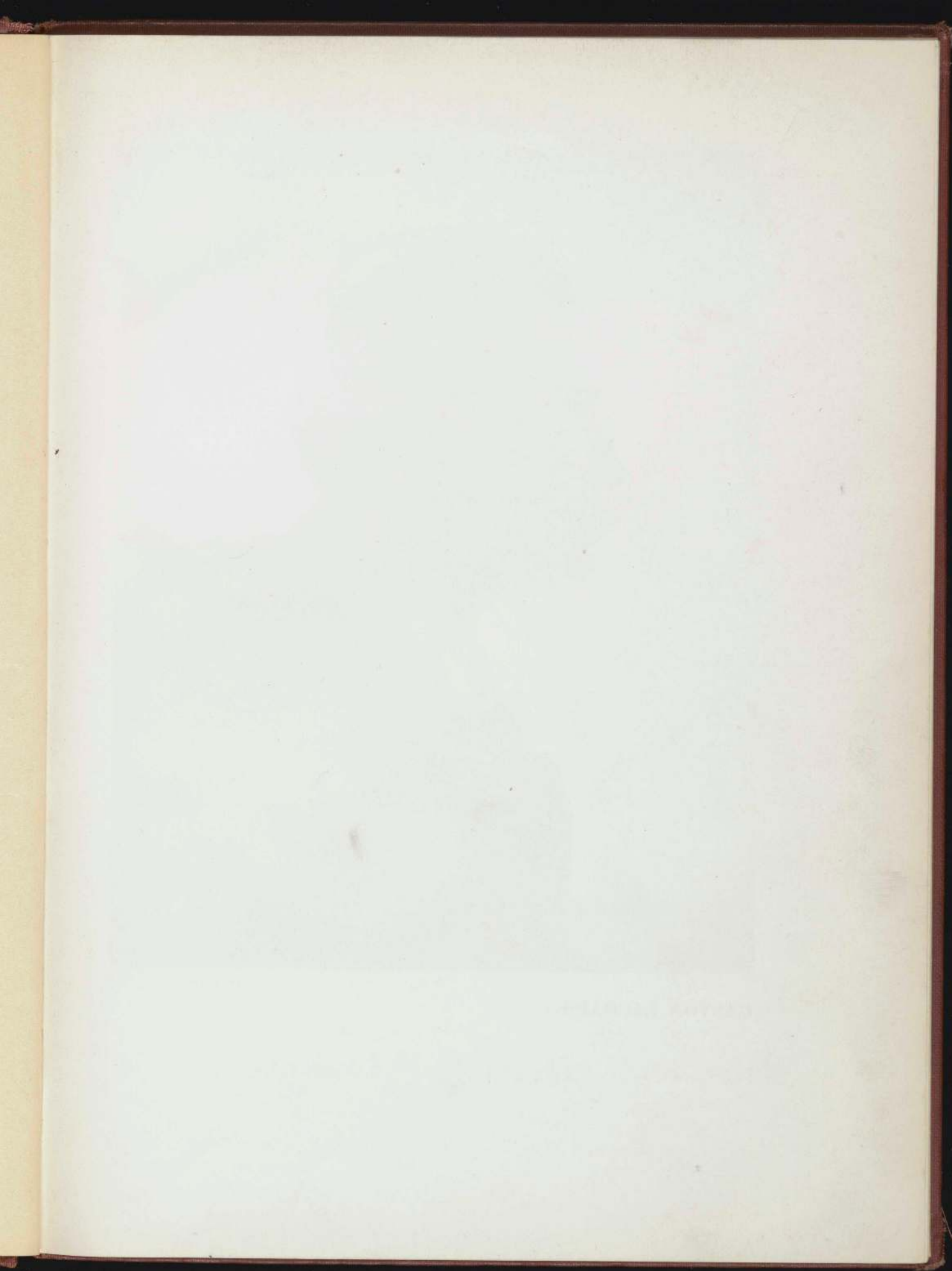


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**GASTON LACHAISE**

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**January 30 - March 7, 1935**

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York**



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Miss Dorothy Miller and Miss Ernestine Fantl of the Museum Staff have been in charge respectively of assembling the exhibition and supervising the catalog.

Mr. Lachaise has coöperated in selecting the exhibition. Only works approved by him have been included.

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## GASTON LACHAISE

### His Life

The sculptor Gaston Lachaise was born in Paris, March 19, 1882. His father, Jean Lachaise, was a cabinet maker who came up from Auvergne to the capital and installed himself in his own workshop. He married Marie Barrée, a Parisian of Alastian descent. Jean Lachaise executed the woodwork for the private apartments of the engineer Eiffel at the very top of the great tower constructed for the Exposition of 1889. As a small boy Lachaise climbed with his father out upon the exterior framework of the tower, conceiving a terror of heights.

At the age of thirteen, encouraged by his father who had an artisan's respect for an artist, Lachaise entered the Ecole Bernard Palissy. Named after the great Renaissance ceramist, this school was one of the most thorough and imaginative training grounds for the artist-craftsman in the whole of Europe. A remarkable standard of practical work in carving stone, wood and ivory, in drawing, painting, anatomy and the history of art was maintained by an excellent academic faculty. Lachaise studied there for three years. He was instructed by the director Aube, a distinguished academician, and particularly by Moncel, the master in sculpture. To complete his course Lachaise should have stayed a fourth year, but he was eager not to waste his time, as he thought, so he applied for admission to the Académie Nationale des Beaux-Arts, to which he was admitted in 1898 at the age of sixteen.

Moncel had been a pupil of Gabriel Jules Thomas, the most conservative of the classicists and head of one of the three sculpture ateliers at the Beaux-Arts. Lachaise therefore entered the studio of Thomas rather than of either of the two other eminent official sculptors, Falguière or Barrias. At the same time Charles Despiau and Paul Landowski were studying at the Beaux-Arts; of the three hundred odd students of the time only Despiau, Landowski and Lachaise have, in any real sense, become eminent.

Lachaise learned a great deal more at the Ecole Bernard Palissy than at the Beaux-Arts, but his new position as a student of the state gave him for a time a sense of security. He had a small studio on the Avenue du Maine near the Gare Montparnasse. He was a good student but worked without any particular im-



pulse. He was trying, as he was taught, to express "interesting" subjects. His natural dreaminess began to assert itself and he found himself more and more prone to wander in the Louvre and other museums rather than to work. He went to studio parties, to the Bals Musettes, the Concerts Rouges. He read Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Verlaine.

One day he met by chance an American who later became his wife and who was to have a profound influence on his art and life. She was leaving for America and he would have followed at once if he had had the money. To his wife Lachaise has constantly given all credit for a courage and fortitude of which he himself was not capable. She had been the directing emotional and spiritual force in his creative endeavor.

Though he could not leave France Lachaise now abandoned the Beaux-Arts. He had already twice been chosen in the first twenty of three hundred students to compete for the Prix de Rome. This twenty was to be reduced to ten, the ten to the winner. But Lachaise threw over all his chances for such academic ease and went to work for René Lalique, the successful designer and manufacturer of jewelry and objects in glass. The style of the Art Nouveau with its use of motives from nature was rampant. Lachaise went around with a snake in his pocket to study its undulations as ideas for jewelry designs. During these years he exhibited frequently at the Salon des Artistes Français.

He worked with Lalique for a year to save enough money to go to America. He sailed from Liverpool on the S. S. Ivernia. His decision to leave Europe was the turning point of his life. Since then he has never left this continent, and he feels that in spite of his foreign heritage he has become, in his thirty years of creative life here, entirely naturalized.

When he arrived in Boston on January 13, 1906, he could not speak a word of English. He had tried to learn it at night school in Paris but soon gave it up. He had thirty dollars in his pockets and no prospects. But he got a job for a short time with John Evans, a commercial sculptor on Huntington Avenue, who told him to do a Gothic Virgin for a church. Lachaise found himself, after all his study at the Bernard Palissy and at the Beaux-Arts, wholly untrained to turn out this kind of work. He had not learned to construct a figure in any style at a day's notice. In Paris he would have been given the problem of expressing a "subject-composition" and he would have had six months to do a full-length figure.

He found a room on Beacon Hill. Through his landlady who knew the eminent American academic sculptor, Henry Hudson Kitson, he secured his second position. Kitson, who lived at Quincy not far away, was working on an enormous Civil War memorial to the Confederate dead at Vicksburg, a project involving soldiers, horses, men and guns. When Lachaise started to work for Kitson he found again that what he had been taught at the schools was of little practical use to him. But



his training with Lalique and his mastery of the jeweler's craft stood him in good stead. He worked on the uniform trimmings, belt buckles, buttons, epaulets, harnesses and saddles. Kitson was a stickler for military accuracy. He well knew the eagle-eyed committees of C. S. A. veterans with whom he had to deal. Kitson was also working on the Fenway memorial to Patrick Andrew Collins and Lachaise did the delicate tracery on the Irish Harp of Tara's Muse. Lee Lawrie, later the sculptor of Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol, was at this time Kitson's chief assistant. Lachaise was amazed at the facility with which Lawrie could throw up a figure, wrinkles in the sleeves, creases in the pants, all complete in practically no time. But his Beaux-Arts training always made him look for the anatomical structure, the bone beneath the surface.

Lachaise had been of an indolent, delicate and dreamy disposition. In the spring of 1906 he took a room in Quincy. Every day he swam in Dorchester Bay and at the end of a month he could swim a mile at a stretch. This changed his nature physically and mentally. For the first time he really felt that he was an American, although he had made little progress in American methods of working. He rented a studio on Tremont Street near Park, but continued to earn his living by enlarging buttons, medals and swords for Kitson. As work of his own he modeled a series of masks in honor of the birth of a friend's child. They were faces of such men as Abraham Lincoln and others who he felt would have a benign influence over a new life.

Kitson then came to New York, opening a studio on MacDougal Alley. In the previous two years Lachaise had made himself very useful around the studio, so that he was left, with Mrs. Kitson in charge, to finish enlarging a big equestrian statue, the central figure of the Vicksburg memorial, which in all took four years to complete. Lachaise followed Kitson to New York in 1912. He took a small studio on Fourteenth Street, and first felt the impulse to model the small human figures which were to be the basis of his subsequent sculptural activity.

The severing of his connection with Kitson in one sense relieved Lachaise. He was at least free, but he had absolutely no means by which to live. He took a room in a boarding house on Washington Square South kept by a Miss Case. It was a house in which Edgar Poe might have lived, full of dark corners, strange sounds and smells, and even boasting a mad poet. Lachaise had two first floor windows which looked on the Square, and in this room, by no means a studio, he commenced the life-sized *Standing Woman* (No. 16) which was to take ten years to complete. His wife posed for this figure in its earliest state, but after that he amplified the form from his own imagination. This figure he considers to be the nucleus and spring of his entire development and in some ways his best work. His mother managed to help him with what little money she could spare, but after six months he had to look for another job.



At about this time Lachaise went to the studio of Paulanship, whose assistant, an Italian sculptor Buffano, was leaving to work on the decoration of the San Francisco's World's Fair. Manship did not feel that he needed an assistant, however, and Lachaise continued his search elsewhere. Suddenly the mad poet at Miss Case's decided that he wanted to study sculpture and asked Lachaise if he knew who could teach him. Lachaise had been fascinated by the behavior of this strange man. He took him to Manship's studio. Manship refused to teach the poet, but said that if Lachaise himself would come back the next day there would be work for him.

Manship was doing considerable sculptural detail on private houses for the architect Platt. Lachaise worked on decorative arrangements of leaves, fruit and the like. The training at Lalique's again proved useful. Manship was pleased, and Lachaise worked on the detail of the pedestal of Manship's *Nymph and Centaur*, putting more character into his work than would an ordinary bronze chiseller.

In 1913 Lachaise rented his first really good studio. It was on West Twenty-third Street and had a skylight but no elevator. He could now take the cast of the *Standing Woman*, which was already in plaster, out of storage. On this he now worked a great deal, and also at this time composed the series of statuettes, a few of which, cast in bronze from the wax, are exhibited in the present exhibition (Nos. 1-5). He was starting to express his own personality freely for the first time. Lachaise was now able to marry, as he had long wished to do. Then he became ambitious on his own account; he wanted to have a show himself. When the preparations for the famous Armory Show of 1913 were under way, Gutzon Borglum and Arthur B. Davies had come to Kitson's studio to see if he had anything for the exhibition. Kitson had not, but after they had left, Lachaise, who was in his overalls working around the studio, asked Kitson if he could not show them something of his own. Lachaise overtook them halfway down the alley, led them to his room nearby, and showed them a clay figure of a woman (No. 3). He had no money for bronze or plaster, but it was exhibited in the Armory Show under glass.

Lachaise had planned a show for 1916 at the Bourgeois Galleries. Toward this he worked intensively, sending plasters to the foundry, the casting to be paid for when the bronzes should be sold. The World War and unsettled conditions forced the postponement of his exhibition until 1918, and debts started to mount up grimly.

Lachaise's life has never been easy, but strangely enough, it has always been on the verge of ease without his ever achieving, even for a month at a time, anything like economic security. Yet Lachaise however much he has been misunderstood has always impressed academic sculptors and critics by his innate crafts-



manship and ability; and his decorative work, always somewhat of a compromise for him, has usually won immediate and wide-spread popularity. An American academician once approached him, telling him that it would be easy for him to join the National Academy, thus gaining prestige and the probability of subsequent commissions. At the same time he was informed that if he chose to compete as an American for the Prix de Rome it would be possible to suspend the rules disqualifying a married man. But Lachaise had no desire for three years' study in Rome. His one idea was to establish himself independently as a sculptor in his adopted country. He felt that any academic approbation or affiliation was a step in the very direction he had abandoned when he left France. Lachaise has persistently refused any alliance with official groups. In 1930 he was asked to join the Art Commission of the City of New York, but he declined to serve because he felt that he could not be sympathetic with the policies of such a body.

His first one-man show at the Bourgeois Galleries was comparatively well received. Two pieces were sold. Henry McBride praised the work, but the *Standing Woman*, now complete in plaster but not to be cast in bronze for another ten years, was ridiculed as fat, heavy, grotesque.

Manship moved from his old studio at Twenty-third Street and Lexington Avenue to the large studio in Washington Mews which Lachaise himself now occupies. He was at work upon the memorial to J. P. Morgan, commissioned by the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This large marble plaque was, of course, designed by Manship, but Lachaise worked on both the clay and the plaster and did all the stone cutting. Some four years were expended on its execution.

During this period Lachaise had a difficult time making both ends meet. He was working toward his second show. There was hardly enough time in the twenty-four hours of a day to fulfill his obligations to Manship, and do his own work. In his own studio on Fourteenth Street he was modelling a large work, an heroic nude group of a man with a woman in his arms. This he later destroyed in the plaster for he felt that it was unrealized. He wishes to return to the idea, but as yet has not.

In 1920 his second one-man show was held at the Bourgeois Galleries. Albert Gleizes, the French painter, was a friend of Lachaise and much interested in his sculpture. They exchanged examples of their work. In spite of Lachaise's considerable fame in America, the small figure which he gave Gleizes is his only work owned in Europe. The French, so eager as a nation to claim their artists, have never had a chance to see Lachaise's work. Nothing was sold from the second show. There was little result from it except more debts. But a little later Lachaise began to sell a few works directly to collectors, and Kraushaar, the Fifth Avenue dealer, for some time bought nearly everything Lachaise would bring him.



Soon after this time Lachaise decided to sever his connection with Paul Manship.

In 1919 *The Dial* was taken over by Dr. James Sibley Watson and Scofield Thayer. They made it a magazine distinguished by contributions from the important creative artists and writers of America and Europe. The frontispiece of the first issue was a drawing by Lachaise. Later several photographs of his sculpture and drawings were used for its monthly posters and his work was frequently reproduced in its pages. Lachaise did portraits of Watson and Thayer, and other contributors to *The Dial* also sat to him, notably Marianne Moore, E. E. Cummings, Gilbert Seldes, Edward Nagle, Edgar Varese, and Henry McBride. Thayer bought *La Montagne* cut in a bluish stone, which was reproduced along with a crayon drawing in the *Dial* portfolio "Living Art," published in 1923. In 1924 A. E. Gallatin published a book of plates of the work of Lachaise, with an appreciative essay and a check list of works so far achieved. In 1927 Alfred Stieglitz gave Lachaise a one-man show at his Intimate Gallery, and did a great deal to help the sculptor's position and to justify him before the New York world of art. Stieglitz' propaganda for Lachaise came at an excellent time, for Lachaise was being bitterly attacked for his innovations in form. Lachaise did portraits of Stieglitz and of John Marin in bronze and of Georgia O'Keeffe in alabaster.

