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THE YOUNG WILLEM DE KOONING:

EARLY LIFE, TRAINING AND WORK, 1904-1926

by

JUDITH L. WOLFE

VOLUME I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York

1996

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My foremost gratitude is extended to Willem de Kooning. His candor and insight during many conversations and the paintings, drawings, and sculptures of his long career have provided inspiration for years of research and thought. It was my position as curator at the Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton, New York that afforded the occasion to meet the artist and his family, friends, and colleagues, whom I interviewed in preparation for the 1981 exhibition of his work at the museum.

Once my study was under way as a dissertation, I received guidance from Rose Carol Washton Long and Mona Hadler at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Professor Long's buoyant optimism has shepherded my progress over the years; Professor Hadler's counsel has pointed out directions for future study. Milton W. Brown, Sidney Geist, and Francis V. O'Connor have given important timely advice and assistance. I am grateful as well to Marlene Park and Stephen Polcari for their suggestions after reading a draft of this study.

From the early 1980s until her death in 1989, Elaine de Kooning acted as "fairy godmother" to this study, providing names and addresses of family members in the Netherlands and of friends from the 1930s and 1940s, information from her

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own experience, access to ongoing correspondence regarding de Kooning's early work, and even employment to keep daily life moving apace with research.

When I began my study, the subject of de Kooning's early years was to have extended at least through the 1930s, but the world across the ocean proved an engrossing focus in itself. I have been extremely fortunate in receiving advice and information over the years from two major scholars of Dutch art, Joop M. Joosten and Carel Blotkamp. I am very grateful to each of them; this study would not have been possible without the avenues that they opened to me.

Harry Mariën shared his knowledge of genealogical research and compiled a group of documents that extended beyond the possibilities of my own entrée to archival materials. His friendship and continuing assistance have meant a great deal over the years.

Leo de Kooning, half-nephew of the artist, and his wife Jos have also become valued friends. Beginning with translation, and continuing with assistance in understanding Dutch divorce law of the early twentieth century, they have contributed substantively to this study.

Eric and Lyotta De Prins have taken keen interest in propelling my work forward and have given many kinds of assistance, large and small, always with generous hospitality. Renée Lemmens De Prins has kindly made her knowledge and family archives and collection available to

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me.

Rotterdam artist Klaas van de Erve, who studied at the Rotterdam Academy from 1928 to 1936, kindly corresponded with me from 1984 until his death in 1992; he furthered my research in the Netherlands by enthusiastic work on his own as well as by answering my many questions and providing transportation in his Volkswagen to museums and archives across the Netherlands.

This study has brought into my life other new friends who have helped me with it in numerous ways. Among them are Agnes Bristel, Juliana van der Vloed Nash, Rosa Lindenberg, Maria Lindenberg, Robin Adèr, Xavier Tricot, and Jacqueline Boreel.

Those whom I interviewed, credited in notes throughout the study, added brightness to my work days and have given life to the result. I am very grateful for their time, knowledge, and good will.

The owners of the unpublished works of art discussed in this study have been especially kind in making material available.

The staffs of many institutions have made my work more efficient and pleasant. Closest to home are those in the library of Southampton College of Long Island University, especially Betty Herbert. Among the various divisions of the Rotterdam Gemeentearchief, I am especially grateful for help from Adriaan Gordijn, Topographical Section, archivist

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Peter Siepman, and librarian Mijeke van Balen. At the library of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, assistance above even that institution's excellent standards was extended by staff-member Willem Been. Catherine Heesterbeek-Bert, librarian of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels, was exceptionally gracious and helpful. For dealings with Willem de Kooning's interests, the staff of his New York office has been supportive and efficient.

Permission to quote from her father's memoirs was given by Beatrice Escher-Jongert; from her interviews with de Kooning, by Sally Yard; and to use material in the estate of Elaine de Kooning, by Marjorie Luyckx.

This dissertation could not have been completed without financial support from my family. A grant from Ian Woodner helped with travel expenses in 1985. During the writing of the dissertation, a position at the Amagansett Free Library has provided a sympathetic environment of part-time employment; I am grateful to Carleton Kelsey, Laurie Granitto, and the members of the Board of Trustees.

Peter Garnham, in addition to proof-reading, has helped keep daily life cheerful and steady.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

F	J.-B. de la Faille, The Works of Vincent van Gogh, His Paintings and Drawings (New York: Reynal & Company in association with Wm Morrow & Company, 1970; Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International, 1970)
NRC	Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (newspaper)
RKD	Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (State Office of Art Historical Doncumentation), The Hague
RKK	Rotterdamsche Kunstkring (Rotterdam Art Circle)
VANK	Nederlandsche Vereeniging voor Ambachts- en Nijverheidskunst (Netherlands Association for Crafts and Industrial Arts)

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory

of my brother

William Richard Wolfe (1945-1995)

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INTRODUCTION

Enamored with the idea of America and ambitious to make his way in the world, twenty-two-year-old Willem de Kooning emigrated from the Netherlands to the United States in 1926. He had completed more than four years of art studies, had worked for ten years in several areas of commercial art, had painted still lifes, landscapes, and portraits, and had made scores of drawings. In his new and very different environment he continued commercial art work, painting, and drawing; twenty-two years later, in 1948, his first one-person exhibition marked his prominence in the New York art community. This second "gestation period" in the United States was decisive in the formation of de Kooning's mature art and he is justly considered an American artist; yet half his years before 1948 and all his training belong to a different culture. Those early years--as yet known only by several pages of continually repeated, sometimes erroneous, accounts--and their contribution to de Kooning's development will be explored in this study.

Knowledge of surviving works of art from de Kooning's youth has hitherto offered scant guidance to this period. Recent findings, however, bring to light over forty drawings and paintings from the European years; a handful have now been published but most are presented and analyzed here for

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the first time. De Kooning's juvenilia consists of two small still life paintings in oil made when he was about twelve years old; a still life drawing made at the Rotterdam Academy; forty-two works made about 1924, including an oil portrait, two drawings with watercolor, and pencil and conté drawings; and a further drawing, The Kiss, dated 1925.[1]

The expanded awareness of de Kooning's early years offered in this study will pave the way for a better understanding of his development and career as a whole. For instance, what did the young artist's experiences as a house-painter and commercial artist--window-dresser, sign-painter, and would-be illustrator--contribute to his art? Did his academic education have a bearing on his later work? How much of his artistic formation came from his European experiences of the late teens and early 1920s and how much from the New York experiences of the late 1920s and 1930s? Such questions can be answered only by turning more assiduous attention to the Dutch years.

Review of the Literature

Art historical discussion of de Kooning's early years

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[1]These works are owned by de Kooning; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and private individuals in Europe and the United States. The term juvenilia is used here in its dictionary definition, "works produced in one's youth"; Random House Dictionary, 2d ed. Rather than referring to childhood only, as will be noted below in relation to the work of Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, the period of youth is interpreted as extending through the age of twenty-one, one year into de Kooning's legal majority.

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has been dependent on information published by Thomas B. Hess. One page of the Chronology at the end of Hess's 1959 monograph on the artist presents most of what has been repeated since that time. The 1968 catalogue that Hess prepared for the Museum of Modern Art contains further discussion of the Dutch years and there are additional comments and explanations in his Willem de Kooning Drawings of 1972.[2] Since Hess's accounts of de Kooning's early years have informed all subsequent discussions, I will often refer to them and offer corrections where possible. For example, while Hess has asserted tnat de Kooning completed the full eight-year course of study at the Rotterdam Academy, de Kooning's studies there ended after four or five years. The great value of Hess's work notwithstanding, certain predispositions hindered his view of the Dutch years: he had difficulty reconciling activities in the commercial and fine arts and he had little interest in what went on in Dutch artistic circles beyond his own awareness.[3] Nor did he undertake archival research.

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[2]Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning (New York: George Braziller, 1959), 113; idem, Willem de Kooning (New York: Museum of Modern Art; Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 12-14; idem, Willem de Kooning: Drawings (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1972), 18-19 and passim.

[3]These are subtle matters, part of generational biases, rather than personal closed-mindedness. They show up in the conversation of Willem de Kooning, Harold Rosenberg and Thomas Hess, 2 March 1964, [East Hampton, N.Y.], untranscribed tape recording, made by Betty Wolffe, Hess Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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The source of information for Hess about the Dutch experience was usually de Kooning, either directly or via the recollections of Elaine de Kooning, the artist's wife.[4] In all the published material, de Kooning's own comments about his early years remain the most illuminating. Among these verbal testimonies, two major beacons for this study have been the 1950 interview with Martha Bourdrez in which de Kooning spoke of his Dutch years and the 1960 interview with British art critic David Sylvester.[5] Somewhat less of

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Rosenberg especially steered the conversation away from the Dutch years, saying such matters were covered in the 1960 David Sylvester interview, but Hess also chose not to follow through on new information about the Dutch years that he did not have the background to understand. This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

[4]Elaine de Kooning met her husband in 1936; their years of closeness were the late 1930s and the 1940s. In my awareness, de Kooning talked about his years in Holland with her more than with any other close person; the memoirs of Elaine de Kooning, left unfinished at her death in 1989, are being completed for publication by her sister Marjorie Luyckx. To avoid confusion, in this study I will refer to Willem de Kooning as "de Kooning" and Elaine de Kooning as "Elaine," intending no disrespect. Regarding de Kooning's early years, Hess also had contact with de Kooning's half-brother Koos Lassooy and with Leo Cohan, the friend who had helped de Kooning come to the United States. For information regarding academic art education Hess consulted Nikolaus Pevsner's Academies of Art, Past and Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).

[5]It is my assessment that de Kooning was straightforward in the information he offered. Martha Bourdrez, "De Kooning, Painter of Promise," Knickerbocker 12 (May 1950): 8-9. The Bourdrez interview was a source for Hess as well. David Sylvester, "Painting as Self-Discovery," BBC broadcast, 3 December 1960; published without interviewer's questions as "Content Is a Glimpse...." Location 1 (Spring 1963): 45-53, the version reprinted in Hess, 1968, 146-150; excerpts published with questions as "De Kooning's Women," Sunday Times Magazine

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Holland comes forth from the otherwise rich commentary and interview by Harold Rosenberg.[6] A number of previously unpublished or hard-to-find interviews with de Kooning are available in French translation in an excellent volume edited by Marie-Anne Sichère.[7]

Treatments of de Kooning's career since Hess's studies have illuminated the Dutch years and their influence with sprinklings of information from new interviews with de Kooning, general reflections on the nature of Dutch art, and one cogent analysis of an early drawing. None has taken account of the specific milieu in which de Kooning was formed.

Studies brought forth before the mid-1990s, those by Robert Hobbs and Gail Levin, Stephen Polcari, and David Anfam, all of whom deal with the larger phenomenon of

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(London), 8 December 1968, 44-52, 57; excerpts also published as "De Kooning's Women," Ramparts 7 (April 1969): 20-24; most complete published version, in French translation, is "Entretien avec David Sylvester, pour la B.B.C.," in Willem de Kooning: Ecrits et propos, ed. Marie-Anne Sichère (Paris: Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1992), 99-112.

[6]Harold Rosenberg, "Interview with Willem de Kooning," Art News 71 (September 1972), 54-59. An unedited typed transcript exists in the estate of Elaine de Kooning.

[7]Marie-Anne Sichère, ed., Willem de Kooning: Ecrits et propos (Paris: Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1992). In addition to the interviews with de Kooning that have been published, there are others that will eventually come to light and will undoubtedly give further information on this period: I have seen a portion of the text prepared by Joe Liss based on his taped conversations with de Kooning; Amei Wallach has recorded interviews that she plans to publish.

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Abstract Expressionism, and Sally E. Yard, Harry Gaugh, Diane Waldman, and Lynne Cooke, on de Kooning specifically, have not attended to the years prior to de Kooning's emigration to the United States beyond Hess's treatment.[8]

The retrospective exhibition held at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and in Paris and Berlin in 1983-84 brought forth an incipient view into de Kooning's Dutch background: an early portrait drawing was exhibited and published for the first time in the Whitney catalogue--although it was not discussed in the text--and in the chronology a first mention was made of cartoon-like

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[8]Robert Carleton Hobbs and Gail Levin, Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years (Ithaca, N.Y.: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University; New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978); Stephen Polcari, Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); David Anfam, Abstract Expressionism (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990); Harry F. Gaugh, Willem de Kooning (New York: Abbeville, 1983); Diane Waldman, Willem de Kooning (New York: Harry N. Abrams; Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1988); and Lynne Cooke, "Willem de Kooning: 'A Slipping Glimpser,'" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1988). Sally E. Yard, Willem de Kooning: the First Twenty-six Years in New York--1927-1952 (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1980; New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), presents information from interviews with de Kooning in the late 1970s in which there is material pertinent to the present study; interviews published in French translation in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 185-201; English transcript on file at Willem de Kooning Office, New York. Yard's first chapter, "1927-1935: The Earliest Years in New York," pages 2-25, provides a capable introduction to the period immediately following that of this study, a period that merits further examination.

Mark Stevens and Analyn Swan are preparing a biography of de Kooning, to be published by Doubleday in 1997; in my awareness, they are the only others to have done research in the Netherlands on the artist's Dutch experience.

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drawings.[9] The Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée nationale d'art moderne, put forth its own catalogue for this retrospective that included an essay on de Kooning and the Flemish and Dutch tradition in painting. This essay, by Louis Marin, is a meditation in which de Kooning's comments about influence, association, Rubens, and Rembrandt are interwoven with reflections about his mature work and works by Rubens, Rembrandt, Jan van Goyen, and other seventeenth-century masters.[10]

As de Kooning neared his ninetieth birthday in 1994 and it became clear that an Alzheimer's-like affliction had

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[9]Paul Cummings, Jörn Merkert, and Claire Stoullig, Willem de Kooning: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and W. W. Norton, 1983), no. 1; Chronology, 268: "Supports himself . . . drawing cartoons." The same catalogue, with German translations of texts, was published for the Akademie der Künste, Berlin by Prestel Verlag, Munich.

[10]Louis Marin, "Un peintre sous influences: Notes sur 'de Kooning et la tradition flamande et hollandaise de peinture'," in Willem de Kooning, ed. Claire Stoullig (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1984), 31-39. It would be difficult to cite all discussions in this vein, important among them Thomas B. Hess, "In de Kooning's Studio," Vogue 168 (April 1978): 234-37, 335, but Jack Cowart offers an original note about the "creative *Dutchness*" in de Kooning's landscapes, suggesting comparisons with the "eccentric . . . tangled forms [and] . . . assertive non-contextual feeling and materials" in Adam Pynacker's seventeenth-century Landscape with Cows and the "paint application and the image cropping" in van Gogh's "mutant expressionist" Long Grass with Butterflies; Jack Cowart and Sanford Sivitz Shaman, De Kooning, 1969-78 (Cedar Falls, Iowa: University of Northern Iowa, 1978), 15-16, n. 2. More recently, Dutch precedents for de Kooning's art are discussed in Charles Moore Brock, "Describing Chaos: Willem de Kooning's Collage Painting Asheville and its Relationship to Traditions of Description and Illusionism in Western Art" (Master's thesis, University of Maryland, 1993).

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ended his art production, a renewed interest in the totality of his oeuvre has prompted interest in his background and juvenilia. Scholarly catalogues accompanied exhibitions of de Kooning's works in the Hirshhorn Museum Collection and a special loan exhibition of paintings at the National Gallery, Washington, D.C. Judith Zilczer's catalogue for the Hirshhorn Museum published for the first time one of two extant still life paintings made by de Kooning when he was about twelve, and made use of several dates provided from my research.[11] Marla Prather published de Kooning's The Kiss of 1925 with her catalogue essays for the National Gallery catalogue.[12] This drawing was shown for the first time at the Allan Stone Gallery's exhibition Liquefying Cubism of 1994 and published in color in the accompanying catalogue.[13]

In his 1994 dissertation, Representation and Illusion in the Art of Willem de Kooning, Michael Zakian incorporates

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[11]Judith Zilczer, Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1993), fig. 1; 12-14, 187. In the chronology, the narrative of de Kooning's parents' activities and the custody of the children after their divorce was inadvertently burdened with errors from previous publications.

[12]Marla Prather, Willem de Kooning Paintings (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 82, fig. 5; 85, n. 47. This drawing was first reproduced in the auction catalogue Contemporary Art (Part II) (New York: Christie, Manson & Woods International Inc., 7 May 1986), lot no. 108.

[13]Liquefying Cubism (New York: Allan Stone Gallery, 1994), 1.

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observations on de Kooning's Dutch experience and analyses of two of the early drawings, welcome contributions to seeing the oeuvre as a whole. Zakian's argument, that de Kooning "used representation not to foster ambiguity, but as a way to explore the human need for mimesis," is not belied by this study.[14]

Aspects of my own research were first made public in the context of Petra ten-Doesschate Chu's interest in the phenomenon of Kindheitstil. Dr. Chu suggests that "artists' juvenilia may throw new light on the evolution of individual artists' styles, on their thematic preoccupations, and on those ill-defined . . . notions: 'creativity' and 'talent.'"[15] Her description has provided a fruitful focus for examining works that are from de Kooning's youth rather than childhood,[16] and it colors the material in the

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[14]Michael Reuben Zakian, "Representation and Illusion in the Art of Willem de Kooning" (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, 1994), ii. I find myself disagreeing with some of Zakian's assessments and emphases, to be noted below as they bear upon the material of this study, but not with his central issue of de Kooning's dedication to an "exploration of sense experience" in his intelligent reading of de Kooning's writings, statements, and art works; ibid., 231.

[15]Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "Kindheitstil," Abstracts and Program Statements 1993, 81st Annual Conference, College Art Association of America, Seattle, 3-6 February 1993, 20.

[16]In her introduction to the session, Chu defined childhood works as those made before academic art training, a criterion which would exclude the de Kooning works I presented, as would de Kooning's age when he made them (twenty to twenty-one). Yet in a number of ways these youthful works fit the developmental profile which the Kindheitstil topic addresses: they are little-known and thus

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Conclusion of this study.[17]

Content of this Study

This study examines de Kooning's training and early career as an artist and situates his development within the context of the Dutch experience and art world in which it began, extending outward to include his trip to Belgium in 1924, and ending when he left the Netherlands for the United States in the summer of 1926.

The eight chapters follow a chronological arrangement. Biographical information, drawn from archival research and interviews, is presented in Chapters 1 and 6. Information about Rotterdam, where de Kooning and his family lived, is included in Chapter 1, as is a discussion of the two still life paintings made when he was about twelve years old. De Kooning's family background could have offered him little

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have not yet been incorporated into our view of de Kooning's work; they happen to pay little heed to academic training; and they were made before a crucial divide in de Kooning's artistic awareness, his move to New York.

[17]My paper for Dr. Chu's Kindheitstil session at the College Art Association 81st Annual Conference, Seattle, 4 February 1993, was subsequently expanded in other lecture presentations as well as in an article, and has been adapted back into Chapter 8 and the Conclusion of this study. Lecture at Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, New York, 18 July 1993; at symposium in conjunction with exhibition, Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 5 November 1993; panel presentation, Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, New York, 23 April 1994; and at Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, New York, 7 July 1994; "Van Wim tot Bill de Kooning: Zeven decennia thematiek en vorm," trans. A. van Hoorn, Jong Holland 10, no. 1 (1994): 6-28, English summary, 62-63.

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perspective on the state of the arts in the Netherlands and his own cultural view in the early years was probably never very broad; it seems to have grown in accord with the awareness of those with whom he came in contact, and the publications and exhibitions to which they led him. Particular attention is therefore given to his employers and teachers.

Chapter 2 presents Gidding & Sons, the painting and decorating firm for which de Kooning worked from 1916 to 1920; Jaap Gidding's career in particular is discussed, along with information about the Rotterdam art world of the generation prior to de Kooning's. In Chapter 3, about de Kooning's experience at the Rotterdam Academy, teachers Johannes Heyberg and Jacob Jongert receive considerable attention, as does the course of instruction with its distinctive offerings. Jongert's formation includes background material relevant to the history of the applied arts in the Netherlands. The charcoal and conté still life drawing now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is discussed in this chapter. Chapter 4 is devoted to Bernard Romein, the young artist for whom de Kooning worked as assistant, and his most important mentor in those years. Because until now so little has been known about him, I have followed Romein's career past de Kooning's departure from the Netherlands, answering de Kooning's question about what became of him, and possibly gleaning further understanding

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of Romein's views in the early 1920s; this material is presented in the Appendix.

The wider art world in which de Kooning's instruction, work, and formation took place, the subject of Chapter 5, is described with attention to de Kooning's vantage point as well as to what can be known of the prevailing situation. Late Symbolism, Art Déco, a mix of Cubism and Expressionism, De Stijl design, the sturdy realism of Charley Toorop, advertising design, and illustration work were all part of his art world.

In 1924 de Kooning and two friends travelled to Belgium, an event chronicled in Chapter 7; the journey is important for the works left behind and preserved by de Kooning's employers, among them a portrait in oil of their little niece. This group of works and a drawing of 1925 that was kept by de Kooning's family provide a view of the young artist's concerns after his study at the Academy and before his emigration to the United States. They are presented in Chapter 8.

The works discussed in this study constitute the de Kooning juvenilia. In addition to giving us access to the artist's background in Holland, they enable us to assess the divide between his European and American experiences. The works also offer a wealth of thematic and formal precedent for insight into de Kooning's later attitudes to imagery and style, implications of which are taken up in the Conclusion.

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On Conversing with de Kooning in the 1980s

Many of the statements by de Kooning in this study come from his conversations with the author in the 1980s. Since de Kooning's cogency was gradually deteriorating during these years, some explanation may be helpful.[18]

My first official meeting with Willem de Kooning was at his studio/house in Springs, New York in November 1980. As curator at the Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton, I was preparing an exhibition of de Kooning's works to be held the following spring, part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the organization.[19] I contacted Elaine de Kooning, who had been in charge of arrangements at her husband's household since July 1978,[20] and was expecting a brief visit. I had been forewarned that the once voluble and delightful conversationalist had become disturbingly

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[18]De Kooning's medical history is an important subject that cannot be treated here, but awareness of his gradually decreasing mental abilities must be a factor in evaluating his comments in later years. Current understanding of his condition during the 1980s has been summarized by Robert Storr, "At Last Light," in Willem de Kooning: the Late Paintings, the 1980s, ed. Gary Garrells and Robert Storr (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1995), 50-51. There is some question as to the precise diagnosis of the affliction.

[19]Judith Wolfe, Willem de Kooning: Works from 1951-1981 (East Hampton, N.Y.: Guild Hall Museum, 1981).

[20]Date given by Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985. Unless otherwise noted in the first citation, all interviews by the author took place in East Hampton, N.Y.

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untalkative;[21] he was inclined to repeat the same comments several times in a row. As de Kooning and I settled at the big wooden dining table, Elaine hovered casually nearby to assist in any awkward moments. Her responses were incisive, definitive; his were poetic and evocative. The questions I had prepared were not geared to de Kooning's way of thinking and remembering, but the conversation went on and became delightfully stimulating. De Kooning was an exceptionally personable man; he seemed intellectually more substantial and interesting than I had expected even from Hess's sympathetic portrayal. As the conversation progressed, his repetitions fell away; he was glad to be talking about art and even initiated much of a long conversation. Everyone was pleased with the visit, the first of many.

From my first conversations with de Kooning, I allowed for the fact that I was dealing with an elderly person whose recall wasn't always perfect; in those early years I came to doubt how much this reservation was necessary. Sometimes after a conversation, I realized that what had seemed a *non sequitur* was a turn of thought to include another aspect of our subject. In fact, I discovered that whatever I might set as the first question in a session, was generally adhered to by de Kooning as the major topic throughout that

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[21]By Tom Ferrara, then assistant to Elaine de Kooning.

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conversation.[22]

In 1981 when I met with de Kooning many times, it seemed to me that there was nothing amiss with the information he offered. He was forthright and candid and also made it a point to be evasive when he wanted to be. His way of speaking, as I understand from others, had always been evocative, never settling on a definite point.[23] In my experience, his command of English was such that a precise and subtle idea could be expressed by a string of words that were often rather simple in themselves. In part, this was a happenstance of immigrant life, but it served as a congruent layer in de Kooning's aesthetic: to convey a nuanced perception through the ordinary. It is likely, especially as time went on, that long explanations in a verbal account were a way to compensate for the loss of a pertinent word.[24] De Kooning's way of speaking became vaguer and more allusive over the years of our conversations.

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[22]Some conversations were recorded on audio tapes; sometimes I had a piece of paper on which I jotted down key phrases during the course of the conversation; most of the time, I wrote notes immediately after the talk. In the latter two methods, citations can only offer accurate words in small phrases. Even from a taped conversation, de Kooning's elliptical speech patterns can be challenging to cite.

[23]Raoul Hague, for one, observed this to be the case in his own conversations with de Kooning from the early 1930s on through the 1950s, interview by author, 7 February 1985, Woodstock, N.Y.

[24]A lessening of language abilities is a symptom of Alzheimer's and related diseases.

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The content of his recollections, too, began to meld so that several stories became conflated. Gradually, the conversations came to contain unmistakable misperceptions of current reality, interwoven with entirely astute observations. In one-to-one relating, the conversations could float along in a blend of reality and irreality that I came to perceive as analogous to a dream. This was about 1986. In later encounters, around 1988, he might begin a cogent and pertinent sentence but could lose its drift before finishing it.

In group circumstances even in the early 1980s de Kooning often appeared abstracted and to be in his own world. But there were always times during such occasions when a serious comment--usually about his art--would elicit a raised eyebrow and a sharp look of assessment.

Let me offer one interchange with de Kooning related to this study. In 1984 he suggested that I use him as a character in a novel. I should continue to ask him questions and he would tell me the truth, but I should use the material with my own imagination, to make something new.[25] That, I told him, was not at all my premise. I have since thought many times about his insight into the writing of history.

As I have progressed further in my study, I find de

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[25]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 2 December 1984.

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Kooning's idiosyncratic suggestion to have imparted a facet of his own aesthetic. The drawings from the Dutch years reveal a maker who mused on the human condition, often in extrapolation from his own experience. As will be discussed in the Conclusion, I believe that throughout his career de Kooning has used himself[26] and others he has known as types to be cast in his drawings and paintings as conveyors of a fiction, a running commentary on human nature, its plights, dramas, foibles and potential. For this task he broadened his own experience with images from the world about him: from city neighborhoods to the bays of eastern Long Island, illustrated magazines and tabloids, advertisements and store windows, literature and popular novels, and the history of art.

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[26]Photographs of himself and even a mannequin formed from his own clothing were cast in various roles; Yard, First Twenty-six Years, 49-50.

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CHAPTER 1

ROTTERDAM AND FAMILY

A Changing City

The Rotterdam in which Willem de Kooning was born in 1904 was a city undergoing change. Since the inauguration and completion of the Nieuwe Waterweg (New Waterway), from 1866 to 1890, a deep eighteen-mile-long channel connecting the city with the North Sea, large numbers of new residents had been arriving each year, lured by the promise of jobs in the burgeoning harbor town. Many were country folk impelled by a series of agricultural crises in the late 1870s through the early 1890s. Between 1900 and 1915 Rotterdam was the fastest growing city in the Netherlands; its population increased by fifty per cent. Only around 1920 did this growth level off.[1]

The focus of the city was--and still is--its harbor. The new arrivals around the turn of the century attended first and foremost to the needs of the river trade: the widening and deepening of harbors, the construction of new harbors, the building of bridges and railway emplacements, shipbuilding and repair, the loading and unloading of ships.

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[1]P. J. Bouman and W. H. Bouman, De groei van de grote werkstad: Een studie over de bevolking van Rotterdam (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Comp., 1952), 13, 17, 109.

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Support businesses grew apace: more places of business and housing were built; shop-keeping expanded. Most of the new jobs called for unskilled workers and paid low wages; hours were long and living conditions dire; for at least a generation the city offered scant improvement for the lives of many of its new residents.[2]

Rotterdam accommodated its enlarged population partly by annexing outlying towns, first directing its attention southward, but reaching out in all directions, incorporating Delfshaven to the west, for instance, in 1886. Both of de Kooning's grandfathers had been born in Delfshaven, in 1839 and 1849. New neighborhoods arose in Rotterdam as dwellings were built on new streets, many to the north and east of the city center in the late 1880s and 1890s. It was these neighborhoods that housed de Kooning and his family during many of his early years. The most intense growth occurred to the south of the old city, heavily populated by the agricultural laborers turned unskilled dock workers;[3] for a year when de Kooning was a boy, his family lived there.

During de Kooning's boyhood the inner city lost one of its oldest neighborhoods: most of the Zandstraat quarter, a picaresque slum famous for its nightlife, was razed after 1911 to make way for a new Stadhuis, or Town Hall. Between 1913 and 1922 the large north/south canal in the center of

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[2]Bouman, De groie, 12, 56.

[3]Bouman, De groie, 14-16.

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the city, the Coolsingel, was filled in to become a broad promenade among the new civic buildings and stores. Here the twenty-year-old de Kooning would stroll with friends, meeting other youths and pretty girls. The new Town Hall building would become a site for mural commissions in the late teen years and 1920s.

Rotterdam had long had the reputation of attending to shipping and trade to the detriment of cultural pursuits. For the most well-to-do residents this characterization was not entirely just. The art educator H. P. Bremmer, for instance, in the teen years and early 1920s found his most enthusiastic audience in Rotterdam. Historian Hildelies Balk observes that, "There people had the money and the daring to buy art, and did not suffer from the cautious gentility which characterised the artistic milieu of Utrecht and The Hague."[4] This well-to-do group included shippers, insurers, bankers and their wives. It should be noted that they gained conviction and a specific taste from Bremmer's courses, which were first of all the occasion for agreeable social meetings within their own class.

The larger number of well-off middle class Rotterdammers, however, were notoriously conservative in

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[4]Hildelies Balk, "De freule, de professor, de koopman en zijn vrouw: Het publiek van H. P. Bremmer," Jong Holland 9, no. 2 (1993): 61. Bremmer later became director of the Kröller-Müller Museum.

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their tastes and ungenerous to the arts.[5] Rotterdam artists needed to be, like the city, hard-working; by the inter-war years they had acquired a reputation for taking every opportunity they could for sustenance, from designing printed advertisements to painting decorations, rather than hope for support from an enlightened patron, a more likely possibility in other towns.[6] A national government report of 1921 observed that Rotterdam, although one of the largest cities in the Netherlands, had only a single state-supported museum, and that that instituition was treated in a "step-motherly" fashion by the public authorities; the commission recommended a quickened tempo of acquisitions to catch up with other communities, advice that was not followed.[7] The journalist and cultural critic M. J. Brusse characterized the city in 1917 as a predominantly business-like, materialistic harbor where earning money was the priority; he found the rapid and profitable rise in the status of the city generally not accompanied by that of an artistic sensibility.[8]

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[5]Bouman, De groie, 44.

[6]Marianne van Erp, "Rotterdam, cultuurloze stad?" Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 7 (1988; The Hague: SDU, 1990): 214.

[7]Ibid., 214, 225; van Erp also notes that before 1940 Rotterdam's municipal funding for the arts was appallingly meager, achieving by 1939 only 2 1/2% the amount allotted in Amsterdam since 1920.

[8]M. J. Brusse, "Tentoonstelling van Binnenhuiskunst," Onze Kunst 16, no. 32 (September 1917): 66.

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The De Kooning and Nobel Families

De Kooning's family had little relationship to the artistic interests of the city. According to the entries on population records, the men on the two sides of the family worked as shipbuilders and carpenters; there is no documentation nor recollection to indicate a more specifically artistic field.[9] Neither of the two families was part of the well-off middle classes nor of the new influx, having lived in Rotterdam and adjacent towns for several generations. The generation just prior to Willem was the first to move beyond the worker class to proprietorship of small businesses, although it was only in Willem's grown years that his father was economically comfortable.[10]

Willem's father, Leendert de Kooning, was born in Rotterdam in 1876. He had dark blond hair, an aristocratic countenance and ordinary schooling, probably to the age of

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[9]A relative of de Kooning's maternal great-grandmother Willemina Mouthaan may have been an architect: Jan Mouthaan, architect, age 55, witnessed the birth of the artist's maternal grandfather. Christiaan Gerardus Nobel, Birth certificate, Delfshaven 24 February 1849, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam. Further research is necessary to establish the connection.

[10]Information regarding the rise from the working class is from Neeltje and Gerrit Jan Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985, Haarlem; Mrs. Tamboer, born 1909, is de Kooning' half-sister; Mr. Tamboer knew the family from 1928.

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twelve.[11] Leendert's grandfather Cornelis, whose name was spelled "de Koning" as well as "de Kooning," worked as a ship's carpenter (*scheepmaker*); his son Willem, born 1839, followed the same profession.[12] This Willem had ten children, of whom four were boys.[13] Each was hard-working and went on to establish himself in his own business:[14] the eldest was first a beer-bottler, then dealer in plasters and ointments and also rented out rooms; Leendert's younger two brothers worked as butchers, the youngest having started as a beer-bottler.[15] Their mother was Maria van Ladesteyn,

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[11]Koos Lassooy, half-brother of Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985, East Hampton; Gerrit Randolfi, nephew of Leo Cohan, and Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985, East Hampton; the latter two both commented that de Kooning looked like his father.

[12]The spelling variations were noted in the marriage certificate of Cornelis's son Willem, born 1839; Willem de Kooning and Maria van Ladesteyn, Marriage certificate, Rotterdam, 1865, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam; photocopy provided by Harry Mariën. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Mariën who used his genealogical expertise on my behalf to assemble photocopies of many documents from the Bevolkingsregisters (population registers) in Rotterdam, Schiedam, and Brussels, and who counselled me in this research.

[13]Willem de Kooning, born Delfshaven 24 November 1839, Family card listed in Bevolkingsregister 1880-1895, 491-1276, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[14]Gerrit Jan Tamboer, husband of de Kooning's half-sister, interview by author, 24 July 1985.

[15]Information from the individual family cards for Cornelis, born Rotterdam 4 October 1871; Willem, born Rotterdam 21 January 1878; and Jacob Johannes, born Rotterdam 1 April 1887; filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam. For the latter two, the words given are *vleesehhouwer* [*sic*] and *slager*, respectively.

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remembered fondly by a son-in-law for her remarkable dignity.[16]

Unwilling to work for another, Leendert began his career by selling flowers from a two-wheeled cart in the street. His inherently reserved personality chafed at shouting out to the passersby, his son-in-law recalled, but Leendert increased his business to the level of a flower stand near the railroad station before going into partnership with his older brother. They worked in the beer-bottling business together until Leendert set out on his own, in the same business. The beer came in casks from the Heineken factory and they bottled and distributed it.[17]

Although the Dutch economy in general was doing well at the turn of the century, these were lean times for Leendert and his new family. He chose as his bride a young woman from the neighboring city to the west, Schiedam, known then and now for its major industry of distilling jenever, the distinctive Dutch gin. There are no photographs of Cornelia Nobel from this time, but family descriptions recall her black hair and dark eyes; their daughter Marie was said to resemble her in appearance and, in later years, in

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[16]Gerrit Jan Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985. Usually spelled "Lodesteyn," this is a distinctly Rotterdam family name, according to Adriaan Gordijn, Topographical Section, Rotterdam Gemeentearchief. I am very grateful Mr. Gordijn for answers to my topographical questions.

[17]Gerrit Jan Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985.

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personality. It is from Cornelia that Willem inherited a distinctive physical trait, his large feet.[18] Cornelia's father, Christiaan Gerardus Nobel, was a self-employed skilled carpenter (*kistenmaker*);[19] his father had been an office clerk (*kantorbediende*),[20] and Cornelia's mother's father, Laurens Oers, a carpenter's assistant (*timmermanskneckt*).[21] The younger family members assembled for her wedding, probably her sister's husbands, were working as tailor (*kleermaker*) and wall-paperer

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[18]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, noted that Cornelia had large hands and feet, inherited by Bill and himself. He gave de Kooning's shoe size as eleven. Elaine commented in the 1980s that de Kooning always had difficulty finding shoes that fit him.

[19]Cornelia Nobel, Birth certificate, Schiedam 3 March 1877, filed in Archief der gemeente Schiedam; photocopy from Harry Mariën. Nobel is a Schiedam name from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, possibly also associated with Delfshaven; information from Adriaan Gordijn. Mr. Gordijn explains that this professional appellation, literally "crate-maker," suggests that Nobel was most likely working on his own rather than for someone else, and perhaps because he was more talented; it indicates a "kind of carpenter who always had a good job."

[20]Christiaan Gerardus Nobel, Birth certificate, Delfshaven 24 February 1849, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[21]Cornelia Oers, Birth certificate, Schiedam 27 October 1849, filed in archief der gemeente Schiedam; photocopy from Harry Mariën. Adriaan Gordijn informs me that the family names of Cornelia's maternal grandparents, Oers and van der Heiden, may have come from Brabant; they arrived in Schiedam well before the 1870 influx when war made a boom for the distilleries and lured many agricultural workers from the south, for Cornelia's mother was born in Schiedam in 1849.

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(*kamerbehanger*) when they signed the marriage certificate.[22]

Leendert de Kooning and Cornelia Nobel, regal and noble in name if not birth, were married in Schiedam on December 22, 1898. He would soon be twenty-four; she was two years younger. One wrinkle in the proceedings was occasioned by Leendert's mother: she was not present at the ceremony nor was her consent given, but instead a medical certificate was offered that claimed her "not in a state to make her will known with discernment."[23] No family recollection takes account of this woman's incapacity. Her specific objections to the marriage have not come down to us, but we can surmise that she was overruled by officials' view of the circumstance, for Cornelia was pregnant. Six weeks after their marriage, the couple was registered as living at Ruwaardstraat in the far western part of Rotterdam, just north of Delfshaven. This was one of the newer streets created by the expansion of the city--it was first named in

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[22]Leendert de Kooning and Cornelia Nobel, Marriage certificate, Schiedam, 1898, filed in Archief der gemeente Schiedam; photocopy from Harry Mariën. Family accounts so identify the name van Meurs but I have not checked further in the population records.

[23]Hebben de verloofden aan Ons overgelegd . . . een geneeskundig attest, waaruit blijkt dat de moeder van de bruidegom niet in staat is haren wil met oordeel des onderscheids kenbaar te maken; ibid.; transcript and preliminary translation from Harry Mariën. Both Cornelia's parents signed the document; Leendert's father was declared to consent, but he did not sign because he had never learned to write; Leendert's older brother Cornelis signed the document.

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1895--and was a respectable address for a newly married couple; while the location was not evidence of prosperity, it indicated that Leendert had work.[24] By 2 July 1899, they were living in a somewhat older house just across the nearby Delfshavense Schie canal, and on that day their daughter, Maria Cornelia, was born.[25]

In the five years before Willem's birth in April 1904, six more addresses are recorded for the family. This prodigious upheaval would characterize Cornelia's life throughout Willem's years in Rotterdam; she initiated and apparently enjoyed the quest for a nicer apartment at less rent.[26] After the two addresses in the western part of the city, the family moved for the most part within the new neighborhood of the Noord in northeastern Rotterdam.[27] The

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[24]The addresses of the family are recorded on Leendert de Kooning, born Rotterdam 10 February 1876, Family card, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam. Description of the neighorhood from Adriaan Gordijn; he consulted Johan Okkama and others, De Straatname van Rotterdam (Rotterdam: Rotterdam Gemeentearchief, 1992) for the date of the street.

[25]Maria Cornelia de Kooning, Birth certificate, Rotterdam 2 July 1899, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam; photocopy from Harry Mariën.

[26]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985. It may have been a form of spring housecleaning, for landlords usually painted apartments for new tenants, according to Adriaan Gordijn.

[27]Adriaan Gordijn, letter to author, 24 August 1995, writes, "The northeastern part of Rotterdam in the time you mentioned had no special name, but you could name it 'Noord,' people live 'in Noord' nowadays, though 'Centrum-noord' is the official name. I presume that for the period 1900-1925 seldom was referred to a part of the city as a whole, but mostly as 'in the surroundings of the

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first four addresses are just north of the Hofplein Electrische Spoor Station and correspond to two addresses for Leendert's business; by 1904 they cluster about a dozen blocks northward around Vletstraat 26 where Leendert situated his factory, with some calculation, one may assume, for in 1903 a big Heineken brewery was established nearby on the eastern bank of the Rotte River, just north of the bridge at Noordplein.[28] Along this area of the river there were also small factories--two made chocolate--and three sawmills. Many of the streets on which the de Kooning family, and later the Lassooy family, lived were laid out in this neighborhood in the 1890s. The buildings offered decent housing for which tenants paid by the month rather than weekly. Most of this area still exists.

These must have been trying years. Three more daughters were born, all to succumb within days or months. Twins Cornelia and Adriana were born in July 1901 and died that August. A fourth daughter, also named Cornelia, was born in October 1902 and lived until June 1903.[29]

Noordsingel' or 'near Zwaanshals'. However, on a map of 1929 'Noorden' is stated."

[28]The addresses of Leendert's factory are in the yearly Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam (General Addressbook of the Rotterdam Municipality). Information about the brewery and the neighborhood from Adriaan Gordijn.

[29]Leendert de Kooning, Family card. De Kooning knew about these early siblings who died before he was born because he mentioned the twins over fifty years later. The context deserves telling. In the late 1950s he was having dinner with a lady friend, Ruth Kligman, her twin sister and

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By 1904 when Willem was born, Leendert had expanded his business to making soft drinks, *limonade*, as well as bottling beer, and had settled in the small factory on Vletstraat, the location of which would change only ten years later, to just across the street.[30] The family's dwellings continued to change, however. On 24 April 1904 Willem was born at 1:00 P.M. at Zaagmolenstraat 13.[31] Two moves later, the family lived on the Vijlkapperstraat in an apartment that abutted the factory building at a right angle. In these early years Leendert worked gruelingly long hours, especially in summer.[32] His business was often in precarious circumstances, as was the marriage, for it was at this location that a family drama occurred. In an effort at economy, Leendert hadn't obtained a license for his delivery

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the sister's husband, who had asked de Kooning why he "had a thing" for twins; the questioner was aware that Joan Ward, the mother of de Kooning's daughter Lisa, also had a twin sister. Ruth Kligman, interview by author, 28 June 1983, East Hampton. One could go further: many of de Kooning's important women have had close relationships with a sister, notably his wife Elaine with her younger sister Marjorie. As there have been a number of paintings of two women, this biographical fact may have a bearing on the art. The most important two women in de Kooning's early life were his mother and his sister Marie.

[30]In Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1904, his business is listed as "bierbottelarij & fabriek v. kwast."

[31]Willem de Kooning, Birth certificate, Rotterdam 4 April 1904, Burgerlijke Stand, Rotterdam; photocopy from Harry Mariën.

[32]Gerrit Jan Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985.

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cart dog. He was caught by the police, and chose a two-day stay in jail instead of paying a fine. He returned home to discover that his wife had sold most of the factory equipment.[33] Cornelia's claim, as recorded on their divorce document, was that she had needed the money to feed their children.[34]

Years later, Leendert wrote to his grown son, apologizing that he couldn't live with Cornelia because she was too hysterical.[35] Leendert filed for a legal separation in January 1906, after seven years of marriage. Willem was then twenty-one months old. In late February 1906, Cornelia took the two children with her to an apartment on Josephstraat just west of the city center, where the rent may have been more modest. She counter-filed for a divorce in April 1906. Within the next two years, she and the children changed addresses two more times, to

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[33]Antonie Breedveld, nephew of Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 5 July 1985, Tiel, Netherlands; Leendert de Kooning, half-brother of Willem de Kooning, interview by author, translated by Jos de Kooning, daughter-in-law of Leendert, 16 July 1985, Rotterdam.

[34]Arrondissements Rechtbank, Rotterdam (1878-1920), Records of Divorces, inv. no. 1040, filed in Rijksarchief, The Hague. For help with transcription and translation of this document, I thank Agnes Bristel, Harry Mariën, and Leo de Kooning.

[35]Willem de Kooning, East Hampton, to Marie van Meurs, Rotterdam, Autograph letter signed, [2 December 1967], possession of Anthonie Breedveld, Tiel, Netherlands in 1985: "I remember getting a letter from father de Kooning--and telling me---and apologizing---but that he couldn't live with my mother---that she was too hysterical."

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apartments within several blocks of Leendert's factory.[36] She would have received support from Leendert when he could provide it. It is likely that she also took in laundry, as she would later do in lean times.[37] She is listed as a *werkster* (charwoman) in the Rotterdam Adresboek for 1908.

In the divorce settlement, which was registered in January 1907, Cornelia was awarded five guilders a week in child support. This decision would be legally binding until the children were twenty-one years of age, or self-supporting.[38]

In a separate settlement of 9 February 1907, custody of the children was granted to Cornelia, to Christiaan Nobel, the children's maternal grandfather, and to two of Leendert's married sisters.[39] This is somewhat unusual. It would be expected that primary custody go to the mother, secondary to the father, and then to one blood relation on each parent's side. Perhaps Leendert's abilities to earn a living were still precarious, or questioned by the court.

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[36]Population register (1900-1910), pp. 58 and 135, GK 582 and 586, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam. Information on rent from Adriaan Gordijn.

[37]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985; Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[38]This information and the explanation in the following paragraph were kindly provided by Leo de Kooning, half-nephew of Willem de Kooning, who drew on his legal training and the documents rather than family accounts.

[39]Arrondissements Rechtbank, Rotterdam (1834-1920), Register of Guardianship, inv. no. 866, filed in Rijksarchief, The Hague.

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In any case, legal custody did not rule where the children were to live; whatever arrangement was acceptable to the family would be within the law.

Surely preceded by an awareness of disharmony on the part of the children, this period of legal proceedings and separation from his father began before Willem was two years old. Two years later, another large change occurred. Cornelia remarried on 8 April 1908.[40] Instead of adjusting to a stepfather, however, Willem was sent to live with Leendert. He was transferred to his father's household five days before the marriage, three weeks before his own fourth birthday, to remain in Leendert's charge for ten months, until 9 February 1909. These transfers of address are recorded in the population registers;[41] no legal proceedings are indicated in the civil records for these years which are, however, incomplete.[42]

In adult years, de Kooning related the events of this period to his friend Thomas Hess, who wrote,

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[40]Jacobus Lassooij and Cornelia Nobel, Marriage certificate, Rotterdam, 1908, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[41]Family cards of Leendert de Kooning, born Rotterdam 10 February 1876, and Jacobus Lassooy, born Rotterdam 14 July 1875, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[42]There is no record of legal proceedings in the available documentation in the Rijksarchief, The Hague; since this documentation is incomplete, no conclusions may be drawn; I thank Mrs. A. Meddens-van Borselen, staff member of this division of the archives, who guided me in my search.

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> When he [de Kooning] was about five years old, his mother and father were divorced. The court assigned his older sister to his mother, and Willem to his father, probably because of the extremely warm relationship between them. His mother, however, fought the decision, at first simply by grabbing up the child and taking him home with her, later through a successful appeal to the court.[43]

To Gaby Rogers in 1978 de Kooning recounted,

> My mother and father separated when I was three years old. And then I lived with my father, who was a distributor for Heineken's beer. But I was in touch with both my parents. My mother married again and owned a bar.[44]

The recollection of Cornelia snatching Willem away from his father's household while he was outside playing was part of the artist's stories to Elaine and to his daughter Lisa as well.[45] In Elaine's telling he was grabbed from his father's yard three times and his father had twice gotten a court order to have him back.[46]

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[43]Hess, 1968, 12.

[44]Gaby Rogers, "Willem de Kooning: The Artist at 74," LI/Newsday's Magazine for Long Island, 21 May 1978, 21. Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985, said de Kooning had told her he was three when his parents divorced. She gave this year to Curtis Bill Pepper, "The Indomitable de Kooning," The New York Times Magazine 20 November 1983, 70, and in her "Personal History of Willem de Kooning recorded by his wife, Elaine," ca. 1985, Estate of Elaine de Kooning. Mrs. de Kooning gave me a copy of this "Personal History" on 10 January 1986.

[45]Lisa de Kooning, interview by author, 4 February 1993, East Hampton.

[46]Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History": "His parents were divorced when he was three years old and he was turned over to the custody of his father, Leendert, but his mother, Cornelia, kept grabbing Bill when he was outside playing and bringing him back to her house until finally his father relinquished all claim (Willem told me about this with a

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Although separated from his mother and eight-year-old sister, four-year-old Willem apparently found the arrangement of living with his father to his satisfaction. As Leendert would not have been able to care for both a child and a business, he probably had help from his own mother, a widow since 1902, who was living at Zaagmolenstraat 19 in 1908;[47] Leendert is listed at that address after the Vijlkapperstraat apartment and again in the autumn of 1907.[48] Eight months after Willem went to live with him, Leendert remarried. Perhaps this spurred Cornelia's interest in taking back her child.

Leendert's second marriage, to Neeltje Johanna Been on 25 November 1908, was by all accounts calm and harmonious. There were to be four children, one of whom died in infancy. The first born were twins, a boy and a girl, on 21 September 1909; only the girl, Neeltje Johanna, lived. It is possible that Leendert knew of his wife's pregnancy at the time that Willem went to live again with Cornelia. He and his second wife had a son, Leendert, in April 1914, and second daughter, Hendrika Johanna, in March 1918.[49]

Whatever their motivations, the adult arrangements were different from the child's awareness. Some parts may

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certain amount of bitterness)."

[47]Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1908.

[48]Leendert de Kooning, Family card.

[49]Ibid.

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coincide, as for instance, Cornelia's explanation that her new location provided a better neighborhood to play than did Leendert's factory.[50] Years later Willem continued to harbor anger at his father for not fighting to retain custody.[51] Looking at the documents, however, we see that Leendert had lost even his expected share of custody during the time of the divorce; he had been caring for Willem on personal agreement only, and it might have been an exceptionally hard battle to surmount the earlier decision. We do not know the views of his second wife. Leendert liked to watch Willem and Marie, apparently lingering near their home, causing some gossip among the neighbors that he was still interested in Cornelia.[52] As years went on, however, relations with Leendert were to become largely a matter of financial collection. In 1967 de Kooning lamented in a letter to Marie that when Leendert parted with Cornelia, "he was a stranger again. . . . he forgot that the children must

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[50]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 28 October 1984; the difference in neighborhoods is not clear from the documentary evidence, however.

[51]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 1980s. Perhaps de Kooning referred to this when he lamented to Eugene Tiritter, a friend from Alcoholics Anonymous in the mid-1970s, that his father was weak; Eugene Tiritter, telephone interview by author, 29 June 1995.

[52]Leendert de Kooning, half-brother of Willem de Kooning, interview by author, translated by Jos de Kooning, 16 July 1985.

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have something from both the father and the mother."[53]

The Lassooy Family

In February 1909 when Willem joined Cornelia, Marie, and new husband and stepfather Jacobus Lassooy (also spelled "Lassooij"), they lived on Eerste Pijnackerstraat, near to Lassooy's café,[54] and several blocks from Leendert's factory. Lassooy was a *koffiehuishouder* (café-licensee).[55] In family recollection, his parents and other relatives had bars in sailors' quarters and were well-to-do.[56] Only a limited number of licenses were then sold by the state, so the license was itself of value, and could be rented to others. Lassooy seems to have done this during much of Willem's youth.

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[53]Willem de Kooning, East Hampton, to Marie van Meurs, Rotterdam, Autograph letter signed, [2 December 1967], possession of Anthonie Breedveld, Tiel, Netherlands in 1985.

[54]According to the Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1909, the café was located at 95. The residence was first at 96, across the street, then at 74a; Jacobus Lassooy, Family card. It is likely that the move from 96 to 74a was made to accommodate the extra child.

[55]This is his trade as recorded on the marriage certificate. A *koffiehuis* may be translated as "café," "public-house" ("pub") or "barroom." By his son's account, father Lassooy had worked as a seaman in his early years, travelling widely, although this is not recorded on official documents; Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[56]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985. Jacobus Lassooy, father of de Kooning's stepfather, is listed as *tapper* (alehouse keeper) on his son's birth certificate. Jacobus Lassooy, Birth certificate, Rotterdam 14 July 1875, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam; photocopy from Harry Mariën.

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Lassooy was a gentle and easy-going man.[57] He was thirty-two years old when he married Cornelia--she had just turned thirty-one--and was from a Roman Catholic family, although he and they may not have seriously practised their faith. Cornelia, Leendert, and their children were recorded in the population registers as Protestant. While religion was an important distinction in Dutch society, it may not have been so to the family. Marie's son never knew that Lassooy was Catholic.[58] De Kooning has said that both his parents thought religion was "a lot of hooey."[59]

By 1911, Lassooy had moved his café licenseship to Keizerstraat 21, in the center of old Rotterdam.[60] This was a short north-south street linking Weste Wagenstraat, a major shopping area, with the Fish Market and the centermost harbors. Several short blocks to the west was the Boymans Museum and just north of that, the Passage, a shopping arcade, and the Academy, both fronting the major intersection that held the Caland Fountain, the relatively

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[57]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[58]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[59]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 3 April 1981; Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985, commented, "Bill said that religion just did not crop up as a subject in his family. It didn't mean a thing to his mother or his father."

[60]Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1911.

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new monument commemorating the Nieuwe Waterweg.[61] North of the fountain was the Coolsingel, a major canal that would soon be filled in to become a wide promenade; behind the markets and shops of its eastern bank was the notorious Zandstraat neighborhood, much of which would be razed in 1912 to make way for the new Post Office and Town Hall.[62]

A photo of Willem and Marie was made in a Weste Wagenstraat studio, when they were around six and ten. Whether elicited by the occasion or more ingrained, Willem's serious little face had a taut and wary expression. During this period the family lived first on Mauritsstraat, a number of blocks west of the Coolsingel, where housing was less costly than it had been in the newer Pijnackerstraat neighborhood; Cornelia probably cared for the children full-time at this location because it was some distance from the café. The next move was just around the corner from the café on De Zijl, an old street crossing Keizerstraat with "very old and inexpensive" housing.[63] Here the seven-year-old Willem was near to Noord Blaak and the many boats moored

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[61]The Boymans Museum was then located in the Schielandshuis, the only structure of those just mentioned to survive the 1940 destruction of Rotterdam. The Passage was built in 1878-79; the Caland monument in 1907. Baedeker, Karl, Belgium and Holland, Handbook for Travellers, 15th ed. (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker Publisher, 1910), 304, 308.

[62]The Zandstraat neighborhood was thus about seven city blocks north and west of Keizerstraat.

[63]Addresses recorded on Jacobus Lassooy, Family card; information on housing from Adriaan Gordijn.

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along this harbor; there were also prosperous shops and, at the eastern end, the still-functioning old Post Office and Stock Exchange. Equally near, to the north, was the Groote Markt with its different kind of bustle and a seventeenth-century bronze statue of Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Cornelia gave birth to her second son and Willem's half-brother, Jacobus Johannes Lassooy, who was called Koos, on 8 May 1912, shortly after Willem turned eight.[64] Around this time, the family moved for a year to Voorstraat, in the far west of the city, the neighborhood where Marie had been born, and then back to the Eerste Pijnackerstraat in the Noord; when Koos was just an infant and when de Kooning must already have been established in lower school, they moved for a period to Rosestraat across the Maas River in the south part of the city. Rosestraat was a main thoroughfare in an area populated with dockworkers. After a stay there the family went back to live in the Noord for the years of World War I; they lived at three different apartments on Nieuwe Zaagmolenstraat, a short street perpendicular to, and giving on to, the Rotte River[65] and then across the river on the Linker Rottekade. As may be seen, Cornelia's inclination to move her household had continued unabated; eighteen changes of address are recorded for the eighteen

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[64]Jacobus Lassooy, Family card.

[65]Now called Zaagmolendrift; information from Adriaan Gordijn.

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years between her marriage to Lassooy and 1926, the year that Willem left for the United States.

By 1914, when Willem was ten, Lassooy was no longer officially working as *koffiehuishouder;* he was not listed as acting in this capacity again until 1926,[66] when it seems to have been Cornelia who carried the burden of running the café.[67] During these interim years Lassooy rented the café license for income and worked at various other jobs.[68] His occupations as listed in the population records are harbor controller, life insurance agent and engine stoker at the Droogdok Mij. (Drydock Society), as well as unemployed, unskilled worker.[69]

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[66]In the section of professional listings of the Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, Lassooy's café is first listed in 1909 with the Eerste Pijnackerstraat address, changes to Keizerstraat in 1911 and ceases until 1926 when the café address is given as Zaagmolenstraat 18b. There may be a delay of almost a year between actual fact and publication of the listing. I have not consulted Adresboeks for the years 1910, 1912, 1913, 1918, 1922. From legal records to be discussed below, we know he ran a café, unsuccessfully, in 1916.

[67]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985; Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[68]In 1915 and 1916 Lassooy is listed in the Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam as *vergunninghouder* (licensee) and in 1917 as *kastelein*, with a similar meaning. Whether these titles mean that he rented the license to another, or ran the café himself in a slightly different manner from a *koffiehuishouder*, is unclear.

[69]*Controleur havenbedrijf, agent levensverzekering, vuurstoker*, and *los werkman;* Jacobus Lassooy, Family card. The harbor control work (given as *graancontrol*) and engine stoking (*stoker*) can be dated approximately to 1913 and 1922 from listings in the Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1914 and 1923, respectively.

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During the period when the Lassooys did not actually run a café, Cornelia took in laundry and cleaned houses. There were times when father Lassooy, in his younger son's memory, did nothing. At some point, he had a health problem, and a lung had to be removed. After that, he was unable to lift heavy items in the café and more work fell to Cornelia.[70]

The Young Willem

The young Willem was a child whose households changed every year and whose family, with himself, shifted from a nuclear unit of four to a threesome with working mother and six-year-old sister, to another with much-loved father and grandmother, then to father and stepmother and then, with some dissatisfaction, to mother, stepfather and nine-year-old sister. He was a little boy who had had many close ties by the time he was five. Those who loved and cared for him often did not get along with each other. The central figure in the disharmony may well have seemed his volatile, strong-willed mother.

In later years de Kooning often spoke resentfully of Cornelia. When he was a child her strictness and stresses

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[70]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, remembered his father as not working when the family lived on the Aert van Nesstraat, about 1918 to 1920; in his recollection, the lung problem may have been around 1930. Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985, who was born in 1916, said he never saw Lassooy work.

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may have seemed arbitrary.[71] When he was a little older he did not like the career choices her decisions imposed on him. He did benefit, however, from her approval of his wanting to be an artist and her encouragement of his interest. She found it romantic, de Kooning explained, and went on to say that she herself had been interested in acting.[72] Cornelia did do some amateur acting only after her children had grown; there was little time or money for the arts during the years of their upbringing. Koos could not recall her going to a museum in the years of his childhood.[73] In 1980 de Kooning commented that his mother always said she had made so many sacrifices for her children; he then proffered the wry assessment, "I don't think so."[74]

Marie and Koos described the relationship between Willem and their mother to an interviewer in 1982. Marie's assessment was that, "My mother was a tyrant and Willem was stubborn." Koos said of Cornelia, "You see, she was a

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[71]Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History," wrote, "Telling me about his childhood, Bill always revealed considerable resentment toward his mother. She was very strict and often hit him when she was angry with him--which was almost daily." Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 1985, recalled his mother's seemingly arbitrary slaps for perceived misbehavior or "for not working hard enough."

[72]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 15 December 1980.

[73]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[74]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 15 December 1980. Probably both were right.

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masterful woman who dominated the whole family. Only she mattered and Wim and she fought constantly."[75]

Willem went to live in the Lassooy household with regret, whether hurt or the anger it later became, that his father had not tried harder to keep him and felt indignant about the presence of his stepfather. Although he never had problems with Lassooy whom he considered "a nice man,"[76] he interacted with him in a haughty manner, which he later regretted. To Marie in 1967 de Kooning wrote,

> I remember that I wrote father Lassooy a letter,--asking him forgiveness for the way I disrespected him and for my vainness and snottiness,--behaving so godawfull in those early years.[77]

Among these stressful relationships, one family member was not an agent of hurt. De Kooning's sister Marie was his ally and protector, standing up for him against their mother's storms. He wrote to her in 1967, "I will never forget that during my grown-up [*sic*] period, you were always there to protect me."[78] The dynamic of older sister

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[75]Ken Wilkie, "Willem de Kooning: Portrait of a Modern Master," Holland Herald (Amsterdam) 17, no. 3 (1982), 24.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Willem de Kooning, East Hampton, to Marie van Meurs, Rotterdam, Autograph letter signed, [2 December 1967], possession of Anthonie Breedveld, Tiel, Netherlands in 1985. Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History," wrote, "He also resented his stepfather--which he later regretted, saying he was a very kind man."

[78]Willem de Kooning, East Hampton, to Marie van Meurs, Rotterdam, Autograph letter signed, [2 December 1967], possession of Anthonie Breedveld, Tiel, Netherlands in 1985.

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stepping forth to take his side against a powerful and arbitrary mother may have been an important precedent in interpersonal relationships.[79] Willem remained extremely fond of Marie in adult life, although he didn't write to her until forty years after his departure for the United States.[80]

School

When he was six, in September 1910, Willem was eligible to begin elementary school. By law he should have started no later than the age of seven, but he actually may have begun school in autumn 1912 when he was eight. Elaine de Kooning's account has him starting at eight,[81] plausible since the compulsory attendance law, in force since 1901, was recent enough to be outside his parents' experience;[82]

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[79]It is one which the grown man later sought in times of domestic distress: he enlisted the presence of former lady-friend Nini Diaz during a visit from Cornelia in the 1930s as well as to leaven a problematic relationship with his new lady-friend Juliet Browner. He seems to have had an innate skill at playing his women against each other; it is a dynamic art dealers came to know as well.

[80]Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History": "He was very devoted to Marie."

[81]Ibid.: "He began school at the age of eight and finished eight years of schooling in four years, graduating at the age of twelve." She is in error about the course of instruction at the lower schools; it should be six years, not eight.

[82]According to the Compulsory Attendance Act, in force from January 1901, "every young Netherlander . . . is given a regular elementary instruction, from his 6th to his 12th or 13th year at the least." J.C. Ligtvoet, Education in the Netherlands, A General View of the Netherlands, XV (The

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Cornelia may well have followed her own inclinations just as later Marie did not enroll her son in school until he was eight.[83] De Kooning himself, in later years, implied that he never did graduate from elementary school.[84] If he did start elementary school at the age of eight, he may have been noticeably older than most of his classmates. At whatever age he started, he would have had to change schools as the family addresses shifted to different school districts. At six or seven, if he had begun his schooling by then, he would have attended a school in the center of the city, to be moved to another near Delfshaven for a year and then to the Noord, then South Rotterdam, and the Noord again, where he may have had several years without a change.

Of his schooling, de Kooning said to Gaby Rogers in 1978, "At twelve, I was a very good pupil. I had two friends and the three of us were always at the top of the class."[85] Koos, who was only four when Willem was twelve, remembered him as doing well in grade school, but as not

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Hague: Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, 1915), 3. In 1913 all schools for elementary education in the country offered instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, the rudiments of the Netherlands language, national history, geography, physical science, singing, "the first exercises in free-hand drawing," calisthenics and gymnastics, and plain needlework for girls; ibid., 10.

[83]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[84]Dane Dixson, interview by author, 11 November 1984, East Hampton.

[85]Rogers, "The Artist at 74," 21.

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liking to go: their mother had a difficult time getting him out of bed in the morning.[86] When de Kooning's half-sister Neeltje and her husband visited the artist in East Hampton in 1976, the one regret he voiced about his youth was not having had the opportunity to continue his schooling: "he liked it and could do it." This sentiment may well have been prompted by some envy that Neeltje spoke English so well and easily.[87]

Willem's elementary school teachers perceived his aptitude for the drawing classes. In Elaine's account, "his teacher told Bill's mother that he was exceptionally talented at art so she sent him to work at a decorator's shop."[88] The youth's interest of course was already apparent to his family. Koos remembered drawings his half-brother did at home of boats and workhorses pulling wagons. He remembered too that there were times when Cornelia was concerned that Willem preferred to stay inside and draw rather than go out and play. He himself, Koos said, wore out many pairs of shoes playing soccer.[89]

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[86]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[87]Neeltje and Gerrit Jan Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985. They visited de Kooning on 5 May 1976 and conversed in English. De Kooning understood Dutch if they spoke slowly, they explained. Neeltje's education had been in the M.E.U.L.O. school, "for the working class who were somewhat better off," rather than high school, the Tamboers explained.

[88]Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History."

[89]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

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Childhood Memories

There are several childhood memories that de Kooning has repeated to interviewers over the years. They give the flavor of his youthful experience and usually fit into later concerns, a reason for the telling. Other early memories are more private and have come forth only to family members or close friends, and are seldom known in de Kooning's words, leaving room for distortion.

One of de Kooning's uncles, the artist said in 1982, was,

> a seaman with the Holland-America Line. He used to tell me stories about America and once gave me an American football. And there were cowboys and Indians, you know; it was romantic.[90]

A little earlier he spoke of this same early awareness of the United States to Gaby Rogers, giving his age as nine or ten years old.[91] When he was about fourteen de Kooning loved to read adventure stories of American cowboys and Indians, by Karl May.[92]

Another recollection of these years involves a family who rented Willem's parents' café. They had a daughter a

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[90]Wilkie, "Portrait," 28. It is as yet unclear to me who this uncle was.

[91]"I had an uncle who was a seaman who worked for the Holland-America Line. He spoke to me about the U.S. and he had a friend, another seaman, who brought me an American football. He also talked about America a lot. I met people like that when I was 9, 10 years old"; Rogers, "The Artist at 74," 21.

[92]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

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few years older than himself and he had a crush on her. He was fascinated with a reproduction of Emmanuel Leutze's Washington Crossing the Delaware (1851, Metropolitan Museum of Art) that this family had and with the American flag in the form of the shield-shaped emblem.[93] To Tom Ferrara, he remembered the family as American, his own age as eight or nine, the daughter as about eleven.[94]

In one childhood event, de Kooning was playing at marbles with friends in the street near his house, remembered by Koos as the Zaagmolenstraat, when a marble fell down a sewer opening that was covered by a grate.[95] De Kooning described the drama to Amei Wallach in 1979:

> "So some other kid, stronger and older than I was, lifted it [the grate] up so that I could lay on my belly and get that thing I lost." And then he shoved Bill into the sewer, "the goddamn son of a bitch, and he closed the goddamn lid. If it wasn't for an old lady--I remember her very clearly--I would have died there. She saved my life."[96]

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[93]Willem de Kooning, interview by David Sylvester, 1960, reprinted in Hess, 1968, 147; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 15 March 1981.

[94]Tom Ferrara, telephone interview by author, 12 March 1995. Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985, remembered the girl's name as Nina.

[95]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985. Lassooy, who was born in 1912, said that he remembered the event and that he was about one or two years old. The Lassooy family lived at Zaagmolenstraat around 1910, when Willem was about six and before Koos was born, and at Nieuwe Zaagmolenstraat around 1912-15.

[96]Amei Wallach, "My Dinners with de Kooning," Newsday, 24 April 1994, 24. This is a story familiar to de Kooning's family, as conveyed to me by Lisa de Kooning, 4 February 1993, and several times in the 1980s by Elaine de Kooning.

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This was the most dramatic of a series of surprising, usually negative, experiences with water that occurred during de Kooning's life. For instance, on a trip to Miami in the early 1930s his first venture into the water resulted in a man-of-war tentacle wrapped around his ankle, leading to a swollen leg and an evening of serious pain; he avoided the water and never learned to swim.[97] When traveling in Italy in 1959-60 he was so struck by Keats's lines about a water grave, the epitaph on the poet's tomb in Rome, that he held the phrase in waiting as the title for a painting: about fifteen years later, a suitable work came forth and it became . . . Whose Name Was Writ in Water, 1975 (The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York).[98] What could seem merely an apt and poetic allusion, appropriate to the watery, elegaic painting, was also a blend of strongly felt personal experiences: as a child in Holland, a young man in Florida, a mature man on holiday and a yet older man musing on his place in his culture.

One glancing recollection offered by de Kooning about

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[97]Virginia Diaz, interview by author, 18 October 1985, Sarasota, Florida. On 13 June 1979 de Kooning told Amei Wallach, "I never could learn to swim"; Wallach, "Dinners," 24.

[98]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981: "I guess I could have used it earlier, too, maybe. But I just didn't want to do it. But after a long time, I felt I had to do it." De Kooning spoke of his conversation with Gregory Corso while traveling in Rome in Willem de Kooning, interview with Bert Schierbeek, in Willem de Kooning, ed. Thomas B. Hess and Edy de Wilde (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1968), 78.

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his childhood, too slight to be included in family members' accounts, also bears out an inclination to blend personal experience (or recollection) into the iconography of his creative activity. When he was three years old and living with his mother, he recalled, he managed a journey down the steps of the house in order to play with other children who were there. This vignette of very early independence and sociability came forth while talking about the double stairway he had designed for his Springs studio and house.[99]

Another memory of early years surfaced in 1981 when de Kooning was looking at a book on early Netherlandish painting.[100] He recalled being taken to the art museum by his mother and a man-friend of hers when he was about nine years old. This memory sat unpleasantly. The relationship between his mother and the man wrankled him still at the age of seventy-seven: "I suspected there was something going on there." The good side of it, he explained, was that he got to see the art.[101] If Cornelia had a flirtation during her

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[99]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981.

[100]The period was not strongly represented in the permanent collection of Rotterdam's Boymans Museum during the teen years, but likely to be highlighted in special Christmas exhibitions which were put on every year.

[101]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 4 December 1981. De Kooning described to Joan Ward an uneasiness with his mother in public; there had always been something disturbing to him about her presentation of herself, like a hat tilted just a little too much. Joan Ward, interview by

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second marriage, she may have chosen the specific outing because it would benefit her son, apparently unperturbed that he could take umbrage at the circumstance.

The Breedveld Family

In August 1915 when he was eleven, de Kooning's sister Marie, defender and friend within his domestic world, left the Lassooy household.[102] This loss must have occurred amid strong emotions. She was sixteen; eight months later she married Dirk Breedveld and two weeks after that, gave birth to Antonie Breedveld. Her departure is recorded in the population records as a move to her father's household; that apartment was small and there is no recollection on the part of her half-siblings that she lived there; they do recall however that Leendert was terribly fraught about Marie's circumstance.[103] Cornelia's anger was so intense that Koos, only three at the time, got the idea in later years that Leendert had raped Marie, an unlikely scenario

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author, 1990s.

[102]On 6 August 1915 she was transferred from the Jacobus Lassooy family card to that of Leendert de Kooning, and on 26 April 1916 to the family card of Dirk Breedveld, born Rotterdam 21 November 1891; all, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[103]Neeltje de Kooning Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985, recalled that Leendert was upset: he thought Marie was too young to get married, and yet he had to give his permission.

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from all other accounts.[104] With so many concerns, the loss to Willem may not have appeared important to anyone but himself.

Marie's marriage and the birth of her child took place in Rotterdam. The months of absence prior to these events may have been spent partly in Amsterdam. In any case Breedveld is recorded as having moved from Rotterdam to Amsterdam in February 1916 and then back to Rotterdam in April 1916;[105] on the marriage document his occupation was cited as warehouse clerk (*magazijnbediende*) in Amsterdam.[106] After their April 1916 marriage, Marie and Dirk moved to an apartment on Gerard Scholtenstraat 114b in the same section of town in which the Lassooy and de Kooning families lived. Breedveld, who was twenty-four, eight years older than she, worked in stores that sold furniture, carpets and curtains. After Marie had finished her schooling, when she was twelve or thirteen, she had worked as a hairdresser but after that she became a seamstress; she was later listed as *huisnaaister* in the population register, which meant she worked from her house, making alterations

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[104]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985; Mr. Lassooy was ill when I spoke with him and a number of his assessments tended to be harsh.

[105]Dirk Breedveld, born Rotterdam 21 November 1891, Family card, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[106]Dirk Breedveld and Maria Cornelia de Kooning, Marriage certificate, Rotterdam, 1916, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

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and repairs directly for clients. She had a special aptitude for the cut and drape of clothing for ladies who were hard to fit, perhaps with a physical disability, and did very well with this work. In her son's awareness, she was self-taught; in later years she took classes but, he said, it was an innate ability that had given her her start.[107]

As he grew up, Marie's son, called Tonny by the family, was aware of the close relationship between Marie and her brother, recalling that whenever Willem felt "in the downs" he would visit Marie. Several times he lived with them for a few weeks or so.

Two Still Life Paintings

When Willem was about twelve years old, a household change brought the family to an apartment where he met another boy, slightly older than he, who was also interested in art and who painted in oil. Willem's enthusiasm must have been strong, for his stepfather bought him oil paints.[108] He began to paint in oil before he went to the Academy, perhaps before going to work for the Gidding firm.

At some point while working for the Giddings he had a

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[107]The information in this and the following paragraph comes from the family card of Dirk Breedveld and from Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[108]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 12 July 1983. According to Elaine de Kooning's "Personal History," the donor of the art materials was "an uncle."

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room in the family apartment for his studio. He referred to it as an attic room to Newsday interviewer Amei Wallach in 1979, although several years earlier he had told Joan Levy, a school friend of his daughter Lisa, that the family had never had an attic but that he had always wanted one. To Ms. Levy he said that his mother had gotten him paints and had helped him get going, had made the room available for him.[109] Amei Wallach recorded the conversation on this subject as follows:

> My mother, she used to clean it [the attic], made it beautiful, so I could work there. . . I had a job in a shop then. So after work I would go to the attic there and paint the pictures. Two brothers owned the place and one of them, a very nice man, he used to give me flowers so I could work from them. The other brother was like the artist. He designed murals and things like that. He gave me all the old tubes and showed me how to roll the bottom so there was quite some paint left over, you know -- good paint.[110]

Two still life paintings that de Kooning made when he was twelve were kept by his mother; one has made its way back to the artist's possession and the other remained for a long time with his friend Leo Cohan (figs. 1 and 3).[111]

During an interview with Gaby Rogers in 1978, revealingly proffered after talking about first seeing the

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[109]Joan Levy, telephone interview by author, 30 April 1994.

[110]Wallach, "Dinners," 24.

[111]Black and white photographs of these works are in the Hess Papers, Estate of Elaine de Kooning. The photographs each have the notation "painted at 12 years of age" and are numbered 1 and 2, respectively, in the sequence in which they are presented here.

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work of Paul Klee in New York, de Kooning said,

> I have a painting I did when I was 12 years old. I put a piece of wallpaper behind a coffee pot. A relative recently brought it to me when he came to visit me. The work shows promise, but there is something wrong with it. I saw it immediately; I saw that the top and the bottom of the coffee pot are viewed from different directions.[112]

This interest in the coherence of the spatial representation continued to be the artist's main comment about the work,[113] showing how important his subsequent experience at the Academy was for his assessment of two-dimensional renderings. The awkwardness of de Kooning's childhood work amounts to slight deviations from what one might describe as normative adult work and is entirely unlike the adult Paul Klee's attentiveness to "a naive style,"[114] which had been

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[112]Rogers, "The Artist at 74," 21.

[113]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 May 1983. Jennifer Johnson, Willem de Kooning Office, New York, conversation with author, 1993, was told this by Lisa de Kooning. De Kooning said to Amei Wallach on 13 June 1979, "I made a mistake. Look, I could have made it deeper, put the top on a little less, you know, in relation to the cup. It's a very good picture"; Wallach, "Dinners," 24.

[114]Felix Klee, ed., The Diaries of Paul Klee, 1898-1918 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 278, no. 922, as cited in Donald E. Gordon, Expressionism: Art and Idea (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 104. See also Jonathan Fineberg, "Klee's Rhyme of Childhood," Abstracts and Program Statements 1993, 81st Annual Conference, College Art Association of America, Seattle, 3-6 February 1993, 23; and idem, "Paul Klee und die Rückkehr zu den "Uranfängen," chap. in Mit dem Auge des Kindes: Kinderzeichnung und moderne Kunst (Munich: Gerd Hatje, 1995), 92-129.

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a "revelation" to de Kooning in 1930.[115]

De Kooning's early Still Life [with Coffee Pot] (fig. 1) depicts the plumply proportioned, glazed brown coffee pot paired with a cup and saucer of far more dainty demeanor, stark white with an angular handle and a design of roses along its cup.[116] In front of and between these two ceramic objects on the white table cloth is a small box of Swedish matches: the trademark blue swallow is recognizable as an "X" form on the yellow ground of the commercial package, a design which is still in use after eighty years.[117] A band of brown, perhaps the wood of the table, separates the white cloth from the wallpaper behind. The wallpaper used by the young artist has large, rustically meandering shapes in vivid red, green, blue, and orange; the paint in this section is applied with broad vertical strokes that sometimes leave flickers of white ground. It is likely that de Kooning rearranged some of its shapes, or at least was mindful of the ways in which they echoed the lines of the coffee pot and the tiny flower on the cup.

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[115]Rogers, "The Artist at 74," 21. This must be the Paul Klee exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, 13 March - 2 April 1930.

[116]This still life was reproduced for the first time, in color, in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 13, Fig. 1.

[117]Sally Yard, First Twenty-six Years, 33, 133, points out a number of "X" shapes in de Kooning's abstractions of the 1930s and early 1940s, including the Untitled (Matchbook) of ca. 1942.

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The robust coffee pot and prim cup and saucer are placed close together with the handles of each toward the left, not immediately convenient for use by a right-handed person. The colors in the brown pot range from sienna to umber to green and black with strong white highlights as the roundness and sheen reveal light and shadow and reflections of the table cloth. The modelling of the cup and saucer is accomplished with only white and gray, revealing a mind not aware of colorful French Impressionist shadows; this is apparent as well in the gray-black shaded areas of the tablecloth. The green, red and pink of the cup's floral sprig may be a nod toward the warm colors of the coffee pot and wallpaper but they do not integrate the cup with them.

The pleasure of a coffee break is amplified by the suggestion of smoking, although no paraphernalia is given beyond the match box that could be around just to light the stove. The crisp angular shape of the box and its warm colors help to unite the composition. Surely it is included as a familiar household item without any ulterior intention of rattling the traditional still life repertoire with a contemporary mass-produced product.

On the back of this still life is the beginning of another (fig. 2).[118] A coat of olive green serves as the

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[118]In 1992 the painting was cleaned and the unfinished work on the back of the particleboard was discovered. I am grateful to Roger Anthony and Jennifer Johnson of the Willem de Kooning Office, New York for this information and slides of the work.

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ground for a white chalk outline sketch of what appears to be a metal tea kettle with its top beside it and a graceful vase to the left. Only the cylindrical side of the tea kettle and the area above its handle have been painted. The burnished sheen seems to have lured the artist into painting it first, in complex nuances of white and gray with a bold vertical highlight. The background above the handle, in sienna accented with dark brown at the sides, makes a pleasing arc with a few errant strokes at its edges. There is no indication why this segment of the ground should be so set off; it provides an intriguing--perhaps misleading--view of the young artist considering figure and ground as complementary forces. The vase has received a vertical highlight, a projected link with the tea kettle.

The other extant still life painting (fig. 3) from about 1916, also in oil on particleboard, is only slightly smaller and shares dark, intense colors and a pleasure in highlights. Here, an earthenware pitcher sits directly on a wooden tabletop with two lemons and an orange; most of the upper background is a green, umber, and sienna striped cloth. The coloring of the pitcher takes account of the yellow reflections of the lemons, but that of the table seems to be less carefully observed. The shadows on the table are made with black (and perhaps green); all go to the right, in consonance with the leftward highlights on the pitcher. The highlights on the orange and the leftmost

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lemon, however, are more centered and counter a sense of a uniform source of light. All the highlights are in white impasto, vivid enough to cause the inside of the pitcher to come forward a little too much. The stripes on the background cloth are thalo green and sienna brown, overpainted with gentle strokes of umber so that the interstices are uneven and more colorful. An irregularity in the treatment of the stripes puts the greenest one at the center of the orange and the widest at the center of the pitcher.

The Still Life [with Pitcher, Lemons, and Orange] is a pleasing one, probably a mixture of carefully observed objects and more generally rendered ground and background. Instead of two entities with a smaller one between them, as is the case on both sides of the other early painting, this work has its four items placed at curious distances from each other, making the orange and foreground lemon seem quite independent.

The two still lifes are agreeable paintings. A part of their merit, of course, is the warm smile of appreciation they evoke for a twelve-year-old's attentive efforts, the earnest beginnings of a long career.

Holland and Rotterdam during and after World War I

In historian E. H. Kossman's account of the Netherlands during World War I, industry, agriculture and navigation

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benefitted from the country's neutrality during the first three years[119] but in 1917 the economic situation turned. With the stagnation of shipping, supplies became scarce and rationing was imposed. Unemployment in industry spread rapidly and the cost of living rose. Meat, butter and cheese were sold to the export market and the food needs of the populace were neglected, despite government efforts to alter the situation. Kossman summarized the troubled economic and social situation in 1918:

> By the end of the war the condition of the workers, badly clothed, underfed, miserably housed, was desperate. Although most of them were not revolutionary-minded they were doubtless full of resentment against the still ostentatious luxury displayed by the individuals who had made huge profits, and against the Dutch bourgeoisie generally--the shipowners, bankers, and merchants--who had done very well during the first years of the war and behaved with due caution during the last.[120]

As the shipping center, Rotterdam felt the blockade strongly. Already in June 1916 there were food riots.[121] De Kooning later recalled to Elaine that during the war the women of Rotterdam "attacked the men who . . . wheel[ed] bread through the streets, grabbed the bread, and ran." When these incidents were reported in the newspapers, "the

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[119]E. H. Kossmann, The Low Countries, 1780-1940, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 552.

[120]Ibid., 553.

[121]Herman Romer, Rotterdam in de jaren tien 1910-1920 (Zaltbommel: Europese Bibliotheek, 1985), 108-09.

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women in Amsterdam all ran out and did the same thing."[122] To Robert Jonas, a close friend in the 1930s, de Kooning remembered people in the street, chanting alternately "Red, Bread."[123]

The Lassooys survived primarily on turnips and potatoes, more turnips than anything, de Kooning told Elaine. He was aware of the irony that the food products of the nation, including butter, were sold to England and Germany, leaving the Dutch to eat margarine.[124]

During the war the Dutch state had busied itself with rewriting its constitution in order to allow for universal male suffrage, declared in December 1917. Women gained the vote in 1920. The first elections under the new Constitution took place in July 1918. While the socialists made considerable gains, the confessional parties did so too and in fact dominated Parliament.[125] Not long after the new government was in place, a number of disturbances made it seem as if revolution might occur. In a speech on 11 November 1918 in Rotterdam the socialist leader Pieter J.

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[122]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[123]Robert Jonas, interview by author, 4 December 1984, Brooklyn, N.Y.

[124]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[125]Kossmann, Low Countries, 555-56. The confessional parties, those of the various religious groups, historically were opposed to liberalism.

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Troelstra proclaimed that the recent German revolution would be continued in the Netherlands; he foresaw revolt in the armed forces and police, abdication by the "bourgeoisie" in power, and called for abolition of the monarchy. At the end of a tense week, loyalty to the nation and monarchy prevailed.[126] Perhaps it was to this period that de Kooning referred once in a conversation about rulers; he mused on the bravery called for from the royalty, to ride calmly in an open carriage waving to the crowd during an uncertain time.[127]

The unrest of the period encouraged enactment of progressive social measures. The Labor Act of 1919 brought the eight-hour working day; the disability insurance and old-age insurance, initiated in 1913, were extended and made fully operative. But a depression between 1920 and 1923 made employers balk at their responsibilities for workers' welfare and brought social legislation to a halt. The early 1920s were a time of unemployment and widespread dissatisfaction, causing gains for the socialists in the

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[126]The German navy had mutinied at Kiel on 4 November 1918 and on 10 November Kaiser Wilhelm had escaped into exile in the Netherlands. Gerald Newton, The Netherlands: an Historical and Cultural Survey 1795-1977 (London: Ernest Benn, 1978), 97-98; Kossmann, Low Countries, 558-60.

[127]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 13 April 1986. Queen Wilhelmina appeared at a demonstration on 18 November 1918 in The Hague, to tremendous applause; Newton, Netherlands, 98. De Kooning's family name, of course, is a variation on the word for king.

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1925 elections.[128] In 1923 the anarchistic Rapaille-partij (Rabble Party) earned enough votes from the disaffected in Rotterdam to place its candidate on the Town Council.[129] According to later accounts, the Lassooy family maintained a skeptical remove from politics.[130] After 1925 the Dutch economy recovered, joining a general boom in the world economy; on 28 April 1925 the Netherlands returned to the gold standard, an indication of confidence and stability.[131]

Bankruptcy and a New Neighborhood

By the outbreak of World War I Jacobus Lassooy and the family lived in the Noord neighborhood, where they would stay for four years. The café business foundered. Whether management or war conditions were the cause, from January 1916 Lassooy could not pay the rent for the café; he tried unsuccessfully to obtain a loan; finally, in May 1917, pushed by his landlord, he declared bankruptcy. Over the next twenty months, two houses owned by Lassooy's family were put on the market and his share, one-ninth, went to his

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[128]Kossmann, Low Countries, 659-61.

[129]Herman Romer, Rotterdam in de jaren twintig, 44-45.

[130]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, said that the family wasn't interested in politics; their attitude was that politicians always promise, and then don't deliver. Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[131]Kossmann, Low Countries, 661, 658.

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creditors, who came out reasonably well, with eighty-six per cent of what they were owed. Cornelia's cushion against poverty was diminished. The court had ruled that Lassooy be allowed to keep his license, worth ten gilders a week, in order to feed his family.[132]

During this period of financial distress, documented from January 1916 to January 1919, peaking in spring 1917, Willem grew from a boy of eleven to a youth of fourteen. Whether he knew the details of the household finances is now a matter of conjecture; his younger brother never learned of the bankruptcy.[133] The timing corresponds to the end of Willem's elementary schooling; education past the age of twelve--for Willem, April 1916--was not compulsory.

In de Kooning's later awareness, it was his mother's decision that he stop his schooling and go to work. She took his paycheck for household expenses and gave him an allowance, a practice not unusual in working-class families.[134] Whatever his own ideas at the time, de

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[132]Jacobus Lassooy, Family card, has the date 2 May 1917; Arrondissements Rechtbank, Rotterdam, Records of Faillissements, filed in Rijksarchief, The Hague, contain the information given in this paragraph. I am grateful to Jacqueline Boreel for assistance in transcribing, translating, and explaining this material.

[133]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 23 July 1985, Rotterdam.

[134]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985. Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History." See also P. M. Hough, Dutch Life in Town and Country (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 52.

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Kooning later regretted not having had the opportunity to continue his education.[135] His complaint to Elaine was that his mother should have sent him to the Academy during the day.[136]

Not long after the bankruptcy proceedings were underway, the Lassooy family moved to Tuindersstraat 144, just west of the center of Rotterdam.[137] A second move in this area, to Aert van Nesstraat 114a, was recorded in March 1918; two years later, the family moved upstairs in the same building. In April 1921, after four years in the center of the city, crucial to Willem's development, they relocated to Pijnackerplein, in the Noord neighborhood of Lassooy's first café and Leendert's factory. It is unclear what work Lassooy did during this time. He disappears from the Rotterdam Adresboek until 1923, an indication that he paid

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[135]As noted earlier, he had voiced resentment to his half-sister who grew up in father de Kooning's household that she had had a more privileged upbringing and had been able to go on to secondary school. Eight years after Willem left primary school, when it was time for Koos to make the decision about secondary school, he chose to continue his schooling with the approval and support of his parents, but soon changed his mind and went to sea; he visited his brother in New York a number of times. In the early years Cornelia took his pay, too. Koos Lassooy, interviews by author, 25 April 1985 and 4 August 1985.

[136]Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History."

[137]Mauritsstraat, an address of the Lassooy family around 1910, was one block west of Tuindersstraat. Adriaan Gordijn informs me that, according to the Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam for the years 1919-22, a café in the name of Chr. Tupker was located at Tuinderstraat 144; it is most likely he who rented Lassooy's license.

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for housing in a different way, perhaps by the week, perhaps as a sublet.[138] Certainly he either used his café-license or, more likely, rented it to another.

If financial circumstances dictated work rather than schooling for Willem, the neighborhood offered a favorable location.[139] At Aert van Nesstraat 130, just around the corner from the Tuindersstraat address and about seven doors from the next family address, was the decorating firm of Gidding & Zonen. In Koos's memory, father Lassooy took young Willem to the firm one day, asking if they would take on an apprentice.[140]

With details that are poignant in retrospect, de Kooning described the event to Gaby Rogers in 1978,

> When I left school my stepfather took me around to look for a job. He kept stressing the point that it wasn't the money he was interested in. We found a place where they hired me.[141]

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[138]In Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1923, his trade is given as stoker. I thank Adriaan Gordijn for the explanation about payment for housing.

[139]The addresses are recorded on the Lassooy family card with only an occasional date. It is possible that the move to this neighborhood occurred as a result of Willem's new position.

[140]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[141]Rogers, "The Artist at 74," 21.

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CHAPTER 2

GIDDING & ZONEN, 1916-1920

Willem de Kooning started work at the firm of Gidding & Zonen (Gidding & Sons) in 1916, perhaps early in the summer.[1] There he worked a twelve-hour day for a number of months, then an eight-hour day, a change that must have been initiated voluntarily by his employers for it only became law throughout the Netherlands in 1919.[2] In de Kooning's telling, his aptitude in painting led Jan and Jaap Gidding

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[1]In a number of accounts he recalled that he was twelve: Wilkie, "Portrait," 24; Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History." On one occasion he said he had to be twelve; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 August 1985. It is likely that he left grammar school at the end of the academic year.

[2]Hansmaarten Tromp, "Willem de Kooning: 'Elke stijl is fraude'," De tijd, 21 October 1977, 12: Toen ik er kwam had je nog de twaalfurig werkdag. Maar na een maand of zes werd dat omgezet in een achturige. Ze hadden uitgedacht dat mensen evenveel werk verzetten in acht uur als in twaalf uur ... dat was gewoon te lang, vervelend. Nu kreeg je ook meer vrije tijd. (When I came there you still had the twelve hour workday. But after a month or six that was changed to eight hours. They had thought it out that men get through as much work in eight hours as in twelve. That was plainly too long, boring. Then I had more free time.) Jack Kroes, Het paleis aan de laan: De geschiedenis van het bondsgebouw van de ANDB (Amsterdam: Industriebond NVV, 1979), 43, discusses workers' hours in the Netherlands. Monique Gidding described her father Jan Gidding's political views as "modern for the time," interview by author, 18 May 1985, Rotterdam. Elaine de Kooning's recollection, "Personal History," had de Kooning working twelve hours a day for a year until he went to the Academy.

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to press him to go to the Academy for evening classes.[3] No matter how considerable his talent, this recommendation was not unusual; instruction for the tradespeople of the town was part of the Academy's mandate, and the Giddings sent all their promising young workers there.[4] One Dutch art chronicler has spoken of a Rotterdam tradition for its painters to receive their background as housepainters.[5]

De Kooning's Recollections

In describing his four years at the firm of the Giddings, de Kooning proffered, "Well, there it wasn't: 'time is money.'" He recalled making coffee for the men, tea in the afternoon, and fetching things. He spoke of the older workers as helpful in teaching him: "I got a lot of training but also a lot of cleaning up for everybody." He learned lettering at the shop as well as at the Academy. He

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[3]Tromp, "Elke stijl," 12. Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History," wrote of a school teacher who praised young Willem's work. To Wilkie, "Portrait," 24, de Kooning said, "Jaap Gidding suggested I enroll at the Academy."

[4]See Chapter 3. Rotterdam artist Klaas van de Erve (1912-1992), letter to author, 6 and 7 December 1984: "Gidding sent every man to the Academy." This may have been general knowlege or Mr. van de Erve may have learned it from his conversation with Aart Glansdorp, a Rotterdam painter who also worked for the Gidding firm during de Kooning's time there. Mr. Glansdorp declined to speak with me.

[5]Leo Ott, Hendrik Chabot, leven en werk (Rotterdam: Donker, 1981), 22. Painter Jan van Heel (born Rotterdam 1898) recalled that there were a number of housepainters at the Rotterdam Academy when he was a student there, 1920-1923; interview by author, translated by Robin Adèr, 19 June 1986, The Hague.

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referred to his position as that of apprentice and explained that "they also sent me to other places where work was going on."[6] Among such "other places" he has mentioned hotel lobbies[7] and the leaded glass studio:

> I worked in different directions, for instance, on stained glass. I didn't know about stained glass; I worked for those men, they showed me what to do. I learned a lot of qualities in the profession instead of going to school. The shops were nice to work for.[8]

In the 1970s de Kooning spoke of another aspect of Jaap's business work to Joan Levy, a young art student who was a classmate of his daughter Lisa: that of fabric printing, although he may not have been involved in this field; "he said they did it at the shop and that there was a lot of money in it," she recalled.[9]

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[6]Willem de Kooning, interviews by author: "Time is money," 1985; a similar comment was made regarding working for Bernard Romein, 28 October 1984; cleaning up and other places, 23 August 1985; lettering and apprentice, 23 June 1985.

[7]Wilkie, "Portrait," 24: "we did a lot of hotel lobbies and that sort of thing."

[8]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 August 1985. I shall use the term "leaded glass," a translation of the Dutch *glas in lood*, as the more generic term for what English-speakers usually call "stained glass"; *gebrand-schilderde glas* (literally, "fired-painted glass") is a more specific technique, also used by Gidding, as was glass-etching.

[9]Gidding made designs for fabrics and wallpapers that were produced by outside factories. Mienke Simon Thomas, "Textile," in Industry & Design in the Netherlands 1850-1950, ed. Reyer Kras, Elinoor Bergvelt, Petra Dupuits, Titus Eliëns, and Désirée Koninkx (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1985), 83 and passim. De Kooning introduced this subject in a discussion of how Ms. Levy would earn a living. She recalled conversations in which de Kooning spoke of his time

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In a 1985 conversation with me and Elaine de Kooning about the Academy and the Gidding firm, de Kooning said, "The Academy was completely different in feeling [from the shop] . . . the shop was better than the Academy." He probably had in mind the general attitude among the men toward their work and toward him; at the Academy the experience was more authoritarian, even military. Elaine added at this point in the conversation that Bill had often spoken with her about learning how to handle paint in the shop.[10] This is especially important since he did not receive instruction in painting at the Academy, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

To Gaby Rogers in 1978, when the conversation turned to using safflower oil as a medium, de Kooning explained, "I have had so much experience from being a housepainter, decorator, ceiling painter and artist that I should know everything about painting. . . . People don't know how much you can learn as a housepainter or in display houses." He

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at the Giddings' in words that ring true to recorded conversations: "'I was the apprentice, the go-fer. The men were all like my father. One boss was so nice to me.'" From his descriptions she recalled that the firm produced "huge walls of etched glass and mural paintings." Her assessment was that de Kooning "got a sense of commitment to work, commitment to a job, and how to make something" from the men at Gidding's. Joan Levy, telephone interview by author, 30 April 1994.

[10]Willem and Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 23 June 1985. De Kooning likened the Academy to the military in interviews by author, 4 November 1982, 2 December 1984, 23 August 1985.

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went on to describe the Gidding firm:

> It was a terrific big place, and I learned a lot there. I worked there as a housepainter and decorator. I learned about mixing paint with water and oil. . . . I believe in being employed to learn things. If you work for a decorator, you pick up certain things that you would never do otherwise because you have to do all kinds of things. So if you work for a place or a group of people you learn in that way.[11]

In another recollection of the Gidding firm, already cited in the previous chapter, de Kooning spoke of Jan Gidding as "a very nice man," who gave him flowers for the still life paintings he made at home and of Jaap as "the artist" who "designed murals" and who gave him old tubes of paint that had quite a bit of paint still in them.[12] He thus continued making still life paintings in oil in his free moments at home after he had started to work for the Gidding firm. The Lassooy family budget did not offer much leeway for still life objects and the oil paints that he needed, but the Gidding brothers helped in this regard. Whether that help included advice, instruction, or criticism related to painting is not known. From his comments, it would appear that de Kooning had considerable contact with both Jan and Jaap.

In his 1960 conversation with David Sylvester, de Kooning recalled that his interests when he was "fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old"--the time he was at the Gidding

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[11]Rogers, "Artist at 74," 21.

[12]Wallach, "Dinners," 24 (interview of 13 June 1979).

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firm--were more attuned to being an artist in the fine arts sense of the word than they were a little later when he was about nineteen and twenty, a time when "you really want to go up in the world and you don't mind giving up art." His intention when nineteen and twenty was to,

> become an applied artist . . . . a designer or a commercial artist. . . . At that time we were influenced by the de Stijl group. The idea of being a modern person wasn't really being an artist in the sense of being a painter.[13]

This recollection across forty years does not elaborate on the youth's earlier ideas about the higher calling of art. Whatever the views were, they seem to have been held during de Kooning's his first three years at the Academy, while working for the Gidding brothers.

Of his work for the Giddings, he explained, "I had a nice reputation over there, a nice standing. I went through quite a few years of being there."[14]

Gidding & Sons, the Firm

Gidding & Sons was one of many small firms of painter-decorators in the city of Rotterdam. It was founded by Johannes Gidding who had died in 1914 and was continued under his two sons, Jaap and Jan, through the late 1920s, and then under Jan through most of the 1950s. Jaap continued to be associated with the business by providing

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[13]Hess, 1968, 146-47.

[14]Willlem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 August 1985. He continued, "Later on I did the still life."

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designs while also working on his own.[15] In 1916 when the twelve-year-old de Kooning entered the Gidding shop, its owners were twenty-nine and twenty-five years of age. Jaap, the elder, had more art training and was perhaps the more artistically talented and ambitious, and his work and interests seem to have been more crucial for the artistic direction of the firm during Willem's years there.

Advertisements for the Gidding firm describe its offerings. The greatest amount of copy is on an undated advertisement (fig. 4) after the two sons were affiliated with the firm; it reads, amid restrained, symmetrical decorative forms, "Gidding & Zonen, Schilders, Ateliers voor Dec Schilderwerk, Ontwerpen voor Kunstnijverheid, Oudekunst Handel," further amplified with "in het wapen van St. Lucas."[16] These words declare that first and foremost, the principals are painters, in the sense of practitioners of the fine art; their studios attend to decorative painting and they create designs for applied/industrial art, as well as deal in the sale of old art. The terms decorative painting and industrial art straddle older and newer views

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[15]Jaap Gidding lived during 1923-25 in Germany, Belgium and Paris. Information from the Bevolkingsregister at the Rotterdam Gemeentearchief was kindly supplied by Drs F. A. M. Schoone, letter to author, 11 March 1985.

[16]Original source unknown, photocopy sent to me by Klaas van de Erve. By 1911 the Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam had similar information, listing the firm as "Gidding & Zonen," with the descriptions "Schilders en Decorateurs, Oude Kunsthandel, Atelier voor kunstnijverheid."

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of the profession.[17] The heraldic shield of St. Lucas refers, not to the earlier guilds, but rather to the exhibition society of painters established in Amsterdam in 1882; both Jan Gidding, the father, and Jaap participated in the yearly exhibitions of this group.[18]

In late 1919, the business letterhead (fig. 5) still proclaimed affiliation with the St. Lucas society.[19] Now the business was declared to be "Schilderwerk, Glas in Lood, Kunsthandel:" painting, of pictures and interiors indicated in the same word, leaded glass work, and art dealer. There was a second address, indicated in the Rotterdam Adresboek as that of the glass studio;[20] leaded glass may have entered the range of production as a result of Jaap's training. It was a sensible business choice because leaded glass windows were very popular in Holland in the first

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[17]Adi Martis, "Terminology and ideology," in Industry & Design, ed. Kras and others, 15-20.

[18]A. B. Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst in Nederland 1900-1914, Utrechtse Kunsthistorische Studiën, III (Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1959), 66. Exhibition records, library of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

[19]Typography section, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. It has a crisp, elegant typeface based on Roman capitals with decorative wavy lines confined to a corner, enclosed in a clean rectangle.

[20]This location, at Mauritsstr. 49b, first appears in the Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1919; the listing continues through de Kooning's association with the firm.

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decades of the twentieth century.[21]

The private homes which the firm painted, according to the son of its longtime foreman, Johannes (Jan) F. van Ingen (1876-1979), were those of shipowners and bankers living in western Rotterdam, the wealthier part of the city around 1900.[22] Jaap Gidding's daughter remembered that the firm had handled the decorations for the house of an executive of the prosperous Gist & Spiritus factory in Delft.[23] In the awareness of Jan G. M. van Ingen, son of the foreman, who was near in age to de Kooning, easel paintings were not offered for sale by the firm. After the German bombardment of Rotterdam in 1940, the firm never regained its earlier stature.[24]

Rotterdam artists who knew the Gidding firm from the

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[21]The high point of the use of leaded glass in private houses was 1890-1930, especially 1900-1920. Carine Hoogveld, Frans van Burkom and Ellinoor Bergvelt, "Een nieuwe kunst -- sierende en monumentale glaskunst 1890-1930," in Glas in lood in Nederland 1817-1968, ed. Carine Hoogveld (The Hague: SDU, 1989), 55, 60. Frans van Burkom, "Kunstvormgeving in Nederland," in Nederlandse architectuur 1910-1930, Amsterdamse School, ed. Ellinoor Bergvelt, Frans van Burkom, Liesbeth Crommelin, Freerk Sleeboom and Wim de Wit (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1975), 88-90.

[22]Jan G. M. van Ingen, son of Jan F. van Ingen, interview by author, 25 July 1985, Rotterdam. The elder van Ingen started working for Gidding around 1909 and continued there throughout his career.

[23]Mrs. Jan Siep, née Auguste Sophie Gidding in 1912, interview by author, 8 May 1986, Naarden.

[24]Jan G. M. van Ingen, interview by author, 25 July 1985. He was born in 1905 and visited the shop often during his youth on errands for his father.

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1920s recalled it from the perspective of the mid-1980s as "advanced, modern, but in a gentle way."[25] This seems an apt characterization, if we are to judge from the reproductions which remain, most of which document Jaap Gidding's career, during the course of which the idea of the modern underwent considerable changes. In his daughter's recollection, Jaap Gidding considered his work to be modern, although in 1921 the Dutch critic Ro van Oven reported that, "without hesitation he classifies himself among those who strive to follow an already disappearing tradition."[26] Gidding's work seems modern, not in the sense of upholding particular new principles, but in adapting a sensibility to what clients found pleasing and current.

Jaap Gidding's sensibility was capable of a variety of directions, especially in the time that de Kooning worked in the firm, 1916-1920. This period spanned the formation of the De Stijl group and the early years of the Amsterdam School, the two modern movements of Dutch applied arts, but

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[25]Nico Benschop, interview by author, 4 May 1985, Rotterdam; Klaas van de Erve, who was present, concurred. These Rotterdam artists, born in 1907 and 1912, respectively, were probably less aware of the pre-1920 work. Benschop's wording recalls architectural historian B. Zevi's 1953 description of the Amsterdam School as "modern but with charm," as quoted by Helen E. Searing, "Housing in Holland and the Amsterdam School," (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1971), xxv.

[26]Mrs. Siep, interview by author, 25 July 1985. Ro van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 31, no. 62 (1921): 296-301. Van Oven also wrote on De Stijl artists' work during this period.

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Gidding was personally involved with neither at their inceptions. The two major movements of the previous generations of designers in Holland had been the international floral Art Nouveau--especially strong in Rotterdam, The Hague, and Delft--and the Nieuwe Kunst, the restrained and geometric Dutch counterpart developed in Amsterdam.[27] Both these movements had waned, about 1900 and 1904 respectively, during the time Gidding received his training and began his career. Around 1908 Dutch interior design interests were directed most toward Germany, especially Munich and Darmstadt, and Austria, particularly Vienna.[28] Gidding spent four years in Munich at this time and his career incorporates much from that sojourn with specifically Dutch aspects of both Art Nouveau and Nieuwe Kunst. As the Amsterdam School and De Stijl developed, he interacted with these practitioners, mostly those of the Amsterdam School, producing part of a famous Amsterdam School ensemble and participating in what was both its peak and swan song, the Dutch pavilion at the 1925 Exposition

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[27]Nieuwe Kunst was first identified as such in 1966 by Louis Gans, Nieuwe Kunst: De Nederlandse bijdrage tot de Art Nouveau. Dekoratieve kunst, kunstnijverheid en architektuur omstreeks 1900 (Utrecht: A. Oosthoek's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1966), and the term is now generally accepted. The polarity between The Hague and Amsterdam is discussed in Hoogveld and others, "Een nieuwe kunst," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 72, 89.

[28]Frans van Burkom and Wim de Wit, "Vormgeving als kunst, kunst als vormgeving," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 38-40.

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Internationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, where he was awarded a silver medal. He designed a cover for Wendingen, the periodical associated with the Amsterdam School, in 1921 and that same year placed advertisements in the periodical De stijl.[29]

Jaap Gidding (1887-1955)

Training and Early Influences

Jaap Gidding, whose given names were Jacobus Wilhelmus, received his art training from his father Johannes and the Rotterdam Academy.[30] Johannes Gidding (1859-1914), who went by the name of Jan, had also studied at the Rotterdam Academy, and had exhibited still life paintings in the exhibitions of Living Artists held at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and the Rotterdam Academy and also with the St. Lucas society at the Stedelijk Museum from 1899 to at least

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[29]Wendingen 4, no. 6 (1921): cover; reproduced in Giovanni Fanelli and Ezio Godoli, Wendingen 1918-1931, Documenti dell'arte olandese del Novecento (Florence: Centro Di, 1982), fig. 35, p. 100. Advertisements for the Gidding firm appeared in De stijl 4, no. 1 (1921): i; 4, no. 12 (1921): i; 5, no. 10/11 (1922): ii. Mrs. Siep, interview by author, 25 July 1985, particularly remembered Wendingen, remarking that her father had every one of the issues, so it is possible that de Kooning learned of this periodical from its first appearance in 1918.

[30]A respected Dutch designer, Gidding has been included in articles and books on various aspects of Dutch design work; he is the subect of an unpublished doctoraalscriptie by Sandra van Dijk, "Jaap Gidding," (Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1990), which I have not received permission to photocopy nor had the opportunity to read.

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1909.[31] One of the father's still life paintings (fig. 6), in the collection of Jan van Ingen, son of the foreman in the shop, is a primarily tonal work in browns and beige with a creamy impasto, pleasing in its small scale and rounded forms.

Jaap studied at the Rotterdam Academy intermittently for five years between 1899 and 1905.[32] He began at the age of twelve in the division of *Handteekenen*, the course of study most attuned to the fine arts. In his third year, Jaap continued with the division of *Handteekenen* but added the course of study called *Ornamentteekenen* (Ornament Drawing) which he chose over *Kunstnijverheid* (Industrial Arts or Applied Arts), a choice which could show a more traditional bent. The two latter divisions, however, were joined in 1903 under their new head, Adolf le Comte. Working in The Hague and Delft, Le Comte had been an important educator and publicist for the improvement of Dutch applied arts since the 1870s; in the second half of

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[31]There is some confusion in both P. A. Scheen, Lexicon Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars 1750-1950 (The Hague, 1969) and the exhibition records of the library of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, between Jan Gidding the father's and Jaap Gidding's exhibition history. In the actual catalogues the entries before 1914 are for either "Jan" or "J." Gidding; I propose by reason of age that the "J." refers to the father in 1905 and 1906; in 1910 it could refer to either.

[32]Verslag der Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen te Rotterdam over 1899-1900 (Rotterdam, 1900); and successive yearly reports for 1900-01; 1901-02; 1904-1905.

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the 1890s he was one of the artists who brought international Art Nouveau forms to the Netherlands.[33]

For the academic years 1902-03 and 1903-04, Gidding is not listed among the students of the Academy. His daughter recalls that Jaap disliked school so his father had said, "go to work in the firm." Instead of the Gidding firm, though, Jaap at this time worked in two notable stained glass studios, that of Kerling in The Hague, and the Schouten firm in Delft.[34] Adolf le Comte, who assumed his post at the Rotterdam Academy during the time that Jaap was on leave, was himself affiliated with the Schouten firm. While with Schouten, Le Comte had revived the style of the Crabeth Brothers, the famous Dutch Renaissance designers of stained glass, as well as creating works in the curvilinear style of Art Nouveau.[35] Both these styles would have been available to Gidding between 1902 and 1904; a 1921 discussion of Gidding's work stresses his early interest in the Crabeth Brothers but does not mention the Art Nouveau

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[33]Gans, Nieuwe Kunst, 44. Works by Le Comte are illustrated in Gans, pls. 96-99, 101-103. Plate 99 is a tile panel of a figure, Jealousy, ca. 1901, made with angular lines; plates 101-103 are tile panels of floral and bird designs, ca. 1904. The entry in Scheen, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars, lists Le Comte as Gidding's main professor at the Academy.

[34]Mrs. Siep, interview by author, 25 July 1985; van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 298; van Dijk, "Jaap Gidding," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 245-46.

[35]Carine Hoogveld, "De ontwikkeling van de glasschilderkunst in de negentiende eeuw," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 42, 44.

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production of that studio.[36] At the Kerling studio, decorative floral designs were the major production before 1903, while more rectilinear geometric forms were beginning to enter the repertoire and came to be dominant by about 1905.[37]

Gidding resumed his studies at the Rotterdam Academy for at least one more year, that of 1904-05, at the end of which he was promoted to the sixth and last Class in the division of *Decoratieve Kunst en Kunstnijverheid*. Jaap's brother Jan, who was four years younger than he, attended classes at the Academy for two years, from 1905 to 1907.[38] Jaap was listed, with his father, as a member of the Academy in 1908.[39] Around this time, Jaap made at least one of several study trips to Italy; he was especially inspired by the Byzantine mosaics in Venice and Ravenna.[40] It is likely that he spent some time in Paris during this period[41] and must also have begun his studies in Munich.

A fellow-student at the Rotterdam Academy, Constance

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[36]Van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 298.

[37]Hoogveld and others, "Een nieuwe kunst," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 69.

[38]In the division of *Handteekenen;* Verslag der Academie over 1905-06 and Verslag der Academie over 1906-07.

[39]Verslag der Academie over 1907-08.

[40]Obituary, Rotterdams Nieuwsblad, 26 April 1955.

[41]Jaap Gidding, "Jaap Gidding," in Nederlanders en hun werk, ed. N. Japikse (Amsterdam: Van Holkema en Warendorf N.V., 1938), 526-27.

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Madgalena van Erp, became Jaap's wife in December 1909. Shortly after their marriage, the couple moved to Munich for two and a half years, perhaps longer.[42] This was a continuation of art studies, especially enjoyed within a community of artist friends, in his daughter's account of family recollections.[43] The stay in Munich seems to have been the most decisive influence in Jaap's development. There, according to van Oven's 1921 account, he was especially influenced by the glass painter Franz Becker-Tempelburg and the work of Johan Thorn Prikker.[44] The leaded glass work of these two artists is quite different, one from the other. A 1915/16 article in Kunstgewerbeblatt reproduces a number of windows by the former; Becker preferred static all-over decorative motifs, symmetry, and a modicum of rippling classical drapery and dimensional shading for robust figures that are nonetheless aligned with

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[42]Documents and a family memory do not match. The Bevolkingsregister puts their return to Rotterdam to August 1912; Mrs. Siep's awareness of family history has it that her father came back to Holland in 1914 with the outbreak of World War I, and also the time of his father's death (24 August 1914, according to Scheen, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars); interview by author, 8 May 1986. Van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 299, reported that Gidding spent four years in Munich; if we allow for study time before the marriage, he could have been in Munich from 1908 to 1912, dates offered by van Dijk, "Jaap Gidding," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 245.

[43]Mrs. Siep, interview by author, 25 July 1985, recalled one name: Holder Pfeiffer.

[44]Van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 299.

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a consideration for the surface plane (fig. 7).[45] These are qualities less in evidence in Gidding's early glass work than are similarities to Thorn Prikker's medieval-expressionist glass designs, as will be discussed below.

While in Munich Gidding may also have been acquainted with the painting and decorative work, and surely with the theater designs, of Fritz Erler.[46] In a biographical essay, Gidding wrote that after studying in Munich he was "active for some time at the Reinhardt Theater in Munich."[47] Max Reinhardt's Künstler Theater was in Berlin, but he was director in residence of the Munich Künstler Theater in the summers of 1909 and 1910, and guest director in 1911,[48] where Fritz Erler was a designer.[49] Erler's

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[45]Fritz Hellwag, "Becker-Tempelburg," Kunstgewerbeblatt, n.s., 27, no. 8 (1915/16): 141-47.

[46]Scheen, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars, which has errors, as noted earlier, has him working with Erler on stage sets: "Werkte in Munchen bij prof. F. Erler (toneeldekoraties)." An error in Scheen not mentioned earlier is the designation of Marinus Gidding (1863-1925) as brother of Jaap and son of Jan; Jan's birthdate of 1859 disqualifies this.

[47]Gidding, "Jaap Gidding," in Nederlanders, 526: "was hij gedurende eenigen tijd werkzaam bij het Reinhardt-theater te München." The experience with Reinhardt was also mentioned by Lambertus Zwiers, "Werk van Jaap Gidding," Bouwkundig Weekblad 39 (1918): 88.

[48]Peg Weiss, Kandinsky in Munich (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 202, n. 83.

[49]Georg Fuchs, Revolution in the Theater: Conclusions Concerning the Munich Artists' Theatre (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), 88. Elaine de Kooning, interview, 20 January 1985, recalled that de Kooning had spoken to her of his early interest in Berlin because of the theater

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color in paintings of this period was "strong and bright," showing the influence of Impressionism combined with "the linear-decorative tendencies of Art Nouveau."[50]

Gidding's special color gamuts are often referred to in Dutch criticism as coming from his stay in Germany. In 1921 Ro van Oven found that, "the German influence . . . sometimes makes his color too strong and his drawing too wild." Several years earlier, Lambertus Zwiers observed that Gidding's stay in Munich had exposed him to the "temperament and luxiuriant colors" often lacking in Dutch artists.[51] It is possible that Erler's use of color was an

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there, a reference that may or may not be related to Gidding; perhaps Elaine de Kooning's memoirs will offer further information. To John McMahon, his assistant and friend in the 1960s, de Kooning spoke of his early interest in Berlin for the advanced state of the applied arts there; John McMahon, interview by author, 15 May 1994.

[50]Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 40, referring to Erler's painting Nordland, 1907.

[51]Deze kunstenaar ontkomt niet steeds aan Duitschen invloed, welke zijn kleur soms te fel, zijn teekening soms wat te gewild maakt; van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 297. Münchener kunstenaars . . . die . . . de groote verdiensten hebben van temperament en kleurenweelde, die bij ons zoo dikwijls geheel ontbreken; Zwiers, "Werk van Jaap Gidding," 88. Zwiers also noted the "large design and extraordinarily fine detailling" in Gidding's work as particularly Dutch traits. (Zijn werk draagt dan ook meestal een grootschen opzet en buitengewoon fijne detailleeringen, welke laatste den echten precieus werkenden Hollander weer door en door verraden.) Brusse, "Binnenhuiskunst," 78, spoke of the influence of "the modern Munich artists" (moderne Münchensche kunstenaarsbent) on Gidding. Cornelis van der Sluys, Machinale Textielkunst, Tapijten, Gordijnen, enz., De toegepaste kunsten in Nederland, no. 2 (Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1925), 38, perhaps referring to van Oven's article, noted that, "Gidding was

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influence; but a more certain source for aspects of Gidding's color range, as well as that of the Amsterdam School designers, was the color range used by the younger German and Austrian interior designers, which in turn was related to contemporary Expressionist painting: green, violet, red, yellow, black and gold.[52]

Constance Gidding participated in the Deutsche Werkstätte, the section of the German Arts and Crafts movement that was associated with the Werkbund and interested in the possibilities of mass-production.[53] Later in Holland, designing for machine production was to become an important aspect of Jaap's career: he is noted for tapestries, carpets, pottery, and glassware which he designed for various manufacturers as well as for fabric and

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once reproached for an all too great influence of German design, especially in his earlier decoration. But although we know that he worked for years in Germany (and again at this moment) and his sympathy is strongly Germanic, above all for the great possibilities there for decorative artists, yet his work is not absolutely German. One can at most say that it is not specifically Dutch." (Men heeft aan Jaap Gidding wel eens een al te grooten invloed der Duitsche sierkunst verweten, vooral bij zijn vroegere decoratie. Maar al weten wij, dat hij jaren in Duitschland werkte (zelfs nog op dit oogenblik) en zijn sympathie zeer sterk Germaansch is, vooral door de groote mogelijkheden daar aan de sierkunstenaars geboden, toch is zijn werk niet absoluut Duitsch. Men kan hoogstens zeggen, dat het niet specifiek Hollandsch is.)

[52]Van Burkom and de Wit, "Vormgeving als kunst," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 40.

[53]See Reyner Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, 2d ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 71.

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wallpaper designs.[54] One published example of Constance Gidding's work is a handcrafted item, an embroidered pillow with a design of stylized poppies (fig. 8) noted by a 1917 Dutch reviewer for its "newness of conception [,] . . . almost overbold color oppositions, of an uncommonly joyous and warm feeling," and the "piquante and powerful contours of her spirited ornament."[55] This work comes near the spiky-Baroque designs of Dagobert Peche, also evident in the early work of fellow-Rotterdam designer Piet Zwart.[56]

Jaap Gidding in Rotterdam, 1912-1920

Returning to Rotterdam in August 1912 with his family now expanded to include two small daughters, Jaap pursued a

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[54]See Industry & Design, ed. Bergvelt and others, passim.

[55]Schier overmoedige kleurtegenstellingen, van een ongemeen joyeuse en warme kleurgevoeligheid, in de pikante en krachtige contouren van haar geestige ornamentiek. Het . . . kussen . . . is een gelukkig voorbeeld van haar werk, dat ook reeds op een tentoonstelling in Den Haag om zijn nieuwheid van opvatting bijzonder werd opgemerkt; Brusse, "Binnenhuiskunst," 71-72, reproduced 69.

[56]Dagobert Peche became a designer at the Wiener Werkstätte in 1915; he is noted for turning away from the principles of functionalism and truth-to-materials toward a rarefied classicism or rococo, with leanings toward chinoiserie, influencing not only the Viennese but also the German Werkstätte. Dutch art historian Frans van Burkom, "Kunstvorming in Nederland," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 92, described Gidding as a disseminator of these forms after 1920. The pillow was also reproduced in Corn. van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst (Amsterdam: Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur, 1921), vol. 2, fig. 21, on the same page as a tea cosy with similar forms by Piet Zwart. Zwart developed further under De Stijl influence to geometrical, functional forms.

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career with his father's firm and took part in a number of exhibitions.[57] He showed oil paintings, watercolors, and drawings but primarily decorative panels and objects. His daughter recalls that he considered the decorative arts his true profession, the work in which he took greatest pride. His independent paintings were to him pleasant but ancillary productions.[58]

Several major events for avant-garde interests in the visual arts occurred in Rotterdam shortly after Gidding's return. In November 1912 a retrospective exhibition of works by Kandinsky was shown at the Oldenzeel gallery.[59] The catalogue of the exhibition contained an introduction written by the artist and a short article by him, "Uber Kunstverstehen," appeared in De Kunst magazine in that same month.[60] Gidding admired Kandinsky for the rest of his life.[61] In the month just prior to this exhibition, the

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[57]As has been mentioned above, it is possible he spent much of 1912 to 1914 in Munich.

[58]Mrs. Siep, interview by author, 25 July 1985.

[59]Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 115 and 270, n. 2, suggests that this may have been a further venue for the Kandinsky exhibition organized by "Der Sturm" in Berlin and exhibited there in October 1912.

[60]Ibid., 115 and 270, n. 3.

[61]Mrs. Siep, interview by author, 25 July 1985. Geurt Imanse, "Van *Sturm* tot *Branding*," in Berlijn - Amsterdam 1920 - 1940 wisselwerkingen (Amsterdam: E. M. Querido's Uitgeverij B. V., 1982), 253, comments that it is striking that Dutch critics tended to take Kandinsky's work seriously, an attitude not usually accorded such new art.

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same gallery showed works by the Italian Futurists, making Rotterdam an important center for awareness of avant-garde artistic currents in the years prior to World War I.[62] This exhibition record contrasts with the reputation of the city's art patrons as notoriously conservative.[63]

When it came to joining artists' exhibition groups, Gidding exhibited with the by then well-established St. Lucas society. Founded in 1882 by a small group of friends who were then students at the Amsterdam Academy, it grew in the following decades to a large exhibiting body without a particular artistic direction until 1908 when its yearly exhibition became a showcase for Dutch art of an expressionistic vein, associated with French Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism, catapulting the society into an important position in modern Dutch painting; this status, however, was shared with the Moderne Kunstkring from 1910 and passed on to the Onafhankelijken (Independants) in 1913.[64] In the 1914 St. Lucas exhibition at the Amsterdam

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[62]Ida Boelema, "De Branding," Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld: Het begin van de abstrakte kunst in Nederland, 1910-1925, Museumjournal 17, no. 5 (1972): 255, 261, n. 3. Futurist works were shown again in Rotterdam at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in May and June 1913. Els Brinkman, De Branding 1917-1926 (Rotterdam: Stichting Kunstpublicaties Rotterdam, 1991), 13, cites critic N. H. Wolf's 1912 observation in De Kunst that the Futurists were taken more seriously in Rotterdam than in Amsterdam or The Hague.

[63]Brinkman, De Branding, 13, marshalls a number of arguments.

[64]Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 66-67, 117.

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Stedelijk Museum Gidding showed Fasching (German for Shrovetide or mardi gras carnival),[65] Fruit (fig. 11) and Wajangpop; in 1916, a decorative panel and peacock decoration; Flowers in 1918; Masks and Still Life in 1919. He also exhibited regularly at Pulchri Studio, The Hague, an exhibition society associated with The Hague School painters and quite traditional by 1914.[66]

Gidding was a member of the first artists' group of the twentieth century to form in Rotterdam, De Rotterdammers, founded in 1914 and comprised for the most part of younger artists; the impelling reason for the group was to increase exhibition possibilities.[67] In the first exhibition, held in spring 1915 at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, Gidding showed White Peacock, a decorative panel.[68] Although De Rotterdammers had no exhibition space of its own until 1922, it was active in finding rooms, seeking subsidies, and holding exhibitions. For this reason it retained the continuing presence of those members who chose to secede and

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[65]The wording in Dutch is *vastenavond* or *dag voor Asdag*.

[66]The Pulchri exhibitions are mentioned in Gidding, "Jaap Gidding," in Nederlanders, 526-27.

[67]Brinkman, De Branding, 15-16.

[68]Vereeniging van beeldende kunstenaars "De Rotterdammers": Eerste tentoonstelling van werken der leden, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 30 May - 27 June 1915, RKK archives, inv. no. 238. Gidding designed the emblem on the cover; thirty-nine artists participated, including Herman Bieling. Rotterdamsche Kunstkring Jaarverslag, 1915, 6, notes that the exhibtion space was rented.

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uphold a more avant-garde view of art.[69] Among these was De Branding, (Breakers, Surf) one of the most active of Holland's avant-garde artists' groups in the period; from 1917 to 1926 it exhibited the works of its Rotterdam members along with foreign avant-garde artists, mostly German, as there were close contacts between De Branding and Der Sturm.[70] De Branding did not espouse a particular style; its only coherent aesthetic was a conviction that its works were breaking with tradition.[71] Gidding was not part of this group, but his classmate at the Academy and friend Herman Bieling was a major organizer of De Branding and Gidding was certainly aware of its events. Whatever knowledge de Kooning had of these activities probably began from the vantage point of the Gidding firm and the instruction at the Rotterdam Academy.

The galleries of the Rotterdam Academy featured De Rotterdammers for the Christmas exhibition in 1917, and again in the spring of 1919, during de Kooning's first and second years of study there. An account of the 1917 show noted of Gidding's arums and poinsettias, "He is decorative but by no means flat."[72] A newspaper article of the same

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[69]Brinkman, De Branding, 16.

[70]Ibid., 28 for contacts with "Der Sturm."

[71]Ibid., 9.

[72]Hij is decoratief maar daarom geenszins vlak; Holland Express, Christmas 1917, typescript from article, collection Siep.

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year stressed the promise of the young Rotterdam artists, dividing them into the path-breakers and those who make fresh, agreeable paintings; Gidding was among the latter. Among the former were members of De Branding--Bieling, Wim Schuhmacher, Johannes Tielens, and non-member Albert Plasschaert, an influential figure for another of the De Branding group, Ger Ladage. The reviewer was sensitive to these artists' "seeking after form and color accents, which . . . were allowed to speak more directly and more consciously to the soul."[73] Some of these works must have belonged to a milieu of late Symbolism fired by Kandinsky's works and writings, as well as by aspects of the Futurists' works and writings.[74]

In his daughter's awareness, Gidding always went to museums and exhibitions. In her recollection, he was very interested in new movements and admired Kandinsky, Klee, and Picasso. He was also fond of Japanese prints. Cubism didn't mean anything to him, however, she recalled; nor was he keen on the later work of Mondrian. The Bauhaus did interest him very much. Gidding was personally connected with several of the architectural giants of the period: his

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[73]Het zoeken naar vorm- en kleuraccenten, die meer direct en meer bewust tot de ziel spreken dan de realisten wilden en vermochten; "De drie tentoonstellingen in d[ ] Academie: De Rotterdammer[s]," [RNH?], [1917?], newspaper clipping in Siep collection.

[74]For commentaries on the careers and illustrations of works of the various De Branding artists, see Brinkman, De Branding.

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daughter recalls that he worked with Hendrik P. Berlage and that Karel P. C. de Bazel was a friend.[75] Although he thought of his work as "modern," Mrs. Siep described her father as "old-fashioned in manners and ways of thinking." He was not particularly interested in America.[76]

Asked about Jaap Gidding's interests in literature, his daughter replied that he loved French and German literature, especially Balzac; he also had a collection of works by Dostoevsky and was very fond of Dickens. Gidding himself stressed his interest in literature in the biographical outline which he prepared for publication in 1938.[77]

Jaap Gidding, 1921 Elsevier's Article

We gain an important picture of Jaap Gidding's character and interests from a 1921 article by Ro van Oven that appeared in the Dutch cultural magazine Elsevier's. The author, who interviewed Gidding and visited the shop, describes him as "a born esthete," an "individualist" seeking his "development and fulfillment in the principle 'art for art's sake.'" She found Gidding in no way allied with those influenced by the English Arts and Crafts

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[75]I have not found documentation to amplify this information.

[76]Information in this and the following paragraph is from Mrs. Siep, interviews by author, 7 July 1985 and 8 May 1986.

[77]"Voor genoegen houdt G. zich gaarne bezig met literatuur." (For pleasure G. happily occupies himself with literature.) Gidding, "Jaap Gidding," in Nederlanders, 527.

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movement who gave primary importance to ethical and social matters.[78] This observation is noteworthy because the English influence was so important and widespread in Holland; the author here lets us know that Gidding as a businessman was happy to make sumptuous works for the wealthy. By contrast, two of de Kooning's other Rotterdam elders in art, Jac. Jongert and Bernard Romein, were deeply concerned with the ethical and social aspects of art-making.

We learn from van Oven's account that Gidding's earliest training and sensibilities directed him toward the "outward and sensual beauty of the Renaissance" and that only belatedly had he come to see the beauties of the spiritual and Romanesque-Gothic and to associate himself with the turn-of-the-century renewal in the decorative arts "inaugurated by Lauweriks and Der Kinderen." Van Oven credited the leaded glass work of Thorn Prikker as an important impetus in this broadening of Gidding's work.[79]

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[78]Hij immers, geboren aestheticus, kan niet anders dan zijn eigen voltooiing en vervollediging zoeken in het l'art pour l'art principe, dat te München jaren achtereen leiding gaf aan de Duitsche kunstnijverheid. Hij, individualist in ieder zijner uitingsvormen, acht he aesthetisch begrip het hoogste; van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 297. Stressing that Gidding was an "individualist in every one of his ways of expression" links him to the concerns of the Amsterdam School.

[79]Gidding werd geheel opgevoed in de meer uiterlijke en zinnelijke schoonheid der Renaissance en het vergeestelijkte der Gothiek bleef hem nog verborgen. Deze invloed is het, die nu nog in zijn ramen te voorschijn komt, nadat hij zich had aangesloten bij de hernieuwing door Lauweriks en Der Kinderen geïnaugureerd; ibid., 299. Lauweriks and Der Kinderen are associated with the Nieuwe Kunst; Lauweriks's

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The designation Renaissance must here refer primarily to the Crabeth Brothers' leaded glass windows, a preference which may have disposed Gidding to appreciate the work of Becker-Tempelburg when in Germany.

The all-important contribution of Symbolism to modern art, the linking of purely formal means with expressive capacity, is cited in this article, perhaps by Gidding. As a result of her meetings with the artist, van Oven wrote that Gidding, "first of all a draftsman, . . . still finds one of the most fundamental truths in van de Velde's saying, 'Line is a force.'"[80] We can only conjecture as to whether this famous dictum made its way into shop talk and the thoughts of the young de Kooning with any of its original potency, if at all.

Early Paintings of Jaap Gidding

For the various media in which he worked, Gidding developed different styles, a conscious point of honor among designers of the previous several decades in their efforts to express the nature of the material with which they were working. The shifts in styles exhibited by Gidding often relate as well to his choices of artists to emulate, for in

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work became important for the Amsterdam School.

[80]Immers deze is eerst teekenaar en vindt nog steeds van de Velde's uitspraak: "Die Linie ist eine Kraft" een der meest fundamenteele waarheden; ibid., 297. Van Oven then went on to proclaim Gidding's color sense stronger than his line.

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many instances his designs closely rely on works by others.[81]

Since Jaap and his brother Jan occasionally supplied Willem with paints and still life subjects, their oil paintings bear noting as possible models for the young artist. As yet, however, few paintings by Jaap and none by Jan Gidding that can be dated prior to 1920 have come to my attention. De Kooning's two early still life paintings, discussed in the previous chapter, may have been made before he began working for the Gidding brothers or in his early days there. No other extant works by the young de Kooning relate to the early Gidding paintings.[82]

An oil portrait of his young wife (fig. 9) which Gidding painted in Munich[83] reveals an Aesthetic/Symbolist pleasure in subtle gray-gold harmonies, gently punctuated by blue beads. The profile view and large patches of paint in the clothing lend an artfulness to what is essentially a

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[81]This was observed by contemporary commentators. A reviewer of an exhibition of India ink drawings by Gidding at the Rotterdamsche Kring in 1920 turned vitriolic against Gidding's willingness to adopt handsome techniques developed by others, lamenting the "gruwelijk oppervlakkig" (abominably superficial) resemblance to the work of Dirk Nijland and Chris Lebeau's drawings of dunes; NRC, 27 November 1920, clipping at RKD.

[82]Subsequent to my visit with them, the Siep family found some early oil paintings by Gidding, some of which Mr. Siep described as "like Jugendstil." Telephone conversation, 19 July 1985; these works were not available during a second visit, 8 May 1986.

[83]Collection Siep; inscribed: "Jaap Gidding / Muenchen."

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tender, faithful representation.

We do not know the colors of City View (fig. 10), a freely brushed gouache made by Jaap in Munich in 1911;[84] looseness of execution gives character and a certain expressive distortion to the forms of buildings and architectural elements. An undated still life oil, Fruit (fig. 11), included in the St. Lucas exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in the spring of 1914, also known in black and white, shows that the artist leaned slightly toward robustness of design at the expense of veristic accuracy of depiction, but one could not call the work expressionistically treated.

Decorative Works, 1916-1921

The years that de Kooning worked for the Gidding firm were the ones in which Jaap first came to prominence in his chosen field of the applied arts. In addition to decorative panels, he exhibited leaded glass windows, carpets, and eterniet panels (etched and painted asbestos cement, a medium which was considered to have great promise, but which soon proved unstable) in a number of shows of the applied arts in Rotterdam, The Hague, and Amsterdam. As well, he designed and supervised the painting of the interiors of

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[84]It is known only by a black and white photograph from the auction catalogue of Sotheby Mak van Waay, Amsterdam, 14 May 1979, no. 459; in RKD files. The purchaser can no longer be traced; Richard Fernhout, Sotheby's Amsterdam, letter to author, 18 July 1991.

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cafés, restaurants, and cinemas in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Arnhem, and Deventer, some of which included his leaded glass windows.[85] He made windows for private residences and businesses, designed upholstery fabrics and wallpapers, and also designed posters for some of his group exhibitions.

Cornelis van der Sluys, with whom Gidding joined in organizing exhibitions of interior arts, wrote in 1921 that Gidding was "a prolific and hardworking designer. In the main, he makes paintings and leaded glass."[86] The two media that van der Sluys found to comprise the major part of Gidding's design work at this time, decorative painting and leaded glass, may also be the ones most likely to have influenced the young de Kooning. Murals for various locations seem to have been painted on canvas in the Rotterdam atelier so de Kooning was probably familiar with

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[85]Elly Adriaansz, "Fragmenten uit een kleurrijk oeuvre: Drie bioscoopinterieurs van Jaap Gidding," Jong Holland 11, no. 2 (1995): 10-14, discusses the decorations of the Luxor-theater in Arnhem of 1915. The Luxor-theater in Deventer opened 23 January 1919; newspaper clipping, 24 January 1919, RKD.

[86]Jaap Gidding is een vruchtbaar en hardwerkend sierkunstenaar. In hoofdzaak maakt hij schilderijen en glas in lood; van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 1, 105. Although a view of Gidding's entire career finds his glass work a proportionately small part of his oeuvre (see van Dijk, "Jaap Gidding," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 245), it did not appear so in 1921. This is borne out as well in Joan Levy's recollection of de Kooning's comments to her, interview by author, 30 April 1994.

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these designs, whether he worked on them or not.[87] As has been noted, de Kooning worked in the glass studio for a time, so this output would have been known to him as well.

Painted Wall Decorations

Gidding's designs for wall murals and leaded glass are markedly different, as is appropriate to the nature of the materials, but this may result as well from Gidding's interest in different models. Even among the murals, there is a distinct divergence in styles at this time. Most of the mural designs are what van der Sluys calls "characteristically 'Gidding':"

> The composition is fantastic, animals and plants are blended with ornament and raised to a refined luxuriance through striking color juxtapositions.[88]

These wall designs by Gidding (figs. 12, 13, 15) have a decidedly oriental cast, a blend of sinuous Indian paisley shapes that derive from Art Nouveau with puffy cloud forms that are more Chinese. The latter quality can be found in contemporary work of the influential Dutch architect and

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[87]Ro van Oven said that when she visited the studio in Rotterdam, work was under way on a frieze destined for the National restaurant in Arnhem; van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 298. A photograph of the studio will be discussed later in this chapter.

[88]Het is karakteristiek "Gidding." De compositie is fantastisch, dieren en planten worden tot ornament verwerkt en door frappante kleurstellingen tot een verfijnde weelde opgevoerd; van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 1, 105, text describing fig. 113, frieze for café National, Arnhem, ca. 1920-21. This frieze is also reproduced in van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," pl. LXII.

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designer, J. L. M. Lauweriks (1864-1932), who worked in Germany between 1904 and 1916 and was associated with the Amsterdam School on his return (fig. 14).[89] One sees as well an affinity with the work of Russian designer Leon Bakst, whose theater sets and costumes had enthralled Europe for almost a decade when they were exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in July 1919.[90] Thus the mural designs most "characteristically 'Gidding'" incorporate fantastic figuration in oriental luxuriance, part of what came to be known as the *bioscoop-stijl* (cinema style).[91] In a 1971 interview about his own "cinema style" wall decorations for the Tuschinsky Theater in Amsterdam, Rotterdam painter Piet den Besten, a near-contemporary and colleague of Gidding, gave as his own most important

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[89]Lauweriks's interior for the 1914 Cologne Werkbund exhibition was reproduced by van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 2, fig. 115, on a page facing two of Gidding's wall designs, reproduced here as figs. 12 and 13. The forms were used as well in Lauweriks's cover for the first issue of Wendingen 1, no. 1 (1918). For Lauweriks, the fanciful organic forms were based on the Golden Section in logarithmic spirals; see Ype Koopmans, "In het voetspoor van Pythagoras: Kosmische symboliek in de Nederlandse architectuur tussen 1900 en 1940," Jong Holland V, no. 5 (1989): 23-34, English summary 39-40.

[90]Tentoonstelling van Aquarellen en Teekeningen van den Russischen kunstenaar Leon Bakst, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 6-20 July 1919, RKK archives, inv. no. 242.

[91]By the mid-1930s such work was alluded to by A. van der Boom, unidentified clipping in Gidding file, RKD, as "een nationaal kwaad uitgegroeiden bioscoop-stijl" (an outgrown national bad cinema-style), but with greater distance we now appreciate the period interests.

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influences Leon Bakst and Gustav Klimt.[92]

Sections of wall paintings that Gidding designed for restaurants during this period survive in black and white photographs, but contemporary discussion gives an idea of the colors used. The frieze of the large room in the Amsterdam restaurant La Reserve, prior to 1921, (fig. 13) was described by Ro van Oven as evoking,

> a peaceful "cosy" mood through the fine soft grey background decorated with a black/gold motif (horn of plenty), enlivened by a few orange dashes of birds in flight and flower petals.[93]

The same author described Gidding's work in the banquet room (fig. 15) of that restaurant:

> The party room is more exhuberant although the reigning inner calm is maintained here also in the broadly decorated frieze. Over the earth, where a bright green lizard and a jaunty cock of blazing orange like the glow of a festival lantern are symbols of the world, arches the heaven where the orange recurs in a bird striving toward the stars. Gold rain lets its drops sparkle down, a broad amethyst path leads upwards from the earth. And, although approaching naturalism, this composition is of an especially decorative efficacy. The flat areas are filled without overloading, the motifs repeat without becoming monotonous. It is Gidding's strength that his friezes never show the uniformity of the stencil. . . . Throughout, also, the windows are designed with ornamental leaded glass wherein, by the firmer handling of the material, all the colors are again joyously

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[92]Zuzana Skalova, "Het Theater Tuschinski" (Kandidaats-scriptie, University of Amsterdam, 1973), 23, n. 46. Den Besten was born in 1893.

[93]Een fries, dat door het fijne molgrijze fond, met zwart-gouden motief (hoorn van overvloed) gesierd, verlevendigd door een enkelen oranje-toets van verspriede vogels en bloembladeren, een stille, "cosy" stemming evoceert; van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 298.

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manifested.[94]

During this time Gidding also designed at least two painted wall decorations with sprightly geometric designs, quite unlike the murals just discussed. This variant style has elements of the geometrical, restrained, and symmetrical compositions of Nieuwe Kunst, buoyant in its contrasting use of large areas without patterning. Known only by photographs, it may be seen in the interior of the Café Loos in Rotterdam of 1917-18 (fig. 16) and in canvases of a similar design which are in process of being painted in the Gidding studio (fig. 43); this latter document portraying the staff at work will be discussed below.[95]

The Café Loos was in the building of the Electrische

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[94]Uitbundiger werd de feestzaal, al bleef de alles-beheerschende innerlijke rust ook hier in het breed-gedecoreerd fries bewaard. Over de aarde, waar een felgroene hagedis en een parmantige haan van blakend oranje gelijk het schijnsel van een feestelijke lampion symbolen de wererld zijn, welft zich de hemel, waar het oranje zich herhaalt in een vogel, stijgend naar de sterren. Gouden regen laat zijn trossen neertintelen, een breede amethysten baan voert van de aarde omhoog. En, hoewel naderend het naturalisme, is deze compositie van bijzondere decoratieve werking. De vlakken werden gevuld zonder overlading, de motieven herhaald zonder eentonig te worden. Het is Gidding's kracht, dat zijn friezen nooit de eenvormigheid der schablone vertoonen. . . . Overal ook werden de ramen gesierd met ornamentaal glas-in-lood, waarin, bij de strakkere hanteering van het materiaal, alle kleurenvreugde zich weder manifesteert; ibid., reproduced pl. LXI. Cornelis van der Sluys designed the furniture for this restaurant.

[95]Both photographs, collection Siep; the latter is also in the collection of Monique Gidding. I am grateful to Madeline Siep, granddaughter of Jaap Gidding, for finding and sending to me the additional material that included the photograph of Café Loos.

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Spoor Station in the Hofplein, Rotterdam.[96] The decoration is most abundant on the ceiling, beams, and the top portions of the supporting piers, with an additional frieze in the area over the bar, all set against the clarity of undecorated lower areas. The designs are flat and geometric with a preponderance of circles, some of them overlapping each other in bubbly effervescence. Although this exuberance exceeds Nieuwe Kunst sobriety and simplicity, the crisp, light effect nonetheless calls to mind art historian Louis Gans's description of turn-of-the-century Dutch design as "playful and gay," which he contrasts with the "sentimental or pathetic" propensities of contemporary French and German designs.[97]

In addition to the wall decorations designed by Gidding for specific sites, several panels are known from photographs of exhibition stands (fig. 17).[98] Among these

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[96]A. Gordijn identified the building, and informed me that it burned in 1940.

[97]Gans, Nieuwe Kunst, 84 and (English summary) 103. In another context, that of tapestry design, van der Sluys, Machinale Textielkunst, 37, figs. 4-6, saw fit to contrast Jaap Gidding's work with that of Willem Penaat (1875-1957), whom we may regard as a representative of Nieuwe Kunst: "We zien dan het groote onderscheid tusschen de kalme en voorzichtige, niettemin sterke geaardheid van Penaat en het onstuimige, spontane, overmoedige talent van Jaap Gidding." (We see the great difference between the calm and prudent, nonetheless strong disposition of Penaat and the impetuous, spontaneous, over-bold talent of Jaap Gidding.) Café Loos is thus the exception in Gidding's work.

[98]Collection Siep; also reproduced in van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 2, fig. 192.

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is a wooden panel with fish of 1918 which was reproduced in the 1919 yearbook of VANK, the Dutch organization of applied artists, of which Gidding was a member (fig. 18).[99] The shapes in the pendant panel are more abstract, but they resemble the same bubbles and foam, perhaps coral. In free panels, not so closely bound with architecture, the floating forms which Gidding would favor throughout his career are asymmetrically disposed.

Leaded Glass

During de Kooning's time at the firm, the Gidding company built up a business in designing and manufacturing leaded glass windows for residences, restaurants, and cinemas.[100] This medium had come into favor at the end of the nineteenth century and was widely used in secular buildings, private and public, through the 1920s, as well as for religious buildings. It was ideally suited to the "expressive spaciousness" and mysteriousness valued in

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[99]The acronym stands for Nederlandsche Vereeniging voor Ambachts- en Nijverheidskunst (Netherlands Association for Crafts and Industrial Arts); VANK Jaarboek (1919): fig. 68.

[100]After de Kooning was no longer working for the Giddings, Jaap made important windows for the staircase of the former Rotterdam Gemeentebibliotheek (Municipal Library), 1923, reproduced in Hoogveld, Glas in lood, 135, fig. 128, and for the Bijenkorf stores in Amsterdam and The Hague, 1926; these and others are listed in W. F. Gouwe, Glas in Lood, De toegepaste kunsten in Nederland, no. 3 (Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1932), 58. Other major Gidding works in glass, still existing, are the Oranjeraam in the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft, 1933, and a large window in the Erasmiaansch Gymnasium, Rotterdam, 1936, each executed by other glass ateliers.

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interior design by the Amsterdam School and was used by a number of De Stijl architects as well.[101] The Dutch mural movement that began as Gemeenschapskunst (Communal Art) in the 1890s and came to be called "monumental art" after World War I[102] often reached fulfillment in the 1920s in leaded glass windows instead of painted murals.[103]

As materials for leaded glass became more readily available after World War I, the Gidding firm became noted for its glass work, designed by Jaap. Ro van Oven gives the most informative account of Jaap's training and work in glass, stating that he began designing in this medium about 1917 with a Christ, Man of Sorrows that was indebted to Thorn Prikker.[104] In that year, de Kooning's second at the firm, Jaap Gidding exhibited designs in fired glass in the

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[101]Van Burkom, "Kunstvormgeving in Nederland," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 88-89. Evert van Straaten, "De Stijl," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 94-107.

[102]Caroline Boot and Marijke van der Heijden, "Gemeenschapskunst," in Kunstenaren der idee: Symbolistische tendenzen in Nederland, ca. 1880-1930, ed. Carel Blotkamp, Evert van Uitert, Mariëtte Josephus Jitta, and others, (The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1978), 42.

[103]Van Burkom, "Kunstvormgeving in Nederland," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 88.

[104]Van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 298-299; she also mentions a 1917 Gidding leaded glass of a nude. Thorn Prikker's Man of Sorrows (Ecce homo, 1913) is illustrated in August Hoff, Die religiöse Kunst Johann Thorn Prikker's (Düsseldorf: A. Bagel, 1924).

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Rotterdam gallery Unger & Van Mens.[105] As has been mentioned, from 1919 through the time of de Kooning's association with the firm, there was a separate location for the leaded glass part of the business at Mauritsstraat, 49b.[106]

A major influence on Gidding's designs for leaded glass was the work of Johan Thorn Prikker (1868-1932), the Dutch Symbolist artist whose flowing linear paintings and craft work of the 1890s had helped to make The Hague a center for Art Nouveau.[107] Thorn Prikker had left Holland in 1904, receiving teaching appointments and commissions for applied art designs in Germany until his death; he made important contributions to the art of leaded glass which became a

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[105]A. O., "Binnenhuiskunst bij Unger en Van Mens te Rotterdam," Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 27, no. 54 (1917): 398-400.

[106]Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1919.

[107]Early mentions of Thorn Prikker's influence on Gidding's glass design occur in 1921 in van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 299, as already noted, and in A. Hoff, Thorn Prikker und die neuere Glasmalerei (Essen: G. D. Baedeker Verlag, 1925), 14 and fig. I (Jaap Gidding, "Teppichfenster"). For an important chronology and brief account of Thorn Prikker's career, see Joop M. Joosten, Johan Thorn Prikker (1868-1932), catalogue no. 443 (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1968). Summary accounts of Thorn Prikker's work in glass and his influence in Rotterdam may be found in Peter van Dael, "De Monumentalen," and Frans van Burkom, "Johan Thorn Prikker," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 119-121, 132-135, 338-340. An English account not cited there is Robert Kehlmann, "The Legacy of Thorn Prikker," American Craft 45 (April-May 1985): 26-31. I have not yet been able to consult several studies of Thorn Prikker's work, among them, Johan Thorn Prikker 1868-1932, glas-in-loodvensters 1912-1932 (Nijmegen: Nijmeegs Museum Commanderie van Sint Jan, 1983).

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major medium for him from the teen years. His leaded glass windows for Dreikönigen Church, Neuss, Germany, 1911-12, (figs. 19-21) merged his own mystical interest in Christian subjects and pre-Renaissance art with what became the German Expressionist interest in medieval themes and forms.[108] Medieval, Art Nouveau, and Expressionist traits continued in Thorn Prikker's glass designs of the teen years, with new solutions in the treatment of the ground appearing as the decade progressed, notably combinations of lattice fragments and hatchings with the curving lines and diagonally and orthogonally placed lead lines.[109] The nature of these designs showed a receptivity to Cubism, but the geometrical and diagonal structures were present in Thorn Prikker's architectural work already in his 1902 graffito mural for the staircase of the Leuring house in Scheveningen, Netherlands. Although none of his glass work was commissioned by patrons in the Netherlands, Thorn Prikker's ties with his native country were never entirely broken and they were especially strong with Rotterdam where he was featured in exhibitions in 1893 and 1906, 1918, 1921, and 1923 and jointly won a commission for murals in the Town

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[108]Donald E. Gordon, Expressionism: Art and Idea (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 102, on medieval interest. The window Christ and Magdalene is illustrated in color with the lower-register cross and abstract floral design in August Hoff, Johan Thorn Prikker (Recklinghausen: Verlag Aurel Bongers, 1958), 9.

[109]Van Burkom, "Johan Thorn Prikker," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 340, dates this change to ca. 1920.

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Hall in 1918.[110]

Gidding may have become interested in the leaded glass work of Thorn Prikker when the latter's scenes from the life of Christ were exhibited in a chapel-like room in the May 1912 Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne.[111] An undated early sketch by Gidding for a leaded glass window (fig. 22) is very close to Thorn Prikker's window for the Adoration of the Three Kings for Dreikönigen Church, Neuss.[112] Gidding responded to the flattened simplifications of form and the unifying quality of the diagonal beam of heavenly light. He

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[110]Rejected early studies for the Town Hall murals were exhibited in 1921 and acquired by the Boymans Museum the following year. In 1926 Thorn Prikker received a new commission and those mural paintings are in the reception hall of the Rotterdam Stadhuis (Town Hall).

[111]The walls of this chapel were painted by Kirchner and Heckel; Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 243. These were the six choir windows for Neuss; Joosten, Johan Thorn Prikker. Hoogveld and others, "Een nieuwe kunst," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 89, suggest that Gidding may have seen Thorn Prikker's glass work in Germany. In the same volume, van Dijk, "Jaap Gidding," 246, following van Oven's account, gives this as a fact. Accounts of Thorn Prikker's contributions to the 1912 Sonderbund exhibition were published in German and Dutch periodicals in 1913 and 1914, cited in van Burkom, "Johan Thorn Prikker," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 340. In 1913 the Museum van Kunstnijverheid in Haarlem exhbibited nine fragments of the Neuss windows and in 1914 these windows were exhibited at the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition in Cologne in A. Fischer's Heinersdorff house; Joosten, Johan Thorn Prikker.

[112]Van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 2, fig. 121; also mentioned in Hoogveld and others, "Een nieuwe kunst," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 89. Thorn Prikker's Neuss windows met with resistance from church officials and were not installed until 1919; Joosten, Johan Thorn Prikker. Van Burkom, "Johan Thorn Prikker," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 338, describes the windows.

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experimented with details of tracery in the angular star at the upper right; while not yet integrated with the rest of the composition here, the reliance on lead lines and pure glass increased in his work, and the amount of painted enamel details came to carry less of the design,[113] following a similar development in Thorn Prikker's work. This changing emphasis is attentive to the facture of medieval glass, and moves away from the Renaissance techniques of the Crabeth brothers.

An early glass window by Gidding for secular use represents a nude woman seen from the back (fig. 23); it is dated 1917. The abstracted star forms of the Adoration study recur around the perimeter of waving lead lines that echo the large forms of the woman's body, themselves punctuated by decorative half-circles.

A leaded glass window reproduced in Onze Kunst in 1917 (fig. 24) points to another major interest of Gidding's, the Wiener Werkstätte.[114] The large central diamond shape contains a frontal, standing child holding a garland of abstract floral shapes.[115] The spiralling scroll in the child's terrain has its parentage in pottery designs of

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[113]Van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," 299.

[114]Brusse, "Binnenhuiskunst," 81.

[115]The child recalls a Karl Otto Czeschka design for jewelry in the 1911 Almanach of the Wiener Werkstätte; reproduced in Werner J. Schweiger, Wiener Werkstätte: Design in Vienna 1903-1932 (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 92.

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antiquity, but was widely used by the Dutch architect/designer Berlage from the late 1890s as well as by Viennese artists, among them Klimt. The complex, yet symmetrical patterning of triangular, hexagonal and four-sided glass shapes of the surrounding area includes dark/light reversals of forms, mirror-imaging and turning of repeated forms, devices also used in the contemporary glass design of artists as various as Thorn Prikker and Theo van Doesburg. The motifs within these shapes are abstracted, decorative deer, birds, fish and plant forms; some of the panels carry interest by the color and texture of the glass itself. The central shape is too vertical within the diamond design to suggest that Gidding was interested in the proportion system used by Berlage, de Bazel and Lauweriks to assure harmony of design within the work and by extension, with the cosmos.[116]

A 1919 window for a private residence in Rotterdam (fig. 25) shows Gidding's early glass work at its most opulent as well as his abiding attentiveness to Thorn Prikker's design work and perhaps to other recent

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[116]The specifically Dutch interest in proportion will be discussed in the following chapter. In the context of tapestry design, van der Sluys, Machinale Textielkunst, 37, wrote that Gidding worked "not without system, hardly possible in the applied arts, but with greater daring and 'laisser aller'" than Nieuwe Kunst designer Willem Penaat (niet zonder systeem, daar dit nu eenmaal bij toegepaste kunsten niet wel mogelijk is, maar wel met grooten durf en "laisser aller").

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developments.[117] A simplified, partially nude female figure is rendered in lyrically curving lines, surrounded by an immediate ambience of abstracted leaf, bird and star shapes on modulated grounds within a near-pentagonal "house" shape, further embraced in an armature of diagonally-oriented trapezoidal panels. The diagonal panels especially point to the influence of Thorn Prikker, as may be seen in a tapestry reproduced in Dekorative Kunst in 1910 (fig. 26),[118] but also to the blend of Cubist angles and saucy curves used by Gidding's school friend Bieling in a series of 1918 paintings of the Berlin Expressionist dancer Grit Hegesa that show up as well in a 1919 dance concert program possibly designed by Bieling (fig. 27).[119] Gidding's outer panels have rectangular, asymmetrical, mostly vertical subdivisions in the lower sections that combine with restrained curves in the middle parts, giving way to irregular, curving forms in the upper areas. The effect is

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[117]Reproduced in van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 2, fig. 116 and in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 246, fig. 230. Since 1992 in the collection of the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the window is signed and dated, "Jaap Gidding 19"; I am grateful to Sandra van Dijk for this information.

[118]Thorn Prikker, De drie ijsheiligen (The Three Ice Saints), reproduced in Dekorative Kunst 19 (1910): 555 and in Adriaansz, "Gidding," 19. Adriaansz introduces this tapestry as an example of Thorn Prikker's expressionist style that was so influential for Gidding.

[119]Paintings mentioned in Brinkman, De Branding, 26 and reproduced, 107. Anonymous program for performance of 1 February 1919 reproduced, ibid., 26.

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more decorative and appealing than Bieling's Expressionist work.

Other early glass windows by Gidding are a woman with deer from before 1918 (fig. 28), and a kneeling nude woman flanked by curvilinear accents of abstracted vegetation, first published in 1921 (fig. 29). The latter two are each set in a network of clear, predominantly rectangular panes. The vegetation forms can be observed more closely in Orchids (fig. 30), a panel of fired glass reproduced in 1921. Gidding adapted his own fish panel of 1918 (fig. 18) to a more simplified leaded glass version (fig. 31.).[120]

Contemporary discussions of Gidding's glass work stress the rich colors and his interest in using the properties of the glass itself. In 1917 a critic noted his use of "very hard opalescent glass from Bohemia, . . . in which are flaming nuances." The following year, Lambertus Zwiers praised the *joie de vivre* attained by Gidding's large areas of colored glass, "mainly through the material," rather than through the ornamental effect of the lead lines.[121]

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[120]The nude viewed from the back was reproduced in 1917 in A.O., "Binnenhuiskunst," 398 and in 1918 in Zwiers, "Werk van Jaap Gidding," 89; woman and deer in Zwiers, "Werk van Jaap Gidding," 88; kneeling woman in van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 2, fig. 117; and Orchids and Fish in van Oven, "Jaap Gidding," plate LXIII.

[121]Gidding werkt met het zeer harde opalescent-glas uit Boheme, . . . in welke vlammende nuancen zijn; A. O., "Binnenhuiskunst," 399-400. Gidding zijn effect teweegbrengende in hoofdzaak door het materiaal; Zwiers, "Werk van Jaap Gidding," 89.

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Tapestries: Wall Hangings and Carpets

The tapestries designed by Jaap Gidding were executed outside the workshop but were widely exhibited during the time de Kooning worked for the firm. Often in the high-pile, hand-knotted technique called Smyrna, many of Gidding's tapestries continued in the vein made popular by the Dutch designer Theodorus A. C. Colenbrander (1841-1930) from the late nineteenth century (fig. 32).[122] The designs

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[122]Colenbrander was responsible for the first specifically Dutch non-historical "renewal" in the decorative arts in the 1880s, in the field of pottery decoration. He worked as an architect in Paris for a considerable time from 1869, designed earthenware decorations in the Netherlands from 1884, and carpets from around 1890; his quite individualistc designs reveal a wide interest in Middle Eastern and East Asian ceramics and carpets. While his flamboyant and colorful vases did not sell well in the 1880s they were immediately recognized as a pioneering effort in modern design and eventually created a place for themselves in Dutch taste, achieving popularity in the latter half of the teen years and 1920s, by which time his Nieuwe Kunst work was seen as near to the fantastic designs of the Amsterdam School. Gans, Nieuwe Kunst, 74, 96, 113. David Revere McFadden, The Structure of Style: Dutch Modernism in the Applied Arts, 1880-1930 (New York: Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 1994), wall labels and brochure for exhibition. Richard Mills, "Kleurnuancen: T. A. C. Colenbrander als tapijtontwerper," trans. Hanny Keulers, Jong Holland 10, no. 2 (1994): 6-31, English summary: 76-77. Cited there is A. Weltens, "T. A. C. Colenbrander, Nederland's eerste industrieel ontwerper," in T. A. C. Colenbrander, Plateelbakkerij 'RAM' te Arnhem, ed. R. Neerincx (Arnhem: Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, 1986), 26-33. Van der Sluys, Machinale Textielkunst, 38, mentions Colenbrander and Carel Adolph Lion Cachet (1864-1945) with regard to the modern and Dutch traits of Gidding's work; he describes Colenbrander's work as strongly personal and individual, developed from the forms, atmosphere, and impressions of nature, but absolutely not naturalistic; ibid., 31. Van Burkom, "Kunstvorming in Nederland," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 94, notes such critical references relating Gidding's designs with those of Colenbrander and Lion Cachet.

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feature irregular, abstract forms symmetrically disposed in unusual color harmonies (figs. 33 and 34; see also exhibition stand, fig. 17). An appreciation of the central medallions and borders of oriental carpet designs is clear, as is the fact that Gidding, following Colenbrander, considerably extends the underlying principles of these forerunners. The level of abstraction and idiosyncracy of form led one unsympathetic reviewer to compare Gidding's shapes to "greasy fleece in an undrained town canal."[123] A number of Gidding's carpet designs feature a rectangular central area with distinct motifs extending perpendicularly to the four sides of the composition, variations on Colenbrander's most often reproduced design format, which the latter called "artichoke."[124]

As Colenbrander's colors seemed "unbelieveably daring," to a 1923 Rotterdam newspaper-writer,[125] Gidding's garnered

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Hoogveld and others, "Een nieuwe kunst," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 81, 84 note the resurgence of interest in the work of Lion Cachet and Colenbrander from 1916. Mienke Simon Thomas, "KVT," in Industry & Design, ed. Kras and others, 94-97, discusses Gidding's relationship to the Koninklijke Vereenigde Tapijtfabrieken factory in Rotterdam and the Smyrna technique. Mills, "Colenbrander," 16, explains the Smyrna technique.

[123]De lijnen en kleuren zwemmen door elkaar als vettige vliezen in een stadsgracht, waarin niet wordt gespuiid; Anonymous, "'Bureau' voor Meubelkunst Van der Sluys [The Hague]: Jaap Gidding," NRC, 15 February 1920, clipping in RKD.

[124]Mills, "Colenbrander," 26.

[125]Ibid., 16.

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similar appraisals. The colors of a 1920 rectangular carpet by Gidding (fig. 33) are orange, ochre, and cream on a beige ground, moderated by gold, yellow, siena, and grey.[126] Small watercolor designs from the period (fig. 35) give a further sense of Gidding's colors: a preferred gamut, somewhat different from Colenbrander's range, was black, turquoise and violet punctuated with orange, white and grey.[127]

Among Gidding's designs for cinemas is perhaps the most widely known work of his career, the carpet in the fantastic entrance foyer of the Tuschinski Theater in Amsterdam, 1920-

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[126]Reproduced in Frans Leidelmeijer and Daan van der Cingel, Art Nouveau en Art Deco in Nederland (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff/Landshoff, 1983), 71, color plate 11. A watercolor tapestry design shown at the Kunstnijverheid en Volkskunst exhibition at the Rotterdam Academy in 1918 is reproduced in color in Adriaansz, "Gidding," 19; the colors are green and white accented by red, black, gold and grey.

[127]The watercolors are in the Siep collection. Similar colors are mentioned in reviews in the RKD clipping file: Anonymous, "Jaap Gidding," Tel., 8 February 1920; Anonymous, "Museum van Kunstnijverheid [Haarlem]: Lente-tentoonstelling," unidentified newspaper, [spring, 1922]; Anonymous, "'Bureau' voor Meubelkunst Van der Sluys [The Hague]: Jaap Gidding," NRC, 15 February 1920. The unappreciative reviewer of 15 February 1920 gave further colors for another of Gidding's carpets: the most sour green and yellow, light blue and cobalt blue, here and there with white contours against violet. Van der Sluys, Machinale Textielkunst, 37-38, voiced reservations about the strong colors of some of Gidding's carpets which he found not always attuned to an interior, sometimes attracting too much attention, and too exclusive for mass production; the carpets in the Smyrna machine technique, however, he praised highly for the varied, yet tranquil colors; ibid., 41.

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21 (fig. 36).[128] This project came at the end of de Kooning's time with the firm, or perhaps soon after he left. The bold colors--red, green, violet, brown, orange and yellow--and central eagle were most likely suggested by Abraham Tuschinski, a Polish immigrant, and are certainly related to the international penchant for exotic moving picture palaces. The thick carpet was rewoven in 1984, for a second time, following Gidding's design; a number of viewers who knew the original when it was in good condition considered this replacement too garish and untrue to the original.[129] The Tuschinski Theater is considered, along

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[128]Many publications suggest Gidding may have had a hand as well in designing the wall and ceiling paintings and leaded glass windows; according to Mrs. Siep, interview by author, 25 July 1985, the walls were not by her father. Skalova, "Tuschinski," 9, attributes the hall in its entirety to Gidding's design; she makes it clear that the wall paintings in other parts of the building were by the Rotterdam painter Piet den Besten. Frans van Burkom, "Kunstvormgeving in Nederland," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 78, fig. 88, reproduces a photograph of the entry foyer, crediting rugs and decorative painting to Gidding; this is repeated by Petra Timmer, "The Amsterdam School and Interior Design: Architects and Craftsmen against the Rationalists," in The Amsterdam School: Dutch Expressionist Architecture, 1915-1930, ed. Wim de Wit (New York: Cooper-Hewitt Museum, The Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 122. Hoogveld and others, "Een nieuwe kunst," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 78, suggest Gidding designed the windows because his stay in Germany made him the most likely of the designers involved in the building to use such vivid colors. Adriaansz, "Gidding," 16, attributes the ceiling, walls and carpet to Gidding.

[129]F. F. Fraenkel, "The Tuschinski Theatre," The Architectural Review 915 (May 1973): 326, noted that the second carpet was then in place. Reactions to the 1984 carpet conveyed by Liesbeth Crommelin, Applied Arts department of Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 26 July 1985.

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with the Scheepvarthuis (Shipping Building, 1912-16), also in Amsterdam, and the Hague branch of the De Bijenkorf (1926) department store, a particularly fine example of the expressive total design achieved by the Amsterdam School.[130]

Poster

For a group showing of interior arts at Huize van Hasselt, Rotterdam in February 1917, Gidding designed the poster which was used again with only a few changes for the April showing at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and at the Kunstzalen d'Audretsch in The Hague in 1919 (fig. 37).[131] The predominance of black and the horizontal banding which houses the lettering resemble the printed work of the Wiener Werkstätte; reversals of light and dark for lettering and ground follow the explorations of the Werkstätte's Alfred Roller and Kolomon Moser.[132]

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[130]Frans van Burkom, "Kunstvormgeving in Nederland," in Amsterdamse School, ed. Bergvelt and others, 76; Timmer, "Interior Design," in The Amsterdam School, ed. de Wit, 126.

[131]The first two versions of the poster may be found in the collections of the Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, respectively; the Stedelijk Museum example is dated in pencil; the third version is reproduced in color in Kees Broos and Paul Hefting, Grafische vormgeving in Nederland, een eeuw (Amsterdam: L. J. Veen, 1993), 51.

[132]Ibid., 51. This poster is also discussed in Brusse, "Binnenhuiskunst," 70.

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De Kooning's Work at the Gidding Firm

Gradually de Kooning would have been assigned tasks beyond those he has spoken of, getting coffee and tea and cleaning up. To my knowledge, he has not described his work at the Gidding firm in any detail. He has said that he was taught by the workers, certainly by example. He must have spent a good deal of his work time in house painting. Among the men he worked under, something is known about the painter Jan van Ingen who began as an assistant around 1909 and eventually became foreman of the atelier. In his son's words, van Ingen had a "firm hand: he could draw with his brush a firm line a meter long."[133]

> He [van Ingen] learned the profession of "fine painting" as a horse- and carriage painter for doctors and other important persons and became a master in fine-line painting. He was a very skilled domestic-and-decoration painter and was the only one, or one of the very few, allowed to paint in the private rooms of the many aristocratic customers Gidding had.[134]

Carriage painting makes important use of the striper, or liner, brush which de Kooning would later use in his paintings, and show to Gorky who afforded it a prominent role in his own art. It is likely that Mr. van Ingen's craft was de Kooning's most intensive introduction to the tool.

Serious and punctual, van Ingen took pride in his work and in his nickname "the house painter with slippers";

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[133]Jan G. M. van Ingen, interview, 25 July 1985.

[134]Jan G. M. van Ingen, letter to author, 3 May 1985.

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indeed, he always took slippers to the job. In addition to fine-line decorations, his specializations included lettering--painting clients' names on their front doors--and color mixing. His eye for color provided exact matches for the clients and Jaap to decide on.[135] His son recalled that, "he was much interested in art and he always took me to the Christmas Exhibition of the Academy of Art in Rotterdam when I was a young man."[136]

Over the years De Kooning mentioned to Elaine a number of housepainting tricks that he learned at the Gidding firm. One practice, if it is relayed correctly, involved working from the bottom of the wall upward in order that drips could be smoothed away from an already moist surface, leaving less of a trace than they would on a dry surface.[137]

The practice of preparing old doors for re-painting provided a technical procedure that would reach far into de Kooning's art. Robert Storr has recently described the technique, based partly on conversations with de Kooning assistant Tom Ferrara, and its place in the artist's paintings of the 1930s and 1940s and again in the early 1980s:

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[135]Jan G. M. van Ingen, interview, 25 July 1985.

[136]Jan G. M. van Ingen, letter to author, 3 May 1985.

[137]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 1980s. This practice was not familiar to John McMahon, de Kooning's studio assistant from mid-1963 to 1973 or 1974; interview by author, 15 May 1994.

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> Setting the stretcher flat on sawhorses as he had done with old doors when he was a housepainter in the 1920s, dousing the surface with turpentine to keep the dust down and increase its receptivity to fresh pigments, and then working with fine-grade sandpaper, de Kooning created the amorphous visual depth and tactile suavity of the Pompeian murals he and Arshile Gorky had admired years before in the 1930s and 1940s and which de Kooning in particular had recreated in his paintings of that period. Around the edges and throughout the internal painterly weave of many of the paintings he made between 1980 and 1982 are patches of the soft, ambiguously colored ground he thus prepared from paintings left over from the 1970s.[138]

Years of housepainting certainly accustomed de Kooning to handling paint,[139] and may even have inculcated certain movements. In the mid-1960s John McMahon painted the bedroom walls in de Kooning's East Hampton house/studio. McMahon recalled,

> [De Kooning] picked up a big brush and he said, the way we did it, John, we put it on this way, and he dip[ped the brush] into the bucket and spread . . . the paint on the wall in a [horizontal] figure-eight motion, just to get the paint going. Then it would be an up and down stroke, then a horizontal stroke, and then as you're spreading the paint your stroke gets lighter and lighter, reducing the brush marks on the surface; you're almost tickling the surface toward the end to get this very beautiful smooth distribution of paint on this area. And then you start again. Now, that's interesting because, if you do a lot of housepainting, if you work a year doing housepainting, you develop this figure-eight stroke. . . . This might have influenced his famous whip stroke. . . . It was all

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[138]Robert Storr, "At Last Light," in Late Paintings, ed. Garrells, 45.

[139]It may be possible to be more precise about the methods used by Dutch housepainters in the teen years of the century; art historian Mienke Simon Thomas has kindly given suggestions for further research.

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done with a three- or four-inch hand-held brush.[140] Certainly those years of long hours at the task of applying paint continued in de Kooning's mature years in the stamina of keeping at his painting. Fellow painters in New York in the early 1950s commented that he was always working, working, working; one could see him from the street through the window of his second-floor Fourth Avenue studio.[141]

In the period 1916 to 1920, marbling and woodgraining were no longer fashionable in interior decoration, but it is likely that some of the more traditional customers of the Gidding firm were still interested in such painted surfaces.[142] These are the sorts of practice that could be

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[140]John McMahon, telephone interview by author, 15 May 1994 and personal conversation, East Hampton, 31 July 1994.

[141]Rose Slivka, panel discussion at Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York, 28 July 1994. Albert Terris, who first met de Kooning in 1952, recalled the awe in which he was held by fellow artists for dedication that was sometimes measured by hours in the studio; he relates that artist friends had commented admiringly, "'There's Bill. He worked eight hours today'"; conversation with author, 5 October 1994.

[142]Van der Sluys wrote in 1913 that the imitation of marble and woodgraining, on doors in particular, were among the greatest errors of contemporary house painting; he favored plain, neutral tints for homes that would be rented. A reader took exception to his view, including in his first letter the argument that to eschew graining and marbling would go against the taste of the public and would impose poverty on them. Corn. van der Sluys, "Het Interieur," Centraalblad der bouwbedrijven voor Nederland en Kolonien no. 9 (1913); C. P. van Hoek and Corn. van der Sluys, "Ingezonden," ibid., no. 11 (13 September 1913); C. P. van Hoek and Corn. van der Sluys, "Ingezonden," ibid., no. 14 (27 September 1913); C. P. van Hoek, "Ingezonden," ibid., no. 16 (18 October 1913). I am grateful to Mienke Simon Thomas for these references and to Marcia Zaaijer, archivist

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passed on from experienced workers to younger ones, and de Kooning probably learned the techniques of marbling and graining from his work in the housepainting trade. As has been demonstrated by a humorous product of the 1950s (fig. 38), he could slap out the striations of a black and white marble and get the results to dry, all in short order--on the seat boards of a privy at the Bridgehampton house rented by himself and several artist friends.[143]

Marbling and graining are practices that are at once scrupulously attentive to a naturally occurring external source and freely inventive, even abstract. The painstaking reproduction of fine veins and clusters from some model--either the natural material or a painted rendition--using various kinds of brushes must have been part of de Kooning's early experience. Such skills are congenial to the facture of his later paintings. In the freely brushed Door to the River of 1960 (figs. 39 and 40), for example, the visual

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at RKD, for arranging for photocopies to be sent from NAi Study Center, Rotterdam.

[143]This item was found in 1985 and received considerable publicity, including a color photograph in Newsweek, 4 February 1985, 42. For the set of Eric Satie's The Ruse of Medusa, performed at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1948, de Kooning "transformed a huge stodgy desk and two nondescript columns into magnificent pink and grey marble with a technique he had learned at a decorator's shop in Holland when he was sixteen years old," as recalled by Elaine de Kooning, "De Kooning Memories: Starting Out in the 1940s, a Personal Account," Vogue 173 (December 1983): 394; see also Mary Emma Harris, The Arts at Black Mountain College (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 154-56. Photographs of the set showing the marbling are in the personal archives of Mary Emma Harris, New York.

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drama is heightened in several places by carefully brushed fine lines of contrasting color or value. A subtle blue-purple, less than a millimeter wide, runs along the edge of a bold, broad slash of brown. A tiny vein of brown marks the divisions between a slather of yellow-white and dried white leavings of a nubby texture.[144] I propose that these are marks of careful and willful editing, made to look quite like the freer and sometimes accidental productions they accompany and that the patient craft of marbling and graining is part of their background.[145]

In conversation with Diane Waldman in the mid-1970s, de Kooning mused on the parallels of his own training with that of Braque who, as Waldman writes,

> had learned to paint imitation marble while working for his father. De Kooning was fascinated by their parallel training and the way in which both painters had put their craft at the service of their art.

In these conversations, de Kooning was moved to observe, in Waldman's wording, "how much demeaned both craft and artifice had become in the modern world, and how honorable and noble such traditions had been in the past."[146] This past is no further back than de Kooning's own youth and his

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[144]De Kooning's outlining of drips has also been observed by Sally E. Yard, "De Kooning's Women," Arts Magazine 53 (November 1978): 99.

[145]Experience in lettering is also apposite, as can be seen in a number of the two-tone signatures that often occur on large paintings of the 1960s and 1970s.

[146]Waldman, Willem de Kooning, 142.

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experiences of these years underlie many of his later views about the place of art within society.

De Kooning worked for a time in the Giddings' leaded glass studio. One of the workers he remembered was a Mr. Roos who worked in that studio and who would have been one of the men "who showed [him] what to do."[147] We can only speculate on de Kooning's tasks there. Jaap's designs probably arrived in the form of a cartoon from which templates were made for the shapes of the various pieces of glass which were then cut; some of these pieces would have been painted, probably by Jaap, and fired in a kiln. The process of assembly would offer ample places for a learner's participation, as the quick-to-oxidize lead would have to be cleaned and, after soldering and puttying--a stage also requiring considerable cleaning--would then need to be blackened. During the cutting and assembly stages, it would be a foremost concern to have the pieces fit precisely into the whole. Whether image or background in the figurative design, each piece would count equally in the

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[147]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 August 1985. Elaine de Kooning knew Roos's name from conversations with her husband over the years; interview by author, 23 June 1985. Mrs. Siep and Monique Gidding also recalled this employee. Monique Gidding said that Roos painted glass; interview by Klaas van de Erve, 1985, Rotterdam, as recorded in letter to author, 1 April 1985; and interview by author, 18 May 1985.

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construction.[148]

It is tempting to see the interlocking network required of the leaded glass medium as an early discipline congenial to de Kooning's mature paintings, especially in the paintings of the 1950s in which black linear elements count so heavily in structuring the composition across the surface. Examples might be Woman VI, 1953 (fig. 41) and Gotham News, 1955 (fig. 323). The least that may be said of the influence of Gidding's leaded glass practice on the youthful de Kooning is the exposure it offered to abstracted, angular forms, often melded with organic forms and figural representations, in intense and unusual color harmonies.

The allover composition so essential to craft work that was a part of de Kooning's early experience at the Gidding firm may have provided a residual memory when he sought equality of figure and ground in his mature work. In this regard, it is intriguing to compare Woman VI, 1953 (fig. 41) with Gidding's renderings of women in leaded glass (figs. 23, 25, 28, 29) and carpet designs of about 1920 (fig. 33). From such a vantage point, the carpet prompts a comparison as well with Door to the River of 1960 (fig. 39), another notable use by de Kooning of a nearly-central rectangle.

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[148]I am guided by Paul San Casciani, The Technique of Decorative Stained Glass (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1985), 16-32. Gidding's process would have been near to these general steps.

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The widespread importance of the glass worker's craft during de Kooning's youth in Holland probably furthered an iconographic choice he made in the early 1940s. The Glazier (fig. 42) is his designation for one of the Men paintings of ca. 1940. De Kooning commented to me in 1981 that the painting was inspired by someone he had seen when he had looked into a shop on Third Avenue in New York; he especially liked the fact that the man could be construed as either employee or owner of the business.[149] For all the comraderie of the Gidding workshop, or any high-mindedness of the artist-worker ideal, which indeed is present in The Glazier, de Kooning's comment shows the importance to him of America's promise of freedom from class and economic limitations.

Photograph of the Gidding Atelier

While housepainting was a major activity of the Gidding firm, the decorating of interiors with intricate designs, which were often painted in the studio on pieces of canvas and then applied to the walls and ceilings of the site, is documented in a photograph (fig. 43) from the general period in which de Kooning worked at the firm.[150] This seemingly

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[149]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981.

[150]Prints exist in the possession of each of the daughters of Jaap and Jan Gidding; Klaas van de Erve sought out and kindly had a copy made of the print belonging to Monique Gidding, daughter of Jan, for use in this study. I am grateful to them both. The photograph has been published

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casual studio view shows the many stages of such a production. The youthful directors of the firm are seated at a table cluttered with rolls of paper or canvas. Jan is at the right drawing on a large sheet of paper, cigar in hand, and perhaps referring to another sheet above his work, while Jaap attentively looks on, artfully smoking a cigarette. On the far side of the same table, a boy appears to be grinding or mixing colors on a flat surface or palette. In front of him is a long narrow sheet of paper with a design that could be a decorative bird. To the left and behind the table are nine employees at work on the various parts of the decoration. The design for the work is pinned on the wall just behind Jaap and completed sections of it are hanging from supports near the ceiling, probably to dry.[151]

One of the workers has a solo project of executing a larger canvas. He is at an early stage of the execution and appears to be working free-hand, drawing the linear underpinning of an asymmetrical and bubbly design, presumably referring to the plan pinned on the surface beside him. Wearing shirt, tie, workcoat and hat, the young man stands with his left hand jauntily on his hip. Upon seeing this photograph, Elaine de Kooning was convinced by

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in Adriaansz, "Gidding," 7, where it is dated ca. 1908.

[151]When I showed this photograph to de Kooning, 23 August 1985, it did not jog any memories.

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the posture and body structure that this worker was her husband as a youth.[152] If the worker is the young de Kooning, the photo would have to be dated about 1919-20, not out of line with the ages of the Gidding brothers or the style of the decoration, which could date to a decade earlier as well. Both the style and the floor plan of the site are similar to that of Café Loos of 1917-18 (fig. 16). Of all the workers pictured, no other could be de Kooning, but I find it reasonable to leave his identity open. In fact, there are arguments against de Kooning having this role: at most, his age would have been sixteen, young for such a prominent placement (he would have been only in his third year at the Academy); had he attained such importance, he may not have left the firm in 1920.

The reasons for Elaine's spontaneous identification, however, go beyond the appearance of the man and are definitely relevant to de Kooning's formation: he is working, as are the others, and as de Kooning has always preferred, on a hard, vertical surface. The portion of the decoration on which the man is working is near the scale that de Kooning came to prefer for his larger paintings: 70 x 80 or 77 x 88 inches. He is referring to another work placed beside his painting, as de Kooning has done at least

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[152]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 1985.

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since the 1960s and probably all his career.[153] In the 1980s and in many earlier periods, de Kooning began his paintings with a linear substructure of charcoal.[154] The Giddings' high-ceilinged studio with its hanging apparatus may have a subliminal bearing on the height of the studio which de Kooning designed for himself in East Hampton, although the industrial spaces of New York lofts were the more immediate models.[155]

The decorative forms recorded in this photograph of the Gidding atelier remained within de Kooning's design repertoire for at least several years after he left the firm. A sketch for a menu cover which he left with his employers in Belgium in 1924 has jottings of similar bubbly shapes planned to embellish the full design, and serving as well to echo the plump form of the humorous figure that dominates the cover (figs. 44 and 45). Several isolated shapes on another sheet (fig. 46) from this group appear to

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[153]John McMahon, interview by author, 15 May 1994. Elaine de Kooning, interviews by author, 1980s, has said that de Kooning always liked to have his work around him.

[154]See Susan Lake and Judith Zilczer, "Painter and Draftsman," in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 172-79; Richard Shiff, "Water and Lipstick: De Kooning in Transition," in Willem de Kooning Paintings, ed. Prather, 35-36 and passim. Assistants helped with this stage in the later 1980s; see Storr, "At Last Light," in Late Paintings, ed. Garrells, 47, 57-58.

[155]To carry the analogies between this busy workshop and de Kooning's own working habits even further, in later years de Kooning felt more comfortable if his assistant were working on his or her own painting in a corner of the studio. Tom Ferrara, conversation with author, early 1980s.

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be doodles more than decorative forms, but they are within the range of the formal vocabulary of Café Loos and the canvases in the Gidding atelier; their consonance with the shapes used for Charlie Chaplin inadvertently reveals a period quality.

Departure

After four years at the Gidding firm, de Kooning changed his earning arrangements: when he was sixteen he successfully applied to work for freelance advertising artist Bernard Romein.