Some years before, Lachaise had done some architectural decoration. A large house in Miami built in 1920 by the Chicago millionaire, James Deering, had a small allowance for decorative sculpture. The architect Paul Chalfin offered Manship the job, but he declined. Lachaise accepted. He designed two handsome peacocks which were admirably suitable for garden sculpture. Unfortunately they were badly executed in stone in Florida. Welles Bosworth, architect of the New York Telephone and Telegraph Building at Broadway and Fulton Street, had Manship design a frieze around half of its great hall. In 1921, when Manship was in Europe, Bosworth asked Lachaise to superintend a duplication of the frieze for the other half of the hall. Lachaise refused, but it was happily suggested that he might design something of his own, which he did. In 1922 he executed cement panels of the four seasons for Bosworth's house at Locust Valley, Long Island. He considers these panels his finest architectural sculpture previous to the completion of the reliefs for the International Building in Rockefeller Center.

In 1928 Joseph Brummer gave his handsome galleries for a retrospective one-man show. The *Standing Woman* was finally shown in bronze, as well as the plaster of the large *Floating Woman* (No. 31).

Meigs of the Philadelphia firm of architects Mellor, Meigs and Howe became interested in Lachaise through seeing a photograph of one of his works reproduced in a magazine, and asked him to do a sea gull for his apartment. George Howe of the same firm had received the commission to design a federal memorial to the men of the United States Coast Guard for the National Cemetery at Arlington. He



realized that the work of an unofficial sculptor would be accepted with difficulty by the Government Art Commission, but he fought successfully for Lachaise's design, which is of a comparatively tranquil nature.

In 1931 plans for Rockefeller Center were in the air. The late Raymond Hood, one of the architects, was also planning the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition and commissioned Lachaise to do a portal for the Electricity Building. Lachaise now asked him for a job on the Rockefeller Center project. All sculptural commissions were in the hands of Harvey Wiley Corbett. Finally Lachaise was given a commission. But instead of being allowed to do the large bronze over-door of the Maison Française on Fifth Avenue and Forty-ninth Street, he was relegated to a relatively obscure position on the Sixth Avenue side of the R. C. A. Building. The Art Commission unanimously approved his designs, but they were so placed that they can be properly seen only when the elevated railway is removed, if ever.

Lachaise's portal for the Electricity Building at the Chicago World Fair was twenty feet high, fifteen wide. It was executed in polychromed plaster, at first black and gold, then changed to white in the second year of the Fair. This panel was an interesting experiment in the use of the human male figure against a pattern of telegraphic wires and insulators. It was destroyed at the close of the Fair.

Lachaise has just finished two large reliefs for the International Building in Rockefeller Center, now in process of construction. These panels show figures of typical working men, in one panel blasting for the foundation of a building, in the other balancing in the air on a steel beam. These panels, also, are to be placed in a rather awkward and unflattering position, but they are nevertheless his pre-eminent achievement in this branch of his medium.

### His Work

It is probable that Lachaise is one of the most important sculptors alive today, but the magnitude of his achievement is not readily grasped, and this for no merely superficial reason. In his work there is a concentrated dynamism which is so intense that it repels while it attracts. His subject matter is not ultimately men and women, nor even Man and Woman. His subject matter is the glorification, revivification and amplification of the human body; its articulate structure clothed in flesh. He is an idol maker. He risks the dangers, derisions and rewards of a man, not creating a religion, but at least supplying the documents corroborating a religion. Just as his figures frequently transcend the factually physical, so does their physicality transcend the immediately sexual; but since much of his work has sexual implications, there have been numerous inevitable confusions in his reception as an innovator.

Lachaise, above all other sculptors since the Renaissance, is the interpreter of



maturity. He is concerned with forms which have completed their growth, which have achieved their prime; forms, as he would say, in the glory of their fulfillment. Amplitude and abundance are not in themselves concepts unpleasing to most people, so long as the expression of them in sculpture is not far removed from a young Greek girl banked with a flowering cornucopia representing Plenty. Acceptance of the idea of maturity today would imply a change in popular psychology. It is no wonder that to a nation predominantly adolescent Lachaise's insistence upon the mature is frightening.

Considered a violent offender against rules of good taste in sculpture, Lachaise can nevertheless rely on many witnesses from the past in art to justify him, should he need them. Michelangelo, Titian, Dürer, Rubens, Rembrandt, Courbet come easily to mind. He feels that he is a link in the tradition of the handling of developed forms, but far more as a re-creation than as a reminiscence of previous epochs. His preferences in the art of the past illuminate his present activity. The past he loves best is remotest, the very earliest dawn of European culture when men inscribed tusked mammoths and bison on the walls of their stone caverns, beasts with shaggy mountainous bodies delicately balanced on small, careful hoofs. Or small paleolithic objects carved from ivory or stone, female bodies of refined grossness, with huge mounded breasts capable of suckling whole tribes; earth-goddesses which were in ten thousand years to be corrupted into the softer, many-breasted Diana of the Ephesians. Next, he admires the clarity, precision and anonymity of the Egyptian stone carvers, craftsmen who were capable of taking human models, priest or king, and elevating them into godhead, the cut stone becoming not only a portrait but an expressed fragment of divine vitality, an idol worthy of worship. Lastly he feels himself close to the Hindu sculptors of India and the Malay archipelagos, who allowed themselves great freedom with the human body, adopting hieratic rearrangement and refinement to produce interlocking friezes of terrible dances and scenes of loving and destructive gods. He feels that the cavemen had already all the reverence, simplicity and fervor of subsequent "great" periods, that their painting too had a majesty never revived in later inventions. He admires the force of barbarians and feels there is not nearly enough of their directed impulse in art today. He feels that his own work has a barbarian impulse which, taking nature as its base, makes nature idol-like or god-like. For the well-achieved work of other more civilized periods he has the good craftsman's respect for good craftsmanship. But that is about all. He thinks, for example, that negro sculpture, considering its conditioning in fear, magic and ceremonial aims, is far more relevant to Africa and to ourselves than is Greek sculpture of the middle or late periods and the decadence of classic traditionalism in the West. A simple, unbiased vision has been difficult for the paler European. He believes that Renaissance imitation of Greek ideals and its various mutations



down to our own time are without much inherent energy and in the last analysis only well-executed imitations of a reality far more moving in the flesh. The cave-men knew as much about the relationship of animals to natural forces as contemporary artists despite their advantage of the whole realm of scientific research and developed cosmologies. Not that Lachaise would stop at the mammoth. Only, he would share the grandeur and inevitability of the earlier impulsive awe, unfettered by secondary considerations of decoration or surface refinement or a preconceived idea of what is fitting or beautiful.

Lachaise keenly feels himself to be of his own time. He is constantly motivated by a tense desire to express his reactions, to clarify impressions received immediately around him in his daily existence. When he left the declining French heritage of the nineteenth century at the age of twenty, he foresook all that the European continent had to offer him. He came to an America which was and is, for him, explicit in its many vivid, brutal, fragmentary energies and techniques. He has loved and studied the ample crassness of strip-tease burlesque shows, the miraculous human equilibrium of circus tightrope walkers and six-day bicycle racers, the transitory revelations of women's fashions, the irresistible controlled force of hydraulic presses and steam drills, the lift and pull of derricks, and the suspension of riveted steel beams. His files are full of pictures torn from newspapers, wind blowing a woman's skirt, workmen balanced on the final height of a building's skeleton, airplanes, automobiles, and wild animals. Of the sculptors of his own time he respects Lehmbruck, Epstein and Brancusi.

Many of his American contemporaries have sat to him for their portraits. Sometimes the likeness has been achieved in a few sittings. But in other cases it has been far longer. On one head he worked for fifty-eight separate sittings, on another small full-length portrait, longer. Often a portrait has been done in the initial clay, later cast in bronze from plaster, and subsequently even carved in marble. The portraits are a great deal more than likenesses. Like Roman and Egyptian portrait heads they preserve at the same time not only the man but his epoch. Lachaise's portraits, like the rest of his work, are essential rather than factual. Except for Epstein, there is no one in our own time who so comprehensively presents a whole personality in a portrait head.

The whole personality can of course be inferred from a head. But often over the past few years Lachaise has preferred to portray the entire nude figure whenever the model can be persuaded. There are numerous barriers against such portraiture today, primarily in the minds of his subjects. But the Romans and the Egyptians were not dismayed by this frankness, and gradually we are becoming less so.

Lachaise has in his life done a great deal of work which, though he is by no means ashamed of it, he considers to be of a secondary nature. This includes



numerous decorative treatments of birds, fish and animals, all studied carefully for the fullest expression of their character but with full understanding of the slightness of the subject matter. It is not difficult to understand why these amiable objects have been widely popularized and even imitated. His architectural work of the past he also considers of a subordinate character. He always hopes for the day when he will be offered the chance to produce a work of sculpture in relation to architecture which is neither an apology for a blank wall or an incidental detail in the design. It is not too unlikely to expect that such a time will come. However, most architects are jealous of any competition with their own rigid elevations. They placate the sculptor by placing his work where it amounts to little more than an irritated surface. They do not sufficiently understand that sculpture in high relief or even free-standing can definitely enhance the monumental volumes of modern building.

However, Lachaise has not allowed himself to be discouraged from attempting heroic sculpture merely because of lack of large commissions. Aside from the first *Standing Woman* he has completed four large figures, each suitable for an architectural setting. The so-called *Floating Woman* was completed in plaster in 1927. At this time Lachaise had been much impressed by contemporary theories of space and time. He had been considering the almost unimaginable curve of the earth's ocean horizon line, straight to the physical eye, but progressing into an infinite curve; over and above this, even more incredible, the convolutions of the earth's curves enclosed in other more enormous orbits, of which our whole universe is possibly but a fragment. He has always felt the most sentient, universal subject of sculptural expression to be the human figure, and in his *Floating Woman* he attempted an embodiment of cosmic concepts.

The heroic nude *Woman* (No. 39), is a culmination in this direction, the maturity of his maturity. Her strong legs seem almost forced deep in the ground, yet her large haunches exert little pressure. She exists in air as much as on the earth. She is a calmly savage figure, an idea of the feminine that has a serenity more dominating than tender. This figure is an uncompromising statement, not easy to regard with complacency.

The *Man* (No. 41), considerably refined and altered since it was first shown at the Museum of Modern Art in 1930, is this *Woman's* peer. The pride of this figure is staggering. Its benediction is an ultimate gesture of triumphant, active, sympathetic control. No model was used. The anatomy of the torso reveals the sublimated, crystallized design and firm amplification which Lachaise's profound knowledge of the architecture of the human body has brought him.

Lachaise's physical types have about them an ambiguous quality. The faces of his women often partake of masculine strength and the female figures have a male musculature. His men's heads are sometimes almost androgynous, and mysteri-



ously may be implicated with their opposites. This is not decadence but a clear understanding of the mutual nature of the two sexes which arose from the same source.

*La Montagne* (No. 60), has achieved finality in an heroic mould, after several intermediary developments in bronze and stone. The sculpture is cast in cement, a material which Lachaise feels is appropriate for out-of-doors. *La Montagne* will be placed on a rise of ground in a tall pine wood, raised in all its buoyant weight on six high pillars. This sculpture is a clear phrasing of Lachaise's conception of weight, the balance of breathing sumptuousness, a mountain raised into air, earth sharing the shape of clouds, not swollen or inflated but placid with a concentrated luxurious fullness.

In his own studio at present there are a number of pieces in plaster and bronze which have not been included in this retrospective exhibition. Lachaise feels these works to be of paramount importance to himself and to the world's knowledge of him as an artist. If they were to be shown today, however, they might give offence and precipitate scandal obscuring the importance of the rest of his creation. He is proud of these works and he is not afraid of scandal, and he believes that the original elements in these sculptures will have a healthful effect when they are courageously displayed in a favorable setting. The elements characterizing these works are not new to him. But in them his previous tendencies have been pushed so far as to constitute almost a new revelation. He has fixed in these works heroic incarnations of flesh so violent, so disturbing, that for some time to come they can only provoke wonder.

The organs and spasms of birth are universal symbols for the source and continuation of human life. Lachaise has not been timid in using these symbols. Here again he has personified and canonized sexuality. But his sexuality has not the qualities of superficial, titillating attractiveness, which easily becomes obscene or absurd when rendered in stone or bronze. The lust he shows is heavy, cleansing, weighted with implications of earth and the sprung seed.

No discussion of Lachaise's work, however brief, would be complete without a word about his drawings. Though entirely in outline and very much the work of a sculptor as opposed to that of a painter, the drawings are in no way studies for sculpture. They are independent expressions in their own medium; swift, exuberant, economical and bold. They show his gifts of imaginative metamorphosis, his profound understanding of the articulation, motive processes and capacities of the human body.

### His Position

Lachaise is now recognized, even by the daily press, as one of America's outstanding artists. The show at the Museum of Modern Art is a sign of his import-



ance. Nevertheless, it is illuminating to consider him, an acknowledged artist of superior talent, in relation to one factor that qualifies this kind of recognition—economic security.

Lachaise is not represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art nor in many other American museums. Until this year and the commission for the Fairmount Park Memorial in Philadelphia, Lachaise has had to wait for a public monument worthy of his talent, although they are continually handed out to acceptable academicians even in these lean times. It is true that he is well represented in many private collections. For his patrons a considerable amount of work of secondary character has been accomplished; a smaller amount of primary importance. His life has been filled with difficulties about money, debts and ensuing misunderstandings involving the exhaustion or estrangement of successive patrons, as has so often been the case with artists. A reputation for being difficult, particularly in combination with his naturally reticent character, has not enhanced his standing with possible selection committees. He is not a humorous nor a particularly engaging man. Neither is he resentful. But his intense earnestness has become a way of life, apparent in his manner and his speech. By nature soft and agreeable, he has often forced himself to be harsh and arbitrary almost to save his soul by his own brutality. He has a very just notion of his position in the present and the future. His work, achieved and to be achieved, is of course far more important than the attitude of his patrons about the way he accomplishes this work. If he had followed their solicitous prudent counsel he might have been out of debt, but much of his work would not have existed in the bronze, or at all. Too often patrons have been confused as to the motives of their patronage. Genuinely attracted by something in an artist's work, they will often wish to possess it. Gradually they become involved in the artist's personal life. Patronage imperceptibly shifts to charity, charity to indignation and exasperation. It remains to be seen if patronage by the state has any advantage over the accidental interest of private individuals.