De Kooning's experience at the Gidding firm had given him diligent work habits and a respect for fine workmanship. At the firm he acquired a range of technical skills, including lettering and marbling, and received his most extensive experience handling oil paint. He became familiar with a polyglot vocabulary of modern forms--second-generation Dutch versions of Art Nouveau, Nieuwe Kunst, and Wiener Werkstätte design, a Netherlands equivalent of Art Déco.[156]

De Kooning's 1960 statement to David Sylvester about the importance of the De Stijl influence might lead us to wonder if he had found the decorative sensibility at Giddings' not to his taste. Yet some of the jottings just mentioned and the Symbolist drawings of 1924 and 1925, and

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[156]De Kooning's use of Art Nouveau forms in 1925 is not dependent on any Gidding works that I have seen.

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Romein's work as well, indicate that he did not leave the Gidding firm because of a De Stijl awakening. He may have considered the new field of advertising promising; he may have wanted to escape the routine of house painting; it is possible that the position with the Giddings had been planned for only a four-year period. Whatever the reasons, this change brought de Kooning to his most important mentor of his European years, Bernard Romein. Spanning the time he worked for the Gidding firm and then for Romein, were long evenings spent in assiduous training at the Rotterdam Academy.

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CHAPTER 3

THE ACADEMY

Overview

From the years 1917 to 1921, Willem de Kooning was enrolled at the Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen te Rotterdam; he probably spent more time at the Academy and may have received further instruction in 1925 and 1926, but the matter is unclear.[1] Throughout his later years he spoke favorably of the education he received there.[2] Government subsidy of this institution most likely enabled him to attend classes without tuition costs.[3] He worked for a living during the day, first at the Gidding firm and then as assistant to Bernard Romein, and attended classes in the evening. He would have preferred to have been able to attend the day classes and, according to Elaine

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[1]The dates of de Kooning's enrollment are recorded in the annual Reports of the Academy, cited later in this chapter; these Reports comprise one of the few Academy records to survive the 1940 destruction of Rotterdam.

[2]David Sylvester notes that de Kooning "remained very conscious of and talked about [his training] for as long as he talked about art, his daughter Lisa has told me. 'When I went to the Academy ...' was a frequent opening to a sentence"; David Sylvester, "Flesh Was the Reason," in Willem de Kooning Paintings, ed. Prather, 15. This was true for me in the 1980s: "It was a very good Academy," was de Kooning's comment on 3 February 1983.

[3]He would have had to apply for this privilege; so far as I know, the records are lost.

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de Kooning, long retained a grudge against his mother in particular for not making this possible.[4]

In the hierarchy of Dutch artistic instruction, the training which de Kooning received at the Rotterdam Academy was planned to elevate the artistic awareness of tradespeople rather than to educate fine artists. It was also a starting point for someone with higher aspirations: a student with exceptional talent would be forwarded to the Academy in Amsterdam for completion of artistic training as a painter or sculptor; only in Amsterdam could one compete for the Prix de Rome, of interest even to the young Mondrian in 1892, when he went to Amsterdam from Winterswijk to continue his studies.[5] The aim of going on to studies in Amsterdam was not a part of de Kooning's regrets about missed education and in later years he (erroneously) thought he had received the same education as Mondrian,[6] perhaps

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[4]Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History" and conversations with author, 1980s.

[5]Robert P. Welsh, Piet Mondrian's Early Career: the "Naturalistic" Periods (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), 9-10. Mondrian competed for the Prix de Rome in Spring 1901. For discussion of the Prix de Rome and the nature of instruction at the Amsterdam Rijksacademy see Adi Martis, "Van 'tekenschool' tot 'kunstvakschool': de Rijksoverheid en het onderwijs in de beeldende kunsten van circa 1820 tot circa 1940," in De Lucaskrater: Historie en analyse van en meningen over het beeldende-kunstonderwijs aan de kunstacademies in Nederland, ed. M. van der Kamp, P. G. J. Leijdekkers, J. L. Locher, and J. B. H. Vierdag (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 34-49.

[6]"Mondrian went to the same Academy"; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 4 November 1982.

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because all Dutch academies were under state regulation.

The only study of de Kooning's academic education has been put forth by Thomas B. Hess, who got much of his information from de Kooning. From extant records and de Kooning's recollections, to Hess and others, from publications on academic study in the Netherlands, and from accounts of elderly Rotterdam artists, we can gain a better understanding of this education, although questions remain.

Hess on de Kooning's Academic Education

Since Hess's accounts of de Kooning's study at the academy have informed all subsequent discussions, it will be important to refer to them and to offer corrections where possible. In his 1959 monograph Hess included, under the heading of Chronology, a biographical essay on de Kooning's career based in part on conversations with the artist. The paragraph on the Academy, while somewhat misleading, has only slight errors in those matters that can be documented and may therefore be taken as a tentative guide when recorded evidence fails.

> At Jaap Gidding's advice, he enrolled for the full course of evening classes at the Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen, where, for the next eight years, he received instruction in the fine and applied arts. There was no formal graduation or certification for artists (as, on the other hand, there was for plumbers) from the Academy. Students remained there until it was felt that they could practice their crafts and techniques competently. Emphasis was placed on a thorough knowledge of the classical disciplines (drawing, anatomy, perspective, color theory) and accepted methods

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> (architectural rendering, wood-graining, lettering, etc.). The atmosphere was lively. (He remembers working with Mies, and the director, Heiberg.) . . . . In 1925 he returned to Rotterdam [from Belgium] and the classes at the Academy.[7]

The Mies referred to was not Mies van der Rohe, but Herman E. Mees, whose last name is pronounced somewhat like the German architect's first. Johannes Gerardus Heyberg was never a director at the Academy but is the instructor most often referred to by de Kooning in later years. Mees was named *Hoofdleeraar* (Headmaster) of the Division of Plastic Arts in 1921-22. This is the first year in which de Kooning's name is not listed in the annual Report. This fact bolsters the likelihood that de Kooning continued his studies after the spring of 1921; at least he kept track of events at the Academy.

Hess's discussion of the Academy a decade later in the Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalogue incorporates a sprightly summary of Nikolaus Pevsner's study of academies and introduces the curious concept that de Kooning "was taught guild and academy disciplines and philosophies simultaneously."[8] It is unclear whether the concept of the

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[7]Hess, 1959, 113. In 1950 Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8, had written, "Some of his professors were 'terrific' and he specially remembers Mr. Mees, the director, and Mr. Heiberg."

[8]Hess, 1968, 12-14, citation from page 13; repeated as recently as Judith Zilczer's otherwise superbly researched essay, "De Kooning and Urban Expressionism," in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 12.

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guild was introduced by de Kooning or Hess. In the discussion it stands for the value placed on instruction related to the trades, a significant factor at the Rotterdam Academy: Hess speaks of the "feudal guilds" as having "made no distinction between fine and applied arts." The reference is historically misleading, however, for guilds had been abolished in the Netherlands in 1798 and a continuing influence is not claimed for them in other accounts of art instruction there. De Kooning's contribution to this train of thought may come from the views of R. N. Roland Holst, as explained to him by Jac. Jongert; such thoughts ultimately derive from William Morris and John Ruskin, not medieval Dutch practice.

Although interwoven with the argument of the guild/academy dichotomy, Hess's paragraphs in the 1968 catalogue provide the most detailed description coming from de Kooning of his course of study at the Rotterdam Academy and will be considered further after summarizing the history of the academy and looking at the careers of several teachers who were important to de Kooning.

History and Mandate of the Rotterdam Academy

The nature of the instruction that de Kooning received reached back into the nineteenth century, not because of the continuing influence of guilds in Holland, but as a result of the development of the education system for artists. From its inception in 1851, the Academie van Beeldende

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Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen te Rotterdam was a consolidation of three earlier institutions, brought together to fulfill requirements of the central government. By a decree of 1817, all cities of a certain size were to provide evening instruction for tradespeople in drawing the human figure and in the fundamentals of architecture. This decree, which left the organization and funding up to the individual communities, was the means of providing for a function formerly offered by the guilds, abolished for about two decades at that time. The law was elaborated in 1829 to include more technical instruction--such as geometry and perspective--for "the useful arts," as such a background was becoming essential for newly developing trades.[9] It bears noting that drawing was considered not just the basis of the fine and applied arts but as important to education as reading, writing, and arithmetic: it was a means of visualizing and developing a product, essential for the practice of trades.[10]

The three schools brought together to form the Rotterdam Academy were a drawing society and school called Hierdoor tot Hooger (Through Here to Higher), an

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[9]J. Bruggeman, Onderwijs in meervoud: De voorgangers van de Hogeschool Rotterdam & Omstreken in historisch perspectief (Rotterdam: Hogeschool Rotterdam & Omstreken, 1993), 32-34; Martis, "Van 'tekenschool' tot 'kunstvakschool,'" in Lucaskrater, ed. van der Kamp and others, 34-37.

[10]Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 38-42.

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architectural drawing school and a technical school.[11] Each of these organizations tells something of the evolution of art education in the Netherlands and in Rotterdam in particular.

Hierdoor tot Hooger was nearest to the early European art academies, founded in 1773 by professional painters and amateurs with the intention of raising the level of the art in the Netherlands, mindful of its decline in international prestige since the great period of the seventeenth century. The members drew from plaster casts and from clothed and nude models and enjoyed friendly conversation. Within a decade this drawing society saw fit to transform itself into a public academy to develop the taste and artistic abilities of tradespeople and thus to raise the quality of Dutch products in general, not just painting. This was in 1781; the action of these townspeople was in keeping with the general west European phenomenon of Mercantilism and the Enlightenment concept of education.[12] Within its private, desultory manner Hierdoor tot Hooger fulfilled half the governmental requirements as they were to be formulated in

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[11]Ibid., 38. I have not consulted sources cited by Bruggeman: J. A. Bakker, De oorsprong der Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen te Rotterdam, aangetoond in de geschiedenis van het teekengenootschap "Hierdoor tot Hooger" (Rotterdam: 1900); F. N. Maas, Honderd jaren Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen (Rotterdam: 1951).

[12]Pevsner, Academies of Art, 152-160.

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1817.[13]

In order to offer the architectural instruction required by the law, the city of Rotterdam founded the Stadsteekenschool voor de Bouwkunde in 1822 as a stopgap measure. At city expense and on a tight budget, this school was to provide instruction in architectural drawing "only for the needy class."[14] To meet the needs of the citizenry, another school, the Volksindustrieschool, was founded in Rotterdam in 1832 at the initiative of the private philanthropic society, the Nederlandsche Huishoudelijke Maatschappij (Society for Dutch Domestic Economy), which contributed funds itself and raised money from the Rotterdam town council and the other philanthropic society that contributed so much to Dutch education, the Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen (Society for Public Welfare).[15] Instruction was offered in algebra, geometry, mechanics, architectural drawing, and ornament drawing to

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[13]A second painters' society, Arti Sacrum, formed in 1837, had united with Hierdoor tot Hooger before 1851; Het onderwijs aan de Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen te Rotterdam in 1913 (Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1914), 3; "Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten, Rotterdam," in Lucaskrater, ed. van der Kamp and others, 188.

[14]Allen uit den behoeftigen burgerstand; Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 43-45.

[15]See Adi Martis, "Some Organizations and their activities," in Industry & Design, ed. Kras and others, 22-23.

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students from a somewhat wider background.[16]

When these three Rotterdam schools were brought together in 1851 it was at the insistence of the national Ministry of Interior Affairs. Rotterdam had lagged behind even smaller cities in founding a full-fledged drawing academy, largely because it was unwilling to undertake the financial responsibilty.[17] The name of the new institution, Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen te Rotterdam, gives equal billing to the fine arts and the technical sciences, which were the two divisions of instruction.[18] The technical sciences were just that: the emerging fields of engineering drawing; the words should not be construed as referring to the technical aspects of the fine arts.[19]

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[16]Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 45-46. By the time it joined with the other schools, the Volksindustrieschool was called the Hoogere Industrie-school; Onderwijs in 1913, 3.

[17]Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 50-51.

[18]Ibid., 71. The words *beeldende kunsten* are usually translated into English as the "plastic arts"; *beeld* literally means "image."

[19]This is possible when the name of the academy is translated, as it is following Hess, 1968, 12, Rotterdam Academy of Fine Arts and Techniques. A combination of artistic and technical fields occurred in the early drawing schools in Germany which also bore responsibility for a wide range of education. There however, as early as 1809, forty-two years before the Rotterdam academy was formed, an idealistic vision of art study sought to remove the words *mechanischen Wissenschaften* from the name of the Berlin academy; Pevsner, Academies of Art, 161, 245.

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Starting in 1872,[20] the Academy was housed in its own building on the Coolvest across the street from the Boymans Museum, which had been its first location. It had its own exhibition rooms and collection. By 1920 the overcrowding and poor physical condition of this building caused the administration to consider alternate locations; the structure was demolished in 1936 to make way for a new stock exchange building, and only four years later, the new locations of the decentralized academy, along with its records, teaching appurtenances, and collections were destroyed in the bombardment of Rotterdam in World War II.[21]

The earliest course of instruction in the *Beeldende Kunsten* (Plastic Arts or Fine Arts) was comprised of classes in *handteekenen* (free-hand drawing), ornament, modeling, anatomy, perspective, architectural drawing, and the history of architecture.[22] The term *handteekenen*, free-hand drawing, marked a distinction from drawing with a ruler as was required for technical subjects; it was the course of study followed by those who would be painters, the section in which de Kooning himself was to be enrolled, and its content was derived from French eighteenth-century academic art instruction: drawing from two-dimensional examples,

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[20]Onderwijs in 1913, 3.

[21]Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 73, 110-111.

[22]Ibid., 71.

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plaster casts, and the living model, first clothed, then nude.[23]

This course of instruction was reorganized in the 1880s when Jan Striening (1827-1903), was appointed to the newly created position of *hoofddocent* (head teacher). Striening, a strong supporter of reforms, introduced both a new method in drawing instruction and initiated instruction in the new field of *kunstnijverheid*, (literally "industrial art," also translated "applied art"). The changes which he brought were still in place in 1914. It was under Striening that J. G. Heyberg received his training, so the former's influence reached into de Kooning's education as well.

The new method of drawing instruction was that developed by Ferdinand and Alexandre Dupuis in France earlier in the century when they opened a drawing school in Paris in 1835. The title of the Dupuis brothers' book, published in 1836, is indicative of their intention to prepare students for the trades: Enseignement géneral du dessin, sous le point de vue industriel (General instruction in drawing, from the industrial point of view). The method was imported into the Netherlands via Germany in the 1850s

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[23]Ibid., 76-77. *Handteekenen* is the earlier spelling of the word, in use during de Kooning's years at the Academy; present-day spelling is *handtekenen*. Because it contains such distinct meanings, I shall use the Dutch word instead of an English translation.

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and 1860s.[24] Referred to in Dutch as *natuurtekenen* (drawing after nature), this method substituted three-dimensional wire and wood models for the two-dimensional drawings students had traditionally copied in their early instruction; this allowed students to grapple directly with three-dimensional objects. The first phase of the Dupuis method was called perspective drawing. Simple to complex geometric forms in wire, wire covered with gauze, and wood and solid plaster were displayed at various angles and heights (fig. 47); students were to draw the objects from many different viewpoints. A catch phrase for Dutch apologists of the Dupuis method was that it trained eye and hand.[25] Looking ahead to de Kooning's instruction, the first phase of the Dupuis method was still in the curriculum

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[24]Frans Grijzenhout, "Teekenen zij een bestanddeel der opvoeding, 1880-1900," in Geen dag zonder lijn: Honderd jaar tekenonderwijs in Nederland 1880-1980, ed. Ben Koevoets and Herbert van Rheeden (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1980), 12-15.

[25]Ibid., 13. In the second phase of the Dupuis method, which was less often imported into the Netherlands, plaster models of heads were designed in four versions each to present at first only the simple broad masses of the head, then the larger features, which became progressively more detailed. The advanced part of this second phase started with plaster models of the human figure and led to drawing from the living model. The Dupuis method is also discussed in Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 77-78; Clive Ashwin, Drawing and Education in German-Speaking Europe 1800-1900, Studies in the Fine Arts: Art Theory (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), 95-96, pl. 32; Adi Martis, "Het ontstaan van het kunstnijverheidsonderwijs in Nederland en de geschiedenis van de Quellinusschool te Amsterdam (1879-1924)," Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 30 (1979; Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1980): 95-97.

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in the teen years of the twentieth century.

In 1882, a year after his appointment, Striening offered a new course of instruction in applied art.[26] A report which he had prepared with W. B. G. Molkenboer in 1880 on drawing instruction in Belgium showed familiarity with and keen support for the ideas of the National Art Training School in South Kensington, England, which he brought to his new post.[27] The importance of botany in designing ornament and an interest in discovering fundamental principles of design are key contributions of the English system.[28] Rotterdam was not far behind Haarlem (1877) and Amsterdam (1879) in initiating or re-vitalizing instruction in the applied arts, contemporary with The Hague (1882), and ahead of Utrecht (1886).[29] The immediate impetus for this activity was the 1877 Amsterdam exhibition Kunst toegepast op Nijverheid (Art Applied to Industry)

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[26]For translation of the term *kunstnijverheid*, I am guided by Patricia Wardle's English summary for Martis, "Het ontstaan," in NKJ, 143. Further discussion of this and related terms occurs in Adi Martis, "Terminology and ideology," in Industry & Design, ed. Kras and others, 15-21.

[27]Martis, "Het ontstaan," in NKJ, 86 and nn. 32 and 170. Franca Wouters, Jan Striening 1827-1903: Teekenmeester in Deventer en Rotterdam (Zwolle: Uitgeverij Waanders, 1988), 33-34. The English system had been of interest to Dutch art educators for over a decade; see Martis, "Het ontstaan," in NKJ, 86 and Martis, "Van 'tekenschool' tot 'kunstvakschool,'" in Lucaskrater, ed. van der Kamp and others, 40-43.

[28]Christopher Frayling, Royal College of Art: 150 Years of Art and Design (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987), 38-43.

[29]Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 80.

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which alerted the nation to the same problems that were defined in England after the Great Exhibition of 1851. By the time of Striening's semi-retirement in 1902, this branch of instruction had become so well attended that a separate Division of the academy was established, *Decoratieve Kunsten en Kunstnijverheid* (Decorative and Applied Arts), under the leadership of Adolf le Comte (1850-1921), already mentioned as a teacher of Jaap Gidding. From 1908 to 1918 the post was held by Huib Luns (1881-1942) and then by Jac. Jongert (1883-1942), with whom de Kooning was in communication.

In 1882-83, during Striening's tenure, day classes were first offered at the Rotterdam Academy and for the first time, painting was taught.[30] From the 1880s, throughout the early part of the twentieth century, when de Kooning was at the Rotterdam Academy, painting was taught only in the

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[30]Wouters, Striening, 38; Onderwijs in 1913, 3. Striening had learned painting as a youth in his native Haarlem; he had studied, on an individual basis, under local painters, including animal painter Pieter Frederik van Os, from whom Anton Mauve also took lessons a decade later. (Striening also studied under portrait painter Jan Piet Blom and still life painter D. H. Joosten.) Wouters, Striening, 18, uses the term *tekenles* (drawing lessons) for his study with the painters. Striening was also a student at the Haarlem Stadsteekenschool where instruction would definitely have been limited to drawing. In his own work Striening favored the mediums of watercolor and wash drawings although he regularly exhibited oil paintings. Striening's training points to an issue that had to be addressed in nineteenth-century art education: whether painting was to be taught in a studio or academy setting, an issue discussed in Jenny Reynaerts, "Van atelier naar academie: Schilders in opleiding 1850-1900," in De schilders van Tachtig: Nederlandse schilderkunst 1880-1895, ed. Richard Bionda and Carel Blotkamp (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1991), 88-107.

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day classes. References to this instruction are understated in the documents of the period, perhaps because the nature of training in the arts was then a subject of considerable debate.

This debate, which had begun late in the nineteenth century and had grown with state subsidies for arts education, crystallized in the Nijverheidsonderwijswet (Technical Education Law) of 1919. The guiding principle of this law was that instruction in art would be given in accord with the claims of social life:[31] art instruction at all institutions other than the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam would be directed to the applied arts and teacher-training related to an art career in a trade, not the fine arts. The Rotterdam Academy was specifically designated, along with that of The Hague and others, as a school of the applied arts.[32] Thus the emphasis on the practical use of his academic education was imparted to de Kooning, not only by his own economic circumstances and the high-minded idealism ultimately deriving from nineteenth-century English and Belgian renewals in the applied arts, but also by the decisions of hard-headed Dutch legislators.

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[31]Bruggeman, Onderwijs, 105.

[32]Martis, "Van 'tekenschool' tot 'kunstvakschool,'" in Lucaskrater, ed. van der Kamp and others, 44-47. I am grateful to Adi Martis for information on art education in the Netherlands and advice for research given in conversation, 2 September 1986.

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Teachers at the Academy

The yearly Reports of the Academy list its teachers and the subjects they offer, and specify who taught evening or day courses, but they are not more precise about the levels of the classes, so it is not possible to trace with precision with which teachers de Kooning studied. He has spoken of professors Heyberg, Mees, and Jongert. Because their careers enlarge our understanding of the milieu in which de Kooning was formed, they will be described with considerable attention, especially those of Heyberg and Jongert.

Johannes Gerardus Heyberg

The person from Rotterdam whom de Kooning most frequently mentioned in conversation with me is his drawing teacher at the Academy, Johannes Gerardus Heyberg (1869-1952), whose work may be described as academic Realist/Impressionist. Heyberg was born in Rotterdam in 1869, and was thus Mondrian's senior by three years; he was also near in age to Johan Thorn Prikker, Richard N. Roland Holst, and Willem van Konijnenburg, all of whom were born in 1868. These members of Heyberg's generation all began their careers with sympathy for the Hague School, went through an important Symbolist period, and by around 1910-1917 had grappled with, incorporated into their art, ignored, or discounted modern movements in painting. Heyberg, too, admired the Hague School painters but a Symbolist phase is

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absent from his career: he had little tolerance for the work of Jan Toorop or of Van Gogh, which he considered a decline in art. By about 1910 the success of modern art so dismayed him that he stopped painting altogether and sold all his own paintings as an act of protest.[33] The man who took such a rash step had painted quiet scenes of contemporary Dutch military men in off-duty hours, paintings suffused with calm introspection (figs. 48 and 49).

This calm and Heyberg's usually somber palette made it easy to characterize him in later years as having been a Hague School painter.[34] But his subjects are mainly figures, his painterliness is restrained, and the tangibility of his forms scrupulously observed, traits which belong to a number of painters of the generation called the Amsterdam Impressionists. Although the connection is not readily apparent, Heyberg's aesthetic was in fact partially shaped by fellow-Rotterdammer and leading Amsterdam Impressionist George Breitner (1857-1923), a dozen years his senior, whose advice he had sought while still a student in the mid-1880s. Breitner had travelled to Paris in 1884 where he had been impressed by the work of Degas, among others; he was dedicated to painting the life of his time;

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[33]NRC, 5 December 1949; Algemeen Dagblad, 9 December 1949; and L. V., "J. G. Heijberg, Schilder van het militaire leven," Legerkoerier (March 1952), clippings in RKD.

[34]This occurred in newspaper and non-art journal obituaries.

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in the 1880s he especially favored military scenes; and he valued a more precise draftsmanship than he himself possessed. Some of these interests and views may have been conveyed to Heyberg.

Like de Kooning, Heyberg began his studies as a boy in the evening classes of the Rotterdam Academy, following the program in the Plastic Arts, called, as it was for de Kooning as well, *Handteekenen*. He was promoted from the first to the second Class in the spring of 1883. He thus entered the Academy shortly after Jan Striening became Head Master of the Division. In Heyberg's third year, the program in *Kunstnijverheid* (Applied Arts) was initiated; he entered this course as well, progressing in both programs each year.[35]

In 1887, at the age of eighteen, Heyberg had completed five years of evening study in the division of fine arts and three years in the applied arts. In that year he won the Silver Medal for his drawing of a male nude. According to Rotterdam artist Klaas van de Erve, this drawing became part of the Academy collection and hung in the corridors for years before it was destroyed in the 1940 fires; it was reproduced in a 1914 booklet describing the course of study

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[35]Verslag der Academie over 1882-83; and successive yearly reports for 1883-84; 1884-85; 1885-86; 1886-87.

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at the Academy (fig. 50).[36]

Although medium and maker are not confirmed in the publication, it is an especially fine work and may be examined as an indication of the summit of achievement at the Rotterdam Academy in which Heyberg was an important teacher in 1914. While the pose of the nude male is nominally one of action, Heyberg has conveyed the meditative revery of both the long-held pose and the artist's attention. The light playing over the body seems more active than the model; it allows for eloquent, sharp contours between figure and ground and between the right arm and torso, but in all other ways Heyberg's treatment stresses subtlety of modelling over linear crispness. The background changes from deep shadow to more luminous atmosphere; except for the darkest tones, this ground is a masterful flutter of nuances. Although it is clearly an *académie*, there is a fullness of spirit and a cohesiveness to the work that elevates it within its type.

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[36]Klaas van de Erve, letter to author, March 1992. Onderwijs in 1913, pl. 7. Sections of this booklet on the instruction at the Rotterdam Academy were mailed to me by Mr. van de Erve, who had entered the day classes of the Rotterdam Academy at the age of sixteen in 1928, beginning with the fifth Class; he won the Silver Medal in 1936; letter to author, 5 November 1984. Mr. van de Erve was insistent that, although illustrated with the works of the *Schilderklasse* (Painter class), and although a number of the other works in the booklet are dated 1912 and 1913, this work was executed in conté and was drawn by Heyberg so many years earlier. He gave its size as approximately 120 x 60 cm.; letter to author, March 1992. In style and mood it is consonant with Heyberg's other works.

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At some point during his studies Heyberg had shown his "painting experiments" (*schildersproeven*) to George Breitner; the latter counselled him to enter the day classes of the Academy, which had only recently been inaugurated.[37] At some point he prepared for and received the certificate to teach art.

In the spring of 1889, Heyberg was conscripted by lottery into military service. He became a corporal in the Regiment of Grenadiers and Fusiliers, spending four-and-a-half months on duty for the first summer and about six weeks each on three successive summers. This mundane biographical occurrence gave him his preferred subject matter for the rest of his painting career: soldiers engaged in casual activities, often in a guard room or in the barracks. Heyberg's view of the military life is a distinctive one. Rather than grand deeds or active maneuvers, he offers the soldier "in his manly housekeeping,"[38] in works so calm that a writer in 1916 likened them to "large still lifes."[39]

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[37]Algemeen Dagblad, 9 December 1949, clipping in RKD. The annual Reports of the Academy do not report the progress of the students in the day classes. Heyberg could have studied during the day as well as during the evening for several years before his silver medal in 1887 or he could have attended painting classes afterward, for existing documentation of his activities does not fill in these years.

[38]NRC, 5 December 1949, clipping in RKD.

[39]G. D. Gratama, "Den Haag: Tentoonstelling J. G. Heijberg bij Biesing," Onze Kunst 15, no. 2 (1916): 113.

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In the 1880s military subjects were enjoying international popularity. They were favored by history painter Charles Rochussen (1814-1894), the doyen of painting in Rotterdam at the time, and by younger Dutch artists Breitner and Isaac Israels. Works in this genre by French artists Edouard Detaille (1848-1912) and Alphonse de Neuville (1835-1885) were in Rotterdam collections.[40] Heyberg might well have been intrigued with such themes at the beginning of his academic studies, for when he was in the second Class at the Academy, in October 1883, Isaac Israels, only four years older than himself, had a shed put up on the Bolwerk in the center-city part of Rotterdam harbor. There he painted the background for his three-meter-wide canvas Volunteers Departing for the Colonies.[41] The young Israels had considerable success in Holland, Brussels and Paris with this and his other military canvases.[42]

In September 1892 Heyberg began his forty-two-year career of teaching at the Rotterdam Academy; he taught evening classes at first, later day classes as well. By the

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[40]Richard Bionda and Carel Blotkamp, "Introduction," and Sanne van Smoorenburg, "G. H. Breitner," and "I. Israëls," in The Age of Van Gogh: Dutch Painting 1880-1895, ed. Richard Bionda and Carel Blotkamp (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1990), 15, 113, 154, 159.

[41]Anna Wagner, Isaac Israels (Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, 1967), 15.

[42]Ibid.; Sanne van Smoorenburg, "I. Israëls," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 154.

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time de Kooning entered the Academy he taught drawing from the head, still life drawing, pastel and watercolor, twenty-two hours a week in the evening classes and eighteen hours a week in the day classes.[43] During his first year of teaching, one of Heyberg's students was Kees van Dongen, many of whose early drawings Heyberg came to own.[44] Some of these works may have been available for de Kooning to see during his own student years.

The same month that he began teaching, Heyberg married Sara Ledeboer, also a capable and dedicated artist. During the later 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, both painters exhibited in the Netherlands and in large international exhibitions in Germany, Paris and Barcelona.[45] The strategy of seeking a market and reputation in foreign exhibitions was widely pursued by Dutch painters in the early 1890s.[46] Heyberg did well. At

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[43]NRC, 5 December 1949, clipping in RKD. According to the annual Reports, he taught more hours than any other teacher by about ten hours a week.

[44]Van Dongen was a student in the evening classes from 1892-94, and during visits to Rotterdam between 1898 and 1902 he continued to draw from the nude at the Academy. See Jan van Adrichem, "Kees van Dongen's early years in Rotterdam and Paris," in Jan van Adrichem, Donald Kuspit, and Michel Hoog, Kees van Dongen (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1989), 11-13.

[45]A notebook kept by Heyberg, now in the RKD Archivalia, lists exhibitions between 1898 and 1907 in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Munich, Paris, Berlin, Hamburg and Barcelona.

[46]Richard Bionda, "The Market for Contemporary Art in the Netherlands," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 79, n. 37.

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the opening of the exhibition rooms in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam he received a gold medal for his work Na de Rust (After the Halt) and was similarly honored at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900 for Près du poêle (Near the Stove).[47]

One painting that Heyberg sent to the Grosse Berliner Kunst-Ausstellung in 1901, Auf der Wacht (On Watch), is reproduced in the catalogue of that exhibition (fig. 51).[48]

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[47]Obituary, NRC, 18 January 1952, gives the date 1890 for Stedelijk Museum exhibition; entry in Scheen, s.v. Heyberg, Johannes, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars, gives 1895. Paris, Exposition Universelle de 1900, Catalogue Officiel illustré de l'Exposition Décennale des Beaux-Arts de 1889 à 1900, Pays-Bas, no. 29.

Other works that Heyberg exhibited around the turn of the century are: Der Kaffee der Soldaten (Soldiers' Coffee) in Munich, Münchener Künstlergenossenschaft, Münchener Jahres-Ausstellung im Kgl. Glaspalast, 1899, no. 397; Wintertag (Winter Day) and Rauchender Korporal (Smoking Corporal) in the exhibition held by the same society in 1900, nos. 389, 390; Im Quartier (In Billeted Lodgings) again in Munich, 1901, no. 768, Junger Soldat (Young Soldier) in Berlin, Grosse Berliner Kunst-Ausstellung, 1901, no. 590; Unteroffiziere (Non-commissioned Officers), in Munich, 1904, no. 440; Grenadiers in de kazerne (Grenadiers in the Barracks) in the Tentoonstelling van levende Meesters, Rotterdam 1906, no. 69; Korporaal Wachtcommandant (Corporal Commander of the Guard) and 's Winters in de Wacht (Winter in the Guard) in the Jubileumtentoonstelling Sint-Lucas, Amsterdam, 1906, nos. 209, 210. Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, s.v. Heyberg, Johannes; Dutch catalogues in the library of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; entry in Scheen, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars, has further titles for exhibitions 1890-1905 in Amsterdam, Arnhem, The Hague, and Rotterdam.

Heyberg-Ledeboer's work was included in Munich, 1900 and 1901, Berlin, 1901, Rotterdam, 1906; she also exhibited with the Sint Lucas artist's group in 1907, 1908, and 1914, when her husband did not.

[48]Grosse Berliner Kunst-Ausstellung, 1901, no. 589, reproduced on page 114.

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An air of quiet repose pervades the scene of two soldiers in the corner of a guard room. One sits with his back at an angle to the viewer, reading from a paper which he holds to catch the light while the other pours tea or coffee in a posture very near to that of Vermeer's Kitchenmaid (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, fig. 52).[49]

Chambree van de Grenadiers (The Grenadiers' Barrack Room) was purchased by the Boymans Museum in 1915 (fig. 53). It is thus a work de Kooning could have known. Unlike On Watch and two other undated paintings in the Boymans collection (Soldaten in de Kazerne and Twee soldaten in een Wachtlokaal, acquired in 1925 and 1948 respectively), the composition of this work is rather dense. A partly-cropped figure looms immediately in the center foreground, and the shelves on the wall behind are cropped at the left before receding to the right at a slight diagonal. In spite of this proximity, however, the viewer is afforded psychological distance to observe the unselfconscious, inwardly-directed activities of the men and to scan the appurtenances of the room. The foreground man polishes the hilt of his dress sword in quiet revery, while three other soldiers are absorbed in the music of an accordionist. An isolated white bowl in the lower right provides the one

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[49]His pose differs from that of Vermeer's in the placement of the right forearm, which is nearer to the body, changing the angle of the pouring vessel as well. The head of Heyberg's youth is inclined slightly more downward and the torso faces slightly more to the front.

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wholly depicted, isolated form in the painting; as such, it seems to summarize and encapsulate the meditative mood.

The portrayal is everywhere governed by sight; edges of forms are not sharp, though they are distinct. Separate brush strokes are sometimes perceptible, and the sunlight creates a surprisingly warm glow of colors in the drab setting. Close inspection can find in the sword polisher's blond hair strokes of orange and green; and there are pink, orange, and yellow highlights on his skin with blue and green perceptible underneath.

Heyberg's solid draughtsmanship is coupled with a northern Impressionist's interest in light and atmosphere, here more colorful than in many of his works, sundrenched compared to the general gamut of Breitner, although somber indeed in relation to French Impressionism. Breitner's and Israels's experiments with cropping, deriving from their knowledge of French work and interest in photography, may be behind this exceptionally crowded composition in Heyberg's oeuvre.[50] A mood of quiet contemplation infuses this and all Heyberg's canvases. Mood and atmosphere, conveyed by the word *stemming*, had been a keyword in the thought of later nineteenth-century Dutch artists and critics, and was

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[50]Heyberg himself "hated photography and he became frightfully angry when you mentioned the question," according to Klaas van de Erve, letter to author, 7 February 1985.

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sometimes used as a synonym for Impressionism.[51]

Heyberg's mood and subject matter are candid, unpretentious, without a trace of the anecdotal. A dozen years before Heyberg chose the material to which he would remain loyal in his art, such values ran counter to reigning academic views.[52] Art critic J. van Santen Kolff, who took up the cause of the Hague School painters in 1877, argued for "realism, the absence of idealization and refusal to submit to the laws of aesthetics" as the "perennial qualities of Dutch painting."[53] Thus the great seventeenth-century Dutch painters received a positive reevaluation which was consciously linked to the painting of the Hague School and later to the Amsterdam Impressionists. It is in this general context that we may see Heyberg's seamless incorporation of the seventeenth-century tradition.[54]

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[51]Carel Blotkamp, "Art Criticism in De Nieuwe Gids," Simiolus 5 (1971): 130-132. Blotkamp points out that little distinction between the interior and exterior aspects of this concept was deemed necessary.

[52]Ibid., 130.

[53]Expressed in English by Carel Blotkamp, ibid., 121.

[54]A. M. Hammacher, Amsterdamsche Impressionisten en hun kring (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff Uitgever, 1941), 107, notes that Dutch artists after the Hague School found in "the art of Rembrandt, Hals and Vermeer a source of strength," likening the phenomenon to nineteenth-century French painters' drawing upon their own heritage from the rococo period. Bionda and Blotkamp, "Introduction," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 18, see the Hague School painters as offering a more fleeting moment than some of the Dutch painters who followed them; they liken the calm in the next generation's work to such seventeenth-century masters as Saenredam and De Hoogh.

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This trait has been mentioned in relation to On Watch, the work exhibited in Berlin in 1901. We find it as well in the large canvas by Heyberg which hangs in the Rotterdam Town Hall. A single, asymmetrically placed foreground soldier stands frontally facing the viewer in a casual, contemplative moment, with several fellows on the other side of the canvas. The large scale and the dark background of the painting call to mind the militia portraits of the seventeenth century, although notably without boisterous celebration. The introspective mood and yellow tones emerging from grey and brown may be an invocation of Rembrandt. Heyberg's grand references are quietly melded to the young soldiers, few in number, contemporary, dutiful, straightforwardly unprepossessing.[55]

Professor Heyberg is probably de Kooning's most direct historical link to the national tradition of Holland. The young man may not have experienced the connection specifically through the paintings of Heyberg, nor even

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[55]Not long before the end of his life, Heyberg was visited by a writer from the Legerkoerier (Army Courier) to whom he gave an explanation of the importance of his subjects which both surprised and touched the interviewer: "The army is the dike around the land, the moment this dike falls away, chaos comes." In the wording and context given by the interviewer, "the upright aim of closing out chaos" may be related to Heyberg's view of modernism as a "demolition of the art of painting." (Heijberg . . . zag in dit modernisme een afbraak van de schilderkunst. . . . "Het leger is de dijk om het land, zodra deze dijk wegvalt komt er chaos." . . . Het waren de woorden van een kunstenaar, wiens eigen leven vervuld is geweest van de oprechte bedoeling de chaos buiten te sluiten); L. V., "J. G. Heijberg."

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through Heyberg's explanatory words, but certainly through his discipline. Hess recounts,

> [De Kooning] remembers the amphitheater at the school, the students gathered around the still-life objects arranged in the middle of the stage, and the professor, who kept saying emphatically: "Draw without ideas! Draw what you see, not what you think!" This advice stayed with him, always. He is contemptuous of ideologies in art, of any ideas that tend to close a painter's mind to new insights or possibilities.[56]

By the time de Kooning came to Heyberg's class, the latter had given up painting for almost a decade and had devoted himself to teaching. Heyberg was intense and exigent and many of the students were afraid of him. De Kooning recalled to a Dutch interviewer in 1977,

> My professor was a terribly strict man. We couldn't say anything during his classes, drew still lifes and had to take care that we didn't soil the paper. I was his best student.[57]

Hess tells us that, "the professor honored [de Kooning] with a pet name, as one of the best draftsmen in the school;" the name seems to be irretrievable.[58] De Kooning's comments to me indicate that Heyberg was severe but ultimately compassionate and inspiring. He recalled an occasion when Heyberg had reacted harshly to a student conversation in class, only to become quite lenient when he discovered that

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[56]Hess, 1972, 18.

[57]Mijn professor was een ontzettend strenge man. We mochten niets zeggen tijdens zijn colleges, schilderden stillevens en moesten zorgen dat we het papier niet vuilmaakten. Ik was zijn beste leerling; Tromp, "Elke stijl," 12.

[58]Hess, 1972, 18.

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they were talking about art.[59]

Tales of Heyberg's tyrannical ways in the classroom abound.[60] He was indeed no ordinary teacher. As an interviewer from his elderly years reported, "he painted through the means of his students."[61] If Heyberg's students carried the burden of his forsaken career, de Kooning at least, seems to have done so lightly. He commented to Hess that Heyberg, "himself had been a painter, but had given it up with the advent of modernism. . . . The professor, he says, probably thought that Impressionism was subversive."[62]

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[59]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 2 December 1984.

[60]BAC., "Heyberg de geduchtige: Herinneringen van een oud-leerling," Rotterdams Nieuwsblad, 22 January 1952, clipping in RKD. Klaas van de Erve, letter to author, 6 and 7 January 1985, wrote, "Heyberg pressed so awful in the beginning of the course on us youngsters (we were afraid of him) that all drawing[s] (the subjects were different) looked at the end the same." Nico Benschop, interview by author, May 1986, told of drawing a still life in his first day of Heyberg's class, using inch-thick charcoal lines; Heyberg came to look at the work and said, greatly humbling his young charge, "'Which side of that line do you think is the right line?'"

[61]Schilderde hij door middel van zijn leerlingen; L. V., "J. G. Heijberg."

[62]Hess, 1972, 18. De Kooning's early attitude toward and understanding of Impressionism are of interest. This statement, while filtered through his mature awareness, makes it clear that he never considered Heyberg an Impressionist, even with the attention Heyberg gave to atmosphere. Heyberg did paint landscapes, as noted in Scheen, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars, but they may have formed only a small part of his production; I have not seen one.

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A number of Heyberg's former students remembered him with praise. De Kooning had fond memories of this teacher, whom he mentioned again and again in his own later years. One former student wrote shortly after Heyberg's death of "Spartan lessons in concentration and self-discipline," of instruction that had "laid the foundations of an unsparing self-control," and praised the man "who his life long fought against snobbism, slackness, and dabbling." Heyberg "had a definite philosophy," he wrote, "which he now and then administered" to his students, speaking "in parables, as he laid the finger on faults in our work, or in society."[63] Former student J. P. Molenaar found Heyberg "a great thinker" who "said important things, just in daily practice, talking to students."[64]

Recollections of Heyberg's teaching center on observing objects in atmosphere. For Klaas van de Erve, Heyberg taught "gradation in black and white and in color. Second, he always said you can't see a subject; you only see

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[63]Spartaans-eerlijke lessen in concentratie en zelftucht. . . . Deze man . . . in ons de fundamenten legde van een niets-ontziende zelf-contrôle. . . . Een sterk man, die zijn leven lang vocht tegen snobisme, slapheid en beunhazerij. . . . Had Heyberg een bepaalde philosofie, waarvan hij ons zo nu en dan wat toediende. Hij sprak graag in gelijkenissen, als hij de vinger legde op fouten in ons werk....of in de maatschappij; BAC., "Heyberg de geduchtige."

[64]J. P. Molenaar, interview by author, translated by Nico Benschop and Robin Adèr, 12 September 1986, Rotterdam. Molenaar was born in 1914 and attended the Rotterdam Academy in the 1930s.

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atmosphere."[65] Nico Benschop explained that Heyberg "wanted to give his understanding and knowledge about painting and drawing, the thing around it, the invisible thing."[66] J. P. Molenaar recalled a conversation with Heyberg while walking along the street:

> He said, "look, you think that this yellow bus and red sign are very important, but they are not. The tone of the day, of the light, the moment, the whole, is important." . . . *Toon*, *stemming*, *sfeer* were important to him.[67]

If this was in the 1930s, it would have been at the same time that de Kooning was walking through the streets of New York with a sharp eye, noting to Edwin Denby "a gesture, a crack, some refuse, a glow--where for a moment nature did it, the mysteriousness you recognize in a masterpiece. . . . He looked hard to catch exactly what was there."[68]

Talking to Irving Sandler in 1959, de Kooning spoke of the difference between his own work and that of Clyfford Still and Jackson Pollock: "I feel myself more in tradition. I have this point of reference--my environment--that I have to do something about. . . ." When the conversation turned to his own current work he said, "The mystery in the world is to see something that is really there. I want to grab a

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[65]Van de Erve, letter to author, 8 and 10 January 1985.

[66]Nico Benschop, interview by author, May 1986.

[67]J. P. Molenaar, interview by author, translated by Nico Benschop and Robin Adèr, 12 September 1986.

[68]Edwin Denby, Dancers, Buildings, People in the Streets (New York: Horizon Press, 1965), 271-72.

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piece of nature and make it as real as it actually is."[69] If such interests did not come from Heyberg, a suitable foundation for them had been laid in his class.

Herman Mees

Of the three teachers at the Academy whom de Kooning mentioned for Hess's biographical essay, Herman Mees (1880-1964) is the most surprising. Aristocratic, well-educated, reserved but genial, this locally successful portraitist of the wealthy makes an intriguing contrast to the disheveled, severe, no-longer-painting Heyberg and the farmer's-son, politically left, idealistic Jongert.

Between 1917 and 1921, Mees is listed in the annual Reports of the Academy as a teacher of *Handteekenen* in the evening classes. It is likely that he was one of de Kooning's drawing teachers before the fourth year in Heyberg's class. In Hess's record, de Kooning "remembers working with Mies [*sic*]."[70] The recollection and the relationship may have amounted to little more than that statement.

Mees's background may be offered briefly to fill in our awareness of de Kooning's academic environment. Mees was

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[69]Willem de Kooning, interview by Irving Sandler, 16 June 1959, in Irving Sandler, "Conversations with de Kooning," Art Journal 48, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 216-17. For the "piece of nature" de Kooning referred to his Merritt Parkway painting.

[70]Hess, 1959, 113.

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born in Veendam in northeastern Netherlands, the son of a medical doctor, and retained the accent of that region.[71] His family moved to Rotterdam when he was seventeen, and there he finished his higher schooling. He had begun studies in architectural engineering but persuaded his father to let him go to the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam in 1901; after two years he continued his academic studies in Rotterdam and received the silver medal in 1904. He stayed on another year to earn a teaching certificate, then spent three years in London, where Frank Brangwyn corrected his studies in the evening classes of the London School of Art. After that he spent half a year in Paris and another in Germany, divided between Munich and Dresden.

Mees began teaching at the Rotterdam Academy in 1909. A philosophical bent had inclined him toward theosophy during the time he had been a student there, but in this year a friendship with Dutch Hegelian philosopher G. J. P. J. Bolland so influenced him that he stopped painting for two years. Then he met Willem van Konijnenburg, in 1912, and considered the man, his ideas, and his art of major importance for his own career.[72] Above all, he revered van

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[71]Henri Dekking, "Herman Mees," Op de Hoogte 30 (1933): 113.

[72]Mees contributed to two collective appreciations of van Konijnenburg. His essays follow plates 88 and 227 in volumes 2 and 3, respectively, of Willem A. van Konijnenburg Paintings and Drawings Belonging to the Collection of G. F. H. van Kooten Kok, trans. H. Raymund Wildermuth, 3 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1929); Herman E. Mees, "Willem

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Konijnenburg as "the painter-thinker" (*de schilder-denker*).[73] Whether or not de Kooning heard about van Konijnenburg and his ideas directly from Mees, we know that there was sympathy for him and his work at the Rotterdam Academy.

A 1922 portrait drawing by Mees in the collection of the Boymans Museum gives an idea of his work in the period that de Kooning was his student (fig. 54). The sitter is Dutch poet Jan Hendrik Leopold (1865-1925), conveying in visage and posture the wistful melancholy of his work.[74]

Jacob Jongert

The third teacher singled out by de Kooning was Jacob Jongert (1883-1942). With him de Kooning came into contact with the mainstream of advanced Dutch developments in the applied arts of the previous several decades at their most

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van Konijnenburg als leermeester," in H. de Boer and others, Willem A. van Konijnenburg (Wassenaar: J. A. A. M. van Es, 1928), 127-137. Mees also wrote an obituary praising van Konijnenburg's generosity and dedication to his art; NRC, 2 March 1943, clipping in Haagsch Gemeentemuseum.

[73]Mees, excerpted from Willem A. van Konijnenburg, Collection van Kooten Kok in Dekking, "Herman Mees," 115. A reviewer in 1924 found Mees's work to be still in the shadow of van Konijnenburg's larger art; P. K[oomen], "Rotterdamsche Tien," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten 1 (1924): 183-84.

[74]A brief discussion of Leopold's work in English and a sampling of his work may be found in Theodoor Weevers, Poetry of the Netherlands in its European context 1170-1930 (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1960), 178-180, 312-15.

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idealistic and reasoned.[75] It is likely that this contact was limited to conversation without the more practical interchange of a working relationship, and that it occurred after 1920. De Kooning spoke of Jongert to Hess and Hess's brief account remains the most concrete record of the association: "A teacher at the Academy, Jongert, also encouraged de Kooning's interest in the radical art of the time."[76] Professor Jongert's training and career to the mid-1920s in Rotterdam give an ambiguous indication of the "radical art" in which he may have encouraged the young de Kooning's interest.

When he first came to Rotterdam in 1918, Jongert's work was rooted in the principles of the Nieuwe Kunst and, in its decorative elaboration, could be described as closely

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[75]Knowledge of Jongert's career was revived after some decades of neglect with a 1982 exhibition at the Hague Gemeentemuseum; Emy Hoogenboezem, Flip Bool and Marjan Boot, Jac. Jongert 1883-1942: Graficus tussen kunst en reclame (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, 1982). The author of the catalogue essay also wrote an unpublished *doctoraalscriptie*: Emy Lankhof, "Een onderzoek naar Jac. Jongert 1883-1942, toegespitst op zijn gebruiksgrafiek," Kunsthistorisch Instituut, Utrecht, 1979. In 1941 during the first half-year of his stay at the sanitorium "Dennenoord" in Doorn, Jongert wrote a memoir, "Herinneringen van een boerenjongen," transcribed after his death by Paula and Anna Jongert, and brought into more modern Dutch and rearranged in chronological order by Johanna Jongert. A privately printed 4th edition of 1985-1986 was kindly made available to me by Beatrice Jongert Escher. The artist preferred to be known professionally by the shortened version of his first name, Jac. Jongert.

[76]Hess, 1958, 113. This is the last sentence in a paragraph about de Kooning's employer Bernard Romein, to whom the word "also" refers.

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related to the modern Amsterdam School. Just as the country itself was changing in the wake of World War I, Jongert's career was to undergo a considerable transformation. By the middle of the 1920s--precisely the period in which de Kooning was developing as a young artist--Jongert was becoming known for the bold simplicity of his advertising posters and graphic work for several Dutch businesses. This striking metamorphosis occurred gradually, and with little alteration in Jongert's deeply felt artistic convictions.

Jongert was the only child of a dairy farmer in Enge Wormer, a small town north of Amsterdam. His family led a frugal existence quite removed from the world of art. As a boy of eleven years, Jongert left elementary school to work on the farm but at fourteen resolved to become a painter. When he was sixteen he enrolled in the trade-oriented course of study at the Amsterdam Kunstnijverheid-Teekenschool Quellinus (Quellinus School of Applied Art), a major center of instruction in the newly developing field of the applied arts.[77] During his first year there, 1899-1900, he found the traditional instruction under Director Bart van Hove less than inspiring but the classes with J. H. de Groot, the famous disseminator of the geometrical theories of Lauweriks and de Bazel, changed his outlook forever.[78] According to

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[77]See Martis, "Het ontstaan."

[78]For de Groot, see Martis, "Het ontstaan," 126-28. Carel Blotkamp, "Annunciation of the New Mysticism: Dutch Symbolism and Early Abstraction," in The Spiritual in Art:

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Jongert's later account, he considered de Groot's own work "too inartistic," but the idea of geometry as a starting point for ornamental composition remained key to his development.[79]

During Jongert's second year at the Quellinus School a new director was appointed, a man who would also be important in his development. C. W. Nijhoff initiated reforms that allowed for greater freedom in drawing from nature and designing on one's own, rather than just copying models and patterns; some of these changes Jongert may later have brought to the Rotterdam Academy. In Jongert's last year at the school, he studied with the newly appointed H. Ellens, whom he has credited as a great influence. Ellens's instruction enabled him to apply what had so intrigued him in de Groot's theoretical classes.[80] Ellens and de Groot approached the design process from opposite starting points: whereas de Groot had begun with geometrical shapes and adapted them to representation, Ellens's point of departure was the motif, from which a geometric order was derived. Art historian Emy Hoogenboezem notes that Jongert sought an equilibrium between the two approaches and that his work was

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Abstract Painting 1890-1985, ed. Maurice Tuchman and Judi Freeman (New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1986), 95 puts the work of J. H. de Groot in context, as does Koopmans, "Kosmische symboliek."

[79]Te on-artistiek; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 71-72; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 18.

[80]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 82.

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freer than de Groot's, less stylized than Ellens's.[81] It was a fruitful year during which Jongert, in his telling, "worked out my thoughts on the unity of image and geometry" in various media, including batik cloth, a glass window, a children's book, and a page for a Bible. "I had become the most important student at the school, and even gave ideas to others. I learned a lot from historical works." On completion of his studies in the summer of 1902, he was awarded the silver medal.[82]

The next logical step in Jongert's education was the three-year course at the Rijksschool voor Kunstnijverheid in Amsterdam. After the stimulation of the Quellinus School, however, the instruction there was frustrating for him and he attended for only one year. During this year the interests of his fellow students brought Jongert into contact with the ethical attitude to living proclaimed by Frederik van Eeden and J. van Rees, the rigours of which he found related to the high-minded task of making art and which influenced him for some years: vegetarianism,

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[81]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 19; Hoogenboezem, Jac. Jongert, 4.

[82]Mijn gedachten over de eenheid van beeld en geometrie werkte ik op alle manieren uit in werkstukken. . . . Ik was zeker de meest belangrijke leerling geworden van de school, en gaf nog ideeën aan anderen. Veel leerde ik van oude werken; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 86.

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abstemiousness and anti-militarism.[83]

In consultation with Nijhoff and Ellens about his career, Jongert first sought a position in the leaded glass studio of Schouten--it would have been shortly before the time that Gidding was there--but for the level of his art portfolio, such work would have been a dead-end job. Schouten counselled Jongert to continue his studies at the Rijjksacademie; Nijhoff offered to provide financial support, stipulating that Jongert get the M.O. degree (*middelbare onderwijs akte*) which would enable him to teach.[84] At the Rijksacademie the following year, 1903-1904, Jongert was again somewhat of a misfit. His compositions based on mathematical foundations earned him the nickname--presumably good-natured--"*meneer de architekt*" from director August Allebé, the genre- and portrait-painter known for his realism.[85] Jongert attended day and evening classes, prepared on his own for the theoretical parts of the M.O. exam, and took a course offered by Nijhoff in architecture one evening a week.

Jongert became increasingly interested in mural painting (*monumentale schilderkunst*) and in the period

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[83]Deze ethische bevlieging heeft jaren geduurd (This ethical whim lasted for years); Jongert, "Herinneringen," 91; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 20.

[84]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 20; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 93.

[85]'Mr. Architect', or 'his lordship, the architect'; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 98.

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before World War I, he centered his professional goals in this direction. This branch of the arts was exceptionally important in the Netherlands at the time. Discussions of Antoon Derkinderen's murals of the 1890s had put forth the concept of Gemeenschapskunst, an art of the community, and Hendrik Petrus Berlage's masterful Stock Exchange building in Amsterdam (1896-1903) had brought these ideas to an impressive expression.

Toward the end of 1904, through the intermediary of Nijhoff, Jongert became assistant to Richard N. Roland Holst (1868-1938), who had recently contributed murals for the Stock Exchange and was at that time fulfilling a commission for murals in the Algemene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkers Bond (1897-1900, A.N.D.B., Diamond Workers' Union) building in Amsterdam, also designed by Berlage. Jongert stopped attending day classes at the Academy and began what was to be a period of work-study under Roland Holst, of enormous influence in his life, both professionally and personally. He would have been happy to have forsaken the M.O. degree project, but his elders intervened: Roland Holst dismissed him for a time until he completed the degree in 1905. Except for this interruption, Jongert worked for Roland Holst on the A.N.D.B. until the completion of the first phase of the murals in the meeting room, in May 1907.

There were fourteen images in painted panels above a

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high dado.[86] Single figures, or a small group, enacted allegorical roles in geometric fields surrounded by decorative borders; accompanying inscriptions included such slogans as "Freedom," "Brotherhood," "Organization," and aphoristic texts composed by Henriëtte Roland Holst: for example, "Enthusiasm bears the young life through eddies of resistance," and "Solidarity withstands even the alluring voice of gold," (fig. 55).[87] If the flat patterning, inscriptions, and simplified, planar backgrounds suggest an affinity with medieval manuscripts, this similarity was part of Roland Holst's aesthetic: important early influences included William Morris, the Pre-Raphaelites, and the Nabis and French Symbolist writers. As, in his view, the unifying spiritual belief of the Middle Ages had produced an exalted communal art, Roland Holst sought the same for the present, with socialism instead of religion as the inspiring force, and valued as well the formal qualities of the earlier era. For him drawing was more related to the idea than was the pictorial, individualistic tradition of the Renaissance (to

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[86]These murals are known only by black and white photographs; they were redone on asbestos panels in the 1930s because the saponification of the paint's alkaline casein base had caused them to deteriorate. Sergio Polano, Hendrik Petrus Berlage, Complete Works, trans. Marie-Hélène Agüeros and Mayta Munson (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 153. Kroes, Paleis aan de laan, 37-38. Polano gives date of 1934 and Kroes of 1937.

[87]"Geestdrift draagt 't jonge leven door kolken van weerstand heen," and "Solidariteit weerstaat ook de lokkende stem van het goud"; Kroes, Paleis aan de laan, 34-39, reproduced on pages 75-85.

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him, the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries); hence, the profile, linear presentation of his figures.[88] He shared Berlage's commitment to the social role of architecture, the integration of the various arts under architecture, and architectural and decorative composition founded on basic geometric forms, as well as a mission that the modern era might find its own style. "The monumental painter is no realist or naturalist," Roland Holst would proclaim:

> He does not image the outer appearance of nature but the spiritual synthesis of it, his work springs from the idea in order to strengthen the Lofty through constructive and geometric laws.[89]

"We [social democrats]," Roland Holst wrote of the A.N.D.B. murals, "see in the collectivity of workers reality and

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[88]Van Dael, "De Monumentalen," in Glas in lood, ed. Hoogveld, 113. Annemarie Spapens, "R. N. Roland Holst: Theorieën omtrent de monumentale kunst," Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 7 (1988; The Hague: SDU, 1990): 153, elucidates that for Roland Holst the Renaissance encompassed the period from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century. An important recent study on Roland Holst was not available to me in time to be incorporated into this study: Elisabeth Pauline Tibbe, R. N. Roland Holst, arbeid en schoonheid vereend: Opvattingen over gemeenschapskunst, Nijmeegse kunsthistorische studies, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1993).

[89]De monumentale schilder is geen realist of naturalist. Niet de uiterlijke verschijning der natuur beeldt hij, maar de geestelijke synthese ervan, zijn arbeid ontspringt uit de idee om door de bouwende en geometrische wetten tot de Verheven erkenning te stijgen; Roland Holst, Over kunst en kunstenaars (Amsterdam, 1923), 171, cited in Boot and van der Heijden, "Gemeenschapskunst," in Kunstenaren der idee, ed. Blotkamp and others, 41; the statement also appears in R. N. Roland Holst, "Ethische factoren in de monumentale schilderkunst," VANK Jaarboek (1919): 32.

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idealism all in one, and it is this that inspires us and gives hope for the future."[90]

Roland Holst's values, formative influences, and work dovetailed with Jongert's previous training and aspirations and greatly expanded them. His broad cultural understanding and knowledge of literature made him a valuable mentor in the young man's efforts to compensate for his sparse early education.[91]

An additional legacy of Jongert's study time with Roland Holst was a commitment to radical politics. The zeal that Jongert had earlier expressed in more personal ethical standards was transferred to a wider arena. He became active in the political life of the Zaanstreek district, an industrial area between Alkmaar and Amsterdam, spending increasing amounts of time at this work until in 1911 Roland Holst counselled him to choose between art and politics.[92]

After receiving the M.O. degree, Jongert spent his evenings teaching drawing at the Stadsteekenschool in Purmerend, a short distance north of Amsterdam. He would

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[90]Wij [sociaal-democraten] zien bij het samengaan der arbeiders realiteit en idealisme tegelijk en het is dit dat ons inspireert en hoop geeft voor de toekomst; Kroes, Paleis aan de laan, 36.

[91]Beatrice Escher, daughter of Jac. Jongert, interview by author, 19 April 1993, Amsterdam, confirmed that Roland Holst and his wife Henriëtte advised Jongert in reading literature. They were close friends until their deaths.

[92]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 21-22; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 132.

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remain affiliated with this school until he moved to Rotterdam in 1918; he taught during the day at the Industrieschool voor Meisjes in Amsterdam from 1908 to 1911 and then at the Dagteeken- en Kunstambachtschool voor Meisjes, also in Amsterdam, from 1911 to 1918. There he taught design for clothing and craft to young women. With this last position, his financial life became more stable.

In each situation Jongert was interested in experimenting with the manner of instruction to give it a more modern character. His students protested from time to time that they found his program too mathematical. Perhaps as a result, Jongert's procedure in the Amsterdam schools was to work together with the students to "build up an ornamental drawing out of simple, basic shapes."[93] He was asked by his former teacher J. H. de Groot to present his ideas on art instruction to the Amsterdam art association Arti et Amicitiae in 1913. Hoogenboezem sums up his lecture as asserting that too much emphasis was placed on faithfully copying natural forms and too little on the geometric-constructive elements of reality which were essential for a harmonious unity.[94]

During this period Jongert nurtured a career in the domain of *monumentale schilderkunst* (mural painting). In

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[93]Ik . . . bouwde met de leerlingen een ornamentale tekening op uit eenvoudige grond-figuren; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 22.

[94]Ibid., 23.

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1906-07 he executed a mural in the administration room of the Purmerend Statsteekenschool with the allegorical subject of "Work, Instruction, Expectation" (no longer extant). On a trip to Paris with wine-merchant friend and patron Cas Oud in the summer of 1910 he was especially interested in the murals of Puvis de Chavannes.[95] He entered into collaboration with the young architect J. J. P. Oud--coincidentally a relative of Cas Oud--with whom he had become friends in 1906, planning frescoes for the common room of a block of four workers' dwellings called Vooruit (forward) in Purmerend, designed by Oud and built from 1911 to 1913.[96] Oud wrote about the project in 1912, pleased

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[95]The stated purpose of the trip was to see cathedrals; Jongert had read Viollet-le-Duc, according to his daughter, Beatrice Escher, interview by author, 19 April 1993. The writings of the French architect had been important for Roland Holst.

[96]Jongert's friendship with Oud began when they were both commuting between Amsterdam and Purmerend. Oud, who was younger by seven years, had studied at the School voor Kunst en Kunstnijverheid from 1902 to 1906, just after Jongert's one year there, and then had worked in the Amsterdam architectural office of Jan Stuyt from 1907-1908. He returned to school, first for a teaching degree at the Rijksnormalschool voor Teekenonderwijzers and later at the Technische Hogeschool in Delft. In 1909 Oud was appointed to a teaching position at the Purmerend Statsteekenschool and he and Jongert became colleagues. Their friendship was probably most intense at this time, through to at least 1913, when Oud moved to Leiden. Toward the end of 1910, Oud came under the influence of Berlage, often visiting him and his family. Jongert, of course, had already participated in one of Berlage's ideal collaborations and was inspired by the same concerns. During a 1911 stay in Munich, working for the architectural firm of Theodor Fischer, Oud became enthusiastic about contemporary German architects' experimentation with new methods of construction and building materials, which he sought to incorporate in his

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that it was the first example of fresco painting in the Netherlands in modern times.[97] The execution of the frescoes proceeded slowly; Jongert was still at work on them in 1917, with a figure for "Day." He later wrote that the work was not successful: "I couldn't find a style for this technique."[98] The wall ended up as a pearwood panel, with the figure cut into the wood, and the lines filled in with a wash of paint, keeping the natural wood as ground. "Day" was a man binding a sheaf of grain and wiping the sweat from his forehead.[99] Jongert also designed a leaded glass window in 1912 for the new town hall of Purmerend, and painted a chimney panel in the burgermaster's room, the latter as a contribution without remuneration.

The influence of Roland Holst dominated Jongert's work in the early teen years, both in the murals and in a poster he designed for a 1912 international exhibition of the gas industry in Amsterdam (fig. 56). He had submitted the

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own work in "a completely Dutch manner" upon his return. Hans Esser, "J. J. P. Oud," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 124-125.

[97]J. J. P. Oud, "Schoorsteen in het gebouw der werkmansvereeniging 'Vooruit,' te Purmerend," Klei 4, no. 22 (1912). Oud had been impressed with the frescoes he had seen on a study trip to Italy; Esser, "J. J. P. Oud," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 125.

[98]Ik kan de stijl niet vinden voor deze techniek; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 23; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 158.

[99]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 174-75. Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 21, notes the strong resemblance to Roland Holst's murals for the A.N.D.B.

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design to a competition, hopeful because "the jury was modern," and had won first prize.[100] Apollo/Helios, symbol of energy and light, carries the infant Hermes, god of wealth and power. The allegorical figures and their poses owe a great deal to Roland Holst, as does the patterned border which reflects as well the more general period style of Nieuwe Kunst artists. A certain freedom in handling the lithographic ink may be seen in the cartouche containing the signature; this exploration of the qualities of the medium, another Nieuwe Kunst value shared with Roland Holst, is a trait that would grow in Jongert's graphic work.

In his experiments with the medium Jongert may have been inspired by his admiration for G. W. Dijsselhof's (1866-1924) "special handling of paint," as he put it, an important enough influence to act as a "counter-balance" to that of Roland Holst.[101] In these years Jongert also established a friendship with Sjoerd H. de Roos (1877-1962),

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[100]De jury was modern; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 135. The poster is discussed in Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 23, 39-41 and Marcel Franciscono, The Modern Dutch Poster the First Fifty Years 1890-1940, ed. Stephen S. Prokopoff (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987), 24-25.

[101]De bijzondere behandeling van de verf, die hij soms toepaste, inspireerde mij. Deze invloed was ook een prachtig tegenwicht tegenover mijn "oude baas"; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 111. After 1900 Dijsselhof devoted himself to painting and no longer worked in the applied arts; see Gans, Nieuwe Kunst, 50, 104.

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the socialist graphic artist and designer of typography,[102] and was inspired to explore the medium of woodcut. He found the simplicity required by the medium and by black and white congenial, using it to illustrate a pair of children's books and ultimately relying upon it as a starting point for other designs, including rugs and advertising work.[103]

In the summer of 1914 Jongert and two friends made a bicycle trip to Cologne to see the celebrated Deutsche Werkbund Exhibition of applied arts, an experience that would prove decisive in Jongert's career. The most important impression of the exhibition for Jongert was the modern packaging of everyday commercial items (fig. 57).

> . . . what interested us most was the street of stores, where all the modern articles were packaged and displayed: gingerbread, cigars, lamps and electrical articles. That gave us a shock, both of us professionals. What lay before us was a terrain that in Holland was not yet broached; but with such a great country preceding, we must surely follow. And what possibilities for instruction, should the practice once be begun! For this alone the trip to Cologne was

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[102]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 133. De Roos's early experiences as a designer were with "Het Binnenhuis," the firm established by Berlage. He designed the typeface Hollandsche Mediaeval in 1912, the first Dutch typeface in over a century, with which he sought to embody the "entire historical and cultural tradition." Based on fifteenth century Venetian types and very near to the Golden type of William Morris, it was enthusiastically received in the Netherlands. With this and subsequent typefaces he was a leader among the proponents of classical typography, valuing legibility, proportion and harmony. Alston W. Purvis, Dutch Graphic Design, 1918-1945 (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992), 100-105; Broos, Grafische vormgeving, 45.

[103]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 159-160, 173.

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worthwhile.[104]

As the German example in the industrial arts began to gain momentum in the Netherlands, Jongert was among the first to create new designs in packaging and display. He became a pioneer in advertising design and in the concept of a house style for the modern business enterprise. While he perceived the need for good design in this area, and the burgeoning opportunities it would offer, it was not his intention to devote himself solely to this field.[105] Yet he also took considerable pleasure in the discipline of advertising design, likening his early experiences with it to the discovery of his capabilities in "the best years of . . . [his] Amsterdam study time, but more developed and mature."[106] The decade of the 1920s was in fact a "golden

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[104]Maar wat ons het meest interesseerde dat was de winkelstraat, waar alle artikelen modern waren verpakt en geëtaleerd: koek, sigaren, lampen en electrische artikelen. Dat gaf ons een schok, ons beiden vaklieden. Wat lag daar een terrein voor ons, in Holland nog niet aangesneden; maar als een zo groot land voorging, moesten wij wel volgen. En welk een mogelijkheden voor het onderwijs indien de praktijk eenmaal zou toebijten! dit alléén was de tocht naar Keulen waard; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 153; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 41-42. Product designs are illustrated in the last plate of Jahrbuch des deutschen Werkbundes (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1915).

[105]In his memoir, he recalled remarking to an assistant around 1919 that becoming the advertising specialist of the Netherlands was not his ideal; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 204.

[106]Ik vond in deze arbeid mijzelf terug, zoals ik zo graag wilde zijn in de beste jaren van mijn Amsterdamse studie, maar meer uitgegroeid en rijper; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 164.

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age for advertising, when public mistrust abated and ads seemed a natural part of the spreading prosperity in many of the Western nations," as Kurt Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik have written.[107] In 1919 and 1923 Jongert lectured and wrote enthusiastically about the role of advertising in modern life;[108] it is the work for which he is best known.

An early advertising commission came from the company owned by the family of Jongert's wine-seller friend Cas Oud, De Wed. G. Oud Pz. en Co. (Company of the Widow of G. Oud, the son of P. Oud); this Purmerend firm distilled liquors and made soft drinks. Jongert first designed labels for apéritif bottles, ultimately designing the bottles themselves in 1924,[109] and creating a unified look for the company in its exhibition stands at the Utrecht Jaarbeurs (fig. 58), a national industries fair, beginning in March 1917, when he received considerable recognition. He was especially pleased that this work was "free of foreign forms and influence," as he wrote in his reminiscences. He

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[107]Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, High & Low: Modern Art Popular Culture (New York: The Museum of Modern Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 297.

[108]"Kunst in de reclame," Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 12 June 1919, on a lecture by Jac. Jongert, 11 June 1919, at Ons Huis, Rotterdam, during the exhibition "Kunst in de Reclame"; Jac. Jongert, "Affiches van Nederlandsche Kunstenaars: Reclame," Wendingen 5, no. 2 (1923): 3-15.

[109]A. van der Boom, "Het Industrieele Gebruiksvoorwerp," Haarlem. Courant, 10 October 1924, clipping at RKD.

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described the early labels as "modern, clear, and Dutch."[110] A vermouth label of about 1916 (fig. 59) has the mix of orientalism and geometric rigor of the previous several decades of advanced Dutch graphic design, notably in the work of de Bazel, Berlage and C. A. Lion Cachet.[111]

Another of Jongert's earliest advertising designs was for the glass factory at Leerdam, a Dutch company with an enlightened policy for elevating the artistic quality of its products. In 1915 P. M. Cochius, the director, employed architect K. P. C. de Bazel to design glass tableware; both men were theosophists and considered it a duty to offer well-designed, mass-produced, and therefore, low-priced objects that through daily use would contribute to harmony in society.[112] Underlying each of de Bazel's designs was a geometric system. When asked to make a black and white advertisement (fig. 60) for the Leerdam company, Jongert decided to feature a slender carafe by the architect. Using

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[110]Het prettige was dat alles vrij was van buitenlandse vormen en invloed. . . . Modern, duidelijk en Hollands; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 164-165.

[111]When Lion Cachet died, Jongert wrote an appreciation of his work for the Rotterdam newspaper, NRC, 27 November 1924, as cited in Hoogenboezem, Jac. Jongert, 14; many of his comments were reprinted in van der Sluys, Machinale Textielkunst, 35-36. This vermouth label is related as well to graphic designs by de Roos, for instance, an endpaper of 1913, reproduced in A. A. M. Stols, Het Werk van S. H. de Roos (Amsterdam: Lettergieterij "Amsterdam" Voorheen N. Tetterode, 1942), 31.

[112]A brief discussion in English may be found in Désirée Koninkx, "Leerdam," in Industry & Design, ed. Kras and others, 198-99.

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woodcut as his medium, he evoked the edges and reflections of the glassware in simplified, rippling forms which he elaborated further into a decorative border containing handsomely consonant lettering. "This advertisement was reproduced many times as an example of modern business advertising, and came to be much imitated," Jongert later wrote, "and was a good advertisement also for me."[113]

Jongert made the Leerdam advertisement in 1917,[114] the year in which the De Stijl movement was founded. Even allowing for its different function, it is a far cry from Mondrian's "plus and minus" drawings and compositions with color planes, van Doesburg's abstracted cardplayers (Composition IX, fig. 61), or Bart van der Leck's distilled compositions with thin planes, all of the same year. Jongert's distance from the new movement can be gauged as well by the gradual cooling of his friendship with J. J. P. Oud who had moved from Purmerend to Leiden in 1913 where he had met Theo van Doesburg in May 1916.[115] Just over a year

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[113]Deze advertentie is vele malen gereproduceerd als voorbeeld voor moderne bedrijfsreclame, en vond ook wel navolging, en was een goede reclame ook voor mij; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 163. Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 44, explains that he worked in woodcut for the original design, but for a larger window sign he made a variation in conté.

[114]Date given in Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 6.

[115]Oud had learned of van Doesburg's projected association of modern painters and had written him to suggest it include architects and encourage collaboration among the arts; the Leidsche Kunstvereniging De Sphinx (Leiden Art Club The Sphinx) was founded upon their meeting; Esser, "J. J. P. Oud," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed.

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later Oud was closely involved with the preparations for the new periodical De stijl. Between 1916 and 1921 Oud and van Doesburg worked together on several architectural projects until Oud removed himself from De Stijl principles in 1922.[116] By 1918 Jongert and Oud were both living in Rotterdam; Oud began his position as municipal architect in January 1918 and Jongert became headmaster of the Decorative and Industrial Arts division of the Academy in September. In his reminiscences, Jongert wrote that the mutual distancing in his friendship with Oud was,

> rooted in a difference in views of art that gradually manifested itself. The architect, via the painter Van Doesburg, became a fiery champion of the *nieuwe zakelijkheid*.[117]

In his memoir Jongert did not use the terms De Stijl or Neo-Plasticism.[118] The term Nieuwe Zakelijkheid is of course related to the German Neue Sachlichkeit and both may be translated into English as New Objectivity or New

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Blotkamp and others, 110.

[116]Ibid., 126, 146-49. A falling-out came over van Doesburg's color contribution to a housing project in Rotterdam.

[117]Wortelde in het verschil van opvatting over kunst, dat zich langzamerhand openbaarde. De architect werd via de schilder Van Doesburg een vurig voorstander van de nieuwe zakelijkheid; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 176.

[118]In conversation he did use the term Amsterdam School, but not Art Déco; he may have used the term Jugendstil, although that recollection is not certain, as kindly clarified by Beatrice Escher, letter to author, 6 May 1996.

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Tangibility.[119] Jongert used Nieuwe Zakelijkheid or the adjective *zakelijk* in relation to architecture and the applied arts as a general period designation for, in his 1940 account, "the pursuit of an ornament-less style." He saw it as a European phenomenon of the period after 1925, officially heralded in Rotterdam in 1921 by Oud in his lecture, "On the future of the art of building and its architectonic possibilities," given at a meeting of the architectural society Opbouw.[120]

Jongert himself had earlier remarked on the changes taking place in post-war society: in the autumn of 1920 he spoke out in favor of a functional approach to art. "Present-day society demands utility and profitableness (*nuttigheid*)," he declared at the third Art Congress in The Hague,

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[119]The Dutch word *zakelijk* has a different nuance in meaning from the German cognate. Efficiency and the economical conduct of business are part of its meaning, unlilke the German stress on the object, although the German word also carries the figurative meanings "matter of fact-ness" and "impartiality." Jaap Goedegebuure, "Expressionisme, Nieuwe Zakelijkheid, Magisch Realisme," in Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 7 (1988; The Hague: SDU, 1990): 293; Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 279, 331, n. 38. In the following paragraphs I shall use the word *zakelijk* as more inclusive than any of its translations; it may be translated as "functional" or "constructive."

[120]Het was een streven naar een ornament-loze stijl; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 227. For the lecture, see Esser, "J. J. P. Oud," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 146.

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> and if the artist wants to be a part of society in a functional way, he must give his work such values. The artist is obliged to go along with this because he can progress only through his societal involvement.[121]

These well-meant words were apparently hard for Jongert to live up to in practice, for his own style did not appreciably change until 1923, and then only for certain commissions. In retrospect he wrote,

> This [*zakelijk*] movement can be considered as a reaction to the decorative period, of which [the 1925 exhibition in] Paris had been the summit. . . . In a subsequent gathering of Opbouw I spoke against this theory on social grounds . . . . Socially the *nieuwe zakelijkheid* was accepted. Decoration meant nothing: only cost. Low-cost buildings and low-cost manufacturing. While in earlier houses well-painted decorations were always brought in to corridors or rooms, now [after 1925] one no longer did this. . . . Socially I knew that it must succeed, but at the same time that it would be a danger also for art. It became too great a limitation, just when historical development ought to expect a broadening.[122]

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[121]De tegenwoordige maatschappij eist "nuttigheid" en als de kunstenaar op een funktionele manier deel wil uitmaken van die samenleving, moet hij zijn werk die nuttigheidswaarde geven. Daarom is de kunstenaar genoodzaakt hier in mee te gaan, want hij kan alleen door zijn maatschappelijke betrokkenheid verder komen; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 50-51. Citation given in Hoogenboezem, Jac. Jongert, 8: Jac. Jongert, "De organisatie van kunstenaars," Kunst en Kunstenaars in de Veranderende Maatschappij, Handelingen van het derde Algemeene Kunstcongres te 's Gravenhage, 7, 8, 9 October 1921, 89-110.

[122]Deze actie kon beschouwd worden als een reactie op de decoratieve periode, waarvan Parijs de top was geweest. . . . Ik op een volgende vergadering van "Opbouw" tegen deze theorie heb gesproken op maatschappelijke gronden . . . . Maatschappelijk werd de nieuwe zakelijkheid aanvaard. Het was een prachtig element in de opgezweepte concurrentie: geen versiering betekende: nog goedkoper. Goedkoper bouwen en goedkoper fabriceren. Waren in de vroegere woningen altijd nog wel geschilderde decoraties in gang of kamers aangebracht, nu deed men daar niets meer aan. . . . Maatschappelijk wist ik dat het moest slagen, maar tevens

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We may sense the aesthetic chasm developing between Jongert and his friend Oud--and the incipient *zakelijk* movement--when we compare reproductions that each offered for publication in Dutch periodicals in 1918 (figs. 62 and 63). Jongert's medieval knight was first made as a book illustration and was labelled as such in De Cicerone but was later included in Cornelis van der Sluys's book on interior design as a larger painting, intended as a wall decoration.[123] No such decoration would be suitable for the pristine walls of De Vonk, the socialist vacation house in Noordwijkerhout designed by Oud with floor tiles in the hall and stairwell by van Doesburg, illustrated in De stijl in 1918.[124]

Jongert's image is taken from the Frankish romance

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dat het een gevaar ook voor de kunst, zou worden. Het werd een te grote beperking, waar juist de historische ontwikkeling een verruiming deed verwachten; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 227-28, 237. Beatrice Escher, interview by author, 19 April 1993, said her father, "didn't like the fact that embellishment was forbidden," that there could be "no element of playfulness; he was afraid it would be too barren. . . . He appreciated both [the decorative and the constructive], wondering how they would merge."

[123]De Cicerone 1 (15 March 1918), clipping in RKD. Van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 1, 104; vol. 2, 76, fig. 103. The work is labelled *paneel* (panel). Jongert, "Herinneringen," 175, wrote that he made a larger painting from the black and white drawing.

[124]Van Doesburg showed this project in an exhibition at the Rotterdam Academy in the spring of 1918; Esser, "J. J. P. Oud," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 130-132. Jongert's small drawing was included in an exhibition in The Hague around the same time; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 180-181.

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Karel ende Elegast, a twelfth- or thirteenth-century Dutch poem that was one of the first books printed in the Netherlands. The central character Elegast is a gentleman thief who roams the forest, robbing the rich and protecting the poor, until a series of adventures--including the use of magical herbs--let him prove his loyalty to Charlemagne.[125] The galloping horse carries Elegast over a landscape of ovoid shapes and stylized toadstools, the steam from its nostrils unfurling in looping circular forms that rhyme with the abundant clouds rising from the landscape. A distant round orb of sun or moon serves to anchor the decorative rhythms; its middle-value tone provides a transition between the dark lines and white shapes of the lower area and the predominantly dark forms with white linear definition of the horse and rider above. In 1927 this composition was described by Cornelis van der Sluys as a "virtuoso development of ornament with plant and animal forms."[126]

We have a summary record of Jongert's 1921 thoughts on wall paintings as presented in a lecture at The Hague

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[125]Reinder P. Meijer, Literature of the Low Countries (England: Stanley Thornes (Publishers) Ltd, 1978), 7-8. I thank Lyotta De Prins for information on the Elegast romance.

[126]Men ziet uit deze compositie een virtuoze ontwikkeling van het ornament met plant- en diervorm; van der Sluys, Binnenhuiskunst, vol. 1, 104. Jongert's image may be compared with Roland Holst's 1916 decorative panel of a deer and rider for the staircase of the Capi company in Amsterdam, reproduced in Gans, Nieuwe Kunst, 291, fig. 262; Jongert's forms are more succulent.

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Kunstkring. The thread running through his lecture, according to a newspaper chronicler, was "the nobility of handwork." The writer praised Jongert for his "idealism and understanding of the composition of a wall painting" and found him open-minded to the beneficial contributions of machine-made elements, for instance, reinforced concrete, but noted that he stressed above all the bond "between art painters and house painters . . . in the knowledge of material, the handling of the material": for Jongert the human contribution of good painting was more valuable than the machine contribution of speed of production, and required time and devotion.[127] Thus, some months after Oud's Opbouw lecture arguing for a *zakelijk* architecture "of clear form and pure proportion imaged in almost impersonal, technically plastic ways,"[128] Jongert defended the individual expressiveness of the artist in the handling of his material. He did not broach the issue of the subject matter of the wall painting, although he himself clearly attached importance to the allegorical meanings of his figures and the social resonance of Dutch medieval subjects.

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[127]Den adel van het handwerk. . . . Vol idealisme en begrip voor de compositie eener wandschildering . . . . De band van het vak tusschen kunstschilders en ververs, . . . in de kennis van het materiaal, in de behandeling van het materiaal; "Haagsche Kunstkring: Lezing Jongert," 2 November 1921, newspaper clipping in RDK.

[128]Op haast onpersoonlijke, technisch-beeldende wijze, tot organismen van klare vorm en zuivere verhouding beelden; J. J. P. Oud as cited in Goedebuure, "Expressionisme, Nieuwe Zakelijkheid," 293.

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Jongert's highest aspirations for his art may have been out-of-step with the *zakelijk* developments of the 1920s and 1930s, yet many of his most noted designs of those years would be considered *zakelijk*. His reminiscences allow the "usefulness" of this approach in commercial advertising:

> For business advertising this movement was propitious and dangerous. It was favorable because this idea set everthing to the main point, to the goal, and through it many superfluities were set aside. . . . Personally I could remain standing. The new notion had for me very useful aspects, without wholly conquering my heart.[129]

Jongert's views on the subject of advertising were more exuberantly and idealistically expressed in 1919 and 1923. In a lecture on "Kunst in de Reclame" (Art in Advertising) given at Ons Huis gallery, Rotterdam in 1919 during an exhibition of advertising posters and printed work, Jongert spoke of the importance of advertising in helping businesses

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[129]Voor de bedrijfsreclame was deze beweging gunstig en gevaarlijk. Het was gunstig omdat deze idee alles zette op de hoofdzaak, op het doel, en hierdoor werd veel overbodigs aan kant gezet. . . . Persoonlijk kon ik staande blijven. De nieuwe opvatting had voor mij wel bruikbare kanten, zonder dat het geheel mijn hart veroverde; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 230-231, 236-37. The dangerous side of the new movement, for him, occurred when "the abundant application of photographs and prints in book and poster lettering" served to "exclude drawing." (Maar het werd een gevaar, waar het begon met het tekenen uit te sluiten door het ruimschoots toepassen van foto's en afdrukken van de boek- en biljetletter); ibid, 231. In Hoogenboezem, Jac. Jongert, 12, fig. 21, a poster of the 1930s that includes photocollage is attributed to Jongert; Beatrice Escher, who worked as assistant in her father's studio from 1933-1940, interview by author, 19 April 1993, said that this work was not by him: Jongert "never did any [photocollages] himself; . . . [she herself made some] in the style of Piet Zwart and Schuitema." Her father allowed the work to come from the studio; "he would seldom interfere."

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recover or consolidate after the war. While the manufacturer or merchant's first consideration was economic, for the artist, Jongert stressed, the first consideration must always be "whether through his collaboration in the advertising an elevation of its beauty is possible." He saw advertising as "connected with the whole development of art," belonging in particular to applied art, and brought the Nieuwe Kunst principles of applied art to it, offering three areas in which advertising was by definition "bound" or restrained: the spirit, which was the goal of the commercial concern; the material design; and the medium in which it is executed. Jongert favored the use of lithography and woodcut with their more apparent expression of "the human spirit and hand" over mechanical reproduction (*mechanische cliché*). "Pure beauty" in advertising, of uppermost importance for the artist, consisted in simplicity, immediacy, and unity: the unity of image and text, in meaning and form, with choice of medium and the working of the medium, which should be done entirely by the artist, always with self-restraint before the demands of the task.[130]

Several years later, in 1923, Jongert wrote the essay

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[130]Of er door zijn medewerking aan de reclame verheffing van de schoonheid in deze mogelijk is. . . . De reclamekunst . . . staat niet afzonderlijk, zij houdt met de geheele kunstontwikkeling verband. . . . De menschelijke geest en hand. . . . De zuivere schoonheid . . . .; "Kunst in de reclame."

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for an issue of Wendingen devoted to posters by Dutch artists. He offered many of the same views, with an optimism worked to exultant pitch. He began, "Advertising is all-powerful." It was advertising and the traveling businessmen carrying it to the remotest corners that, he declared,

> revolutionized the thinking of the middle classes. . . . It is . . . [the travelling businessmen's] task to sweep away old-fashioned notions in our clothing, nourishment, and recreation and to prepare the way for their product that is of today and, therefore, attractive.[131]

While he distinguished between commercial and ideal advertising, the one devoted solely to profit and the other to humane concepts and high ideals, he himself worked in both realms and in this essay was most interested in the pervasiveness of advertising in contemporary life, "just as water pervades the entire organism of the world."

> Advertising is the desire for growth that is in us all, the desire for a continually different development and ever more perfect form of society. And because it is so at one with the supreme will to life, it surges up in ever new places and in continually different forms, just as water springs forth, suddenly and mysteriously and sometimes in the middle of sandy wastes.[132]

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[131]De reclame is oppermachtig. . . . Zij zijn het, die het denken der kleine burgers hebben omgekeerd . . . . Het is hun werk, de verouderde opvattingen in onze kleeding, voeding en ontspanning op te ruimen, en baan te maken voor hun artikel, dat is van dezen dag and daardoor bekoort; Jongert, "Affiches," 3. Parts of this essay are translated by Cornelia J. Perrone in Franciscono, Modern Dutch Poster, 7-8, 24, 26.

[132]De reclame doortrekt ons leven, zooals het water het gansche organisme van de wereld. . . . Reclame is de ons allen omvattende begeerte naar groei, naar een steeds andere

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The social and natural analogies that derive ultimately from William Morris express the optimism Jongert could feel in the early 1920s for society, industry, and the applied arts. He has transferred Gemeenschapskunst (Communal art) values to advertising. When Jongert raised the issue of what the artist might expect from the "great societal power" of advertising, he proposed that the answer was in the future.[133] It would depend on institutional decisions to offer instruction in advertising and on the willingness of industrialists to work with artists. Jongert nonetheless concluded his essay,

> There is perhaps nothing so desirable in these times as the knowledge of being necessary in the production process.[134]

In this essay Jongert considered the *métier* of advertising a demanding one for the artist:

> Advertising claims much of the artist, really everything, his unbroken sympathy and entire working-powers. Advertising claims, more than any other branch of *kunsthandwerk*, that the artist remain young in his work, always re-generating himself and never resting on success gained. He may not stand still in his

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ontwikkeling en altijd meer volmaakten vorm van samenleving. En omdat het zoo één is met den almachtigen levenswil borrelt het op, op altijd weer nieuwe plaatsen en in steeds andere vormen, juist zooals het water ontspringt, plotseling en geheimzinnig en soms te midden van zandwoestijnen; Jongert, "Affiches," 3.

[133]Deze groote maatschappelijke kracht; ibid., 7.

[134]Er is misschien niets zoo begeerenswaard in dezen tijd als de wetenschap, noodig te zijn in het productie-proces; ibid., 15.

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development, never repeat himself.[135]

Successful artistic advertising required, he wrote, a "command over the realm of forms and an almost unlimited fantasy."

> The ability to use forms and fantasy effectively necessitates a long study of the plane, its mathematical and aesthetic claims, and a long experimentation with the qualities of basic forms in relation to each other.[136]

The understanding of basic forms was "always enriched anew," he wrote, by "the infinitude of form combinations . . . in living nature."[137]

As early as 1901 or 1902, in his last year at the Quellinus School, Jongert had felt that in the future "the foundation of art work must be mathematics."[138] His subsequent experience only strengthened this view and in the

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[135]De reclame eischt van den kunstenaar véél, eigenlijk alles, zijn ongebroken belangstelling en geheele werkkracht. De reclame eischt, meer als eenige andere tak van kunsthandwerk, dat de kunstenaar jong blijft in zijn werk, zich self steeds herschept en nooit rust bij behaald succes. Hij mag niet stil staan in zijn ontwikkeling, niet zich zelf herhalen; ibid., 10.

[136]Wanneer de maker over rijkdom van vormen kan beschikken en over een schier ongebrensde fantazie. Om vormen en fantazie doeltreffend te kunnen gebruiken is noodig een langdurige studie van het vlak, zijn wiskunstige en aesthetische eischen, en een langdurig experimenteeren met de eigenschappen van grondvormen tot elkaar; ibid., 11.

[137]In de verschijningsvormen der levende natuur zal de jonge kunstenaar steeds de oneindigheid van vormcombinaties voor oogen hebben en altijd weer opnieuw verrukt zijn over den juisten vorm voor een bepaalde functie; ibid.

[138]Ik beweerde toen dat de grondslag van dat kunstwerk de mathematica moest zijn; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 84.

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early teen years, he sought an acquaintance with mathematics and physics teacher Henri Adriaan Naber (1867-1944), for whose 1915 book entitled Meetkunde en mystiek (Geometry and Mysticism) he designed the cover.[139] Naber's work must have been important to Jongert, for his best student from just before and after his 1918 move to Rotterdam, the glass designer A. D. Copier, has written of studying the works of Naber and De Groot as well as reading the theosophist Schoenmaekers.[140] Although theosophical world views influenced Jongert's own education, his teaching in at least one instance, and certainly the patronage he received, he

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[139]H. A. Naber, Meetkunde en mystiek, drie voordrachten (Amsterdam: N.V. Theosofische Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1915). The motivation Jongert gave in his reminiscences was the preference he experienced for "using geometrical lines to give changing divisions in simple ways" in his free "studies" (art work other than commissions). He journeyed to Hoorn to meet Naber whom he characterized as studying "above all the mystical side of geometrical constructions" and met with him again on several occasions. (Ik hield er van geometrische lijnen te gebruiken, die op eenvoudige wijze verrassende delingen geven. . . . [Dr. Naber] bestudeerde vooral de mystieke zijde van de geometrische constructies); Jongert, "Herinneringen," 181. Concerning Naber and Pythagorean and Theosophical thought, see Koopmans, "Kosmische symboliek." Explanatory information on Naber's career is given on pages 17-19 in Alied Ottevanger, "De wet der verevening: Over de betekenis van een natuurkundige wet voor de filosofie en het werk van Dick Ket," Jong Holland V, no. 6 (1989): 15-29, English summary 39-40. See also Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1994), vol. 4, 352-53.

[140]Leidelmeijer, Art Nouveau, 172.

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himself was not a theosophist.[141]

In his advertising work of 1919 to 1926--the period in which de Kooning was likely to have known it--Jongert gradually made a transition from freely spontaneous, often organic, decorative forms to a more severely geometrical, *zakelijk* presentation. The pivotal year in this development may have been 1923.[142] This is the year that he became aesthetic consultant to his important client, the Erven de Wed. Van Nelle (Heirs of the widow Van Nelle) company of Rotterdam, which processed coffee, tea and tobacco, and whose image of its place in society may well have influenced Jongert's stylistic evolution.

Jongert's first work for Van Nelle was an advertisement for tobacco in 1919 (fig. 64). The curving shapes of symetrically placed pipes with smoke rising from them offer an Art Nouveau appearance.[143] A year later Jongert designed two of the most splendid posters of his earlier, decorative style: Van Nelle's Tabak and Apricot Brandy for

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[141]Beatrice Escher, interview by author, 19 April 1993, said, "He was not a religious man. His family was protestant. He used old proverbs." Mrs. Escher said that Jongert designed books by Krishnamurti for the Van Nelle management, but to him it was a "rich man's belief."

[142]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 52; the same author uses the year 1925 as a dividing point in Hoogenboezem, Jac. Jongert, 9-10.

[143]Reproduced in Hedwig Saam, "Van Nelle," in Industry & Design, ed. Kras and others, 150. Discussed in Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 48; this advertisement came into circulation in June 1919.

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the Oud company (figs. 65 and 66).[144] Both compositions rely on heraldic, symmetrically placed rectangular divisions,[145] the consonance of the design with the product, and the interest created by freely worked lithographic ink or more soberly stroked crayon. Sharing in the precepts of Roland Holst, Jongert himself worked directly on the stone. Intelligence of design and technical subtleties of the posters continue to delight the mind and eye long after the first impact. In the tobacco poster, smoke rises in a central pillar of succulent Art Nouveau abundance above and between tobacco blossoms, each depicted with respect for both the pentagonal order and lively variations of their forms. The flowers, smoke, and lettering seem to prompt the wavy lines with dots and tiny triangles that enliven the architectural array of shapes. Jongert's handwork in applying the lithographic tusche gives kinetic and tactile appeal.

A similarly personal touch enlivens the central area of the Apricot Brandy poster. In this poster it is the shape of the bottle (not yet a Jongert design) that generates the major decorative elaborations. The distillation process by which the product was made provides the ancillary motif of bubbles, rendered in overlapping circles and arcs that give

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[144]Discussed in Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 49 and in Franciscono, Modern Dutch Poster, 25.

[145]This format was often used by Roland Holst.

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a period resonance; we are reminded of Gidding's wall decorations for the Café Loos where Jongert may well have taken coffee.

During the later teen years Jongert made free "studies" that were both figurative and purely ornamental.[146] By the early 1920s he was especially interested in experimenting with lacquer paint, "to bring to expression the noblest qualities of that material through patient handling, overpainting and polishing," and with oil paint's "sluggish, thick, cake-like" texture that could be brought near to the appearance of semi-precious stones.[147]

Jongert was rightfully pleased with the 1920 Van Nelle Tabak poster which he described in his reminiscences as "one of the best works made for them. It is an artistic poster, and does not yet have that sharp economy (*zakelijke*) that bans the artistic act." The Van Nelle management seems not to have been so favorably inclined. As Jongert wrote,

> The wishes of the firm were: the clearly business-like, through which the charm of the sensitive could come to expression only in the proportions and in the grouping, the characteristic also of their new factory. I applied myself to their requirement and thus gave an attractiveness and personality to their advertising

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[146]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 181.

[147]Het was in deze dagen dat ik mij wel bijzonder interesseerde voor, en proeven nam met lakverven, om door langdurige behandeling, overschildering en slijpen, een verfbehandeling te krijgen die het nobelste in dat materiaal tot uiting wist te brengen, en de trage dikke koekerige olieverf wist te brengen tot naast de half-edelstenen; ibid., 223.

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through measure and color.[148]

He conflated a half-dozen years in this description, for the new factory building was begun in 1926 by the architect Leendert C. van der Vlugt. During the early years of his work for Van Nelle, Jongert wrote that he and the management did not "entirely understand each other or were not well attuned," but that by 1923 they had each "adapted and that everything then went well."[149] He was to be in charge of all internal graphic design as well as external advertising until his illness in 1940, and he brought to it both unity and distinction. The younger partner of the firm, C. H. van der Leeuw, became a friend "who understood and valued his aspiration," in the words of a 1927 interviewer, to whom Jongert also praised Rotterdam's industrialists: "they have confidence in you, which is the requirement for a good collaboration; they have a pleasant, almost American manner

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[148]Die plaat voor de firma Van Nelle blijft een van de beste werken voor hen gemaakt. Het is een artistieke plaat, en heeft nog niet dat scherp zadelijke waardoor de artistieke daad wordt uitgebannen. De wensen van de firma waren: het helder-zakelijke, waarbij de betovering van het gevoelige alleen tot uiting kon komen bij de verhoudingen en in de groeperingen, het karakteristieke tevens in hun nieuwe fabriek. Ik heb mij aan hun eis aangepast, en toch nog door maten en kleur een aantrekkelijkheid en persoonlijkheid aan hun reclame weten te geven; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 208; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 49.

[149]Mocht de samenwerking met de firma Van Nelle in de eerste jaren nog wel eens gestokt hebben door elkaar niet begrijpen of niet op elkaar afgestemd zijn, rond 1923 liep alles goed, en hadden wij ons bij elkaar aangepast; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 218.

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of doing business."[150] Van der Leeuw was a theosophist[151] and the idealistic course he pursued valued artistic quality of advertising design over public taste.[152] Jongert later wrote, "In the history of humanity, important works of culture originate in the harmony among several men. These figures were here present."[153] During the later 1920s, in New York, de Kooning sought work as a designer by presenting his portfolio to businessmen, perhaps with Jongert's experience in mind.[154]

The same summer in which Jongert designed the Van Nelle Tabak and Oud's Apricot Brandy posters he also prepared a poster and other printed work for the recently founded Volksuniversiteit of Rotterdam, at which he would also give lectures and offer courses during the 1920s.[155] The insignia motif is the figure of a sower rendered in angular

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[150]Een vriend, die zijn streven begreep en waardeerde. "Haar industrieelen . . . hebben vertrouwen in je, wat de eisch voor een goede samenwerking is; ze hebben een prettige, haast Amerikaansche manier van zakendoen"; "Jac. Jongert," Bekende Rotterdammers, Biografisch Maandschrift, December 1927, 548.

[151]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 48.

[152]Saam, "Van Nelle," in Industry & Design, ed. Kras and others, 151.

[153]In de geschiedenis van de mensheid zijn belangrijke werken van cultuur ontstaan door de eensgezindheid van enkele mensen. Deze figuren waren hier aanwezig; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 218.

[154]Virginia Diaz, interview by author, October 1985, Sarasota, Florida.

[155]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 50.

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forms, a personal variation of the angularity that had entered Jan Toorop's monumental work from Cubism and that in other hands was so characteristic of Expressionist art. For Jongert this stylistic shift is but a seamless modification of the formal play always operating in his work. In the poster (fig. 67) the figure, elliptical seeds, and background forms of clouds and birds are carefully attuned to each other and to the lettering. As much as the forms, the facture compels interest, especially in the varying rhythms of parallel crayon strokes. This poster has a more up-to-date formal language and a more personal touch, but the principles of design have not changed from the 1912 poster for the International Gas Exhibition.

Jongert proffered another seemingly Cubist-Expressionist rendering for a cover of Wendingen in the same year (fig. 68). The issue was devoted to the architect Berlage. Jongert's image is a helmsman whose face and hand, at right angles to each other, fill most of the central rectangle, itself framed by rectangular lettering and borders. Glinty triangles and rectangles accomplish the modelling of the figure yet remain subservient to the natural forms. The prevailing severity is complemented--or diminished, one could argue--by decorative, curving waves in the upper corner.

Jongert's advertising work became more *zakelijk* in 1923. In that year his designs for Van Nelle included an

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advertisement for Varinas Gold Stamp tobacco (fig. 69). The centralized, rectangular format is not unlike that for the 1920 tobacco poster and subtle plays of asymmetry in minor motifs remain, but the totality is crisper, simpler, more sober and geometric. As Hoogenboezem observes, "vivid colors, taut design and clearly legible typography" would define the image of Van Nelle's graphic products until 1940.[156] A well-known advertisement for coffee (fig. 70) initiated in 1925[157] has the slogan, "proeven is koopen" (to taste is to buy). Lettering carries most of the design, with just the profile of a cup and the interest of a circle that becomes a "P" to keep one's eye well occupied. Jongert's lettering became simpler, and made use of sans serif forms, but was still executed by hand.[158]

The more *zakelijk* turn in Jongert's work did not go unnoticed by Theo van Doesburg. Writing in a 1924 issue of De stijl, van Doesburg made a jab at Jongert and the work he fostered at the Rotterdam Academy. The comment came in an aside regarding the widespread unacknowledged influence of

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[156]Heldere kleuren en een strakke vormgeving met een duidelijk leesbare typografie zullen het beeld van Van Nelle's gebruiksgrafiek tot 1940 bepalen; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 52.

[157]Ibid., 53; Hoogenboezem, Jac. Jongert, 11; reproduced in W. F. Gouwe, De Grafische kunst in het practische leven, De toegepaste kunsten in Nederland, no. 23 (Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1926), 48, fig. 29.

[158]Hoogenboezem, Jac. Jongert, 12.

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De Stijl and instances in which it could be negative. As point number one of negative instances van Doesburg complained,

> that this influence is secondary and is cultivated by those who, hostile to the original idea, borrow the outer form without understanding the spirit and in so doing promote a squarish, systematic baroque (the case with the "Rotterdam Academy", Jongert-Zwart).[159]

One can understand van Doesburg's dismay from two reproductions placed side by side in the VANK Jaarboek of 1923-24: a leaded glass window for a market-hall by van Doesburg and an advertisement in painted glass and wood by Jongert, both of 1923 (figs. 71 and 72).[160] Jongert's work is a variation on the Varinas Gold Stamp design but in this version eight stout curlicues adorning a central rectangle and eight stylized tobacco flowers at the sides, as well as a segmented curving apron at the base, do give a "squarish baroque" sensibility, or at least one of Amsterdam School decoration.

In an essay of 1927 Jongert showed enthusiasm for the *zakelijke*, perceiving it to be an underlying "idea in the community" by which the artist could be guided, as a ship by

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[159]Dat deze invloed secundair is en bewerkt wordt door hen, die aan de oorspronkelijke idee vijandig, den uiterlijken vorm overnemen, zonder den geest te kennen en zoodoende een kwadratisch barok, systematisch, kweeken (het geval "Rotterdamsche academie", Jongert-Zwart); [Theo van Doesburg,] "Alphabetische Informatie: Tijdschriften, Boeken, Artikelen enz.," De stijl 6, no. 8 (1924): 108. Piet Zwart was hired by Jongert in 1919 to teach the lower level courses in applied arts.

[160]VANK Jaarboek (1923-24): figs. 14 and 15.

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a compass.

> "Material necessity" has become a much-used and authoritative utterance for us, just as was "beauty" several years ago. The functional (*zakelijke*) becomes the ideal, a compelling power, something standing above the power of man as an individual, the condition for happiness of the mass and therefore binding for the individual.

He concluded this paragraph, "But also the functional (*zakelijkheid*) is variable and not eternal in itself." This reservation shows how Jongert could embrace the functional for his time and place, without seeing it as synonymous with the artistic.[161]

Jongert had moved to Rotterdam in the autumn of 1918 for an important development in his teaching career: he was appointed head of the division of *Decoratieve Kunst en Kunstnijverheid* (Decorative Arts and Industrial Design) at the Academy following Huib Luns's departure to teach in Den Bosch. Jongert's task, as he wrote in his reminiscences, was to modernize the department.[162] He considered his own training, experience and teaching to be very different from

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[161]Een idee, welke in de gemeenschap of in een groep daarvan boven ligt. . . . "De materieele noodzakelijkheid" is bezig een machtwoord voor ons te worden, zooals eenige jaren geleden "de schoonheid" dat was. Het zakelijke wordt het ideaal, een dwingende macht, iets staande boven het vermogen van den mensch als eenling, de voorwaarde tot het geluk van de massa en daardoor bindend voor het individu. Maar ook de zakelijkheid is veranderlijk en niet eeuwig aan zich zelf gelijk; Jac. Jongert, "De Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen te Rotterdam en de toegepaste kunst," VANK Jaarboek (1927): 117. Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 53, points this out.

[162]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 25; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 190.

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that of his predecessor;[163] indeed, he was among the first generation of artist-teachers trained in the applied arts. He may have retained the general offerings of the existing course of study,[164] reorganizing instead the presentation of projects and the requirements for their execution. He wrote of his first year that the students in the heavily attended evening classes applied themselves to the different ideas directly and with enthusiasm, but that the day students, who were for the most part working toward a teaching degree, threatened a protest.[165] His carefully arrived-at theories about the harmonious combination of natural motif and basic geometric forms must have offered too great a challenge, or at least too great a change to those students, who had to be more involved with the theoretical aspects of their work. Within several years, however, exhibitions of the work of Jongert's students received favorable comment in the Rotterdam press.[166] And

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[163]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 190.

[164]This will be discussed later in this chapter.

[165]Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 25; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 191.

[166]"The press was enraptured over the cheerful, colorful work . . . and the various handwork techniques in which it was executed." (Is de pers opgetogen over het vrolijke kleurige werk . . . en de verschillende handwerktechnieken welke er worden toegepaste); Jongert, "Herinneringen," 204. Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 25, says that five years later his modern approach was praised; her source may be "Academie van Beeldende Kunsten: Reclame Kunst," NRC, 29 December 1923, cited in her Jac. Jongert bibliography.

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at the 1925 Exposition intérnationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, a presentation of student work from the departments of applied arts at the academies of Haarlem, Amsterdam and Rotterdam received a gold medal.[167]

Writing about his philosophy of teaching for the Paris catalogue, Jongert set forth the importance he attached to understanding the art of one's time, art history, and the societal basis for art, as well as to fostering individual talent. These comments help us imagine the tenor of the conversations that took place between him and the young de Kooning.

> In order to be able to exercise his important function with success it is necessary that the professor be sensitive to the development of art as it is produced today and that he understand equally what has been accomplished in earlier periods. The creative instinct of the artist has profound roots in social life. In each era it is in the character of society that the artist discovers his guiding principle. Different generations of artists transform these principles and propagate ideas only in struggling with the material which they endeavor to express in their works. It is from the fusion of principle and technique that style is born. As a result of this collaboration between artistic desires and technical possibilities all the works of a certain period resemble each other to a certain degree; to this fundamental unity diversity is brought by the individual talent of the artist. Because of the variability of these two elements, the guiding principle and the material conditions, the history of the development of art makes the impression on us of an undulating line, of which each undulation represents an artistic phase; it is the individuality of the artist that breaks the simple curve of each of these undulations. It is very important that the professor knows to distinguish in each work of art the

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[167]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 227; Lankhof, "Een onderzoek," 26, uses the term "Grand Prix." Some of these works are reproduced later in this chapter.

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> part of these two factors, in order that he can explain to the student the value of the artist and his period. Thus he will know better to recognize the personal note in the work of the student.[168]

The undulating line that Jongert calls forth here is a purely intellectual concept. Later in the essay, though, Jongert notes that a student's individuality shows up most readily in the greater freedom of the fifth year of study, when he or she is "made to elaborate as much as possible the

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[168]L'enseignement des beaux-arts doit être considéré comme la base et le point de départ de toute carrière artistique. Afin de pouvoir exercer son importante fonction avec succès il faut que le professeur soit sensible au développement de l'art tel qu'il se produit autour de lui et qu'il comprenne également celui qui s'est accompli dans les périodes antérieures. L'instinct créateur de l'artiste a des racines profondes dans la vie sociale. A chaque époque c'est dan le caractère de la société que l'artiste découvre son principe conducteur. Les différentes générations d'artists ne transforment ces principes et ne répandent les idées qu'en luttant avec la matière qu'ils s'efforcent d'exprimer dans leurs oeuvres. C'est de la fusion du principe et de la technique qu'est né le style. De cette colloboration de désirs artistiques et de possibilités techniques il résulte que toutes les oeuvres d'une certain époque se ressemblent en quelque sorte; dans cette unité fondamentale la diversité est amenée par le talent individuel de l'auteur. A cause de la variabilité de ces deux éléments, le principe conducteur et les conditions matérielles, l'histoire du développement de l'art nous fait l'impression d'une ligne ondoyante, dont chaque ondulation représente une phase artistique; c'est l'individualité de l'artiste qui brise la courbe simple de chacune de ces ondulations. Il importe beaucoup que le professeur sache distinguer dans chaque oeuvre d'art la part de ces deux forces motrices, afin qu'il puisse expliquer à l'élève la valeur de l'auteur et de son époque. Ainsi il saura mieux reconnaître la note personelle dan la travail de élève; Jac. Jongert, "Pensées et principes qui se trouvent à la base de l'enseignement donné dans la section des arts decoratifs à l'Académie des beaux arts de Rotterdam," in Section des Pays Bas à l'exposition internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (Paris, 1925), 9; my translation is from the French translation of the original Dutch which is no longer available.

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movement of an ornamental line."[169]

Jongert wrote another essay on the instruction in applied arts at the Rotterdam Academy for the Dutch readership of the VANK Jaarboek of 1927. He began with a somewhat theosophical rumination:

> The forms of the things surrounding us which have not grown in nature originate in the range of ideas (*gedachtenwereld*) of mankind.[170]

and continued to extol the "compelling tempos" of industry which the artist must reconcile with "beauty, the immortal of art."[171] He highlighted the three most important aspects of instruction as:

> the obtaining of technical knowledge, learning to make a well-balanced division within a given plane or space, learning to perceive the forms of the things surrounding us.[172]

Jongert was very sensitive to the career needs of students and wrote that not only instruction, but information about commissions, should be the province of the Academy. He also noted that advice was always available at the Academy for

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[169]On les [les élèves] fait élaborer autant que possible le movement d'une ligne ornamentale; ibid., 13.

[170]De vormen der ons omringende dingen, die niet in de natuur gegroied zijn, ontstaan in de gedachtenwereld van den mensch; Jongert, "De Academie en de toegepaste kunst," 115.

[171]Eenerzijds de schoonheid, het onsterfelijke van de kunst, . . . anderzijds de industrie vol van dwingende tempo's; ibid., 116.

[172]Het verkrijgen van technische kennis, het leeren maken van een evenwichtige verdeeling binnen een gegeven vlak of ruimte, het leeren waarnemen van de vormen aan de ons omringende dingen; ibid., 119.

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the former students who sought it.[173]

We do not know whether de Kooning sought Jongert's counsel or if the communication between them was more casually woven into everyday activity. From one of de Kooning's reminiscences, we know that it was bolstered by his friendship with a student in the applied arts division.[174] The contact was enough for de Kooning to give the teacher a position of importance--after that of Bernard Romein--for having "encouraged [his] interest in the radical art of the time."[175] The radical art of the time was that of the De Stijl group and other constructive tendencies referred to by Jongert as *zakelijk*, to which his own relationship was mixed.

We can imagine that his encouragement included a view of those developments as consonant with the needs of present day living, perhaps suggesting that they might not be fully satisfactory. His explanations of art history would have honored mural painting and the relationship of art to social life above the development of free painting, which he considered to be in a state of decline.[176] He would have encouraged the young man to be guided by the character of

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[173]Ibid., 120-21.

[174]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981; see Chapter 5.

[175]Hess, 1958, 113.

[176]"Kunst in de reclame."

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society. Such comments may be the direct source of de Kooning's 1951 observation regarding earlier twentieth-century artists: "Freedom to them meant to be useful in society."[177]

Jongert would have urged the artist to continue in carefully observing the forms of nature and to be mindful of the fit of his forms on the surface plane, attending to the shape of the "ground" as much as the motif. The universalizing capacity of geometric shapes may have been offered with some of Naber's mystical observations. In mature years de Kooning was never particularly mystical but didn't mind if a work were inclusive in its references. He occasioned perplexity during the Artists' Sessions at Studio 35 with his observation that "geometric shapes are not necessarily clear."[178]

De Kooning spoke of the period to David Sylvester in 1960:

> When we went to the Academy--doing painting, decoration, making a living--young artists were not interested in painting per se. We used to call that "good for old men with beards." And the idea of a

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[177]Willem de Kooning, "What Abstract Art Means to Me" (talk delivered in conjunction with the exhibition "Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America," The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 5 February 1951), Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art 18 (Spring 1951), in Hess, 1968, 144.

[178]Willem de Kooning, as recorded in Robert Goodnough, ed., "Artists' Sessions at Studio 35 (1950)," in Modern Artists in America, ed. Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt and Bernard Karpel (New York: Wittenborn Schultz, Inc., 1951), 19. Discussed in Zakian, "Representation and Illusion," 73-80ff.

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> palette, with colors on it, was rather silly. At that time we were influenced by the de Stijl group. The idea of being a modern person wasn't really being an artist in the sense of being a painter. . . . I really intended to become an applied artist. I mean, it was more logical to be a designer or commercial artist.[179]

The Gemeenschapskunst ideals underlying Jongert's work may have influenced de Kooning and his friends more directly than did the De Stijl group, itself influenced by the same nucleus of values.[180] De Kooning's transfer of the modern ethos to the work of the commercial artist, rather than to painting is nearer to Jongert's views than to De Stijl thought, which gave priority to the "spiritualizing" role of free painting. De Kooning's later use of the term De Stijl, or even the name Mondrian, (which he could use as synonymous concepts) might in many instances more fairly be conveyed by the term *zakelijk*.

None of de Kooning's surviving drawings from the period shows a trace of interest in the *zakelijk*, but he has spoken of using De Stijl concepts in his applied art work. In fact, his later comments always connect his early appreciation of Mondrian with applied art.[181] His more

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[179]Hess, 1968, 146-147.

[180]Gemeenschapskunst ideals influenced the De Stijl group via Oud, long a friend of Jongert, and Bart van der Leck, who had begun his career as a leaded-glass worker and admirer of Derkinderen. See Cees Hilhorst, "Bart van der Leck," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 153-185, and R. W. D. Oxenaar, Bart van der Leck tot 1920, een primitief van de nieuwe tijd, (The Hague, 1976).

[181]See further discussion in Chapter 5.

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youthful and opportunistic view is not unlike Jongert's recollection, "The new notion had for me very useful sides, without wholly conquering my heart."[182]

An idea expressed by Jongert in his 1925 essay, that of struggling with the material which the artist endeavors to express, has a tantalizing consonance to de Kooning's mature work. Could aspects of this concept have entered into, and remained available to de Kooning's awareness? Experimentation with the nature of the material is a factor in de Kooning's oil portrait of 1924, but it does not seem a paramount issue. There is a large leap of oblivion before the individual expressiveness of the artist in handling his material surfaces in the 1940s does indeed coincide with a period style. The similarity of teacher's thoughts and eventual filfullment of the student's talent, "communal" now in public museum exhibitions, offers a satisfying point of reflection for the historically-minded, although it may be a salutory coincidence more than an influence.

De Kooning's Enrollment

The name Willem de Kooning first appears in the extant records of the Rotterdam Academy in the spring of 1918. The *Verslag* (Report) for the year 1917-18 lists him as promoted from the first to the second *Klasse* (Class) of instruction in *Afdeeling* (Division) D, that of *Beeldende Kunsten*

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[182]Jongert, "Herinneringen," 236-37, Dutch wording given above.

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(Plastic Arts/Fine Arts).[183] It should be noted that de Kooning's name is never listed under Division E, that of the Decorative and Applied Arts.[184] Thus he chose to follow the course of instruction for painters and sculptors rather than for practioners of the applied arts, even though he was employed in the latter field.[185] Despite this choice, de Kooning was aware that his studies needn't prepare him for a career in the fine arts per se; he was counselled that he might use the academy education for a career in carpentry or another such field.[186]

De Kooning's name appears in the Academy annual Report

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[183]Verslag der Academie over 1917-18 (1918): 36; Verslag der Academie over 1918-19 (1919): 37; Verslag der Academie over 1919-20 (1920): 37; Verslag der Academie over 1920-21 (1921): 40; in the listing of students passing from one Class to another, the heading for the Division is given as *Handteekenen*. The dates of de Kooning's enrollment at the Academy have entered the de Kooning literature in Zilczer, Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, 187, with information provided from my research.

[184]In 1919-1920 a W. de Koning appears as promoted from first to second Class in Division E; this is most likely not a misspelling of de Kooning's name because there would be no cause for him to take the same elementary material he had completed two years earlier.

[185]In the entering class there were ten students with the trade of *decoratieschilder* (decoration painter) in the Division of *Handteekenen*, twenty-two in the Division of Applied Arts; Verslag der Academie over 1917-18 (1918): 31.

[186]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 August 1985. "You were advised to go in a certain direction, like carpentry or . . . " He named several others, which I could not recall when expanding my notes. Later in that same conversation, in which experiences at the Academy and at the Gidding firm were hard to differentiate, de Kooning commented, "They directed me in the building trade."

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each year for four years, moving from Class to Class through the spring of 1921, in which he is listed as promoted from the fourth to the fifth Class. He could have completed much of the work of the fifth Class, but most likely he did not complete the full course of instruction, which was comprised of eight Classes. The names of students receiving promotion are no longer listed in the Reports of 1923-24 and subsequent years, so we cannot know for certain that de Kooning did not re-enroll as a student at the Academy during his last years in the Netherlands.[187] It was not unusual for a student to spend more than a year on a Class merely by the nature of the material to be mastered.[188] It may be deduced from the statistics given in the annual Reports, more complete in 1918 than in each subsequent year, that if a student's attendance were to slacken, his or her place would be filled by another.[189]

When de Kooning entered the Academy, he was one of about 650 students in the evening classes; that number was

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[187]The names of day students are not listed in the Reports during the whole period, so attendance in these classes would not be recorded.

[188]The 1914 booklet, Onderwijs in 1913, 9, stipulates that the seventh and eighth Classes need more than one year. In Rotterdam artist Klaas van de Erve's experience in the 1930s, the eighth Class was expected to take two years; interview by author, 1985.

[189]This was also the impression of Anton van Gemert, Director, and Drs. Jeroen Chabot, Adjunct-Director, of the present-day Rotterdam Academy, in conversation with author, 15 April 1993.

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relatively evenly distributed among the four divisions (somewhat more were in B, Mechanics), with 145 in his Division D.[190] There were seventy-seven students in the day classes for the Plastic Arts and Decorative Arts combined. Of the seventeen who began the first Class of Division D evening classes in September 1917, three dropped out and ten, including de Kooning, were promoted to the second Class by the end of March 1918.[191] The group of fellow-students promoted each year with Willem varied from eight to eleven. The relatively constant number was not always made up of the same individuals. Students may have been allowed to enter at any time of year provided there was a place. Of those promoted each year with de Kooning, only one other continued for the four years, two others for three of the years.[192] About four per cent of those promoted were young women; de Kooning recalled that the female

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[190]The four divisions of the Academy, as reorganized in 1915, were: A, *Bowkunde* (Architecture); B, *Werktuigkunde* (Mechanics); D, *Beeldende Kunsten* (Plastic Arts); and E, *Decoratieve Kunsten en Kunstnijverheid* (Decorative and Applied Arts). Some of the technical sciences, including Division C, had been parcelled out to trade schools in other locations of the city.

[191]Verslag der Academie over 1917-18 (1918): 22.

[192]None of these people are listed in Scheen, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars; in 1985 I was unable to find any listed in the Rotterdam telephone book, nor did Klaas van de Erve know of them.

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students were a little older than the male students.[193] Two friends from the Academy days, known through family stories, were Benno Randolfi, who was one year ahead of De Kooning, and Willem Klop, one year behind.

The course of instruction at the Rotterdam Academy during 1913 is described in a booklet published in 1914, which includes photographs of student work.[194] It may have been superseded by a somewhat different curriculum or organization by the time de Kooning entered the Academy in 1917 but, considering the paucity of information on the Rotterdam Academy during these years, as well as the slow-to-change nature of the Academy, the timing is fortuitous and the contents well worth summarizing. The booklet begins with a brief history of the Academy and procedes to describe the instruction in each of the four Divisions, giving primary attention and space to the evening course of study.[195] Instruction in the first two years of the

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[193]"When I went to the Academy, most of the time the women were a little older, although they were still very young." Asked if, when drawing the nude, the male and female students were in the same class, he said, yes, "we were put to the test, like a family relationship"; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 August 1985.

[194]Onderwijs in 1913; Klaas van der Erve first mailed me parts of this booklet, and then went over its contents with me on 31 July 1985.

[195]At that time Division A was Painting and Sculpture. On pages 6 to 10 the curriculum for the evening classes for painters is described; a further page is devoted to the variations in instruction for students of sculpture, woodcarving and other mediums; then comes a short description, less than a page, of the course of study for

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Division of Painting and Sculpture and the Division of Decorative and Applied Arts was the same, although offered separately.

Evening classes for the Painting and Sculpture Division were held from 6:00 to 10:00 in the evenings, five nights a week, from September through March. Entrance requirements included having attained the age of twelve years and having completed the equivalent of lower school. In order to further the general education of its students, the Academy offered instruction in the Dutch language and in arithmetic.[196]

Course of Study: *Handteekenen*, Classes One to Five

Speaking of his early instruction at the Academy, de Kooning said in 1983, "The first class was in lettering, perspective. I was very young."[197] Hess, too, recounts from de Kooning's recollection that, "first, there was lettering, copying inscriptions; at the end of the year each

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the day classes. After discussion of the classes in Architecture and Mechanics, the remaining pages, 32 to 38, are devoted to the course of study for the decorative and applied arts, evening classes described first in detail, with a further page for the day classes.

[196]In the Dutch language, two hours per week, for the first three years and in arithmetic, four hours a week, during the first year only.

[197]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 27 January 1983. The perspective lessons to which he referred may be the drawing from geometric forms, described as part of the third Class.

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student was supposed to make one masterful sign."[198]

The text of the booklet describes the first two Classes as intended primarily to teach the use of materials, stressing exactitude and neatness (*nauwkeruigheid en netheid*), and to develop an eye for proportions.[199] Work from the first three Classes for painters is illustrated in Plate 1 of the 1914 booklet (fig. 73). Lettering, in this case the rendering of numbers, is included as the fourth example of student work.

In the first project described and illustrated, the students were to draw, free-hand, straight lines with charcoal, then compositions of straight lines. They were to proceed to make geometric figures, consisting first of straight lines, then of curved lines, filled in with flat tints of chalk (*krijt*). The conclusion of these exercises was the copying of simple *wandplaten*, or wall designs, the second and third studies illustrated.

When asked about drawing straight lines, de Kooning said that he had heard of it, but had never done it.[200] Klaas van de Erve had also heard of this practice, although he too had never had to do it.[201] Such exercises derive

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[198]Hess, 1968, 13.

[199]Onderwijs in 1913, 6.

[200]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 June 1985.

[201]He was able to describe the charcoal lines as very thin, with parallel lines drawn about two centimeters apart; the curved lines started with a diagonal drawn between

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from the Pestalozzi method for teaching very young children which was used in the lower schools in the Netherlands.[202]

Van de Erve decribed the *wandplaten*, which were drawn from cards placed in front of the class. The size of such cards varied, but 60 x 80 cm. was likely.[203] He stressed that the students copied these patterns; they did not make their own designs. While the pattern before the class may have been in pale colors, in van de Erve's first year, all work was in black and white; students used either charcoal or conté crayon,[204] but not pencil. He estimated that at most one could do ten in the year: "it went slowly."

In the second Class the *wandplaten* were continued, according to the 1914 description, with the copying of ever more complex designs, and graduating to the medium of brush and watercolor. Drawing letters and numbers was the next subject of study. The letters were to be placed in words, then into aphorisms, with attention to legibility and harmonious distribution on the paper. The tool for this was

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corners of the sheet. There was also an ellipse drawn in concentric repetitions. All of these exercises were drawn free-hand.

[202]Ashwin, Drawing and Education, 2-50; Grijzenhout, "Teekenen zij een bestanddeel der opvoeding, 1880-1900," in Geen dag, ed. Koevoets, 10.

[203]During van de Erve's time at the Academy, 1928-1936, students could copy the forms from the book by Godefroy if they preferred, but he believed that Godefroy was not offered in the evening classes.

[204]Referred to by van de Erve as "conté à Paris."

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penseel, which could be pencil or brush.

Van de Erve recalled sepia ink and a round sable brush for the *wandplaten*, but he did not use watercolors. After gaining some experience with the forms of letters, van de Erve recalled, one used a brush for normal handwriting, executed very slowly, then made signs of *sproken*, or sayings. For advanced students, the brush van de Erve described for the lettering, a *sleper*, is the "dragger" or "liner" brush which de Kooning was to show Gorky in the 1940s.[205] Starting young drawing students with training in lettering is clearly related to trade needs.[206] A lasting influence of this part of de Kooning's background was noted by Hess: "a number of his paintings of the mid-1940s and the mid-1950s are clued to scattered letters."[207]

Although he mentioned beginning his studies with lettering, it is unlikely that de Kooning could escape the *wandplaten* that were still part of the instruction ten years later. The designs that he copied were probably similar to-

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[205]Van de Erve, letter to author, March 1992, stressed that *slepers* were used only by advanced students or professionals. Hess, 1972, 17, wrote, "His familiarity with the liner's brush came, of course, from his training at the Rotterdam Academy, where the applied arts were taught evenhandedly with the fine ones."

[206]An area for future study is to learn how and when lettering got to be part of the curriculum and how widespread it was in Dutch and European art schools.

[207]Hess, 1968, 13, continues, "walking down the Boulevard des Capucines at night, on his first visit to Paris -- January 1968 -- [de Kooning's] initial impression was that 'the French have very neat, crisp lettering.'"

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-if not identical with--those published in the booklet of 1914. They were primarily geometrical motifs, suitable for repetition as in a border design on a wall, at that time still in use in interior decoration.[208] One of the five studies illustrated is recognizable as deriving from a historical period: it is based on Greek palmettes and scrolls. All recall Owen Jones's influential Grammar of Ornament of 1856;[209] in fact the Academy owned reproductions of plates from Owen Jones and they were a primary object of study in the fourth and fifth Classes of the Applied Arts Division in the 1914 system. In diligently copying these models, the first and second year *Handteekenen* students were becoming craftspeople capable of executing another's designs.

The flat ornamental motifs offered in the first two years of Academic study were part of the curriculum for both the Division of Plastic Arts and that of Decorative and Applied Arts. The description of the instruction in handling materials is more detailed in the decorators' section of the 1914 booklet:

> In drawing after the *wandplaat* particular attention shall be paid to the pure process, the laying down of flat tones in watercolor and the pure pulling of

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[208]For example, in Gidding's Café Loos in Rotterdam, 1917-1918.

[209]The Greek-derived forms are nearest to those in Owen Jones, The Grammar of Ornament, (London: Studio Editions, 1986), Greek No. 5, pl. XIX. None of the other *wandplaten* are so closely related to the Jones plates.

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> contours with the so-called rush-pushers (*beizentrekkers*, reed pens), through which for decorative painters (by far the largest contingent) the practice of the trade is approached.[210]

This description is curiously apt for de Kooning's painting technique in the mid-1980s. At that time he usually worked from a charcoal underdrawing; with a two-inch wide flat brush (shaped like a housepainter's brush), he followed the edge of a line, pulling his color along it.[211]

The 1914 booklet tells us that the third Class introduces "drawing after nature." This begins with wire figures, then with solid models.[212] With both wry humor

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[210]Bij het teekenen naar wandplaat zal bijzonder gelet worden op zuivere bearbeiding, he leggen van vlakke tonen in waterverf en het zuiver halen van contours met zoogenaamde biezentrekkers, waardoor voor de decoratieschilders (verreweg het grootste contingent) de praktijk van het ambacht wordt benaderd; Onderwijs in 1913, 33.

[211]He wanted to keep the surface smooth. Curiously, he often compared these paintings to signs. Insofar as his early experiences are responsible for this later way of working, de Kooning's time at the Gidding firm would have to be considered as important in this regard as the curriculum of the Academy. I have noted de Kooning's way of painting in the 1980s because that is what I have witnessed. Research into and thoughtful analysis of some of his earlier techniques have been put forth most recently by Richard Shiff, "Water and Lipstick: De Kooning in Transition," in Willem de Kooning Paintings, ed. Prather, 33-73; this is a fruitful area for study.

[212]Teekenen naar de natuur; Onderwijs in 1913, 7. In the development of the course of instruction, there was never any question that this rendering was other than perceptual. Michael Zakian, "Representation and Illusion," 129-31, argues that de Kooning's "renderings of geometric brass models were diametrically opposed to the principles of his *trompe-l'oeil* still life," noting that "they were technical drawings, drafting exercises that emphasized the precision of pure, unmodulated line," and that "these mathematically exacting line drawings were conceptual,

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and ingenuous accuracy, de Kooning described to Hess the Dupuis Brothers' forms (first devised in the 1830s) as looking "like Constructivist sculptures." They were to be rendered, he explained, from various angles, neatly on paper.[213] The authors of the 1914 booklet stressed that the chalk indications of shadows should at first define just the large forms (*de groote schaduwen*), and only the large forms, and that they be exact.[214] To a young art student for whom he served as mentor in the 1970s and 1980s, de Kooning described making such geometric shapes. He spoke of starting from the inside and finding the outer edge, explaining that the mass would build itself; the edge would be the elusive thing that one tried to find. He alluded to the tedious rigors of the process by saying that only he and one other student survived that class and that both became famous, himself here, the other in Holland.[215] To my knowledge, he never subjected his own students to

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rather than pictorial, in that they reproduced the essential structure of an object, as opposed to its visual appearance." Zakian's assessment of the instruction is incorrect, yet his larger point, that "representation is enormously complex," involving "different ways of envisioning reality," whether a world of "unchanging, eternal forms," or of "mere appearance," is inherent in all academic instruction that leads from simple to complex forms.

[213]Hess, 1968, 13.

[214]Onderwijs in 1913, 7.

[215]Joan Levy, telephone interview by author, 30 April 1994.

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geometrical exercises.

The simple plaster models with geometric forms were to lead up to a "simple still life, a pair of objects from daily life, of not too small dimensions, placed beside each other." Plaster casts with "leaf and plant forms, concluding with a simple ornament" completed the material of the third Class.[216] The student drawings of the latter rendered plaster casts of Gothic ornamental molding.

Klaas van de Erve confirmed that the geometric figures made of wire or solid plaster, and wooden boxes and stools were those of the Dupuis brothers. He recalled that the large shadows were first indicated with charcoal and that the finished work was completely in conté, covering the earlier indications. To achieve the modeling, students were taught to smudge with their fingers. The 1914 booklet does not illustrate the simple still life, but van de Erve offered a photograph of his own, drawn in 1928 in Heyberg's day class (fig. 74). Van de Erve recalled that the plaster ornaments were Greek or Gothic.

The method of depicting shadows in these drawings was referred to by van de Erve as the Heyberg technique; he qualified that, while it is a standard academic method, Heyberg's influence could be recognized in the especially

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[216]Een eenvoudig stilleven, een paar voorwerpen uit het dagelijksch leven, van niet te klein afmeting, bij elkaar geplaatst. . . . Blad- en plantvormen om te eindigen met een eenvoudig ornament; Onderwijs in 1913, 7.

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refined results. Heyberg also insisted that the objects be put in the center of the paper.

Student work from the fourth and fifth Classes is illustrated in Plate 2 of the 1914 booklet (fig. 75). The fourth Class is the last which we know de Kooning to have completed. The booklet tells us that drawing after still life arrangements, "now more complex," is continued.[217] This description fits the one extant work by de Kooning from the Academy, the drawing Still Life: Bowl, Pitcher and Jug, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 76). It can therefore be dated to the academic year 1920/1921; logic would have it be the culminating project, most likely completed in spring 1921. In comparison with the student works illustrated in the 1914 booklet, the de Kooning still life, while adhering to his teacher's strictures, is more dramatically presented, with no slack space. He brings the objects to within an inch of the boundaries of the sheet, and lowers his viewpoint to include the edge of the table top. This still life will be discussed a greater length later in the chapter. So far as can be ascertained, the objects for these still life drawings were chosen and placed by the teacher.[218] The authors of the 1914 booklet give the aim for these drawings: "The drawings shall be so far as possible sustained so that the tone and texture in entirety

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[217]Nu meer samengesteld; ibid.

[218]This was the experience of Klaas van de Erve.

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can come into their rightful accord."[219]

Klaas van de Erve described his own experience in Professor Heyberg's drawing class. Mr. Heyberg put an old piece of wood on the table to make a horizontal surface and on it put two or three objects, different for each student. In the evening class, however, the whole class made the same still life, which was placed in the center of the amphitheater because of the lighting (fig. 77).[220] The student could take half a sheet of paper, 32 1/2 x 50 cm., or a whole sheet. He had to put a mark on the board to help him find the same place for each work session. Everything had to be drawn to actual size. The student first blocked where he saw the total circumference of the objects, which had to be centrally placed. He used a knitting needle to measure, and also eye and thumb. After making a separate block of each object, he had to draw the outlines with a very thin point of charcoal. When the charcoal drawing met with Mr. Heyberg's approval, the student went over the same outline in conté à Paris. Then it was time to put in shadow, filling up the objects; line was no longer

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[219]De teekeningen worden zoo ver mogelijk doorgevoerd, zoodat de kleur en de stofuitdrukking geheel tot hum recht kunnen komen; Onderwijs in 1913, 7.

[220]The drawing of the evening class in progress, owned by Klaas van de Erve who kindly supplied me with a photograph, was made in 1891 by A. van Maasdijk, teacher at the Academy since 1883; van de Erve said nothing had changed between 1891 and 1928. Van Maasdijk will be mentioned again in Chapter 4.

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important. Even the contour drawing contained the larger shadow shapes, and from the beginning the background and objects were treated "all in one."[221]

The conté used, van de Erve continued, was number one conté, extra fine drawing pencil, sharpened to a "point like a needle." One put in the values by making a "grain with small dots, almost like stippling" over the whole drawing. At two days a week it took a year, about 600 hours. After the objects were filled in, the background was begun. You had to make "the real tone you saw before you." A stompe (*doezelaar*, made of chamois formed into a roll with a point) was used to take the grain out of the conté and make it all "flat."[222]

The finish of "minute conté crayon dots and points" was described by de Kooning to Hess and put forth in Hess's 1968 essay as a guild "secret," a contrast to the academic principles embedded in all other aspects of the still life drawing project.[223] In Hess's more detailed discussion of the technique in 1972, the entire techique was described seamlessly. Here is that account:

> The students were supposed to follow each area, point to point, from the model to the paper. The exercise

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[221]As has already been noted, the information in this paragraph is from conversations with Klaas van de Erve in July 1985, with the exception of the last sentence, clarified by van de Erve, letter to the author, March 1992.

[222]Klaas van de Erve, interviews by author, July 1985.

[223]Hess, 1968, 13-14.

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> was to clear the students' eyes of conventional seeing and to urge them to record nothing but their firsthand experience.
>
> After the outlines were settled on the paper in faint charcoal lines, the still-life was modeled carefully, facet by facet, with conté crayon, the transitions and elisions expressed in gentle smudges and wipes of stompe or chamois. Each move had to be checked against the model. The students had to train themselves to keep their eyes at fixed levels and angles and at the same distance from the still-life and from the paper, and to reassume the identical position day after day. (The draftsman's pose is as rigid as that of the model sitting for a portrait.) Great care had to be taken to keep the skin of the paper intact. A bit too much rubbing and the fibers would come unstuck, making areas where the charcoal would become too shiny and black. When the volumes were finally established the whole sheet was carefully rubbed and stomped to give an even layer of pigment across the surface--like a veil of black stretched over the white skin of the paper. It is, in other words, a full expression of the medium of conté over paper--each element is given its complete articulation.
>
> . . . In exercises like this still-life at the Academy, he enjoyed (in recollection) the long hours and the patience demanded by the project.[224]

In van de Erve's experience, Mr. Heyberg mostly talked about whether or not you had the right tone, about seeing the difference between background and object. "He never talked about feeling. You had to do what he said. He went around the class, controlling all the time: 'too dark, too light;'" he might rub out a student's drawing. After a student in the day classes finished this drawing, he went on to do another in pastel, first in black and white, then in color. "If it was very good, you could do the same in watercolor, but it happened seldom." Van de Erve had heard that it was possible to be invited to do the still life in

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[224]Idem, 1972, 18-19.

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oil in the last class.[225]

The fourth Class, according to the 1914 booklet, also included further drawings after plaster ornaments, with more difficult models; their provenance, often from medieval architecture, to judge by the samples illustrated, was to have been explained to the students by the teacher. The second half of the fourth Class was preparation for the fifth Class, which was devoted primarily to drawing from plaster casts of Renaissance portrait busts. In the fourth Class, we are told, students drew "after enlarged fragments of the human countenance: eyes, nose, mouth, ear, in various positions." They also began drawing "the proportions of the human body" and were taught the theory and practice of perspective.[226]

Van de Erve described the plaster noses and mouths as being about a meter high and wide. The drawings were done in charcoal or conté or a very black Siberian chalk.[227] The student drawing illustrated in the 1914 booklet gives a certain logic to the idealized, cool, partial countenance of half-nose, half-cheek, mouth and chin by rendering it

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[225]Klaas van de Erve, interviews by author, July 1985.

[226]Naar vergroote fragmenten van het menschelijk gelaat: oogen, neus, mond, oor, in verschillende standen. . . . Teekenen der proporties van het menschelijk licham; Onderwijs in 1913, 8. The theory and practice of perspective were not further explained. The time allotted to fragments of the face was 8 hours per week, with 2 hours for proportions of the body, and 4 hours for perspective.

[227]Klaas van de Erve, interviews by author, July 1985.

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matter-of-factly as a cast hung by wire on a plank. This standard academic practice of working from parts of the face assumes an intriguing importance when we consider the fragments of the human face that recur in de Kooning's later paintings.

Only in the fifth Class did the students draw the human head in its entirety, according to the plan in the 1914 booklet. Seeing the whole was stressed. Therefore, the first heads were drawn "only in contour with just the form of the large shadows in them, later they will be entirely finished off until at last they are as much as possible faithful imitations of the model."[228] The plaster casts chosen for these studies were mostly from the Renaissance since, we are told by the authors of the booklet, the student would feel himself in nearer relationship to them than to the (for him) less comprehensible, stylised works from antiquity.[229] Van de Erve remembered a head of Dante and heads of Michelangelo's two figures for the Medici tombs as well as a head of one of the Michelangelo slaves (the latter were more complex and probably used for the sixth Class); these were executed in conté, he said.[230] There

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[228]Worden de eerste koppen slechts in omtrek geteekend, met alleen de vorm der groote schaduwen er in, later worden ze geheel afgewerkt tot ze ten laatste zooveel mogelijk getrouwe nabootsingen van het model zijn; Onderwijs in 1913, 8.

[229]Ibid.

[230]Klaas van de Erve, interviews by author, July 1985.

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were busts of the emperors Nero, Vespasian and Augustus.[231]

De Kooning recalled to Sam Hunter in 1975 that at the Academy he drew regularly from copies of classical sculpture and specified that he himself always drew the Roman works, never the Greek.[232] In declaring allegiance to the more realistic works he may have been proceeding as was considered appropriate by his professors. Nonetheless, he perfectly understood the subtleties of his education. He commented to art historian Sandy Kraskin in 1977 that the Rotterdam academy was naturalistic, not idealistic: one drew even the chips and smudges on the plaster casts; he explained further that the Dutch and German academies were unlike the French.[233]

The fifth Class also included "proportion drawing" (*proportie-teekenen*), again unexplained in the booklet, and the beginning of anatomical drawing, from the human

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[231]Dick van der Plas, Adrianus van der Plas, een kunstenaarsleven 1899-1974 (Groningen: Van der Plas Beheer, 1992), 12 and fig. 1; I thank Riet van der Plas, daughter of the artist, for kindly providing me with a copy of this privately printed book. Curiously, the 1917 charcoal drawing by Adrianus van der Plas that was made from a cast at the Rotterdam Academy, while labelled "Keizer Vespasianus," does not appear to portray that Roman Emperor.

[232]Willem de Kooning, interview by Sam Hunter in Sam Hunter, "De Kooning: Je dessine les yeux fermés," Galerie Jardin des Arts 152 (November 1975), 68-70, as reprinted in "Entretien avec Sam Hunter," in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 151. De Kooning did not make the distinction between the Renaissance and antiquity.

[233]Sandy Kraskin has kindly shared with me this unpublished interview of 29 August 1977.

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skeleton, as well as the beginning of perspective drawing (*perspectief-teekenen*). Klaas van de Erve identified "proportion drawing" with a passage from the 1914 authors' goals for the fifth Class, in which we are told that the student shall be placed at different positions in relation to each new model: near, far, at a level with, beneath, shadow side, lit side, "to insure that the act of drawing shall not degenerate into a recipe-like imitation."[234]

The authors of the booklet mention that the teachers introduce material when the students are ready for it. For purely logistical reasons, various levels of students would work after casts or the model at any one time. It is possible that de Kooning was able to make studies beyond the limits of the fourth Class; the documentary evidence does not preclude his having completed much of the fifth Class.

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[234]Opdat het teekenen voor hem niet zal kunnen ontaarden in een recept-achtig namaken; Onderwijs in 1913, 8. While unable to give a breakdown of the graduated method given for the study of anatomy, van de Erve recalled working from large plates taken from the anatomical study by de Lange. It took about two years to complete the series, which was executed in pencil, conté, and brown or red watercolor or ink for the muscles. During the 1930s, the skeleton was relegated to a corner and not used.

For perspective, the day classes in the 1930s used a 1923 book by W. C. A. Ridderhof. Ridderhof had taught at the Academy, both day and evening classes, since 1914. The perspective motifs included circles, ellipses, squares, and the depiction of three-dimensional constructions. What the evening class learned would have been less detailed, according to both van de Erve and the 1914 booklet. It is not clear how the perspective drawing of the fifth Class differed from the theory and practice of perspective as offered in the fourth Class.

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Course of Study: *Handteekenen*, Classes Six to Eight

The full course of study offered by the Rotterdam Academy continued in the sixth Class with drawing from plaster casts of "more heads with busts, heads in action on the neck and shoulders, and then torsos." Next came drawings of "hands and feet, in many different positions, mainly after casts from life." Drawing from the skeleton was continued, the theory of anatomy begun, and "instruction in style and ornament" was given.[235]

Only in the seventh Class, which generally took two years, was the whole figure to be drawn, first from casts, then from the living nude model. The attitude of the authors was that, after having progressed to drawing from the live model, the students would voluntarily seek to draw again from the plaster casts "since they now begin to see more of the really beautiful in the antiques and want to try to place something from them firmly in their work." Drawing from the *écorché* and an explanation of musculature were part of the seventh Class (two hours per week), along with style and ornament (two hours) and the history of the fine arts

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[235]Meer koppen met busten, koppen in actie op hals en schouders, daarna rompen. . . . Handen en voeten, in allerlei houding en stand, en van alle kanten gezien, hoofdzakelijk naar natuur-afgietsels besteed. . . . Onderwijs in de stijl- en ornamentleer; Onderwijs in 1913, 8-9.

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(two hours).[236]

The casts available to students in the sixth and seventh Classes included a head of Pasquino, the head and torso of Laocoon, the head of Michelangelo's Giuliano de' Medici, Michelangelo's Dying Slave and the Uffizi Dancing Faun (fig. 78). A drawing made by Klaas van de Erve in 1934 shows the Academy's gallery of plaster casts (fig. 79). While it features the Belvedere Torso, one can identify, widely separated from each other, two figures from Rodin's Burghers of Calais and, in the right foreground, the head of Michelangelo's Moses.

The lectures that de Kooning recalled, via Hess's account, were "on art theory and history, from the Egyptians through the Renaissance."[237] De Kooning once mentioned

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[236]Of ook wijl ze nu meer van het werkelijk schoone in de antieken beginnen te zien en willen trachten iets daarvan in hun werk vast te leggen; ibid., 9.

[237]Hess, 1968, 13. We have an indication of the art historical range of the administration from a series of lectures on painting and sculpture given by Huib Luns during the first year that de Kooning attended classes at the Academy. The lectures, however, were offered on Friday afternoons and it is thus unlikely that the youthful employee of the Gidding firm could attend. Dividing the material by medium--murals, painting, graphic art, architectural sculpture, and statuary--Luns began the wall painting section with Early Christian mosaics and ended with nineteenth-century wall paintings. The painting lectures culminated with "Naturalism in genre painting, Breughel and the 17th-century Hollanders"; Verslag der Academie over 1917-18 (1918): 9-10.

In van de Erve's slightly later experience, the art history classes concentrated on Dutch art, especially of the seventeenth century, "Frans Hals, Rembrandt," covering artists as recent as Floris Verster and Breitner, contemporaries of Van Gogh. Van de Erve said that in his

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attending lectures on American architecture at the Academy.[238] The Academy had a lecture program that brought in outside speakers, as well as an exhibition program. Both will be mentioned in Chapter 5.

The eighth Class, which in the booklet's decription had to take at least two years, included drawing after the nude living model (ten hours per week), portrait drawing (two hours) and drawing from the clothed full figure (two hours) (fig. 80). The poses of the nude models were also drawn anatomically (two hours), in the typically methodical way: first only a limb, in large scale, in contour with black conté crayon; then the skeleton was placed within it in red ink; and finally the muscles were drawn with black conté. From the limb the student progressed to the torso, from front and back, and finally to the entire figure.[239]

The student works from the eighth Class illustrated in the 1914 booklet present a range of models from slim boy, two young women, mature men, and an older man. All the nude figures are male, and they are engaged in activities that

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experience the art history classes were required only for students preparing for the teaching certificate examination, and they were not well attended by other students; Klaas van der Erve, interview by author, 3 July 1985, and letter to author, 7 February 1985. This was the case during Jongert's study time as well, but he had liked and benefitted from the art history classes and would have encouraged students to attend them; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 98.

[238]Rogers, "Artist at 74," 21.

[239]Onderwijs in 1913, 9-10.

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evoke a range of references, from quotidian to religious to classical art: while one performs some kind of craft work on a table top, perhaps planing, another model stands head back, arms out against a cross, and the adolescent boy assumes the pose of the thorn puller. A more romantic note is struck by a young woman in Spanish (or gypsy?) clothing playing a guitar. The nudes are as much precise renderings of individual bodies as are the portrait head studies.

This concluded the entire course of study given in the evening. Painting was not taught in this part of the curriculum; nor were compositions of groups of figures. In Klaas van de Erve's awareness, color was never used in the evening classes. As far as can be ascertained from the illustrations in the 1914 booklet, perspective drawings of architectural interiors were not stressed.

Course of Study: Decorative and Applied Arts

The applied arts, which Hess had de Kooning studying at the Academy, were taught in Division E, *Decoratieve Kunsten en Kunstnijverheid*, in which de Kooning's name never appears as being promoted from one Class to another in the annual Reports. This is also the area of study for which the descriptions in the 1914 booklet were superceded by new practices during de Kooning's years at the Academy, for in the fall of 1918, when the youthful artist began his second year of study, Jac. Jongert assumed the post of Head of the Division.

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In some large issues, the instruction in this Division probably did not change from the years prior to Jongert. The authors of the 1914 booklet state in the early paragraphs describing this Division, "The Academy is no trade school, in the narrow sense of the words . . . ," even though the instruction in the Division was necessarily geared to the requirements of the individual trades of the students; the goal of the Division was to "give working decorators and applied artists the aesthetic formation which workers in the art trades cannot do without."[240] Similarly Jongert wrote in 1927, "The course for applied art at the Rotterdam Academy is no high school for decorative arts."[241]

In the 1914 system, the first two Classes in the Applied Arts Division ran parallel with those of the *Handteekenen* Classes. Both before and after Jongert's arrival, the two Divisions differed in the emphasis placed by applied arts instruction on "the principles of composition of flat ornament," on "the rhythm and

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[240]De "Academie" is geen vakschool, in den engen zin des woords . . . . De Winter-avondcursus in Decoratieve kunst en Kunstnijverheid heeft ten doel in de praktijk werkzamen decorateurs en kunstnijveren de estetische vorming te geven, die werklieden in de kunstambachten niet kunnen ontberen; Onderwijs in 1913, 32. In the early plan, the students' needs are divided into work that involves modelling or relief and work that is flat, while horticulturists, furniture-makers and smiths are given specialized classes.

[241]De cursus voor toegepaste kunst aan de Rotterdamsche Adacemie is geen hoogeschool voor decoratieve kunsten; Jongert, "De Academie en de toegepaste kunst," 119.

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mathematical foundation of all ornament," and in emphasizing the study of plant and animal forms.[242] Jongert added the design of three-dimensional objects and spaces to the general course and stressed "a well-balanced division within a given plane or space" over ornament per se.[243] He also stressed developing "the critical spirit of the student."[244]

In both the 1914 curriculum and Jongert's accounts, drawing from the human figure was given less emphasis than in the *Handteekenen* division. In the earlier program applied arts students drew from the Renaissance busts, but the end product did not have to be so thoroughly worked as in the *Handteekenen* Division, and the full figure and anatomy were lacking from the decorators' courses. Jongert noted in 1927 that drawing from nature was given for the purposes necessary to perform one's trade and that more advanced interests could be met by taking courses in the

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[242]De beginselen van het samenstellen van vlakornament . . . het rythme en den wiskundigen ondergrond van alle ornament, . . . door studie naar natuurvormen als bloemen en planten, vlinders en vogels, de leerlingen in staat gesteld zich vormenkennis te verschaffen en in de natuur lijnen en vormen, kleur en kleurcombinaties op te merken, die gebonden door maat en rythme zijn ornament zullen worden; Onderwijs in 1913, 33-34.

[243]Een evenwichtige verdeeling binnen een gegeven vlak of ruimte; Jongert, "De Academie en de toegepaste kunst," 119.

[244]Le professeur doit développer autant que possible l'esprit critique de l'élève; Jongert, "Pensées," 11.

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Handteekenen division.[245]

In 1914 the principles of color were listed as part of applied arts instruction even in the evening and were not mentioned in connection with the evening *Handteekenen* course.[246]

After Jongert's arrival, the overall philosophy in the presentation of the various student exercises may have differed more than the actual tasks themselves, except that Jongert had the students invent compositions from the earliest years. He seems to have started his curriculum not with lettering but with ornamental polygons, the equivalent of the *wandplaten*, emphasizing the relationship between motif and ground as "integral parts of the ornament." In Jongert's course, drawing from nature still began in the third year with the Dupuis models; here too, though, Jongert emphasized that the "background must form one of the integral parts of the group."[247]

By the sixth Class, in the 1914 plan and for Jongert as well, applied arts students designed their own decorative ensembles, a freedom lacking in the course of study for painters, and in the seventh year they competed for prizes

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[245]Onderwijs in 1913, 35; Jongert, "De Academie en de toegepaste kunst," 120.

[246]Onderwijs in 1913, 34.

[247]Le rapport entre le motif et le fond . . . des parties intégrantes de l'ornement. . . . Le fond doit former une des parties intégrantes du groupe; Jongert, "Pensées," 12, 13.

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with very specific projects for which they proposed designs.[248] The student works illustrated in the 1914 booklet show mostly plant and animal forms, one embellished with a goblet; four designs for the theater include architecture and the upper half of a figure (figs. 81-83). In the 1925 presentation of student work at the Paris Exposition intérnationale des Arts Décoratifs, works by the young Rotterdammers under Jongert's tuition could most efficiently be described as Art Déco (figs. 84-89). Printed fabrics, vases, packaging, a folding screen, a room for a country house, the interior of a café, a sign-post for a theater and an advertising sign make use of predominantly rectangular forms with some simple and modish curves.[249] The sign for "Indian Motor" is composed solely of De Stijl/Bauhaus rectangular blocks, while the country house interior and theater sign-post have decorative elaborations. The café interior displays awareness of and admiration for the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

For some decades into the twentieth century, the applied arts classes offered the only occasion at the Academy for experimentation, which was never a possibility

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[248]Onderwijs in 1913, 33-36; Jongert, "Pensées," 13-14.

[249]Jongert, "Pensées," illustrations on pp. 19-23, 26-30.

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in the traditional classes of the Academy.[250] The plastic arts classes were taught with rigorous copying after nature, while in the decorative arts Division, students were encouraged to learn the laws of design in nature and to come up with imaginative solutions for practical purposes.

In 1983 de Kooning said, "the Academy was very pure; it didn't teach commercial art." He could have been referring to the concentration on "aesthetic formation," or just to the fact that his experience was in the *Handteekenen* Division. In neither department were wood-graining or marbling, mentioned by Hess, part of the curriculum. Architectural rendering, also mentioned by Hess, belonged to instruction in the Architecture Division and was not discussed in any other, although it may well have been included in Jongert's more advanced courses.[251]

The Day Classes

The course of study for the day classes in the Plastic Arts, so wished for by de Kooning, is described briefly in the 1914 publication following the detailed account of the evening classes. Day classes were held six hours a day, five days a week, from 1 September to 15 July, a period four

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[250]Benno Randolfi's nephew, also called Benno, and Klaas van de Erve, both trained at the Rotterdam Academy, affirmed this in conversation with the author, July 1985.

[251]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 27 March 1983; Hess, 1959, 113, mentioned wood-graining and architectural rendering and in 1968, 13, wood-graining and marbleizing.

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months longer than that of the evening classes which ended on 15 March each year.[252] For admission the student had to demonstrate proficiency in drawing a "mask after a plaster model," for which, if necessary, he or she could prepare in the last class in the Applied Arts Division, a reference to drawing from the Classical or Renaissance bust. Three years were considered necessary to complete the course of study in drawing, which appears to have been the same as that offered in the advanced years of the evening classes. The student would then spend all his or her time on painting, beginning with still life subjects or plaster heads and moving with the same progression as in the drawing classes from heads to hands and feet to the whole figure, from plaster casts to live models, clothed and unclothed. This part of the instruction also took three years, a total of six years.[253]

No indication is given about the medium of painting but according to Klaas van de Erve's comments, watercolor preceded work in oil, and probably pastel came before the watercolor.[254] There are two plates representing this part of the curriculum in the 1914 booklet, labelled *Schilderklasse* (painter class) (figs. 90 and 91). From the reproduction it is not apparent if the plaster cast after

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[252]Onderwijs in 1913, 11, 6; in addition, the facilities were available from 7:00 to 9:00 in the morning, four days a week, from 1 April to 15 July.

[253]Ibid., 11.

[254]Klaas van de Erve, interviews by author, July 1985.

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Rodin's Burghers of Calais is rendered in conté or watercolor; and sparkling glass bottles in the still life could be depicted in either of the above or in oil, as could be the portrait of an older woman, so similar is the minutely rendered technique and careful observation. Extra depth and luminosity in the portrait of a starchy Dutchman may be the result of the oil medium, and the probing view of personality the product of a better student. The two nudes are a crouching boy and a standing man, the latter probably by J. G. Heyberg, discussed earlier.

It is on the last pages of the 1914 booklet that the day classes for the Division of Decorative and Applied Arts were described.[255] Here, suddenly, the authors let out all the stops. It is as if parents and advisors were to be convinced to allow the young people in their care to take the day classes. We learn that painters can use oil or distemper, that the mediums of lithography, woodcut, or batik are available. Decorative designs may contain the human figure (as one of the student works illustrated in 1914 did, fig. 92). With these statements we become aware that such opportunities were not possible in the evening Applied Arts classes. For the day students, the collection of art objects was available and the library, with its sizable collection of decorative works and specialized

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[255]Information in this and the following paragraph is given in Onderwijs in 1913, 37-38.

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periodicals, "more easily" accessible.[256] The daytime Applied Arts students shared some of the classes with the day students in the Plastic Arts Division. They were divided into groups of more or less advanced abilities (most likely to separate the serious and capable from the dilettantes). And, we are told, they would greatly increase their progress and understanding if they also attended the evening classes.

For those who wished to prepare for the examination that certified art teachers, the day course of study in the Division of Decorative and Applied Arts, supplemented with evening classes, offered the best preparation, according to the booklet.

More on De Kooning's Enrollment

The fact that de Kooning did not finish the course of study at the Rotterdam Academy is confirmed by his own comments in later life. His earlier recorded statements are less clear, probably because as a younger artist he wanted the stature of having completed the full course of study. As a controversial avant-garde artist, it may have seemed a complementary ballast. For some time afterward, he seems to have been hesitant to contradict earlier assumptions.

The first account we have of de Kooning's training is from 1924, in the draft of a letter which he wrote to his

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[256]Gemakkelijker nog dan 's avonds; ibid, 37.

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prospective employer while in Belgium. The young artist mentioned his academic education in a brief clause before a more detailed description of his commercial work experience. He began with the phrase, "After six years at," which he crossed out, editing his sentence to begin, "After the Academy in Rotterdam Holland."[257] The period of six years might be accurate or a slight inflation, chosen perhaps because it was the amount of time required for the completion of the Day Course of Study.

De Kooning gave six years again after he moved to New York in the most detailed early account of his education, a biographical listing connected with his mural for the 1939-1940 World's Fair. It reads, "Academy of Plastic Arts, Rotterdam, Holland, 6 years." He chose to omit the technical half of the Academy's name. The list continues with two years more of schooling in Belgium, most likely inaccurate, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. Under "Awards" are listed, "State Academy Award, Rotterdam, Holland" and "Silver Medal, Academy of Plastic Arts."[258] It is likely that the young artist was urged by his fellows,

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[257]~~Na-6-jaar-de~~ Na de academie te Rotterdam Holland; Willem de Kooning, to [Van Genechten firm], Brussels, [ca. 1924], Private collection. The full text of the letter will be given in Chapter 7.

[258]Painting and Sculpture in the World of Tomorrow: Fair-Commissioned Mural Painting (New York: New York World's Fair Department of Feature Publicity, 1939), biography in appendix. A copy exists in the library of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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or his own ambition, to inflate his credentials in the hope of acquiring commissions.

Hess's accounts of 1959, 1968, and 1972 all assign eight years to de Kooning's study at the Rotterdam Academy, from 1916 to 1925 with a break for the trip to Belgium.[259] Perhaps the number eight, the correct number of Classes in the evening program for painters and sculptors, was supplied by de Kooning, who may have answered a question without supplying the full story. The artist would have had ample opportunity to correct this, but apparently never did. At some point between 1955 and Hess's 1959 monograph, he must have given some information to his chronicler, for in the Hess papers there is a photostat of Paul Cummings's article from the 1955 volume of Current Biography with notes jotted on the back. Cummings had written, "In 1924 he was graduated from the academy as a certified artist and craftsman." Hess's note reads, "not graduate, just stopped."[260]

To the filmmaker Erwin Lieser de Kooning supplied information that corroborates the documentation in the

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[259]In all three publications Hess specified "for the next eight years" after beginning the instruction. In 1959 and 1972 he stated that de Kooning returned to classes at the Rotterdam Academy after the trip to Belgium, using the words, "finishes curriculum at Academy" in the 1972 publication; Hess, 1959, 113; 1968, 12; 1972, 291.

[260]Paul Cummings, "Willem de Kooning," Current Biography Yearbook (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1955), photostat copy in Thomas B. Hess Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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Academy annual Reports. He said, in 1978 or 1979,

> I went to the Academy there; I went to about the fourth or the fifth grade. They have eight classes. Four years or something, or five years. Just the winter time, you know, about seven months, at night, only at night. It was a good Academy, though. Very systematic, very good training.[261]

In conversations with me in 1982 and 1983 he was equally candid about not having completed the full course of study. In April 1983, he spoke of going to the Academy for four years, evenings only. On another occasion, asked why he didn't complete the entire course of study, he said he "had to make a living," explaining also that he went to night classes which were "for the working class." He and some other students "walked out because we found jobs."[262] Once, he likened the Academy to the military: "The Academy was like the military, very strict. . . . I didn't finish the Academy course; I was one of the best students. I didn't want to stay on and on."[263] In another conversation, he explained that he was getting a little

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[261]Erwin Leiser, Willem de Kooning and the Unexpected (Zurich: Erwin Leiser Filmproduktion, 1979). As late as 1977 de Kooning told Dutch interviewer Hansmaarten Tromp that his study time was eight years; Tromp, "Elke stijl," 12.

[262]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 27 March 1983.

[263]Idem, interview by author, 4 November 1982. In a 1952 obituary for Heyberg, a former student likened his classes to military drill; BAC, "Heyberg de geduchtige." As an aside, it may be noted that the director of the academy administration was a military man; Jongert, "Herinneringen," 189.

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bored with the Academy but also that he went to the Academy again, later, at another level.[264] This last comment is intriguing and remains as yet open to speculation.

The Silver Medal

There was no diploma for completing the evening classes in *Handteekenen*, but there was a prize for the best drawing of the nude in a special competition for those students in the eighth Class who were invited to compete for it. This prize was the Silver Medal; there was also a Bronze Medal and an Honorable Mention. Klaas van de Erve described the competition for the Silver Medal in 1936: the students who were selected drew from the model in fourteen evening sessions of three hours each. The winner was considered the

> best of the year end of the Academy evening course. Further on it has no value. It is only a good introduction to the Rijks Academy to go [in the] direction Prix de Rome, which is the highest reward in the Netherlands.[265]

Drawings which earned the Silver Medal were illustrated in the Academy annual Reports in 1918 and 1919. Piet van der Rest won the award in 1918 with his drawing of Rust (Repose); K. J. van Veen's winning work of the following year had the motto, Emergan (fig. 93).[266] Both were

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[264]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 May 1983.

[265]Klaas van de Erve, letter to author, 6 and 7 January 1985.

[266]Verslag der Academie over 1917-18; Verslag der Academie over 1918-19.

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drawings of the male nude, a single figure, posed and titled in a generally meaningful way. It may be noted that there was no reference to national history or world literature.[267] Each of these two works has a white ground but shows a minimal amount of shading where the figure meets the surface that supports it. (One suspects that had Heyberg been the instructor for the full figure part of the curriculum, the results would have had at least more impressive backgrounds.)

Never having completed the eighth Class at the Academy, de Kooning could not have won the Silver Medal. Further, the annual Reports list Silver Medal winners through the year 1926, when de Kooning left the Netherlands, and his name does not appear. So far as I have been able to ascertain, a State Academy Award did not exist, unless it is a reference to tuition subsidy.

De Kooning's claim to have been awarded the Silver Medal might be regarded as metaphorically accurate, however, since he was undoubtedly an excellent student. Of the drawing Still Life: Bowl, Pitcher and Jug (fig. 76) done at the Academy, de Kooning has said it was the best in the class. "They were proud of that drawing." Professor Heyberg had at first kept the drawing, but understood when

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[267]Such references did exist for the group compositions assigned for the Prix de Rome competitions at the Rijksacademie; Reynaerts, "Van atelier naar academie," 95.

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Willem asked to have it.[268] It remained with de Kooning's family until it was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1983. This drawing was probably the source of de Kooning's metaphorical Silver Medal.

Still Life: Bowl, Pitcher and Jug

The Metropolitan still life is the one tangible witness to de Kooning's Dutch training. A sizeable drawing, 24 1/4 inches in width, it presents a steady-eyed mastery of depiction. We view the corner of a table against an undefined space and ruminate on three humble objects of daily use. Their rustic bulk and seeming simplicity confer gravity and wholesomeness. Part of the Academy's collection of antiquities and old art objects, and placed for artistic contemplation, they bear witness to simple domesticity, but allude as well to the Golden Age of Dutch seventeenth-century art when Vermeer portrayed a similar pitcher in The Kitchenmaid (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). (See fig. 52.)

Everything in the drawing with the exception of highlights is rendered in tiny stipples of conté crayon, indistinguishable from the raised grain of the paper. The modulation is so carefully controlled that the ridges of the hand-thrown jug are clearly apparent, as are chips on the pitcher rim, nicks on the surface of the table edge, and drips of glaze on the lower part of the bowl. Inside the

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[268]Willem de Kooning, interviews by author, 23 May 1983, 27 January 1983, and 2 December 1984.

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bowl, the irregularities in the glaze are yet more subtle, fanning out into molten forms. These liquid, accidental variations are marvelously opposite to the patiently applied, dry medium in which they are expressed. The amorphous shape of a three-dimensional irregularity along the lip of this same bowl is made as comprehensible as the ribbed edging it interrupts.

As the eye takes in the expanse of the drawing, the density and value of the background seem uniform, relentlessly requiring the modelling of the objects to create volume with values relative to it. Everywhere the meeting point between object and ground or neighboring object is precise. Reflections are allowed to help in making these distinctions: the horizontal top of the pale bowl can be differentiated from the ground beyond by a white glow judiciously interposed along much of the boundary; the left side of the pitcher gains a thin edge of light value bouncing up from the table, which sets it off from the dark jug behind it before the shadow of its own bulk takes over.

The tones of contiguous spatial levels are nearly the same along the right side of the pitcher. There the initial outline is still to be seen even though the body of the pitcher is carefully kept either lighter or darker than the ground. This is the area which most betrays long hours of student labor. The heavy paper itself curves with this burden as well as from years in non-museum framing. Just

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above, however, the handle of the pitcher is fresh and free of line.

As one follows these decisions, one wonders if there is a place where observation is superseded by artistic sleight of hand. At the moment this viewer can offer only one candidate, with uncertainty: the left side of the pitcher, near the rim, must offer a thin dark line to set itself off from the highlight on the dark jug.[269]

While the table continues to the right beyond the edge of the drawing, the three objects which hold our attention in an asymmetrical group are almost centered on the sheet; they are nearer to the right edge of the drawing by a portion of an inch. Closing off the drawing on the right are the two rounded handles of pitcher and jug, one in profile, the other turned nearer the spectator. With the edge of the pitcher, they make three curving scallops in dark, light-dark, and middle values. The earthenware bowl on legs projects furthest to the left edge, creating a more angular profile in tandem with the corner of the table, each of relatively similar values. The irregularity on the lip of the bowl demands to be read in this corner episode because it interrupts the two rhyming horizontals of bowl and table just where the table edge angles back toward the

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[269]Another spot which may go beyond the tight dialogue with observed differentiations may be on the inside of the pitcher handle where a curious highlight opens up to match the ground, leaving an area the size of a pea to seem blank.

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bowl; this molten lump is offered as a counterpart to the table corner just below.

Within the demands of this assignment in observation, there is a contradiction: the ground has to be invented. A wall behind would surely have knicks or cracks; pure atmosphere would eventually contain some incident, most likely another student's drawing table, or at least gradations of light. About twenty years later de Kooning expressed a defining characteristic of "modern art" to a fellow artist to be the equivalent importance given to figure and ground.[270] This particular exercise in his academic training conferred acuity in perceiving and representing objects and people in relation to a ground to which they were ultimately more important. Yet the general message which de Kooning received from Heyberg's instruction would have attuned him to perceiving the whole.

In 1983, de Kooning mused on this drawing, "It's like a photograph, except more romantic."[271] He knew that "draw[ing] without ideas," with eyes open to what they saw, gave back more than just the objects.

Conjectures about Further Study

While de Kooning may have begun the fifth Class at the

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[270]Costantino Nivola, interview by author, 13 March 1986.

[271]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 27 January 1983.

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Rotterdam Academy in the fall of 1921, he had not completed it by the spring of 1922, nor spring of 1923.[272] One more academic year remained before he travelled to Belgium, probably in the spring of 1924. If he returned to the Netherlands in 1925 there would have been another academic year before his departure for the United States in July 1926. Hess maintained that de Kooning returned to classes at the Academy after the trip to Belgium, even specifying that he completed the course of study.[273]

While we know that the latter part of Hess's assertion is untrue, de Kooning's 1983 comment that he went to the Academy again, later, at another level,[274] propels a search for explanations. Perhaps the time was 1925. Could he have audited classes irregularly with the permission of a professor? This would have required special circumstances indeed, for the old Academy building was overcrowded in the 1920s and, in my understanding of the annual Reports, a student would have to attend classes regularly or leave to make a place for another student. Were these later classes in the applied arts under Jongert, or in *Handteekenen*?

While the matter of attending further classes is conjectural, it is clear that de Kooning would have liked to

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[272]The spring of 1923 is the last time this information was given in the annual Reports of the Academy.

[273]Hess, 1972, 291.

[274]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 May 1983.

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have followed the day course of study at the Rotterdam Academy, which offered the only instruction in oil painting. The fact that he had not been able to do so was an abiding regret.

Summary and the Legacy of the Academy

The two most important corrections of previous assumptions about de Kooning's years at the Rotterdam Academy are: (1) he did not complete the full course of instruction, and (2) he was never taught to paint in oil at the Academy. De Kooning's vast experience with oil paint was thus acquired in his European years primarily as a house painter.

In de Kooning's four or five years of academic study, insomuch as we may know from the 1914 booklet, a tenth to a quarter of his time was devoted to the human figure. The rendering of geometric patterns and forms, flat and three-dimensional, probably occupied a third of his attention; lettering under a tenth, plaster casts of floral ornament a tenth, and the still life somewhat over a tenth of his experience.[275] With the exception perhaps of lettering,

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[275]The hourly break-down of the course of instruction in the 1914 booklet is not always clear, and in the instance of drawing "lines" we know de Kooning's instruction did not comply with it. Following the booklet, here is my rough calculation for the first four Classes: geometric planes and forms, 35%; lettering, 7%; plaster ornaments, 13%; still life, 13%; human form, 10%; perspective, 4%; arithmetic and language, 17%. In the first five Classes, the approximate percentages would change to: geometric planes and forms, 28%; lettering, 6%; plaster ornaments, 10%; still life, 10%;

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his entire artistic curriculum involved rendering what was seen.

Certain aspects of traditional academic art training were not part of de Kooning's early experience. He did not receive thorough training in drawing hands and feet. He may not have had much academic experience with the full figure, whether plaster cast or living model, clothed or nude.[276] No matter what level of instruction he completed at the Rotterdam Academy, he would not have had training in composing figure groups.

The greater part of de Kooning's traditional academic experience was with the human head and, stretching what may be called traditional, the still life. In later years, when he taught, he would always set up a still life for his students;[277] I know nothing about his use of portraiture in

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human form, 25%; perspective, 7%; arithmetic and language, 13%. I included the "lines" under geometric forms; that effort might well have been re-apportioned to lettering.

[276]While his academic experience with the figure may have been limited, de Kooning associated the male nude with academic study. He said he never drew from the female model in art school; it was always a very muscular male model; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 November 1981. He often chuckled over the American art school emphasis on the female nude. To him the purpose of study was to learn musculature and for this, the male model was the obvious choice. It was not a matter of a lack of interest in the female nude; he explained that he did draw from the female model, later, in a studio with other young artists; ibid. The female nude thus belonged to a different stage of expression.

[277]Elaine de Kooning, interviews by author, 1980s; Max Kallenberg, interview by author, 8 January 1985, New York; Joan Ward, interviews by author, 1990s; Pat Pasloff, "1948,"

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teaching. In de Kooning's oeuvre, the most "academic" works are portrait drawings: of his wife Elaine de Kooning, friend Max Margulis, and a drawing for a commissioned portrait, all dated between 1940 and 1944 (figs. 94-97), and several other drawings from this period.[278]

When we compare the seemingly academic technique of these de Kooning works with the portraits made by students at the Rotterdam Academy (fig. 80) and by Mees (fig. 54) and Heyberg, however, we immediately observe striking differences. The first distinction to be made is among de Kooning's own works: male and female receive differing treatments. The women (and girls) are almond-eyed and somewhat idealized, less precisely observed than Max Margulis. In the Academy works, whether by student or teacher, every part of the face is equally observed and recorded with markings. In de Kooning's portrait drawings of women, the white of the paper is allowed a greater role: it becomes the tone of the flesh, subtly modulated to support the features inserted within its field. Far removed

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Art Journal 48, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 229; Ellen Auerbach, interview by Marla Prather, 1993, in Willem de Kooning Paintings, ed. Prather, 84, n. 19.

[278]There are drawings related to a possible commission for Harper's Bazaar, for which Elaine posed wearing braided hairpieces, and four heads of young girls, also posed for by Elaine and published in Harper's Bazaar 74, no. 3 (1 March 1940): 81. In addition, there is an idealized woman's head with a fillet or ribbon across her forehead which may date from the mid-1930s or the early 1940s, reproduced in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 18, Fig. 4.

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from the life portraits done at the Academy, the pallor and regularized point of departure of these women and girls by de Kooning seem nearer even to the plaster casts of parts of the face than to renderings after Roman or Renaissance portrait busts. There was little else so Neo-classical in de Kooning's training.[279] The descent from de Kooning's academic experience is not direct, however. First and foremost, these works testify to the intervening "Ingres Revival" among New York artists in the 1930s.[280] Hess further related some of these works to "the Neo-Romanticism of Bérard and . . . Rococo-Cubism of Lurçat" to which de Kooning was attentive during the early 1940s in his search for commercially viable images.[281]

In the masterful pencil portrait of Max Margulis (fig. 96) there is closer attention--in fact, fanatical attention--to observed reality. The fine point of the pencil has created stipples rather than lines. The face hovers into

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[279]There is a curious affinity between this group of de Kooning works and an 1862 portrait by Heyberg's teacher, Jan Striening, illustrated on the cover of Wouters, Striening. It depicts the artist's two daughters in a Beidemeier Neo-classicism not often displayed by Striening nor in any way associated with de Kooning's training.

[280]Melvin P. Lader, "Graham, Gorky, de Kooning, and the 'Ingres Revival' in America," Arts Magazine 52 (March 1978): 94-99.

[281]Hess, 1972, 26. This may be the point that Hess intended to make when he included Lurçat's name in jottings that appear to include corrections offered by de Kooning to Paul Cummings's 1955 biographical entry for Current Biography Yearbook; Hess Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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view from the white ground even more delicately than do the women's features within the face: there is only a suggestion of neck; the ear is a blur no more defined than a shadow on the cheek. Atmosphere, vision, and technique all recall Heyberg's lessons, transported to a realm of poetry.

This drawing and the unfinished painting based on it (fig. 97), make an illuminating comparison with Herman Mees's portrait drawing of Jan Hendrik Leopold (fig. 54). In the Mees, the rendering of the face and hands is minutely accurate, the clothing more broadly sketched--an acceptable dichotomy in the tradition of portrait drawings. De Kooning sought the stylistic unity appropriate to a painting by keying both clothing and face to a degree of abstraction. Tellingly, this version lacks hands. De Kooning left the painting unfinished, Margolis said, after several attempts at doing the hands. "He claimed he can't do hands."[282] One reason was that he had not submitted himself to the sixth Class at the Academy.[283]

There are three aspects of de Kooning's academic training that dramatically diverge from the standard curriculum of the eighteenth-century French academy: the *wandplaten*, or flat ornamental motifs, lettering, and the Dupuis brothers' geometrical figures. These had

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[282]Max Margulis, interview by author, 9 January 1985.

[283]A study of the hands and feet--sometimes omitted, sometimes emphasized--in works of de Kooning's mature and later years would be illuminating.

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considerable bearing on his later art.

The technique of rendering the *wandplaten* was among the earliest de Kooning learned and, as noted above, remained a part of his way of working in the 1980s. A variation of his early concentration on lettering came to play a compositional and wryly iconographic role in the work of the 1940s. This concern may have begun in the 1930s and probably continued long after it was apparent in the work. As late as 1985 de Kooning was keen on a particular advertisement in Time magazine that had simple, sans-serif upper-case block letters arranged vertically and commented that he thought he could "use" it in his painting.[284] Paint application and lettering, of course, were more intensively related to de Kooning's commerical experience than to the academic projects which introduced them; indeed, that was the rationale of the curriculum.

The *wandplaten* and the Dupuis brothers' geometric forms together raise the issue of an interest in--and fluency in--elementary geometric shapes. A recollection of de Kooning's musings with pastel and paper in the mid-1940s points to the constancy of such a vocabulary in his thoughts. Edwin Safford, son of de Kooning's friend Dr. Frank Safford, Jr. was a boy when de Kooning visited his family in Wading River, Long Island, around 1944. He recalled,

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[284]See Janis and Blesh, De Kooning, 16-17; Hess, 1959, 23. Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 9 November 1985; Time, 15 April 1985, 66.

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> I had a pastel set which he put to very good use. He would sit on the porch sometimes and just spend an hour fooling around with colors or geometric forms. . . . My brother, sister, and I noticed how he could draw absolutely perfect squares and triangles. . . . [He would make] two triangles that were absolutely the same size look different sizes by the way he shaded them and colored them.

Asked if this were done to amuse the children or for his own interest, Safford considered it de Kooning's own interest: "He wasn't much interested in amusing children." The children marvelled that he could "draw a circle on a piece of paper that to the eye looked absolutely perfect." These capacities were exhibited as well when de Kooning put storm doors on the summer house; "he was an excellent carpenter and he never needed a carpenter's square to perfectly square a piece of wood; he was an extraordinary craftsman."[285]

If such ruminations and abilities were spurred or furthered by the Dupuis brothers' drawing method or by Jongert's comments, they could equally testify to the interest in Kandinsky's work and writings in New York, especially on the part of de Kooning's friends John Graham and Arshile Gorky.[286] Trying out geometric shapes in various colors calls to mind Kandinsky's Bauhaus instruction. It is noteworthy that de Kooning's meditations

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[285]Edwin J. Safford, telephone interview by author, 6 October 1983.

[286]See Gail Levin, "Kandinsky and Abstract Expressionism," in Theme & Improvisation: Kandinsky and the American Avant-Garde, 1912-1950, ed. Gail Levin and Marianne Lorenz (Boston, Toronto, London: Bulfinch Press, 1992), 192-221, especially 211.

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during a summer in the country gravitated to the geometric; around the same time his friend Gorky spent a summer in the country turning to nature for inspiration.

In 1957, during the height of his acclaim in New York, for both abstract and figurative works, de Kooning happened to mention his academic experience to Selden Rodman:

> Sure, sometimes I go through periods of real despair, look at my picture, and say to myself, 'What the hell am I doing?' But to go back to scratch--what scratch? As an artist I am what I am now, and couldn't possibly go back to representation, to the academy, which was where I started. In Holland I was a full-fledged member of the academy at 12.[287]

This comment implies that representation was the essence of de Kooning's academic instruction. One wonders if he considered lettering, dividing the surface plane, and dealing with basic geometric shapes as part of his academic heritage or as totally interwoven with his commercial art and later art-making experience. If he considered these elements as part of his earliest instruction, they would qualify as "back to scratch," origins to which he might return.[288] In fact, these elements often provided a

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[287]Selden Rodman, "Willem de Kooning," in Conversations with Artists (New York: Devan Adair Co., 1957; reprint, New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), 103 (page reference is to reprint edition). The last sentence would only be accurate if it were amended to say "fully-enrolled, active student."

[288]My point of departure in this paragraph is the context in which Stephen Polcari cites the Rodman interview in his Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience, 274-276. Polcari discusses the "continuum of art history" in de Kooning's work, noting the artist's respect for the "grand tradition of Western painting" and disinterest in modernist purity or in Clyfford Still and Barnett Newman's

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springboard for de Kooning, but their use was always intermingled with ongoing life, with "what happened to be around, what one naturally painted when one got up in the morning," as he commented to Rodman in the same conversation.[289]

Of all the extant work by de Kooning, very little overtly recalls his experience at the Academy. Yet I posit that every work we know from the mid-1930s to the end of his career in some way bears its influence. The works of his youth, made in the mid-1920s, aim in a different direction, but one that was also fruitful for his later development. These works will be introduced in Chapter 8, after an account of important intervening experiences.

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belief in creating art anew.

[289]Rodman, "Willem de Kooning," 103.

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CHAPTER 4

BERNARD ROMEIN

In 1920, while he was still attending evening classes at the Academy, de Kooning left the Gidding firm and became the assistant of Bernard Romein (1894-1962), then a young artist whose freelance business in advertising had begun to expand.[1] Romein, an important figure in de Kooning's youth, was an artist of wide-ranging talents, a refined sensibility, and considerable development over a forty-year career as a commercial artist, painter, sculptor, and teacher of design. He is virtually unknown in his native Netherlands because he accepted a teaching post in Dublin in 1938, and little-known in Ireland as well since he did not participate in the Irish art world.[2]

Twice, Romein's later professional path coincided with that of de Kooning, but the younger man seems not to have known it. At the New York World's Fair of 1939-40, where a

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[1]Most accounts place the year as 1920 and de Kooning's age as sixteen; Hess, 1959, 113; Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History." An exception is Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh, De Kooning (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 70, who write, "In 1919 apprenticed to the painter Bernard Romein."

[2]Rotterdam artist Klaas van de Erve kindly investigated on my behalf in 1985 and learned from Dutch colleagues that Romein had taught in Ireland; I wish to acknowledge my gratitude for this first positive step in my research on Romein.