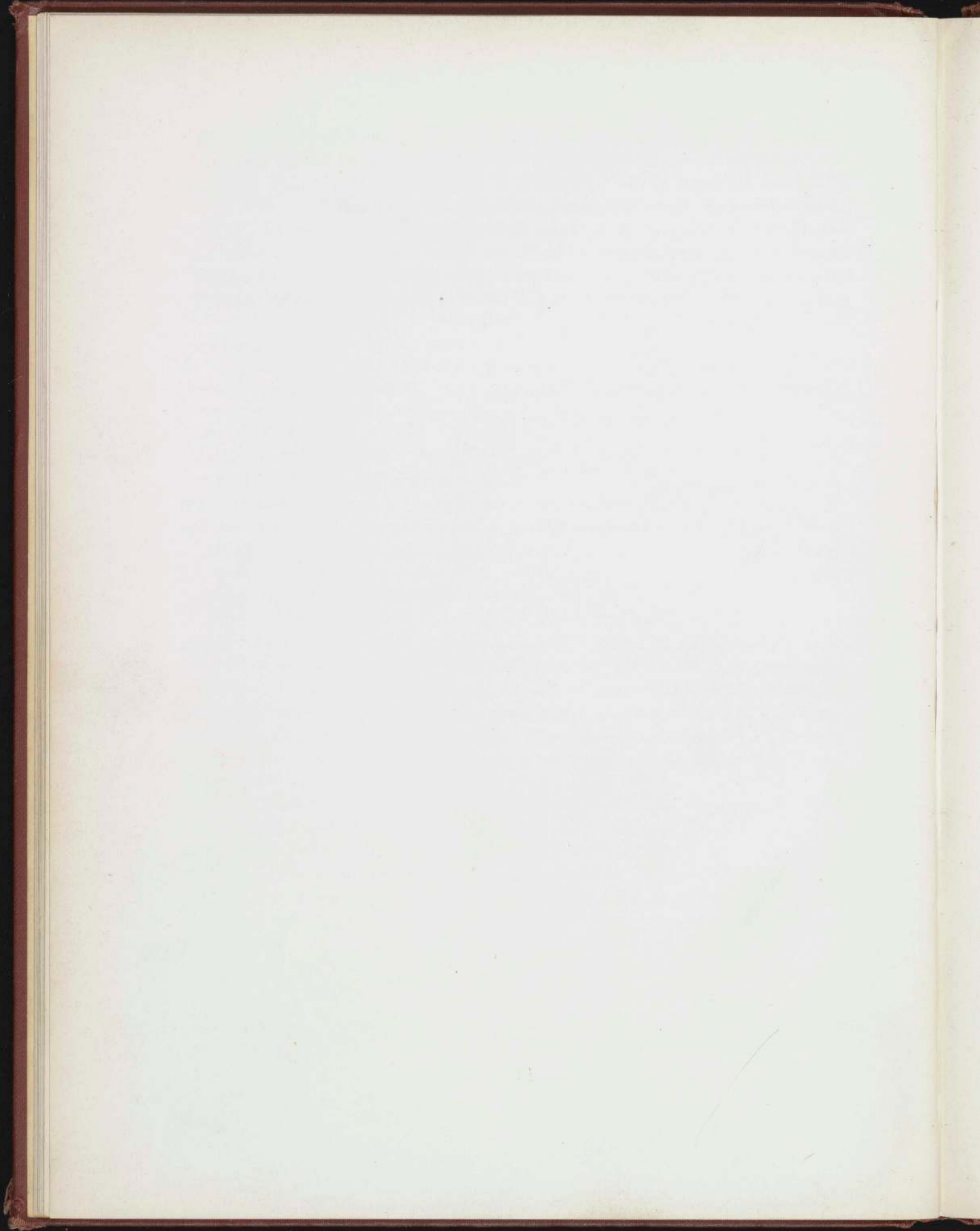
As for Lachaise's future, there is the commission for the monument in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. There will be portrait heads to do, and the possibility of casting in bronze some of the large figures already in plaster. What else? That is in the hands of the architects of whatever building still goes on. Most of it is controlled by government commissions, and their diffident attitude toward such a sculptor as Lachaise is only too well known. Lachaise has constantly refused to teach. He believes that anyone with a character so well defined as his own could only hand down mannerisms to sensitive pupils. He feels that, as in his own case, the best teachers are well instructed pedagogues. His influence, as such, upon American sculpture has been negligible.

One may hope that some really unselfish interests concerned with the fine arts

will give Lachaise a commission for an even more important civic or public work. Many possibilities suggest themselves. For example, there is no worthy memorial to Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia, a project which interests Lachaise intensely. There is no fitting monument to Herman Melville, or to Winslow Homer or Thomas Eakins. John Reed is unhonored by Harvard College. There is no stone to the memory of Hart Crane, whom Lachaise knew and admired. Lachaise has twenty years or more of work ahead which should be the crowning period of his life. Not to make the fullest use of such a talent would be heartless waste.

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN





## CHRONOLOGY

- 1882 Born in Paris, March 19
- 1895 Entered the Ecole Bernard Palissy
- 1898 Entered the Atelier Gabriel Jules Thomas at the Académie Nationale des Beaux-Arts
- 1899-1903 Exhibited at Salon des Artistes Français
- c.1905 Left the Beaux-Arts. Met Isabel Nagle, his future wife. Went to work for René Lalique
- 1906 Landed in Boston, Massachusetts, January 13.
- 1906-1912 Worked for Henry Hudson Kitson
- 1912 Moved to New York City. Began the *Standing Woman*
- 1913 Small clay figure exhibited in the Armory Show. Met Paul Manship and became his assistant. Married
- 1916 First show planned and postponed
- 1918 First one-man show at the Bourgeois Galleries
- 1920 Second one-man show at the Bourgeois Galleries
- 1919-1925 *The Dial* period. Portraits
- 1921 Frieze for Telephone Building, New York. Work at the Kraushaar Galleries
- 1922 Cement plaques for Welles Bosworth's house, Long Island
- 1923 *The Dial's* portfolio, "Living Art," published
- 1924 Monograph by A. E. Gallatin published. Cleveland Museum purchase of marble head
- 1927 One-man show at Stieglitz' Intimate Gallery
- 1928 One-man show at the Brummer Gallery. *Floating Woman* shown. National Coast Guard Memorial, Washington
- 1930 *Heroic Man* (first state) exhibited at Museum of Modern Art
- 1931 Reliefs for R. C. A. Building, Rockefeller Center
- 1932 Portal for Chicago Century of Progress Exposition
- 1933 *Heroic Standing Woman* in bronze placed in New London. Nude portraits
- 1934 Reliefs for International Building, Rockefeller Center. *La Montagne* in cement
- 1935 Commission for Memorial to the Peoples of America, for Fairmount Park, Philadelphia



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The work of Lachaise has also been reproduced in many periodicals, such as *The American Magazine of Art*, *Architectural Forum*, *Arts and Decoration*, *The Art Digest*, *The Art News*, *The Dial*, *Fine Arts*, and *Parnassus*, and in the catalogs of the Museum of Modern Art, *Painting and Sculpture by Living Americans*, *American Painting and Sculpture*, and *Modern Works of Art*.

## CATALOG

An asterisk before a catalog number indicates that the item is illustrated by a plate which bears the same number. Dates have been supplied by the artist.

- \*1. Woman (1910)**  
Bronze, 12 inches high  
Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York
- 2. Woman Walking (c. 1911)**  
Bronze, 11¼ inches high  
Collection Kraushaar Art Galleries, New York
- \*3. Woman (1912)**  
Plaster, 10½ inches high  
Exhibited: Armory Show, New York, 1913  
Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise
- 4. Woman (c. 1912)**  
Bronze, 7¼ inches high  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- 5. Statuette (c. 1912)**  
Bronze, 7¾ inches high  
Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise, New York
- \*6. La Montagne (c. 1913)**  
Bronze (1930), 6⅞ inches high  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- \*7. Woman (1913-1918)**  
Bronze, 12½ inches high  
Collection Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts
- \*8. Woman (c. 1918)**  
Bronze, 11⅞ inches high  
Collection Gustave B. Garfield, New York
- \*9. Woman's Head (1918)**  
Marble, 10½ inches high  
Collection Mrs. Q. A. Shaw McKean, Boston
- 10. Woman's Head (1918)**  
Stone, 14½ inches high  
Collection Dr. James Sibley Watson, Jr., Rochester, New York



11. **Relief—Woman (1918)**  
Marble,  $28\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise, New York
12. **Seated Woman (c. 1918-1925)**  
Bronze,  $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches high  
Collection Mme. Helena Rubinstein, New York
- \*13. **Woman on Sofa (1918-1923)**  
Bronze (1928),  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches high  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
14. **Woman's Head (1919)**  
Stone,  $14\frac{3}{4}$  inches high  
Collection Mrs. W. Murray Crane, New York
- \*15. **Woman's Head (1920)**  
Marble,  $20\frac{1}{4}$  inches high  
Collection Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio
- \*16. **Standing Woman (1912-1927)**  
Bronze, 68 inches high  
Collection John A. Dunbar, New York
17. **Torso (Fragment of No. 16)**  
Plaster (1934), 47 inches high  
Collection the Artist
18. **Woman's Head (1922)**  
Alabaster,  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches high  
Collection Arthur F. Egner, South Orange, New Jersey
- \*19. **Woman Walking (1922)**  
Bronze, 19 inches high  
Private Collection, New York
20. **Mask (1922)**  
Alabaster, 7 inches high  
Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise, New York
21. **Mask (1922-1925)**  
Bronze nickel-plated,  $15\frac{1}{2}$  inches high  
Collection Arthur F. Egner, South Orange, New Jersey
22. **Portrait of E. E. Cummings (1924)**  
Bronze, 15 inches high  
Collection Mrs. Edward Cummings, New York

- 23. Portrait of Edward Nagle (1924)**  
Bronze, 14 inches high  
Collection Edward Nagle, Charlottesville, Virginia
- \*24. Portrait Head (1924)**  
Plaster, 13½ inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*25. Standing Woman (1924)**  
Bronze, 15¼ inches high  
Collection Mrs. O'Donnell Iselin, New York
- \*26. Woman in Chair (c. 1924)**  
Bronze, 12⅞ inches high  
Collection Weyhe Gallery, New York
- 27. Floating Figure (c. 1924)**  
Bronze, 13¼ inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*28. Standing Woman (1926)**  
Bronze, 15¾ inches high  
Collection Frank K. M. Rehn, New York
- 29. Woman (1926)**  
Bronze, 11⅝ inches high  
Collection Paul Rosenfeld, New York
- 30. Relief—Woman (1927)**  
Alabaster, 13⅝ x 7⅜ inches  
Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise, New York
- \*31. Floating Woman (1927)**  
Bronze (1935), 53 inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*32. Portrait of John Marin (1927)**  
Bronze, 11 inches high  
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Anonymous Gift
- \*33. Head (1928)**  
Bronze nickel-plated, 13¼ inches high  
Collection Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



- 34. Woman (1928)**  
Bronze, 17 inches high  
Collection Mrs. Edward A. Norman, New York
- \*35. Woman (1928-1931)**  
Plaster, 17¾ inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*36. Reclining Woman (1928-1931)**  
Plaster, 13½ inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*37. Torso (1928)**  
Bronze, 8¾ inches high  
Collection Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., New York
- 37A. Hand of a Pianist (1928)**  
Plaster, 21 inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*38. Woman (Acrobat) (1929)**  
Bronze, 20 inches high  
Illustrated with No. 57  
Collection M. R. Werner, New York
- \*39. Standing Woman (1930-1933)**  
Bronze, 8 feet high  
Lent through Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Connecticut
- \*40. Torso (Fragment of No. 39)**  
Plaster (1934), 45 inches high  
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Gift of Edward M. M. Warburg
- \*41. Man (1930-1935)**  
Plaster, 8½ feet high  
Collection the Artist
- 42. Torso (1930)**  
Bronze (1935), 9 inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*43. Torso (1930)**  
Bronze, 12 inches high  
Collection the Artist

- \*44. **Portrait of Timothy Seldes (1931)**  
Alabaster, 10 inches high  
Collection Gilbert Seldes, New York
- \*45. **Portrait of Carl Van Vechten (1931)**  
Bronze, 16 inches high  
Collection Carl Van Vechten, New York
- 46. **Statuette (1932)**  
Bronze, 6¼ inches high  
Collection Mrs. Philip Owen, New Haven, Connecticut
- \*47. **Portrait Head (1932)**  
Bronze, 15½ inches high  
Private Collection, New York
- 48. **Portrait of Evelyn Gerstein (1932-1935)**  
Bronze, 15½ inches high  
Collection Gustave B. Garfield, New York
- \*49. **Portrait Bust (1933)**  
Marble, 32 inches high  
Collection George L. K. Morris, New York
- \*50. **Boy with a Tennis Racket (1933)**  
Bronze, 23 inches high  
Collection George L. K. Morris, New York
- \*51. **Portrait Figure (1933)**  
Bronze, 20¾ inches high  
Private Collection
- \*52. **Portrait of Edward M. M. Warburg (1933)**  
Alabaster, 14½ inches high  
Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York
- 53. **Breasts (1933)**  
Marble, 7¾ inches high  
Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York
- \*54. **Knees (1933)**  
Marble, 19 inches high  
Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York



- 55. Torso (1933)**  
Marble, 14 inches high  
Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York
- 56. Woman (1933)**  
Bronze, 13 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches high  
Collection Lyon Mearson, New York
- \*57. Woman (1934)**  
Bronze, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches high  
Collection the Artist
- \*58. Relief—Woman (1934)**  
Plaster, 87 x 50 inches  
Collection the Artist
- \*59. Portrait Figure (1934-1935)**  
Bronze, 45 inches high  
Private Collection, New York
- \*60. La Montagne (1934-1935)**  
Cement, 4 feet high, 9 feet long  
Collection George L. K. Morris, New York

## **DRAWINGS**

### **Crayon Drawings**

- \*61.** Collection the Artist  
**62.** Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise, New York  
**63.** Private Collection, New York

### **Ink Drawing**

- 64.** Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise, New York

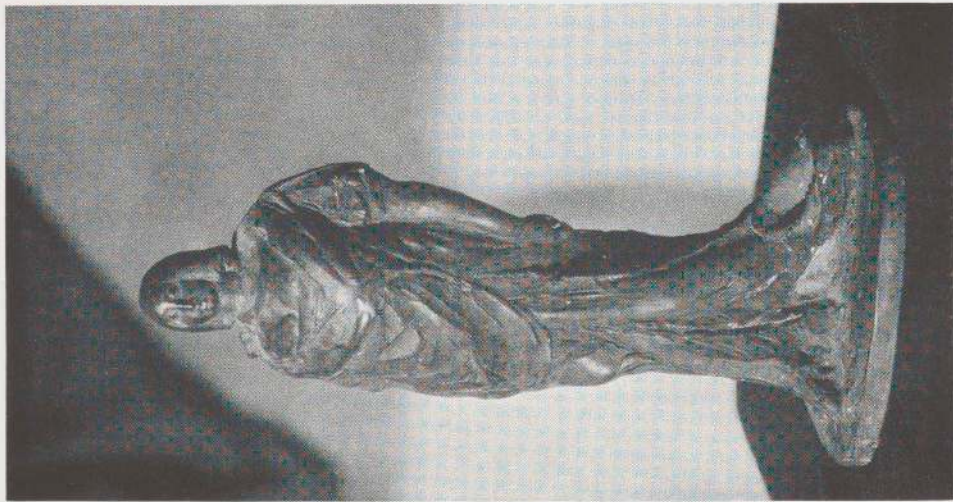
### **Pencil Drawings**

- \*65-74.** Collection Edward M. M. Warburg, New York  
**75.** Collection Lyon Mearson, New York  
**76-77.** Private Collection, New York  
**\*78-84.** Collection the Artist  
**85-86.** Collection Mrs. Gaston Lachaise, New York  
**87.** Private Collection, New York

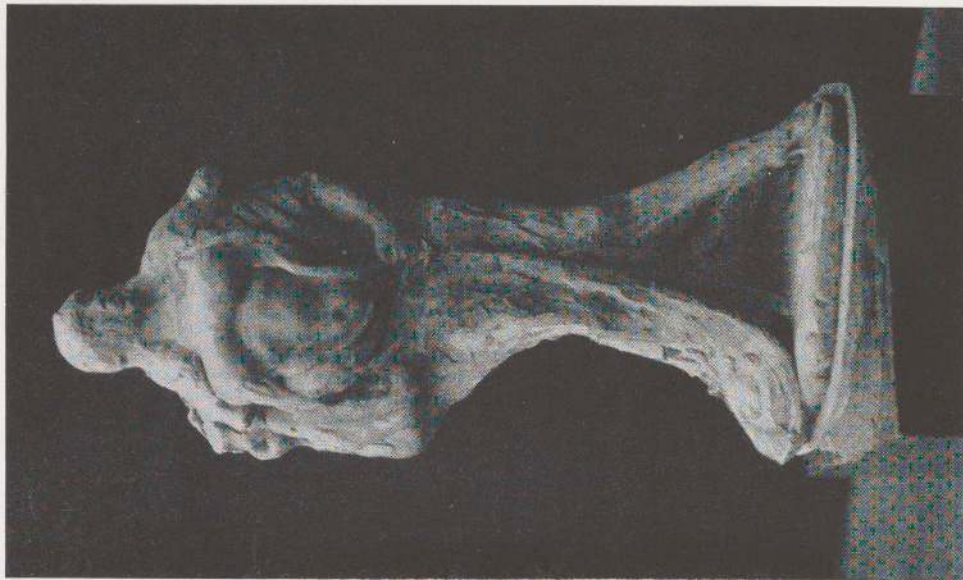
## PLATES

The plates bear the same numbers as the items of the catalog. Not all the items are illustrated.