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painting designed by de Kooning covered the exterior of the Hall of Pharmacy, six panels by Romein were exhibited in Ireland's Cultural and Historical Pavilion. And in 1953-54, Romein entered three paintings in the São Paulo Biennial,[3] the same exhibition in which ten paintings by de Kooning were included with the group organized by the Museum of Modern Art to represent the United States.[4] Romein presented his paintings as an individual from Ireland, and they were exhibited with works by twenty-one other artists from various countries in the Estrangeiros Espontâneos (Unaffiliated Foreigners) section.

De Kooning's Recollections

To judge from de Kooning's surviving works of the period, Romein may be the single most important mentor of his youth in Holland. As will be noted later, his influence may extend even to works made in the United States. In verbal comments as well, de Kooning has credited Romein highly, and beyond the making of art; his earliest recorded account was to Martha Bourdrez in 1950:

> Bernard Romein . . . had a terrific influence in my life. He was like a rebel and through him I got to know the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Piet Mondrian and Walt Whitman.[5]

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[3]São Paulo, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, II Bienal do Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, 1953-54, 52, nos. 24-26.

[4]Ibid., 148-49, nos. 11-20.

[5]Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8.

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In 1985 a conversation of his youthful employment led de Kooning to say of Romein,

> Oh, he was marvelous. I learned a lot from him. The other place [Giddings'] was just a nice place, it was decent but nothing to rave about. But Romein was a special person.[6]

De Kooning was apparently one of several applicants for the job with Romein. He was chosen, he recalled, for his helpful attitude: [I had] "no chip on my shoulder, I was polite. . . . The others were too cocky."[7] For at least a year while working for his new employer, Willem continued with evening classes at the Academy. Romein encouraged this and may even have urged him not to abandon his studies.[8] "He thought I was the cat's meow, to be a student and learn, you know, and to help him."[9]

Based on conversations with de Kooning, Hess described Romein's work as "directing the painting of signs and making of displays for a large department store."[10] That department store was the Cohn Donnay & Cie, Warenhuis on the Korte Hoogstraat 1a, known rather generically as Het

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[6]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[7]Idem, interview by author, 2 March 1983.

[8]De Kooning and some other students "walked out [of the Academy] because we found jobs. . . . He thought I should go to the Academy"; idem, interview by author, 27 January 1983.

[9]Idem, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[10]Hess, 1959, 113.

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Warenhuis (Department Store) (fig. 98).[11] The tasks de Kooning mentioned as part of his job included cleaning and making order in Romein's studio, making deliveries, and "making price tickets . . . and show cards" for the store windows.[12]

The ten-year age difference between de Kooning and Romein caused him to refer to his employer as "an older man," and then explain, "he wasn't old, but he was already in the world."[13] The two got along well. De Kooning recalled Romein's sense of humor: he himself might be exasperated with some work that wasn't going well and Romein would laugh and put matters into perspective.

> He had a marvelous sense of humor. He was always, when anything went haywire for me, you know, like that, he used to come in smiling and be very happy. And so I have to go along for a while and see what I can do about it, you see? . . . He was very serious but he also had a marvelous sense of humor and so it was always a pleasure for me to help him. . . . that's why

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[11]This store meets descriptions given by Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, Romein's niece, Koos Lassooy, Gerrit Randolfi, and Klaas van de Erve. According to an article on file in the Rotterdam Gemeentearchief, conveyed to me by Saskia Graver, the store opened in April 1894 and closed in 1926 when the building was bought by De Galerij; that company was taken over the next year by the owners of De Bijenkorf, and the store became a branch of the Hema stores in 1927; the building was destroyed in World War II and rebuilt in the same location in 1953.

[12]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 28 October 1984. In the 1980s he still referred to water-based tempera paints as "show-card colors"; Tom Ferrara, telephone interview by author, 12 March 1995.

[13]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 28 October 1984.

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> I could work very hard because he kept going so nice.[14]

Romein would chuckle, too, de Kooning recalled, at his assistant's lack of refinement, probably finding Willem's cultural background at odds with his talent and tastes.

> He thought I was a crackpot, no, not a crackpot, but he couldn't help laughing, . . . I [was] not refined, you know what I mean.[15]

Nico Benschop, a Rotterdam artist born in 1907 who worked freelance for Unilever and who knew Romein only through his art work, for which he had a high regard, provided a different view of Romein's sensitivity, culled from the gossip of a small art community. Benschop described Romein as "a difficult type of man, very nervous; he couldn't stand interruption." There was something "vulnerable" about him; he was not one for "friendship in general."[16]

Almost every time Romein's name occurred in conversations in 1983-1985, de Kooning offered, "I learned a lot from him." Asked to describe what Romein taught him, he considered, "It's very hard to say, those things. Because,

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[14]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985. Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos also spoke of her uncle's sense of humor: "He could tell very good stories, you would always laugh; [the stories were] about his life, he saw it the humorous way"; interview by author, 1 May 1986, Rotterdam.

[15]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 28 October 1984.

[16]Nico Benschop, interview by author, 4 May 1985, Rotterdam.

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first of all, you have to know one another very much." He alluded to the "things prepared" by Romein and said, "I could ask questions." The teaching that Romein offered was like "just walking next to him," rather than a didactic situation. This prompted a query about going to look at art shows. "At art shows, yes, and books, like German books where they had marvelous artists, outstanding artists in Germany."[17] Romein took de Kooning to art exhibitions in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam.[18] To his own young assistant in the 1980s, De Kooning spoke specifically about Romein taking him to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.[19]

De Kooning described Romein as happy enough to work for the department store--"he really didn't mind working for this outfit"--but also as having "a much more romantic feeling." At one point he remembered him as "a very good painter" and mentioned his sculpture as well,[20] while on another occasion he explained,

> He wasn't like a terrific painter, he wasn't in that direction, you see. But he had to know a lot about [it] so it goes his direction. . . . He had a lot of, how can I say it, like a lot of things up his sleeves, you know. He wasn't smart alecky. . . . He was quite influenced by different schools but it wasn't because

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[17]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[18]Idem, interview by author, 15 February 1983.

[19]Tom Ferrara, telephone interview by author, 12 March 1995.

[20]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 28 October 1984.

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> he didn't know what to do, he just wanted to take a good look at everything.

De Kooning affirmed that Romein made works that were very different from one another, "and he was very wonderful about figuring that out," and that he knew a lot about commercial art "and other art too." He mused,

> He was a remarkable man . . . I never knew what became of him. . . . He could have come here too, or France or Germany. . . . It would be very nice for me to know what he does.

De Kooning worked for Romein for "quite a few years, on and off."[21] He also worked freelance, "on my own account" as he described it in a letter of 1924, garnering more such employment as time progressed.[22] The greatest contact between Romein and de Kooning would thus have been between approximately 1920 to 1923, with a hiatus during the young man's 1924 sojourn in Belgium; it is likely that the two remained in communication with each other through 1926 when de Kooning left the Netherlands.

Background, Training, and Early Career

Johannes Bernardus Romein's family background had a good deal in common with that of de Kooning's, including emotional distress, loss of a parent, and financial struggle. He was born in 1894, ten years before de Kooning,

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[21]Idem, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[22]Willem de Kooning, letter to [Van Genechten firm], Brussels, [ca. 1924], Private collection. The full text of this letter will be given in Chapter 7.

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in Hillegersberg, then a small community north of Rotterdam. He was the eleventh and last child of a carpenter who became a builder.[23] The father earned a good living but squandered it on women; poor management of his affairs necessitated a move in May 1898 to Rotterdam, to the same neighborhood, the Noorden, in which de Kooning was born. In December 1907, the same year in which Bernard completed his middle school education, and shortly after his thirteenth birthday, his mother died suddenly of a heart attack. It was she who had always encouraged his interest in drawing, for which there were no noted precedents within the family.

At that time, when "still a boy," his niece recalled, Bernard worked as a housepainter, "to earn a living for his study of art."[24] Thus Romein's professional path began as de Kooning's did. While studying at the Academy, Romein experienced difficulties in his home life. During this period the older children of the family left the household, leaving only Bernard (and possibly another) at home with "no support to his talent."[25] Romein remained close to his

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[23]Information on Romein's early family life is drawn from the family card of his father, Cornelis Romein, born Hillegersberg 24 January 1860, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam and from correspondence and conversation with his niece, Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, who was born in 1915. The number of children in the family according to Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos was eleven; only ten are recorded on the family card.

[24]Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, interview by author, 1 May 1986.

[25]Idem, letter to author, 18 November 1985.

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eldest sister Adriana who had left the household when he was fifteen and she may have been an important source of encouragement to him in these years.[26] After his father's remarriage in 1910, shortly before he turned sixteen, Bernard apparently received no further support from him, although, with two exceptions, he was listed on his father's family card in the population register until 1925. The family thought of Bernard as a self-made man.

Romein was hardworking and serious about his choice of career. At some time in his youth he wore his hair rather long as an indication of his poetic inclinations and encountered teasing because of it. A photograph from about 1917 shows him in long hair, cape, and sandals painting a landscape in a field.[27] This interest in the fine arts, most likely influenced by the Hague School, was to shift toward the graphic and applied arts, at least as a means of making a living.

Romein is first listed in the annual Reports of the Academy as promoted from the third to the fourth Class of the evening course of study in the spring of 1909, in the division of *Handteekenen*. A classmate was Piet den Besten who would later make wall paintings for the Tuschinsky

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[26]Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos is her daughter; she observed that Bernard continued to visit Adriana as if she were his mother.

[27]Photograph in the possession of Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, the source of this information. The painting is hidden from view.

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theaters. After two years Romein appears in the annual Report as promoted to the sixth Class, and the following year, in the spring of 1912, as promoted to the seventh Class.[28] The next documentation we have of Romein's education at the Academy is five years later when he received Diploma A, for the L.O. (*lagere onderwijs*) degree, enabling him to teach art in elementary schools. In May 1918, a year after receiving the teaching diploma, Romein is listed as promoted to the seventh Class in the division of *Handteekenen*, a repetition of his status six years earlier.[29] At this time, Willem de Kooning had just turned fourteen and was promoted from the first to the second Class. Johanna Geul, Romein's future wife, was half-way through the seventh Class. Jacob Jongert would begin teaching at the Academy the following September. Romein was twenty-three. It is his last appearance in the Academy annual Report.

Romein could have attended classes at least in the 1918-19 academic year and possibly in the next year, for the seventh Class took two years. He probably met Jongert at

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[28]Verslag der Academie over 1908-09; and for the years 1910-11; 1911-12. It would seem that Romein completed the first three Classes in one year, but it is likely that as a somewhat older student he entered in the third Class.

[29]Verslag der Academie over 1916-17 (1917): 31; fellow recipients of the L.O. certificate were G. P. H. Schuitema, the noted graphic designer, and Adrianus van der Plas, mentioned later in this chapter. Verslag der Academie over 1917-18 (1918): 36.

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this time although most likely he did not have him as a teacher,[30] for Romein is never listed for any of the Classes in the division of Decorative and Applied Arts, even though this is the area that he would pursue for his career.[31] He did continue his education for teaching: among his papers is a certificate to teach calligraphy (*schoonschrijven*) in secondary schools dated August 14, 1919.[32] Since Romein's work for Het Warenhuis caused him to seek an assistant by 1920, he could not have finished the full course of study at the Academy. Kooning did not know him through the Academy, although his discussion of Romein included the comment, "And he knew the good teachers in the Academy, too."[33] Romein kept up a constructive relationship with officials at the school; he was asked to design the menu cover for the dinner celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Academy in 1926.[34]

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[30]Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos knew Jongert's name, so he may have figured in family conversations.

[31]In 1913-14 a "J. Romijn" was promoted to the second Class in this division, not proceeding further in later years; it is unlikely that this was the same Romein who is consistently listed in the annual Reports as "J. B. Romein."

[32]My record of this degree is inadequate to explain it further; the present location of the Romein documents is now unknown to me.

[33]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[34]The drawing, dated 9 October 1926, was in Romein's estate and sold at Sotheby's Amsterdam, sale #453, 6-8 April 1987, lot no. 334.

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Like many Dutch artists, Romein and his wife kept portrait photographs of their teachers. Johannes Heyberg, Sara Heyberg-Ledeboer, Herman Mees, Simon Miedema, and Alexander Henri Robert van Maasdijk figured in their pantheon.[35] In later years Mrs. Romein spoke about van Maasdijk, whose easel was in her possession, Heyberg, and Mees.[36]

Miedema taught sculpture; on the back of his photograph is written, "leermeester van Bernard" (teacher of Bernard). Three further photographs exist of his work, respectable figural groups not a day beyond the nineteenth century in sensibility, hardly surprising since Miedema began teaching at the Academy in 1880. It is not clear what portion of his studies Romein devoted to sculpture or when he did so. He left a number of undated sculptures that will be discussed below.[37]

Van Maasdijk (1856-1931) may have been important to both the Romeins. He taught figure drawing from the nude,

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[35]Heyberg and Mees have been introduced in Chapter 2. The photos of Mees are newspaper clippings, as is one of Ferd. G. W. Oldewelt, Head Master of the Academy. Oldewelt taught painting and thus may have been Miss Geul's teacher, or perhaps he is included as an esteemed figure even though neither had studied with him.

[36]Ann Zwart-Jonkers, interview by author, 4 May 1986.

[37]The arrangement of the course of study after 1914 (the time when Romein's name is not listed in the annual Reports, until 1917 and 1918) would require a student to select sculpture from his very first year and to devote a portion of each year's work to modeling.

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and thus students would encounter him in the seventh and eighth Classes.[38] In his long tenure at the Rotterdam Academy--almost forty years starting in 1883--he taught several generations of Rotterdam artists, who held him in high regard. When Bernard set up his business studio sometime before December 1925 it was in the same building as the elder teacher's.[39] Van Maasdijk, who was born in Brussels, attended the Academy there, worked in Düsseldorf and Genoa, and was appointed to the Rotterdam Academy when still in his twenties, having achieved considerable success with his detailed paintings of literary and historical subjects. Just at that time, however, the sensibility of the Dutch public was beginning to accept the quite different aesthetic of the Hague School; and a large canvas on which van Maasdijk had staked his career, Cardinal Mazarin introducing the painter Le Brun to Louis XIV, proved inadeqate to his expectations when exhibited beside canvases of the Maris brothers and Breitner. He passed on his bitter lesson to his students, according to Leo Ott, biographer of Hendrik Chabot: "I was behind the times. Keep in mind that

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[38]Van der Plas, Adrianus van der Plas, 11-12.

[39]Address given in Johannes Bernardus Romein, born Hillegersberg 27 November 1894, Family card, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam; Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1925, has no listing under Romein but the name of van Maasdijk is among those at that address. Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos knew the name van Maasdijk and at first recalled that he and her uncle shared the atelier, then recollected that there were two ateliers on one floor. A sublet would explain the Adresboek data.

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as an artist you must never take a retrospective view, you must always look forward."[40] Commentaries on the 1931 posthumous exhibition of his works noted the tragic aspect of a painter whose considerable abilities and high aspirations had not come together either with the changing times or in first-rate work. Dirk Hannema, director of the Boymans Museum and author of the 1931 catalogue introduction, characterized van Maasdijk as living in a "literary-historical world." In later years a religious sentiment came to the fore in his work. His students found him a splendid draftsman and held his instruction and integrity in high regard.[41] In 1940 an art critic facing several hundred paintings, sculptures, and graphic works in an exhibition of Rotterdam artists pondered if one could identify a specifically Rotterdam trait, and suggested that van Maasdijk may have provided a common leavening, alluding to his students as "pioneers in a certain direction that made a place in its work for the so-called social

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[40]Ik achterliep. Onthoud dit wel: als kunstenaar mag je nooit terugzien, je moet altijd vooruit kijken; Ott, Chabot, 30.

[41]Cornelis Veth, "A. H. R. van Maasdijk: Een Kunstenaarstragedie," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten 10, no. 4 (1933): 114; "een litterair-historische wereld," Hannema's words cited ibid., 108; P. K[oomen], "Rotterdam: Alexander Henri Robert van Maasdijk," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten 8 (1931): 185-187. Ott, Chabot, 29-30, discusses van Maasdijk as a teacher.

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element."[42]

In the interval between Romein's two promotions to the seventh Class, he departed from Rotterdam to live in Arnhem and The Hague, in the first for four months when he was eighteen, and in the latter for two years when he was twenty and twenty-one. Family stories do not flesh out these notations in the population register, but we learn from it that Romein's trade was listed as lithographer upon his return from Arnhem at the end of 1913.[43] Between February 1915 and January 1917 he is listed as living in The Hague, a displacement that may be related to war mobilization or to a job. He did manage to receive the teaching diploma from Rotterdam by the spring of 1917.

Romein was fortunate to meet a sympathetic friend at the Academy who became his wife in November 1926. Johanna

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[42]Pioniers van een bepaalde righting, welke aan het zoogeheeten sociale element een plaats in het werk inruimde; A. Glavimans, "Rotterdam Beeldende Kunstenaars," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten 17, no. 8 (1940): 195. Among van Maasdijk's students were H. F. Bieling, H. Chabot, J. J. van Heel, and A. M. van der Plas. By the time Klaas van de Erve entered the Rotterdam art world, van Maasdijk seemed unimportant, and I could elicit no characterization of the former teacher from him.

[43]He departed for Arnhem 13 August 1913 and returned to his father's household 29 December 1913, with his trade listed as lithographer; Cornelis Romein, Family card. The notation "(beltoeg)" appears beside the date of departure; it may refer to taxation or military service. The possiblity of military duty was doubted by Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos because there was a quota per family and Bernard was the youngest of many. Joop M. Joosten knows of no appropriate school of lithography in Arnhem; Romein may have acquired the professional status earlier in Rotterdam.

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Hendrika Geul was enrolled in the evening classes from 1914, earning promotion to the eighth Class in the spring of 1919.[44] Miss Geul and her family--her father was a businessman who made a comfortable living--provided important encouragement for Romein. Her background included the privilege of good schooling in literature and music as well as the instruction at the Academy. Throughout their life together, Romein and his wife shared interests and kept a close society. They "read the world literature, travelled, were interested in culture and science."[45] In later years, their interests in music and literature were manifested in collections of musical recordings and books. By 1948 their collection included such art objects as sixteenth-century Persian pottery, Dutch East Indian Wayang puppets, Egyptian and African sculpture, Austrian and Dutch ceramics and glassware, modern Russian puppets, fine rugs, and early posters and play-bills.[46] Romein's niece, who became re-acquainted with the couple and then with his widow in the early 1960s, said that they were interested "in all things political and religious." Mrs. Romein "knew much about the Middle East and East, especially China, so it must

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[44]Verslag der Academie over 1913-14; and reports for 1914-15; 1915-16; 1916-17; 1918-19.

[45]Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, letter to author, 18 November 1985. Other information on Johanna Geul's background from idem, interview by author, 1 May 1986.

[46]"An Irishman's Diary," The Irish Times, 1 June 1948, clipping in Romein estate.

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have been the interest of my uncle too, philosophical and religious."[47] Close friends of her later years said that Mrs. Romein liked to talk about spiritual life, reincarnation, and the cabala.[48]

Among the books remaining from the Romeins' collection are two that were given as gifts during their years of courtship. One is inscribed, in translation, "1 June 1920 / To Ber / a flash and love in your loneliness."[49] The book reflects the spiritual interests of Johanna Geul, perhaps of Romein as well: it is a Dutch translation of essays by Prentice Mulford (1834-1891), Het Geheim des Levens (The Secret of Life).[50] Mulford's thought has been summarized

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[47]Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, letter to author, 18 November 1985; idem, interview by author, 1 May 1986. She described the philosophical periodical Bres to which Mrs. Romein subscribed as "zwevend" (ethereal; literally, floating). In another context, she noted that the couple had been vegetarians for a long time. In the population records, Rotterdam Gemeentearchief, it can be seen that Johanna Geul was from a Roman Catholic background; Romein's family is listed as Reformed Dutch (Protestant).

[48]Ann Zwart-Jonker and Nicolette Messaoud-Jonker, interviews by author, 16 April 1993.

[49]1 juni 1920 / Aan Ber / een flits & liefde in je eenzaamheid.

[50]Prentice Mulford, Het Geheim des Levens, essays, trans. B. Nolthenius-Mertens (Baarn: Hollandia Drukkerij, n.d.). Mulford was an American born in Sag Harbor, New York (coincidentally not far from de Kooning's later home in Springs); he set out for California as a belated gold-rusher in the 1850s, wrote humorous sketches on the West for newspapers, among them the Golden Era for which Bret Harte and Mark Twain also wrote, and converted to spiritualism in 1865, claiming to have communicated with departed spirits. He wrote thirty-six volumes on spiritualistic and theosophic science. Dorothy Ingersoll Zaykowski, Sag Harbor, The Story

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as follows:

> His doctrine was partly concerned with a theory of material and spiritual existence which embraced telepathy, spiritualism, and mental-healing in a sort of Neo-platonic synthesis, and partly given over to advice on how to realize the most on one's personality. It resembled Christian Science but contained no dogma; it anticipated the ideas of Frank Crane and M. Coué.[51]

For his friend's twenty-fifth birthday in January 1923, Romein gave a far more stolid book, a heavy volume on anatomy, but inscribed in elegant script, "From your Bernard." A volume suggesting Romein's interest in spiritual issues, inscribed "B. Romein," may have been in his possession when he employed de Kooning: a 1916 edition on cosmic symbolism by Sepharial (1864-1929).[52]

Although de Kooning may never have been aware that Bernard Romein read Prentice Mulford, he became entralled by another American writer to whom Romein introduced him, Walt

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of an American Beauty (Sag Harbor, New York: Sag Harbor Historical Society, 1991), 201-203; Joseph A. Sullivan, "Aftword," in Prentice Mulford's Story, California Relations, no. 35 (Oakland, California: Biobooks, 1953), 143-145.

[51]Franklin Walker, ed., "Biographical Introduction," in Prentice Mulford's California Sketches (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1935), xxi.

[52]Sepharial, Cosmische Symboliek (Amsterdam: Uitgeversmaatschaapij de Toekomst, 1916). An English edition of this book (Santa Fe, N.M.: Sun Publishing Company, 1981) has as subtitle, "Being a discussion and exposition of some recondite and obscure points in the art of the kabalists, the mysteries of sound, form and number, and the basic principles of cosmic symbolism," and credits the author as also writing A Manual of Occultism, The Kabala of Numbers, Kabalistic Astrology, A New Manual of Astrology, Second Sight, and others. The Romein books are now owned by family friends of Mrs. Romein in the Netherlands.

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Whitman. "To read the poets, Jeez, that's what I couldn't figure out except by Mr. Romein."[53]

Along with Walt Whitman, de Kooning was impressed by Romein's interest in the American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright:

> He spoke already about Frank Lloyd Wright and people like that, American people they never knew in Holland before. . . . When I was working for him he had that idea of Frank Lloyd Wright the architect and different men, I forget now, but they were very famous in the world, you know. Writers and painters. And he knew a lot about it. He didn't even know English. He had no schooling for English, but he had ways of translating it. He was a very remarkable man.[54]

In these comments, one senses de Kooning's youth and his capacity for appreciation of literature, ideas and art. His early awareness came through the mediation of another--and his most esteemed mentor was clearly Romein--rather than through the education to discover the cultural world on his

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[53]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985. De Kooning's interest in Walt Whitman will be discussed in a further study.

[54]Ibid. Wendingen 4, no. 11 (1921) featured the work of Frank Lloyd Wright with an introductory essay by Berlage and 22 illustrations; Wendingen 7, nos. 3-9 (1925) were devoted to Wright with more than 200 illustrations and texts by Wright and others in English, French, and German. The seven issues were republished in H. Th. Wijdeveld, ed., Frank Lloyd Wright: The Life-Work of the American Architect Frank Lloyd Wright with Contributions by Frank Lloyd Wright, an Introduction by Architect H. Th. Wijdeveld and Many Articles by Famous European Architects and American Writers (Santpoort, Holland: C. A. Mees, 1925); this volume was republished as Frank Lloyd Wright et al., Frank Lloyd Wright: The Complete 1925 "Wendingen" Series, with a new introduction by Donald Hoffmann (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992). Before de Kooning knew Romein, Wright's interiors were discussed in Jan Wils, Wendingen 2, no. 6 (1919): 14-15.

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own.

Another important cultural discovery that came through Romein was the Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky, then going through a high point of esteem among younger Dutch intellectuals.[55]

The location of Romein's studio when de Kooning first started working for him is not recorded; it could have been in Het Warenhuis. Romein is entered in the population registers as remaining in his father's household until 10 December 1925; on that date his residence, and also place of work, is given as Noordblaak 21b, a location in the center of the city and right on the harbor, especially invigorating because "in those days," Mrs. van Wijngaarden recalled, "you could see and smell the products." He is listed as *kunstschilder*--painter in the fine-arts sense--and lithographer.[56] A business card (fig. 99) exists with this address: it informs us in a Gothic typeface that Romein worked as a "Restorer of Old Paintings / Miniatures" and in smaller print that he could undertake the "maintenance of

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[55]Tom Ferrara, interview by author, 12 March 1995, was clear from his conversations with de Kooning that Romein told the young man about Dostoevsky. Rudolf Jans, Tolstoj in Nederland (Bussum: Uitgeverij Paul Brand N.V., 1952), 124. De Kooning's interest in Dostoevsky will be the subject of a future study.

[56]Johannes Bernardus Romein, Family card; Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, interview by author, 1 May 1986.

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collections."[57] Thus, while his work as a window dresser and advertising artist came to provide his main support, he also pursued more traditional crafts related to the fine arts as a means of income. In the same building as this studio was that of A. H. R. van Maasdijk, Romein's former teacher at the Academy, who had retired around 1921.[58]

Among Romein's clients was Joseph Bood, owner of a store in the Weste Wagenstraat, in the shopping area near Het Warenhuis. During an annual promotion called Winkelweek (Store Week) in November 1925, the Bood store windows were praised above all others in the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, with a special nod to Romein's mannikins and masks. Romein designed the decorations for the street as well, triumphal arches painted in fresh colors with strings of electric lights.[59] Bood was sufficiently pleased with Romein's work to send samples of printed materials designed by him to De Reclame (Advertising) magazine for review. The mention in March 1926 found evidence of "spirit and fantasy," and in the next issue Romein was included in a

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[57]Restaurateur van Oude Schilderijen / Miniaturen / onderhouden van collecties. The card has the street number as 21, not 21b. Romein stayed at this address until June 1929. When Willem was about seven years old, he and his family had lived near this address.

[58]Scheen, Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars, gives a retirement date of 1920; Verslag der Academie over 1920-21 (1921): 34-35, lists him as a teacher for that academic year.

[59]"De Winkelweek Weste Wagenstraat," Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 13 November 1925, clipping in RKD.

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list of eight Dutch advertising artists recommended by the magazine, described by Peter Karstkarel in retrospect as "one of the most distinctly Art Déco publications in our country."[60]

Romein became successful and very busy, his niece recalled. As a girl of ten she visited this studio with her mother, Bernard's sister Adriana. "He wore a working coat and his hair was a little long." Mrs. van Wijngaarden also recalled of her uncle that, "although he had the advertising work, what he liked most was to make paintings." In so far as she can remember, the paintings were "abstract." It is hard to transpose that word of an adult in 1986 to the experience of a ten-year-old in 1925; it is somewhat more helpful to know that she didn't understand her uncle's work, except for the books and calendars that he designed. Her mother had similar feelings; Adriana and Bernard did not speak about art because when she visited the studio, "she found the art awful, too modern."[61]

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[60]Geest en fantasie; "Fa. Jos. Bood, Rotterdam," De Reclame 5, no. 3 (March 1926): 149; "Adressen van Nederlandsche Reclame-Kunstenaars," De Reclame 5, no. 4 (April 1926): 236. Een van de duidelijkste art déco-uitgaven in ons land; Peter Karstkarel, De reclame door Jan Rotgans, Piet van der Hem en Jan Wijga (Franeker, Netherlands: 't Coopmanshûs Museum, 1976), 10.

[61]Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, interview by author, 1 May 1986. Regarding Romein's interest in the "free" versus the applied arts, a younger Dutch graphic designer who knew him in the 1950s in Dublin wrote, "The consideration of fine arts and applied arts as different was to him of no consequence and like a Renaissance man, he had the ability to apply himself in so many different ways that this, in my

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Works before 1926

The "modern" paintings recalled by Romein's niece may or may not have been made before 1926, when de Kooning left Holland. Of the several hundred surviving works, few are dated and some of the earliest, from 1912 to 1921, appear to have been assigned dates--sometimes two different dates--retrospectively.[62] Several drawings signed and dated 1921 and 1922 offer a stylistic guide to the period in which de Kooning was associated with Romein. Closely related to these works are a number of undated drawings and a group of calendar drawings from 1927.

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opinion became a handicap rather than a help"; Jan de Fouw, letter to author, 13 April 1991. Dr. John Turpin, Director, National College of Art and Design, Dublin, letter to author, 4 March 1991, kindly forwarded me to Mr. de Fouw.

[62]Except for advertising drawings in the archives of the Nederlandsche Gist- en Spiritusfabriek, Delft and of Calvé, Delft, and the occasional poster in design collections of museums and archives, my knowledge of Romein's oeuvre comes from works--and papers--assembled by the artist and his widow. This considerable body of works has now been rather widely dispersed. Several works remain with family friends in the Netherlands. A number are in the Gemeentemuseum Helmond, Netherlands; see Annemieke Hogervorst, Mens en Werk: Catalogus van de collectie van het Gemeentemuseum Helmond (Helmond, Netherlands: Gemeentemuseum Helmond, 1990), 125-35, nos. 221-40. Most were sold at auction by Sotheby's Amsterdam, 6-8 April 1987, sale #453, lots no. 300-380. Of these, twenty-seven works are in Japan; see Nobuko Hitomi, Bernard Romein (Kiryu City, Japan: Okawa Museum of Art, 1990). There are designs for postage stamps in the Postmuseum, The Hague; see Christiaan de Moor, Postzegelkunst (The Hague: Staatsbedrijf der Posterijen, Telegrafie en Telefonie, 1960), 121-23. Klaas van de Erve first made contact with the NGSF archive on my behalf and looked for Romein's work in other locations as well. Joop M. Joosten gave invaluable guidance in finding Romein's heirs.

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Many of the works dated prior to 1926 seem to be related to literary or Biblical themes; some may have been commissioned for playbills or posters. Two vertical drawings offer bearded figures in long robes designated as designs for Sophocles's Oedipus the King (figs. 100 and 101); they are each signed and dated, respectively, 16 and 22 November 1921.[63] Teiresias, the blind seer, bears his knowledge with downcast looks, one hand at his mouth as if to withhold the explanation demanded by Oedipus, the other at his side bent in tense reflection, a man pondering fate. The clenched fist of his pendant Oedipus focuses the indignant pique of the regal, yet-unaware protagonist. Taut pencil lines accomplish definition of form with a whisper of shading in one area only, the circular arc of Teiresias's bald cranium, an idiosyncratic depiction that recurs in de Kooning's early drawings. Romein here pairs Neo-classical clarity with a craggy, nervous direction to his lines.

In another early drawing by Romein (fig. 102) a bearded man in a short, generic chiton, staff at his feet, gestures in an elemental landscape to a sweeping sky delicately heightened by tonal wash; one thinks of Demosthenes or Lear

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[63]On lower right of front mats of each, in pencil, is written: "ONTWERP VOOR HET TREURSPEL 'ODIPUS' DOOR SOPHOCLES" (design for the tragedy "Oedipus" by Sophocles). On the verso of the upper mat of the man with head turned to his shoulder is: "Odipus 16 nov 1921 / Bernard Romein"; there is no lower mat for this drawing. On the verso of the lower mat of the man with his hand on his chin is written: [difficult to read: Teires] "ias / 22 nov 1921 Bernard Romein."

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or Oedipus's blind wanderings. Signed only "BERNARD," it may not relate to the Oedipus works, for it has been dated, on the back, 1916 and 1912.

An early Romein drawing is dated precisely to 19 July 1921 and titled, "The five kings of the Amorites hanging at the command of the *fozia*," (fig. 103).[64] This unusual subject is from the Book of Joshua 10:26, where the enemies of Israel are delivered to the Israelites and slain, as ordered by the Lord. The victorious display of the hanged kings is countered by a private world of inward tensions suffered by the foreground figure, presumably hidden from the multitude behind him. Symmetry and grandeur is instilled by abstract background arcs of graded values, created by ink wash over vertical, parallel pencil lines.

Such arcs are used as well in a drawing assigned to 1918 with the designation "jeugd werk" (work of youth)[65] that depicts two mourners and a dead man, conceivably but not necessarily Christ (fig. 104). In all of these works, the figures are rendered in line only, a treatment simplified to outer contours and judicious interior definition of musculature and garments; it is bold, firm and eloquently stylized. In all but the figures of Teiresias

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[64]De vijf koningen de Amorieten gehangen op bevel van fozia; the date and title are inscribed on the back of the drawing; the date "1916" is also written there, in another hand.

[65]Inscription on verso; signature "BERNARD" on recto.

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and Oedipus, background arcs insure that the emotive content of the figures' gestures pervades the full composition.

The backgrounds of these works and their portentous, dark subjects offer similarities to youthful works by two other Rotterdam artists with whom Romein attended classes at the Academy, themselves good friends and both students of van Maasdijk: Hendrik Chabot (1894-1949) and Adrianus van der Plas (1899-1974). Chabot, who would emerge in the 1930s as a major Expressionist painter, made a series of Symbolist, socially-engaged etchings around 1922 on the theme "Leven" (Life, fig. 105) in which similar arcs, nearly mandalas, enclose the central figures.[66] In a pastel drawing called De Boer (The Farmer) of 1922, van der Plas used more irregular, less centralized arcs in the upper background, some filled in with close-set parallel lines; and in his painted Pietàs of 1923 and 1924 rounded arcs illuminate the three crosses in the background landscape (figs. 106 and 107).[67] The oil Pietà was well-received at van der Plas's first exhibition late in 1923[68] and reproduced in Elsevier's magazine the following year; it was

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[66]Tol Collection, Chabot Museum, Rotterdam, where titled "Levensloop" (Course of Life); Ott, Chabot, 47-48, uses title "Leven."

[67]Van der Plas, Adrianus van der Plas, figs. 3, 8 and 9.

[68]At Zunstzaal Groenendaal 50, Rotterdam, October 1923; ibid., 19, and clippings in the possession of Riet van der Plas.

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praised there as,

> a modern Pietà, in which the emphasis was placed on lines and in which the meaning was to be sought in the linear rhythm, the expression, the atmosphere; in which the painting was kept flat and a new, not perspectival, spatial expression was sought and found.[69]

The modern quality of the intersecting arcs as used by van der Plas and Chabot may well be indebted to the Cubism of Lodewijk Schelfhout (fig. 108), widely exhibited in the Netherlands in the teen years and the subject of a 1921 monograph by German art historian F. M. Huebner.[70] The critic who discussed this Pietà in 1924 overlooked any such influence, as Romein probably did too, and went on to note that the youth of the day wanted something other than the spontaneous, broad, painterly handling of the Impressionists (i.e., the Hague School):

> in present day painting the constructive line [in which a decorative element may also be found] is the core of the design. Our foremost painters, van Konijnenburg, Toorop, Thorn Prikker, demonstrate this.[71]

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[69]Hier is een modern opgevatte Piëta, waarin nadruk gelegd werd op de lijnen, en waarbij in het lijnenrhythme, de uitdrukking, de stemming, de bedoeling werd gezocht; waarin de schildering vlak werd gehouden en een nieuwe,--niet-perspectivische--, ruimte-uitbeelding is gezocht en gevonden; A.O., "Adrianus van der Plas te Rotterdam," Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 34, no. 47 (1924): 363-64, pl. 24.

[70]Friedrich Markus Huebner, Lodewijk Schelfhout, Junge Kunst, no. 28 (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Bierman, 1921).

[71]Doch in deze lijnen . . . tevens het sierend element te vinden, zoo is ook in de schilderkunst van dezen tijd de constructieve lijn de kern van het ontwerp. Onze vooraanstaande schilders: Van Konijnenburg, Toorop, Thorn Prikker, bewijzen het; A. O., "Adrianus van der Plas," 364. This commentary argues for the esteem in which Symbolism was

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Certainly, a linear eloquence interested Romein. Even more notable in his work than the similarity of concerns with his contemporaries Chabot and van der Plas, is the influence of Johan Thorn Prikker, whose leaded glass designs have been discussed in relation to Jaap Gidding's. Although he had been working in Germany since 1904, Thorn Prikker continued to be a noted figure in Dutch art and was especially esteemed in Rotterdam. His large drawings on vellum of 1894, Le Moine Epique (fig. 109) and Le Moine Sauvage, were exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring late in 1918 in a group show of modern drawings.[72] Work exhibited in Utrecht was discussed in the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 10 October 1919, as well as in Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift.[73] H. P. Bremmer wrote on Thorn Prikker and published illustrations of his work in his periodical Beeldende Kunst in April 1920.[74] In October 1921 the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring showed forty-six

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still held in certain Dutch cultural circles as late as 1924.

[72]Tentoonstelling van Moderne Teekeningen, Aquarellen en Pastels, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 10 November - 8 December 1918, nos. 38 and 39, RKK archives, inv. no. 241; no. 37 was Thorn Prikker's Une Estampe.

[73]"'Voor de Kunst' te Utrecht," NRC, 10 October 1919; Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 29, no. 58 (1919): 425-27.

[74]Beeldende Kunst 7, no. 6 (1920): 50-60, figs. 41-48. These are Impressionist and Symbolist works from the 1890s, including Le Moine Epique, with one portrait from 1912, less influential upon Romein than the monumental fresco cartoons.

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works by Thorn Prikker, including fresco cartoons The Sower (1909, fig. 110), Cain and Abel (1909), and The Anchor Draggers (1911, fig. 290), the painting Adam and Eve (1911), the large fresco cartoon Saul and David (1912, fig. 111), and four early designs for murals for the Rotterdam Town Hall (ca. 1918-21, fig. 277), as well as fired and leaded glass windows, designs for textiles, and drawings.[75] It is the works in the 1921 exhibition that are the nearest to Romein's.[76] Gestures that are at once dramatic and meditative and linear partitions of musculature in the fresco cartoons seem to be emulated in the early drawings by Romein.

Curiously, de Kooning did not mention Thorn Prikker to Martha Bourdrez in 1950 when he spoke of Dutch artists whose work he had known during his years in Holland or, later on, to Thomas Hess. In 1985 he did recall, as noted earlier, "German books" with "outstanding artists in Germany" whose work he knew through Bernard Romein. Two such books may have been August Hoff's 1920 J. Thorn Prikker, published by the Cologne Kunstverein in which the Adam and Eve is

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[75]Tentoonstelling van Werken van J. Thorn Prikker, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 16 October - 6 November 1921, RKK archives, inv. no. 244. Joop M. Joosten generously shared his extensive information on Thorn Prikker to greatly augment what could be learned from the catalogue listing.

[76]I am not sure what similar works by Thorn Prikker would have been available to Romein before 1921; the 1918 competition for the Town Hall murals may have occasioned a viewing.

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illustrated, or Hoff's Die religiöse Kunst Johann Thorn Prikker's of 1924 with its many illustrations, including The Sower, the Anchor Draggers, and Saul and David, all of which were exhibited in Rotterdam in 1921.[77]

Romein's works dated 1922--three pencil drawings heightened with watercolor or gouache--are of contemporary subjects.[78] In addition to their reliance upon line, they resemble the work of Thorn Prikker in a curious trait: the especially large feet of the figures.

In one drawing a seated boy, head lowered, hands clenched, is lost in melancholic thought (fig. 112). His surround is a blank white wash that omits even a chair.

Dejection permeates the small drawing of two boys who stand in an undefined interior that looks out onto a series of smokestacks, many of which produce streaks of dark smoke (fig. 113). The spindly legs and hunched and wary posture of the elder boy, who cannot be more than ten, and the abject face of the younger call the viewer's attention to

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[77]August Hoff, J. Thorn Prikker (Cologne: Kunstverein, 1920); idem, Die religiöse Kunst Johann Thorn Prikker's. I thank Joop M. Joosten for a photocopy of the 1920 catalogue. Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985, commented on a reproduction of Thorn Prikker's work that he didn't remember seeing works like it when he was young. He then offered, "Maybe I did but I forget. Maybe I was looking at it without knowing what I was looking at." The Thorn Prikker reproduction in question was probably The Bride or an early work, not the works of the teen years that were more influential for Romein (in 1985 the author had not yet seen works by Romein).

[78]All are signed and dated on the front: "Romein / 1922."

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social issues: these children have been neglected in the wake of industrial practices. In fact, this drawing served as the basis for an undated poster design for "Pro Juventute," a charity organization devoted to children (fig. 114). The clearly legible yet elegant lettering recalls that of Jongert's posters of 1920, as do the vertical stripes of the side borders. The incisive linear treatment of the drawing of two boys is the same that Romein had used for his theatrical/literary early works but there are no grand curves to the postures or background. Instead, the design emphasizes horizontal and vertical directions--in the smoke and towers and in the youths' clothing.

The third drawing dated 1922 (fig. 115) shows grown men in a social plight. The Helmond Gemeentemuseum which now owns the work has chosen to call it, Tehuis voor daklozen (At home for the homeless).[79] The two men standing in the foreground, like the two boys in the other drawing, are of differing ages. Behind them other men mill about in an evening street, so identified by glimmers from a street lamp and windows of the building which closes the background.

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[79]Reproduced in Hogervorst, Mens en Werk, 125, no. 221. Annemieke Hogervorst, curator of the Helmond Gemeentemuseum, fax-letter to author, 28 February 1995, wrote that this undocumented title was in the inventory records when she began working at the museum. It is likely that the title was invented by previous staff members; the source of the drawing was the Romein estate, via three changes in ownership, so the title could not have been Romein's unless it were recorded on the work or on papers that made their way to the museum.

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While evictions for inability to pay rent were a frequent and degrading practice in Rotterdam in the early 1920s,[80] the theme would more appropriately be depicted with families and possessions. Perhaps Romein had in mind the problem of unemployment. Whichever the case, discontent mingled with helplessness marks these men. The men have not the pent energies of the boys: there is a shuffling activity that somewhat counters the overwhelming listlessness of the foreground faces. This small work may be a self-sufficient meditation on a social concern or a preparation for a more public presentation such as a political poster. Either way, it is made for slow and careful viewing of the dark-on-dark tonalities in which craggy highlights of hands and hollow-cheeked faces function in counterpoint to the plain geometry of the windows.

De Kooning recalled that Romein had his "own social ideas" and had a concern to "try to influence" others. This fleeting observation came in a conversation about de Kooning's decision not to continue his studies at the Academy; Romein, of course, provided the job that seemed more important than further study, but he also urged de Kooning to continue at the Academy.[81] Such urging may have

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[80]Romer, Rotterdam in de jaren twintig, 44-45. This subject will be discussed again in Chapter 8.

[81]"[We] walked out because we found jobs. Bernard Romein, not go the whole thing. A short guy. Own social ideas, try to influence. He thought I should go to the Academy"; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 27 January

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constituted a social concern, yet the subjects of these 1922 drawings suggest that de Kooning may have associated with Romein the kinds of social ideas in them. Such social views would have been consonant with Jongert's, who may even have been a source of commissions for Romein.[82]

One other surviving work by Romein is dated before 1926. It is a 1925 pencil and gouache drawing for the cover of a booklet of St. Nicholas and Christmas Songs (fig. 116).[83] Romein depicts the appropriate Dutch personages, St. Nicholas and his helper Black Piet, along with a row of sprightly elves in his incisive linear style. They stand on a low horizon before which hovers a still life of snow-laden holly branches and two candles, whose flames send vertical white and blue lines to the top of the composition. The elves are not customarily part of the seasonal repertoire; here they may reveal a latent influence of Walter Crane, an important figure in Dutch applied arts.

This Christmas songbook cover design is the one surviving work by Romein with a certain date before 1926 that makes use of color. Secondary colors, purple and

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1983.

[82]Jongert put his student Dirk Cornelis (Dick) Elffers in touch with artists and clients involved with social issues; Purvis, Dutch Graphic Design, 174.

[83]The full text on the cover, which is signed and dated, center left, "Romein / 1925," is: "18 ST. NICOLAAS & KERSTLIEDEREN / GEARRANGEERD DOOR C.A. WULFFRAAT / VOOR PIANO-VIOOL-HARMONIUM EN ZANG / OPUS 45 ..... PRIJS FL 0.90 / UITGAVE PH. HAKKERT JR. ROTTERDAM."

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green, occupy more space than the primary red and blue, the totality made crisp by the generous use of white and black. Everywhere the color is flat; it fills in the forms almost to the defining lines, leaving a space of lighter ground to function with the dark of the lines. Especially useful for dark forms, such as Zwarte Piet's hands, this "reserve" of ground around a telling line is a characteristic of some of de Kooning's drawings of the period, and even makes its way into de Kooning's one surviving oil painting of the 1920s.

The lettering on the songbook cover belongs to what may be called an Art Déco calligraphy, widespread during the period, yet never reaching adaptation to an esteemed typeface. It allowed for considerable inventiveness, as we see in Romein's spiral volutes. The solidly filled-in blocks of the letters are characteristic of markings possible with the Redis-pen, an implement that was just gaining widespread use in Holland in the early 1920s.[84] This modish lettering was never part of Jongert's graphic work.

From this period we also have a record of a work that Romein exhibited at the Jaarbeurs voor Kunstnijverheid (Industries Fair for Applied Arts) at the Stedelijk Museum,

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[84]M. W., "Artistiek Schrift," De Reklame 1, no. 9 (September 1922): 260-62.

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Amsterdam in November and December of 1919.[85] The title may have a relationship to literature: De Droomer, herinnering uit het leven recalls the subtitle of a short novel by Dostoevsky, published in the Netherlands in 1906 as Witte nachten: Sentimenteele roman (uit de herinneringen van een droomer).[86] The title is translated into English as White Nights: A Sentimental Story from the Diary of a Dreamer. Such a personal and literary title is somewhat out of place among the furniture by de Bazel and Berlage, clocks by Gispen, and stencilled floor runner by Schuitema. It might be an advertisement for a publishing house.

Comparisons with De Kooning's Later Work

Romein's 1922 drawings of the two boys and the unemployed men invite comparison with two of de Kooning's works which were made in New York over fifteen years later: the pencil drawing Self-Portrait with Imaginary Brother (fig. 117) and the large oil painting, Two Men Standing (fig. 118), both from about 1938. In all four works, the elder, taller person is on the left and two standing figures, stationary, stare forth in the general direction of

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[85]Jaarbeurs voor Kunstnijverheid (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1919), no. 65. The work was submitted by Romein himself, rather than by a company for whom the design was made.

[86]F. M. Dostojefskiej, Witte nachten: Sentimenteele roman (uit de herinneringen van een droomer), trans. Z. Stokvis, Bibliotheek van russische literatuur, no. 3-4 (Amsterdam: Maas & Van Suchtelen, 1906).

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the viewer. Romein's works, with factories and an urban street as backgrounds, are clearly meant to be understood within a social context. The people are types more than individuals. In the de Kooning works, background incident is almost eliminated. What remains in the oil painting is an unexplained piece of rumpled cloth on the floor and vague indications of an interior space that suggests the Pompeiian murals in the Metropolitan Museum of Art as much as any contemporary locale, be it artist's studio, factory, theater dressing room or store window. Like Romein's, though, these men by de Kooning seem to function as types more than as individuals. We are given more latitude to imagine their circumstance and thoughts, but are guided by the casual or workingman's clothing of the man on the left and the curious *déshabille* of his partner, as well as by the expressions of concern on their faces.[87] Whatever worries may beset them, they are upright and seem to have the inner resources to prevail.

In Self-Portrait with Imaginary Brother, a title given by owner Saul Steinberg and never changed by de Kooning, the issue of portraying an individual or a type seems enlarged to self-reflection and invention.[88] The postures

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[87]Sally Yard, conversation with author, late 1980s, said she couldn't get de Kooning to comment on the incipient skirt of the figure to the right, nor could I.

[88]Saul Steinberg, interview by author, 25 August 1993. Steinberg bought the drawing from de Kooning around 1946 and the title came about when he filled in the loan form for an

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of the two protagonists, with the differentiation in age and experience, even without the title, suggest a relationship of guidance and trust, not the issue in Romein's pairs.

Romein's images of two boys or men have not the meditative sweep of de Kooning's later use of this theme. Romein directed his concern to troubles that must be remedied from the outside with large societal changes, and did not tarry on the relationship between the two people. Nonetheless, these images may have had a place within the younger man's memory, sifted through time and experience and melded with other likely inspirations: Gorky's self-portraits with his mother, Picasso's Two Acrobats with a Dog of 1905, and the Le Nain brothers' extended families.[89] In the small sampling of de Kooning's works from Holland and Belgium, we do not find such a theme when a case could more readily be made for Romein's influence. Yet Romein's example as mentor could reverberate within the memory of the

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exhibition to which he lent the drawing. At that time Steinberg didn't know de Kooning had a half-brother. He is not sure he and de Kooning ever talked about the title. De Kooning so accepted the concept that in conversation with the author, 14 April 1981, he spoke of wanting to make some "imaginary portraits."

[89]On Gorky, see also Hess, 1972, 24; reproductions in Melvin P. Lader, Arshile Gorky, Modern Masters Series, 8 (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 29-35. The Picasso was exhibited in New York 15 November 1939 - 7 January 1940; Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Picasso: Forty Years of his Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1939), no. 31. This exhibition was noted by de Kooning to Sally Yard in 1976 as one of three pivotally influential one-person exhibitions; Yard, First Twenty-six Years, 14. The Le Nain brothers will be mentioned again in the Conclusion of this study.

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subject itself.[90]

Undated and Later Works Similar to Works of the Early 1920s

The works by Romein that have been discussed so far are those that assuredly belong to the period when de Kooning was in Holland. There are a number of undated drawings that relate closely in theme or style to these works. In addition, a calendar and book on calligraphy, both from 1927, are stylistically near to the works made before 1926. I should like to draw upon this expanded group as examples of the kinds of work with which de Kooning was acquainted, for they help to reveal affinities between the works of the youthful artist and Romein.

Among these undated works are a group of three drawings with watercolor made on commission for a performance of Grieg's Peer Gynt at the Amsterdam Opera Gebouw.[91] These

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[90]Tom Ferrara, telephone interview by author, 12 March 1995, based on his conversations with de Kooning, considered Romein as acting like an older brother to de Kooning, someone who took an interest in helping him out. Sally Yard, First Twenty-six Years, 54-55, suggests that the "composition of de Kooning's Self-Portrait with Imaginary Brother was prompted by Burckhardt's 1936 photograph of de Kooning standing next to, and slightly in front of his [own] early painting of a man," and that the "painted figure perhaps triggered for de Kooning a recollection of the father lost to him by circumstance." This observation only enriches the resonance that the memory of Romein's drawings may have had for de Kooning.

[91]Ann Zwart-Jonker, interview by author, 4 May 1986, learned this from Mrs. Romein. Correspondence with the Nederlandse Opera and the Netherlands Theater Institute has not turned up documentation or a likely date.

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works provide the nearest stylistic comparison, from the oeuvre of Romein or any other artist, to de Kooning's strongest surviving work of these years: a drawing of a worker's family that was left in Belgium around 1924; it will be discussed in Chapter 8. While these three works by Romein are more elaborately worked than those already discussed as "youth works," a smaller fourth drawing inscribed, "schets voor 'Peer Gynt'" (fig. 119), possibly a preliminary work for the group, is clearly related to the early drawings. The hand that the running Peer holds at his side turns in a gesture not unlike that of the 1921 Oedipus (fig. 101) and the line and wash treatment is near to that of the seated boy of 1922 (fig. 112).

The more finished three works represent Peer Gynt's meeting with Solveig, Peer's mother Aase looking for her son with a stick in her hand, and Peer standing before the Dovre King and an assembly of Troll Courtiers (figs. 120-122). The linear treatment of faces, hands, feet, trees, and draped clothing is crisp and fascinating in its gnarled and curving inventiveness. Coupled with the extreme clarity of line is an apparent abandonment to the liquid potential of the blue watercolor wash that fills in the ground. Romein's attentiveness to the nature of this material calls to mind the sensuously worked passages of Jongert's lithographic posters of 1920. Unless these drawings are preliminary studies Romein has not observed a primary tenet of Jongert

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and Roland Holst: for them it was important that the artist work the final stone or plate with his own hand. Romein seems to have missed this part of their aesthetic, although his training in lithography would have enabled him to follow it.[92]

The complicated flow of fabric in Aase's ill-fitting bodice, sleeves, and skirt deserve special note. They, or their equivalents, may be part of the heritage of de Kooning's curious clothing of the late 1930s, for instance in the Self-portrait with Imaginary Brother (fig. 117). In comparison, Romein's forms are assured and clear, distant cousins of classical drapery; de Kooning's forms are mysterious and inexplicable. There is no flowing contour line in the de Kooning; only delicate, sketchy strokes conjure forth the complications of fabric wrinkles.

Concerns for the circumstances of the worker in old-age are manifest in a poster design (fig. 123) in Romein's line-and-wash style at its most supple, with the wash now placed within the figure, just barely heeding the rigors of the linear network. The elderly man leans on a cane, itself seemingly supported by a host of small figures who turn out

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[92]Jan de Fouw, the Dutch graphic designer who knew Romein in the 1950s, letter to author, 13 April 1991, has written, "In his time (in Holland) reproduction and printing was autolithography, colours of artwork separated and worked on stone by craftsmen, not by the artist." De Kooning seems to have missed any sense of social altruism with regard to the medium of lithography; John MacMahon, interview by author, 15 May 1994; Tom Ferrara, conversations with author, early 1980s.

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to support instead a further figure intent upon cutting down the cane. Elegant traditional lettering, with admirable concision, protests that the old age law is seventy-five per cent bureaucracy, twenty-five per cent disability. Even more than the "Pro Juventute" poster with the two boys, this design greatly simplifies the decorative borders of Roland Holst and early Jongert while keeping the implicit architectural ordination, and expands the role and freedom of the figurative element.

Such social concerns and the style continue in a large drawing inscribed De Opstandigen (The Insurgents, fig. 124), in which six men in work clothes charge from right to left brandishing farm implements as weapons; in a now-tattered pendant with truncated inscription, . . . n Vernederd . . . (The Defeated, fig. 125), five men walk abjectly, left to right.[93]

An undated drawing meant to advertise a clearance sale also fits stylistically with the works of the early 1920s, as does another of workers carrying crates (figs. 126 and

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[93]The Helmond Gemeentemuseum owns De Opstandigen and dates it to 1924; Hogervorst, Mens en Werk, 125, no. 222. No date is inscribed on the drawing itself and the reason for the attribution is unknown to present curator Annemieke Hogervorst, fax-letter to author, 20 February 1995. The verso of . . . n Vernederd . . . has the drawing of a knight on it, possibly related to the 1939 commission for the Irish pavilion at the New York World's Fair. This latter title is a puzzle: the main word was probably "vernederden"; it is not clear what word ending in "n" could precede it; the older article "den" does not match the "de" used in De Opstandingen; my thanks to Agnes Bristel for language help.

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127). In both, the subject of worker, now employed and hard-working, is appropriate for the window of a Rotterdam or Delft department store. In the long horizontal composition, a train bellows black smoke in shapes like those in the drawing of two boys; in the other, puffy arcs of clouds set off the central triangle of figures. The lettering of "Opruiming" (Clearance) is in the style suitable to the Redis-pen, especially recommended for store-owners and window dressers in a contemporary periodical devoted to advertising.[94]

Romein used a blocky variation of the Redis-pen lettering for a calendar that he designed for the Nederlandsche Gist- en Spiritusfabriek in 1927 (figs. 128 and 129). The Delft company, which produced yeast for breadmaking and bulk alcohol for jenever, chose the theme "Eat Bread" for a calendar that covers the span of May 1927 to April 1928.[95] Each page has a slightly different arrangement of horizontal and vertical bands and blocks for borders, the calendar, and an illustration showing the use of bread in daily life. The illustrations are in the same crisp style used for the Christmas song book cover of 1925: defining black contours filled in with flat gouache strokes

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[94]M. W., "Artistiek Schrift," 260-62.

[95]The original drawings are in the archives of the present firm, Gist-Brocades N. V. I am grateful to archivist J. van Leeuwen for her kind assistance in showing Romein's work and to Klaas van de Erve for arranging the appointment.

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that leave reserve areas of the underlying middle tone, especially around the black lines. Sometimes lines within the illustration affirm the horizontal or vertical directions of the borders. In Chapter 8 similarities between the drawings for this calendar and a 1924 painting by de Kooning will be discussed.

Contemporary reviews praised the calendar, noting especially the "joyous, cheerful colors" and Romein's talent for color.[96] The color scheme gives priority to yellow, orange, cerulean blue, a deeper blue, green, and rose.[97] De Kooning, who never saw this particular set of drawings, often made use of a similar range of colors in the mid-1940s.

Romein served as "Reclame-teekenaar," or advertising draftsman, as he is credited on the title page with two other authors, for a 1927 booklet on modern applications of "cord writing" executed with the Redis-pen.[98] In addition

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[96]Blijde vroolijke kleuren; "EET BROOD!," Het Vaderland, March 1927, clipping in RKD. "Reclame-kunstkalender der Nederlandsche Gist- en Spiritus-fabriek," Dordrechtsche Courant, 19 April 1927, clipping in RKD.

[97]The ground is gray; siena and black often play a role in the borders.

[98]W. Hoogenboom, A. S. Moerman and Bern. Romein, Koordschrift: moderne toepassingen, geheel uitgevoerd met de Redis-pen (Rotterdam: W. L. and J. Brusse, 1927). It was cited as a new publication on 9 April according to an unidentified clipping in the RKD. The reviewer acknowledged the "modern effect" but found "these letters and these advertising examples . . . rather too superficial" (deze letters en deze reclame-voorbeelden wel wat te oppervlakkig aandoen).

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to diagrams for forming various letters, the book included twenty examples of price cards and advertising cards (figs. 130-135). Romein has wielded the pen to produce both blocky letters and gracefully sweeping script, and a variety of borders and images. The bubble forms so common to the period which have been noted in the work of Gidding and Jongert appear in an advertisement for housewares store "Woning" Sneeh on page fifteen (fig. 133).

When shown copies of these pages in 1985, de Kooning commented, "This is the applied arts in terms of business. You have to be very good." Asked if he himself made signs like these, he replied, "Yes I could make it." That interchange came when looking at page seventeen, "Tijdelijke Prijs" (Special Price, fig. 134). The advertisement on page twenty, "Zaanlandsche Zilversmeedery, De Fazant" (Zaanland Silversmiths, The Pheasant, fig. 135), elicited de Kooning's praise for the consonance of lettering and image: "That's nice letters, accordingly."[99]

Sculpture and a Further Undated Painting

Romein's "free" sculptures and paintings are undated and not easily placed within a chronology.[100] A group of

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[99]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 August 1985. Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985, recalled de Kooning making price cards with a Redis-pen on a quarter of the table in Marie's apartment.

[100]My time to become acquainted with this sizable body of work was limited. Dates were not readily found by the owners who helpfully conveyed whatever information they

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small sculptures and a single painting related to a De Stijl aesthetic may belong to the works made in Holland.

Among artists near Romein's generation who began their careers in Rotterdam, Herman Bieling (1887-1964) made sculptures in the early 1920s that somewhat resemble the plaster sculptures left by Romein. If the visual similarities imply similar dates, de Kooning's brief allusion to Romein's sculpture may mean that he saw works like those that survive (figs. 136-138). About four to ten inches in height, they are stylised renditions of figures that verge on abstraction: a head, a pair of standing draped and bearded figures, seated figures, all in rhythmically expressive postures. Planes meet in sharp angles that recall the linear precision of Romein's early drawings; knobby, curving forms are related to those of the seated boy of 1922, but the images are more abstract; larger planes catch the light in modulations like the shading that appears in the commercial work of the 1930s. A friend from Romein's later years recalled,

> A large collection, approx. 35 or 40 abstract plaster sculptures, about 6" high and mostly vertical, with green-bronze patina finish was kept in his studio but not one was ever (as far as I know) realised to the monumental scale they were intended. . . .
>
> His ideas about abstract art . . . were always concentrated on the 3-dimensional solid and interplay of angles and planes, never compared to the work of any

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could.

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other individual artist in discussion.[101]

It is Herman Bieling's sculptures of the early 1920s that suggest a time frame for Romein's works. Bieling made vertical heads of sharply contoured, swinging planes that were exhibited at De Branding shows at least as early as 1922, the time of the Rotterdam Academy location.[102] The Philosopher was reproduced in Jan Lauweriks's 1924 book on sculpture in the domestic and architectural environment.[103] Plastiek Monumental was illustrated in the De Branding exhibition catalogue of 1925/1926 (fig. 139), with showings at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1925 and Oude Postkantoor, Rotterdam, January 1926.[104] As in his

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[101]Jan de Fouw, letter to author, 13 April 1991. The sculptures from Romein's estate that I saw in 1986 were not painted.

[102]Brinkman, De Branding, 33-40, reproduces the catalogue for the De Branding exhibition held at the Academie van Beeldende Kunsten, Rotterdam 24-31 December 1922. Among sculptures exhibited by Bieling was no. 48, "de filosoof"; ibid., 37.

[103]Jan Lauweriks, Plastische Kunst in Huis, De toegepaste kunsten in Nederland, no. 4 (Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse, 1924), 11 and fig 27. Some of the titles of the sculptures of the 1922 De Branding show are listed in the De Branding catalogue for its exhibition of 25 December 1923 - 3 January 1924 held at a school on Goudschesingel, Rotterdam. A copy of this catalogue is in the library of Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. A sculpture similar to The Philosopher is recognizable in an installation photograph of that show in its later Utrecht venue; Brinkman, De Branding, 132.

[104]Brinkman, De Branding, 113. A bronze cast of this work is reproduced, ibid., 111, with the subtitle De Denker (The Thinker), 18 1/8 inches high. According to Leidelmeijer, Art Nouveau, 140, it was included in the Dutch entry to the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts

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woodcuts and paintings (figs. 139 and 140), in his sculptural work Bieling invested analytic Cubist planes with Expressionist vigor or introspection. Romein's surviving paintings and drawings bear no relation to Bieling's two-dimensional works.

One undated painting by Romein shows an interest in a different modern direction, the mature work of Mondrian and van Doesburg. It is the only one of its kind among the several hundred from Romein's estate.[105] Only sixteen inches square, it is easily recognized as an homage, but one which rings distinctive changes on the De Stijl aesthetic (fig. 141). Most notable is the use of shading from white to dark gray along some edges of the white planes, without the use of black lines, making the planes seem to hover in relief rather than remain rigorously flat. The shading and the softly brushed texture of the white paint contribute to the tender tranquility that emanates from the painting.

Any atmospheric or poetic gentleness in this work by Romein is held in check by the sharp edges of the rectangular shapes and especially by the two crisp black lines which meet at a right angle within the painting. The truncated intersection of these lines may be an original contribution to the asymmetrical rhythms sought by the De

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Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes.

[105]It is designated Red Square in the Sotheby's sale; lot no. 314, reproduced in color, p. 75.

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Stijl artists.[106] It is successful because the edges of the darkest plane, the blue, continue the directions of the black lines. Perhaps also necessary for the equilibrium of the work is the central placement of the red square on the left/right axis of the composition. Such a central emphasis was theoretically shunned by Mondrian because it might have the effect of a vanishing point in perspective.[107] In Romein's use, this red plane anchors a pinwheel action.

De Stijl painting offered precedents for this small painting before de Kooning left the Netherlands in 1926. A work by van Doesburg, Composition in Gray, 1919 (fig. 142) incorporates shading, but concentrated on corners as well as straight edges so that the effect is one of "gleaming metal plates . . . catching the light capriciously" and evoking, in Carel Blotkamp's observation, the work of Léger.[108] The Romein painting is near in size to each of the three small square paintings by van Doesburg exhibited as a unit at the

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[106]In my awareness, it does not occur in another work of the period.

[107]See Hoek, "Mondrian," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 63.

[108]Carel Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 27. This work was reproduced as Ragtime in the periodical A bis Z 15 (1931); ibid., 26. Romein's use of shading is far quieter and gives no sense of sheen. Had van Doesburg seen the painting he might have objected that the delicate sfumato was too near the sentiment-producing "tone" of Dutch impressionist art, as he wrote to Mondrian in 1919 about the latter's unshaded but grayed colors; Els Hoek, "Piet Mondrian," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 54.

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Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in the summer of 1920, Composition (XVIII) de trois tableaux, (fig. 143) and not dissimilar to the central canvas in some of its forms.[109] Of Mondrian's images, Romein's painting seems nearest to the compositional type called "central" by Els Hoek after Robert Welsh's 1966 observations.[110] A reproduction of such a work was available from December 1922 in De stijl (fig. 144), and two such paintings could be seen in Amsterdam in the spring of that year and again in Rotterdam in 1925.[111]

Nonetheless, it is likely that Romein's composition was made after de Kooning's years in the Netherlands. The subtle and personal use of De Stijl/Neo-plastic elements implies time for Romein to have assimilated them. The square format and white rather than pale blue tones have more in common with Mondrian's work of the 1930s than early 1920s. From Romein's advertising work that can be dated, we see crisp linearity still dominant in 1927 and an interest in softer shading beginning only in 1930. Yet Romein must have been attentive to Mondrian's work during de Kooning's years with him, for de Kooning commented to Martha Bourdrez

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[109]Reproduced in Blotkamp, "Van Doesburg," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 28, fig. 26; each canvas is 13 3/4 in. square. The exhibition was Kubisten en neo-kubisten, "La Section d'or" te Parijs.

[110]Hoek, "Mondrian," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 64-66.

[111]See Chapter 5.

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that Romein introduced him to the work of Mondrian.[112] Romein may have suggested a trip to the 1922 Mondrian exhibition in Amsterdam; it may have been Romein who pointed out to him the compositional contributions of De Stijl design in the applied arts.

Later Works

After de Kooning left the Netherlands, Romein continued his work in commercial art and "free" painting and sculpture. Among other works, he designed a book cover in 1929 that combined De Stijl and Amsterdam School elements, sophisticated posters with the floating planes of synthetic Cubism and Suprematist/Constructivist painting, and abstract paintings based on similar design principles. By 1948 he had amassed a considerable poster collection, with which he could lecture on the history of the poster. Altruistic, socially-oriented views of the role of commercial art that he expressed in the 1940s are consonant with some of Jongert's earlier writings. Further information and observations about Romein's later career, as well as an account of his teaching in Dublin, are given in the Appendix.

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[112]Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8.

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CHAPTER 5

DE KOONING'S ART WORLD

As a youth de Kooning first came into contact with the professional world of the fine and applied arts via his employers Jan and Jaap Gidding, then through his teachers and peers at the Academy and, most importantly, through his employer Bernard Romein. Exhibitions, periodicals and art books widened his awareness. In tracing de Kooning's early "art world," the most revealing information about his knowledge of art movements comes from his own comments. We may learn what sorts of works he might have seen from checklists of exhibitions held in Rotterdam and elsewhere. Reviews in the art and popular press suggest prevailing ideas about some of the art movements, as do the observations of Dutch art historian A. M. Hammacher, active as a critic during de Kooning's youth.[1] The careers of artists working in Rotterdam and other Dutch cities during the period also reflect the concerns of the time.

The Rotterdam art world that was de Kooning's immediate environment had its own character within the generally prevailing currents of twentieth-century Dutch art, and

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[1]Hammacher was born in 1897. See P. de Ruiter, "A. M. Hammacher als kunstcriticus: Zijn Utrechtse en Haagse jaren 1917-1927," Jong Holland 8, no. 4 (1992): 19-34.

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these currents in turn were markedly different from the art world that would be available to de Kooning and fellow artists, as well as art critics, in New York in the 1930s. Both environments, however, needed to come to terms with major developments in art that had occurred outside their borders.

In the Netherlands a first wave of modernism had occurred in a number of exhibitions before World War I. The first modern Dutch movement, Luminisme, incorporated in varying degrees French Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Divisionism and the art of the Nabis and Fauvism; it held sway in Amsterdam between 1908 and 1911 at the exhibitions of the St. Lucas artist's society. Between 1911 and 1914 a number of exhibitions of foreign art in various Dutch cities introduced Cubism, Futurism and German Expressionism, especially the work of Kandinsky, who exerted a considerable influence through his art and writings. Rotterdam held its own in these exhibitions of advanced foreign art, notably with 1912 showings of works by Kandinsky and the Futurists.[2] In Amsterdam presentations, the work and thought of Henri Le Fauconnier came to have a dominant role; he appeared to the Dutch as the most important artist of the Cubist movement just as he was turning his moderate

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[2]See Chapter 2.

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Montparnasse Cubism toward more expressionist concerns.[3]

During World War I the international exchange of art and ideas shrank. Le Fauconnier however remained important because he came to live in the Netherlands from 1914 to 1920. Another exception was an influx of Belgian refugees, who were at first influenced by their hosts and then developed beyond them. During the time of enforced isolation Dutch artists re-aligned their interests and new artists' associations abounded. The developments that built on modern movements from the rest of Europe entered a distinctly Dutch phase and sometimes discovered kindred spirits in earlier Dutch art.[4] By the end of the war the important contributions of the early French and German modern movements were not always readily apparent as such.

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[3]Jan van Adrichem, "The introduction of modern art in Holland, Picasso as *pars pro toto*, 1910-1930," Simiolus 21, no. 3 (1992): 168, 177. Le Fauconnier's works had been among the more advanced Cubist works shown in 1911, and in 1912 were dominant in number, as well as accompanied by a catalogue essay he had written. Le Fauconnier's essay, "La sensibilité moderne et le tableau," in the catalogue of the 1912 Moderne Kunstkring exhibition in Amsterdam became, for the Netherlands, the manifesto of Cubism; Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 197, n. 3; the essay was also published in De Kunst 5 (12 October 1912) and is available in Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, appendix I, 327-330. The essay reflected the Montparnasse Cubists' interests in the modern city, science, and technology as well as a Bergsonian emphasis on intuition; the value given to inner feeling was consonant with Kandinsky's views. As Dolf Welling, The Expressionists, the art of prewar Expressionism in the Netherlands (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1968), 14, observed, this essay also became the expressionist manifesto in the Netherlands.

[4]Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 205 makes this last point.

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As contacts were re-established with other nations, the large exhibitions introducing the latest developments in these lands offered many diverse directions.

Accounts by de Kooning

The earliest recorded account by de Kooning of his knowledge of art movements when he was in the Netherlands occurs in the article written in 1950 by Martha Bourdrez for the Knickerbocker, a New York magazine oriented to the Dutch community. On the basis of her interview with de Kooning, Ms. Bourdrez wrote,

> At the Academy he got acquainted with the various movements of painting, the work of the Dutchmen Toorop and van Konijnenburg, the Barbizonschool (Milet [*sic*], Segantini), van Dongen and the "Stijl" group (van Doesburg, Mondrian). "Nowadays in New York artist circles," Bill said, "you find more interest in the work of Mondrian, than in that of Cézanne or Picasso. It is like when you say Poland you say Chopin: when you say Holland you say Mondrian."[5]

The second and third sentences of this account, direct quotations from the artist, are important because they reveal his mindfulness of the contemporary New York climate of keen interest in Mondrian's abstract paintings.

A year later de Kooning told an interviewer for Time magazine,

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[5]Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8. Ms. Bourdrez (1913-1991) was born in Amsterdam and had recently come to the United States with her husband when she met de Kooning at Black Mountain College in 1948. She explained to me in 1985 that she hadn't known much about art so she had written exactly what de Kooning had said; their conversation had been in Dutch.

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> I met a lot of fellows [at the Academy] and we became a little like bohemians. We tried to paint like the impressionists. Some of us imitated Mondrian, too, but we didn't get it very good.[6]

Here is Thomas Hess's 1959 account of Martha Bourdrez's list, written to follow a brief discussion of the Academy and Bernard Romein:

> Thus while de Kooning was keeping up his work at the Academy, he was also being introduced to the aims and accomplishments of the brilliant De Stijl group then flourishing in Holland (under the leadership of Mondrian and van Doesburg), to the Paris moderns, to Frank Lloyd Wright . . .
>
> De Kooning, of course, was attracted to other contemporary Dutch manifestations--to the local versions of Art Nouveau, which dominated much of the current commercial art, to the paintings of Toorop, van Konijnenburg, van Dongen--as well as to the Italian Pointillist Segantini, Millet and the Barbizon School.[7]

This grouping may seem an odd assortment from the western side of the Atlantic but it is not surprising for a young man in Rotterdam about 1920.[8] Jan Toorop and Willem van Konijnenburg were leading figures in the art life of South Holland, the major cities of which were The Hague and Rotterdam. Kees van Dongen, a fellow Rotterdammer who had

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[6]"Willem the Walloper," Time, 30 April 1951, 63.

[7]Hess, 1959, 113. In the paragraph following these, devoted to de Kooning's trip to Belgium, Hess wrote, "He saw, but was not particularly influenced by, contemporary Belgian Expressionists." This comment will be discussed in Chapter 7.

[8]Zakian, "Representation and Illusion," 138, makes a point of de Kooning turning to minor artists; this is the judgement of posterity rather than the views that held sway in the circles of the sixteen to twenty-two-year-old youth.

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studied with de Kooning's own teacher at the Academy, had achieved notoriety and success in Paris. Millet and the Barbizon painters had been esteemed in Holland, especially South Holland, for seven decades, and Segantini had many connections with the Netherlands in his early years.

After Hess's book had been published, de Kooning's lengthy and important conversation with David Sylvester in 1960 offered a further dimension to his artistic interests in Holland. He said,

> When we went to the Academy--doing painting, decoration, making a living--young artists were not interested in painting per se. We used to call that 'good for old men with beards.' And the idea of a palette, with colors on it, was rather silly. At that time we were influenced by the De Stijl group. The idea of being a modern person wasn't really being an artist in the sense of being a painter.[9]

De Kooning was more interested in making a living in a modern way, in the applied arts, than in painting per se. This attitude helps to explain why he did not mention several avant-garde movements in painting and it indicates the nature of his interest in the De Stijl movement, which was considerably different from later New York artists' regard for Mondrian's abstract paintings. The esteem for the applied arts during de Kooning's youth was part of far broader occurrences than the De Stijl group; it was related to the widespread influence of the ideas of William Morris, a heritage that gave a common value system to the disparate

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[9]Hess, 1968, 146.

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styles of the period. In a 1925 account of modern applied arts in the Netherlands, after noting various directions in design, including the Amsterdam School, Berlage's functionalism and the yet more functional/Constructivist work of Oud and W. M. Dudok, critic Justus Havelaar observed the shared underlying principles of "respect for material, technique, and work," proclaiming with optimism that "the artist again becomes workman."[10]

For art historical purposes, we could broadly summarize the different art movements referred to by de Kooning in rough chronological order as: the Barbizon School, Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism, Art Nouveau, Fauvism, "the Paris moderns" (as extrapolated by Hess), and De Stijl, along with the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, first known in the Netherlands about 1910. Not specifically mentioned by de Kooning were Cubism, Expressionism, abstract art, Dada, Constructivism, or the strains of realism emerging in the 1920s.[11]

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[10]Eén principe verbindt de zoo verscheiden uitingen der Kunstnijverheid: de liefde voor de materie, voor de techniek, voor den arbeid. . . . De kunstenaar wordt weer werk-man; Just Havelaar, "Een kort overzicht der moderne toegepaste kunsten in Nederland," VANK Jaarboek (1925): 33.

[11]I take it from Hess's wording that he, not de Kooning, introduced the issue of a possible influence of Belgian Expressionism. The influence of Surrealism was felt in the Netherlands after de Kooning had left for the United States.

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The Barbizon School

The French painters of the Barbizon School had appealed to Dutch artists since the 1850s, hardly surprising since the French artists had found inspiration in seventeenth-century Dutch painting. Nonetheless, in mid-nineteenth century Holland such a choice was a bold stand against prevailing Dutch taste, formed as it was by the academic viewpoint of France. The Barbizon artists at first incurred reactions similar to those received in France in the 1830s and 1840s, when their moody, painterly landscapes and scenes of rural life had challenged academic priorities regarding subject matter and facture, asserting worth for the humble life and observation of nature.[12] By the 1880s however the Barbizon School was generally regarded with favor in Holland. In that decade it came to be known by the Dutch as the modern French school of painting, a position that lingered for many years in part because French Impressionism was neither admired nor collected, and seldom exhibited in the Netherlands until the twentieth century.[13]

Among the Dutch artists drawn to the work of the

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[12]John Sillevis and Hans Kraan, The Barbizon School (The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1985).

[13]Academic Impressionists Bastien-Lepage and Detaille were appreciated. Monet, Renoir and Pissarro were considered too bright, too intellectual. Joop Joostens [*sic*], "Painting in Holland," in Post-Impressionism, Cross-Currents in European Painting (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1979; New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 256; Joop M. Joosten, conversation with author, 14 June 1995.

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Barbizon masters, the wealthy Hendrik Willem Mesdag formed a large collection of their work as well as of his fellow Dutch painters who came to be known as the Hague School. This collection, formed in the 1880s and 1890s, was available for public view at the Mesdag home and then museum in The Hague from the late 1880s.[14] It is possible that de Kooning saw this collection late in 1922 or 1923 when he visited his sister Marie, who lived in The Hague at that time.[15] He may have known Barbizon works from exhibitions in Rotterdam art galleries; the Unger and van Mens, for one, offered their works.[16] A collection of Barbizon paintings formed by Baron van Lyndon had been given to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and was on view there.

There were no works by French Barbizon painters in the Boymans Museum during the first quarter of the twentieth century; there were, however, many paintings by the Dutch Hague School artists who so appreciated their work and

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[14]Sillevis, Barbizon, 73-74; 86, note 25; a part of the collection was sold after Mesdag's death in 1915.

[15]The collection was widely known in the Netherlands. For example, J. J. Sweeney, Piet Mondriaan (New York, 1948), 2, cited in Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 39, n. 4, wrote, "Another important influence which Mondriaan claimed he shared with practically all his contemporaries was that of the Barbizon School paintings collected by Mesdag and placed on public view about the close of the century." Mondrian's contemporaries were de Kooning's teachers at the Academy.

[16]Brinkman, De Branding, 14.

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continued with their aesthetic.[17] Perhaps the designation Barbizon as de Kooning used it was broad enough to include the Dutch painters as well. De Kooning mentioned the Barbizon School as pertaining to the Dutch landscape in his 1971 conversation with Harold Rosenberg:

> In Rotterdam you could walk for about 20 minutes and be in the open country. Of course in that time it still looked like the Barbizon School, the idea of farms and . . . ."[18]

De Kooning specifically mentioned Millet and Segantini as artists of the Barbizon School. Rather than landscapes per se, both these artists tended to depict scenes with people. Millet's concentration on the worker, placing the hard lot of manual labor within the universality of nature and family ties, might well have appealed to de Kooning as it had to Jozef Israels and van Gogh before him. The placement of Segantini with the Barbizon School is appropriate for the Italian artist's early work, the only period represented in the Boymans collection, by a crepuscular view of sheep and shepherdess returning from pasture (fig. 145).[19] Thomas Hess, who may or may not have

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[17]Here and elsewhere in this chapter I rely on Catalogus der Schilderijen en Teekeningen tentoongesteld in het Museum Boymans te Rotterdam (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans, 1921) and Beknopte Catalogus der Schilderijen, Teekeningen en Beeldhouwwerken, (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans, 1925).

[18]Harold Rosenberg, "Interview with Willem de Kooning," Art News 71 (September 1972): 57.

[19]Schapen in het gebergte (Sheep in the mountain-range), chalk drawing with pastel, 37.5 x 65 cm., in Boymans from 1921. Annie-Paule Quinsac, Segantini: Catalogo

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asked de Kooning for more precise information about his interest in Segantini, refers to "the Italian Pointillist Segantini," somewhat complicating the matter. De Kooning could have known Segantini's work from reproductions as well.

Impressionism

De Kooning's comment that he and his friends tried to paint like the Impressionists leads one to wonder just what models they might have given themselves. During de Kooning's years in Rotterdam, there was one French Impressionist painting in the Boymans Museum, a spring morning view of the hills of Auvers by Pissarro that had entered the collection in 1917. The colors in it are quiet and not especially luminous, although the various greens and

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Generale (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1982), no. 326. Segantini's ties with Holland were long standing. In the early 1880s the Milanese art dealer Vittore Grubicy de Dragon spent considerable time in The Hague; he sent studies by Mauve to the young Segantini which influenced the Italian especially in his works of shepherdesses with sheep, a theme with which Mauve was also much occupied at the time. John Sillevis, "The Years of Fame (1885-1910)," in The Hague School: Dutch Masters of the 19th Century, ed. Ronald de Leeuw, John Sillevis, and Charles Dumas (Paris: Grand Palais; London: Royal Academy of Arts in association with Weidenfeld and Nicolson; The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1983), 94-96. I have not been able to find any other Segantini works on view in Rotterdam in the years 1917 to 1926. The only Segantini painting in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels was Bergerie: Effet de lumiere, 1887, acquired in 1899. Phil Mertens and others, eds., Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Département de l'Art Moderne, Catalogue inventaire de la peinture moderne (Brussels: Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1984), inv. 3523. See further discussion of Segantini in Chapter 8.

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blues are distinct; the brushstrokes are mostly parallel, but some are freer. It is a painting that does not particularly stand out as a contrast from the interests of the Hague School artists. For de Kooning, Impressionist painting was likely a general concept for rendering the atmosphere and mood of the seen world, specifically landscapes, with intuition and a painterly freedom.

Gerrit Randolfi, nephew of de Kooning's friend Benno Randolfi, referred to his uncle's paintings as Impressionist, somewhat dark because they rendered Dutch scenes. In his view, this was the style Benno favored thoughout his career. The younger Randolfi recalled one landscape owned by relatives that had been painted by both Benno and Willem:

> It was a landscape, with a house, [and] like a garden, . . . small [18 x 24 inches], with a sky and part of a landscape. They didn't do that really seriously, they just, you know, fooled around, in the young years. . . . It seems to me it was green, . . . very green, with a dark sky. . . . Holland [is] a very grey country most of the time even in the summer, very cold and dreary.[20]

The Hague School

With panoramic, flat polder landscapes featuring large, cloudy skies, and often cows or windmills, or picturesque interior scenes of peasants or fishermen, The Hague School dominated art life in the Netherlands until the turn of the

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[20]The painting no longer exists. Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

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century. It continued through four generations until World War II, going through a low ebb in esteem in the interwar years, more on account of the weakness of the latter practitioners than general popularity and commercial viability. The school ceded its position as innovative only in the latter half of the 1880s, to the Amsterdam Impressionists and then to the Symbolists. From the later nineteenth century, The Hague School was seen as constituting a second Golden Age of Dutch painting.[21]

While de Kooning did not mention the Hague School artists as such, he certainly knew their work. They may have been the Impressionists that he mentioned in 1951. From the years of his schooling, the Museum Boymans displayed, among others, landscape paintings by Paul Gabriël, Anton Mauve, Willem Roelofs, and Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch (fig. 146); seascapes by Mesdag; Children on the Beach by Bernardus Johannes Blommers; a portrait and Fisherwoman at a Window (1896) by Jozef Israels; and Albert Neuhuys's A Workman's Home in Drenthe (also called Worker's Family).[22] The Hague School would have received a further spotlight in 1925 when J. P. van der Schilden left his Hague

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[21]Much of the information in this paragraph is drawn from Ronald de Leeuw, "Introduction," in The Hague School, ed. de Leeuw and others, 13-15.

[22]Baedeker, Belgium and Holland, 1910, 305; Beknopte Catalogus der Schilderijen, Teekeningen en Beeldhouwwerken, (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans, 1925).

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School collection to the Boymans.[23]

Surely the works of the Hague School stayed within de Kooning's recollection and art heritage. One has only to walk a short distance from his Easter Monday of 1956 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the landscapes by Anton Mauve to appreciate, with a certain surprise, the similarity of the green/gray colors. Titles like In the Month of July, November, and Begin October, however generic and "ordinary," occur again, I believe with wry awareness of their earlier Dutch usage, in the de Kooning oeuvre: First of January, 1956, July, 1956, February, 1957, July 4th, 1957, even Easter Monday.[24] De Kooning's Clamdiggers of 1964 may have Rubens's joyous, colorful translucency incongruously and poetically joined by title to the experience of clamming on eastern Long Island, but the title also distantly links the work to the many Hague School scenes of shellfish and seaweed gatherers on beaches.[25] Some of de Kooning's

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[23]Charles Dumas, "Art Dealers and Collectors," in The Hague School, ed. de Leeuw and others, 129, 135 note 59.

[24]Paul Gabriël, In the Month of July ca. 1885, in Rijksmuseum Amsterdam since 1889; Bernard Blommers, November, mentioned in The Hague School, ed. de Leeuw and others, 145; George Poggenbeek, Begin October, in Boymans since 1921. De Kooning, First of January, 1956, July, 1956, February, 1957; see Hess, 1959, figs. 150, 148, 157; July 4th, 1957, see Harold Rosenberg, De Kooning, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1974), pl. 124.

[25]Mauve's The Shellfish Gatherer, Louvre, is a well-known example. Weissenbruch's Strandgezicht (Beach View), Boymans Museum, has a horse and wagon on open beach. The Hague School works are unlike de Kooning's closely cropped view of two nude figures who have little to do with

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paintings of the 1970s, which he has referred to as "watery," may also be seen as partaking of this Dutch heritage. These links with the Hague School occur more frequently after de Kooning began to spend more time in the countryside in Long Island. It bears noting that the only considerable Dutch collection of de Kooning's works, in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, is comprised of paintings which may be seen as a continuation and update of the Hague School.[26]

Amsterdam Impressionism

One Dutch art movement that affected de Kooning only indirectly was that called Amsterdam Impressionism. Its artists, dominated by George Breitner (1857-1923) with important contributions by Isaac Israels (1865-1934), may be regarded in a broad view as reacting against the Hague School's preference for static landscapes and gray tonalities and with introducing into their paintings the townscape, city life, more intense color and dynamism, and attention to firmness of form.[27] With regard to palette,

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clamdigging.

[26]Blotkamp, "Art Criticism," 127, notes the similarity of terms used by contemporaneous critics to describe the paintings of the Hague and Amsterdam Schools and those used some decades later for the "informal or lyrical abstract art in the years after the Second World War."

[27]Ronald de Leeuw, "The Avant-Garde (1885-1910)," in The Hague School, ed. de Leeuw and others, 103-106, with qualifications for these generalizations.

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this is surely relative, as the painters of the Hague School used clearer, brighter colors in the later 1880s, and the works of Breitner are often dark, giving rise to the nickname "brown school" as distinct from the "gray school" of The Hague.[28] The most important difference is that the younger artists turned their attention from the restful countryside and eternal peasant ways to modern life and sought to be of their time. They were the first generation in the Netherlands to revel in the bohemian life, seeking popular dance halls and cafés as subject matter and gathering places.[29]

Vincent van Gogh

George Breitner's more famous contemporary was Vincent van Gogh. The early 1920s was not a period in which large exhibitions introduced the mature paintings of van Gogh to Dutch artists and art viewers as had occurred during the two decades before World War I. Even so, de Kooning could have been quite versed in the art and thought of van Gogh during these years. Van Gogh's letters had been published since 1914, with a biographical introduction by Johanna van

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[28]Robert P. Welsh, Piet Mondrian's Early Career: The "Naturalistic" Periods (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), 19.

[29]Richard Bionda and Carel Blotkamp, "Introduction," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 12-13.

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Gogh;[30] if Romein did not own an edition, he would have been aware of the volumes and their contents. By the time of World War I, Dutch critical writing on van Gogh had come to present him as an inspirational figure, culturally important for the troubled present, as Carol Zemel has summarized.[31]

Although the Boymans Museum owned only van Gogh's early Lane of Poplars near Nuenen, acquired in 1903, it exhibited a number of works from private collections in the late teen years and early 1920s.[32] Many of these Rotterdam collections were formed in consultation with the art educator and writer, H. P. Bremmer, an ardent admirer of van Gogh.[33] In 1918 the Boymans exhibited a group of works by van Gogh lent by the sisters Georgette van Stolk and Grietie Smith-van Stolk; and at the Christmas exhibition of 1922, a

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[30]Carol M. Zemel, The Formation of a Legend: Van Gogh Criticism, 1890-1920, Studies in the Fine Arts: Criticism, no. 10 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), 53-54, cites Vincent van Gogh, Brieven aan zijn broeder, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1914).

[31]Zemel, Formation, 57-58.

[32]Ibid., 36, notes that in 1903 the Boymans became the first public art institution in the Netherlands to sanction van Gogh's art with its purchase of Lane of Poplars near Nuenen (F45). "F" identifies the work as listed in J.-B. de la Faille, The Works of Vincent van Gogh, His Paintings and Drawings (New York: Reynal & Company in association with Wm Morrow & Company, 1970; Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International, 1970).

[33]Balk, "Het publiek van H. P. Bremmer," 19-23.

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grey View from Montmartre.[34] Early in 1923 the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring presented eighty-five drawings from the collection of van Gogh-Bonger,[35] accompanied by a slide lecture by Dirk Hannema, director of the Boymans Museum, on the work and life of van Gogh.[36] Also in 1923 the Boymans Museum showed the Starry Night, now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York,[37] and the Half-Figure of an Angel described in the annual report as it was in Vincent's letters as painted after a reproduction of Rembrandt.[38] The following year van Gogh's Cypresses in the Bremmer collection was on view.[39] At some time in 1926, perhaps before de Kooning's departure for the United States, the Boymans Museum showed van Gogh's Potato Eaters, the smaller painting now in the

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[34]Verslag van het Museum Boymans te Rotterdam over het jaar 1922 (Rotterdam, 1922): 7; identified as in collection Tutein Nolthenius, Delft, this would be View from Montmartre, 1886 (F262).

[35]Teekeningen van Vincent van Gogh, uit de verzameling van Mevrouw Van Gogh-Bonger, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 15 March - 2 April 1923, RKK archives, inv. no. 246. Among the works exhibited were a study for and lithograph version of the Potato Eaters, the lithograph Sorrow, a landscape with pollarded willows, a pen drawing of the landscape at St. Rémy and a landscape with cypress tree (nos. 14, 15, 31, 51, 57, 58).

[36]Lecture, 20 March 1923; Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, Jaarverslag over 1923, 9.