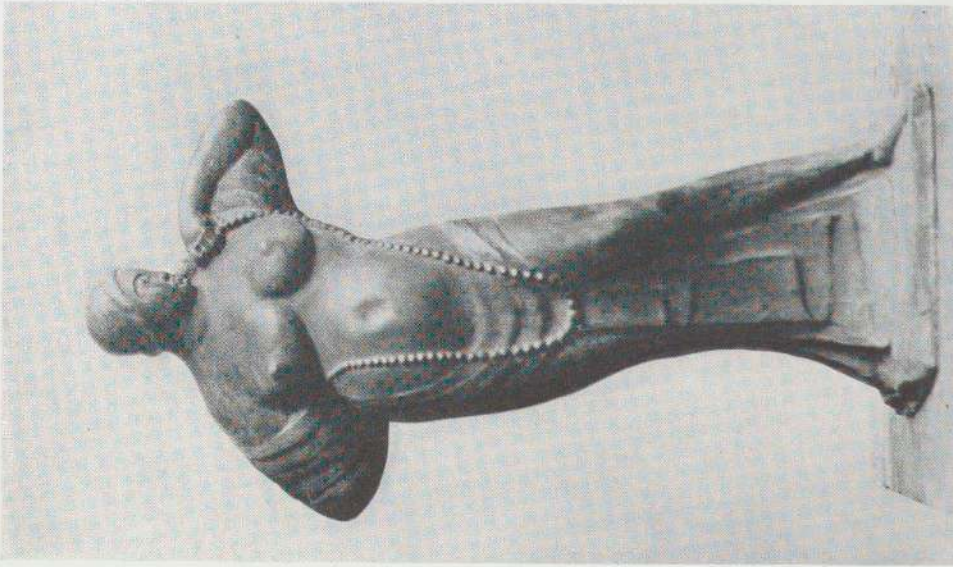


1. Woman (1910)

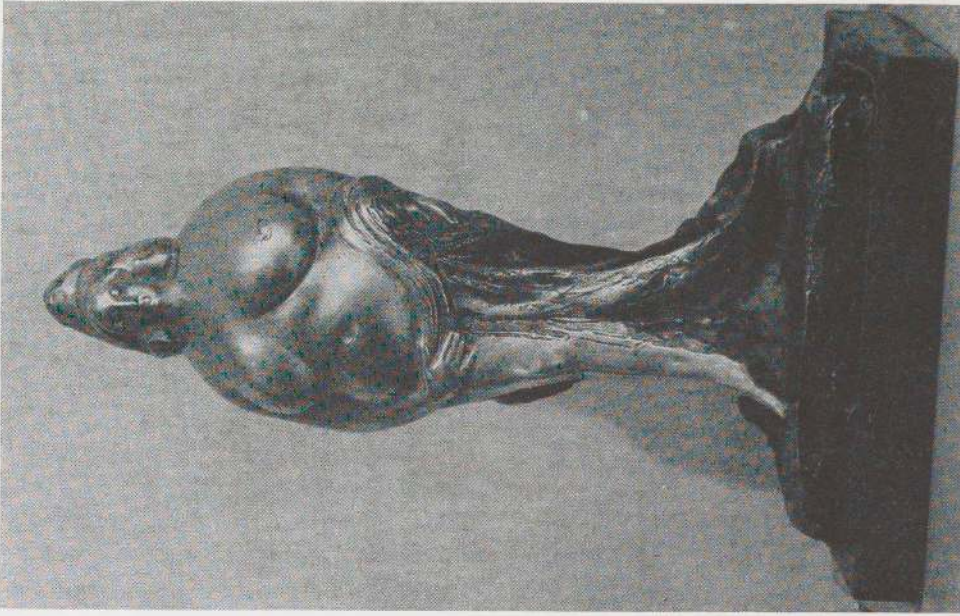


3. Woman (1912)





7. Woman (1913-1918)



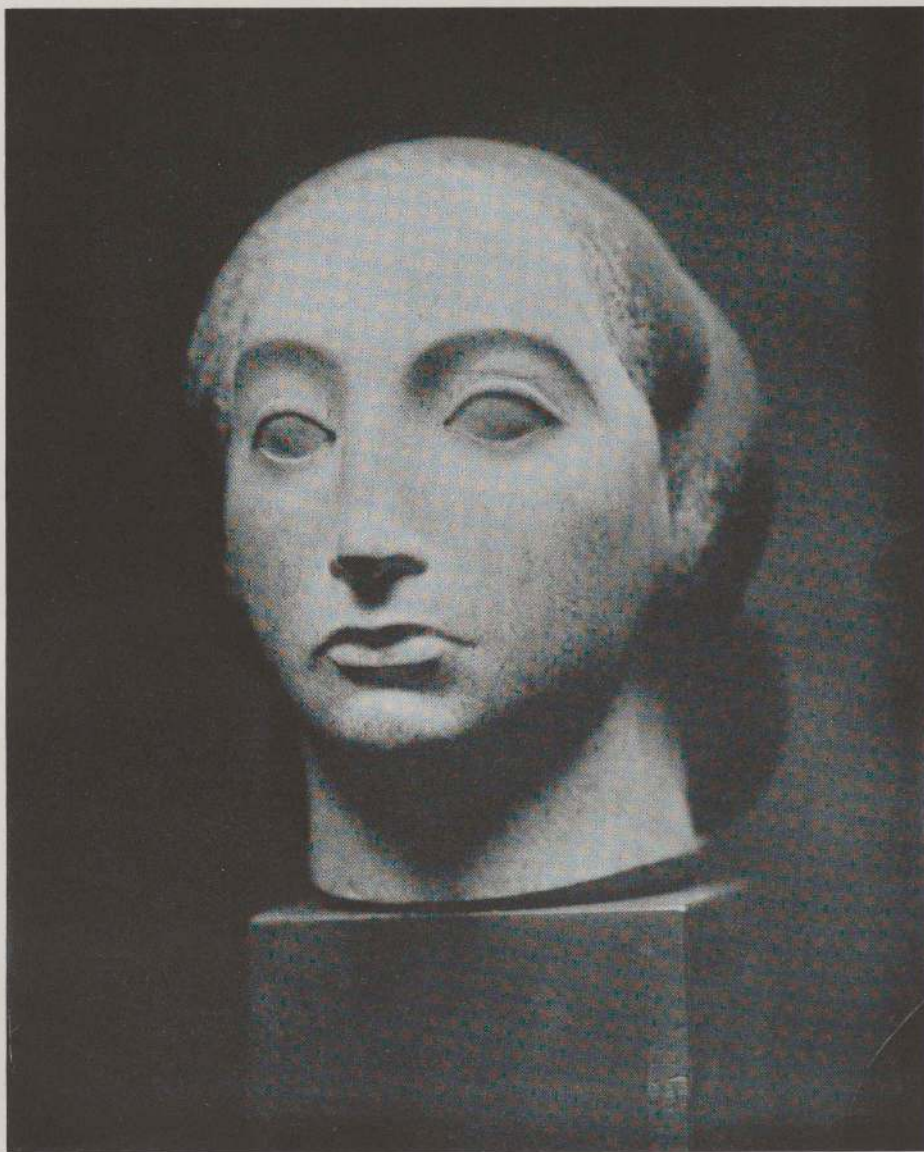
8. Woman (c. 1918)





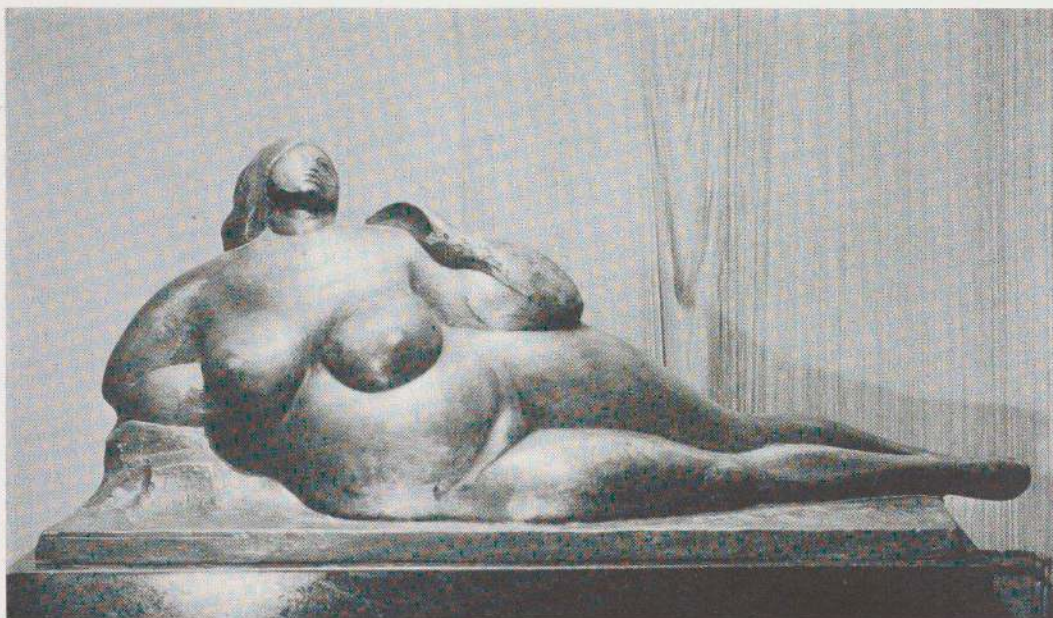
15. Woman's Head (1920)



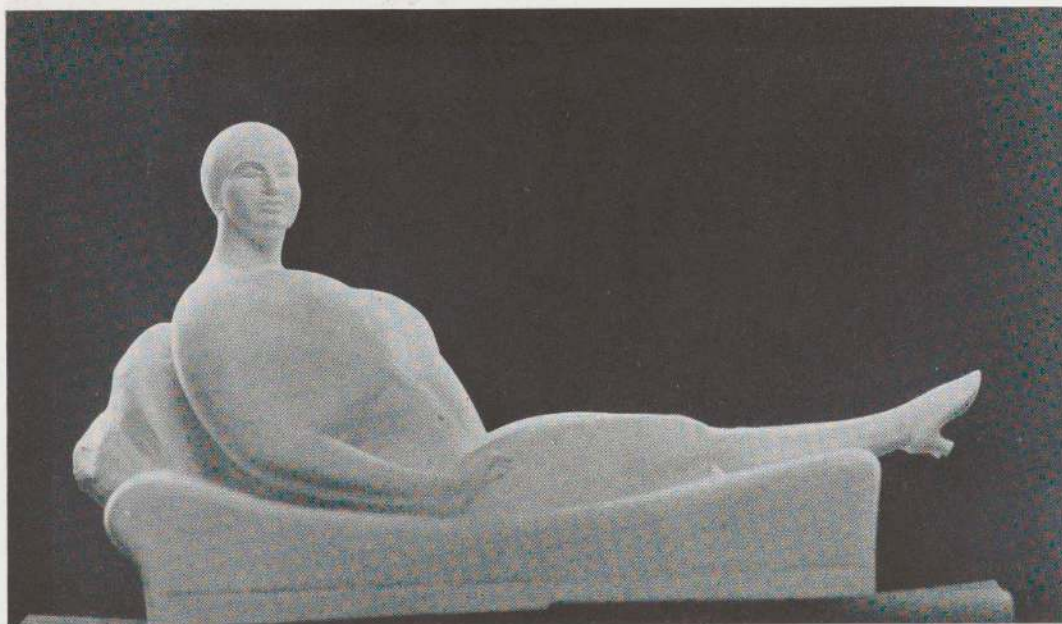


9. Woman's Head (1918)





6. La Montagne (c. 1913)



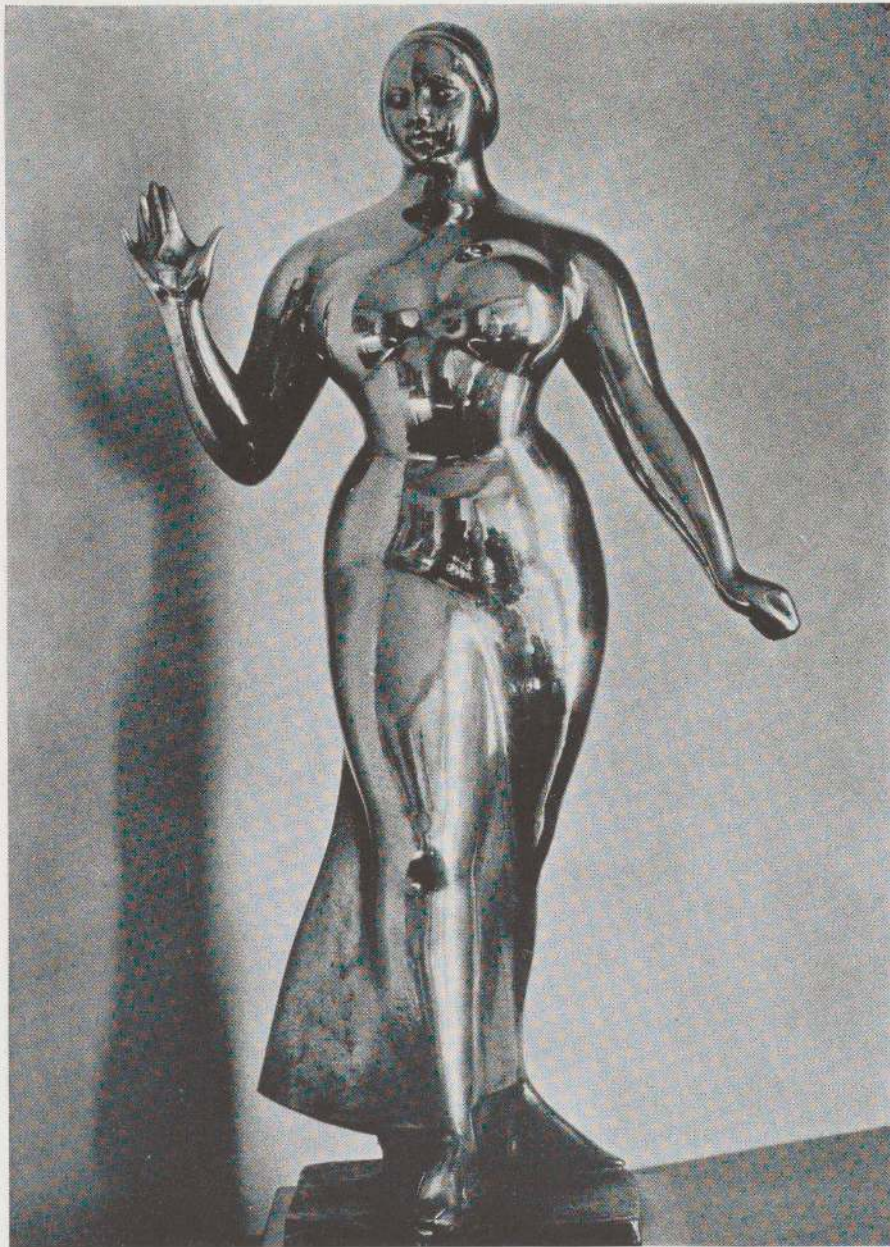
13. Woman on Sofa (1918-1923)