[37]Een grandioos werk uit de laatste periode van Vincent van Gogh, de "Sterren" . . . [collection] mej. G. G. van Stolk; Verslag Museum Boymans (1923): 7. It was on view for the whole year.

[38]Ibid., 9. Half-figure of an Angel, 1889 (F624).

[39]Verslag Museum Boymans (1924): 10.

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Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, made just prior to the final version in the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh in Amsterdam.[40]

Works by van Gogh were also on view in Amsterdam during de Kooning's young adult years. Thirteen works were included in an exhibition of Nederlandsche beeldende Kunsten (Dutch Fine Arts) at the Stedelijk Museum in September 1923 and in the early spring of 1924, possibly when de Kooning was in Belgium, 132 works from van Gogh's Dutch period were exhibited at the Gebouw voor Beeldende Kunst.[41]

There is little evidence in de Kooning's surviving work of the early 1920s that van Gogh was a particular hero for him, but ample evidence that he knew the work. In Chapter 8 de Kooning's Male Portrait Head will be compared with van Gogh's angel.

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[40]Verslag Museum Boymans (1926): 9; Collection Tutein Nolthenius, Delft, therefore, Five Persons at a Meal, 1885 (F78).

[41]Faille, Works of Vincent van Gogh, 692.

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Dutch Symbolism[42]

Of the four major Dutch Symbolist artists--Toorop, Thorn Prikker, Roland Holst and Derkinderen--all of whom were still living and important during the period 1917-1926, de Kooning mentioned only Jan Toorop (1858-1928), aspects of whose works he emulated in 1924 and 1925. He also cited Willem van Konijnenburg (1868-1943), whose work after 1900 incorporated many of the concerns of the Symbolist generation and came to be seen as part of the Monumental Art of the 1920s and 1930s.[43] Van Konijnenburg was an important figure for Herman Mees, one of three teachers at the Rotterdam Academy mentioned by de Kooning. One of van Konijnenburg's well-known works may have informed the first de Kooning painting we know from New York, [Two Women], made

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[42]The Dutch were not comfortable with the term Symbolism and until Bettina Polak's 1953 study, published two years later, the word was usually skirted, even in art historical discussions. I use the term as a shorthand reference to relate the concerns of a generation to those of artists in other countries. In contemporary Dutch critical writing, the works were sometimes known as *ideëele kunst* (ideal, idealistic art) as opposed to the realistic art of the preceding generation. Bettina Polak, Het Fin-de-Siècle in de Nederlandse Schilderkunst: De symbolistische beweging 1890-1900 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955), 272-73; Caroline Boot and Marie Hélène Cornips, "Inleiding," in Kunstenaren der idee, ed. Blotkamp and others, 12-13.

[43]Because this development in his work came so late, Polak prefers to see his concerns, not as Symbolist, but rather as part of the new Monumental Art of the twentieth century. The term "Monumental Art" replaced that of the 1890s, Gemeenschapskunst (Communal Art). Polak, Het Fin-de-Siècle, 306-07.

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in 1928.[44] The work of Johan Thorn Prikker was admired and emulated by de Kooning's otherwise very different employers Jaap Gidding and Bernard Romein, as has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. Thorn Prikker's work was also on view in Rotterdam at times when the young artist could have seen it, as will be noted in Chapter 8. Roland Holst played an overwhelmingly important role in the development of Jac. Jongert, teacher at the Rotterdam Academy who served as mentor in some capacity to de Kooning, possibly to Romein as well. Thus for de Kooning and his immediate circle, the viability of what we now call Dutch Symbolism, often manifested in the later stage of Monumental Art, reached through the 1920s.

Jan Toorop

Jan Toorop's Symbolist works of the 1890s are the most widely known and influential of his long career. These large drawings present the turmoil and enigmas of contemporary life, generalized to essential states by nude or generically clothed figures, often women. The undulating line of Art Nouveau made its first appearance in Holland in Toorop's parallel "sound-lines" of sensuous curves or strident crackles which unite such compositions as O Grave, Where is Thy Victory and The Three Brides (figs. 147 and 148).

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[44]To be presented in a further study.

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Before and after the Symbolist drawings of the mid-1890s, Toorop made vibrant pointillist paintings that continued the iconography of the Hague School.[45] While his paintings were concerned with Divisionism, Toorop's sweeping Symbolist linearity continued in monumental work, beginning with a commission in 1901 for tile panels in Berlage's Amsterdam Stock Exchange. Unlike the idiosyncratic subjects of the 1890s, these images were more straightforward and oriented toward public life. In 1905 Toorop converted to Catholicism, which brought the traditional iconography of the church to the fore in his work; many drawings of stylised saints and apostles--often exhibited in the 1920s--relate to commissions for stained glass windows in churches. Around 1914 straight lines and sharp angles often became the unifying agents in Toorop's work, an influence, in part, of the Cubism of Lodewijk Schelfhout, the young Dutch painter with whom he had established a friendship.[46]

Toorop's interest in international art movements and capacity for friendship were important for the development of Dutch art. In the winter of 1891 he was one of the founders of the Haagsche Kunstkring (The Hague Art Circle), an artists' society based on Les Vingt in Brussels which he had known from his student days there. It sought to unify

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[45]Ronald de Leeuw, "The Avant-Garde (1885-1910)," in The Hague School, ed. de Leeuw and others, 107-109.

[46]Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 168.

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the artistic disciplines in the Wagnerian notion of Gesamtkunstwerk and to make known the latest works of other countries. The Haagsche Kunstkring in turn became the model for the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, founded in 1892, an important organization during de Kooning's years in Rotterdam. Toorop kept close ties with artist friends in Paris and Brussels, among them Paul Signac and Théodore van Rysselberghe. He lent his prestige to the formation of the Moderne Kunstkring in Amsterdam in 1910; patterned after the Salon d'Automne in Paris, it was important in bringing a new generation of avant-garde interests to Holland.[47]

About a dozen works by Toorop were on view in Rotterdam at various times in the period 1917 to 1926, when de Kooning would have been able to appreciate them. Most of these were more recent works, not the hallmark images of the 1890s which would, however, have been available to him in monographs and articles on the artist.[48] Among the works exhibited, de Kooning may have been impressed with Toorop's large and powerful drawing of 1919, The Rebel on view at the

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[47]The importance of the Moderne Kunstkring is discussed by Hoek, "Mondrian," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 42, 72 n. 11; Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 110; and van Adrichem, "Introduction of modern art," 167.

[48]Among the monographs are Julius de Boer, Jan Toorop (Amsterdam: Veen, 1911); Miek Janssen, Jan Toorop (Amsterdam: Veen, [1915]); idem, Schets over het leven en enkele werken van Jan Toorop (Amsterdam: Veen, [1920]); [Albert] Plasschaert, Jan Toorop (Amsterdam: J. H. de Bussy, 1925). Wendingen 1, no. 11/12 (1918) was devoted to Toorop with fifty-six reproductions.

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Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in September 1923.[49] Also during 1923, the Boymans Museum exhibited a watercolor and two symbolist drawings from the Gieseler collection in The Hague.[50]

Willem van Konijnenburg

In the early 1920s Willem van Konijnenburg was nearly as well-known and esteemed in Holland as Toorop, although his reputation has not fared well since his death in 1943. A major figure still at the time of his death, obituaries appeared in the United States in Art News, Art Digest, and the New York Times.[51] During the period that de Kooning was a young man in the Netherlands his reputation may have been at its highest point. He is now virtually unknown outside the Netherlands where he has been seen as a historical curiosity; recent reconsiderations of his career, while welcomed, have not brought greater esteem.[52] A number of articles on his work appeared in the 1920s,

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[49]Keuze Tentoonstelling ter eere van het regeeringsjubileum van H. M. de Koningin: Werken van Hollandse meesters uit de laaste vijf en twintig jaren, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 5-23 September 1923, no. 38, De opstandige, RKK archives, inv. no. 246. Fig. 279 in Chapter 8.

[50]Verslag Museum Boymans (1923): 7-8.

[51]Obituaries in Art News 42 (15 March 1943): 7; Art Digest 17 (15 March 1943): 7; New York Times, 6 March 1943.

[52]Jan de Vries, "Willem van Konijnenburg," review of Willem van Konijnenburg 1868-1943, by Mieke Rijnders, in Jong Holland 7, no. 4 (1991): 56-58.

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including one by his important early champion Albert Plasschaert in the 1921 double issue of Wendingen devoted to him, with twenty-six reproductions.[53] Among the works reproduced were Saint George, 1916, Overgave (Surrender), 1917, Predestinatie (Predestination), 1918, anatomical drawings, several portraits and crucifixions (figs. 149-54), and the large drawing Zacharia, 1920-21, commissioned by the Nederlandsch Israëlitische Gemeente of Rotterdam as a gift for the new Town Hall.[54] Several works by van Konijnenburg, including versions of Overgave, were exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in 1918 and 1923 and at the Boymans Museum in 1924 and 1925.[55]

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[53]Albert Plasschaert, "Willem van Konijnenburg, biographie met enkele uitweidingen," Wendingen 4, no. 1/2 (1921): 4-13.

[54]The commission was withdrawn and given to another artist, with neglible damage to van Konijnenburg's career.

[55]Tentoonstelling van Moderne Teekeningen, Aquarellen en Pastels, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 10 November - 8 December 1918, RKK archives, inv. no. 241, included his Dans der jonkheid, Rituele dans, Dans van het noodlot (Predestinatie), and Kraanvogels. A Ruiter (Rider) and Overgave were in Keuze Tentoonstelling ter eere van het regeeringsjubileum van H. M. de Koningin: Werken van Hollandse meesters uit de laaste vijf en twintig jaren, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 5-23 September 1923, RKK archives, inv. no. 246. At an unspecified time in 1924 the triptych Overgave was on loan to the Boymans Museum from the C. van Lede collection; Verslag Museum Boymans (1924): 10. From mid-January until late March, 1925, the Boymans Museum exhibited in the watercolor room an oil version of Overgave (100 x 75 cm.) and seven drawings by van Konijnenburg from the collection of Rotterdam art dealer K. H. de Haas. The titles of the drawings were The Hunt, Evening, Struggle, Riders, Rider, Struggle, and Maastricht. Verslag Museum Boymans (1925): 7; K. H. de Haas to D. Hannema, Typewritten letter signed, 9 January 1925, archive, Museum Boymans-van

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Allegorical subjects suffused with the suggestiveness of Symbolism had entered van Konijnenburg's work about 1908 after an early period of landscapes in a Barbizon/Hague School vein. From the mid-teen years, figures based on those of various Renaissance masters or of Egyptian art were composed to fit into a geometric network that structured the surface of the painting. This geometric underpinning must have had its source, unacknowledged by van Konijnenburg, in the theories of Lauweriks and de Bazel as made more widely known by J. H. de Groot, whose principles were reflected in van Konijnenburg's own writings.[56]

The artist considered his major subject to be the "eternal struggle" between good and evil, spirit and matter, light and darkness;[57] if this struggle came to a stalemate, there was no doubt in van Konijnenburg's view of the world that the strong leader or hero was to prevail over the weak, the masses who needed to be led.[58] The tenor of his works

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Beuningen.

[56]Andrea Gasten, "Pseudo-mathematica en beeldende kunst," in Kunstenaren der idee, ed. Blotkamp and others, 60. Rijnders, Willem van Konijnenburg, 51-75, summarizes van Konijnenburg's ideas and technical principles as expressed in his writings. De Vries, "Willem van Konijnenburg," 56-57, notes that the geometric underpinning links van Konijnenburg's concerns to modernism.

[57]G. Knuttel Wzn., Willem van Konijnenburg, Palet Serie (Amsterdam: H. J. W. Becht, [1941]), 22-24.

[58]Rijnders, Willem van Konijnenburg, 55-57. Some of van Konijnenburg's social and philosophical views range from unsympathetic to repugnant; in the wake of Hitler the heroically driven "leader" and devoted followers became

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combined "the combativeness of Nietzsche and the pessimism of Schopenhauer," a description recently offered by art historian Jan de Vries to explain why van Konijnenburg was regarded with such high seriousness before World War II.[59]

Van Konijnenburg's works of the teen years and those available to de Kooning in Wendingen or Rotterdam exhibitions were on the whole more full-bodied and sensuous than many of his monumental paintings of the 1920s and later. Overgave (Surrender, fig. 150), first exhibited in The Hague in 1917, was a popular image and van Konijnenburg made a number of versions of it.[60] Plasschaert praised the large work as "a miraculous play of spirit, as if pure spirit revealed itself as a flash of light and . . . became mathematical form." He remarked on the light/dark polarity of the figures' skin tones and noted that she "turns herself with her gaze and mouth and willing torso to him,"[61] but did not comment on the lingering resistance in the woman's

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malevolent beyond their idealistic, if reactionary, origin.

[59]Het lijkt alsof de strijdbaarheid van Nietzsche en het pessimisme van Schopenhauer hier zijn samengebracht tot symbolen van een modern levensgevoel. Deze moderne sfeer heeft er ongetwijfeld toe bijgedragen dat men Van Konijnenburg vóór de oorlog zo serieus nam; de Vries, "Willem van Konijnenburg," 57-58.

[60]Rijnders, Willem van Konijnenburg, 12.

[61]Een wonder spel van geest, alsof de pure geest zich openbaarde als lichtvlaag en in tot begrip geworden mathematischen vorm. . . . [Zij] keert zich met haar gezicht en mond en willige borst naar hem toe; Albert Plasschaert, "Willem van Konijnenburg, een karakteriseering," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten 1 (1924): 8, 6.

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hand gesture nor on the derivation of her posture from Leonardo's lost Leda and the Swan. Van Konijnenburg's cosmic background of creatures, plants, and shafts of light, suggests that he had intended, like Leonardo, a meditation on the mystery of the origin of life. He would have known the red chalk copy of the Leonardo in the Louvre.[62]

Plasschaert pointed out that it was above all the heroic figure that interested van Konijnenburg. This was true in the portraits as well (fig. 153). In the Wendingen article of 1921, Plasschaert praised their psychological penetration and described the heroic portrait as a synthesis of the physical body and of "every spiritual possibility" of the subject, so that the "portrait of a poet becomes a portrait of the poet."[63]

Kees van Dongen

Kees van Dongen had been living in Paris for two decades when de Kooning was a young man. His worldly success and the activities of his early career surely held considerable interest for the younger artist.

Van Dongen had studied at the Rotterdam Academy under

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[62]Van Konijnenburg has reversed the position of woman and male partner so that the long outward curve of her hip is on the right of the composition, as is the case in Ingres's single figure, The Source, 1856, now in the Musée d'Orsay.

[63]Plasschaert, 1921, 8. Elke geestesmogelijkheid . . . het macht toch van het portret van een dichter, het portret van den dichter; ibid., 10.

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de Kooning's own professor Heyberg in 1892-94. Despite great differences in style and content between the work of the two men, there seems to have been a continuing and sympathetic communication, at least on Heyberg's side, for the teacher assembled a collection of van Dongen's early paintings and drawings, some of which may have been available for de Kooning to see during his own student years.[64]

The early works of van Dongen display a variety of styles and subjects. Drawings in chalk, pencil and ink depict landscapes of the Dutch countryside and city views of Rotterdam. Some are attentive to atmospheric effects, others are more linear and stylized under the influence of Toulouse-Lautrec and Steinlen, and depict urban workers or the red light district of Rotterdam (fig. 155). Several early drawings (fig. 156) were used to illustrate the 1917 book Het Rosse Leven en Sterven van de Zandstraat by M. J. Brusse, an homage to the area that was razed in 1912 to build the new Town Hall.

After he had begun his studies at the Academy, van Dongen forsook his family's Catholicism, became a freethinker, and began his long interest in radical politics. He visited Paris in 1897 and stayed almost a

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[64]The authenticity of some of the van Dongen drawings from the Heyberg collection auctioned in 1973 and 1974 is suspect. Jan van Adrichem, "Kees van Dongen's early years in Rotterdam and Paris," in Kees van Dongen, ed. van Adrichem and others, 11, 13, nn. 16, 23.

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year, at first with Dutch friends who were in anarchist circles. Subjects from the Parisian life of Montmartre remained an abiding interest throughout his career. In 1898 van Dongen returned to Rotterdam for eighteen months, once again attending evening classes at the Academy. He worked as an illustrator for the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad and found friendship in a bohemian circle of young artists, writers and actors. He moved to Paris late in 1899, but returned regularly to Holland until 1908. At least until 1902, he drew studies of nudes at the Rotterdam Academy during these visits.[65]

In 1901 van Dongen received a commission for illustrations for L'Assiette au Beurre (fig. 157). Under the innocent title, "Petite histoire pour Petits et Grands Nenfants [*sic*]," the drawings, in which the line may bear some influence from Edvard Munch, presented the life of a young woman who was abandoned by her lover and became a prostitute in order to feed herself and her daughter; the daughter in turn became a prostitute and met an early death.[66] For the next five years van Dongen contributed

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[65]Ibid., 11-13. Van Dongen became a naturalized French citizen in 1929.

[66]"Petite histoire pour petits et grands nenfants [*sic*]," L'Assiette au Beurre, 26 October 1901. Citation, with indication of misprint, given in Jan van Adrichem, "Kees van Dongen's early years in Rotterdam and Paris," and Michel Hoog, "Markers for Van Dongen," in Kees van Dongen, ed. van Adrichem and others, 15, 157. Hoog, ibid., 157, briefly discusses the influence of Edvard Munch on van Dongen.

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drawings to numerous anarchist, leftist and avant-garde periodicals.[67] The social and political relevance of van Dongen's early themes (fig. 158) may have been known to Heyberg and others of his generation.[68]

Along with his career as an illustrator, van Dongen pursued a career as a painter. His early paintings were small landscapes with a subdued, greyish atmosphere reminiscent of the Hague School. By 1902 lighter tones showed his interest in French Impressionism. Friendships with Paul Signac and Maximilien Luce led to his practice of an exaggerated Divisionist technique by late 1904, when he exhibited at Ambroise Vollard's Paris gallery. The next year van Dongen participated in the now-famous 1905 Salon d'Automne with two paintings; related works at this

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[67]Patricia Leighton has related van Dongen's early images of the sordid side of life to deeply held political views. See Leighton, "Anarchist Avant-Gardism in Pre-War Paris: Van Dongen, Gris, Kupka, and Others," Abstracts and Program Statements 1992, 80th Annual Conference, College Art Association, Chicago, 13-15 February 1992, 43.

[68]The artist's thoughts were expressed in Dutch publications of 1905 and 1913. Tom Schilperoort wrote in Op de Hoogte in 1905 that the drawings "dissect with painful clarity human relationships, which in the course of time have deteriorated most gravely and miserably." Alluding to the artist's stance, he continued, "failing to find solid ground for the good and fine things in oneself in society, one leaves it and starts to decry it." In 1913 De Groene Amsterdammer printed an article citing van Dongen on his actresses and harlots: "I know every one of those women's histories, which are deeply tragic. They have experienced life in all its facets. . . . I cannot help painting these women in garish colors; perhaps I do so in order to express the intensity of their lives?" Jan van Adrichem, "Kees van Dongen's early years in Rotterdam and Paris," in Kees van Dongen, ed. van Adrichem and others, 31, n. 25; 7.

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exhibition occasioned Louis Vauxcelles's use of the word "fauve." Van Dongen thus came to share the distinction of the first twentieth-century "ism" via a parallel but separate path from that pursued by Matisse or Derain and Vlaminck or the Le Havre painters. His avant-garde notoriety was bolstered in 1913 when his painting The Spanish Shawl was removed by the police from the Paris Salon d'Automne for its immodest revelation of the female nude.

In 1906 van Dongen exhibited over seventy works at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, a retrospective selection to which he gave great care. While the organizers had found his work worthy, the Rotterdam press was unenthusiastic. In Amsterdam, however, a 1911 showing was praised by artists.[69] His work was again on view at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in May 1914 in a group show of French painters and again coolly received by the press.[70] While these exhibitions ensured that van Dongen was a well-known figure in the Rotterdam art world, they were too early for de Kooning to have experienced the actual works. Only in Amsterdam in 1922 and 1925 was work by van Dongen exhibited in Dutch Museums during the period of de Kooning's student

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[69]Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 110.

[70]Jan van Adrichem, "Kees van Dongen's early years in Rotterdam and Paris," in Kees van Dongen, ed. van Adrichem and others, 21, 23, nn. 48-51.

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and young adult years.[71] Several van Dongen works were illustrated in Dutch magazine articles of 1924; in the articles, as in the one available monograph of the period, in French, by Ed. des Courières, recent works were highlighted.[72]

After World War I, by the time de Kooning was about fifteen, van Dongen's art and its context had undergone considerable changes. He continued his interest in expressive brush work and the female figure, but his sensuous women became less a protest against social injustice than the expression of a libertine eroticism.[73] He rented a large studio on the Rue Denfert-Rochereau in Paris in 1912 in order to give fancy-dress balls and from 1917 he made a name and career painting society portraits.

A major point in Dutch art periodicals of the early 1920s was their compatriot's meteoric rise as a fashionable

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[71]Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 4 March - 2 April 1922, no. 45, La Comtesse d'Archenti; a Mondrian retrospective took place under the auspices of the same exhibition. De Onafhankelijken (The Independents), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 23 May - 17 June 1925, nos. 314-16, Portrait d'homme (P. Lafitte), La voisine de Crigueboeuf, Tête de jeune fille. Brinkman, De Branding, 14, mentions that the Rotterdam gallery Unger en van Mens presented exhibitions of van Dongen's work.

[72]Ed. des Courières, Van Dongen (Paris: Henri Floury, 1925).

[73]Jan van Adrichem, "Kees van Dongen's early years in Rotterdam and Paris," in Kees van Dongen, ed. van Adrichem and others, 7.

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portrait painter in Paris.[74] Openings at his studio, from the ground floor of which he acted as his own dealer, were major events, it was reported with flourish, attended by "le Tout-Paris."[75] Van Dongen's fascination with the theme of women was described by one writer, in contrast to the vision of Toulouse-Lautrec, as turning away from "melancholy, ugly reality" and seeking a "decorative exultation."[76]

While the Dutch critics of the 1920s attended to van Dongen's masterful "fauve" brushwork and described his improvisatory attitude to portraiture,[77] de Kooning's work of those years suggests that such aspects of his fellow Rotterdammer's work were not foremost in his own thoughts. It was most likely van Dongen's success, at times *succès de scandale*, and subjects of the urban demi-monde that impressed the young de Kooning.

"The Paris Moderns"

For de Kooning, much that was Parisian and modern may have been the subject matter of bohemian types and café

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[74]Leo Faust, "Kees van Dongen," Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 34, no. 47 (1924): 230.

[75]Ibid., 232; W. F. A. Röell, "Kees van Dongen," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten 1 (1924): 269.

[76]Overal keert hij zich af van de droeve, leelijke werkelijkheid. . . . Voor hem is het schilderen een vermooiing, een decoratieve exaltatie; ibid., 267. Röell went on to record, in French, van Dongen's quip, "La femme est le plus beau des paysages." (Woman is the most beautiful landscape.)

[77]Faust, "Van Dongen," 229.

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life. When Hess used the expression "the Paris moderns" in 1959, he must have done so as a compromise summation of what he could learn from de Kooning. The description can refer to the art of Matisse and Picasso and the circles around them, for all of whom an important formative influence had been Cézanne. All three of these major figures were to be crucial in de Kooning's artistic development. Yet works by these artists were little in evidence in the Netherlands during de Kooning's years as a young adult. In 1983 he explained, "In the Academy in Holland we didn't know about Picasso. Cézanne, a little bit."[78]

> Perhaps at the Academy there were teachers who talked about Cézanne. It was not overdone. Cézanne, you have to have an eye for it. I was young then. Cézanne wasn't even liked by his own landsmen.[79]

To Paul Hellmann in 1976, de Kooning said, "And all that time in the Netherlands, I never met a single young person who had ever heard of Matisse."[80]

All three figures were mentioned by writers on art in the Dutch cultural press, but often in passing and as points of comparison. None were accorded reproductions in the entire run of Wendingen. There was, however, an extensive

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[78]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1983.

[79]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 23 May 1983.

[80]En dat terwijl ik in Nederland in al die tijd maar één jongen had ontmoet, die ooit van Matisse had gehoord!; Paul Hellmann, "De verloren zoon zit goed," Algemeen Dagblad, 24 December 1976, 25. This is a translation of the English conversation.

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treatment of Picasso in Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift in May 1925, with seventeen reproductions from the Blue Period through Cubist works to 1920s Neo-classism; the article seems not to have made an impression on de Kooning, whose reading may not have gravitated to this rather steep cultural journal.[81] The work of these three artists did not raise enough interest in de Kooning's immediate circles for him to remember or to seek it out. As he said to Gaby Rogers in 1978, "You could take a train to Paris and look at Matisse and Picasso, but I didn't know about it then."[82]

The exhibitions that introduced Cézanne and Picasso to the Dutch public in some depth took place before World War I, mostly in Amsterdam. Matisse seems not to have been shown in the Netherlands before World War I. In 1919, had de Kooning been assiduously attentive, he could have seen fourteen etchings by Picasso in an exhibition of French books and prints at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring.[83] Two years later, in January 1921, Pierre Reverdy's Les Jockeys camouflés with five drawings by Matisse was included among the books on view in an exhibition of La Jeune Peinture

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[81]W. F. A. Roëll, "Pablo Picasso," Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 35, no. 69 (May 1925): 304-15.

[82]Rogers, "Artist at 74," 21.

[83]Tentoonstelling van Fransche Boeken, Etsen, Lithographieën, Medailles en Plaquettes, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 27 February - 16 March 1919, RKK archives, inv. no. 242.

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Française at the same location.[84] Otherwise, he would have had to go to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam for scant opportunities: three works by Picasso in the Léonce Rosenberg collection were exhibited in the spring of 1924, a time when de Kooning was probably in Brussels,[85] and in 1925 Matisse's L'Espagnole and two Picassos, Tête de Femme, 1924 and Compotier, were included in the exhibition of De Onafhankelijken (The Independents).[86]

De Kooning's idea of "the Paris moderns" in the early 1920s would have been different from that available to him in New York in the 1930s. There was no emphasis on Picasso and Matisse, no historical, reasoned or formal overview of Cubism. The 1921 exhibition of La Jeune Peinture Française at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, for instance, included in its eighty-nine paintings, drawings and watercolors listed

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[84]La jeune peinture française, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 5 - 23 January 1921, no. 15, RKK archives, inv. no. 244.

[85]Hollandsche kunstenaarskring, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 10 May - 8 June 1924, nos. 19-21, Buste de femme, dessin, 1906, Les deux nus, dessin gouaché, 1920, and Nature-morte, 1915. Catalogue in library of Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

[86]De Onafhankelijken, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 23 May - 17 June 1925, nos. 336, 342, 343. In addition, fifteen Picasso etchings were shown with works by Lodewijk Schelfhout and B. Essers at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 6 November - 5 December 1920, nos. 97-111. Beginning the month of de Kooning's departure for the United States, a Matisse still life was exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam with Art contemporain français, 3 July - 30 September 1926, no. 122. Catalogues in library of Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. For the reception of Picasso in the Netherlands, see van Adrichem, "Introduction of modern art."

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in the catalogue a grab-bag of works by Roger Bissière, Charles Camoin, Raoul Dufy, André Favory, Marcel Gaillard, Pierre Girieud, André Lhote, Jean Marchand, Paul Sérusier, Paul Signac, Maurice Utrillo and Suzanne Valadon, among others. Also shown were Nature morte au radical by Georges Braque, Maurice de Vlaminck's La Route, La femme au miroir by Fernand Léger, and Marie Laurencin's Femme à l'éventail and Les deux soeurs. Perhaps de Kooning did attend to the illustrated books, among them an edition of Walt Whitman with drawings by Marcel Gaillard and Paul Iribe's Le convalescent et la Berlue rayonnante as well as the Reverdy with five drawings by Matisse already mentioned.[87]

The preceding summer, an exhibition entitled Cubists and Neo-cubists, "The Golden Section" of Paris was shown at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring.[88] Organized by Theo van Doesburg as an international manifestation, it travelled to Amsterdam in the fall and was featured in the popular journal Het Leven in November with ten reproductions and snide captions. Gleizes's Peinture, for instance, was subtitled "Tante Bet op 't closet" (Aunt Bess in the water-

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[87]La Jeune Peinture Française, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 5 - 23 January 1921, RKK archives, inv. nos. 244 and 314a.

[88]Kubisten en neo-kubisten, "La Section d'or" te Parijs, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 20 June - 4 July 1920, RKK archives, inv. no. 313c. In addition to a handwritten list of fifty works, there is correspondence with van Doesburg.

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closet).[89] Planar synthetic Cubism with abstracted motifs of still lifes, landscapes and figures predominated. The major French artists represented were Gleizes, Marcoussis, Survage and Villon; also included were Belgian artist Marthe Donas with six works, the Russians Goncharovna and Larionov, and three De Stijl artists. The author of the Het Leven article sought explanation for the works from Theo van Doesburg who offered that "the cubists did not consider a painting as a representation of one or another object, but simply as color, as a plane harmoniously divided in smaller color planes." Asked why there were so many human forms, van Doesburg said that those artists still retaining objects did not yet know completely how to express their inner feelings.[90] Just what would have appealed to de Kooning, had he visited this exhibition, is hard to know from the evidence of his own contemporaneous art.

De Stijl

The art of the De Stijl movement lends itself to ready summary: flat, rectangular planes of primary colors charged

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[89]At the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 23 October - 7 November 1920; some of the works in the Amsterdam catalogue differ from those listed for Rotterdam; catalogue in the library of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. "Kubistische Kunst in het Stedelijk Museum," Het Leven, 2 November 1920, 1412-1414.

[90]En toen hoorden we van hem, dat de kubisten een schilderij niet beschouwen als een voorstelling van een of ander object, maar eenvoudig als kleur, als een vlak, harmonisch in kleinere kleurvlakken verdeeld; ibid., 1413.

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with leading society to a modern, clear, dynamic and impersonal universal harmony, whether in free paintings or in the three dimensions of architecture and interior spaces. De Kooning's early awareness of the movement may have included all these aspects, however dilute, but his comments make it clear that for him it offered primarily a handy way to get on with the business of earning a living in the applied arts.

In comments in later years, de Kooning often used the term De Stijl as interchangeable with Mondrian's work and with modern applied design. One wonders what terms he may have used in the early 1920s; Jongert's retrospective use of the adjective *zakelijk* comes to mind. A conversation in 1981 about his early attitudes to Mondrian elicited from de Kooning a rambling and inclusive context for the importance of that artist's work. He proffered that a student at the Academy might be given a project to design a cover for:

> maybe a sheet of music, you know, or something like that, . . . in a modern way, and then Mondrian would come in somehow, you know what I mean? . . . he was a big influence on furnishings and, sure. The Stijl group. They made all those chairs, cabinets. Mondrian, well they had Vantongerloo, he was in the group. And they had some more, who all worked as artists, and then another group became industrial artists, you know.[91]

He recalled using the De Stijl/Mondrian aesthetic in his own commercial art. A friend who studied at the Academy

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[91]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981.

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in the applied arts division did some work for his father's business one summer. The father had a shoe store located on a corner, de Kooning said,

> so this wall was all free, you see, from far away. So he, his son, made a big sign there, about shoes, maybe some shoes and things like that, and he, kind of, made [it] very modern, like à la Mondrian as much as he could, laying it out that way. So that we thought was terrific, you know what I mean? And so, we were getting jobs because we could make it faster because we didn't have to be symmetrical always, you know, like this, then a little larger, then something still larger, then something smaller, you know what I mean. You could make up the Mondrian so fast, you know, you could make, you don't have to think. It was easier to apply commercially.[92]

Intriguingly, to the young de Kooning an image of a shoe was not incongruous within a Mondrian-like layout. Indeed, it was entirely appropriate for the purpose of advertising. Reading between the lines of de Kooning's comments, one might speculate that Jongert's design instruction (or perhaps Zwart's) was made available to de Kooning at least in part by the example of a student-friend, and that it was a key ingredient in de Kooning's interest in De Stijl. He seems to have been wholly unaware of van Doesburg's derisive attitude toward Jongert's understanding of De Stijl. It is likely he knew the movement only at second hand; none of his

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[92]Ibid. De Kooning distinctly referred to summer vacation from classes at the Academy; if he himself were still a student the year would not be later than 1921, quite early for De Stijl-influenced forms in Rotterdam. Richard Shiff, "Water and Lipstick: De Kooning in Transition," in Willem de Kooning Paintings, ed. Prather, 47-48, notes recurrent references to shoes in de Kooning's paintings, "anecdotes and biographical details."

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comments suggest that he read the De stijl magazine.

Again and again, de Kooning's references to his modern way of working stress that it was expedient and lucrative:

> It was wonderful for layouts. Because you didn't have to make [it] symmetrical . . . and we all started doing that. Signs and things like that. We got nice orders to make good money making those signs.
>
> Mondrian was, like, you could lay it out in no time. That's why we liked it. Oh, we heard there was more to Mondrian. We did know that there was some kind of measure, but we didn't get very enthusiastic about it. You see, we knew that it wasn't easy, that we couldn't just do that, . . . but we didn't want to do it. I still don't want to do it![93]
>
> [Mondrian] made everything so easy. You do a big red thing here and a small red thing there, and something at right angles, and you'd have a great sign.[94]

De Kooning's youthful reaction to Mondrian's painting itself, as opposed to the possibilites it offered for the applied arts, was basically callow. He reflected in 1981,

> It takes a long time before you can recognize that as something serious. . . . You couldn't see it when you're a young boy. . . . I could say, I can do that too.[95]

Many of the thoughts voiced in the above paragraphs, were also put forth by de Kooning in conversation with Sally Yard in 1976, prefaced by a more mature view of Mondrian's painting and confirming early knowledge of his work. Asked

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[93]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981, partially cited in Chapter 3.

[94]Amei Wallach, "Strokes of Genius, or Flailings in the Dark?" New York Times, 24 September 1995, Art section, p. 36.

[95]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981.

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by Yard what he thought about the work of modern Dutch artists during his time in Holland, he answered,

> Mondrian is the purest artist. He became the greatest lay-out man in the universe. He wouldn't mind it--he was very social-conscious. Early on as students we all knew Mondrian. I was at a young age influenced with sign-making. Because of Mondrian, a sign didn't have to be symmetrical like a sheet of music. Or like Beethoven was symmetrical. It could be asymmetrical. This also saved a lot of time. You could just lay something out--it didn't have to be measured out so perfectly.[96]

Mondrian's work was shown in Rotterdam in 1915, 1920, 1923, 1925 and 1926,[97] but another likely occasion for de Kooning to have known it was the large retrospective exhibition of 1922, held in honor of the artist's fiftieth birthday, at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.[98] Over fifty works were shown, including early landscapes, watercolors of

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[96]Willem de Kooning, interview by Sally Yard, 14 October 1976, in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 186; English original on file at Willem de Kooning Office, New York.

[97]De Kooning was only ten years old when Mondrian's work of 1908 to 1914 was exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in a three-person show, Tentoonstelling van Werken van P. Alma, Le Fauconnier en P. Mondrian, 31 January - 28 February 1915. The 1920 exhibition of the Section d'Or included three works and will be discussed below. In September 1923 a Kinderkopje (Head of a Child) and a Compositie (Composition) were included in the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring exhibition, Keuze Tentoonstelling ter eere van het regeeringsjubileum van H. M. de Koningin: Werken van Hollandse meesters uit de laaste vijf en twintig jaren, nos. 26-27, RKK archives, inv. no. 246. Composition II, Collection Cabos, was shown in the last exhibition of De Branding at the old post office of Rotterdam in January 1926; catalogue reproduced in Brinkman, De Branding, 115.

[98]It was part of Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 4 March - 2 April 1922. De Kooning's sister Marie was living in Amsterdam at the time.

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flowers, two self-portraits, the triptych Evolution, the two versions of Still Life with Gingerpot, and a number of paintings entitled Composition, among them two from 1921 and Tableau I and Tableau II of the same year.[99] It is possible that de Kooning was encouraged to see the exhibition by Jongert or by Romein, each of whom may have had ambivalent feelings about the merits of the most recent work.

In April 1925 the Rotterdamsche Kring, on the initiative of Oud, presented fourteen cubist and abstract works by Mondrian, an exhibition that would have afforded an intensive view of Mondrian's mature work, had de Kooning been receptive to it. Beginning with Figure Study and Nude of 1911, the two versions of Still Life with Gingerpot, two cubist landscapes, Gray Tree, 1912 and a charcoal self-portrait of 1912/13, it offered a condensed view of the evolution to abstraction. Included as well were two vertical compositions of 1914, one of which may have contained the word "KUB," the two large checkerboard compositions of 1919 and, finally, two 1921 compositions

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[99]The latter two are identified in Angelica Zander Rudenstine, ed., Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944 (Milan: Leonardo Arte; Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 43, 204-205, as nos. 96 and 97, in Joop M. Joosten's chronology and exhibition history. These works are large, almost a square meter each, and distinctly pale blue in the lighter areas.

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with red, yellow and blue (fig. 159).[100] Oud gave an explanatory talk on the show.[101]

An earlier occasion for de Kooning to see a selection of works by De Stijl artists, including Mondrian's Composition A, B, and C, occurred in the summer of 1920 when the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring presented Cubists and neo-cubists, "The Golden Section" of Paris.[102] In organizing this exhibition, van Doesburg preferred the connection with Paris, as well as with international colleagues, to touting the distinctiveness or even proclaiming the name of De Stijl. Van Doesburg showed his own Composition (XVIII) de trois tableaux, (fig. 143) Décomposition I and Composition XVII (1919) in Rotterdam; in Amsterdam he showed the Card Players, 1916-17 and Composition IX, abstract decomposition

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[100]This is a different organization from the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring; its records are also in the Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam. Joop M. Joosten, letter to author, 9 May 1995, has pointed out that the works exhibited are most likely the following, published in Cor Blok, Piet Mondrian: Een catalogus van zijn werk in Nederlands openbaar bezit (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1974): nos. 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 218, 225, 237, 238, 269, 270, 275, 276. In his chronology in Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944, ed. Rudenstine, 48, Joosten offers new dates for the earliest and latest works: 1912 to 1922; of the works exhibited in 1994-96, Joosten's exhibition history, 156, 204-205, for nos. 58, 96, and 97, gives the 1925 Rotterdam showing with question marks.

[101]J. E. van der Pot, "De Rotterdamsche Kring, 1913-1942," Rotterdams Jaarboekje 6, no. 10 (1962): 147.

[102]Kubisten en neo-kubisten, 'La Section d'or' te Parijs, 20 June - 4 July 1920, RKK archives, inv. no. 313c. Joop M. Joosten identifies Composition A and Composition C in Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944, ed. Rudenstine, 41, nos. 85 and 86.

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of the card players, 1917, (fig. 61) both of which he had already exhibited at The Hague in 1918, as well as Décomposition, 1920.[103] Vilmos Huszár was represented by a Studie and two space-color compositions of a bedroom and living room (fig. 160).[104] The van Doesburg Card Players and a Huszár room were illustrated in Het Leven, where the Huszár had the distinction of appealing to the capricious caption-writer as well as to the author.[105] De Kooning, too, may have liked the Huszár interiors; had he seen the exhibition, the colors of black, purple, gray and orange may have struck him as near a favored gamut of Jaap Gidding.

Since de Kooning's interest in De Stijl and Mondrian was in relation to the applied arts and advertising, he probably paid as much, if not more, attention to posters and advertisements by Jongert, Piet Zwart (fig. 161) and Paul Schuitema (fig. 162). None of these designers were officially De Stijl artists. Other unofficial sympathizers lectured at the Rotterdam Academy in February 1920: Jan Wils

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[103]Many of these works are illustrated and discussed by Carel Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 24-29, who mentions the September to October exhibition of De Branding in The Hague; see also Brinkman, De Branding, 22-26.

[104]Sjarel Ex, "Vilmos Huszár," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 104-106; n. 44 gives colors. Ill. 158 in this study is similar to the works exhibited.

[105]"Kubistische Kunst in het Stedelijk Museum," Het Leven, 2 November 1920, 1413. The caption reads: "Hé! Da's heelemaal niet gek!" (Hey! This isn't so crazy!)

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on architecture and Piet Zwart on furniture. The third in this series of lectures was given by Jongert, on painting.[106] Intriguingly, de Kooning chose Jongert as mentor, or at least as a teacher to credit in later years, over Piet Zwart who was also teaching at the Academy and whose designs had become very lean by 1920; the differences in their viewpoints toward De Stijl and a functional, constructive art may not have been apparent to him then, or perhaps not important to him. J. J. P. Oud's Café de Unie (fig. 163), completed in the heart of Rotterdam by the fall of 1925, provided de Kooning with a vivid model of many De Stijl traits, again without the official label, as Oud had already broken with the movement.[107]

De Kooning's rather philistine attitude to Mondrian's abstract painting was hardly remarkable in Rotterdam in the early 1920s. Mondrian found even unreceptive post-war Paris more congenial territory and had moved there from Holland in June 1919; van Doesburg was in Weimar from 1921-22, returned to The Hague briefly, then departed for Paris in the spring of 1923.[108] In his 1955 book on twentieth-century Dutch

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[106]Verslag der Academie over 1919-20 (1920): 10.

[107]Located on the Calandplein, the Café de Unie was illustrated in L'Architecture Vivante, autumn, 1925, as reproduced in Paul Overy, De Stijl (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 123, ill. 100, and discussed 131.

[108]The early phase of De Stijl is treated in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others. A list of van Doesburg's addresses is given in Evert van Straaten, Theo van Doesburg 1883-1931: Een documentaire op basis van

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art, A. M. Hammacher described the national reception of De Stijl: "In general, the prevailing art life in the Netherlands did all it could to keep down its influence and to push it aside," until it was discovered that outside the country--especially in Germany and America where the movement was better known and valued--Mondrian was an asset.[109]

Frank Lloyd Wright

De Kooning was an early enthusiast of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, whose work he had first learned about through Bernard Romein. He almost certainly saw the issues of Wendingen devoted to the architect in 1921 and 1925. The 1921 number had an introduction by Dutch architect Hendrik Berlage and twenty-two plates of buildings, among them the Midway Gardens, Chicago (figs. 164 and 165), Imperial Hotel, Tokyo and exterior details of Taliesin in Wisconsin (fig. 166). The dramatic, clean horizontal lines of interior woodwork and cantilevered roofs on the exteriors were embellished with much detailed relief carving (exceptionally rich at Midway Gardens and the

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materiaal uit de Schenking Van Moorsel (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1983), Appendix 2, 183.

[109]In het algemeen heeft het heersende Nederlandse kunstleven alles gedaan om deze invloed klein te houden en in de hoek te dringen, totdat men ontdekte met Mondriaan in het buitenland eer te kunnen behalen; A. M. Hammacher, Stromingen en persoonlijkheden: Schets van een halve eeuw schilderknust in Nederland 1900-1950 (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1955), 97.

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Imperial Hotel), decorative stained glass windows, roughly cut stone and overweening foliage. Excitement over Wright's work involved an aesthetic response quite different from that elicited by the spare and austere De Stijl productions.

Berlage's 1921 introduction to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright is one account in Dutch that we may be certain was available to de Kooning, for in the 1925 issues the texts were in English, French and German. In this essay Berlage saw Wright as a "'romanticist'" rather than an "'industrial architect'" and his work as "'personal', charming and lovable," rather than a "'universal art,'" while greatly praising it,[110] as he had since first seeing it in 1911. For Berlage, one of Wright's greatest merits was that "his designs retain nothing that remind us of historical styles."[111] This issue in architectural criticism may be a source for de Kooning's later aversion to becoming stuck in a style or "ism."

Also in 1921, Dutch architect Jan Wils wrote an appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright in Elsevier's, comparing

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[110]He valt mij tenminste moeilijk Wright anders te zien dan alsden romanticus en wel hem te zien als zijn tegendeel, den "industrieelen architekt" . . . . Ik kreeg . . . niet den indruk van een zoodanige "algemeene" kunst, maar wel van een "persoonlijk" lieftallige en beminnelijke; Berlage essay, Wendingen 4, no. 11 (1921), 3-4. The 1921 article is translated into English in the 1925 issue, Wendingen 7, nos. 3-9 (1925), 79-85, here 81-82.

[111]H. P. Berlage, "The New American Architecture," lecture given in Zurich, 1912, as translated in H. Allen Brooks, ed., Writings on Wright (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981), 131-133, here 132.

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the architect in his opening paragraphs to Walt Whitman:

> Walt Whitman is the man who in his "Song of the Open Road" has described the new society. Frank Lloyd Wright has opened the way for the new architecture. . . . Even as Walt Whitman saw world events in one wide vision and wrote his poems accordingly, so Wright saw the change effected on society by the introduction of steam and electricity and designed his buildings correspondingly.

Wils admired the flow of space in Wright's buildings: "Openness, lucidity, and the concentration of related activities are the basis of his ground plans," as opposed to "our little houses with all their little corridors." He made a point to emphasize the "principle of democracy" in Wright's floor plans, which by his logic, extrapolating from equal rights for all, meant a homeowner's respect for himself, in which he could "live his own life, undisturbed by others' interests. . . . not bothered by servants or the indiscreet eyes of strangers." He wrote that a modern architecture would be the result of "a complete revolution in the ground plan of buildings--resulting from our change in lifestyle."[112] Some of these ideas may have been part of Wil's 1920 lecture on architecture at the Rotterdam Academy.

De Kooning recalled lectures in which Frank Lloyd Wright's work and the Chicago style were presented in relation to the very department stores that provided his own

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[112]Jan Wils, "Frank Lloyd Wright," Elsevier's Geillustreerd Maandschrift 61, no. 4 (1921): 217-227; abridged version translated by Elsa Scharbach in Brooks, Writings on Wright, 139-45, here 139-40.

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income:

> At the Academy we used to have lectures on American architecture. We heard of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Chicago style that had influenced The Hague, Amsterdam, and, in particular, Rotterdam, where they built all those big department stores.[113]

De Kooning's early admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright is still apparent, although in dilute form, many years later in the studio/house he designed for himself in Springs, a subject worthy of further study.

Cubism and Expressionism in the Netherlands

Awareness of Cubism in the Netherlands was importantly affected by the fact that the young Dutch artist Lodewijk Schelfhout had lived in Paris. In 1903, at twenty-two, he had moved to Montparnasse with his family[114] and had developed his work through the experience of French Impressionism, Cézanne, van Gogh, the beginnings of Fauvism, and the café du Dôme. About 1910 he frequented the Tuesday evening gatherings at the Closerie des Lilas café, meeting Le Fauconnier, Gleizes, Metzinger and Delaunay as well as writers Jules Romains and André Salmon. Le Fauconnier was then the leading painter of the group. By the summer of 1911 Schelfhout's paintings showed the influence of Montparnasse Cubism (fig. 108). Until he moved back to the

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[113]Rogers, "Artist at 74," 21.

[114]His father was a painter also; his grandfather Andreas Schelfhout had been a noted Dutch romantic landscape painter.

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Netherlands in 1913, his studio provided like-minded Dutch artists--among them Mondrian--with an address, friendship and entrée to Parisian artists' studios.[115] Dutch artist-critic-organizer Conrad Kikkert became familiar with the Cubist milieux through Schelfhout; Kikkert became a special champion of Le Fauconnier, purchasing Le Fauconnier's Abundance and featuring his work in the exhibitions of the Moderne Kunstkring.

Early in 1913 Schelfhout married a Dutch woman, a devout Catholic, and returned to live in the Netherlands. In a lecture in Rotterdam when his work was exhibited there in 1913, Schelfhout explained that Cubist artists give "a spiritual translation of the impression which nature makes upon them,"[116] somewhat skewing the early understanding of Cubism in the Netherlands. Through his friendship with Jan Toorop, his work took on a religious-Symbolist cast.

By the late teen years and early 1920s the dominant current in Dutch painting, as described by A. M. Hammacher, was concerned with reconciling a Cézanne-based Cubism with a broader, heavier, often tragic Expressionism, somber but

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[115]Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 20-22, 122-124; Matsya Hoogendoorn, "Nederlanders in Parijs," Museumjournaal 17 (1972): 247-53.

[116]De cubisten geven een geestelijke vertaling van den indruk, die de natuur op hen maakt; Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 166 and 196.

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warm in color.[117] The most influential figure behind this style was Le Fauconnier who had chosen to live in the Netherlands in 1914. Leo Gestel's work, with its swinging structure of arcs and parallel hatching, may be seen as an example of the ensuing Bergen School of Dutch Expressionism (fig. 167). Among the strongest artists influenced by the blend of Montparnasse Cubism and German Expressionism were Belgians who had fled to Holland in World War I, Frits Van den Berghe and Gustave De Smet.

Works by both these artists as well as others in the vein of the Bergen School were shown in Rotterdam during de Kooning's young adult years in exhibitions held by the De Branding group.[118] Through the activities of this group, introduced in Chapter 2, Rotterdam became known as a city with an active Expressionism of its own.[119] This

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[117]Hammacher, Stromingen, 105, 131. Hammacher noted in this regard that the Dutch character was somewhat between the French and German. A recent treatment of Expressionism in the Netherlands is Piet Boyens and José Boyens, Expressionisme in Nederland 1910-1930 (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1994).

[118]De Smet was included in De Branding, Rotterdam Academy, 25 December 1918 - 2 January 1919; both artists were shown in De Branding, Rotterdam Academy, 24-31 December 1922. See Brinkman, De Branding, 31, 37, 39, 133.

[119]J. M. Joosten, "Expressionisme," in 150 Jaar Nederlandse Kunst (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1963), 115; Welling, The Expressionists, 17-19; Geurt Imanse, "Die Jahre 1915-1918: Entstehung von 'De Branding' und 'De Stijl'," in Tilman Osterwold, Andreas Vowinckel, and others, Van Gogh bis Cobra, Holländische Malerei 1880-1950 (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, [1980]), 146-85; idem, "Van Sturm tot Branding," in Berlijn - Amsterdam, 259. The major source on the De Branding group is Brinkman, De Branding; see also Geurt

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heterogeneous group produced works that ranged from mystical abstractions by Johannes Tielens (fig. 168), displaying admiration for both Kandinsky and the Futurists, to the vigorous late Impressionism of Marius Richters to zesty, angular woodcuts by Herman Bieling (fig. 139). The group was especially important for its international outlook, a view directed more to Germany and Belgium than to France. In December 1922 its first international exhibition was held in the Rotterdam Academy: in addition to works by Dutch members and Belgian artists van den Berghe, De Smet and Floris Jespers, the Germans Otto Gleichman and Kurt Schwitters were presented; Schwitters's Ueber Gelb was reproduced in the catalogue.[120] The Rotterdam press rightly enough found the artists "all modern but within that very divergent."[121] Late in 1923 De Branding exhibited in the rooms of a Rotterdam kindergarten school works by an intriguing list of local and foreign artists, including among the latter Lyonel Feininger, Otto Gleichmann, Paul Klee, Franz Marc, Lothar Schreyer, Georg Schrimpf and Kurt Schwitters as well as Alexander Archipenko, Albert Gleizes,

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Imanse, "De Branding," review of De Branding 1917-1926, by Els Brinkman, in Jong Holland 7, no. 4 (1991): 52-55.

[120]It was sold for a respectable sum. Brinkman, De Branding, 32, ill. p. 34.

[121]De eenige overeenkomst van al deze gefedereerden is, dat zij allemaal modern zijn, maar daarin zeer uiteenlopend; cited from Het Vaterland, 20 January 1923, in Brinkman, De Branding, 31, where exhibition is discussed, 31-32, and catalogue reproduced, 33-40.

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Fernand Léger, Ivan Puni and Diego Rivera, an equally divergent group (fig. 169).[122] There were five works by Klee.[123] Seven years later de Kooning would go to an exhibition of works by Klee at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and for almost five decades after that carry in his memory the revelation of first encountering those works and of doing so in New York:

> I didn't know there were artists in America before I came. . . . I came to New York and I used to go Saturday afternoons to look at the galleries. I found artists I never knew anything about in Holland, where they have so much art history, they didn't write about it. . . . It was not until I came to America that I started learning about artists and it was surprising for me to find such an interest in art here. I went to the Museum of Modern Art, on 57th Street, they had a whole floor. The Museum of Modern Art started like that. At the time they were running a show of Paul Klee. I had never seen anything like that in my life. It was such a revelation. Then I spoke with Gorky about it. And Gorky said that he too was surprised to see an exhibition of that kind in New York. I first came to know things like the Klee show in New York.[124]

At age nineteen, de Kooning either did not see the Rotterdam exhibition held by the De Branding group or his own aesthetic was not developed in a direction that enabled him to notice or remember works by Paul Klee.

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[122]De Branding, School, Goudschesingel, Rotterdam, 25 December 1923 - 3 January 1924. See Brinkman, De Branding, 32, 42-43, 132-33.

[123]Nos. 77, Garten der Leidenschaft; 78, Kriegerischer Tanz; 79, Maske; 80, Blumengarten; 149, Park; catalogue in library of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

[124]Rogers, "Artist at 74," 21. The dates of the Klee exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art were 13 March - 2 April 1930.

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In November 1922 the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring presented an exhibition of German art that did not include Klee but did offer works by Franz Marc, Lyonel Feiniger, Erich Heckel, Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, Christian Rohlfs, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Schmitt-Rottluff and Max Beckman as well as by older artists Lovis Corinth, Wilhelm Leibel, Max Liebermann, Hans von Marées and others.[125]

Hendrick Chabot, a Rotterdam artist ten years older than de Kooning, took part in the last two exhibitions of De Branding, in 1924 and 1925. In the 1930s and 1940s he would become one of the most significant artists produced by the city, with Expressionist paintings developed after 1930. Chabot's early works of the late teen years and early 1920s, made after studying at the Rotterdam Academy, were drawings and prints in which themes of social realism were presented in hieratic, Symbolist compositions. A series of a factory worker's life, Levenslop (fig. 105), has been mentioned in connection with Romein's early work. One etching of 1922 dealt with the theme of prostitution in a stylized, "Egyptian" manner as both a timeless social ill and a contemporary concern, incorporating the artist's ruminations

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[125]Duitsche kunst, schilderijen, aquarellen en graphiek, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 8-26 November 1922, RKK archives, inv. nos. 245 and 315g. This exhibition is discussed in Kitty Zijlmans, "Duitse tentoonstellingen in Nederlandse musea en kunstenaarsverenigingen," in Berlijn - Amsterdam, 287.

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on the neighborhood around his studio (fig. 170).[126] Chabot's strict protestant background may have inflected his compassion for suffering humanity and his high moral stand. At an exhibition of De Rotterdammers early in 1923, Chabot attracted favorable critical attention with his etchings, among which one entitled Achterbuurt (Slum) depicted an event he had witnessed: a young woman was turned out into the Binnenrotte stark naked, screamed at by an older woman that she would henceforth have to earn the cost of her living.[127] Chabot's social concerns for the underclasses continued along with more generalized celebration of friendship, love and family in a squared-off style that began around 1924 (fig. 226), often referred to as Cubist, but actually indebted to the 1916 works of De Stijl artist Bart van der Leck. Recently Jan van Adrichem likened this period of Chabot's work to the pre-World War I Dutch modernism that "combined symbolism and cubism" in "a religious-philosophical tendency toward the universal."[128] After a period of influence by the Belgian Constant Permeke,

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[126]Ott, Chabot, 46-47 and fig. 3. Ott, 47, uses the adjective "Egyptian" and speaks of Chabot's admiration for ancient Egyptian art, without mentioning the possible influence of Jan Toorop or van Konijnenburg.

[127]Ibid., 51-52. Exhibition held in rooms in a former Old Men's Home, Rotterdam, 17 February - 11 March, 1923. In my awareness, this image is now known only by verbal account.

[128]Jan van Adrichem and Charlotte Wiethoff, Hendrik Chabot, paintings and sculptures (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1990), 7-8.

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Chabot's style evolved to a broad, chunky figuration. His mature themes included the harsh life of the country folk north of Rotterdam, haggard Jewish refugees during World War II and tumultuous yet stark landscapes, of which the most famous may be The Burning of Rotterdam, 1940.

Other Rotterdam Artists

A. M. Hammacher considered Rotterdam a place that brought forth more than the usual number of "apart" artists. In addition to the Expressionist Chabot, he offered a brief discussion of the careers of Dorus Rovers and the now elusive Anton Versluys (b. 1893):

> Dorus Rovers (1892-1953) for example has had at every turn in an uneven and large oeuvre, open to expressionist and abstract influences, an individual response. . . . Now and then in his work an affinity was to be seen with Chabot or with others, all according to his own compelling issues.
>
> Anton Versluys one can no longer follow, after his work was lost in the burning of Rotterdam during the war. Yet an exhibition in Amersfoort (1954) let one see once again a painter who had had a part in that Rotterdam climate. His expression has not an abstract, but rather a decorative-stylizing inclination in which a late symbolism still resonated. Heavy of color, heavy also of line, with a monumental effect in the overall design.[129]

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[129]DORUS ROVERS (1892-1953) b.v. heeft in een ongelijk en groot oeuvre, open voor expressionistische en abstracte invloeden, telkens een eigen reactie gehad. . . . Ook in zijn werk was soms een verwantschap met Chabot te zien of met anderen al naar gelang van het hem boeiende probleem. ANTON VERSLUYS kon men, nadat in de oorlog zijn werk voor een groot deel door de brand van Rotterdam te loor ging, niet meer volgen. Doch een tentoonstelling in Amersfoort (1954) deed ook in hem weer een schilder zien, die aan dat Rotterdamse klimaat deel heeft gehad. Zijn expressie heeft geen abstracte, maar meer een decoratief-stylerende neiging

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The verbal description of Versluys's late Symbolism, with its heavy line, suggests a different sort from the traits that several early works by Romein shared with those of Chabot and van der Plas. It furthers the case for the viability of a curvilinear Symbolism in Rotterdam. Indeed, Klaas van de Erve who began his art studies in Rotterdam in 1928, described the period, "In 1928 we were at the very end of the Jugenstill [*sic*] or art nouveau."[130]

Realism

In the mid-1920s a number of young artists in the Netherlands were working their way toward the various shades of realism that would surface later in the decade, three of whom would be labelled Neo-Realists in 1937 and Magic Realists after World War II: Raoul Hynckes (1893-1973) (fig. 171), Pyke Koch (1901-1991) and Carel Willink (1900-1983). Wim Schuhmacher (1894-1986), too mystical for this appellation (fig. 172), and Dick Ket (1902-1940), too realist, also came to a renunciation of the modernist enterprise with a precise representation of the visible

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waarin nog een laat-symbolisme doorklinkt. Zwaar van kleur, zwaar ook van lijn, met een monumentale nawerking in de gehele opzet; Hammacher, Stromingen, 130-31. Versluys was born in 1893 in Rotterdam and studied at The Hague and Rotterdam Academies, under van Maasdijk at the latter; in addition to painting, he worked in woodcut and leaded glass and designed mosaics and tapestries; P. M. J. Jacobs, Beeldend Nederland. Biografisch handboek (Tilburg: P. M. J. Jacobs, 1993) L-Z, 535. I have found no pertinent works.

[130]Klaas van de Erve, letter to author, 5 November 1984.

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world by 1930.[131] One young artist, very active in a number of Dutch cultural circles, never rejected modernist work but nonetheless held steadfastly from the 1920s to rendering what she saw. Charley Toorop stands apart from the other realists; her work may be considered, arguably, as a mixture of Expressionism and Neue Sachlichkeit.[132]

Charley Toorop

Charley Toorop (1891-1955), the daughter of Jan Toorop, turned to drawing and painting as a teenager during summers in Domburg with her father, exhibiting for the first time with the St. Lucas group in Amsterdam in 1909, where her work was placed with the Luminists.[133] She had no formal training other than that available from her family background. The work of Vincent van Gogh, which she knew from her earliest years, was for her a "breakthrough to a

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[131]John Steen, "Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten," in Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten in de verzameling van het Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, ed. Jan Brand and Kees Broos (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992), 4.

[132]Imanse, "Van Sturm tot Branding," in Berlijn - Amsterdam, 264.

[133]I have drawn on the following sources for information on Charley Toorop: A. M. Hammacher, Charley Toorop: Een beschouwing van haar leven en werk (Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse N. V., 1952); Nico J. Brederoo, Charley Toorop: Leven en werken (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff/Landshoff, 1982); Marja Bosma, "De Kunst van Charley Toorop," in Charley Toorop 1891-1955 (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 1982); Jan Steen, "Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten," and Jan de Groot, "Charley Toorop," in Magisch Realisten, ed. Brand and Broos, 4-44, 150-161; and the RKK archives, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

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new world."[134] In 1911 she became aware of Cubism and her work incorporated angular aspects from time to time but the most important influence in these experimental years was the work of Kandinsky which she could study at close hand in the Domburg collection of theosophist Marie Tak van Poortvliet. Auras in portraits and perhaps even color choices may reflect Charley Toorop's own interest in theosophy (fig. 173). Late in the teen years aspects of Bergen School Expressionism appeared in her work.

During the teen years Charley Toorop was admired by the younger generation as a symbol of personal and artistic rebellion; in 1912 she had distanced herself from her father and his Catholic circle and had married protestant, anarchist-leaning philosophy student Henk Fernhout.[135] Yet she always valued her father's Symbolist work--it is clearly a part of her formation--and seems to have had a religious attitude to the content of her work, even though her outlook on life was socialist. Writing in 1926 to critic Albert Plasschaert, she proffered that she tried, "to give life its full gestalt -- God is to be seen in everything -- however

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[134]Voor mij was het de doorbraak naar een nieuwe wereld; C. Toorop, in catalogue of van Gogh exhibtion, Otterlo and Amsterdam, 1953, cited in Brederoo, Charley Toorop, 23; Brederoo suggests she saw the 1905 van Gogh exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam or the 1907 exhibition at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

[135]They separated in 1917. J. J. Oversteegen, "De tegenstellingen des levens: Cola Debrot en zijn schilders," Jong Holland 10, no. 2 (1994): 49, 78, makes the point about her rebellion.

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depicted."[136]

After a decade of working in mostly Expressionist modes, Charley Toorop's rendering of form and choice of colors came increasingly nearer to observed reality, although the emotional content usually remained intense. In the early 1920s, she literally followed in the footsteps of van Gogh, painting miners' wives and other folk in the Borinage, landscapes in the south of France, as well as patients of a mental hospital (in Utrecht). In the Borinage she stayed in a small hotel for mine workers where she found a subject in La Patronne et sa fille, 1922 (fig. 174).

By the mid-1920s Charley Toorop's choice of subjects from the edges of society may be seen not only as stemming from her admiration for van Gogh, or possibly in relation to the interest in such themes that had entered Dutch art in the 1880s, but also in the context of recent German art. The activities of harbors, music halls, night cafés, dance tents and lodgings for the homeless are themes that she shares with Neue Sachlichkeit artists.[137] While the German works were not shown in the Netherlands until 1929, Charley Toorop must have known them from reproductions in the avant-garde periodicals to which she subscribed, and would have

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[136]Maar 't trachten het leven zijn volle gestalte te geven -- God is in iedere stof te zien -- how dan ook uitgebeeld; C. Toorop, letter to Albert Plasschaert, 15 May 1926, cited in Brederoo, Charley Toorop, 197.

[137]Brederoo, Charley Toorop, 62-63, is my source for this and the following sentences in this paragraph.

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heard about the Berlin art climate from poet Hendrik Marsman whom see saw in the early 1920s. Her own interest in the theme of the "Metropolis" and its rough life led her to work not only in Amsterdam but yet more frequently in 1926 and 1927 in Rotterdam, where she sometimes stayed with her friends the architect J. J. P. Oud and his wife. A letter places her in Rotterdam in March 1926; one wonders if de Kooning saw her then, painting and drawing harbor views and interiors of cafés, perhaps Rotterdams danshuis or Kroeginterieur (fig. 175).

Nico Brederoo has observed that in portraying big city themes, Charley Toorop's work took on a cynicism lacking in her other works of the time. He found the "cool registration of the fringes of society" in Souteneur met Vrouwen (Pimp with Women), 1926 the equivalent of any image by Christian Schad or Otto Dix, but noted that Charley Toorop never displayed the critical irony of many of the German artists.[138] In a 1930 interview Charley Toorop considered her work more German than Dutch, although she hated modern German art; of Neue Zachlichkeit she said, "I find it not art. It's journalistic."[139]

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[138]Een werk als Souteneur met Vrouwen geeft een koele registratie van de zelfkant zoals ook Schad of Dix dit hadden kunnen doen; ibid., 63.

[139]She continued, "When I see something by Braque, there's culture in it. These men don't grow. They immediately set to systematize everything. Their intellect gets in the way. A civilized person doesn't do that. . . . In general, I am partial to the crude and barbaric, but that

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There were many occasions for de Kooning to see Charley Toorop's work, for she showed widely in the Netherlands. In Rotterdam she exhibited fifteen works in a four-person show at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring early in 1922. Portraits or portrait-like "types" of people were the subjects of six of the works: Portrait of a Child, Old Man, Mother and Children, Three Children, Portrait of Jan Toorop, Youths.[140] A still life was included in a group exhibition of modern Dutch painters in September of the following year.[141] In 1924 the Boymans Museum opened an annex for

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systematizing is an expression of barbarism, and I won't have anything to do with it. The Germans have something Fascist." (Ik vind dat geen kunst. 't Is journalistiek. Als je een ding van Braque ziet, daar zit kultuur in. Die menschen groeien niet. Ze gaan dadelijk alles systematiseeren. Hun intellect zit hun in den weg. 'n Beschaafd mensch doet dat niet. . . . in het algemeen houd ik wek van rauw en barbaarsch, maar dat systematiseeren is 'n uiting van barbarisme, waar ik niets van moet hebben. De Duitschers hebben iets fascistisch); J. Bendien and A. Harrenstein-Schräder, "Een gesprek met Charley Toorop," De Werkende Vrouw 1 no. 3 (March 1930): 67-70, as cited in Brederoo, Charley Toorop, 98.

Charley Toorop was a founder in 1927 of the Amsterdam Filmliga which fostered the screening of experimental films by German, French, Russian and Dutch filmmakers. The close-up and montage of film and photography provided inspiration for many of Charley Toorop's paintings from later in the 1920s but probably not for the works which were available for de Kooning to see.

[140]Tentoonstelling van werken van Charley Toorop, Matthieu Wiegman, A. Colnot, O. van Rees, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 15 January - 5 February 1922, nos. 1, Kinderportretje; 3, Oude man; 4, Moeder en kinderen; 6, Drie kinderen; 8, Portret Jan Toorop; 9, Jongens; RKK archives, inv. no. 245.

[141]Keuze Tentoonstelling ter eere van het regeeringsjubileum van H. M. de Koningin: Werken van Hollandse meesters uit de laaste vijf en twintig jaren,

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presenting modern art and the installation contained a large drawing by Charley Toorop, Mensen uit de Borinage (People from the Borinage).[142]

Dada

The most rambunctious of modern art movements, Dada, swept into Rotterdam during de Kooning's young adulthood, but he seems not to have been aware of it.[143] Two Dada evenings were held in Rotterdam, on 30 January and 6 February 1923, with recitations and readings by Kurt Schwitters and Theo van Doesburg, piano solos by Nelly van Doesburg and much gleeful hooting and commotion by the audience. Since the first evening had been a financial success, the second was announced, prompting a further announcement from the chief of police that if a certain order were not kept, the performance would have to be brought to a close. The event apparently came off in its entirety, to judge by an account in the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad in which several lines of Schwitters's sound poetry were included along with the quotation of a shout

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Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 5-23 September 1923, RKK archives, inv. no. 246.

[142]See installation photo in Verslag Museum Boymans (1924): opposite p. 9.

[143]In my awareness, de Kooning has never mentioned the occasion. When I once asked him about Dada, 15 February 1983, he didn't understand my use of the term; it is possible that the timbre of my voice or a lack in his hearing caused a miscommunication.

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offered from the audience. Caricatures of the three performers appeared in the same paper shortly after the first evening.[144]

Dada art received another newspaper mention with a reproduction later that same year. In a short review of the exhibition put on by De Branding late in 1923, a Rotterdam newspaper reproduced two collages by Schwitters and the expressionist Man at Table by Otto Gleichman with the heading "Het Dadaïsme in de Schilderkunst" (Dada in Painting).[145]

Constructivism

What may now be considered as non-utilitarian Constructivist art[146] probably had no distinct identity or label for de Kooning, although he may have used the term

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[144]H. M. Kraayvanger, "Kurt Schwitters in Rotterdam," Rotterdams Jaarboekje 8 (1980): 183-192. Schwitters wrote an account of his collaboration with van Doesburg, published in the last number of De stijl, January 1932, and in English translation in The Dada Poets and Painters: an Anthology, ed. Robert Motherwell, 2d ed., (Boston, Mass.: G. K. Hall, 1981; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 275-76. For Dada in the Netherlands see K. Schippers, Holland Dada (Amsterdam: Em. Querido's Uitgeverij B. V., 1974) and idem, "Dada in Duitsland en Nederland," in Berlijn - Amsterdam, 265-68. A work I have not consulted is H. van den Berg, comp., and T. Smith, ed., Holland's bankroet door Dada: Documenten van een dadaïstische triomftockt door Nederland (Amsterdam: Ravijn, 1995).

[145]Unidentifed clipping, illustrated in Brinkman, De Branding, 45.

[146]As put forth by Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 3.

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zakelijk. From El Lissitzky's first excursions out of Russia, the revolutionary art developments in that nation were known in Holland. Van Doesburg met El Lissitsky in Berlin in the winter of 1921-22 and published his story of two squares in De stijl in 1922 (with a de-politicized translation).[147] Wendingen used a lithograph after a drawing by El Lissitsky for the cover of its Frank Lloyd Wright issue in 1921.[148] And the exhibition of Russian art first shown in Berlin was presented at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in the spring of 1923.[149] When still in Berlin it was highlighted with six reproductions in the popular journal Het Leven in December 1922.[150] The show offered a range of styles and only two of the Het Leven illustrations, Petrokommuna by Natan Altmann and Naum Gabo's Constructive Head No. 2, had the characteristic angled planes and openness of Constructivist art, two-dimensional and collage-like with lettering in the Altmann, innovatively figurative in the Gabo. Also in the exhibition were paintings by Burliuk, Chagall, Ekster, Kandinsky, Klutsis, Lissitzky

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[147]De Stijl 5, no. 10/11 (1922); as discussed in Frank Gribling, "Tussen De Stijl en het constructivisme: Duitsland-Nederland, een schakel in de internationale avant-garde betrekkingen," in Berlijn - Amsterdam, 269-79.

[148]Wendingen 4, no. 11 (1921).

[149]Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 29 April - 28 May 1923. The German catalogue was used.

[150]"Russische bolsjewiki-kunst," Het Leven, 4 December 1922, 1560.

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(Stadt, Proun 2c, Proun 19d), Malevich (three Suprematist paintings, White on White and the Knife Sharpener), Popova, Rodchenko, Stepanova and others; among the three-dimensional works were five sculptures by Archipenko, Space-Constructions and a Kinetic Construction by Gabo, a Space Construction by Medunetskii, a Construction by Rodchenko and a Counter-Relief by Tatlin.[151] De Kooning may well have seen this exhibition for he recalled to art historian Sandra Kraskin in 1977 that he had seen Archipenko's sculpture in a big exhibition in Holland.[152] Elaine de Kooning recalled that there was a modern sculptor "very famous then whom we never hear of now," not Vantongerloo, who "meant an awful lot to Bill and the students at school [i.e., the Academy]."[153] Perhaps this was Archipenko.

Piet van der Hem, Illustrator

In 1981 when de Kooning spoke of his youthful awareness

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[151]Erste Russische Kunstausstellung, Galerie Van Diemen & Co., Berlin, 1922; a copy of the catalogue is in the library of Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

[152]Willem de Kooning, unpublished interview by Sandra Kraskin, 29 August 1977, kindly made available to me by Dr. Kraskin. The five works exhibited were: nos. 538, Aegyptisches Motiv (faience); 539, Weiblich Statuette (faience); 540, Figur (bronze); 541, Mann (bronze); 542, Badende 1915 (Sculptomalerei). Nos. 538 and 540 were illustrated in the catalogue and appear to be the same as those illustrated in Donald Karshan, Archipenko, International Visionary (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, 1969), 53.

[153]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

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of Mondrian's work, explaining that he and his friends "didn't get very enthusiastic about it," he went on to say,

> we had a man who was very fashionable and [did/made] marvelous scenes and things like that. Van der Hem was his name. Piet van der Hem. And some of those were so marvelous. To be able to do that, boy, you have to be very good.

Asked if van der Hem's scenes were made as commercial art or as painting, de Kooning replied, "He was a commercial artist."[154]

Piet van der Hem (1885-1961) worked mainly as a painter but an important part of his career was in the graphic applied arts.[155] Born in Friesland, he had studied at the Amsterdam Rijksacademie,[156] receiving there the full academic training, including making compositions of historical, Biblical and mythical subjects, that de Kooning missed in Rotterdam. Van der Hem's early paintings, of around 1907, bore the influence of Breitner and other Amsterdam Impressionists, then at the height of their importance for younger generations, an influence decisive in the formation of his aesthetic. After completing his studies, van der Hem went to Paris in 1907 and was entranced

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[154]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981.

[155]My main source for the career of Piet van der Hem is Germa van Heerbeek, Piet van der Hem 1885-1961 (Leeuwarden, Fries Museum, 1987).

[156]He studied first at the Rijksschool voor Kunstnijverheid where he earned his certificate to teach drawing in secondary school, taking evening classes at the Rijksacademie, then day classes.

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with the life of Montmartre. His drawings were clearly influenced by Toulouse-Lautrec and Steinlen, with a sense of the glamour of the passing spectacle and an eye for local color. Dutch painter-critic Conrad Kikkert wrote in 1910 of van der Hem's Paris drawings, that the artist portrayed his subjects, no matter how dissolute, "with a large measure of sympathy for all that he perceived. . . . [There was] not a single reproach, no probity, no moralizing in his art." He wrote further,

> It is remarkable that all these degenerate types, these seemingly dissipated, negligible, hunger-ridden, beggarly types, are looked at with so much understanding. Really never with the somewhat annoyingly condemnatory attitude of Steinlen, nor with the brutishness of Sluyters, not with the sentimentality of Rafaëlli, nor with the cynical mockery of Pascin or the haughty caricature of Lautrec.[157]

Upon his return to Amsterdam, van der Hem sought out the working-class neighborhood of the Jordaan where he portrayed in drawings and paintings the daily life of the streets: the market (fig. 176), organ players, streetwalkers (fig. 177) and quarreling youths.[158] He offered his work

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[157]Altijd met een grote mate van sympathie voor al wat hij waarnam. Gelukkig, geen enkel verwijt, geen braafheid, geen gemoraliseer in zijn kunst. . . . Het is opmerkelijk dat met zoveel begrip al die degeneratie-typen, die uitspatting-, die verwaarlozings-, honger-, en bedel-, schijnrijke typen aangekeken zijn. Echtner nooit met het ietwat vervelend wordende veroordelende van een Steinlen, niet met het brute van Sluyters, nooit met het sentimentele van Rafaëlli, ook niet immer met de cynische spot van Pascin of de hautaine caricatuur van Lautrec; as cited in van Heerbeek, Piet van der Hem, 15.

[158]Ibid., for list of subjects.

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for public viewing at the 1909 St. Lucas exhibition in Amsterdam, which in 1908 had provided the first manifestation of modern painting in Dutch art, Luminisme. Van der Hem was superficially influenced by the Divisionism practiced by Toorop, Mondrian, Sluyters and Gestel, and was seen as a promising young modern artist. He had critical and financial success, especially with his drawings, before World War I. In those years he travelled to Rome, Paris again, Moscow and Madrid, seeking out picturesque subjects among both the worldly and the humble (fig. 178).

By 1914 there was a growing distance between van der Hem's artistic interests and the modernism of his Dutch colleagues. While his 1917-1918 paintings of Volendam fishermen displayed a broader style related to the Expressionism of the Bergen School, in the 1920s he retreated from the world of the avant-garde. He parlayed his primary interest in figure drawing into a successful career as a portraitist, seldom working without a commission; disappointed, Hammacher characterized van der Hem's later painting as a "routinized second blooming of Impressionism."[159]

Van der Hem's career as a graphic artist began as early as 1906 with illustrations for Friesian publishers; after his first successful Amsterdam showing in 1909 he received

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[159]Geroutineered nabloei van impressionnisme; Hammacher, Stromingen, 105.

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commissions from various periodicals in the larger western cities.[160] From 1915 to 1920 his political drawings appeared regularly, alternating with those by Jan Sluyters and Willy Sluiter, in the weekly De Nieuwe Amsterdammer and then in the Haagsche Post from 1920 to 1935.[161] His knack for characterizing types of people and situations made him highly successful. According to Germa van Heerbeek, some of van der Hem's fiercest prints are those which protest the horrors of World War I, but he was seldom really sharp; nor was he a person of great political involvement: "In most cases he took a rather moderate position, his drawings are in general rather more humorous than derisive."[162] Van der Hem's 1915 characterization of "Our Great Posthuma," Folkert E. Posthuma, Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, (fig. 179) in a statue of material more "enduring than metal," the food rationing coupons issued by his office, produced an image more Cubist than any the artist offered in his painting, combined with the arcs and hatchings of the Expressionist style he practiced for a short period.

Dutch cafés usually subscribed to several newspapers

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[160]In addition to van Heerbeek, I rely here upon Peter Karstkarel, De reclame door Jan Rotgans, Piet van der Hem en Jan Wijga (Franeker, Netherlands: 't Coopmanshûs Museum, 1976).

[161]From 1935 to 1941 his drawings appeared in the Haagsche Courant.

[162]In de meeste gevallen stelt hij zich vrij gematigd op, zijn tekeningen zijn in het algemeen eerder humoristisch dan honend te noemen; van Heerbeek, Piet van der Hem, 101.

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and it is likely that de Kooning was familiar with Piet van der Hem's work from these sources. He may have known it from posters as well. There were pre-war advertisements for Spyker automobiles, ongoing posters for theater productions, including the comic operettas of Nap de la Mar (fig. 180), and in the 1920s many posters for books and to encourage reading. Van der Hem usually produced only the illustrations for posters and left the lettering to others.[163]

De Kooning could also have known Piet van der Hem's work from visits to the Boymans Museum. A pastel drawing entitled Nachtcafé (fig. 181) had been in the collection since 1913. He may well have admired the apt characterization of the waiter's professional propriety, the respectively demure and bold-cagey glances of the women, and the pleased appraisal given by the well-dressed man. All are well-fed and having a good time. The rendering might be described as academic Impressionism.

Illustration as a Career

As van der Hem's career attests, in the first several decades of the twentieth century a capable draftsman in the Netherlands could at the least supplement his income with illustrations for books and magazines, independent drawings of his choice of intriguing subjects, political cartoons for

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[163]Ibid., 95, 101.

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newspapers, or drawings that advertised business enterprises and cultural organizations. By the early 1920s all these options would have been apparent to the young de Kooning.

Piet van der Hem was one of a number of Dutch illustrators who worked in a variety of styles. Most were academically trained and some, like him, pursued careers in painting as well, the most distinguished of whom was Jan Sluyters.[164] Kees van Dongen had also made illustrations early in his career.

By the 1890s the stylistic options that had devolved from academic drawing practice had been greatly enlivened by influences from Japanese prints and Art Nouveau. The great Dutch illustrator of the first two decades of the new century, Albert Hahn, Sr. (1877-1918), retained such fluid linearity thoughout his work, importantly mediated and leavened by the example of the artists working for the German satirical journal Simplicissimus.[165] A social democrat, Hahn combatted exploitation of workers with forceful images for the socialist weekly newspaper De Notenkraker and posters (fig. 182). He made masterful use of the contrasting black and white lines and forms necessary

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[164]See Kurt Löb, De onbekende Jan Sluijters (Utrecht: A. W. Bruna & Zoon, 1968).

[165]Bettina Spaanstra-Polak, "Albert Hahn en zijn inspiratiebronnen," Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 38 (1987): 331-341.

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to the line-block printing then used by newspapers.[166]

During the first World War the political cartoon proved itself a valuable medium of mass communication. After the war, the daily newspapers, as well as the weeklies, and even political parties made greater use of drawings. Such illustration work began to develop into a specialization, in the process somewhat losing its ties with the fine arts. The drawings ranged from humorously neutral to sharply partisan commentaries on topical matters.[167] The oppositional illustrated newspapers of the nineteenth century had had liberal-left orientations, and this general stance persisted into the twentieth century.

Dutch illustrator Leendert Jurriaan (1885-1980) was, like Hahn, leftist in his political views; he took the name Jordaan after the Amsterdam working-class neighborhood, the inhabitants of which he often depicted. Jordaan's drawings appeared regularly in Het Volk and Het Leven and other newspapers during the late teens and early 1920s. He had studied at the Amsterdam Rijksacademie at the same time as Piet van der Hem but produced caricatural drawings of simplified outlines (fig. 183) without the more realistic tendencies of van der Hem.

Among the well-known illustrators of de Kooning's youth

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[166]Hans Mulder, "De politieke spotprent tussen de beide wereldoorlogen," Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 28 (1977; Haarlem: 1978): 171.

[167]Ibid., 181, 203-204.

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was Belgian-born George van Raemdonck (1888-1966) who had fled to the Netherlands during World War I, found work as a caricaturist for the weekly newspaper De Amsterdammer and stayed. He became known in his new country for drawings that appeared in De Notenkraker but most of all for the comic strip, Bulletje en Boonestaak, on which he collaborated with writer A. M. de Jong; the widely-read strip was published in Het Volk from May 1922 until 1937 (fig. 184). Through the madcap adventures of two boys, readers encountered factual information from a leftist perspective on the social problems of the day: colonialism and imperialism, militarism, capitalist profiteering and the influence of religion.[168] Van Raemdonck's style varied from abbreviated linear notations in striking black-white design to a more fussy, naturalistic rendering, especially in depicting a particular social type.

The works of these and other well-known illustrators were readily accessible to de Kooning in his youth. Elaine de Kooning recalled that he and his Dutch friends knew the work of "English illustrators and cartoonists" and often remarked on de Kooning's interest in the German satirical journal Simplicissimus.[169] Although by the early 1920s the

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[168]Jos Rampart, Een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen A.M. de Jong en George van Raemdonck, Publicaties van het archivariaat "Nassau-Brabant," no. 59 ([Zevenbergen]: het Archivariaat, 1981), 55-56.

[169]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

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quarter-century-old weekly had lost much of its bite, original draftsmen Thomas Theodor Heine, Olaf Gulbransson, Wilhelm Schulz and Eduard Thöny continued their contributions, joined by Karl Arnold. The simplified linear drawings of Gulbransson and Arnold dominated the periodical at this stage of its existence, although George Grosz' more strident work did appear in 1925.[170]

Compared to Arnold's portrayals of metropolitan Germany in the 1920s, Norman Rockwell's small town America and more academic technique would indeed have seemed "innocent" to de Kooning, a word he used to describe the illustrations that he admired in the Saturday Evening Post. He recalled having a Rockwell cover pinned to the wall of his Rotterdam room and that he wanted to come to New York to be the next Norman Rockwell.[171] In 1964, he told interviewer George Dickerson from the Saturday Evening Post,

> [In Rotterdam] . . . I saw magazines from America with pictures of cars and houses. Those illustrators were way ahead of everyone in Holland, so what I really wanted to be in America was an illustrator.[172]

In addition to Rockwell's illustrations, de Kooning

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[170]Mark Rosenthal, Simplicissimus, the Art of Germany's Most Influential Satire Magazine (1896-1944) (New York: Die Aktion Productions, 1979), 22, writes of "illustration and cartoon qualities . . . as exemplified by the works of Gulbransson and Karl Arnold."

[171]Conveyed to me 5 November 1993 by Tom Ferarra, assistant to de Kooning from 1979 to 1987.

[172]George Dickerson, "The Strange Eye and Art of De Kooning," Saturday Evening Post 237 (21 November 1964): 70.

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knew the work of American illustrators J. C. Leyendecker, Charles Dana Gibson, and James Montgomery Flagg, as he mentioned to Abram Lerner in 1975.[173] One important way in which the American illustrators were ahead of the Dutch was in the size of their incomes.[174] An account in de Kooning's words occurs in the 1964 recorded conversation with Thomas Hess and Harold Rosenburg. He said that he didn't go to Paris for art but to New York:

> And New York meant like being a commercial artist or something. Being a modern person. I heard that illustrators would work in hotels, make a few drawings, make a lot of money, and, that's the truth. . . . It wasn't to do with art at all, it was just being somebody. And you make a bunch of drawings, and then you're very, you make a lot of money. Illustrators did in those days, you know. . . . They were living very comfortable, not comfortable, very ritzy. They make drawings for magazines, [and I made mine]. And I still do. [laughter][175]

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[173]A. Lerner, "A few notes after dinner with de Kooning in East Hampton," 24 November 1975, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Archives, Smithsonian Institution. I am grateful to Judith Zilczer for her help in making available a copy of this document. In Lerner's wording, de Kooning "was wild for" American illustrators. Other mentions of intending to be an illustrator occur in 1976 and 1977 interviews by Sally Yard in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 191-92, 195; and Rogers, "Artist at 74," 21.

[174]Lerner, "A few notes," recorded that de Kooning told him he had heard the successful illustrators in America were so affluent they worked only a few hours and played tennis every day, and that it had been his ambition to become a successful illustrator and make a lot of money.

[175]Willem de Kooning, Conversation with Harold Rosenberg and Thomas B. Hess, 2 March 1964, [East Hampton, N.Y.], Untranscribed tape recording made by Betty Wolffe, Hess Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. The first pair of brackets in the quotation indicates that the wording was difficult to make out.

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De Kooning's plan to become an illustrator did not follow the usual Dutch practice of garnering enough work to make a decent living; he had in mind taking himself to the United States where bigger money might be possible.

Summary

The major artists upon whom de Kooning would base his own mature art, Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse, were little in evidence to him during his youth in the Netherlands. Exhibitions of the latest international developments in modern art presented a tumultuous variety of styles, the most radical from France and Russia premised upon synthetic Cubism, for which there was no one available to him to offer an insider's appreciation or explanation. German art was shown in retrospective views up to and including Expressionism but Neue Sachlichkeit works were not exhibited.[176]

De Kooning's comments suggest that he did not seriously or closely follow the radical manifestations available to him in exhibitions put on by De Branding, Dada evenings, articles in avant-garde art periodicals like De stijl or cultural journals like Elsevier's. It is unclear how "advanced" his sensibility in painting may have been. While he found Impressionism worthy of emulation he may have had a

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[176]Georg Schrimpf, who practised a version of the New Realism, showed with the De Branding group in Rotterdam and Utrecht in 1923-24.

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solely commercial interest in such work. He seems not to have developed "an eye for" Cézanne. The rough naiveté of Expressionist painting did not appeal to him. It is possible that he and his friends "imitated" Mondrian in the medium of painting, but his explanations relate only to advertising layouts. As he said, his career focus was directed to the applied arts. In addition to advertising art, he paid attention to the illustrators of the weekly newspapers. He may have had a somewhat more advanced sensibility for sculpture than for painting, since he could remember seeing Archipenko sculptures but not Klee paintings.

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CHAPTER 6

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The De Kooning Family

While the Lassooy family dealt with bankruptcy during the economic difficulties of 1917, Leendert de Kooning achieved moderate success. In the war mobilization and requisition of 1914, he had managed to keep one of his two horses and had taken advantage of a new market, a military training field near Rotterdam.[1] With long hours in the bottling factory, he had made his business viable. The Rotterdam tax register for 1917/18 lists Leendert de Kooning, *bierhandelaar* (beer dealer), as living at Vlethoek 13b with a taxable income of 1,200 guilders and a tax of forty-six guilders. His earnings soar over those of his neighbors, whose incomes range from only 100 to 550 guilders.[2]

Willem's visits to father de Kooning sometimes took place in the factory office; twenty years later he wrote that he could only remember Leendert alone in that small

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[1]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985, suggested Leendert may have kicked the horse to make it temporarily lame.

[2]Registers of local taxation, Rotterdam, 1917-18, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam; photocopy from Harry Mariën.

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office.[3] He would also accompany his father to the stables, for he recalled to his daughter Lisa years later how the horses snorted in contented recognition at the approach of Leendert.[4]

Leendert's second son, called Leo, described his father as closed and introverted, a man who did not express his feelings. To his son-in-law, Gerrit Jan Tamboer, Leendert was "the silent type." By all accounts, he was hard-working. He was exigent with his son Leo, and therefore probably with Willem. The family observed that in later years when Leo was working at the factory, Leendert was harsher with his son's minor lapses than he had been with an employee who had been caught stealing from the company. When Leendert and Leo both worked at the factory, they took their lunches at different hours and would walk different routes to the factory. "That's the kind of man he was," said Leo, his son, in resigned sadness.[5]

Leendert's professional aspirations, as he had shared

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[3]"I can remember you only in the small office. I can only remember you when you were entirely alone." (Ik kan je alleen herinneren in het kleine kantoor. Ik kan je alleen herrinneren als je geheel alleen was.); Willem de Kooning, New York, to Leendert de Kooning, Rotterdam, Autograph letter signed, [21 November 1946], Private collection.

[4]Lisa de Kooning, interview by author, 20 October 1989.

[5]Leendert (Leo) de Kooning, half-brother of Willem de Kooning, interview by author, translated by Jos de Kooning, 16 July 1985; Gerrit Jan Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985; Leendert (Leo) and Jos de Kooning, half-nephew of Willem de Kooning and his wife, interview by author, November 1987, East Hampton.