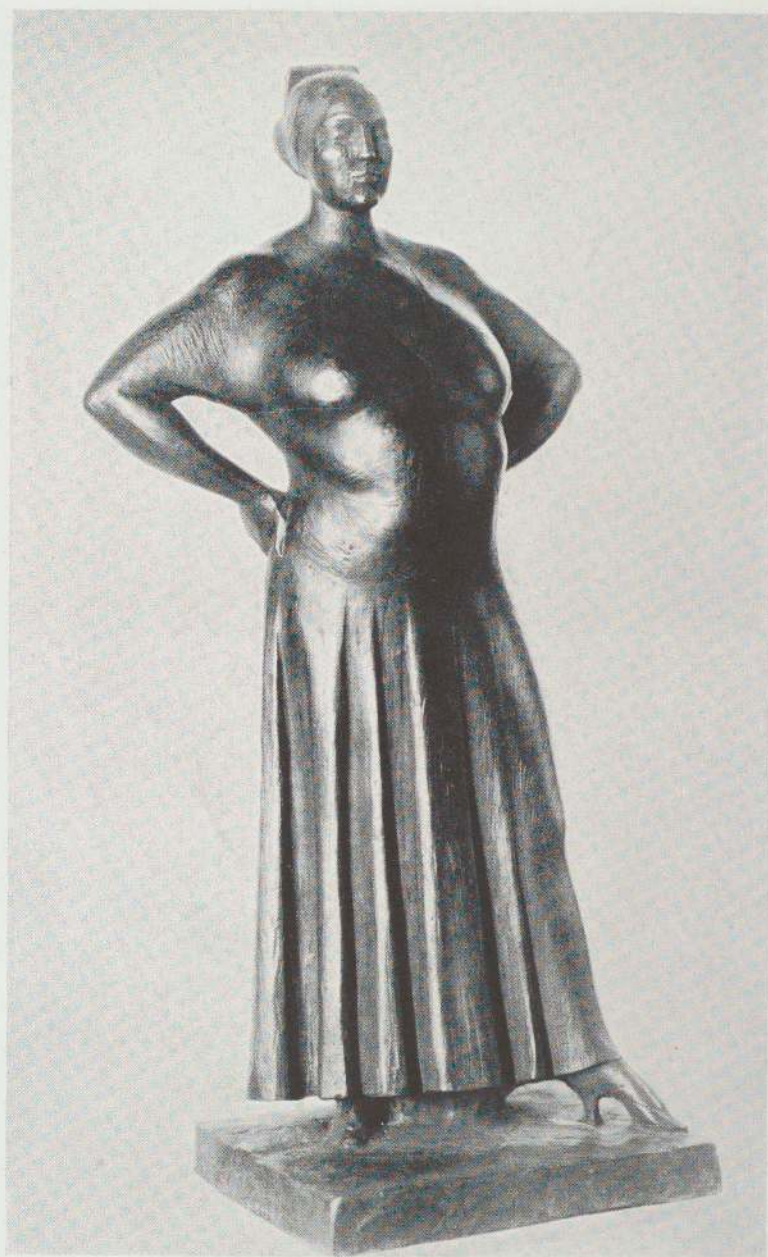
16. Standing Woman (1912-1927)





19. Woman Walking (1922)





28. Standing Woman (1926)





26. Woman in Chair (c. 1924)



25. Standing Woman (1924)



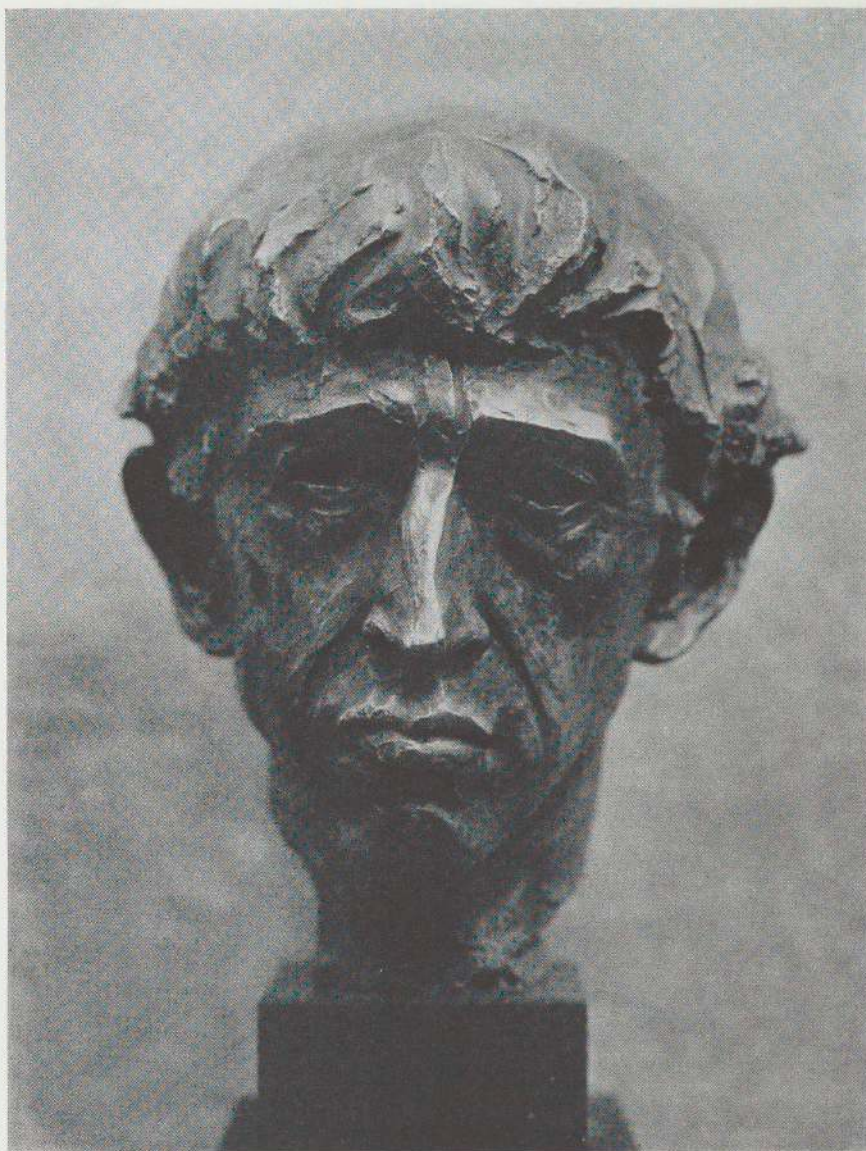
31. Floating Woman (1927)





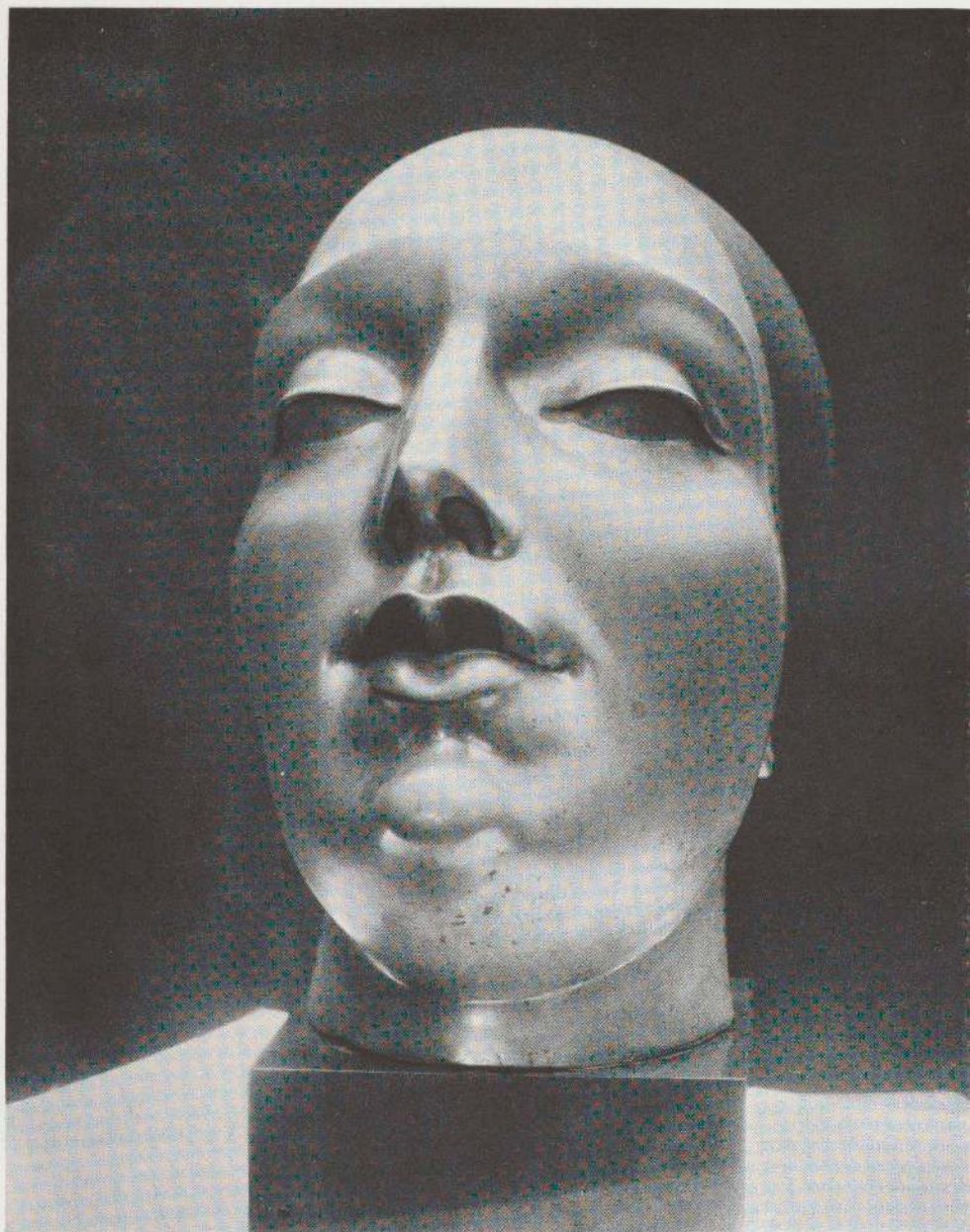
24. Portrait Head (1924)





**32. Portrait of John Marin (1927)**

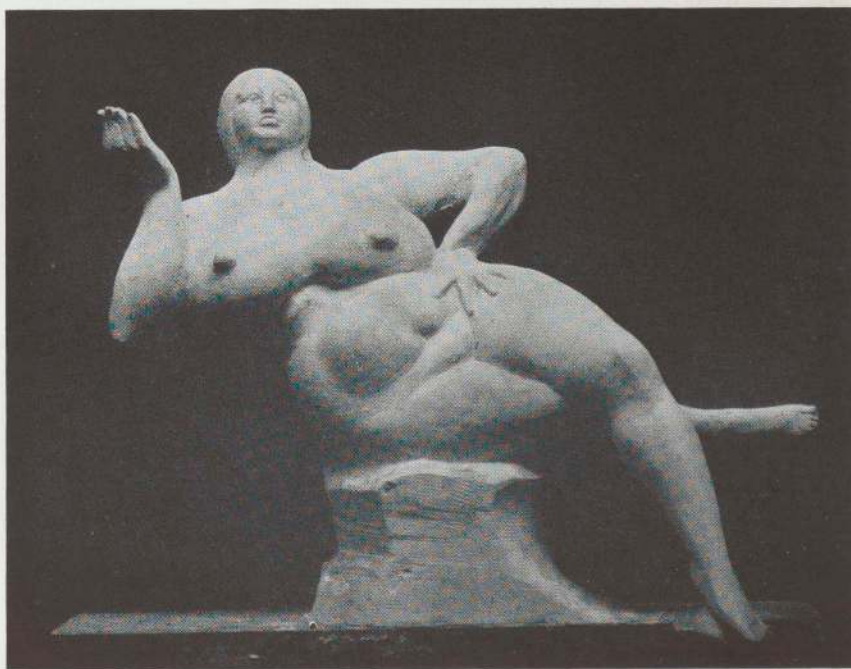
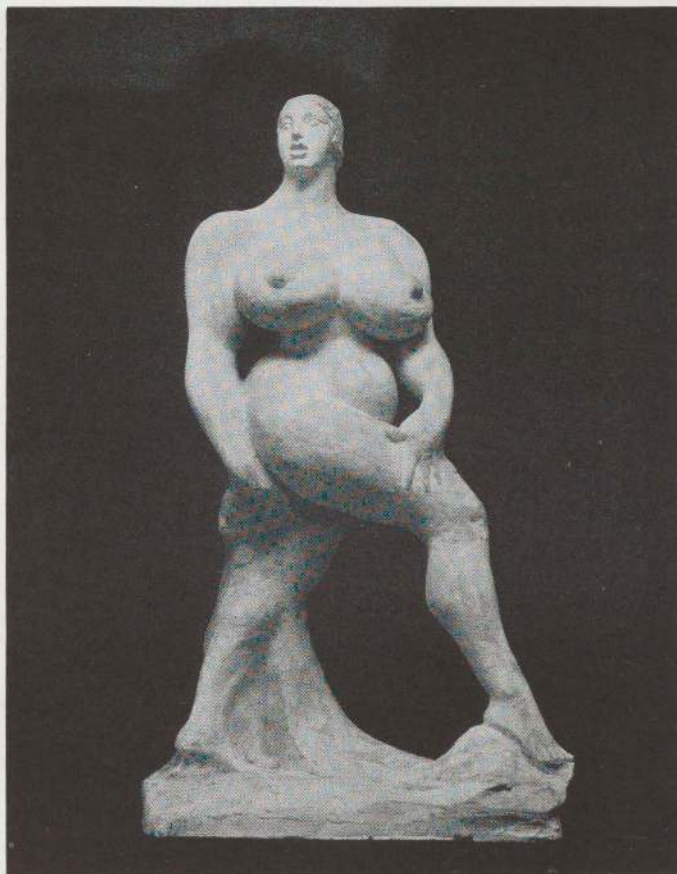




33. Head (1928)

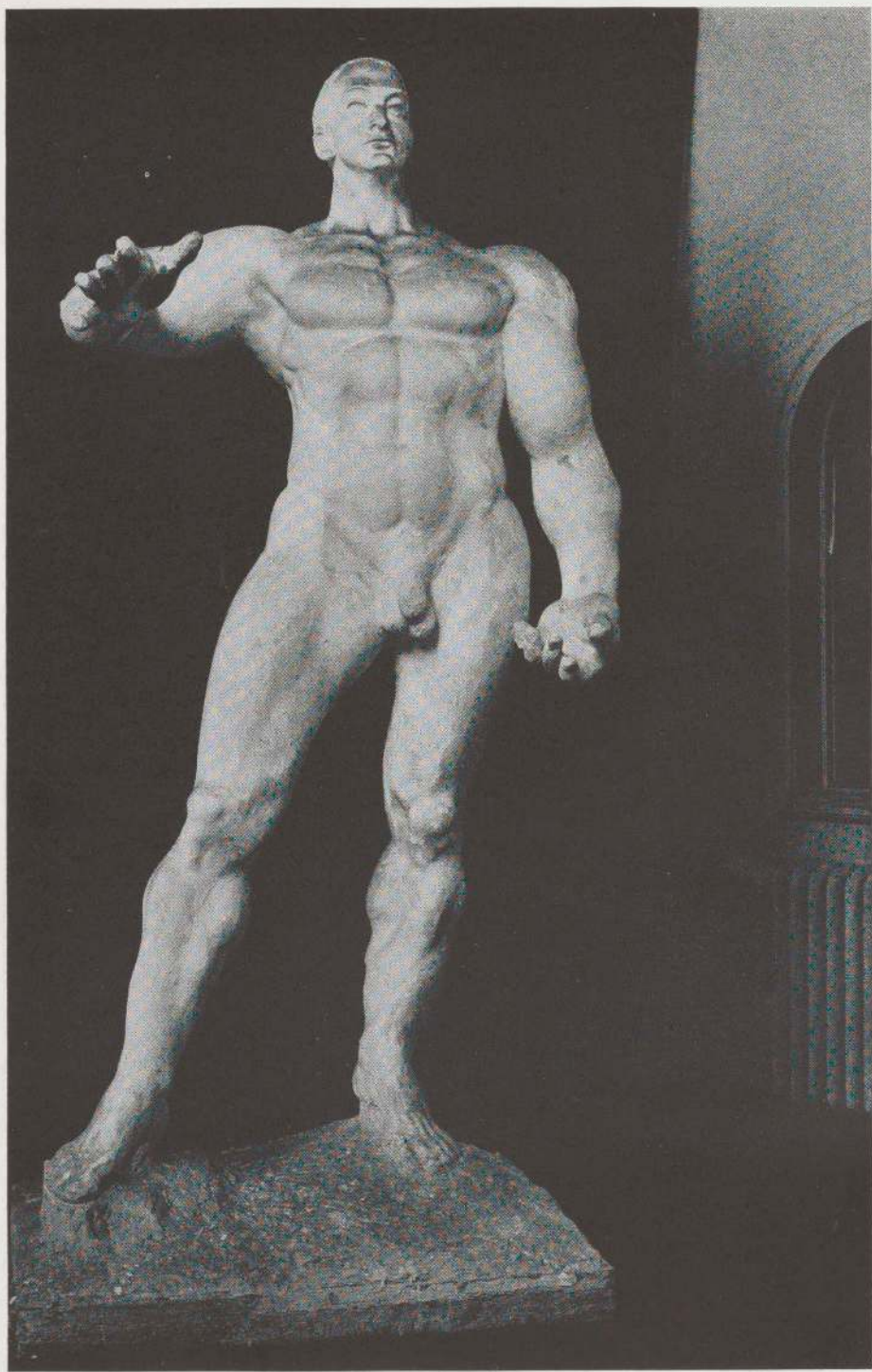


35. Woman (1928-1931)



36. Reclining Woman (1928-1931)





41. Man (1930-1935)





39. Standing Woman (1930-1933)

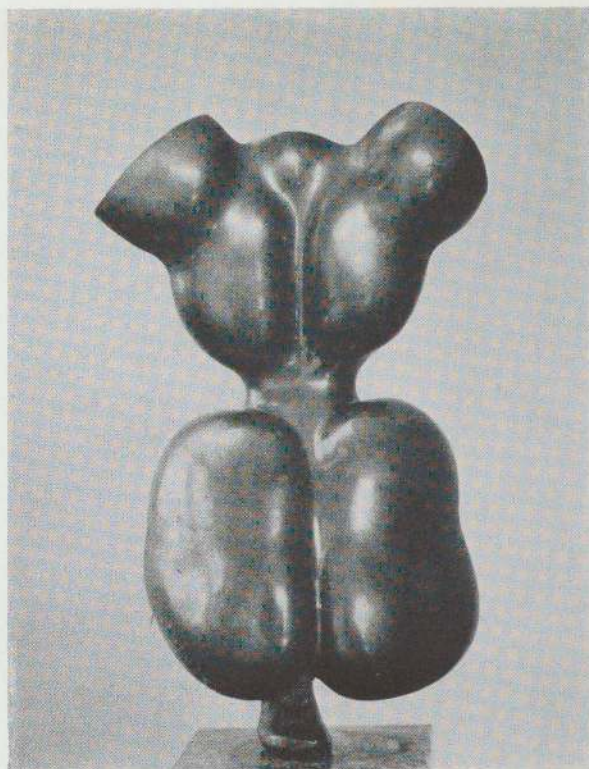




40. Torso (1934)



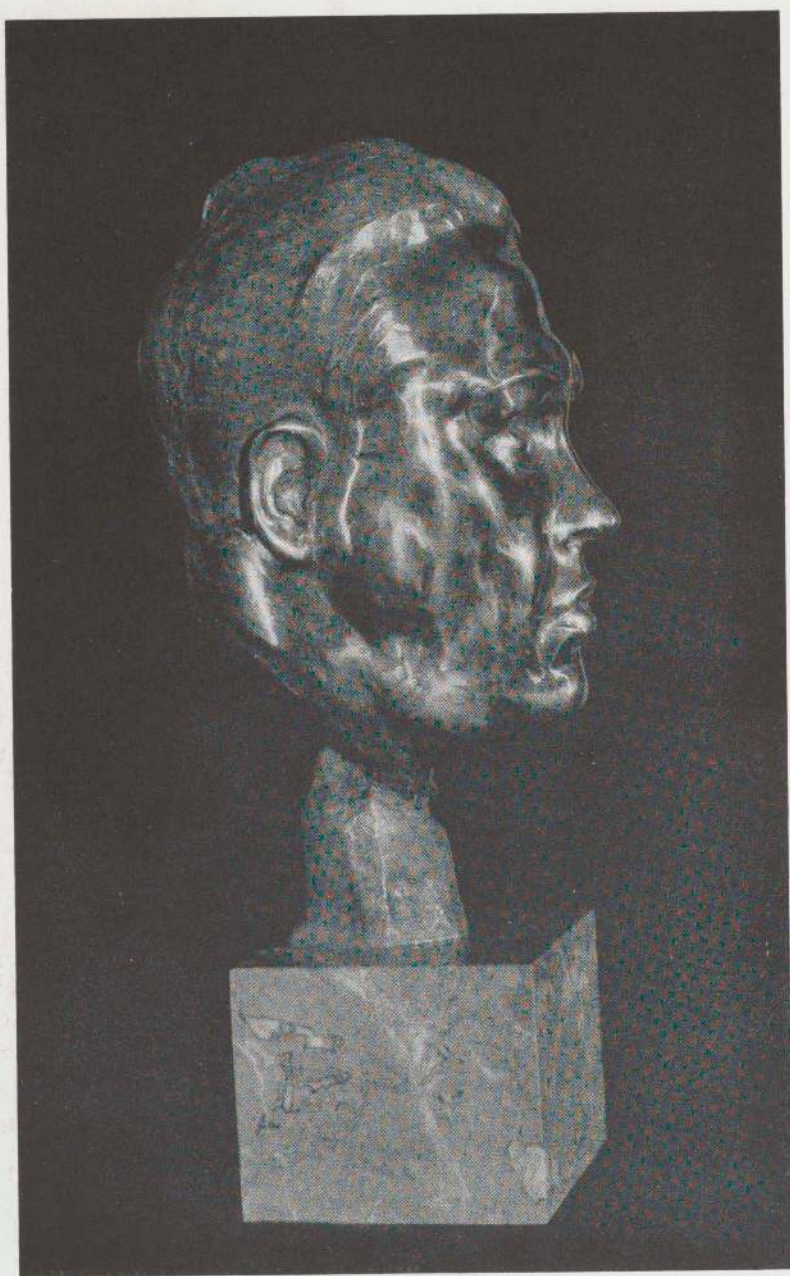
43. Torso (1930)



37. Torso (1928)





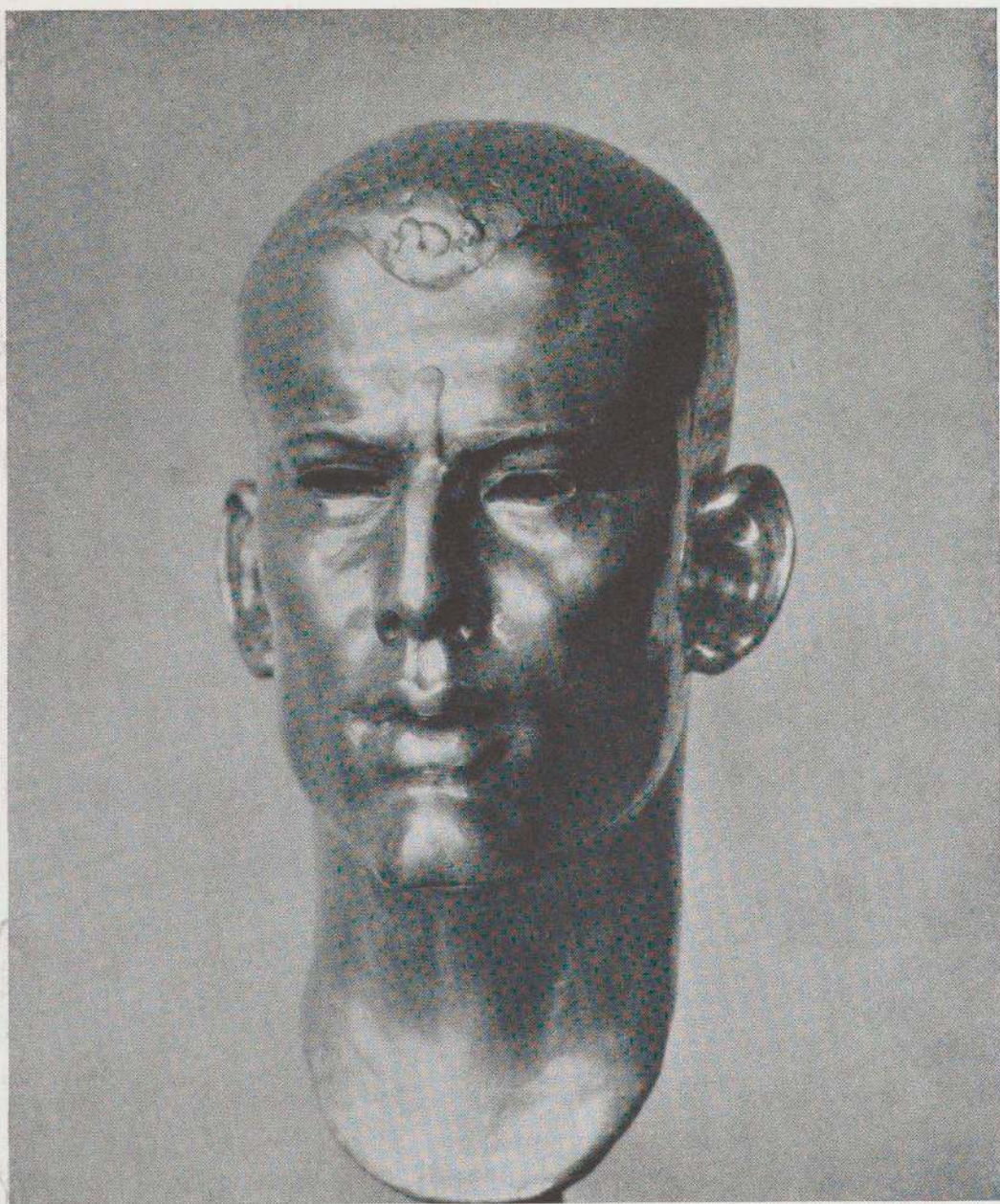


45. Portrait of Carl Van Vechten (1931)



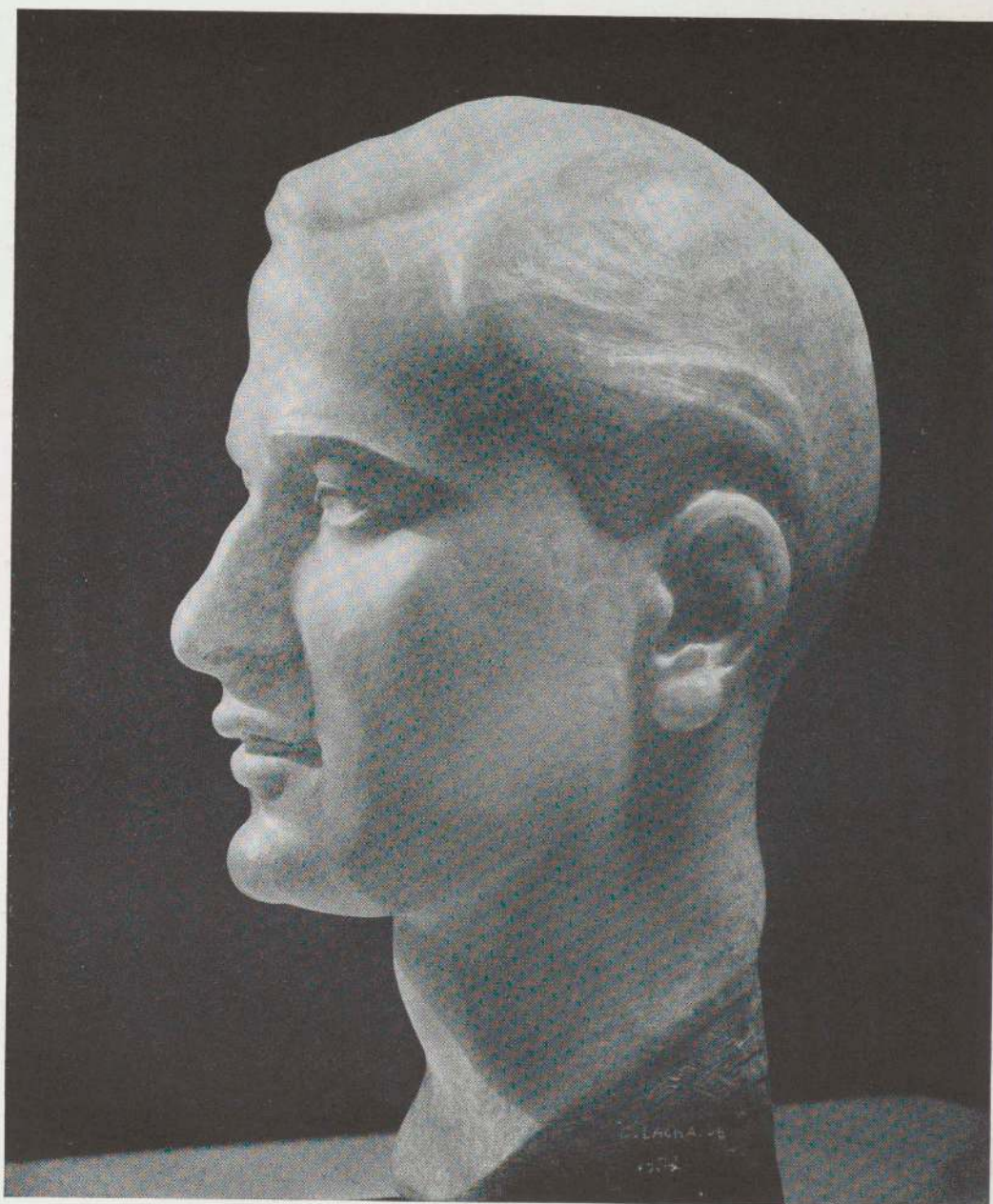
44. Portrait of Timothy Seldes (1931)