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them with young Willem, had involved a young man's dreams to have a huge business, but when he became older he desired a small business, "neat and trim." In 1946 Willem wrote about this to his father, saying that "in painting it is the same. If ever I will be a great painter, that is for others to find out. I am contented just to be a painter."[6]

When Willem was in his late teens he visited Leendert at the house one Sunday afternoon to find a suit of clothes made by his stepmother, a seamstress, hanging over a chair for him to take. He wore it home. Half-brother Leo recalled that his mother made clothing for both her stepchildren, who called her "Tante Nel." Another Sunday afternoon Leo was at home to see Willem bring a group of drawings for his father. He recalled that the subjects were "people in the street, people cleaning the street with a broom, a garbage collector in the streets." The works were in color on paper, not canvas, about twenty by thirty inches in size. Leendert rolled up the drawings, tied them with a

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[6]Ik kan me herinneren dat je mij eens vertelde dat toen je een jonge man was je droomde dat je een geweldige groote zaak had, maar toen je oude was geworden je wilde te vreden zijn met een kleine zaak, keurig en netjes. En in 't schilderen het is het zelfde. Als ik ooit een groote schilder zal zijn dat is voor andere menschen om uit te vinden. Ik ben tevreden om juist een schilder te zijn. Willem de Kooning, New York, to Leendert de Kooning, Rotterdam, Autograph letter signed, [21 November 1946], Private collection.

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string and put them in the cupboard. They have been lost.[7]

In Leo's recollection, Willem may have visited their father about once a month, irregularly. Often he asked for money, which caused arguments. Marie, too, asked for financial help. She didn't visit so often but would send her son Ton with a note asking for money to pay the rent. This dynamic built up considerable resentment in Leendert, who felt they came to him for only one reason. Willem and his father often quarreled, Leo recalled, with harsh words aimed even at Leendert's second wife. From those exchanges, it seemed to Leo that Willem was angry at his own mother too. In Leo's view, Willem preferred to stay poor and spend his time drawing rather than earning money.[8]

Leo's older sister Nel recalled that her father had to pay support, which was settled by law but even after the term had finished, Willem continued to seek financial help. This side of the family thought he was sent by Cornelia.[9] As the law stipulated that child support continue until age twenty-one unless the child were working,[10] the differently perceived end-of-payment period may have begun when Willem

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[7]Leendert de Kooning, half-brother of Willem de Kooning, interview by author, translated by Jos de Kooning, 16 July 1985.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Neeltje de Kooning Tamboer, interview by author, 24 July 1985.

[10]Leo de Kooning, half-nephew of Willem de Kooning, explanation to author, November 1987.

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began working at the Gidding firm. Willem may well have taken it upon himself to seek the support and have been angry that he had been sent to work. The law would explain why he continued to feel he had a right to financial support in order to continue with his study of art. As Elaine de Kooning understood the dynamic, the abiding anger at not being able to attend day classes at the Academy was directed toward Cornelia.

The Lassooy Family

About a year after Willem's four years at the Gidding firm, his mother, stepfather Lassooy, and young Koos moved from the neighborhood of Aert van Nesstraat where Willem had been working, back to the Noord for two years,[11] then across town again to the Nieuwe Binnenweg, further west than the Gidding firm.[12] In June of the next year they were back in the northeastern part of the city, this time across the Rotte River in Crosswijk.[13] The next year, in March 1925 they moved the short distance to Zaagmolenstraat, the street on which Willem had been born. For the first time since the war Lassooy was listed again in the Adresboek as *koffiehuishouder*, with café and residence in the same

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[11]On 20 April 1921 they are inscribed as living at Pijnackerplein 47a; Jacobus Lassooy, Family card.

[12]16 March 1923, Nieuwe Binnenweg 212b; ibid.

[13]7 June 1924, Kerkhoflaan 47b; ibid.

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building.[14] Before 1925 the family must have been living on rent from the café license, Willem's wages, and whatever Cornelia and Lassooy earned at mostly unrecorded employment. We know only that Lassooy worked as a stoker around 1922 and also, from Koos, that he did not work for long periods of time.[15] In Ton Breedveld's experience it was Cornelia who ran the café and his early memories of it may well have begun at the Zaagmolenstraat location when he was nine. He recalled that Cornelia did the cooking, simple items made with extra salt to encourage thirst.[16] As a boy Gerrit Randolfi, Benno's nephew, would do some cleaning work at the café for Cornelia who would give him a sandwich and some money. This was in the early 1930s. "She was a tough cookie," he said; "if you fooled around, she would set you straight, fast. . . . She was a hard-working woman. It was no easy life, you know." He also noted that "she was a lady who cursed" and that she was "a very beautiful woman, even into her older age."[17]

During Willem's teenage years when the café license was

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[14]12 March 1925, Zaagmolenstraat 18a; ibid. Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1926 (listing for café): Zaagmolenstraat 18b.

[15]Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1923, gives his trade as stoker; Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[16]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[17]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985; Mr. Randolfi was born in 1923.

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rented to others, some of the renters were "tough characters," in de Kooning's description. He observed, however, that they were very honorable within their own world and in their dealings with his family.[18] It may have been through this connection that he became friendly with some of the city's more picaresque personalities. Elaine heard stories about this milieu, saying that as a teenager Bill had run errands for prostitutes, "like, go get me some candy, or get my clothes out of the tailor." He had told her that prostitutes, "made the most generous sandwiches; other people would make proper sandwiches but when a prostitute made a sandwich it had everything in it!" If these encounters brought good-natured sexual jostling,[19] Elaine did not hear about it; she recalled that, while Bill wasn't a customer of prostitutes, he liked them and the pimps as friends.[20]

When Willem first began working for Bernard Romein his mother's household was still on the Aert van Nesstraat, not far from the shopping district and his new job at the Warenhuis and equally near to the Academy where he continued his studies until at least 1921. After April 1921, the

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[18]Willem de Kooning, interviews by author, 14 April 1981, 13 April 1986.

[19]For youths of two decades later, such behavior was likely, according to Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[20]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

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family addresses were somewhat further from his activities. Cornelia's household was still his home base until about 1924, but he had begun to stay elsewhere for short periods when frictions became too great.[21] There were indeed frictions. Ton Breedveld recalled a bitter fight over money in which an angry Willem tore off the brass door handle of the café, locked by his mother who was refusing to give him funds.[22]

The Breedveld Family

Marie and her new family lived in the Noord area of Rotterdam for three-and-a-half years, when Willem was twelve to fifteen years old, then moved to Amsterdam where they stayed for another three years, from October 1919 until September 1922. Their first address was Rozengracht 44 in the Jordaan quarter.[23] De Kooning was probably aware that Rembrandt had lived on the Rozengracht (at number 184) in

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[21]Elaine de Kooning, "Personal History," wrote that de Kooning first lived with Marie "and her husband for awhile and then, with friends his own age." According to the population records, the Lassooy household was de Kooning's legal residence until about 1924 or 1925, to be discussed further below and in Chapter 7. It should be noted that in the "Personal History," Elaine de Kooning wrote that de Kooning "never returned home" after his upsetment with his mother's taking the bulk of his salary; based on Gerrit Randolfi's recollection of family stories, I interpret de Kooning's arrangements as being a little looser.

[22]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[23]Dirk Breedveld, born Rotterdam 21 November 1891, Family cards, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam and Bevolkingsregister, Amsterdam.

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his last years and the young artist may have taken in the life of the neighborhood with a retrospective imagination attuned to "Rembrandt's subject matter--the beggars and Jews that he liked to go around with or observe," musing that they "were just what happened to be around, what one naturally painted when one got up in the morning," as he commented to Seldon Rodman in 1957.[24] At this time Marie had two or three young women working for her sewing business.[25]

By October 1922 her young family was settled in The Hague, where they stayed for a year before moving to the surrounding dunes in Loosduinen in September 1923.[26] The changes of location often followed Dirk's work. After only two months they moved again, to the town of Leiden, but the reason for this move may have been Ton. It was the law to enroll children in school at the age of six, and Marie had considered the fresh air of the dunes more beneficial than school. The authorities caught up with them in Loosduinen

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[24]Rodman, "Willem de Kooning," 102-03. The nearby Wester Kerk has a monument to Rembrandt who was buried there; Rozengracht 184 was marked by a tablet, as noted in Baedeker, Belgium and Holland, 1910, 373-74. Although Jews were among the workers and artisans of the Jordaan, the Jewish quarter was on the eastern side of the city; Rembrandt had lived at Joden-Breestraat 4 in his more prosperous years, also marked by a memorial tablet in 1910; ibid., 376.

[25]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[26]Dirk Breedveld, Family card, Bevolkingsregister, The Hague.

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and Ton began his schooling at the age of eight in Leiden.[27]

After a year, the family returned to Rotterdam on October 30, 1924. Their address was in care of Breedveld's mother, in a part of town adjacent to the Noord. Within three months, however, Marie and her son had moved with friends of Marie's to an apartment just north of Central Station.[28] Breedveld had been asked to leave; his son recalled that he was "not so steadfast."[29] The population record lists him as "not traced" on 2 June 1926, about two months before Willem left for the United States; Breedveld also came to this country to seek his fortune and eventually remarried.[30]

Marie's changes of location could have provided her brother with ready access to artistic activities in

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[27]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[28]Dirk Breedveld, Family card, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[29]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985. Marie and Dirk Breedveld were officially divorced in 1932; Marie remarried in August 1933 to Christiaan Gerardus van Meurs; Maria Cornelia de Kooning, Family card, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam. Van Meurs was the eldest son of Cornelia's elder sister; Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[30]Dirk Breedveld, Family card, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam: 2 June 1926, niet op te sporen. Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, recalled that Dirk Breedveld left before Willem. Ton Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985, was aware that his father and de Kooning saw each other in the United States, but "not too often. I think that Willem didn't like him very much. When they met, I think they met via Leo Cohan."

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Amsterdam (1919-1922) and The Hague (1923). Ton could remember with certainty only a visit to the Loosduinen household,[31] the one site where museums and galleries would not have been a lure. De Kooning recalled to his assistant Tom Ferrara in the 1980s that he visited Marie in Amsterdam and that he had gone to the Rijksmuseum with his brother-in-law.[32]

In the ten years of Marie's first marriage, de Kooning grew from a student in elementary school to a young man contemplating a move to the United States. He witnessed his cherished elder sister become a woman and mother almost simultaneously, watched her child growing up, saw her make a career and alter it to follow her husband's position, knew of her money problems and appeals to father Leendert for financial help, saw her dissatisfaction with her marriage and probably met her new beau, a window dresser named Piskowitz.[33]

In de Kooning's possession around 1924 was the draft of a letter to Marie, lamenting and scrutinizing the reason she had not answered his two previous letters.

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[31]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[32]Tom Ferrara, telephone interview by author, 12 March 1995.

[33]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, recalled "Iskovich" and implied that these were pleasant times; Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985, called this friend Piskowitz; in both instances I spell the name phonetically.

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> Are you perhaps angry with my first letter, in which I wrote that I didn't find it as pleasant at your place as before? If that is the reason, then it is unmotivated! If I honestly lay open my thoughts, that doesn't mean that I am reproaching you with them.[34]

Mixed with the plea for clarification and understanding is a brief flash of defiance, a claim of emotional independence that prefigures his later handling of separation after his move to New York. He wrote that he would greatly value hearing from her but that,

> if this appears impossible for one or another reason, then I surely regret it, but <u>also</u> I shall be able to reconcile myself to it very rapidly.[35]

Years later, in 1967, in another letter to Marie, after a forty-year hiatus in their communication, for which he "found no reason to apologize," de Kooning mused with intimacy and honesty about their family and his feelings. In English, given here in his spelling, he wrote, "I guess, that in a way, you are the strongest one in the family." Of their mother he noted,

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[34]Zijn jullie misschien boos op den eersten brief van mij, waar ik u schreef dat ik net niet zoo prettig als vroeger meer vond bij jullie? Als dat de reden is, is ze ongemotiveerd! Als ik eerlijk mijn gedachten bloot legt zegt nog niet dat ik jullie er een verwijt van maak; Willem de Kooning, Rotterdam, to Marie [de Kooning Breedveld], [Rotterdam], Autograph letter [draft], ca. 1924, Private collection; transcribed and translated with help from the owner. This draft was with de Kooning's sketchbook and drawings that were left in Brussels; it has the heading Rotterdam and opens with a salutation to his mother, which is then changed to Marie; the text implies that Marie is living in Rotterdam at the time.

[35]Maar als dit door de een of andere reden onmogelijk blijkt, spijt het me zeker, maar <u>ook</u> zal ik me er zeer rap in kunnen troosten; ibid.

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I am paranoid about her. With my self-centeredness and my unforgiving heart --- I never forgave her.

I know, --- it's not very manly --- but I can't help it.

When I was around 38 or 40 years old I had become in a terrible state of anxiety. My heart would start beating wildly if I just thought about her.

Of the dynamic between father Lassooy and Cornelia he observed, "And I always felt that mother really killed him."

But as you say, -- she is very old now --- and somewhere I have a compassion for her. She is a remarkable woman. Her letters ar absolutely clear.

She is --- (as a matter of fact) -- a little frightening.

I must have inherited her hysteria.

After writing of father de Kooning he went on,

I don not intend to go into some deep psychological underground (-- I really do not care much for it) --- but there must be something we inherit.

Or at least we <u>ought</u> to! for if we did'nt ---- than we <u>really</u> have nothing to do with one another.

So there is the strange struggle, -- or at least the possibility of a struggle --- not to have any love for one's parents ----- and still to have an unandurable and rediculus situation to think that there were meabe two other people one came from.

It is'nt a matter of love, even, or pride.
It is a matter of fate.

Of course, -- to think such things, -- I admit ------ it isn't very grown-up.

I can't help it.
I stayed in this world of childish wonder.

I think that a lot of creative people never grow up.

I am certain that a real man would'nt paint any pictures!

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Or wonder about the universe.
Or believe in dreams.
Or think that trees sometimes look at him.[36]

This document affords a candid and poetic view of the mature man, despite, perhaps because of, his disclaimers. We owe its existence to his close relationship with Marie.[37]

The Randolfi Family

Beyond his kin relationships with the Lassooy, de Kooning and Breedveld families, Willem chose another family for his close circle. At the Academy in 1917 he met Carmine Bennedeti Randolfi (1902-1949), called Benno, who was two years older than he and one year in advance in his studies. Before his time at the Academy, Benno had studied the cello;[38] he also worked for a Rotterdam decorating studio, that of Smierman. His widow recounted Randolfi's recollections of learning lettering and decorating ceilings while at Smierman's, working from 6:00 in the morning until 6:00 in the evening and then going to classes at the Academy. "For one week he got fifty cents and one or two

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[36]This letter was written in English; I have given the original spelling and punctuation. Willem de Kooning, East Hampton, to Marie van Meurs, Rotterdam, Autograph letter signed, [2 December 1967], possession of Anthonie Breedveld, Tiel, Netherlands in 1985.

[37]When news of Willem's drinking reached the popular press and Marie's awareness, she wrote her brother with reproach, urging him to desist, at which point he cut her from his communications and spoken affection; Elaine de Kooning, conversation with author, 1980s.

[38]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

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small tubes of paint."[39] Benno studied at the Academy from 1916 through at least 1919; as far as can be ascertained from the extant records, he completed only three years of study, less than Willem.[40]

Benno's nature was poetic and philosophical. In later years, he expressed himself in writing as well as in painting; sometime before 1940 he had become interested in Krishnamurti, an interest that stayed with him until his death on 28 December 1949.[41]

Most of Benno Randolfi's work was destroyed in the Rotterdam fire of 1940, an event that altered his attitude to life and painting. His earlier ambition to prepare for exhibitions changed to painting "with pleasure and his whole heart," in his widow's description.[42] Paintings that remain include an Impressionist landscape, a bouquet of white lilies against a dark background, a child with a doll,

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[39]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, widow of Benno Randolfi, interview by author, 30 April 1986, The Hague.

[40]Verslag der Academie over 1916-17 and 1918-19. His widow was not aware that the three years were less than the full course of study.

[41]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interviews by author, 30 April 1986, 30 May 1986. When Benno died so suddenly at age forty-seven, de Kooning's mother was upset because she hadn't heard from her son in a couple of years, and feared that if Benno died, Willem might too; she wrote urgent letters to de Kooning and to Leo Cohan; Gerrit Randolfi, interviews by author, 20 January 1985, 20 April 1986.

[42]After the bombing Benno and his wife lived on the floor above de Kooning's sister Marie; Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 20 May 1986.

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a team of horses with a man plowing a field, a Gypsy boy, a portrait of his father made from memory and a view of Rotterdam harbor (figs. 185-187). The date of the landscape (fig. 198) is unknown, but the other paintings are from the early 1940s.[43] The brushwork of this time is supple and free but always renders the visible world. Randolfi was at work on a subject dear to his heart when he died, a large painting of a Gypsy camp at dusk.[44] Gerrit Randolfi remembered his uncle's favorite subjects as the marketplace and the port of Rotterdam.[45]

Among Benno Randolfi's watercolors are picturesque views of Moroccan streets and courtyards, probably from the 1930s, a man selling balloons, a bar scene, people at a beach and a more vaguely Symbolist couple dancing (figs. 188-191). The brushwork and emphasis vary considerably but Randolfi used the watercolor for its fluid translucency and had an eye for gesture.

When Benno's daughter was born in 1942, he made a photo album with lettering designed by himself (fig. 192). The

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[43]The harbor was painted on commission, but refused by the patron who had wanted a view with more ships. Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 30 April 1986.

[44]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, ibid., said that Benno, who played the guitar, was very fond of Gypsies and that there was a mutual sympathy; before World War II Benno had persuaded some Gypsy friends to make a parade through Rotterdam to advertise a film.

[45]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

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spiralling elegance of this lettering is very much within the Art Déco sensibility that we have seen in some of the work of Bernard Romein.

Asked which artists Benno Randolfi had especially admired, his widow's first response was, "not the movement of modernisings," although she went on to say that he liked Mondrian, whose early work he knew, and Picasso because "he painted the inner side of people, one eye in the future and the other in the past." She remembered as well Randolfi's admiration for Chagall, Charley Toorop and van Konijnenburg.[46]

De Kooning once recalled of Benno Randolfi to poet and playwright Arnold Weinstein, "Was he strong! (though he walked like a woman),"[47] noting the Italian grace that seemed foreign in Rotterdam and that must have been unlike de Kooning's own more hefty gait. Another de Kooning comment on styles of walking, revealing his own continual interest in gesture, was expressed to Elaine, who said, "Bill always talked about the style of Americans, [which he

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[46]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 30 April 1986.

[47]The words are from a song by Arnold Weinstein. One evening in East Hampton around 1978 Weinstein visited with de Kooning and his half-brother Koos Lassooy, jotting down their Rotterdam recollections and making them into a ballad on the spot; Arnold Weinstein, telephone interview by author, 23 February 1986. Discussed in Judith Wolfe, "De Kooning's Rotterdam Days In Music and Art," The East Hampton Star Summer Book, 22 May 1986.

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liked], and the way they walked."[48]

Rotterdam artist-contemporaries have recalled that Benno was a ladies' man.[49] His nephew, too, remarked that Benno was "a real lady-killer, very much attracted to girls" and that for him, girls came first. De Kooning, in contrast, he said, "was always very serious. His studies and things like that were always in front of everything."[50]

Willem liked the entire Randolfi family, whom he spoke about many times in later years.[51] Indeed, they had a colorful story. Benno's father, Giovanni, had been born in Picinisco, Italy around 1860 and in his teenage years had walked north with two sisters to Holland, intending eventually to sail for the United States. In an adventure prior to that journey, young Giovanni had been bought from his impoverished parents to perform in a small traveling entertainment run by a "Louis de Beer" with dogs, a dancing bear, and several other children, also from Italian farm families. The children were overheard speaking Italian by an official in Lyons who halted the illegal practice and had

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[48]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[49]Nico Benschop, interview by author, 4 May 1985, recalled that Benno always had a girlfriend; de Kooning was "more serious, a different type."

[50]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[51]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985, said that de Kooning "told me about the Randolfis over and over."

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them repatriated. Parts of this tale resemble the events in Hector Malot's 1878 children's story known in Holland as Alleen op de Wereld (Alone in the World), to which they are related by historical circumstance.[52]

The young Giovanni once again set out northward and when he reached the Netherlands, he met a young Dutch woman from Zutphen who became his wife. After living in Amsterdam and Nijmegen, they settled in Rotterdam in 1891. Benno was the eighth of eleven children. Giovanni worked primarily playing a street organ that was mounted on a wagon and wheeled to various parts of the city. The organ worked by turning a handle, by hand, somewhat on the principle of a player piano. It was a family activity, with Mathilda Randolfi collecting coins from the audience and the youngest child tucked in a cradle beside the organ. The photographer Henri Berssenbrugge captured their early years in a print now in the Rotterdam archive (fig. 193).[53] Years later, the Randolfis were remembered fondly by fellow townsmen.[54] In the summer, they would also make and sell ices and

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[52]Sans Famille is the orginal title; the story is still in print and is known variously in English as Remi, The Foundling, or Nobody's Boy. Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 18 April 1985, recalled that his father got this book out of the library for the children.

[53]Berssenbrugge worked in Rotterdam between 1907 and 1916. The location as recorded on the back of the photo was Westerkade at the corner of Westerlaan; Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[54]Klaas van de Erve, interview by author, July 1985.

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balloons. Giovanni was enterprising and went to England to buy other street organs which he rented or sold to others.[55]

The Randolfi story that de Kooning recalled most often to Elaine concerned an occasion when he had been invited by his young friend to stay for dinner. Everyone was seated round the table and Giovanni was about to cut the meat; noting a slight difference in the configuration, he paused, counted heads and then proceeded with equanimity to slice the appropriate number of small pieces. His casual generosity impressed the young Willem. After quarrels with his mother over her demand for what he considered too much of his pay, he left home to stay with the Randolfis. Randolfi family lore has Willem staying with Giovanni's family for about a year, although the many stories may have amplified the perceived time.[56] During the years that Willem was studying at the Academy, Giovanni Randolfi lived on the Schavensteeg in the city center near the Academy;

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[55]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985. One organ bought from Giovanni Randolfi by Mr. and Mrs. Rinke of Utrecht is now in the collection of the Nationaal Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement in Utrecht. I thank Drs H. M. Blankenberg, Head of Education and Information at the museum, for his helpful information and tour of the collection.

[56]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985, thought de Kooning's age was sixteen; Elaine de Kooning, ibid., felt it was seventeen. Both thought it was when he was making window displays for the Warenhuis, which started with his job for Romein when he was sixteen and may have continued for some years.

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this remaining part of the Zandstraat neighborhood was razed for the new Beurs (trade center) in the early 1920s.[57]

Willem also stayed for a short while with Benno's older brother Vito and his wife Mina. Their apartment was very small and Willem must have slept on a straw pallet in a hallway.[58] As a gesture of thanks, he painted a door of the apartment. No recollection of the door survives beyond the beautiful colors and Vito's great pleasure with it; he said that every time he came home and saw the door, he felt like a king.[59] It was in late 1924 that Vito and Mina first had their own apartment, having previously lived with her family; their address was Weste Wagenstraat 49b.[60] When Vito and Mina moved from that apartment they were very sorry to leave the door behind.[61] Whatever de Kooning had painted on the door, one becomes mindful of the resonance with these early days that the door panels of the 1960s, all

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[57]Algemeen adresboek der gemeente Rotterdam, 1917, 1919, 1921; further information from Adriaan Gordijn, letter to author, 14 August 1995.

[58]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 April 1986.

[59]Benno Randolfi, son of de Kooning's friend Carlo Randolfi and nephew of his friend Benno, interview by author, 10 July 1985, Rotterdam, recalled two doors; Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 30 April 1986, and Gerrit Randolfi, telephone interview by author, 8 February 1986, spoke of one door.

[60]Vito Randolfi, born Rotterdam 1 March 1891, Family card, filed in Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

[61]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 30 April 1986.

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paintings of women, may have had for him.

When Willem visited Benno's older brother Frans, "it was always carnival," Frans's son Gerrit recalls from family stories. He visited often; invitations were not necessary: "this is family." Frans would play the guitar, his wife Sientje would sing;[62] perhaps Bill would, too.[63] When the table was set for dinner, on one memorable occasion, two-year-old Gerrit pelted Willem with little meatballs from his soup, ignoring his mother's protests and becoming more enthusiastic as he saw his target's genuine dislike for the game.[64] At these family gatherings de Kooning met Sientje's brother Leo Cohan, who would help him stow away on a ship to the United States. Leo told him, he said later, "all about New York. He'd worked there as a waiter."[65]

For all Giovanni's enterprise at earning a living, his attitude toward finances was to stop working when there was enough money for basic needs and to enjoy music and convivial moments. When money ran out in a few days, it was time to work again. The family attributed this philsophy to

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[62]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985. Francisco Randolfi was born in 1888.

[63]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[64]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[65]Wilkie, "Portrait," 28.

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Rousseau.[66] In Benno's nephews' view, "the whole family Randolfi went overboard to live like that."[67]

Years later, on seeing the Berssenbrugge photograph of Giovanni and his wife with their organ, de Kooning commented, by way of explanation, that his own family circumstance had been more advantaged.[68] Yet the Randolfi family's respect for the arts and their fiscal policy may have bolstered Willem's resolve to spend time drawing rather than earning a living. The Randolfis may also have set a standard of artistic conviviality, perhaps associated with accounts of Parisian café society, that may have been a factor in the founding of The Club in New York in the 1950s.

La Vie de Bohème

Willem, Benno Randolfi, and perhaps another friend named Wimpy Klop, who began studying at the Academy a year after de Kooning, rented a studio together on the Karrensteeg, a short, narrow street in the center and oldest part of Rotterdam. Between the fish and flower markets, it was not far from the Academy, the Coolsingel, and the stores that might offer them employment. It was also near the Schiedamschedijk with its dance-halls and bars frequented by

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[66]Gerrit Randolfi, interviews by author, 20 January 1985, 18 April 1985.

[67]Ibid.; confirmed by Benno Randolfi, son of Carlo, interview by author, 10 July 1985.

[68]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 July 1986.

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sailors and many others. This address comes down in family accounts but also appears in the population record as Karrensteeg 14, with the date 7 July 1925. The friends thus lived there after their adventure in Belgium.[69]

A number of stories hover about this time. Willem's half-brother Koos recalled going there to bring money from the family. It had been requested to pay the rent, but in Koos's recollection, it was spent on bread and milk.[70] The young men apparently did not pay their rent as a point of honor, in romantic identification with Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov.[71] The policy was, of course, dictated by financial necessity. In another recollection about difficulty in paying rent, de Kooning said that his father de Kooning paid it.[72]

Referring to this period, de Kooning told a reporter for Time magazine in 1951, "I met a lot of fellows and we became a little like bohemians. We tried to paint like the impressionists. Some of us imitated Mondrian, too, but we

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[69]"Schiedamschedijk" is the earlier spelling; it is now written "Schiedamsedijk." Jacobus Lassooy, Family card, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam, at bottom in pencil: "No 4 [a reference to Willem, fourth person listed on the card] Karrensteeg 14 / opgave [reported] 7/7 '25."

[70]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[71]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 2 December 1984.

[72]Idem, interview by author, 12 July 1983.

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didn't really get it very good."[73] Benno Randolfi's few surviving paintings do bear out an Impressionist interest. No such paintings by de Kooning exist, but two by Klop are in Belgium and will be discussed in Chapter 7. The Mondrian imitations may have been in the realm of the applied arts rather than easel paintings, as has been discussed in Chapter 5.

Henri Murger's Scènes de la vie de bohème, 1851, translated into Dutch, had been a favorite book of Dutch artists during the 1880s and maintained its reputation at least nominally during de Kooning's youth.[74] The zany, impecunious adventures of dedicated young men who sought to make their ways in the world of literature, music, painting and love in 1830s Paris would have provided a lens to see present difficulties in a perspective different from that of Leendert de Kooning, or Gidding's workers or even Bernard Romein. To Antonie Breedveld, de Kooning's bohemian attitude to life was modern.[75]

De Kooning's daily schedule had gradually shifted from the highly structured long days of house painting and evenings at the Academy to the more fluctuating demands of

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[73]"Willem the Walloper," Time 57 (30 April 1951): 63.

[74]Rieta Bergsma, "Piet Meiners," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 189.

[75]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985: "In those times, [to be] bohemian was a modern part of society"; Mrs. Breedveld added, "a modern style of living."

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freelance work and the independence of setting his own art projects. For at least his last two years in Europe, he was living with youthful artist friends, sometimes at barely subsistence level. Within their economically pressed world, they made time to read and discuss literature with friends, sit in cafés and draw prodigiously.

They must have explored a range of interests. One youth in their circle, a friend of Willem Klop, was a spiritualist whose practices so impressed one sensitive boy in the group that he lost his reason.[76] Benno Randolfi's nephew remembered from their stories that, "There was great excitement on at least one occasion. The guy . . . [who was interested in the spritual world] went into a trance. They talked about it afterward." He got the impression that the interest in "the spiritual world" lasted for time, "maybe a year," and then faded.[77]

Among de Kooning's friends in the neighborhood were a number of "tough characters," as he described them. He recalled cafés frequented by pimps and other colorful personalities, clarifying to a Dutch interviewer that these people always drank tea, never hard alcohol.[78] One friend

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[76]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 30 April 1986.

[77]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 17 February 1986. He identified the youth interested in the spiritual world as someone who later went to Australia.

[78]Hellmann, "De verloren zoon"; reprinted in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 256.

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from the demi-monde of Rotterdam was Zwarte Max (Black Max). He sometimes visited the young artists at the Karrensteeg studio and at a later apartment on the Kruisstraat but would often disappear for long stretches.[79] He may have been a pimp, but if so, it was a part-time activity; while something about his dealings was shady, he himself was genial, with an inclination to poetic reflection that captured de Kooning's imagination. De Kooning was touched one day when he happened by the railroad tracks and came upon Zwarte Max playing the harmonica in private reverie. And he remembered with pleasure the irony of his well-groomed, handsome friend strolling along the Coolsingel tipping his hat to the solid citizens of the town who "raised their hats right back" and "never knew they were bowing to Black Max."[80]

On weekends the townspeople, especially the younger ones, strolled along the Coolsingel. De Kooning described this pastime in which boys and girls met each other as "promenading." Groups of youths might gather at corners for conversation and a survey of others who strolled with their friends. A usual configuration for strollers would be two young men or two young women walking with each other, but

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[79]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 13 April 1986; Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985; Arnold Weinstein, interview by author, 23 Febrary 1986.

[80]These words are from Arnold Weinstein's "Song of Black Max," reprinted in Wolfe, "De Kooning's Rotterdam Days In Music and Art."

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sometimes, as de Kooning told Elaine, four young women might stroll along "arm in arm, like four abreast."[81]

As a young man, de Kooning "liked to dress," in Elaine's words. He thought the cut of ready-made shirts from America was "the ultimate" and disdained his mother's handmade shirts. "He loved American style."[82] The ready-made clothing in Dutch stores was ill-fitting and of poor quality, Gerrit Randolfi recalled. And the popularity of American movies inflamed the interest in the cut of American clothing.[83]

The story of the Karrensteeg apartment ended when the landlord evicted his young tenants.[84] There was at least one other apartment held jointly by some of the young artists, on the Kruisstraat, a street running south from Central Station, or in some accounts, on the Kruiskade, the large east-west thoroughfare south of the zoo at which Kruisstraat ended. The youths lived there just before Willem left for the United States in 1926. Their quarters were in the back room of a house that had front, middle and back rooms. There Willem had painted two doors, one gold

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[81]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 April 1986.

[84]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 23 July 1985, said that the landlord kicked them out because they didn't pay the rent; one day he went there to visit and they were gone.

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and one silver. His nephew's recollection does not include a reason for the choice. Ton Breedveld could only suggest that his uncle may have been trying out that kind of paint.[85] The glittering sophistication of silver and gold were popular in Art Déco design, from ocean liner murals to product packaging. Several years later, the changing tenants had not altered the doors, for by chance Marie and Ton moved to the same apartment, only realizing it was indeed the very place by the doors.[86]

Perhaps the regal sensation that Vito Randolfi experienced with his doors was encouraged by gold and/or silver paints. If de Kooning had a penchant for metallic paints, it becomes a precedent for the aluminum paint he would later use for its ambiguous spatial qualities in his 1950s paintings of women.

In spite of the camaraderie of these early years, de Kooning recalled in 1976 to Paul Hellman, interviewer for the Rotterdam newspaper Algemeen Dagblad, that he "was dying to leave the Netherlands. I don't know why, all that I

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[85]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985. He remembered that an architect had lived in the front room.

[86]Ibid.; Breedveld also recalled that this was in "the Jewish quarters. And when all the shops were closed, the Jewish shops were open . . . so we had always fresh bread and fresh butter and things like that." Marie and Ton were inscribed as living at Kruisstraat 32b on 7 March 1928; Maria Cornelia Breedveld, Family card, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam.

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remember is that I felt very alone."[87]

Social Concerns

In a 1964 tape-recorded conversation with Thomas Hess and Harold Rosenburg that was also a drinking session, de Kooning alluded to a period, in Holland, of being "very social conscious" that he interpreted as "my downfall." He explained, after the laughter that this provoked, "I got really fucked up with the whole thing." Hess read into this comment a dichotomy between social responsibility and making art in Paris, hence the appeal of commercial art and going to the United States; Rosenburg wanted to argue that "getting screwed up by the socialists" took place in the United States; de Kooning's elucidations were as brief as their attention:

> It had nothing to do with art at all. Either you make a living or you don't. . . . In Holland all the socialists were very art conscious. But I thought I had to get out of that because [he trailed off]. I always wanted to go to New York.[88]

A difficult espousal of social concerns might have

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[87]Hellmann, "De verloren zoon."

[88]Conversation of Willem de Kooning, Harold Rosenberg and Thomas B. Hess, 2 March 1964, [East Hampton, N.Y.], untranscribed tape recording, made by Betty Wolffe, Hess Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is de Kooning's development of this idea: "The social conditions in those days because I knew it by heart, because I was always doing it myself, and then I said, Jeez, it's true, I was really like a shit [perhaps referring to his economic existence]. Not fair, no reason why everybody else should be that way too. So then I got very social conscious."

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occurred under any number of circumstances. In conversations in the 1980s de Kooning would say, "but don't write that," after an altogether generic comment about Holland being a somewhat socialist country; it was an emphasis he saw as removed from his mature existence. From de Kooning's early circle, Jac. Jongert and possibly Bernard Romein had socialist political leanings, and each of them would have had views on the relationship between a political agenda and his art work. It is likely that de Kooning's own political views were equally allied with those prevailing in the old inner city neighborhoods among the resourceful poor who took a certain pride in their way of living and were loyal to the Queen.[89]

Freelance Art Work

After the four years at the Gidding firm and somewhat over a year working for Bernard Romein, de Kooning felt he could make his way in the world without further study at the Academy. While continuing his work for Romein "for quite a few years, on and off,"[90] he did other freelance work, sometimes in collaboration with friends. He made programs for movies,[91] price tickets, set up window displays,

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[89]Bouman, De groie, 53. The socialists called for abolition of the monarchy.

[90]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[91]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

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painted lettering on store windows[92] and made larger advertising signs. Some of this work was "à la Mondrian" and may have featured vertical sans-serif lettering and asymmetrical layouts, as in Oud's Café Unie of 1925. Other lettering would have been in the distinctive Art Déco styles like those adapted by Romein and Benno Randolfi. Traditional lettering using Roman forms was certainly part of de Kooning's repertoire; he must have made a perfect Roman "O" to meet Romein's standards. All in all, window dressing was the work most often referred to as de Kooning's trade by younger members of his own and the Randolfi families.[93]

When de Kooning mentioned his career preparation to Curtis Bill Pepper in 1983, he stressed the lettering and painting signs.[94] Talking about the trade of commerical lettering with John McMahon in the 1960s, de Kooning commented that his Dutch lettering was not suitable in the United States and that he quickly had to abandon that

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[92]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 20 May 1986, recalled Carlo Randolfi's saying that he and Willem had painted letters on shops in Rotterdam in gold leaf.

[93]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985; Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985. Breedveld recalled a "lens and light system" painted on canvas for a photography shop.

[94]Pepper, "The Indomitable de Kooning," 86, records, "I was working daytime and going to the academy at night, and they equipped me very good. I was a good letterer, and I could paint signs. I never expected to be an artist--just to make a living that way."

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direction.[95]

Like so many other young Dutch artists of the period, de Kooning and his friends were versatile in their means of earning money. Gerrit Randolfi was aware that his uncle and Willem both made still life paintings to sell. Friendly collaboration on the same painting occurred in at least one instance, a landscape.[96]

The Rotterdam Adresboek for the year 1925 carries an entry for "Randolfi and B. F. van Arum, reclameschild," (advertising painters) with an address at Lange Torenstraat in the center of the old city.[97] This enterprise must not have been very enduring, for none of the Randolfi family recalled it. Rotterdam artist Nico Benschop had a wisp of a recollection of a small advertising studio in which de Kooning worked; perhaps it was the same as this listing. Benschop distantly recalled a sign for an optician with a round disc and primary colors that he felt was designed by de Kooning. Compared to Romein's book on lettering with the Redis-pen, Benschop thought de Kooning's publicity work had

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[95]John McMahon, telephone interview by author, 15 May 1994.

[96]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985; this is described in Chapter 5.

[97]Lange Torenstraat 72a was near the Grote Kerk; the street no longer exists.

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"more simple, clear, readable . . . block letters."[98]

No recollection by family, friends or contemporaries has included illustration work among de Kooning's means of making money while he was in the Netherlands or in Belgium. Only de Kooning himself has mentioned illustration work as a career, and that was as a projection for the future, a plan to become rich in the United States. It is an ambition that he took seriously and prepared for: most of the surviving juvenilia may be seen as related to a career in illustration. Many of the drawings survive because they were valued in themselves by his Belgian employers.

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[98]Nico Benschop, interviews by author, May 1985. Benschop spent much of the early 1920s travelling in France, and it is difficult to place him in Rotterdam at the suitable times; for instance, he felt he had met de Kooning at Rotterdam's Nenijto Fair but that event occurred in 1928, two years after de Kooning's departure for the United States. Nothing about this particular memory is counter to what could be expected, but it must be taken more as a general sketch of the period than as a precise recollection related to de Kooning.

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THE YOUNG WILLEM DE KOONING:

EARLY LIFE, TRAINING AND WORK, 1904-1926

by

JUDITH L. WOLFE

VOLUME II

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York

1996

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CHAPTER 7

BELGIUM

The Journey

De Kooning and his friends Benno Randolfi and Willem Klop set out for Belgium, possibly in the spring of 1924. The trip may have been considered a trial run for a projected longer stay in Paris, a goal of many Rotterdam artists of de Kooning's generation.[1] He and his friends referred to Brussels as "little Paris,"[2] and in 1950, de Kooning spoke of an ideal reunion with his Dutch artist friends in a Paris café.[3] But the journey is usually connected with his projected emigration to the United States.[4] To an interviewer in 1977, de Kooning said of the trip, "I can't remember now if I went there to see art . . . it also naturally had to do with my wish to go to America, a sort of testing of how long I could stay away from home. I could, and long."[5]

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[1]Rotterdam artists Jan van Heel, born 1898, and Dolf Henkes both went to Paris.

[2]Tom Ferrara, telephone interview by author, 12 March 1995.

[3]Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 9.

[4]Hess, 1968, 16.

[5]Tromp, "Elke stijl," 13.

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The timing of the trip is uncertain. The one document to offer any guide, in the population register in Rotterdam, records only that by 1 November 1925 it was officially noted, after the fact, that Willem had departed for Brussels.[6] One wonders if this information may have been a ruse to elude the Dutch record-keeping system rather than actual fact, for it does not correspond with any other account. Thomas Hess wrote on the basis of de Kooning's recollections that the trip to Belgium occurred in 1924, with a return to Rotterdam in 1925.[7] Marguerite Van Genechten Lemmens, who will be introduced shortly, offered recollections that point to the long days of spring or summer in 1924.[8] Accounts of the duration of the trip vary from three months to a year.

Whatever the timing, the young men went with a sense of adventure. None of them had a passport, nor money for train fare. They managed to elude train conductors and officials. Elaine de Kooning said in 1985,

> Bill told me you were supposed to have a visa or something and he didn't have it and what they did was, they would go into the bathroom or they would just be

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[6]Jacobus Lassooy, Family card, Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam: 1 November 1925, Brussel, ambtshalve. At the bottom of the card there are several erasures of pencil notations that appear to have included the dates "15/5 24" and "2/6 24." It is possible that May and June 1924 were times of change.

[7]Hess, 1959, 113.

[8]Marguerite Jeanne Charles Van Genechten Lemmens (1899-1991), interview by author, 26 May 1990, Brussels.

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very evasive. . . . They all just slipped through.

Not only did a passport cost money, Elaine recalled, but,

> Bill just didn't believe in papers. . . . Bill told me that he never had any papers. He took pride in it. This is when I met him. And he was in America, he didn't have a social security number and he said statistically he did not exist and he loved that idea.[9]

The young men earned what they could with odd jobs, including playing music in the streets, as well as painting advertisements outside in the street.[10] Hess repeats from de Kooning that he "took odd jobs with decorators' firms," and "at sign painting and window display."[11]

Belgium was nearer to Rotterdam than either Paris or the United States and intermediate in terms of challenge since the Flemish spoken in northern Belgium was his own language. This was the case in Antwerp, mentioned with

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[9]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985. De Kooning also had a careful and law-abiding side; in early years in New York he reported his presence to the local police; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 3 February 1983.

[10]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interviews by author, 30 April 1986, 30 May 1986, based on recollections of her husband and of Til Randolfi, sister of Benno; Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985. According to Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, Benno Randolfi, who went to Belgium more than once, worked there as a *letterschilder*, painting lettering for advertising. At one point he had work digging in a garden in ice cold weather; if this was the same trip as that with de Kooning, it could be early spring and still fit with Marguerite Van Genechten-Lemmens's recollection of late evening hours of light. On one trip to Belgium, Benno travelled via Limburg and Brabant, staying at a monastery and paying with paintings. In a fish shop in Belgium he painted a mural decoration with fish.

[11]Hess, 1959, 113; idem, 1968, 16.

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Brussels as cities where de Kooning stayed in all accounts of the trip. Brussels, however, where we can better document the journey, was predominantly a French city in the 1920s. It was the one Belgian city in which the two nationalities came into close contact. Flemish, the Dutch language, was used in the older part of town and in most of the suburbs. French would have been the language of the elegant shops and all advanced education, including instruction at the art Academy. The wide avenues and stately stone buildings of the newer Brussels had--and still have--the feeling of post-Haussmann Paris, in contrast to the brick buildings and medieval streets and canals which laced much of Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

Brussels: The Van Genechten Firm

In Brussels de Kooning sought employment with a firm of painter-decorators in response to an advertisement in the Brussels newspaper Le Soir. The draft of his letter of application exists and may be translated as follows:

> Dear Sir,
> ~~On the occasion of your advertisement~~ [crossed out]
> Your advertisement in "Le Soir" leads me to write to you, in order that I may apply for the position described there as painter-decorator.
> ~~After 6 years of~~ [crossed out] After having attended the Academy in Rotterdam Holland I have always worked on my own account and I can declare with utmost confidence that I satisfactorily know my trade as concerns modern publicity, the initiative to illustrate effectively a certain article, lettering, etc.
> ~~My man drawing~~ ~~The preferable~~ [crossed out]
> Should you permit me an interview we can come to

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an agreement over terms.[12]

As a result of the subsequent meeting, Wim de Kooning and Wimpy Klop went to work for the decorating firm of the Van Genechten family, receiving room and board as part of their pay. It is not clear whether Benno Randolfi worked for the firm, but he did not live with the family as the two Willems did.[13]

This firm had been established at the turn of the century[14] by the painter Joseph "Jef" Van Genechten who had died the previous year, in June of 1923, at the age of fifty-two. In a configuration remarkably like that of the Giddings in Rotterdam, the company was subsequently run by the two sons. Georges and Florent, however, were nearer in age to de Kooning than the Giddings had been, with

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[12]Weled Heer, ~~Naar-aanleiding-van-Uw-annonce~~. Uw annonce in "Le Soir" is mij aanleiding U te schrijven, zoo mogelijk te solliciteren naar de daarin genoemde plaats als schilder decorateur. ~~Na-6-jaar-de~~ Na de academie te Rotterdam Holland bezocht te hebben heb ik steeds voor eigen rekening gewerkt en kan ik met de meeste gerustheid verklaren, mijn vak voldoende te kennen, wat betreft Als moderne reclames, iniatief om zeker artikel doeltreffend te illustreeren, letterzetten etc. ~~Mijn-man-teekening~~ ~~Het liefs~~ Indien U mij een onderhoud wil toestaan kunnen wij over de condities overeen komen; Willem de Kooning, [Brussels], to Van Genechten firm, Brussels, Autograph letter [draft], [1924], private collection; transcribed and translated with help from the owner.

[13]In 1990 Marguerite Van Genechten-Lemmens did not know the name.

[14]The business is listed for the first time in the Almanach de commerce de Bruxelles et sa banlieu (1899), pt. 2: 723, at the address of rue du Moulin 76 (K.); in 1905 it was located at Rue Vandernoot 80; and in 1911 at Rue Vandernoot 66.

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birthdates of 1898 and 1901. It was with Georges, the elder, who was more bohemian and easy-going, that de Kooning got along especially well, according to family recollections.[15] The two brothers had each studied painting and decorative painting, according to their sister Marguerite Lemmens, at the Academy of Brussels.[16] Georges had been enrolled at the Academy for seven years, from 1909 to 1916;[17] Florent studied for five years in all, from 1913 to 1916 and 1919 to 1921, ending his studies two years

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[15]Renée De Prins, granddaughter of Jef Van Genechten, interviews by author, 25 May 1990 and 2 April 1993, Belgium.

[16]Marguerite Lemmens, interview by author, 26 May 1990. Mrs. Lemmens's specification of field is helpful, for in each case the Academy records do not offer enough information to know the professors of the brothers in their final years of study.

[17]The sequence of courses that Georges followed were linear drawing, drawing after relief, ornamental drawing, drawing after *masques*, drawing of *tête et torse antique*. Although he won prizes in the early years, he finished with a rank of nineteen out of twenty. His most important professor would have been one of those listed in the jury of his last year: Henri Baes, teacher of ornamental drawing; G. Jacqmotte; J. Leempoels; Franz Gaillard, an Impressionist painter; Frederic Richier; Rollhier; François Taelemans or Charles Van Landuyt, both teachers of drawing masks and figure fragments, perspective, animals and industrial objects; Guillaume Van Strydonck, teacher of drawing after the antique figure; T. [F?] Khnopff; Van Holder. This list relies on my transcription of handwriting, corrected where possible by the information in Jacques Van Lennep and others, eds., Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, 275 ans d'enseignement (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Musée d'Art Moderne, 1987); especially helpful is the essay in that volume by Phil Mertens, "'La main d'abord, le cerveau ensuite, le coeur pour finir': Enkele aspecten van de schildersopleiding (1900-1930)," 111-23, French summary, 124-25.

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before his father's death.[18] Like the Gidding brothers they had made study trips to Italy and France and knew something of the art monuments there.[19]

Their father, who had been born in a Flemish town and who therefore brought that language to the household, had studied painting in a branch of the same Academy in Molenbeek-St-Jean, one of the nine self-governing suburbs of Brussels, on Rue de Montmartre. He had received high honors there and had subsequently acquired considerable wealth decorating churches and other buildings as well as painting portraits.[20] He also made leaded glass windows for churches, businesses and residences, in later years enlisting the help of his sons. Van Genechten and his sons also worked as restorers of older paintings, occasionally as dealers, offering them for sale. The Copie de Lettres for the business from 1915 to 1922 contains mostly estimates or bills for painting houses with a sprinkling of letters

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[18]Florent studied linear drawing, two years of ornamental drawing and, after the break in his attendance, two years of *tête et torse*, taking a double load of classes in his last year to include drawing from the human figure as well. He finished twenty-four of twenty-eight. The records for his final year give no professors. I thank Harry Mariën for double-checking this.

[19]Marguerite Lemmens and Renée De Prins, interview by author, 26 May 1990.

[20]Ibid.

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regarding the sale of a group of old master paintings.[21] Often a church for which Jef Van Genechten worked could not afford to pay in cash and paid him instead with a painting. With these and other acquisitions, Jef assembled a considerable art collection for which he built a private gallery in the house to which he moved his family and business in 1911.[22]

The collection was still there when de Kooning worked for Georges and Florent. Two photographs of the gallery, taken before and after World War I, show the paintings and sculptures which range from Biblical, mythological, and historical to genre scenes (figs. 194 and 195). The earlier photograph, in which Jef Van Genechten is seated in the center, includes two works painted by him at the Academy, a male torso and a large still life.[23] In both views the far end of the room is dominated by a Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter by seventeenth-century Belgian painter Pierre Ykens the younger. On the wall to the left are a Martyrdom

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[21]Van Genechten firm, Copie de Lettres (1915-22), in the possession of Renée De Prins. The records for 1924 have not been located, if they still exist.

[22]Renée De Prins, interviews by author, 25 and 26 May 1990; Almanach de commerce de Bruxelles (1911), pt. 2: 551. Today it is once again an art gallery, housing the Plus-Kern Gallery, run by Jenny Van Driessche, since 1973.

[23]On the far wall, visible in direct line beneath the hanging plant is the upper torso of a nude man for which he won a first prize. A large still life which also won a first prize is in the lower left of this photo. Information from Renée De Prins, interview by author, 25 May 1990.

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of St. Sebastian and (probably) St. Gomer de Lierre by Theodore Boeyermans, also a seventeenth-century artist from Antwerp. The post-World War I view shows a crucifixion by, or after, Van Dyck in the left foreground; in the gallery above it, toward the lower left, is a scene from the life of Charles V. Above that a Ste. Madeleine is flanked by two small paintings by Teniers.[24] A small catalogue exists of a group of religious paintings offered for sale in 1926 and it includes some of these works.[25] The last page of the catalogue contains the note that paintings of "diverse subjects" were on view in a contiguous room, including works by J. Van Goyen, the school of Rubens, the Belgian realist Charles De Groux, and Honoré Daumier. Among the sculptures in the pre-World War I view of the gallery are a small bronze of Constantin Meunier's Stevedore (on the railing at upper left) and a spirited head of a Bacchante by Jef Lambeaux, on a plinth at the far end of the room.[26]

More recent paintings by Jef Van Genechten seem not to be displayed in these photographs. From one painting still

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[24]Ibid. and Catalogue d'une belle Collection de Tableaux Religieux anciens & modernes provenant de la Galerie de feu J. Van Genechten, Rue Vander Noot 66, Brussels, 23 February - 15 March 1926, in the family records.

[25]Ibid.; of forty-seven paintings, at least seven were of the crucifixion. An additonal forty-six works were engravings and etchings.

[26]Identified by Renée De Prins, interview by author, 25 May 1990.

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in the possession of the family, left unfinished at his death, we see that Jef's mature works included townscapes of a well-structured and soberly-stroked Impressionism. Simplified planes and somber colors suggest a general kinship with Expressionism, although the view-as-seen was his concern, rather than bolder, inner reactions and interpretations. Undated later paintings by Florent are more clearly Impressionist, verging on decorative, and painted with a fussier hand. If there are paintings by Georges in the family collection, they are not clearly identified. There is no painted or drawn record or family recollection of Art Nouveau, Symbolist or twentieth-century avant-garde art work. All evidence suggests that de Kooning and Klop entered into employment with painter-decorators oriented to the historical styles and, for easel painting, to a temperate form of Impressionism.

The Van Genechten house and business were located in a residential area of Molenbeek-St-Jean somewhat west of the Brussels Nord railroad station. In this part of the city Flemish was spoken, but French was used equally in the household. The Van Genechten complex included a four-story building at Rue Vandernoot 66. Here were the large picture gallery at the rear of the ground floor, residential apartments in the upper story, and the studio with skylight filling the top floor. Behind the building an interior courtyard with stables abutted another building which faced

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outward to the Rue Haeck and which was also owned by the family. Natually enough, the walls were painted by the owner. In the main part of the house, before coming to the gallery, one entered a Louis XVI room with angels on the ceiling and then a Flemish Renaissance room with coffered ceiling and wainscoting, all painted by Jef. The rooms were separated by stucco columns painted to look like marble.[27] These decorations probably date from 1911 when Jef moved into the building. By the 1920s marbling and wood-graining were apparently in less favor, for the business records from those years contain only a few references to such work for clients' houses.[28]

The two Willems lived and worked in the spacious three-room atelier on the top floor; it had white walls, double doors and polished copper fixtures.[29] Georges and Florent lived in apartments in this building. Their sister Marguerite, who was married to Jean Baptiste Léon Lemmens, and their little daughter Renée, lived in the Rue Haeck

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[27]Ibid.

[28]Van Genechten firm, Copie de Lettres (1915-22), p. 393, 13 September 1921, front door, two coats wood-graining in imitation oak; p. 473, 18 July 1922, estimate includes dining room and office, wall wainscoting in imitation wood or in tones of painted paper (for the client to choose), *cuisine de cave*, ceilings, three coats enamel or imitation wood (to choose); p. 494, 22 September 1922, staircase and corridor, imitation *pierre de France* [a beige stone].

[29]Renée De Prins, interview by author, 25 May 1990.

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building.[30] In 1990, at the age of eighty-nine, Marguerite Lemmens recalled that the two artists from Holland came to work for her brothers through an advertisement in a newspaper; she thought that they arrived directly from Holland. The young men's adventures prior to their arrival at the Van Genechtens' had left them impoverished and hungry: "They hadn't enough to eat at first. . . . They were near death. . . . They were certainly in poverty, those boys."[31] The young men ate with the family, "everything they were given,"[32] and worked long hours in the studio. "They worked the whole day and sometimes into the evening, as long as it stayed light. . . . They worked from eight in the morning until sometimes ten at night."[33]

Working until ten in the evening may be the most telling memory in terms of dating de Kooning's stay in Brussels. In the latitude of the Low Countries, on the longest day of the year--June 21--the sun sets at 8:58, offering twilight until considerably after that hour. The

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[30]Marguerite Lemmens, interview by author, 26 May 1990; this interview, conducted in French, is the source of information in this and the following paragraphs.

[31]Ils n'avaient pas de quoi manger au debut. . . . Ils faillaient presque de mourrir. . . . Ils étaient dans la misère, ces garçons là.

[32]Tout ce qu'on leur donnait.

[33]Ils travaillaient toute la journée et parfois jusqu'au soir aussi longtemps qu'il faisait clair. . . . Ils travaillaient du matin huit heures jusqu'à parfois dix heures du soir.

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build-up to this time is somewhat slower in the spring, with a more rapid decline by September.[34] Marguerite Lemmens also recalled that de Kooning's stay with her brothers was before the birth of her son on 25 May 1925; she was not certain whether it was before or during her pregnancy, which would have begun in late August 1924. She recalled that she was about twenty-five and that de Kooning was much younger. She was twenty-five on 16 June 1924; de Kooning was five years younger than she.

Marguerite Lemmens remembered de Kooning and Klop as polite, worthy young people who caused no problems.[35] Asked by her grandson if de Kooning liked to party, she replied somberly that, "he never partied."[36] Meals at the Van Genechten household, however, were often followed by social gatherings, "Speaking Salons" where friends met and, along with singing and listening to music, talked about issues of the day; "it ended always with politics," Renée De Prins explained from accounts she had heard of those days. Georges and Florent were liberal, against the Catholic

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[34]Amie C. Gallagher, Assistant Producer, Hayden Planetarium, April 17, 1995, letter to author. This time is based on time zone, UT +1 (or GMT +1); if Daylight Savings Time were in effect, one hour would be added. Daylight Savings Time seems to have been introduced in Belgium only during World War II.

[35]De braves garçons, . . . très polis . . . jamais on n'a eu des ennuies avec eux.

[36]Il ne faisait jamais la fête. The wording, "faire la fête," was initiated by her grandson.

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church, although not against religion per se, and favored legislation to better the conditions of the workers.[37] How much the two Dutch painters participated in the salon activities could not be gleaned from Marguerite Lemmens's recollections.

If they were interested in observing café life and the demi-monde, they did not have far to go. The Rue Vandernoot, while entirely respectable, abuts the Boulevard Léopold II which in turn leads into the large boulevards encircling Brussels proper; several blocks further to the east after the end of Boulevard Léopold II is the Gare du Nord, around which were bars and a red light district. Marguerite Lemmens, however, does not have a recollection of Willem seeking the life of the cafés. Asked if he went on occasion to "prendre un vers" (take a glass) at a café, her answer was, "pas souvent" (not often), that he ate at the house and that he was quite poor: "C'était un petit malheureux."

Impressionist Paintings

The records of the Van Genechten firm show that most of the business involved house painting, usually one or two interior rooms at a time, for private households.[38]

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[37]Renée De Prins, interviews by author, 25 May 1990 and 2 April 1993. They themselves were the beneficiaries of their inheritance.

[38]Van Genechten firm, Copie de Lettres (1915-22).

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Marguerite Lemmens was quite firm however that de Kooning and Klop never did any decorative painting for her brothers' business. Instead, she recalled many easel paintings of landscapes, unsigned, that Georges had framed and then sold with great success to the large department stores Bon Marché, A l'Innovation and Grand Bazar. When she happened to visit the studio there were always five or so paintings that were being worked on "en masse":

> They made paintings en masse. . . . They had a large studio and room to put five or seven paintings. . . . They never signed a painting. There were always three or four paintings at a time.[39]

The paintings, in her recollection, were generally 45 x 60 centimeters in dimension, about 18 x 24 inches, which she regarded as large. She described these landscapes as inventions by the artists, not copies. They were always painted indoors, "always subjects that they invented, but they never did still lifes."[40]

According to Marguerite Lemmens, only one of these paintings was signed, and that was by Klop. In fact there are two paintings signed by Klop that remain in the possession of the family. Curiously, the signatures in the

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[39]Ils ont fait des tableaux en masse. . . . Ils avaient donc un grand atelier et ils avaient la place pour mettre cinq ou sept tableaux. . . . Ils n'ont jamais fait un tableau seul. C'était toujours trois, quatre tableaux à fois.

[40]C'était de l'invention à eux, pas de copies. . . . Toujours à l'intérieur. Toujours des sujets qu'ils inventaient. Mais ils ne faisaient pas la nature morte.

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lower right, W. A. Klop,[41] are accompanied by dates: 1917 in both cases. In that year Klop had not yet begun his studies at the Academy; it is possible that the earlier date might have been part of a marketing plan, but such an explanation doesn't fit with the fact that these paintings were presented to the family; also, none of the paintings that were sold were signed: would they have been dated? It is possible that a precocious Klop did make such paintings in 1917 and had brought some to sell or as part of a portfolio to use in seeking employment.

One landscape envisioned by Klop (fig. 196) is a peaceful autumn countryside. A church with a steeple and a broad low nave, shaped like a barn, and an orange roof is in the middle distance to one side, seen between three nearer trees; to the right a bridge crosses a river and somewhat behind it is another low building with an orange roof. Trees in the distance are a soft, blurred green which suggests atmospheric haze, but the leaves on the foreground trees have turned mostly orange and yellow. Sunshine illuminates one side of the trees and church walls; the blocky shapes of the building contrast with the gently amorphous daubs used for the leaves. A small amount of water between the trees and church catches the reflection of church door and window in dark-on-light passages which make

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[41]In the Rotterdam Academy annual reports, Klop's initials are indeed given as "W. A."

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a satisfying reversal of the nearby light strokes for leaves against the dark tree trunks. The brush strokes are often visible, made with a soft brush and an oily medium. It is a northern variety of Impressionism, made for those who appreciate the Hague School.

The other landscape (fig. 197) signed "W. A. Klop '17" could be characterized similarly. In it, a river with irregular banks recedes from the foreground in a leftward direction; a series of trees on the right creates a perspective diagonal. As in the other painting, a haze of green-to-lavender trees marks the horizon line, here punctuated by verticals of what may be drawbridge appurtenances. Foreground marshes and reflections on the water are made with deft strokes that call to mind the paintings of the Dutch artist Willem Roelofs, for instance his Lakes near Kortenhoef, in the Mesdag collection since 1898. One is tempted to claim such free and limpid brushstrokes as part of the heritage of de Kooning's paintings of the 1970s, for instance Untitled X, 1977 or Untitled XXVI, 1977.

An oil by Benno Randolfi, owned by his widow, bears mention here (fig. 198). It has a relatively similar formula, with a rutted dirt road receding from the foreground, curving off to the left in a gentle beige patch of sunlight. Trees on either side have leaves of russet, beige and yellow in more markedly separate brush strokes,

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made with a dryer paint.

While this painting was made by Randolfi alone, his nephew recalled, as has been noted in Chapter 5, that Benno and de Kooning painted landscapes collaboratively as a commercial venture.[42] As has also been mentioned, de Kooning told an interviewer from Time magazine in 1951 that he "met a lot of fellows" at the Academy "and we became a little like bohemians. We tried to paint like the impressionists."[43]

It is likely that cousins of these three landscapes are still hanging in households of Brussels and that a number of them were made, in part, by Willem de Kooning about 1924. Marguerite Lemmens liked these paintings. Her sense of the young Dutchmen's work was that "they weren't yet making modern art at that time."[44] Her attitude and George's success at selling the paintings in department stores exemplify the complaint of Belgian modernist critics that Impressionism was bourgeois,[45] and show that it remained

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[42]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[43]"Willem the Walloper," Time 57 (30 April 1951): 63. This reference to his own Impressionist painting is unusual in de Kooning's later comments.

[44]Ils ne faisaient pas encore du moderne à ce moment-là.

[45]Robert Hoozee, "Avant la Première Guerre mondiale," in L'Art Moderne en Belgique 1900-1945, ed. Robert Hoozee (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1992), 12, cites Paul Van Ostaijen writing in 1918.

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viable with a wide public well into the twentieth century.[46] Impressionism was the style condemned by Belgium's modernists of all persuasions--whether Expressionist, Fauvist, or Constructivist--as the one to counter with a contemporary alternative.[47] In later years de Kooning, too, credited the De Stijl message as determining his own youthful view that,

> A "modern" artist was not at all someone who just made pretty pictures. He didn't make paintings at all if he were truly modern. He was not an artist (*kunstenaar*) but a tradesman (*vakman*), a designer, for example, of something in advertising. At that time I hadn't the least desire to become a painter.[48]

Thus there was no doubt in de Kooning's mind at the time that the Impressionist paintings he made in Brussels and in the Netherlands were a departure from a modern enterprise.

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[46]Robert Hoozee, "The 19th and 20th Centuries: Painting," in Flemish Art From the Beginning till Now, ed. Herman Liebaers, Valentin Vermeersch, Leon Voet, Frans Baudouin, and Robert Hoozee (New York: Arch Cape Press, 1988), 536, notes, "[Secondary artists]--worthy craftsmen--continued with great conviction to work with a tempered and outdated Impressionism during the era of abstract painting and Expressionsim."

[47]Hoozee, "Avant la Première Guerre mondiale," in L'Art Moderne en Belgique, ed. Hoozee, 11.

[48]Een "moderne" kunstenaar, stelden zij, was helemaal niet iemand die alleen maar mooie schilderijtjes maakte. Hij maakte zelfs helemaal géén schilderijen als hij echt modern was. Hij was geen kunstenaar, maar een vakman. Een ontwerper bijvoorbeeld of iets in de reclame. Ik had dan ook nog helemaal niet de wens om schilder te worden; Tromp, "Elke stijl," 15. This statement has undergone a double translation; the conversation was in English, translated into Dutch for the publication, and here back into English. As has been discussed, de Kooning made similar comments to David Sylvester in 1960.

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It may be why he mentioned them so seldom in later years.[49] In Brussels de Kooning and Klop practised their Impressionism without regard for recording a specific place or light on the spot.

Portrait of Renée

When asked if de Kooning and Klop did paintings of figures, Marguerite Lemmens insisted that they did portraits. In fact, she knew of only one portrait, and it still exists. It is a portrait of Marguerite's daughter Renée (fig. 307).[50] One time when Marguerite Lemmens was in the studio, she recounted, de Kooning had said to her that he wanted to make a portrait of her little girl. He may have made the suggestion out of gratitude to the family for his board, or perhaps because Georges had given him oil paints and a paint box, but he must also have liked Renée's strong-willed little face.

Renée was born on January 21, 1923. The family's first estimate of her age for the portrait--based on guesswork more than any underlying fact--was about twenty months, which would date the painting to approximately September

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[49]At present I know only of the Time article.

[50]Renée Justine Yvonne Lemmens De Prins subsequently had her portrait painted by Belgian artists Schroevens, Ubac (who also stayed at the atelier on rue Vandernoot 66), Luc De Decker and by her husband, who took up painting as a hobby.

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1924.[51] In addition, a pediatrician and nurse kindly looked at a photograph of the portrait and several photographs of the young Renée to estimate her age.[52] They each put her age in the painting at fifteen to eighteen months, which would allow the painting to be made between late April and late July, 1924. The reasons they gave were the posture of the body and the chubbiness of the wrist, which would be gone at the age of two years.[53] Renée, now Mrs. De Prins, believed she sat for the painting in the gallery, although she could no longer remember the exact occasion. Photographs of her as a child (fig. 308) bear such striking similarity to the expression on her face and the orientation of her head in de Kooning's portrait that it is likely he availed himself of them.[54] The painting will be discussed in Chapter 8.

De Kooning's decision to paint the portrait of Renée

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[51]Eric De Prins, letter to author, 20 April 1990.

[52]Gail Schonfeld, MD FAAP and Harriet L. Hellman, CPNP, East End Pediatrics, East Hampton, New York, 23 February 1993.

[53]Determining a child's age from a photograph, it turns out, is a most inexact matter. The doctor explained that language and teeth are the best ways to tell age; examining a child in person can usually be accurate to within three months. In addition to the challenge of working only from an image, their assessment could be thrown off by stylisation.

[54]Dr. Schonfeld and Ms. Hellman put the age of Renée in the photograph with chair at fifteen to eighteen months; the one with the gold chain they assigned variously to twelve months and two-and-a-half years.

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implies a certain latitude in his work schedule. He may well have made many of the drawings which he subsequently left with the family during the course of his stay with the Van Genechtens. His account to Martha Bourdrez of his time in Belgium led her to write, "he made a living as a decorator, studying drawing in his spare time."[55]

Museums of Brussels

On free days, Marguerite Lemmens recalled, Willem and Wimpy, perhaps with Georges and Florent, went to see the museums of Brussels. She said that they went to all the museums in the city, elaborating that they searched for the origin of painting, her way of describing an interest in egg tempera paintings. This would be a normal enough quest, for there were few northern "primitives" in the Netherlands and Dutch artists had long sought out these works in Belgium.

Yet among the early paintings in the Royal Museums of Brussels, the most noted are undoubtedly those in oil. During de Kooning's stay in Brussels, the Musée d'Art Ancien held the Annunciation by the Master of Flémalle, pietàs by Petrus Christus and Roger van der Weyden, Hans Memling's portraits of Burgomaster of Bruges Willem Moreel and his wife, a Virgin and Child by Memling, and two paintings of the Justice of Otto III by Dirk Bouts, among many other

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[55]Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8.

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paintings of the period.[56] The year 1924 was considered the four-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and a number of commemorative festivals were organized in Brussels. Even without this emphasis, de Kooning would surely have known Bruegel's powerful, understated Fall of Icarus as well as his phantasmagoric Fall of the Rebel Angels in the Brussels Musée d'Art Ancien.[57]

While Antwerp remains the major center for works by Rubens, a generous quantity of large altar paintings were in the Brussels Musée d'Art Ancien, among them the Adoration of the Magi, Assumption of the Virgin, Way to Golgotha, Christ Hurling Thunderbolts at the World, Martyrdom of St. Livinus, Coronation of the Virgin, and Miracles of St. Benoit. In the Coronation three putti in the lower section are readily visible at close range, their chubby bodies made of pink, blue-green, and yellow glazes. Small oil sketches by Rubens for paintings for the hunting lodge of Philip IV might also have interested the young de Kooning, among them the Fall of

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[56]For information on works in the Brussels Royal Museums here and throughout this section I have consulted the Catalogue inventaire de la peinture ancienne and Catalogue inventaire de la peinture moderne, both published by the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, 1984; and Baedeker, Belgium and Holland, 1910.

[57]Commemorative festivals noted in Helke Lauwaert, "Néo-réalisme," and Ronny Gobyn, "Chronique 1900-1944," in L'Art Moderne en Belgique, ed. Hoozee, 225 and 364. Other works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder in the Brussels Musée d'Art Ancien were The Numbering at Bethlehem and The Adoration of the Magi.

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the Titans, Rape of Hippodameia, and Mercury and Argus. The Belgian trip may have been the beginning of de Kooning's lifelong admiration for the Flemish master; in later years he would speak of the "hallelujah" quality of Rubens.

The Musée d'Art Moderne, the modern section of the Royal Museums of Brussels, was reinstalled and opened to considerable praise early in 1924, not long before de Kooning's arrival in the city.[58] Devoted primarily to nineteenth-century Belgian painting, the collection was expanding into the twentieth century and included sculptures that were interspersed among the paintings in the new installation. Among the sculptors represented were Constantin Meunier and George Minne. The rooms were arranged to show the historical development of Belgian art with two rooms devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century foreign works and a final room of watercolors by artists of various periods and countries.[59]

A contemporary discussion of the new galleries by Paul Fierens noted that following the arrival of Jacques Louis David in Brussels in 1816, the evolution of Belgian art had paralleled that of the French school, with the four major

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[58]The galleries were inaugurated by Queen Elisabeth on 4 February 1924; Françoise Roberts-Jones-Popelier, Chronique d'un musée, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique (Brussels: Pierre Mardaga, 1987), 79.

[59]Arthur Laes, Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Peinture Moderne, Petit Guide du visiteur (Brussels: M. Weissenbruch, 1924), passim.

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historical divisions of Neoclassism, Romanticism, Realism, and Impressionism.[60] In the rooms devoted to Realism were paintings by Charles De Groux, Constantin Meunier, Alfred Stevens and Léon Frédéric. The room of Luministes included pre-Impressionists, Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists,[61] the most recent "isms" the curators could offer. Among these works were canvases by James Ensor, including Les Masques scandalisés and the still life La Raie. In 1924 Ensor was celebrated and influential, his earlier neglect a distant point of exclamation.[62] Among the numerous Impressionist paintings in the collection, Belgian or foreign, in my awareness none bears a particularly marked resemblance to the works by Willem Klop. The representative of youthful Belgian painting in this last gallery was Ramah (Henri-François de Raemaker) with a 1921 portrait of his wife that bore the influence of Cézanne. Fierens voiced the hope that the collection would soon include works by Rik Wouters, the foremost painter of the Brabant Fauvism in which Ramah had developed, the only significant modernist movement in Belgium before World War

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[60]Paul Fierens, "Le Musée Moderne de Bruxelles," La Renaissance de l'Art 7, no. 7 (July 1924): 408-09.

[61]Laes, Petit Guide, 17.

[62]Arthur Laes, "Le musée moderne de Bruxelles," La Revue Générale 1 (1924): 471.

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I.[63] Along with Wouters, he cited Constant Permeke, whose Expressionist works the collection would first acquire in 1927.[64]

The room of watercolors in the Musée d'Art Moderne, which contained a few oils as well, presented works by Ingres, Millet, Courbet, Raffaëlli, and the Belgians Félicien Rops, Xavier Mellery, and Fernand Khnopff, among others. This seems to have been the only room in which Symbolist works were offered, fitting enough as so many *idéaliste* artists preferred pastel, watercolor, and gouache.[65] Mellery's watercolors Le réveil, depicting a robed woman seated on the ground by a tree, and his Chute des dernières feuilles d'automne, women-leaves falling through the sky, may have been included in the new installation (figs. 199 and 200). Among works by Khnopff that may have been on view are the large pastel Memories, also known as Lawn Tennis; Blanc, noir et or, a vertical composition depicting the artist's sister and the mask of Hypnos; and Un ange, the dichotomous representation of female nature, severe virtue clothed in medieval armor with her hand resting on a lascivious sphinx (figs. 201-203).

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[63]For generalizations about Flemish art, I rely here upon Robert Hoozee, "Avant la Première Guerre mondiale," in L'Art Moderne en Belgique, ed. Hoozee, 25.

[64]Fierens, "Le Musée Moderne de Bruxelles," 408.

[65]Francine-Claire Legrand, Le Symbolisme en Belgique, Belgique, Art du Temps (Brussels: Laconti, 1971), 26-27.

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In the rooms of foreign paintings, de Kooning must surely have been impressed by works by two artists whom he would greatly admire in the 1930s and 1940s: Jacques Louis David's Death of Marat and Ingres's Augustus Listening to a Reading of the Aeneid, which so stand out from the other works of the period. Delacroix's sketch for the ceiling painting in the Louvre, Apollo and the Python, and bronzes by Rodin were also in the new installation.[66]

The second gallery of foreign paintings contained a number of recent works, including two oils from Henri Matisse's Nice period, Femme lisant and La Promenade, given by the Société L'Art Vivant Bruxelles in 1922. A 1924 installation view (fig. 204) of this room shows the two Matisses, landscapes by Alfred Sisley and Armand Guillaumin, a family group by Charles Cottet, two paintings by Gauguin, Portrait of Suzanne Bambridge and the Breton Calvary Le Christ vert, with a still life by Charles Dufresne between them, and several landscapes. Out of view are two other recent acquisitions: a 1921 self-portrait by the Japanese painter Foujita and a Nude painted in Paris in 1922 by the Russian artist Alexandre Iacovleff (fig. 205). The latter was given by a group of benefactors that very year, 1924,

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[66]Fierens, "Le Musée Moderne de Bruxelles," 410. David's Mars Disarmed by Venus, with its long mannerist lines, was in the Brussels collection at that time, as was Delacroix' copy of Rubens's Miracles of St. Benoit, especially notable since the larger Rubens original was in the museum's Old Master collection. It is not clear if these works were on view in the new installation.

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and seemed to appeal to a number of writers as a *dernier cri* from Paris that exemplified as well the continuing influence of Ingres and the Flemish *primitifs*. Paul Fierens wrote about it in his 1924 article on the new installation,

> Before finishing our promenade [through the refurbished galleries], let us congratulate ourselves to find, among the most recently acquired paintings a Nude by Alexandre Iacovleff, the Russian artist to whom Paris owes several mural decorations in which imagination in no way gives way to knowledge, nor knowledge to inspiration. This long feminine body, with its elegant and precise arabesque, hallucinating dimensionality, and waxen pallor, evokes an Eve of Cranach, but made supple by the most acrobatic choreographies and ready to yield to the exigencies of modern life, sportive, a little gloomy and cruel, without losing a bit of her disdainful dignity.
>
> After all, this Oriental woman recalls perhaps the Turkish Bath. She steps out of it, flexible, thin, but with forms of a roundness and contours of an elasticity that are insistently significant. We have encountered "Ingrisme" at the origin of Belgian painting and in the portraits of Navez. Ingres moreover was one of the first to pay homage to our great *primitifs* . . . . Ingres again hypnotises . . . youth.[67]

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[67]Avant de mettre un terme à cette promenade, félicitons-nous de trouver, parmi les peintures les plus récemment acquises, un Nu d'Alexandre Iacovleff, artiste russe à qui Paris doit quelques décorations murales où la fantaisie ne le cède en rien à la science, ni la science à l'inspiration. Ce long corps féminin, d'une arabesque élégante et précise, d'un relief hallucinant, d'une pâleur de cire, évoque une Eve de Cranach, mais assouplie aux chorégraphies les plus acrobatiques et prête à se plier aux exigences de la vie moderne, sportive, un peu morne et cruelle, sans rien perdre de sa dédaigneuse dignité.

Après tout, cette Orientale se souvient peut-être du Bain turc. Elle en sort, flexible, amaigrie, les formes cependant d'une rondeur, les contours d'une élasticité toujours significatives. Nous avons rencontré de l'"ingrisme" à l'origine de la peinture belge et dans les portraits de Navez. Ingres d'ailleurs, l'un des premiers, rendit hommage à nos grands primitifs . . . . Ingres, de nouveau, hypnotise une jeunesse raisonnable, parfois raisonneuse. Ibid.; the installation photograph discussed here was published on p. 407.

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In the Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten's treatment of the new galleries in 1925, the work is reproduced and referred to as "masterful . . . a piece of very great value."[68] It is possible that de Kooning too fell under the sway of Iacovleff's modish rhythms, as will be noted in Chapter 8.

The de Kooning drawing that bears some resemblance to Iacovleff seems more Symbolist than the Russian's canvas, and more undulating of line than the Symbolist works in the Brussels Musée d'Art Moderne in 1924. Yet Brussels was a city rich in Art Nouveau decorations and there may well have been works that inspired or at least prompted de Kooning's. Had he walked in the suburbs in the southern and eastern parts of the city he would have seen any number of private houses with Art Nouveau forms, some with exterior frescoes of figures and foliage.[69]

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[68]Een meesterlijk "Naakt" . . . . is een stuk van zeer groote waarde; René Tonus, "Belgische Kunst," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten 2 (1925) 27.

[69]See Franco Borsi and Hans Wieser, Bruxelles Capitale de l'Art Nouveau (Brussels: Marc Vokaer, 1971); examples are on the house designed in 1900 by Albert Rosenboom at rue Faider 83, illus. opp. p. 72, figs. 245-46; on the 1905 house designed for himself by architect Paul Cauchie at rue des Francs 5, figs. 51-54; and on the house of painter Albert Ciamberlani at rue Defacqz 48, designed by architect Paul Hankar in 1897, pp. 36-37, 78; illus. opp. p. 40, figs. 139 and 140. The facade of the Ciamberlani house is also illustrated in Klaus-Jürgen Sembach, Art Nouveau, Utopia: Reconciling the Irreconcilable (Cologne: Benedikt Taschen, 1991), 44, where the the polychrome sgraffito depictions of pre-Raphaelite figures entwined in a tree are more readily discernible; the subject may have intrigued de Kooning.

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A number of Belgian symbolists were still working in the 1920s. After World War I Jean Delville, Emile Fabry, Albert Ciamberlani, and several others formed the group L'Art Monumental, reaffirming the interest that they had had since the 1890s in elevating the souls of the masses to Beauty via public mural decorations.[70] One possible location for de Kooning to have seen their work was in a museum complex east of Brussels: the Palais du Cinquantenaire, built for the 1880 celebration of Belgian independence. It housed the Musée Royal des Antiquités and the Musée Royal des Art Décoratifs et Industriels. The former contained Egyptian art, not readily seen in the

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[70]Legrand, Le Symbolisme en Belgique, 75; J. Andrianne, R. Dalemans, and others, Idéalisme et symbolisme, hommage à Emile Fabry 1865-1966 (Brussels: Galerie Regard 17, 1973), not paginated. Art historians Philippe Roberts-Jones and Michel Draguet kindly looked at de Kooning's Women and Tree in April 1993 and suggested Fabry as a possible source, with a note to check as well the work of Walter Sauer, Henry De Groux, Ciamberlani, and Delville. Further research is necessary to follow through on their suggestions, for it is yet unclear what works may have been available for de Kooning to see. None of the readily accessible published works by these artists appears decisively similar on a formal level or in subject matter to de Kooning's two symbolist works, presented in Chapter 8.

Works by Fabry on view in Brussels during de Kooning's stay were the nearly complete mural decorations painted in the Grand Stairway of the Théatre Royale de la Monnaie from 1904-1925. Fabry made a number of decorative paintings for houses designed by Victor Horta, including the Aubecq House, 1899 and Braecke House, 1901; illustrated in Franco Borsi and Paolo Portoghesi, Victor Horta (Brussels: Marc Vokar, 1970), figs. 474-76, 498. Information on Fabry also from Retrospective Emile Fabry 1865-1965 (Woluwe-Saint-Pierre, Belgium: Hotel communal, 1965) and Brigitte De Clercq, "Emile Fabry," in Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, ed. van Lennep and others, 170-72.

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Netherlands, antique vases and sculptures, and Gallo-Roman antiquities found in Belgium. The Museum of Industrial Art, devoted primarily to Belgian work, displayed tapestries, lace, medieval reliquaries, domestic pottery, and, in a section of decorative paintings, cartoons by Puvis de Chavannes. The exterior arcade of the large hemicycle that linked the two halves of the building was decorated with mosaics made in 1922 from cartoons by Fabry (six of thirty-six), Ciamberlani, and others.[71] In the northwest corner of the park surrounding these museums is a temple-like structure designed by Victor Horta in 1889 to contain a twenty-three-foot wide marble relief by Jef Lambeaux, Human Passions, (fig. 206).[72] Such tumultuously roiling nude bodies in a monumental setting, commissioned by the state, may have interested de Kooning, but the sculpture could not be considered directly related to his drawing. The Brussels museums had a number of monumental free-standing figure groups in dramatic poses of which the same may be said.[73]

The Belgian Art World

Although not yet perceptible in the collections of the

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[71]As yet, I have seen only distant views of these works and surmise that they depict figures inscribed in medallions.

[72]Borsi, Horta, 52-53, 403, figs. 183-188.

[73]See Jacques van Lennep, Catalogue de la Sculpture, artistes nés entre 1750 et 1882 (Brussels: Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1992).

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Brussels museums in 1924, a great deal was happening in modern Belgian art and literature, in both Flemish and Walloon circles, and in both cultural centers, Antwerp and Brussels. Visits to the many lively galleries of Brussels and to the Kunst van Heden gallery in Antwerp could have acquainted de Kooning and his friends with the main currents of progressive Belgian art, Expressionism and a hard-edged abstraction. In the course of the year, works by foreign artists also were to be seen, mainly French and German.[74]

During this time a group of short-lived periodicals took up the cause of various groups of artists, usually offering international news as well. Chief among them in 1924 were Het Overzicht, Antwerp 1921-1925, the internationally-oriented Dutch-language review covering both literature and art that after the advent of Jozef Peeters to the editorial board in 1922 became strongly oriented to geometric abstraction; Sélection, Brussels 1920-1927, 1928-1933, in French, that began by promoting Expressionist and Cubist fine arts and broadened by 1923 to include literature, music, film, the theater and architecture and the "Chroniques" of André Salmon from Paris; and 7 Arts,

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[74]For this and the following paragraphs I rely on Phil Mertens, "1914-1925, De l'éphémère au construit," in 150 ans d'art belge dans les collections des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, ed. Anne Adriaens-Pannier and others (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1980), 30-36; the essays, chronology and biographies in L'Art Moderne en Belgique, ed. Hoozee; and the card catalogue and holdings of the library of the Royal Museums, Brussels.

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Brussels 1922-1929, also in the French language, devoted to all the most modern artistic manifestations, especially abstract art, celebrating the applied arts of Jozef Peeters in a 1924 issue, and abundantly leavening all issues with Karel Maes's caricatures of contributing artists and writers.[75]

Thomas Hess recounts that de Kooning "saw, but was not particularly influenced by, contemporary Belgian Expressionists."[76] A number of these artists may already have been known to him from Rotterdam exhibitions, for they had been included in exhibitions with the De Branding group at the Rotterdam Academy in 1918 and 1922, as has been noted in Chapter 5. The bulky, primitive forms in works of Frits Van den Berghe and Gustave De Smet, often structured into rectangular areas by the 1920s, seem far from the linear refinement de Kooning was seeking, to judge from his surviving works of the period.[77] Nor did his youthful view

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[75]Anne Adriaens-Pannier, "Les revues d'avant-garde en Belgique et leur combat 1917-1929," in L'Avant-garde en Belgique 1917-1929, ed. Eliane De Wilde and Lydia M. A. Schoonbaert (Brussels: Crédit Communal, 1992), 163-223. The periodical 7 Arts was not available in 1990.

[76]Hess, 1959, 113; in idem, 1968, 16, Hess wrote, "He saw some of the local Belgian Expressionists' work, but there is no evidence that he was at all influenced by them."

[77]In the course of the year 1924 De Smet had a one-person show at the Galerie du Centaur, Brussels and Van den Berghe showed at Kunst van Heden, Antwerp. The style of the Flemish Expressionists in the early 1920s was aptly referred to by critics André De Ridder and Paul-Gustave Van Hecke as "expressionisme constructif" (constructive expressionism); Inge Henneman, "Le mouvement Sélection," in L'Art Moderne en

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tend toward their more somber visions. The same could be expected of his reactions to the work of Constant Permeke, shown in a retrospective early in 1924 at the Galerie Georges Giroux, Brussels, probably before de Kooning was in Belgium,[78] but also included in presentations at the Kunst van Heden gallery in Antwerp later that year.

The abstract painting referred to as *plastique pure* in Belgian periodicals had taken form only around 1920 and flourished briefly before faltering later in the decade.[79] The Brussels abstractionist Victor Servranckx exhibited 104 works at the Galerie Royale there in January 1924, most likely before de Kooning's arrival, but his work was also shown that year at the Cabinet Maldoror and the Galerie Georges Giroux, both in Brussels. Sevranckx subscribed to the periodical L'Esprit Nouveau of Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, and many of his ideas were close to their Purism; the circles exalting machines in his abstract paintings recall the forms that had evoked birth and maternity in his earlier symbolist works and that once again became cosmic in his Surrealist works of 1927.[80] Works by Karel Maes and

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Belgique, ed. Hoozee, 149.

[78]Constant Permeke, Galerie Georges Giroux, Brussels, 19 January - 3 February 1924.

[79]Mertens, "1914-1925," in 150 ans d'art belge, ed. Adriaens-Pannier and others, 34-36.

[80]Inge Henneman, "Bruxelles et Anvers, centres de l'avant-garde, 1917-1925," in L'Art Moderne en Belgique, ed. Hoozee, 134-35; Hoozee, "The 19th and 20th Centuries:

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Pierre Louis Flouquet were on view at the Galerie Georges Giroux, and the Antwerp-based Jozef Peeters, whose determining influence was De Stijl, showed at the Cabinet Maldoror. Servranckx' friend René Magritte, working in a hard-edged Cubist/Futurist style, exhibited at the Cabinet Maldoror and Galerie L. Manteau.

A host of other Belgian artists with various shades of modernist interests showed in Brussels galleries in that year. For example, Le Groupe belge, presented at the Galerie du Centaur in April and May, when de Kooning may have been in the city, included works by artists whose origins were with the Brabant Fauvists, some of whom had acquired a rectangularizing structure by the 1920s: Jean Brusselmans, Ann-Pierre De Kat, Paul Maas, Willem Paerels, Ramah, and Edgard Tytgat, by 1920 an Expressionist of a naive, whimsical cast; others in the exhibition lived or had lived in the village of Laethem-Saint-Martin where they sought spirituality and simplicity in art and admired medieval, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century works: George Minne, Valerius De Saedeleer, Gustave Van de Woestijne. By the 1920s Van de Woestijne's synthesizing work approached Neo-Realism.[81] Georges Creten, also in the exhibition, worked in a style reminiscent of the later Derain, while

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Painting," in Flemish Art, ed. Liebaers and others, 562-63.

[81]This view is put forth by Helke Lauwaert, "Le néo-réalisme," in L'Art Moderne en Belgique, ed. Hoozee, 229-243.

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Hippolyte Daeye was influenced by Modigliani. The difficult-to-classify Léon Spilliaert, who had strong early connections to Symbolism, was also in this exhibition, perhaps showing a rhythmic harbor scene in his later Expressionist style.

Foreign artists on view in Brussels and Antwerp in 1924 rather matched the general proclivity toward Expressionism, often with a Cubist or naive emphasis; there was also a notable interest in the new realism of Germany and Italy; Kandinsky was the only major non-Belgian abstract artist to be shown. A 1924 cross-section of Belgian gallery choices includes, among those who made their careers in Paris: Chagall, Derain, van Dongen, Dufresne, Le Fauconnier, Foujita, Laurencin, Lhote, Lurçat, Marquet, Picasso (with engravings), Utrillo, Valadon, Vallotton, De Waroquier, and Zadkine. From Germany, Campendonk, Corinth, Otto Dix, Grosz, Kokoschka, Seiwert, and from Italy, de Chirico and Casorati were shown. The Dutch artists on view during the year included Conrad Kickert, Lodewijk Schelfhout, and Charley Toorop.

Charley Toorop's show at the Galerie Manteau in Brussels was reviewed in the May issue of Sélection and thus was on view in the spring, possibly when de Kooning could have seen it. André De Ridder praised Toorop for having found a new subject in the study of "alienated women and imbeciles." He continued,

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> These canvases have amplitude and a protracted resonance. One experiences a shiver looking at them from close to, with the strange mystery the painter knew how to deepen in the physiognomy and above all in the gaze of these abnormal people.[82]

In the June issue of the periodical, two recent family group portraits by Charley Toorop were reproduced, an unprettified mother and two children, and the artist's own three children (fig. 207).[83] If these works were on view in Brussels, and if de Kooning saw them or the issue of the magazine, they may well have combined with other works by Charley Toorop that he had seen as inspiration for his watercolor of a family group and possibly, distantly, for the oil portrait of Renée.

The sober scrutiny given her subjects by Charley Toorop is also to be found in the work of Otto Dix, exhibited to a certain acclaim in Brussels in the fall of 1924. De Ridder noted in the October issue of Sélection that the "vogue de Dix" had come suddenly, and that the artist had been accused of being perverse and satanic, charges against which he

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[82]L'étude de femmes aliénées et d'imbéciles . . . . Ces tableaux ont bien de l'ampleur et une résonance très prolongée. On ressent un frisson à les regarder de près, avec l'étrange mystère que le peintre a su approfondir dans la physionomie et surtout dans le regard des ces anormaux; André De Ridder, "Les Expositions à Bruxelles, Charley Toorop," Sélection, n.s., 3, no. 7 (May 1924): 198.

[83]Sélection, n.s., 3, no. 8 (June 1924): 250-251. Brederoo, Charley Toorop, no. 139, Lien Tiggers met haar kinderen Hans en Tineke, ca. 1923, painting destroyed by the artist; and no. 138, Drie kinderen met speelgoed, 1923, private collection, Utrecht.

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defended him.[84]

Another artist on view that year in Brussels was the Swiss-born Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, whose death in December 1923 prompted tributes. In June and July 1924 the Cercle artistique, during the course of the Salon de la Société Royale des Beaux-Arts, showed paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints by Steinlen from the collection of Ivan Lamberty in Brussels.[85] André De Ridder, writing in Sélection, found the group to be not very representative of the artist, containing only a few drawings of the artist's "good period, the working-class time," and mentioned but did not describe a concurrent exhibition honoring Steinlen at Brussels's Galerie Royale.[86] De Kooning's interest in Steinlen had probably begun before his trip to Belgium but he surely would have appreciated the exhibitions.