47. Portrait Head (1932)





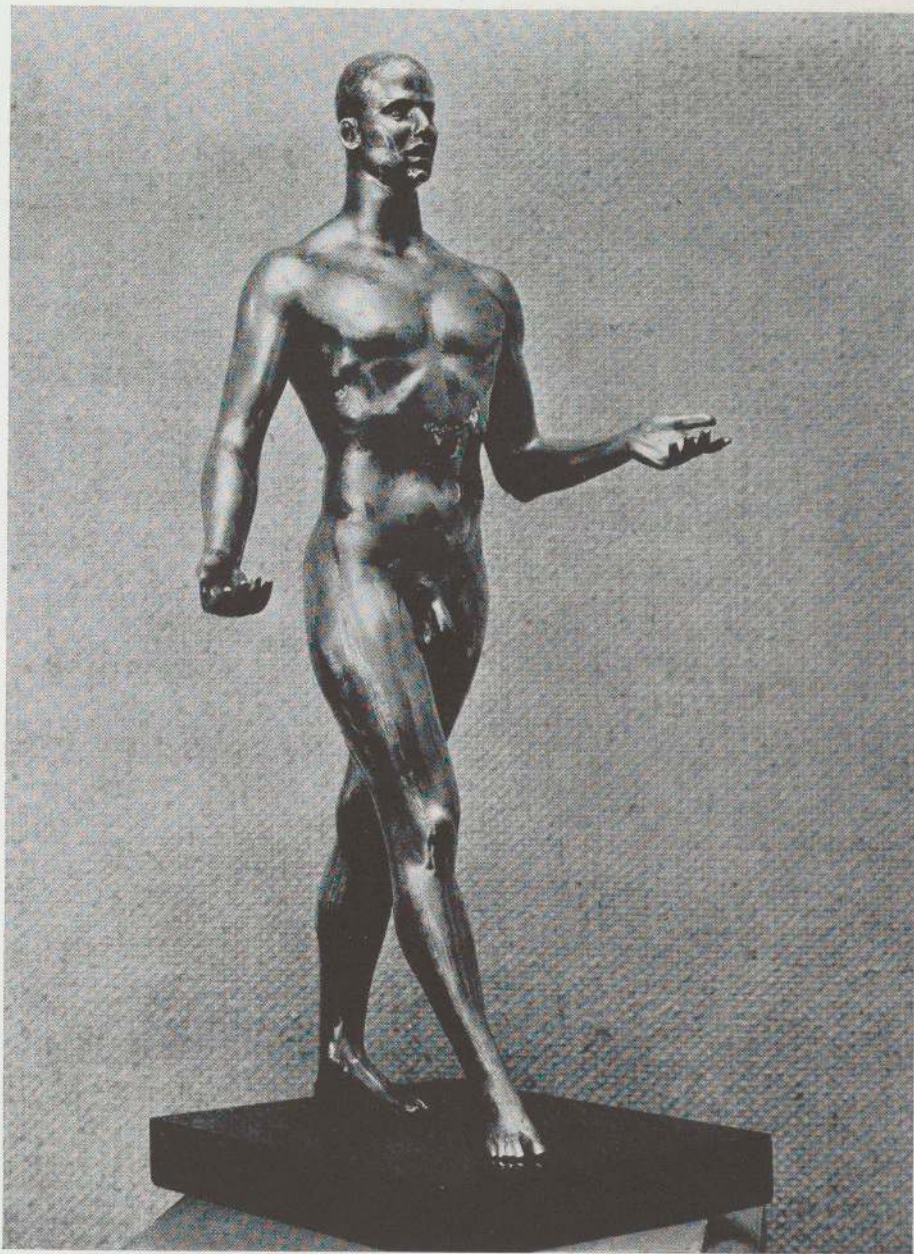
52. Portrait of Edward M. M. Warburg (1933)





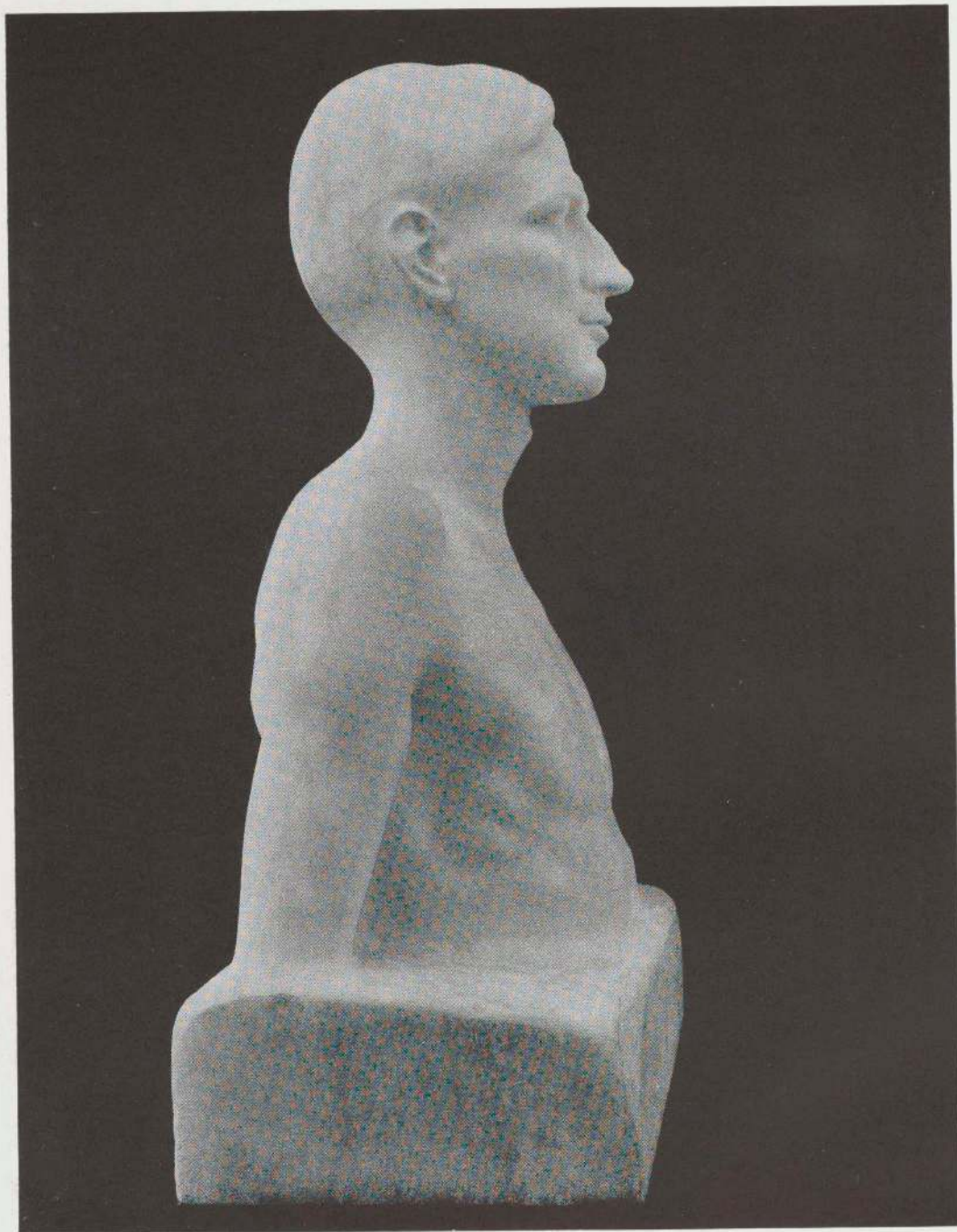
50. Boy with a Tennis Racket (1933)





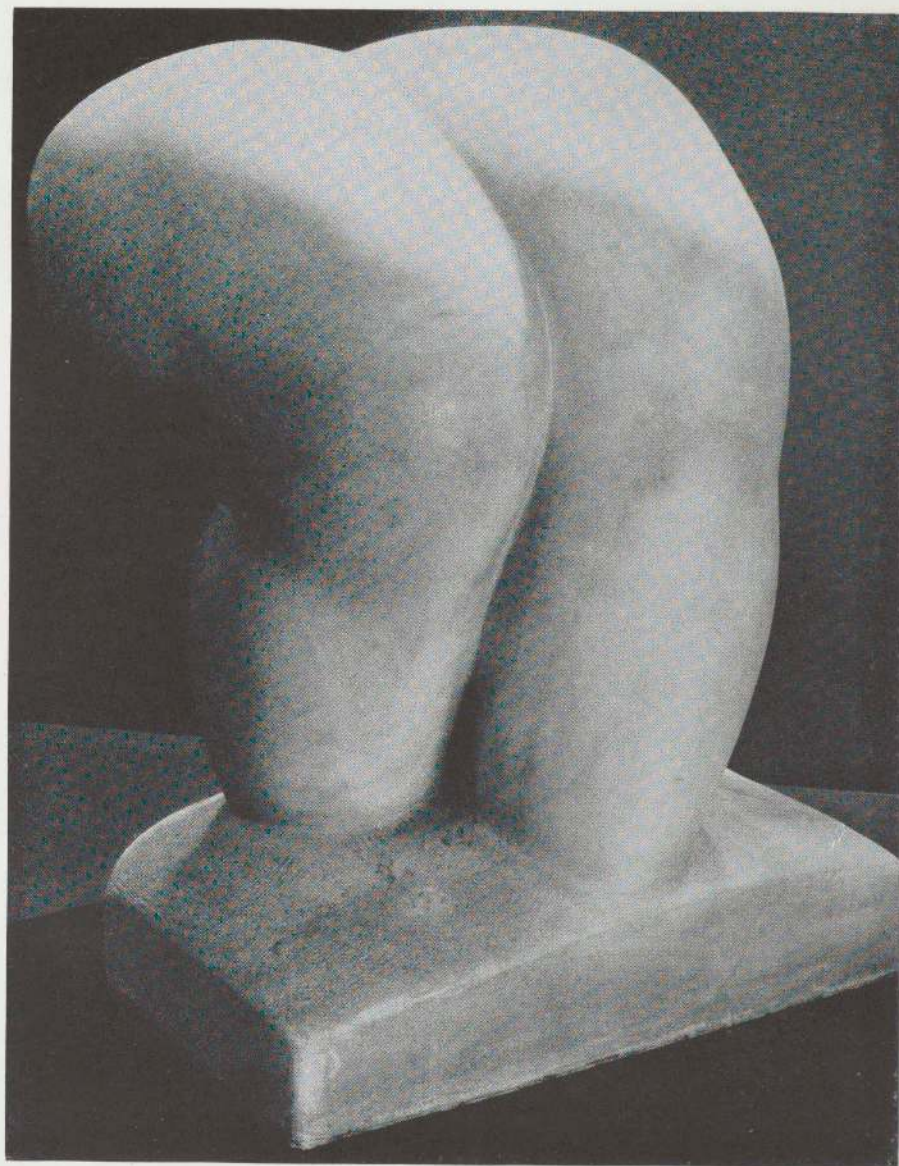
51. Portrait Figure (1933)





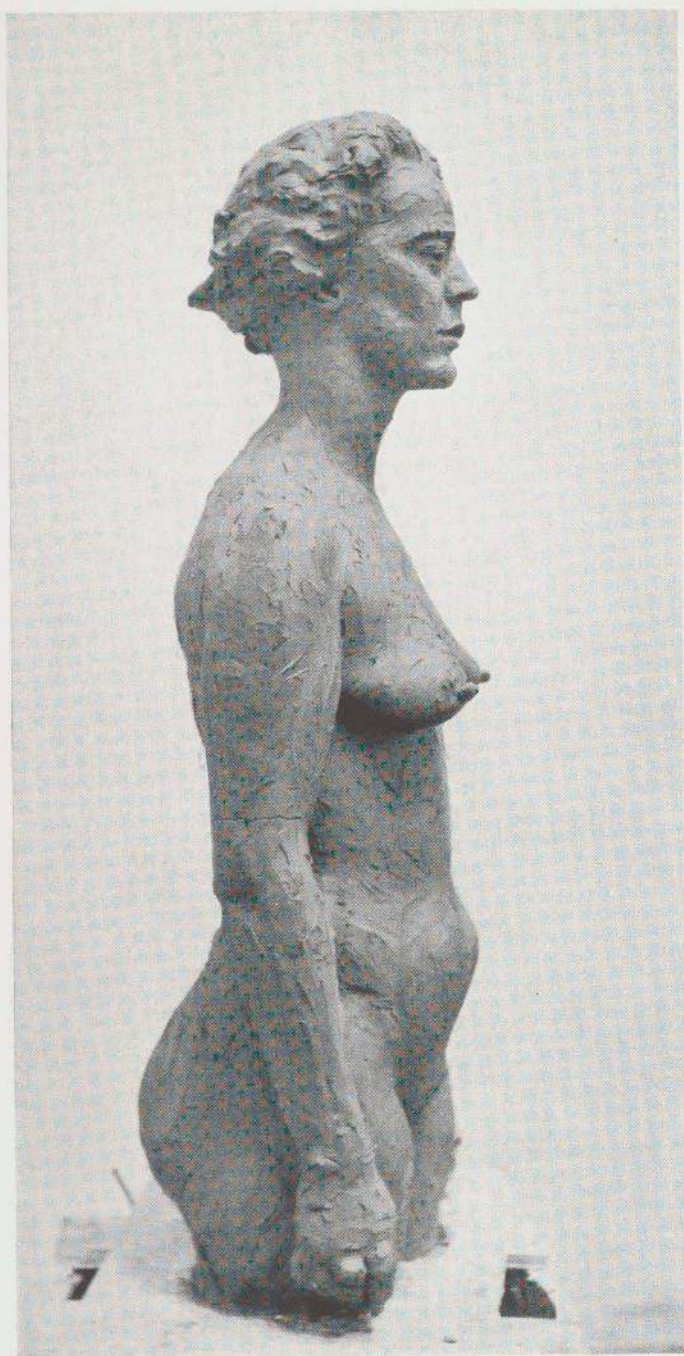
49. Portrait Bust (1933)





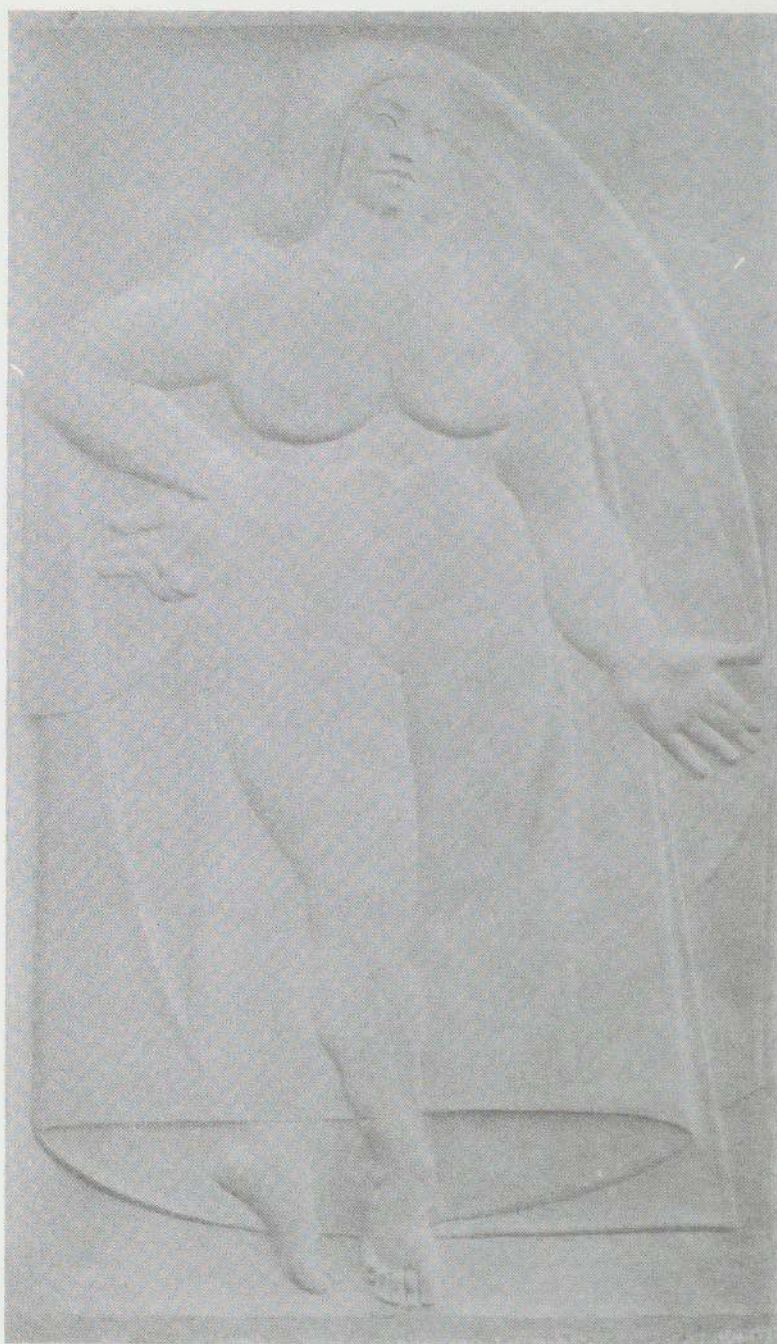
54. Knees (1933)





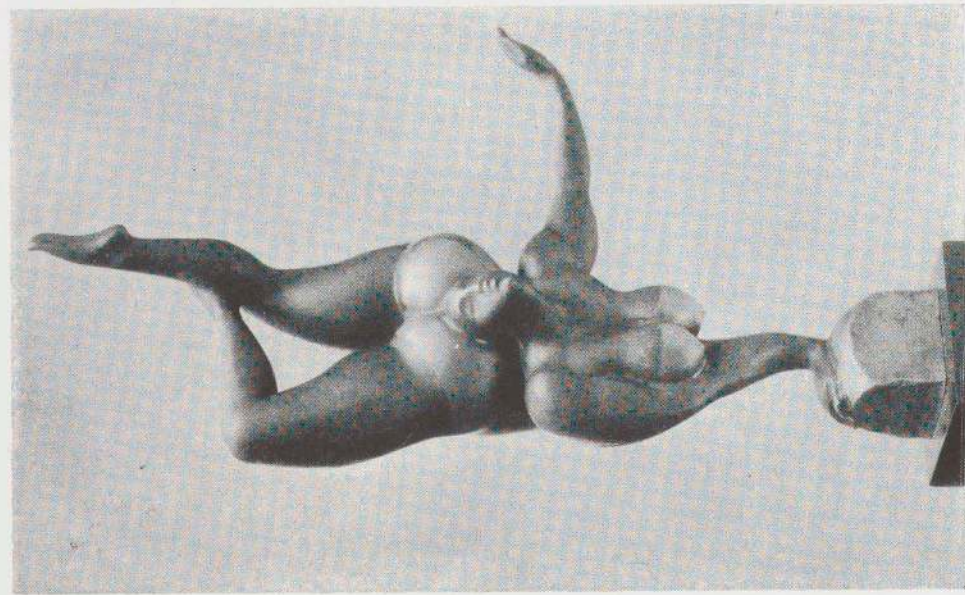
59. Portrait Figure (1934-1935)



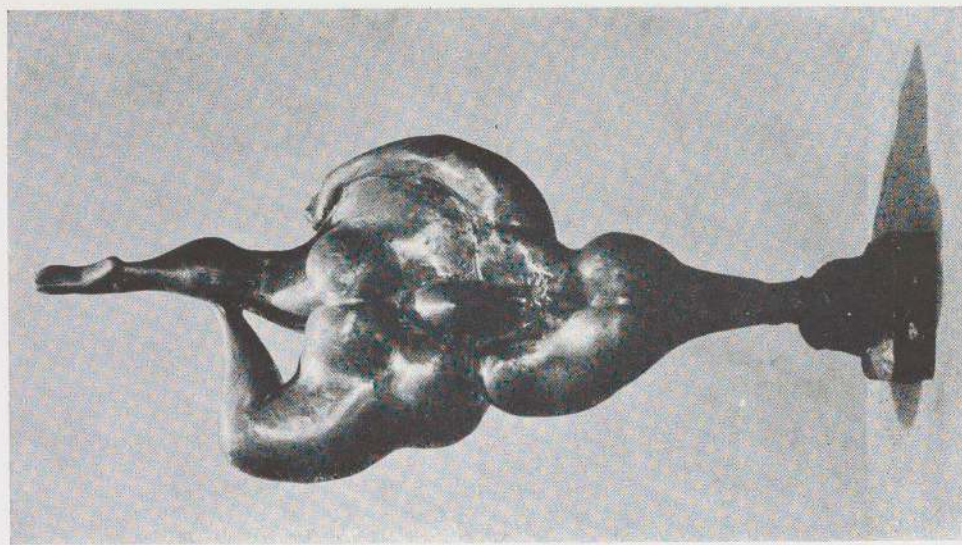


58. Relief—Woman (1934)





38. Woman (Acrobat) (1929)



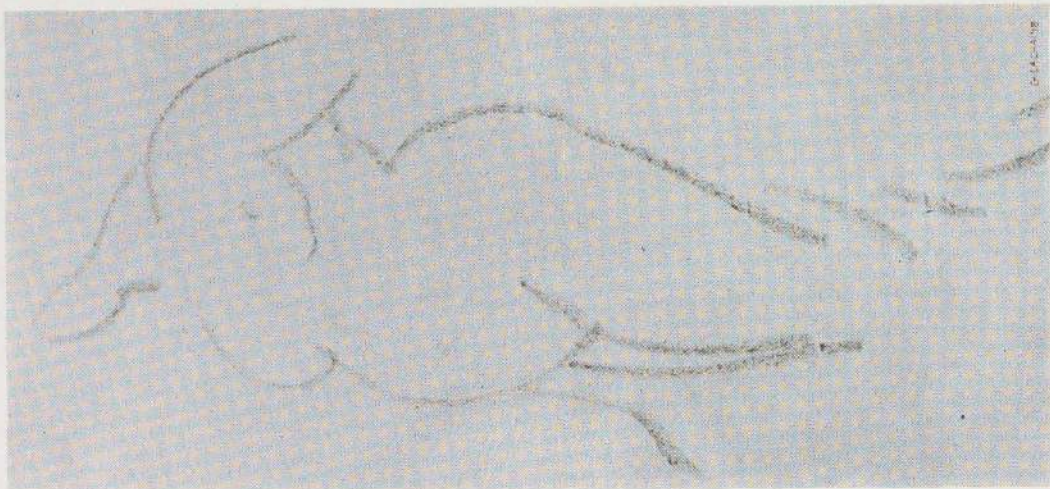
57. Woman (1934)



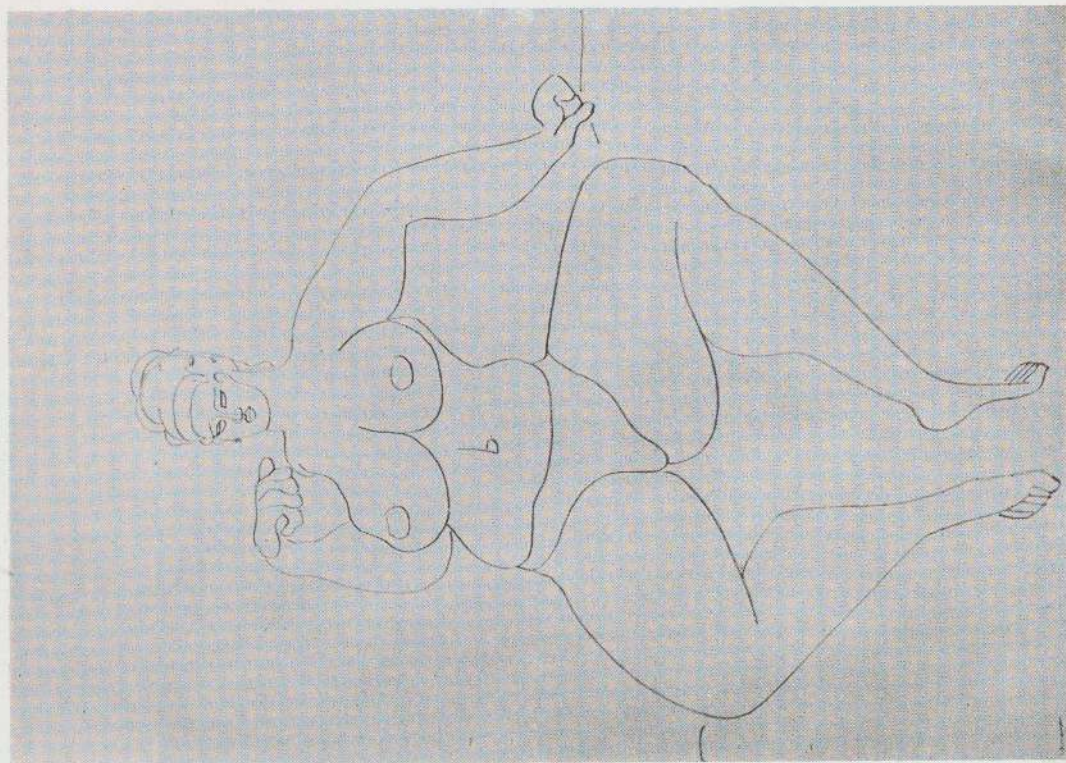


60. La Montagne (1934-1935)



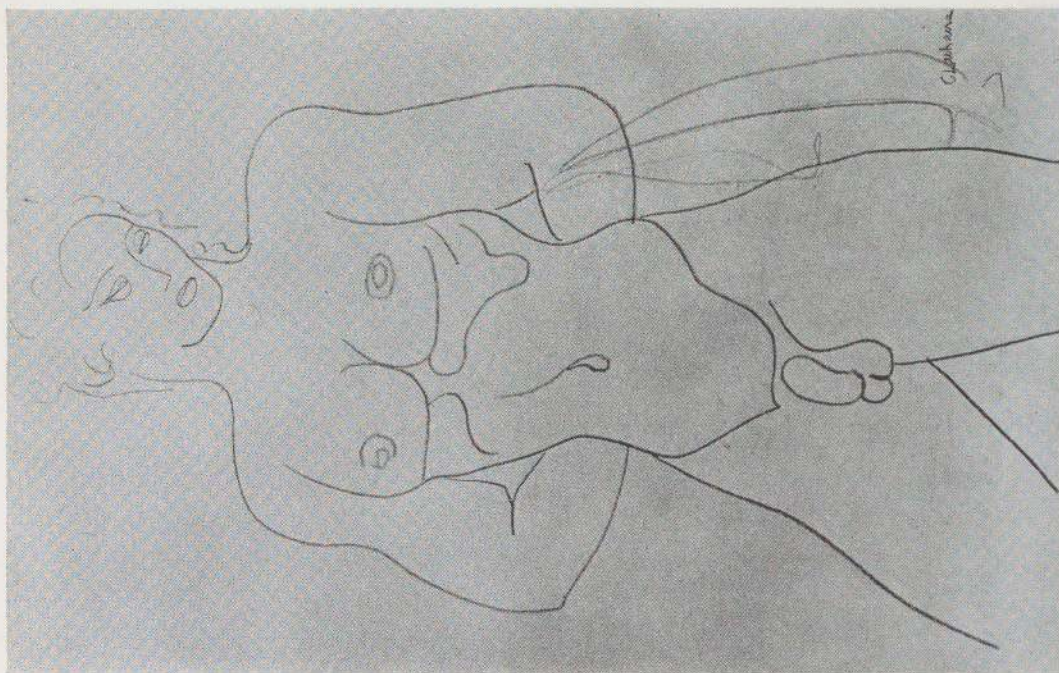


61. Crayon Drawing

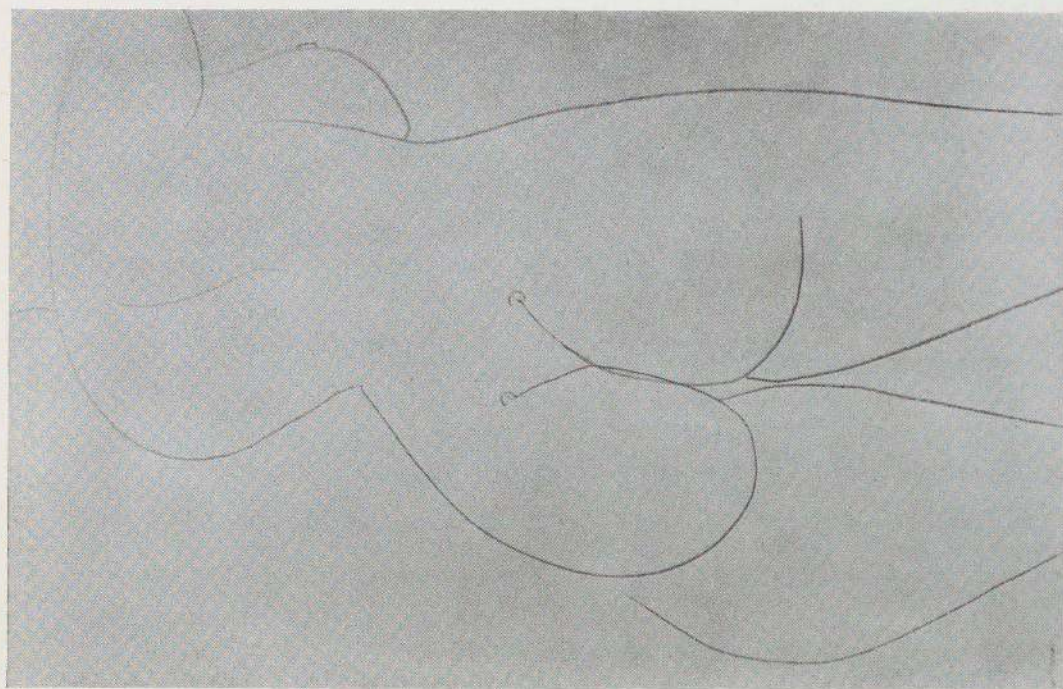


74. Pencil Drawing





65. Pencil Drawing



78. Pencil Drawing



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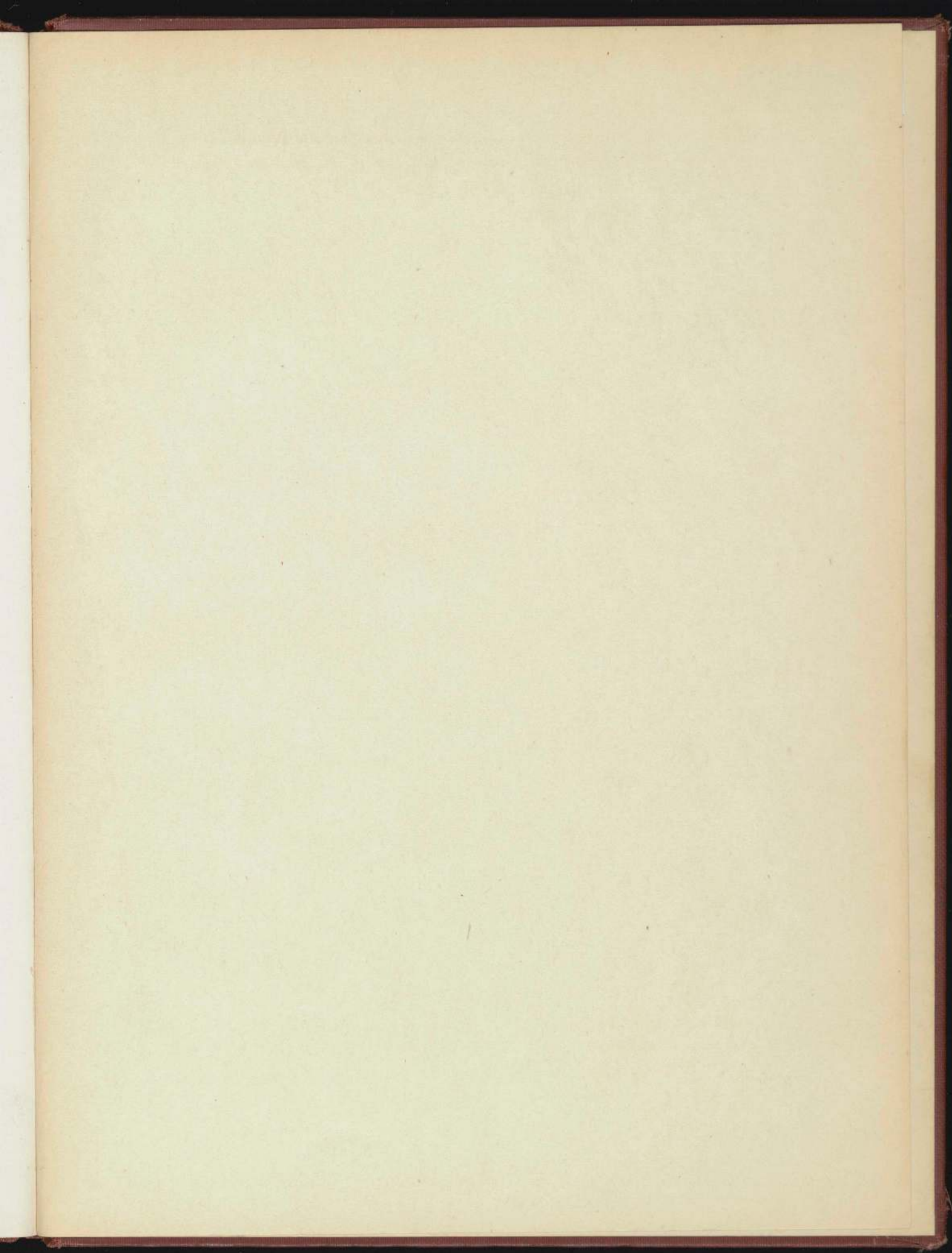
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