Art Studies in Brussels

While living and working in the Van Genechten studio, de Kooning and Klop would have had a respite from their hard

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[84]André De Ridder, "Tableaux et d'Oeuvres graphiques (Cabinet Maldoror)," Sélection, n.s., 4, no. 1 (October 1924): 14, 16; reproductions on pp. 33-39.

[85]The brochure for the exhibition, in the collection of the library of Royal Museums of Brussels, did not list the works.

[86]La bonne période, l'époque 'faubourienne'; André De Ridder, "Les Expositions à Bruxelles: Salon de la Société Royale des Beaux-Arts (Cercle artistique)," Sélection, n.s., 3, no. 9 (July 1924): 409.

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times on the road. This would seem the ideal circumstance from which to explore the possibility of instruction at the Brussels Academy. Georges and Florent had attended that institution for some years and could have helped with logistics and information. There is, however, no record of de Kooning's name in the Academy archives of either the main institution in Brussels or the Molenbeek-St-Jean branch.[87] Art historian Phil Mertens explained in 1985 that one wasn't allowed to attend a course without enrolling but that in practice this may have been a little loose.[88] While Hess reported in 1959 that de Kooning "attended classes in Brussels and Antwerp," his account ten years later left this out and in fact declared that "the trip was not an art tour, but a dry run for his emigration, a testing of his ability to be independent."[89] Benno Randolfi's widow was aware that the trip to Belgium involved doing their own work and not studying at an Academy.[90] In this somewhat murky

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[87]I put on record an unproductive search, in 1993, of the Procès Verbaux, 1921-1927, "Concours pour les places," 1923-24, pp. 162-71; "Concours pour les places," 1924-25, pp. 244-53, Library, Académie Royal des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles. There is an Anna de Koning, p. 164. Through the kind agency of Harry Mariën, the records of the Molenbeek-St-Jean branch of the Academy were searched in 1985 by its director, to whom I express my gratitude.

[88]Phil Mertens, conversation with author, 1985, Brussels.

[89]Hess, 1959, 113; idem, 1968, 16.

[90]Nanne Randolfi-Bakker, interview by author, 30 April 1986.

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circumstance, Marguerite Lemmens's recollection is a clarion call of certainty that de Kooning and Klop did not attend classes at the Academy while they were with her family. She insisted upon this several times.[91]

In Marguerite Lemmens's recollection, de Kooning and Klop stayed with the Van Genechtens for about three or four months. This is near to de Kooning's 1968 account to Dutch writer Bert Schierbeek in which he recalled that he had spent three months in Antwerp and Brussels.[92] However, to Martha Bourdrez in 1950, Thomas Hess in 1959, and assistant Tom Ferrara in the 1980s, de Kooning estimated the duration of the journey at a year. Benno Randolfi's nephew Gerrit gathered from family stories that the group of friends stayed in Antwerp and Brussels for a total time of about six months.[93]

The stay with the Van Genechtens came to an end abruptly. In Georges's account to his family, one day the two Willems were gone. He didn't know why. De Kooning was not concerned about travelling lightly, for he took with him the paint box and oil paints that he had been using.

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[91]Marguerite Lemmens, interview by author, 26 May 1990.

[92]Willem de Kooning, interview with Bert Schierbeek, in Hess and de Wilde, Willem de Kooning, 75; this portion reprinted in George Scrivani, The Collected Writings of Willem de Kooning (Madras and New York: Hanuman Books, 1988), 161.

[93]Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8; Hess, 1959, 113; Tom Ferrara, conversation with author, 1980s; Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

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Perhaps as compensation, he left behind a sketchbook and some drawings. He probably knew the admiration in which they were held; in fact, his employers kept the works for the rest of their lives. Florent took four of the drawings with him when he moved to Paris in 1926 and Georges kept the others in Brussels. Of the precipitous departure, Marguerite Lemmens recalled only that it was too bad those young men left like that, "comme ça," because they did fine paintings.[94] In her retrospective view, they left because they had earned enough money to go to America.

Possibly a reason for the young men's departure was that they were not earning much money. When de Kooning spoke to Bert Schierbeck in 1968, he mentioned the duration of his stay in Belgium because he was so pleased that after one week in the United States he could afford to buy a new suit and work-clothing. "And can you imagine," he continued, "that a few years before this I'd worked with some friends in Belgium, for three months, Antwerp and Brussels, all sorts of jobs, and after three months of crazy work I couldn't even buy one pair of socks."[95] While such a comment does not necessarily explain the departure, it

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[94]Je regrettais que ces garçons étaient partis comme ça, parce qu'ils faisaient de très belles choses; Marguerite Lemmens, interview by author, 26 May 1990. Date of Florent's departure is recorded in Population Register, Molenbeek-St-Jean, Household Composition, Rue Vandernoot 66; photocopy from Harry Mariën.

[95]Willem de Kooning, interview with Bert Schierbeek, in Hess and de Wilde, Willem de Kooning, 75.

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does make clear that a major motive for the journey--above the study of art--was to get ahead in the world.

Antwerp

During their stay with the Van Genechtens, it seems that de Kooning and Klop did not make the short trip to Antwerp. Marguerite Lemmens insisted upon this. However, Antwerp is directly on the train route between Brussels and Rotterdam. The young artists could have stopped there either before or after their stay in Brussels.

They were in Antwerp long enough for de Kooning to write to his father and ask for money to study at the Academy there. In de Kooning's later accounts to family members, the money was sent, and he studied at the Antwerp Academy.[96] Yet in his 1939 biography for the World's Fair, de Kooning did not list the Academy in Antwerp but rather the "Van Schelling Design School" in that city, at which he

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[96]These conversations took place in 1954-55 when Cornelia Lassooy visited New York and stayed for a while with Elaine's sister Marjorie and her husband Edmond Luyckx, who is from Antwerp; Marjorie Fried Luyckx, interviews by author, 20 November and 11 December 1987. Present in those years was family friend Elza Safford, who had studied at the Antwerp Academy for two years in the early 1940s; from the conversations of the time, she felt that de Kooning definitely had attended classes at the Antwerp Academy, but could give no further details; Elza Safford, telephone interview by author, 5 August 1996. My own research has not extended to records in Antwerp; this is an area for further investigation.

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credited himself a year of study.[97] This is a design school that never reached the awareness of Phil Mertens, specialist in Belgian art history of the years between the two world wars.[98] The phantasm of the name fits with the equally elusive extra year of the journey in Belgium. But the name does have a real-life basis: one of de Kooning's good friends from the late 1920s to the 1940s was Bart van der Schelling, a jovial Dutchman and aspiring opera singer who went to fight in the Spanish civil war as a valiant gesture in expiation of his irresponsible ways; he returned with his neck in a brace. Bart was included in every account of those years by de Kooning's friends.

Antwerp is the city of Rubens. Some large paintings were in the churches for which they were made. The Descent from the Cross with two side panels and The Assumption of Mary were, and are, in the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal (Our Lady of Sorrows Cathedral), along with the Elevation of the Cross. Behind the high altar of the Church of St. Jacques is Rubens's burial chapel containing an altar painting by the artist. And the altarpiece of the Church of St. Augustine is Rubens's Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine. It

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[97]"Department of Feature Publicity," Painting and Sculpture in the World of Tomorrow, Fair-Commissioned Mural Painting, New York World's Fair, 1939, appendix, Library, Museum of Modern Art, New York. The year in Antwerp is listed there in addition to a year at the Brussels Academy of Fine Arts.

[98]Phil Mertens, conversation with author, 1985.

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would seem impossible for young artists not to stop to see some of these paintings for which the city is known. Certainly Georges and Florent Van Genechten would have mentioned the paintings by Rubens and could have elaborated on how to find them, so that if they had missed them on the first part of their journey, they could have seen them on the return. Since Flemish was the language of Antwerp, such a quest could have been negotiated readily enough.

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp also had a blockbuster collection of large paintings by Rubens as well as choice works by Jan Van Eyck, Simone Martini, and Jean Fouquet's Virgin and Child.

When de Kooning spoke of his trip to Belgium to an interviewer in 1977 he mused, "I can't remember now if I left to see art."[99] The cultural treasures of Antwerp and Brussels had long since played whatever role they may have offered for the young artist's development. If the full-breasted pink ladies and the continually oscillating movements and countermovements of Rubens's grand compositions served as inspiration, they had surfaced--thoroughly mixed with everything else--in the 1940s and would carry on in another four, or perhaps five, decades of de Kooning paintings.

In the 1920s, however, no particular influence of

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[99]Ik kan me niet herinneren of ik daar nou heenging om kunst te zien; Tromp, "Elke stijl," 13.

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Rubens, the Flemish *primitifs*, or modern Belgian interests is apparent in the surviving drawings and painting of the young de Kooning, works to which we may now turn.

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CHAPTER 8

THE EARLY WORKS

General Observations

There are forty-six works that have survived from de Kooning's youthful European production. Four have come through de Kooning's family: the two small still life paintings in oil made when the artist was about twelve years old; the still life drawing made at the Academy and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and a pencil and conté drawing entitled The Kiss, signed and dated to 1925 by the artist during his 1968 visit to the Netherlands.[1]

The remaining works have been preserved by the Van Genechten family. The oil portrait of young Renée Lemmens was made during the Belgian visit and thus was executed in 1924. The other works, all drawings, most likely date from the same period; however, it is possible that some were made previously and brought from Holland to Belgium, for with them were a draft of one letter and the beginning of another that each have the heading "Rotterdam."

A 6 1/2 x 9 5/8-inch sketchbook cover in which twenty-

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[1]The Kiss, as it was called by de Kooning and his family, was first published under the title A Couple in the Christie's auction catalogue for May 7, 1986, lot 108. As will be discussed below, I am not sure of the medium. In addition to these works, there is a painted wooden container still in the possession of de Kooning's family.

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six of the sheets could fit is inscribed with de Kooning's signature and the Van Genechten address: "W. Kooning / Rue van der Noot 66 / Molenbeek."[2] Thirteen sheets are slightly larger; another smaller one is on distinctly different paper. Most are in pencil and conté. Two have been finished with the addition of watercolor. Three of the sheets have drawings on both sides, increasing the number of images, although many are but slight sketches.[3]

Two of the Belgian works are signed: "Wim Kooning." (He was leaving out the "de" in "de Kooning" as he would for the first years in New York.) In one of the two signatures the final "g" is missing. Twenty-one others are initialed with a jaunty "W. K."[4]

The Belgian works were "discovered" when their owners wrote to de Kooning seeking authentication.

An additional drawing made after de Kooning's trip to Belgium is known only as a detail in the background of a

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[2]Molenbeek-St-Jean was one of the nine self-governing suburbs of Brussels. The closed sketchbook cover measures 16.5 x 24.5 cm. I have examined those drawings that are framed only through the glass; the unframed drawings vary slightly (sometimes upward) from the 22 x 15 cm. of the sheet still attached to the sketchbook cover. (The long measure of 22 cm. is approximate because of the binding.)

[3]Pencil tracings of three of the small drawings and an oil sketch after one of the three exist; the authorship of these works is uncertain.

[4]The same initials are signed on the earliest known work from New York, an oil painting of [Two Women] made for the newly decorated apartment of Beatrice and Harry Winston about 1928.

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snapshot.

The two oil paintings made when de Kooning was about twelve and the still life drawing from his Academy years have been discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. A selection from the other works will be discussed in this chapter.[5]

The extant works of de Kooning's juvenilia reveal two main styles, basically similar in facture, that he amalgamated on occasion: a curvilinear Symbolism and cartoon-like illustration. Of these two modes, the Symbolist works are fewer in number: The Kiss and Women and Tree are the only unqualified examples. The cartoon-like drawings, with subjects that may be broadly characterized as belonging to *la vie de Bohème*, are the most numerous. In between the two stylistic groups are three of the more

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[5]For many of these works, not inscribed with titles and never exhibited, I must be the first to offer a title, which is desirable for identification purposes. Such assigned titles should rightly be written within square brackets, a convention that will be observed in the list of illustrations and captions. As I find this punctuation disruptive in running text, and as so few titles by others exist, I would like to list here those few pre-existing titles and explain that all others have been assigned by myself. As has been noted, the title The Kiss was used by de Kooning's family; Antonie Breedveld, nephew of de Kooning, and his wife spoke with me in English and Elaine de Kooning referred to the drawing in English, but the words in English and Dutch (*kus*) are extremely close. The academic still life was titled by the Metropolitan Museum. Male Portrait Head is the title assigned by the owner when the drawing was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of Art in 1983-84. One of the early oil still lifes was published by the Hirshhorn Museum as Still Life. For the oil portrait of Renée Lemmens, I have respected the title of the son of the sitter, using it as subtitle: Portrait of Renée (Child in Red).

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finished works; they may be categorized as portraits or portrait-like: the drawn Male Portrait Head, a watercolor of a working-class family, and the one oil painting from this period, the portrait of Renée Lemmens. One other drawing depicts a man's head and will be included in this group. Discussion of stylistic characteristics, subjects, and sources of individual works will be divided into these three main groupings.[6]

Symbolist Works

The two works that are Symbolist in style and subject were made at different times. The smaller, Women and Tree (fig. 208), was among the works left in Brussels and may have been made there in 1924. The Kiss (fig. 209), the largest of all the early drawings, was made in Rotterdam in 1925 after de Kooning's return from Belgium.[7]

Both works stylize the human figure to create elegant, sweeping contours, accented by complicated nubby turnings or sharp dramatic shapes. Etheric mists play a role in each of the compositions but are rendered differently. Women and Tree is drawn in pencil and conté with the point of the tools almost always evident; streaks of foggy vapors are conveyed by lighter treatment of the same linear strokings.

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[6]I find it helpful to examine de Kooning's drawing style before treating the oil painting.

[7]As noted earlier, it was signed and dated 1925 during de Kooning's trip to the Netherlands in 1968. Both his own and his sister's memories would have produced this date.

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In The Kiss the gradations of value that flow across the sheet are often the result of smoothing and blending the drawn lines with a stompe or fingers. In places the effect uncannily suggests a watercolor or ink wash.[8]

A grand statement about human existence bound to natural forces seems the raison d'être of the Women and Tree. The Kiss hovers between modish genre subject and a meditation on the sublimities of sensual union as the impelling motivation and genesis of all life.

These works are the forebears of de Kooning's biomorphic forms of the 1940s and the curving vocabulary so dominant in his works of the 1980s. In content as well they are the precursors of many of the concerns of the later work.

From these two early works we observe that the international Symbolism and Art Nouveau that flourished in the 1890s were still meaningful to de Kooning in the 1920s, at least from the point of view of selling his work. He explained to Thomas Hess, who would see a photograph of The Kiss, that Art Nouveau had dominated commercial art in

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[8]The medium of this drawing is listed in the Christie's auction catalogue as charcoal and graphite and in subsequent publications as graphite. I suggest that conté would be more in keeping with de Kooning's experience and other works, although the treatment is different. It was difficult for me to tell the medium from examination of the work; I suggest a question remain until it may be resolved by a conservator.

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Rotterdam.[9] Hammacher's mention of Rotterdam artist Anton Versluys and the "decorative-stylizing inclinaton" of his late Symbolism bolsters this observation, as do the otherwise dissimilar early Symbolist works by Chabot, van der Plas and Romein. While I have found no one source for de Kooning's Symbolism, the Dutch environment that prompted it clearly still esteemed the curvilinear works of Jan Toorop, and the trip to Belgium may well have encouraged de Kooning's Symbolist leanings.

The importance of curvilinear Symbolism in de Kooning's formation enables us to acknowledge this heritage directly for his share of the biomorphic forms so prevalent in American art of the 1940s, hitherto attributable mainly to the Surrealists and Kandinsky.[10]

Women and Tree

In Women and Tree three nude young women, slumped in

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[9]Hess, 1959, 113; there is a photograph of The Kiss in the portion of the Thomas B. Hess papers in the estate of Elaine de Kooning.

[10]Lawrence Alloway, "The Biomorphic '40s," Artforum 4, no. 1 (September 1965): 18-22, reprinted in Lawrence Alloway, Topics in American Art Since 1945 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1975), 17-24, is the major discussion of this issue; he argues for William Baziotes's connections to Symbolism. David Anfam, "'Of the Earth, the Damned, and of the Recreated': Aspects of Clyfford Still's Earlier Work," Burlington Magazine 135 (April 1993), 260-269, presents evidence for Still's interest in Arnold Böcklin. Stephen Polcari gave an overview of the relationship between Abstract Expressionism and Symbolism at the symposium, Willem de Kooning in Retrospect, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., 5 November 1993.

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somnolence, are linked with a pollarded willow or with the earth beside it. An owl flying low on the horizon indicates night, the time of sleep and dreams, perhaps even death. While tensions in the women's bodies suggest a resistance to their state, and the owl their vulnerability in a predatory world, these inflections cannot alter their role as elegant embodiments of change in the daily cycle.[11]

Care has been taken that continuously undulating lines interlock with each other as much as possible. The owl shares its contours with the earth and the crouching woman; all four beings are tangent to the curving tree. In the lower part of the composition, two horizontal wafts of atmospheric haze introduce a seeming layering of textures that will be characteristic of de Kooning's mature work, especially the abstractions of the mid-1950s.

The figures, depicted in distinctly varied poses, and the owl have been brought to greater finish than the other parts of the drawing. The rendering of human anatomy shows special appreciation for sweeping lines of legs and curves of hips, with breasts and heads faring less well. The right breast of the vertical figure has been held in check by the overall contour line. The head of the crouching figure is a

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[11]In earlier presentations of this drawing, I found a sense of doomed struggle against the elements to be more salient than I now do. Dutch art historians Carel Blotkamp and Geurt Imanse, conversations with author, 1986 and 1993, see the drawing in the context of Symbolist references to dawn or dusk.

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tiny mound not clearly attached to a neck; the other two heads fall forward and back at extreme angles, creating in the lower figure a foreshortened brow that occurs like a refrain elsewhere in these drawings. The upwardly wrenched shoulder of the vertical figure is anatomically impossible but melds convincingly with the tree shapes. Hands and feet of all the figures are either omitted from view or rendered in large outline only. The figure drawing is at once knowing stylization, convincing distortion and, it must be said, ungrounded in the careful study of the human skeleton. The subtlety and complexity of design make up for any lack.

There is no detail inside the knot of the tree, but the upward-turning branches are sketched to the edges of the composition, forming enough vertical emphasis to counter the horizontal tiers below. Behind the branches a full moon is barely perceptible.

The subject of women linked to trees goes back to the dryads and hamadryads of Greek mythology. Nude women closely associated with trees were neither prevalent nor out of place in the art of early 1920s Europe, although the heyday for this subject was the 1890s. Jan Toorop's Symbolist drawings offer a number of instances, none of which, however, seems a source for de Kooning. Examples are Les Rodeurs of 1889-92, where the woman is clothed, O, Grave, Where is Thy Victory of 1892, and Fatalisme of 1893 (fig. 210); slim, puppet-like women seldom muster the sexual

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energies to which they refer.[12] Nearest in sensibility to de Kooning's image are Toorop's two versions of the Sphinx, in which trees are only slight vertical indications at the upper edges, but which portray nude women with a certain sensuality. In the smaller study (fig. 211) the sweep of the sphinx's hair is more like de Kooning's lines than is the body of the recumbent woman on her paw, where prominent claws remind the viewer of life's difficulties.[13] In the larger version (fig. 212), the recumbent bodies are man and woman.

Vincent van Gogh saw trees and the undergrowth as impassioned expressions of human traits.[14] The roiling forms of his late landscapes and the bent head of his nude woman Sorrow, exhibited in Rotterdam in 1923,[15] offer further Dutch precursors to this drawing by de Kooning. As with Toorop, the resemblance is not close.

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[12]Rieta Bergsma, "Man and Nature--The Nature of Man," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 49-54, discusses Dutch images of women and trees within the context of the repercussions of Darwinism in Dutch visual arts of the late nineteenth century.

[13]See Polak, Het Fin-de-Siècle, 140, and Geurt Imanse and John Steen, "Achtergronden van het Symbolisme," in Kunstenaren der idee, ed. Blotkamp and others, 22, and Catalogue, ibid., 130, for discussion of citation from Carlyle written in left margin.

[14]Letter no. 195 is often cited in this regard; see V. W. van Gogh, The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1958), 360.

[15]Teekeningen van Vincent van Gogh, uit de verzameling van Mevrouw Van Gogh-Bonger, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 15 March - 2 April 1923, RKK archives, inv. no. 246.

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One of the most arresting and well-known images of women in trees in the history of art is by an artist whom de Kooning mentioned in a 1950 conversation about his Dutch years: the Italian painter Giovanni Segantini. The Evil Mothers of 1894 (fig. 213) was widely reproduced in a number of monographs on Segantini from early in the century and it is possible that de Kooning knew it from one of Bernard Romein's "German art books."[16]

Segantini's title, The Evil Mothers, might have interested de Kooning as much as the floating woman ensnared by the tree. His own drawing, however, gives no indication of children and owes little to the style or composition of the Segantini image. None of de Kooning's women float, but they do share with Segantini's their arched torsos and slumped heads, traits which recur in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century images of women in Western art.

Bram Dijkstra has garnered an impressive group of such images in his treatment of female "idols of perversity" in art and literature of the late nineteenth and early

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[16]See Annie-Paule Quinsac, Segantini: Catalogo Generale (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1982), nos. 574 and 576. Gottardo Segantini, Segantini (Munich, 1913), is one of many similar books published through the early 1920s; the number and numbering of plates varies slightly; here the work in Vienna is plate 30 and the title is given as Die Schlechten Mütter, easily understood by a Dutch-speaker. As is noted in Chapter 5, the 1950 recollection was connected to de Kooning's first discoveries while at the Academy and he placed Segantini with Millet in the Barbizon School rather than with the more Symbolist work of Toorop and van Konijnenburg; Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8.

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twentieth century. He sorts them into several categories pertinent to this de Kooning drawing: Collapsing Woman, Restful Detumescence, and the Nymph with the Broken Back. Dijkstra would see the erotic sleeper cast as a part of nature (and paired with a phallic tree) to be an effort at coming,

> to terms with the fact of feminine sexuality without having to confront the concomitant realization that . . . she might . . . cease to be a passive object for contemplation. By placing woman in nature in a state of utter exhaustion, the painters were trying to indicate that although she was no longer an ideal creature, and instead very much a part of nature, she was still not an active threat to man, who was, after all, in many ways far superior to brute nature.[17]

Dijkstra's comment was made in relation to paintings like Robert van Vorst Sewell's Garden of Persephone of ca. 1896 (fig. 214), where the passivity of the women is extreme. De Kooning's image is more troubled; bent elbows imply a struggle by the women against the lassitude which overcomes them. In fact, the vertical woman alongside the tree trunk recalls Michelangelo's Dying Slave in general pose, with the important exception that her left arm is not raised above her head in abandonment and sleep but rather pushes against the tree.

Dijkstra bases his interpretations on the repercussions of Darwinism in the intellectual climate of Europe. Even

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[17]Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 82; see ibid., 99-100 for a discussion of images of women connected to trees in turn-of-the-century art.

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with its differing emphasis, de Kooning's image is certainly a result of this heritage, whether he was conscious of it or not.[18]

The long limbs of de Kooning's figures have a period quality that may also be seen in the Nude (fig. 205) by Alexandre Iacovleff that was on view in the Brussels Royal Museums during de Kooning's stay in Belgium, mentioned in Chapter 7. The upper contour of de Kooning's recumbent nude shows the same interest in long and short undulations that Iacovleff accentuated on the contour to the right of his standing figure. The anemic, patrician mannerism of Iacovleff's modern model reaching for a robe, however, was not what de Kooning wished to do with his shapes: he chose to entwine them with the elements of nature.

The hipshot pose of the Iacovleff calls to mind that of van Konijnenburg's Overgave (fig. 150) and its source Leonardo's lost Leda, known by nine versions, among which are one in the Louvre, considered the most faithful, and a more distant variation in the Brussels Royal Museums

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[18]One of the disseminators of a social Darwinism in the Netherlands was Walter Crane's The Claims of Decorative Art, translated by Jan Veth in 1892, the same year in which it was published. If de Kooning read Crane, he may have taken to heart a passage in the title essay referring to "beauty, both in life and art," which, "like everything else, is a result of that continual fierce and strenuous struggle for existence throughout nature"; Crane, Claims (London, 1902), 3. See also Bergsma, "Man and Nature," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 55-56.

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attributed to Andrea del Sarto (fig. 215).[19] De Kooning was probably attentive to this painting when he visited the museum, for aspects of the composition recur in his 1928 painting of Two Women.[20]

An indistinct cluster of marks in the empty area to the right of de Kooning's Women and Tree could be the beginning of a second owl's head, reinforcing the potency of night. A stronger imagination might find this cluster to be a human skull in a cloaked body.[21] The presence of a skull, which is hypothetical at best, would veer the meaning of the drawing from a gentle allegory of evening or night to a more stressful statement about the end of life.[22]

An owl, or two, flying near a sleeping figure calls to mind Goya's famous image, the "Dream of Reason." Other plates from Goya's Caprichos series depict pretty women and

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[19]Angela Ottino della Chiesa, The Complete Paintings of Leonardo da Vinci (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1967), p. 108. Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Catalogue inventaire de la peinture ancienne, 264, inv. 1402, formerly attributed to Francesco Franciabigio. This version has four human babies emerging from shells at the bottom of the composition.

[20]To be published in a further study. It may be noted that there is a tree behind the Brussels Leda, that the swan and de Kooning's owl both have prominent wings, and that both works are populated by recumbent and seated figures at the bottom, but it is a considerable stretch to relate the Women and Tree to the Leda.

[21]The darkest mark would be the nasal cavity, curving lines to the right would indicate cheek and jaw, and barely discernible round forms, the eye sockets.

[22]If a skeletal apparition were planned, it seems to have met with the artist's dissatisfaction.

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owls. Plate 75, "Is there no one to untie us?" (fig. 216), combines a struggling woman bound to both tree and man, threatened from above by a huge owl; owl-men ensnare a dancing woman in plate 72, "You won't escape" (fig. 217); and an owl accompanies the ominous flight of two nude women--one old, one young--in "Pretty teacher!," plate 68. Compared to Goya's indictments of human folly, the tenor of de Kooning's drawing is more general, even decorative.[23]

Yet de Kooning's owl is not without menacing overtones. It is engaged in a low hunting glide, seeking prey which it will grab in sharp talons, for the moment out of view. From this perspective, the women's bodies are frightfully vulnerable. Perhaps because it is an active masculine presence, "brute nature" incarnate, the owl has merited such a degree of interest and finish, even beyond the tree.

A half-dozen years later de Kooning painted a stylistically different image of a bird in flight that discretely offered a male presence between a mannequin woman and a manicured tree (fig. 218). The bird will fly through a hoop held by a woman in an ambiguously domestic setting.

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[23]Pierre Gassier and Juliet Wilson, The Life and Complete Work of Francisco Goya (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1971), pp. 181, 184. A task for further research is to find the most likely way in which de Kooning may have come to know Goya's prints. It may be noted that Jaap Gidding depicted stylized owls in a glass painting that he exhibited in The Hague in 1920, but no visual record remains; "'Bureau' voor Meubelkunst Van der Sluys: Jaap Gidding," NRC, 15 February 1920, clipping in RKD.

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The Kiss

In de Kooning's Kiss (fig. 209) only the heads of the two lovers and the woman's hand on the man's shoulder are depicted. Almost half the composition is devoted to an etheric background from which a stream dips around the contour of the united heads. The swirling forms and limitation to black and white are characteristic of Jan Toorop's Symbolist compostions of the 1890s, in which the idea was stressed over observed nature. Swirling lines are also to be seen in Lodewijk Schelfhout's The Dream of 1918 (fig. 219).[24] Schelfhout's forms are fuller than his elder friend Toorop's, but slacker than de Kooning's. De Kooning's image is more sensuous and actively ardent than any of Toorop's. For him flesh is the means of eternal rapture; the body is not inferior to the mind.[25]

The woman's hand, so tenderly placed upon the man's arm, ends in ominously sharp fingernails. Both lovers seem

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[24]Illustrated in color as the frontispiece in Huebner, Lodewijk Schelfhout. Also illustrated in Huebner, Die neue Malerei in Holland (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1921; Arnhem: van Loghum Slaterus & Visser, 1921), illustrations unnumbered and unpaginated. Geurt Imanse, conversation with author, 1993, suggested the later work of Schelfhout as a possible influence on de Kooning's flowing lines.

[25]Bergsma, "Man and Nature," in Age of Van Gogh, ed. Bionda, 46 and n. 35, citing Ernst Braches, Het Boek als Nieuwe Kunst, 1892-1903. Een studie in Art Nouveau (Utrecht: Oosthoek's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1973), 19, observes that the "tendency to spiritualisation which emerged in the 1890s is connected with the view of the body as inferior to the mind."

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unaware of their fierce potential.[26] The nails ostensibly serve to rhyme with the points of the woman's eyelashes and the meeting of her hair and brow; they bring pungency to the swirling Art Nouveau lines. Eye make-up, sveltely contrived beside an arc of stylish brow, offers a taut cylindrical form, bringing up-to-the-minute 1925 dash to the image.

The two faces unite in a carefully blended merging that obliterates their mouths. The virtuoso gradation used at the Academy to render prosaic objects is here put to the expression of the ineffable, a grand statement about life. Although the mouths are notable by their absence from view, they are nonetheless the center of the subject.[27]

To focus on the kiss, the artist has had to compress the man's foreshortened nose, lest it overhang the major event. While not immediately noticeable, I find this compression ultimately disturbing. It does, however,

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[26]The long nails have prompted a comparison with the red fingernails in de Kooning's Woman, ca. 1944 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) by Prather in Willem de Kooning Paintings, ed. Prather, 82; Stephen Polcari, conversation with author, 15 January 1993, also noted the similar emphasis on women's fingernails in de Kooning's paintings of the 1940s. Jerrold Seigel, Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930 (New York: Viking, 1986), 49, notes that Henry Murger gave Mimi sharp fingernails in his Scènes de la vie de Bohème of 1851. Judith Zilczer, letter to author, 12 November 1993, suggests that the hand is not dissimilar to the six-fingered hand of Woman, 1964 in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, no. 29.

[27]A quarter century later, a mouth cut out of a popular advertisement would become a point of reference in painting the famous series of women first shown in 1953.

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prevent the man's nose from overlapping the woman's face, avoiding what Sidney Geist has described as "a metaphor for sexual aggressiveness";[28] this gentleness may be offset by the literally superior position of the man's vertical head above the woman's horizontally-aligned one. In rendering the woman's nose, which yields somewhat to the cheek that it meets so closely, de Kooning has included a nostril, thus alluding in a seemingly effortless, and tactful, way to an open orifice.

In the merging and blending of shapes, the man's cheek and neck flows into the line of the woman's nose and her little finger curves around his shoulder. One continuous line travels between the man's hair and shoulder to the woman's arching neck, with a delicate turn and a widening of its path as it meets her chin. For the length of this curve, the arm/chest of the man is shaded by a band of parallel striations, a device that will recur in several of the drawings. Here it is echoed in the thicker, darker parallel lines of the woman's hair as it hangs from her temple.

That this work was kept by de Kooning's family may be due to an anomalous fact: the work was posed for by de Kooning's sister Marie and her nine-year-old son. How does

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[28]Sidney Geist, Brancusi/The Kiss (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Icon Editions, 1978), 16; referring to the artistic ingenuity that must be marshalled in rendering the two noses, Geist proffers the axiom, "In the Kiss the nose is the final test"; ibid., 24.

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one explain the mother-son models for a depiction of eroticism? To the family, it was merely a matter of practical convenience: the models were available and would pose without charge.[29] In 1982 Marie showed the drawing to Ken Wilkie who was writing an article for Holland Herald magazine, saying only, "It's a fantasy."[30] A snapshot from the 1920s shows Willem with Marie and Tonny, as Marie's son Antonie was called, with this drawing hanging on the wall behind (fig. 220).[31] We may observe Marie's beauty and how the fall of Ton's hair is quite that of the drawing.

Marie's particular beauty, with dark hair and large eyes, often figures in the drawings from this period. She wore her hair combed away from her face, however, rather than in the bangs which adorn many of the young ladies of the drawings.

In 1985 when de Kooning was shown a photograph of this work of his youth, he mused with indulgent affection, "they sure look like they know what they're doing." A little later he commented,

> I thought it was very [whistle]. It's one thing I wanted to do it too, kiss this beautiful young woman. I was very young myself. [laughing] They passed me by, too. They didn't even look at me. They just kept

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[29]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985; Ton Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[30]Wilkie, "Portrait," 24.

[31]Hess Papers, estate of Elaine de Kooning.

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going straight.[32]

The subject was all that captured his attention. And the subject would have been of keen interest to a youth of twenty-one; it is physical, romantic and stylish. The choice, in the context of what is known of his life, was more likely the result of yearning than of celebration.[33]

The subject of the The Kiss is one that had become widespread, modern, and secular in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It may have reached de Kooning via the lithographs of the Swiss illustrator working in Paris, Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen (1859-1923), whom we know he greatly admired (fig. 221).[34] The theme is especially associated with Edvard Munch, whose curving auras in other works seem the nearest influence on de Kooning's swirling background and whose omission of facial features in various versions of The Kiss (fig. 222) may have inspired de Kooning's melded mouths. Either of Curt Glaser's 1918 or 1922 monographs on Munch could have been among Bernard

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[32]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[33]De Kooning did not have a special girlfriend in his Dutch years; Gerrit Randofi and Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985, both had this impression; in Elaine's wording, "Bill didn't have any particular girls in Holland because he would have told me about it."

[34]De Kooning had often mentioned his early admiration for Steinlen to Elaine de Kooning, which she recalled to me on a number of occasions, including a conversation of 20 January 1985. Steinlen's death on 13 December 1923 occasioned a number of obituaries and appreciations in the Dutch press.

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Romein's "German art books" that de Kooning recalled; each edition reproduces four versions of Munch's The Kiss and the 1894 etching Vampire as well.[35] De Kooning may well have noted the reproduction of Klimt's The Kiss of 1908 (fig. 223) in the 1920 issue of Wendingen devoted to the Austrian artist's work.[36] It is possible that he knew the famous Art Nouveau lithograph of The Kiss (fig. 224) by Peter Behrens.[37] In Holland the kiss remained a viable theme well after World War I. Vilmos Huszár used the theme in the first logo of De Stijl in 1917 (fig. 225).[38] Rotterdam artist Hendrik Chabot mixed Symbolism and De Stijl right-angles in his 1924 painting Het gezin (The Family, fig. 226), in which the parents kiss each other.[39]

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[35]Curt Glaser, Edvard Munch (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1918); Curt Glaser, Edvard Munch (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922).

[36]Wendingen 3, no. 2 (1920).

[37]The art historian August Hoff who visited Rotterdam regularly in connection with Thorn Prikker exhibitions at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring was also closely associated with Behrens. Geist, Brancusi/The Kiss, 16-30, discusses aspects of the theme in the early twentieth century; see also Nicolas James Perella, The Kiss Sacred and Profane, An Interpretative History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

[38]Reproduced in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, fig. 77, p. 92. Van Doesburg made an ink sketch of a similar composition, a double portrait of himself and Helena Milius around the time of their marriage in May 1917; ibid., fig. 13, p. 17.

[39]Illustrated in color in Jan van Adrichem, Hendrik Chabot, 9.

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Cartoon-like works

Most of de Kooning's drawings from 1924 are vignettes of contemporary café or street life (fig. 227). The subjects have as their heritage the lives of the workers, prostitutes, and entertainers of Montmartre, as seen in Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's (1864-1901) prints and posters, but more directly appreciated by de Kooning in the art of Steinlen, who was so indelibly influenced by Zola's 1877 novel L'Assommoir. Many of the subjects could have been witnessed in Holland or Belgium, but they would have had a decidedly French, and modern, resonance even in 1924.

De Kooning himself mentioned this in 1985, explaining that there were artists in Paris who made this same subject; he referred specifically to Woman leaning on table, dark ground (fig. 227). He commented in general about these works that, maybe the drawings aren't so good but the atmosphere is there. Of a book of photographs of many of these drawings, he said, "It's an interesting thing to see but nothing to rave about."[40] More than once he used the word "romantic" to describe either the atmosphere conveyed by the drawings or himself as the person who made them.[41] Ruminating on the café settings, he said,

I used to roam around there, you know, and meet people

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[40]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985. At another point he called them "nice drawings."

[41]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 21 April 1985.

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> and there was this large café where you could sit outside and you didn't have to order things all the time, you know, for the money business, you could just sit there anyhow . . . because they needed people to sit there so [others] could come there too.[42]

The milieu of a café as portrayed by French artists had intrigued Dutch artists for several decades. Kees van Dongen, Jan Sluyters, Leo Gestel and Piet van der Hem all made names for themselves with their avant-garde subject matter of the French demi-monde; Willy Sluiter (1873-1949) made illustrations of these subjects into the 1920s (figs. 228 and 229).[43] Art historian A. B. Loosjes-Terpstra has observed that in the early twentieth century Dutch artists and critics paid more attention to the subject matter of Lautrec, Steinlen, van Dongen, and Sluyters than to the form or style of their works and that around 1909 and 1911 the Dutch public considered such subjects to be the height of modernity, even compared to the Luminism of Mondrian. In 1909 and 1910 Gestel interrupted his modernist evolution with anecdoctal drawings and pastels brought back from Paris that Loosjes-Terpstra has described as "typerende" (typifying), "karakteriserende" (characterising), "leaning toward caricature," and as sometimes having elegant lines related to the art of Steinlen. These works and others made in the Netherlands (fig. 230) brought Gestel considerable

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[42]Ibid.

[43]See Chapter 5 on van Dongen, van der Hem and illustration as a career.

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financial success, including commissions from collectors.[44] Such attitudes and interests may well have persisted a decade later and swayed de Kooning's choices.

To the young Jan van Heel, who was one year ahead of de Kooning in the evening classes at the Rotterdam Academy from 1920,[45] Paris was the Mecca of the painter.[46] Van Heel's subjects from the early 1920s were outcasts and the demi-monde of Paris. Writing in 1941 about van Heel's early subjects, Dutch critic A. Glavimans suggested that such preferences were the fashion in the period shortly after World War I, partly from a general predilection, and in part as "a means by which a generation without support tried to find itself."[47]

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[44]Naar de caricatuur neigende stijl; Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, 93-94, and n. 6. She found this group of drawings by Gestel to be regressive.

[45]Jan van Heel, interview by author, translation by Robin Adèr, 25 June 1986; timing confirmed in Academy Verslagen where he is listed as A. C. L. van Heel. Born in 1898, van Heel was six years older than de Kooning, but became a school teacher before studying art.

[46]Dolf Welling, Jan van Heel (Maassluis, Netherlands: Gemeentemuseum Maassluis, 1973), 9. Van Heel was not able to visit Paris until 1945.

[47]Een der middelen, met welke een generatie zonder ruggesteun, heeft getracht zichzelf terug te vinden; A. Glavimans, "Jan van Heel," Maandblad voor beeldende Kunsten 18 (1941): 295. I thank Juliana van der Vloed Nash for early help in translating this article. I have no images of van Heel's 1920s works portraying the demi-monde. With regard to Glavimans's comment, Meyer Schapiro's 1937 observation about late nineteenth-century French painting is pertinent: "As the contexts of bourgeois sociability shifted from community, family and church to commercialized or privately improvised forms--the streets, the cafés and

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The themes of the Parisian streets and cafés also captivated Charley Toorop in the early 1920s, and she was able to draw them on site, favoring tramps, beggars, and those on the fringes of society.[48] As has been mentioned in Chapter 5, her social realism was fanned by her early and intense admiration for Vincent van Gogh but perhaps by more recent German art as well.

Among the Dutch artists who depicted the world of the Parisian boulevards, de Kooning has mentioned two, van Dongen and Piet van der Hem.[49] If the young artist's cartoon-like works continued in the vein of van Dongen's and van der Hem's subjects, he did not emulate their styles. His own style, relatively consistent within these works, appears to be derived from no one particular source, although certain elements point to specific interests. In general, with the emphasis upon line, these drawings by de Kooning belong within the tradition of book, poster, journal, and newspaper illustration of the previous several

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resorts--the resulting consciousness of individual freedom involved more and more an estrangement from older ties; and those imaginative members of the middle class who accepted the norms of freedom, but lacked the economic means to attain them, were spiritually torn by a sense of helpless isolation in an anonymous indifferent mass"; Meyer Schapiro, "The Nature of Abstract Art," in idem, Modern Art: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries--Selected Papers (New York, George Braziller, 1979), 193.

[48]Hammacher, Charley Toorop, 23; he specifically mentions a large drawing, Clochards, 1921.

[49]Bourdrez, "Painter of Promise," 8; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981.

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decades.

De Kooning's crisp outline (see fig. 231), when filled with hatching, is sometimes respected by a reserve space of white. This distinctive characteristic most likely stems from his admiration for Bernard Romein who favored such reserve spaces around outlines in his illustration work, as in the 1925 cover for a booklet of St. Nicholas and Christmas Songs (fig. 116).

In de Kooning's drawings attentiveness to telling details in posture, gesture, or facial expression of the figures is accompanied by formulaic rendering of other aspects: a circular pug nose, awkwardly foreshortened feet, and a rhythmic bowleggedness recur, although they are not always present. Emphasis is upon the figure, with the environment sketched in only enough to locate an event. Compared to the published illustrations of the period, the backgrounds of de Kooning's drawings are strikingly reticent.[50] In a number of instances, linear arcs set off the figure or figural group and provide a more unified outline for its shapes, serving both as ambient space and

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[50]Some of the line drawings of Olaf Gulbransson and Karl Arnold exist in such a void. In the 1950s de Kooning, via Hess, 1959, 18-19, suggested the term "no-environment" to explain his preference for keeping a background ambiguous; the best explanation from de Kooning is in the Snyder film out-takes published in French in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 52-54, English transcript by Sichère on file at Willem de Kooning Office, New York: "There's a certain time in a man's life when he makes his own environment."

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decorative transition to the page.[51] At times there is a shadow on the ground, an irregular linear outline filled with hatching. Whether background arc or a boy's clump of hair, an enclosed form is sometimes broken by an explosive excresence. (See figs. 238 and 269.)

De Kooning's intention for these works is not known. He has never spoken of commissions to do illustrations. Yet as has been discussed in Chapter 5, he has asserted that he wanted to be an illustrator in America. Some of these early drawings may have been meant for a portfolio to show to magazine or newspaper publishers.

While some of the drawings could function as a completely expressed experience, emotion, or commentary on current life, they could also be illustrations for an existing story. For instance, several could relate to Israel Querido's four-part novel De Jordaan of 1912 to 1924. Others which feature children might have had as their intended destination popular novels for boys or even a comic strip like Bulletje en Boonestaak. The subjects beg one to search for sources in Dutch magazine stories or popular novels or late naturalistic literature of the teen years and early 1920s.[52]

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[51]These arcs are more circular than the relatively Gothic forms used by Romein, Chabot and van der Plas.

[52]I thank especially Carel Blotkamp and, at his referral, Sjoerd van Faassen of the Letterkundige Museum, The Hague, for brief conversations about possible literary sources.

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For the purpose of discussion, the themes of the cartoon-like works presented here may be divided into those which feature women, women and men together, men only, the poor, the city market, and children, even though these categories tend to overlap.

Women

Flower Sellers

The protagonist who occurs most often in this group of drawings is the attractive young woman. In the one work that is drawn twice and brought to a finish in the second version with watercolor, she is on the job working as a flower seller, tossing her head in a sideways glance that may be read as carefree and also as calculatedly alluring (figs. 231 and 232). Her freshness and modish beauty are seen in counterpoint to her elder co-worker: stout, bending over in daily labor.

The watercolor was surely made from a tracing of the less-finished drawing, for the back of that work is scored with dark pencil just under the figures. This method of working, tracing lines that have met with the artist's approval as a springboard for a new work, continually repeating and refining forms, would have a place in de Kooning's art for the rest of his career.[53]

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[53]See further discussions in Wolfe, "Van Wim tot Bill de Kooning," 12; Shiff, "Water and Lipstick," in Willem de Kooning Paintings, ed. Prather, 35-36 and passim; and Storr, "At Last Light," in Late Paintings, ed. Garrells, 45-47.

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There is a curious analogy between the Flower Sellers and the Women and Tree. Despite the differences of medium and style, the overall compositions with an upright and a compact, bent figure are similar, as is the position of the vertical woman's left arm and shoulder, and the interest in the thrown-back head. Here the similarity may be less a matter of tracing than of favored poses and shapes.

The flower seller is the only beautiful woman of the early works to present us with a smile. The details of her face have been clarified in the second version, whereas in the earlier rendering the smile is more open and salient. We know that women's smiles would eventually play an important role in de Kooning's paintings of the early 1950s. The tossed-back pose of the flower seller's head also has a curious after-life in de Kooning's work. In 1961 he pasted a photoengraving of a smiling woman's back-tilted head onto a small painting of a quite abstract woman.[54]

Of the early works, this drawing most resembles those in French fashion magazines, although there the young woman's social position would place her as recipient rather than seller of flowers. Nonetheless her clothing has up-to-the-minute lines. The neckline, short sleeve, and dropped waist were all featured in L'Art et la Mode in August 1924 (fig. 233). De Kooning's billowing skirt seems a little

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[54]Woman, I, 1961, oil on paper with collage, 29 x 22 3/8 in., private collection, reproduced in color in Cummings and others, Willem de Kooning, no. 212, p. 198.

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shorter than those of summer 1924 (fig. 234) but definitely longer than those of 1925;[55] the apparent length of his hemline may be deceptive, however, because he has endowed his woman with extremely long legs. De Kooning has significantly altered one aspect of current fashion in giving far more definition to bust and waist.

One detail in this work, present in another as well, points to de Kooning's interest in a specific French illustrator. So far as I am aware, the particular stylization given to the stockings, legs, and foreshortened feet occur only in the work of Georges Barbier (1882-1932). Dark, shaded areas on either side of an elegant leg leave a lighter highlight between them. Examples may be found in the Gazette du Bon Ton of 1924 and in the Almanach des Modes of 1925 (fig. 235).[56] De Kooning's roses have a period quality that links them to the graphics of the Weiner Werkstätte, but they are similar as well to those by Georges Barbier for a perfume advertisement drawn in 1918 that appeared on the inside front cover of La Renaissance de

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[55]JoAnne Olian, Authentic French Fashions of the Twenties: 413 Costume Designs from "L'Art et la Mode" (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1990), 78 and passim. The illustration from the Gazette du Bon Ton of 1924 is published in Ludmila Kybalová, Olga Herbenová, and Milena Lamarová, The Pictorial Encyclopedia of Fashion, trans. Claudia Rosoux (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1968; New York: Crown Publishers, 1968), 309.

[56]Gazette du Bon Ton 7 (1924): pl. 56; Almanach des Modes (Paris, 1925), plate reproduced in Alan Jenkins, The Twenties (London: Heineman, 1974), 240.

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l'Art in May and December 1921.[57]

Prostitute in Doorway

Another attractive young woman with bobbed dark hair, now with bangs, is also shown soliciting business (fig. 236). Here, though, she is clearly a prostitute, languorously--or wearily--leaning against an open doorway or alley between buildings. The architectural elements, which are parallel to the plane of the drawing, are only summarily indicated; improbably, the woman's feet are hidden from view by a sill. The most care of the drawing has been given to the gesture of head and upper torso, conveying a sense of the make-up, hairdo, and *déshabille*. Desirability of the breasts is featured; the skirt hangs limply and unrevealingly. The one hand visible is made to fit its position without detail.

Café Scenes and Women at Tables

The locale of the attractive young woman of these drawings is most often a café, where she is seated at a table alluringly (Café Scene, fig. 237), or dejectedly (Woman leaning on a table, dark ground, fig. 227) or in a conspiratorial huddle of jaded glamour (Two Women at Table with Waiter, fig. 238). In the more populated sketches, the women at tables are clearly in cafés, and as clearly plying

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[57]La Renaissance de l'Art 4, nos. 5 and 12 (1921). I refer to the roses nearest the hands of de Kooning's elder flower seller.

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a trade. As the cast of characters is reduced, the young woman slumps forward on the table and the mood becomes melancholy. It is her solitary, dejected, probably inebriated state that de Kooning noted as similar to the subjects treated by artists in Paris.

Smoke curls ominously around the two women at a café table (fig. 238), setting forth a boundary shape that is more languidly Art Nouveau than de Kooning's usual brisk circular arcs. The two women have contrasting hair styles: one wears a sleek, dark bob, while the other has fluffy pale hair, equally short. The style of dress that de Kooning favored for his women in cafés is cut low, making a horizontal line across the bust, with thin straps that have a tendency to fall off the shoulder. Here he has given his lady with her back to the viewer a more unusual cut of dress: one strap alone runs up to the left shoulder, creating an asymmetrical diagonal across the back and exposing a hefty right shoulder. These are the most predatory of the early women.

In three images the view shortens to just the table top and upper parts of the women's bodies, in each case enclosed in a square or rectangular frame; this closer attention may seek to explore facets of the woman's character or experience. One sketch--of the woman alone, in a pose similar to that of Café Scene--gives in words the artist's view of her or the state of mind and motivation he ascribes

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to her: in the margin of the sheet is the commentary, "altijd schooieren maar" (but always begging), (fig. 239).[58] If this woman is begging, she does so with youth, beauty and stylishness; the burdens that she bears, whether hunger, poverty, illness, or psychological distress, are less pitiable than interesting.

This image is inscribed in a square. It may be to convey the idea of a woman in a window: prostitutes could be seen in windows on the Binnenrotte, a street in Rotterdam, according to de Kooning's brother Koos.[59] It is also possible that the borders have been drawn merely to plan the drawing, for the shapes are compact and mindful of the boundary, as is the case with a quite different subject of Street Vendors (fig. 263). The abrupt line of the woman's bangs is repeated by a horizontal emphasis given to eyes, mouth and clavicle. The general angularity is relieved only by the taut, round breasts. Several tries have been made at the left arm and shoulder, while on the right, crystalline trapezoids and triangles replace any interest in a shoulder.[60] Such attention to angularity prompts speculations about a modernizing interest in Cubism. De

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[58]The word *maar* is often used in casual speech for emphasis; *schooieren* is the infinitive of the verb meaning to beg or cadge.

[59]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[60]This happens again, often just above the shoulder, in the women paintings of the early 1950s.

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Kooning's stylization seems less related to Cubist works than to Jan Toorop's works of the late teens and early 1920s (figs. 240 and 279), their angular divisions sensitive to the requirements of monumental decorative work more than to the Cubism of Lodewijk Schelfhout (fig. 108).[61] It is reminiscent too of leaded glass work: for instance, Gidding's window of a female nude with angular star forms in the upper spaces.[62]

Two women in paired rectangles (fig. 241) are distinctly different from each other; this theme intrigued the artist enough to begin it again, larger and in more separated rectangles on the reverse of the sheet (fig. 242). In both versions, the woman on the right more successfully gained his attention. In the smaller drawing, she smokes a cigarette from a long slim holder and rests her right hand near a full sherry or cocktail glass. A swirl of smoke from the cigarette wafts around her body in Art Nouveau curves, but the lines of her hat, dress and arms are more angular; only semi-circular lines at her breast indicate the curves of her body. Her glance is directed outward and this may be what the artist wanted to explore further, for in the larger

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[61]Toorop's De Pelgrim (The Pilgrim) was illustrated in Het Leven, 1 November 1921, 1403, with a caption describing it as "in de richting van de moderne school" (in the direction of the modern school).

[62]Illustrated in Chapter 4; reproduced in A. O., "Binnenhuiskunst," 398 and in Zwiers, "Werk van Jaap Gidding," 89.

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drawing he concentrated on the head with its wide-open large eyes looking off to the left, punctuated by an uneasy streak of white across the pupil. He retained the rectangular corners of the hat, clearly intended to fit into the corner of the drawing, but changed the brim to reveal or resemble hair pulled across the forehead. Three attempts at a left shoulder may be why the drawing was abandoned, leaving only two sketchy circles for breasts.

The partner of the smoking woman is barely discernible in the large version. We must look to the smaller drawing to explore the distinction intended between this person and the smoker. Fruit or other round objects on the table contrast with the cocktail glass of her pendant; wavy lines punctuated with rounded shapes imply a floral growth where cigarette smoke swirls in the other; a higher neckline contrasts with the careless *decolleté*.[63] If a symbolic opposition was intended in this image, the apparently wholesome woman was less intriguing to the artist.

Men and Women

Prostitutes and Pimps

Two drawings show the young woman and her pimp on the street with either an approaching or departing man (figs. 243 and 244). It is possible to read the scenes as "before" and "after" a business transaction. No continuing narrative

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[63]An indecipherable scribble at her shoulder suggests seventeenth-century images of children blowing bubbles.

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was intended, however, because the pimp is clearly a different person; the woman's clothing is different in the two drawings, but she herself, only sketchily rendered in the second, continues as the same type. In the approach scene she shields herself timidly or reluctantly behind her man. He is inattentive to her feelings as he assesses the street in a pose of commanding yet relaxed chic.

The pimp in the other drawing, a very tough type, strolls arm-in-arm beside his demure woman, whose head is turned toward either him or the departing man some distance behind them. When de Kooning saw a number of these drawings in 1985, this one prompted a comment about the sense of the style of the period.[64]

Knock-out

Among this group of drawings, the one on which de Kooning placed a full signature (minus the "g") has the most disturbing subject matter (fig. 245).[65] A muscular tough with a caricatural face stands in evident self-satisfaction and pride above the recumbent body of a man whom he has knocked unconscious to the ground and from whose head a puddle of blood has formed. A crowd has gathered to contemplate the event, making this drawing the most densely

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[64]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 21 April 1985. Parenthetically it may be noted that the skirt lengths seem right for 1924.

[65]He was leaving out the "de" in "de Kooning" as he would for the first years in New York.

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populated except for a market scene.[66]

The bystanders exhibit varying degrees of interest. Nearest to the thug is a man in a fedora--perhaps of higher economic circumstance--who seems concerned for the man on the ground, even though the line used for his mouth rhymes with the smirk of the perpetrator, as the line of his lapel echoes the muscular breast of the ruffian. Beside the man in the fedora, a man in a worker's cap pauses to look down at the victim; he assesses the damage coolly, the gesture of his little finger implying a fastidious self-absorption. Next, in the center of this row of onlookers, is the figure among them who most captures our attention, and the heroine of the group of drawings, the young woman with dark bobbed hair and bangs. Her parted lips reveal awe at the strength of the fighter; whether her emotions tend to admiration or horror seems deferred to the imagination of the viewer. The man in checkered cap with a casually-mouthed cigarette beside her also looks to the thug; his eyes are hidden and we are less interested in him unless he may belong with the young woman. The furthest spectator to the left directs attention to the victim again; his raised eyebrows, withdrawn arm, and scribble of vertical hair make him appear frightened by the event. Two other characters visible

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[66]There are eleven figures in the drawing of market vendors, nine here, six men walking, six figures in Café Scene, and five each in Five Drunkards, Boy Stealing, Boy Kicked, and Conversations.

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behind this first row lend amplitude to the assembly but register less distinct reactions.

The young woman's dark hair repeats the dark value of the victor's pants and of the victim's blood, a visual link for what is already of psychological interest to the viewer. In spite of the crowd, the subject is an emotional triangle, one of several variants of this theme which recur in de Kooning's early drawings.

We try to assess who the victim might be. A hat, which might give some clues, is not in view; his sweater is of a different cut from that of his assailant. His face is scarcely visible in the foreshortened view that we are offered but it does not seem very old; it is surely not so deformed as that of the assailant. The victim's cranium is vulnerable, and unusual, in lacking hair. The irregularly rounded dome of his skull and his foreshortened features recall the depictions of the infant and the blond boy in the watercolor of the Family (fig. 291), similarities which may suggest an identification of de Kooning with the victim. Once this issue is raised, one looks back to the monstrous slugger: the muscular victor must equally be a candidate for the artist's alter-ego, especially when we recall the many times de Kooning would draw from his own sturdy physique during the late 1930s and 1940s in New York.[67] Speaking with Amei Wallach in 1979, de Kooning commented that as a

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[67]Cummings and others, Willem de Kooning, nos. 6-8.

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young man in Rotterdam he had been "good in the street," meaning as a fighter.[68]

The shoulder, an obsession in the thirties and forties, is here handled deftly. Two curves give trapezius and deltoid muscles. Outline carries the sense of volume aided only by several interior lines. The bulbous outline of this character's arm calls to mind the arms of de Kooning's frontal women of the early 1950s.

The bulge of the back of his neck, also rendered by outline alone, is exaggerated even beyond the lower forms of this figure and belongs with the extreme caricature of the face, the only such example in the extant drawings. An unusual, thin beard accentuates the grin of this monster and rhymes with the devilish eyebrow. A few sprigs of hair break the knobby line of his bald head. The button nose, here shaded, occurs on several other characters in this group of drawings. Such a stylization, while by no means unique to them, can also be found on a working-class type in a Piet van der Hem poster (fig. 246) and in drawings of children or country folk by Bernard Romein (fig. 247).[69]

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[68]Wallach, "Dinners," 24: "I was good in the street too," he says. "What did you do in the street?" I ask. "Fight," is the uncompromising answer. "Sure, I was good. I was strong."

[69]The porter in Piet van der Hem's Spyker Autos poster, before 1914, has such a nose; Franciscono, Modern Dutch Poster, fig. 30. Among Romein's faces are those that may have been illustrations for Germinal; Hitomi, Romein, fig. 20.

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The rendering of the thug's pants is a subtle treatment which reappears in many of these drawings. Lines of interior definition are indicated in reserve: the white of the paper is left between strong parallel strokes to create the indications of center seam, knee and a fold in the lower leg. As has been noted, such a treatment was also used by Bernard Romein.

Here and in the group of drawings in general, anatomy seems knowingly rendered or exaggerated, either for the purpose of the subject or composition. One exception exists, here and in the others: foreshortening of feet often seems inadequate. An extreme case occurs in the man behind and to the right of the woman; his legs are mysteriously summary. Foreshortening is sometimes capably exploited, as in the head of the victim and his hand reaching to the extreme foreground, which intrique the viewer.

An important aspect of this drawing is the demand it makes upon the viewer to unravel the interactions among the characters. The smirking, tough protagonist is similar to a character described by de Kooning to Thomas Hess in the middle 1960s. Hess wrote,

> He always has been fascinated by the idea of making a drawing into a character, like Dick Tracy, or better yet, some of the monsters in that strip, and then putting it through all the paces of a character in a melodrama. The drawing achieves a kind of prosaic grotesque which is at once comical, banal, and, in its way, great.

With the discovery of the early drawings we can literally

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see de Kooning's "lifelong love of, and admiration for, the funny papers" as explained by Hess.[70] It was already well incorporated into his mature art by the 1960s.

Israel Querido's De Jordaan

Many of de Kooning's cartoon-like drawings reflect a world similar to that of Israel Querido's naturalistic novel in four parts, De Jordaan, 1912-24. Querido depicted life in the working class neighborhood of Amsterdam called the Jordaan; the volume entitled "Nes en Zeedijk" dealt with the districts of prostitutes and bars in the center of Amsterdam. There is a poster for "Nes en Zeedijk," by Piet van der Hem (fig. 248) that illustrates a scene from the end of the volume and it is very like the subject in de Kooning's drawing that I have called Knock-out. As de Kooning knew and admired the work of van der Hem, he may have known the poster. It is even more likely that he read the novel, for its world clearly interested his self-described "romantic" nature.[71]

While Querido's Nes en Zeedijk need not be a literary

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[70]Thomas B. Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 30. This was written during the ascendance of Pop art. Hess concluded the paragraph with another statement by de Kooning: "Of course the trouble with the Pop artists," de Kooning once said, "is that they don't pick the good funny papers."

[71]It bears noting that Israel Querido worked in both Symbolist and naturalistic modes, as Carel Blotkamp pointed out to me; de Kooning's Symbolist and cartoon-like works have a similar span.

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source for de Kooning's drawings, examining the relationships between the novel, van der Hem's poster, and Knock-out provides a view of de Kooning's early work in a Dutch context. Intriguingly, where de Kooning's treatment of his subject differs from the van der Hem, it seems nearer to Querido.

In the novel a young woman called Corry, from the Jordaan, proud and beautiful, is attracted by the life of the cafés and is friendly with the prostitutes, although she herself is not of their world. The tale of her love interest in Karel, handsome, altruistic, and a good fighter, is the main plot amid the activities of the denizens of the Nes and Zeedijk. Violent and complex emotions between prostitutes and pimps; friendship, solidarity, jealousy and treachery among the women themselves; the backgrounds of the unemployed and of the prostitutes; extravagant antics of a baron slumming; reflections of a hunchback on human behavior which see the primacy of stealing, destruction, and pleasure-seeking: these dramas take place in the tenements, brothels, bars, and streets of Amsterdam, including the Jordaan quarter.

Toward the end of the novel, Corry finds herself in the same bar with Karel, her beloved, but separated from him by a terrible misunderstanding. To taunt Karel, Corry accepts a dance from Lou the boxer, who behaves lasciviously; Corry's resistance prompts a rescue attempt from the

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good-hearted sailor Jan Gouwenaar. Lou the boxer proceeds to punch Jan to the ground where he lies in a puddle of blood; this is the episode that would correspond with de Kooning's drawing. The novel ends with a fight between Karel and Lou, in which Karel is victorious; it is this event that provides the subject of van der Hem's poster, although he has taken artistic license, for there is no dramatic knock-out as in the previous fight. Karel then leaves without a backward glance, still harboring the misunderstanding about Corry. The last sentence of the novel has her "sinking down on a stool, her hands before her face, and weeping, sobbing as if she would die."[72]

Van der Hem's Corry is not dark-haired and slim, as she is in Querido's tale and the de Kooning drawing, but in the poster the three protagonists are distinct from the onlookers and the setting is clearly a café, indicated concisely by floorboards, a spilled drink, bar stool, bottle, and sign for pilsener beer. De Kooning's drama, whatever his source, omits the setting entirely, except for an indeterminate aura of shading behind the crowd. It could take place on a city street as readily as in a café. His attractive young woman is more integrated with the onlookers

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[72]En zij zonk, de handen voor het gezicht, op een bank neer en huilde, snikte alsof ze stierf; Is. Querido, Amsterdamsch Epos, De Jordaan, Van Nes en Zeedijk (Amsterdam: Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur, n.d.), 543. I am grateful to Agnes Bristel who read the novel and made its story and mood available to me.

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but her reaction is psychologically important to the subject. In de Kooning's drawing the naturalism of van der Hem's poster is replaced by a linear vignette, but the interaction of the characters is still the focus.

The Couple

Among the drawings that depict men and women together I place one that is known only by a photograph (fig. 249).[73] It is included in the snapshot of Wim, Marie, and Ton of about 1925, pinned to a board placed in camera range (fig. 220). The drawing is somewhat wider than The Kiss, which is partly visible hanging on the wall behind. Its corner is hidden from view, but perhaps the missing area had little incident, for the work is brought to less finish than The Kiss. Rendered mostly in line, it depicts the upper bodies of two figures standing close together. The most salient aspects are the left figure's distinctive hat and the open mouths and hunched postures of both people. The hat has a wide brim like a fisherman's sou'wester; among the variety of hats in the early drawings, there is no other like it.[74]

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[73]This drawing might also be placed in my category, "The Poor."

[74]Rotterdam artist Nico Benschop, born 1907, interview by author, 27 May 1986, identified the hat as a *zuidwester*. The brim of de Kooning's hat angles outward more than does the equivalent part of the hats in Wim Wouters's painting Visch lossen, exhibited in the 1923 St. Lucas exhibition, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and reproduced in Het Leven, 8 December 1923, 1619. Photographs of the period yield no similar examples, although the close-fitting rounded top and wide brim are sometimes found on women's hats.

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The generalized background consists of a vertical line, possibly the outside corner of a building, and a dramatic diagonal shadow of graded tiers that recall the wafting ground of The Kiss, now angular.

The figures' postures and open mouths convey downtrodden distress. The woman faces to the right, possibly holding her hand to her breast; the figure to the left, close behind her, may be glancing behind them. The poses have a resonance of Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden of Eden. One might imagine that the couple has been evicted from their dwelling. De Kooning's nephew Antonie Breedveld referred to the drawing as Poverty, his own interpretation.[75] One explanation of the open mouths could be that the figures are singing. When shown a photographic enlargement of this drawing in 1985, de Kooning commented, "That was very much 'Had je me maar,' the name of a song."[76]

Had je me maar!

The search for this song and its context has yielded three paths, each of which fits with de Kooning's early

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[75]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

[76]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985. De Kooning's half-brother Koos Lassooy, present during this conversation, knew that "Had je me maar" had been a popular song. I am grateful to Agnes Bristel for transcribing these words. The meaning is literally, "Had you but me." It could be interpreted, "if only you could have me," and a taunting "you can't catch me," as in children's play.

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interests, and all of which may intersect, although interpretation of this image remains elusive. There are at least two sets of lyrics. One is a popular *kermis* song and the other celebrates a rebellious moment in Dutch politics; the third, with lyrics as yet unknown to me, was the title song of a musical revue featuring bohemian street characters.

The words for the *kermis* song, which was very much "in the air" by 1921, as will be seen below, have been found, on my behalf, by art historian Jacqueline Boreel.[77] The continuing refrain, "Had je me maar," is spoken by beautiful young women turning away lewd suitors. Here is one verse, with refrain, in translation:

> The latest that you now can hear
> Is an adage oh so strange.
> You hear it coming and going,
> Always the retort, "If only you could have me."
> When you see a girl walk by,
> Sweet of face, with beautiful eyes,
> Place no hopes on her,
> For she will cry, "If only you could have me."
>
> If only you could have me, with an offer of a buck,
> If only you could have me, you could walk by my side,
> If only you could have me, while she looks right at you,
> "You may gladly at me look,
> But make love with me you may not."[78]

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[77]Ms. Boreel has found an undated sheet of lyrics, "Had je me maar, voor 3 spie!" sold for three cents, with three verses and three variations of the refrain. I am exceedingly grateful.

[78]'t Nieuwst wat men thans kan hooren
Is een spreekwoord o zoo raar
Je hoort van achter van voren
't Spreekwoord steeds, van Had je me maar

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The words on the published sheet, while teasing, are firmly moralizing. In the recollection of an elderly Dutchman, variant words are more provocative and lead to this translation:

> Come and get me! A lock of hair on one side,
> I am lovable,
> But not marriageable,
> Come and get me! If you have a buck.[79]

> Als je een meisje soms ziet loopen
> Met lief gelaat en een oogenpaar,
> Je hoeft op haar heusch niet te hopen
> Want ze reopt hadt je me maar.
>
> Had je me maar, met een knaakie d'r bij
> Had je me maar, liep je maar aan me zij
> Had je me maar, terwijl ze U aan ziet
> Je mag lekker naar me kijken
> Met me vrijen mag je niet.

This translation was begun by Jacqueline Boreel and colloquialized by myself. In further verses, the wife of a soldier who is away on duty turns down her landlord, and a maid, "prudent and chaste," rebuffs her employer.

> [79]Had je me maar met een lokkie opzij,
> Je kunt wel van me houwen,
> Maar mag niet met me trouwen,
> Had je me maar met een krakie erbij.

These words were recalled by Bram Soethoudt (born 1908) in July 1987; after conferring with his friend Pieter van der Weyden (born 1903 in Amsterdam) he explained further in October 1987 that the word *krakie* refers to the fee of a prostitute; I am grateful to them and to Agnes Bristel, daughter of Mr. Soethoudt, who sought and conveyed their information. I have added the phrase *had je me maar* to Mr. Soethoudt's last line, following the two-line citation in Richter Roegholt, Amsterdam in de 20e eeuw (Utrecht and Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Het Spectrum, 1976), vol. 1, 1919/1945, 135:

> Had je me maar met een knakie derbij,
> Had je me maar met een lokkie opzij. . .

Roegholt is cited in Hans Mulder, "Erich Wichman: anders and anti," in Erich Wichman 1890-1929, tussen idealisme en rancune, ed. Frans van Burkom and Hans Mulder (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 1983), 146. This version spells two words differently: *knakie derbij*. The translation was kindly made by Hanneke Gold who offered further explanation: "This ditty

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From either of these variations de Kooning would have associated the *kermis* song with an attractive young woman, virtuous or not, who rejects some aspect of a suitor's desires.

In 1921 the anarchistic Rapaille-partij (Rabble Party) in Amsterdam put forth as candidate for Town Councilman a well-known street character nicknamed Had-je-me-maar. The gesture was a hoax to protest the inefficacies of the government but it caught the popular imagination and two of the party's candidates were swept into office: Had-je-me-maar and Bertus Zuurbier. (A considerable portion of the votes came from the Jordaan quarter.) Had-je-me-maar, whose real name was Cornelis de Gelder, frequented the terraces of the large cafés in Amsterdam with a cigar box that he had rigged with two strings to play like a musical instrument. At the end of a performance, he would make a deep bow and call out "Had je me maar!," either in reference to the popular *kermis* song or as an advertisement for a new musical, as will be discussed below. From 1921 a new popular song celebrated his candidacy and election with jokes about laws that would favor drinkers of alcoholic

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has the flavor of a come-on, a tease, a coquettish trade-call. . . . The feeling is: 'come and get me if you can!'" Regarding the lock of hair: "maybe she's identifying herself, 'the one with the lock of hair'; . . . *Knaak* (or *knakie*) is slang for *rijksdaalder*, the value of 2 1/2 guilders."

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beverages.[80]

Bertus Zuurbier, the candidate elected with Had-je-me-maar, figures in a de Kooning tale of life in Holland. Elaine de Kooning recalled a story of defiant political cynicism which de Kooning had told her. It featured a man called "Stale Beer," whom she described as,

> like a bum, a vagrant, . . . who would go around to bars and empty glasses--people left a little beer in their glasses [for him]. People were so cynical about government that they elected this man to office. . . .

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[80]Mulder, "Erich Wichman: anders and anti," in Erich Wichman, ed. van Burkom and Mulder, 145-148. The artist Erich Wichman played a key role in this campaign, but de Kooning's awareness seems to have been hazy and may not have extended to the Wichman connection. Mulder discusses Wichman's political views. I am grateful to Xavier Tricot who sent me pertinent pages from Jaap van de Merwe, Gij zijt canalje, heeft men ons verweten! Het proletariërslied in Nederland en Vlaanderen (Utrecht and Antwerp: A. W. Bruna & Zoon, 1974), 298-99, cited by Mulder, ibid., 177, n. 109. This second song has entirely different words, but Mr. van der Weyden, in his 1987 conversation with Bram Soethoudt, linked the song given above with the councilman, explaining that it eventually became popular, sung by all of Holland. Pieter van der Zwan and Tom Weerheijm, Had je me maar: Amsterdams straatleven en straatfiguren tussen 1900 en 1940 (Amsterdam: Stadsdrukkerij van Amsterdam, 1979), 25, proffer that de Gelder was commissioned by a theater director to sing the song as an advertisement for a new musical and give these words:

Had je me maar met een knakie erbij
Had je me maar met een lokkie opzij
Had je me maar wat je hoort en wat je ziet
Ik wil wel met je vrijen,
maar m'n centen krijg je niet!

This variation may be translated:

If only you could have me, with an offer of a buck,
If only you could have me, with a lock of hair on one side,
If only you could have me, what you hear and what you see,
I sure want to make love with you,
but my money you'll not get.

I thank Jacqueline Boreel for this reference.

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> Everyone wrote in his name and he was elected overwhelmingly.[81]

In actual fact, Zuurbier was a street hawker who sold a number of socialist and anarchist newspapers.[82] De Kooning may have conflated the Had-je-me-maar personality with Zuurbier's name, literally "stale beer." These events after all took place in Amsterdam, not his own city. During this period Marie lived in Amsterdam; she may have been at the Rozengracht address in the Jordaan district at the time of the election.

Several Dutch cities elected Rapaille-partij candidates. The climate was favorable in Rotterdam and from 1923 to 1927 café-license-holder L. G. A. Coremans enlivened the Rotterdam Town Council. His support came from laid-off workers, the unemployed, street and market vendors (all subjects of de Kooning's drawings), and those who lived in certain neighborhoods, among them the areas in which de Kooning lived with fellow-artist friends. One degrading practice of those years that won supporters for Coremans and the more serious Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij was the frequency of evictions in which families unable to pay their rent were unceremoniously put out in the street with

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[81]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985.

[82]Mulder, "Erich Wichman: anders and anti," in Erich Wichman, ed. van Burkom and Mulder, 177, n. 95.

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all their possessions.[83] Not knowing where one would spend the night was a part of de Kooning's romantic imagination,[84] perhaps his experience, and it is possible that the forlorn characters in his drawing are facing such a drama. This is a scenario that the drawing itself and the political innuendoes of the "Had je me maar" reference suggest: hard times in which governmental actions are dubious. It seems unlikely that the Couple would be singing the jocular song about the election.

"Had je me maar!" was also a musical revue written by Nap de la Mar that played in Amsterdam's Hollandsch Operettegezelschap from 1915 to 1917 and in Rotterdam as well.[85] A photograph (fig. 250) of the main characters shows the man decked out in the distinctive checked cap--and walking stick--of some of de Kooning's drawings. The female lead plays an Amsterdam orphan girl matured to youthful street beauty.[86] Similar characters had first become the rage in a Paris music hall in 1907 when Max Dearly and

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[83]Romer, Rotterdam in de jaren twintig, 44-45.

[84]Willem de Kooning, conversation with author, December 1981.

[85]I thank Ton Offerman of the Theater Instituut Nederland for photocopies from Han Peekel, 100 jaar Carré relating to the "Hadtjememaar" operetta/revue.

[86]Romer, Rotterdam in de jaren tien, 141. Piet Hein Honig, Acteurs- en Kleinkunstenaars-Lexicon: 3200 namen uit 100 jaar Nederlands toneel (Heino: Drukkerij Sono, n.d.), 142-43. My sources are too scant as yet to offer a summary of the plot.

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Mistinguette danced their Valse Chaloupée, appropriated from low-life dance halls.[87] The prostitute and apache, as her tough lover was called,[88] became entrenched heroes of the popular stage from that time. In the Netherlands in 1926, shortly before de Kooning emigrated, a photo of six dancers (fig. 251), all women but dressed as male and female partners, and its accompanying caption in Het Leven gives the tenor of their stature:

> "Apaches" are lacking at no carnival ball, but not often do we see them so genuine and at the same time so elegant as this group of six Viennese dancers who took first prize at the great masked ball in the Burgtheater: six "apaches" of whom you need have no fear should you come across them by yourself in the late evening.[89]

De Kooning's prostitutes and pimps would have been easily recognized by a wide audience in Holland. They were contemporary types about whom interest and sympathy for their freedom from societal norms were mixed with apprehension. To bring within their world the meaning of the more plaintive Couple and the seaman's hat, one might place de Kooning's subject on the stage as a theater

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[87]Jules Bertaut, Paris 1870-1935 (New York: D. Appleton Century Company, 1936), 198-99.

[88]Derived from the Native American tribe.

[89]De "apachen" ontbreken op geen gecostumeerd Carnavalsbal: maar niet dikwijls zien we ze zoo "echt" en zoo smaakvol tevens als deze groep van zes Weensche danseresjes die op de groote "redoute" in het Burgtheater den eersten prijs weghaalden: zes "apachen" waar ge geen vrees voor hoeft te hebben, wanneer gij ze zoudt tegenkomen op uw eentje in den laten avond; Het Leven, 6 February 1926, 203.

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advertisement and conjure a drama: an unwilling young woman urged by her partner to sell her beauty?; a fisherman-client in love with his unavailable lady of the night?

Men

The men in de Kooning's early drawings are often picaresque types; there is no handsome hero as counterpart to the attractive young woman. When the men interact among themselves, without an interesting woman on the scene, alcohol often plays a role. De Kooning's men of the 1920s are ususally on the move.

Two drawings show carousers. Five Drunkards (fig. 252) has its bulkiest character situated where the strong man stands in Knock-out, and he is almost as caricatural as the fighter. He looks back toward his companions, a commanding point of stasis to their wobbly progress. Just behind him, the man in a dark jacket lifts his head in song or a call that may be shared by the trio further back, two of whom are occupied in keeping the most inebriated of the group on his feet. The viewer takes in the unwieldy crew in a sweeping diminuendo of wavery lines punctuated by the bumptious rhythm of circular hats, heads, feet, and open mouths. The amusing scene has been orchestrated so that lines--dark on light and reserved light on dark--and shapes cannily interrelate. Body language is both apt and exaggerated; only in the face of the dark-jacketed man is there a confusing lack of clarity.

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In the somewhat smaller sketch of Three Drunkards (fig. 253) the gestures of fellowship are brought into a taut circle by background arcs. The central singer helps support a toppling buddy whose foreshortened cranium and limp arm were featured in the other drawing as well.

In The Toast (fig. 254) one has the sense that the central character has captured a bystander to his private drama as he lifts his glass to the fates, watched over in good humor by the background bartender. The stance of the main actor conveys an incipient lurch and an amiable absorption in his ritual.

Other thoughts entirely occupy Two Men Walking (fig. 255). Placed at the right of the composition, background arcs before them and streaking smoke behind, they look up from their movement in a momentary glance. Disparity in dress suggests one is a planner, the other a doer; specifics of dress and facial types and expressions imply that their errand will be shady.

The Man with Striped Jacket and Checked Hat (fig. 256) strolls on his own, head lowered in a certain reverie as he, too, smokes a cigarette that sends out elegant pencil wafts of smoke. Less attention is given to the type and expression of his face. The interest is in sartorial choices, the fall of the jacket, insouciance of the pose, and the meeting of figure with ground. One suspects this dandy is well-dressed for a milieu somewhat outside

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respectable society.[90]

Man with Walking Stick (fig. 257) has an expression of rosy satisfaction and a dainty, curving step, punctuated by pert surrounding arcs. His dance may be a soft-shoe shuffle.

When de Kooning reflected in the 1960s to Thomas Hess about putting a "monster" character through the paces of a melodrama in his drawings, Hess had noticed "a striding male figure, with an important walk, which sometimes turns goofy." Such drawings as Untitled, 1968 (fig. 258) are the continuation of the male characters moving through de Kooning's imagination in 1924. Some may be the song and dance man, the "performer" who sees how long he "can stay on the stage with that imaginary audience," de Kooning's analogy of the way he had come to think about making a painting in 1960, as well as a character he had drawn so

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[90]The checked hat, so distinctive here, has a narrow brim; in cap form it is worn by de Kooning's pimp at a street corner, a bystander in Knock-out, and in a more subdued version by the walking man with a turtleneck sweater. Such a patterned fabric does not appear in photographs of Dutch streets of the period. The costume designer for the revue "Had je me maar!" chose an exaggerated form similar to de Kooning's. The checked cap turns up elsewhere in drawn form in the magazine Het Leven as menacing motivation--it is worn by a lurking man--in an advertisement for an alarm signal and on a gun-wielding character from the 1920 film "Amsterdam bij nacht"; Het Leven, 1 July 1919, 855; 2 November 1920, 1688. Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985, associated the cap with a Parisian pimp.

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many years earlier.[91]

A drawing on a small sheet of textured paper depicts a cluster of Six Men Walking (fig. 259). Blunter conté is used for a more rudimentary portrayal than in the other drawings. And the gestures and clothing of this group have a less individual, less piquant sense of style. The men seem to be workers, possibly leaving work, as de Kooning himself interpreted the drawing in 1985.[92] The forward movement, even though the slumped postures tell us that it is slow, is indicated by several horizontal smudges across the last two figures.

The Poor

One of de Kooning's characters is an Organ Turner (fig. 260). His instrument is a rudimentary portable box that stands on one pole, unlike the larger, more complex organ of

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[91]De Kooning's words to David Sylvester in 1960 are aptly cited and interpreted by Judith Zilczer, "De Kooning and Urban Expressionism," in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 53, 57. Michael Zakian, "Representation and Illusion," 8-11, cites a similar comment by de Kooning to Harold Rosenberg in 1971, "I think all my people are really performers, actors . . . . They are all playing a part in my paintings," in yet another revealing way, to show that "de Kooning's attitude towards representation embodies a concern shared by other Abstract Expressionists"; he compares it to Mark Rothko's 1947 essay, "The Romantics were Prompted," in which Rothko wrote that he conceived of his abstract shapes as subjective "performers" who "move dramatically without embarrassment and execute gestures without shame."

[92]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 21 April 1985.

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Giovanni Randolfi.[93] Yet one feels de Kooning could hardly have treated this subject without musing on aspects of the elder Randolfi's nature. Socialist Dutch artist Johan van Hell painted the same subject a year later (fig. 261), and in each case it is understood that the player's work is not highly remunerative. Van Hell conveys the bleak world that dominates his musician with stark angular areas and a viewpoint that places sidewalk and parts of buildings over his head, as if controlling his existence; the right angles and flat shapes of advanced art styles convey cool, urban, modern times. De Kooning is working in another vein entirely. Within the assumed hardships, his view favors the romantic independence of the player. Even the background conspires in this presentation, for it contains the oddest invention of all the early drawings. The vertical entity behind the man shares some of the forms of his clothing; its lines manage to convey both drooping acquiescence and capricious celebration.

Woman with Cup (fig. 262) may be a pendant to the Organ Turner for the cup she holds is the kind used to collect money from listeners. Elder Rotterdammers recalled that Giovanni's wife used just such a cup, although the woman in

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[93]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, thought it was like Randolfi's, but Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985, and Klaas van de Erve, interview by author, July 1985, did not; the latter two described an organ like that in the Berssenbrugge photograph illustrated in Chapter 6.

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the drawing does not otherwise resemble her.[94] Whether begging on her own account or gathering for a fellow troubadour, she is stooped and relies on a walking stick. Her background accompaniment, as difficult to interpret as the organ turner's, is a more rigid vertical shape than his, but the ambient arcs and dark in-filling give considerable drama. On the left these forms set up a dialogue with the woman's skirt, apron, and blouse for the sake of visual interest and complexity.

The City Market

In addition to the demi-monde, shady characters, the derelict, and the impoverished, de Kooning's street world has two scenes of more everyday folk on market day.

In one drawing (fig. 263) we see street vendors of the city market aligned parallel to the surface of the sheet with a customer and a few passers-by. The cart, barrels, and schematic indication of buildings provide a geometric structure, rectilinear and circular, with which the more irregular shapes of the people harmonize. Deliberate patterns of hatchings fill in such shapes as blouses or shirts. Two children merge with the crowd, but they have roles which permit interpretation: a boy tugs at a younger brother as the two occupy themselves in an adult world, managing in the process to attract the attention of the top-

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[94]Klaas and Miep van de Erve, interview by author, July 1985.

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hatted man behind them.

There was a mussels seller in the Nieuwe Markt in Rotterdam whom de Kooning could have had in mind when he made the second drawing (fig. 264), but in Belgium the scene would also be familiar, evoking a stand where one could buy snails.[95] Dutch photographer Henri Berssenbrugge who recorded so many of Rotterdam's streets around 1910 viewed the *mosselvrouwtje* by the Oostpoort (fig. 265) from a different angle than the more planar arrangement of de Kooning, but with equal interest in the humble picturesque.[96]

Children

A notable aspect of the subject matter of de Kooning's early drawings is the frequency of youthful protagonists. Children or adolescents are included in ten images, two of which are portraits or portrait-like. In seven drawings their activities provide the main drama.

Boy Stealing

In another market scene (fig. 266), the peaceful adult world is interrupted by a boy's misdeeds. The child reaches

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[95]Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, recalled the delicious mussels with vinegar and mustard sauce and noted that snails as well were available in Rotterdam.

[96]Reproduced in Romer, Rotterdam in de jaren tien, 140; and in Kees Nieuwenhuijzen, ed., Henri Berssenbrugge, Straat- en landleven 1900-1930 (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1976), 17.

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skulkingly for a round fruit, his attention directed toward the vendor who is at present staring out to the street. One of three women in the street, conveyed by a minimum jotting of lines, glances to her left and inadvertently notes the boy's movement. She is in the line of vision of the vendor, and we find ourselves aware of a visual and psychological triangle reaching across the depth of the drawing like the lines of the umbrella across its surface. We have to wonder whether the woman will let the boy get away with his theft.

The various lines of vision of each of the characters add complexity to the drawing, as does the rhyming of the boy's sinister arms with the distant, innocent arm and hands of the shopper behind him. These subtleties seem imbedded in the figurative subject matter. Yet some purely formal inventiveness occurs as well; it is reserved for the boy's hands and clothing. Successive planes of the foreshortened knuckles and fingers relate to the wrinkles of his shirt and assert a language of curves and bends, of interest on its own account. It is the same stylization that is pursued in the oil Portrait of Renée (fig. 307) and in the watercolor of the Family (fig. 291).

Boy Kicked

A story is assumed in a drawing of a boy being kicked down some steps (fig. 267). This action is rendered summarily with only the lower legs and feet of the man who impels the boy. The boy has one hand stretched out, in

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surprise or to maintain his balance, and clenches the other. With legs akimbo, he could be in the air or momentarily seated. A sketchily rendered man in a cap and slinking posture at the bottom of the steps is perhaps a bystander but more likely a cohort in crime, waiting for the boy. Two witnesses are indicated only by their legs: they seem to be attractive women dressed in skirts cut just below the knee. The ladies' foreshortened feet are formulaic, and very like contemporary modish representations by Georges Barbier. The relative scale of their legs and shoes suggests that the women may be mother and daughter. The triangular tip of the shoes recurs, surprisingly, on Woman I, 1950-52, where it acquires the resonance of a cloven hoof.

Perhaps this 1920s expulsion takes place on the steps of the Passage, a shopping arcade in the center of Rotterdam which was depicted in another drawing by de Kooning from this period, known only by description.[97] If so, the boy may have sought some material goods--bread, a new shirt, cash from the till?--for himself or for the man in the cap.

The male actors in this drama create a diagonal path across the composition from left to right. Yet equal weight is given to the pert, vertical stasis of the women onlookers. Do they represent indifferent affluence? Is their sympathy sought? Would the younger woman aid the boy were not her elder in between? Background markings suggest

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[97]The drawing will be discussed later in this chapter.

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that they were originally to have stood further back but they gained fuller definition in a forward move. This new location deprived the man in the cap of further substance lest the composition be overburdened. Are the women to keep us from noticing this shady character? Do they counter his influence on the boy?[98]

Youth and Gendarmes

One other youthful miscreant is depicted in this group of drawings (fig. 268). A slim boy of teen years, head lowered, bound at the hands either by manacles or self-imposed gesture, is flanked by two gendarmes who escort him along the street. There is a mysterious form on the boy's chest which we might read as torn clothing or a wound. Has there been a fight? Is the boy being taken to police authorities or to his home? The gesture of the policeman to the left could be either coercive or protective. Certainly the officers are not ominous; the one to the right is comically plump and tousled. A composition which at first glance suggests capture and punishment of a lawbreaker, often one with whom artist and viewer are in sympathy, as in Toorop's large early Arrest, is here less socially clear-

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[98]Elaine de Kooning, interview by author, 21 April 1985, said of this drawing, "The boy is Bill and he knows what he did!" Perhaps an appropriate anecdote from de Kooning's youth will come forth from her memoirs; or perhaps Mrs. de Kooning's comment was her own interpretation. Indeed, it is alluring to see the idiosyncratic subjects of these drawings as having autobiographical sources.

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cut.

The short capes and squarish caps of the policemen are more Belgian than Dutch. Perhaps the difficulty of the young man echoes a bohemian escapade of the Dutch artists on their journeys. When asked about this drawing in 1985, whether he had seen such an event or had made it up, de Kooning mused, "I was very romantic."[99]

Very little background is given to locate this event. A sweeping arcade broken by two jogs of the pencil might be generic indication of the outer world or architectural passageway. It has no more substance than the curving line in the foreground which supports the artist's initials. The presence of the three actors, however, is substantiated by shadows: curved puddles of dark horizontal strokes counter the vertical lines of the clothing and lend cadence to the march, all the while binding the composition with the general leitmotif of rounded forms.

Boy and Automobiles

In this drawing a boy contemplates two luxurious automobiles with longing (fig. 269). The Italian Futurist poet Marinetti had declared the speeding car a symbol of modern beauty in 1909, a message that had reached Rotterdam by 1912 and had a certain attention there in the second

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[99]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 21 April 1985.

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decade of the century.[100] Dynamism, while important, is not the first impression of this drawing, even though horizontal lines indicate that the cars are moving rapidly. The lilt of de Kooning's line removes this drawing from any 1920s celebration of mechanical precision. We are most aware of the contrast between poverty and affluence on the social level, and of youthful want and grown-up empowerment on the personal level.

The slouched posture that conveys the boy's lack and dejection also makes his body consonant with the shape of the round tire of the car behind him, as if interacting with it and impeding its progress across the sheet. The theme implies that the boy is left behind by the splendid modern vehicles, but de Kooning's arrangement insists that the vehicles be considered in terms of the boy's reverie. Thirty years later, when the automobile again plays a role in de Kooning's oeuvre, the artist is metaphorically in the car observing the world outside, as if in artistic vindication of earlier yearnings.

The location of this scene is established by horizontal lines for each side of the street; on the farther side are two summarily sketched vertical forms that could be trees or smokestacks. These markings have great brio and assurance and are the nearest in all the early works to de Kooning's

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[100]See Brinkman, De Branding, 12, 94, 99.

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mature handwriting.[101] They are most similar to pencil drawings of the 1960s and 1970s where they often indicate a woman or person. These exuberant lines seem merely tolerated amid the taut, deliberate treatment of the rest of the drawing, their liberating potential as yet unsuspected.

Compared to the lively trees, the boy is static and carefully drawn, but there is much that is summary here too. The hair is conveyed only by outline and a few short strokes that break the contour, eyes are slits and the nose is a dark oval, all variations of caricatural formulas used in other de Kooning drawings of the period.

Balloons

A dejected boy moves to the background of Balloons and the foreground blond boy here enjoys possession of a more modest luxury item (fig. 270). This iconographically intriguing image succinctly presents a psychogical drama. There are four children and two balloons, and we spend our viewing time reflecting on the matter. The central figure is a girl, seemingly the adolescent version of the beautiful flower seller or prostitutes; she strolls with her large balloon, eyes cast down in reverie, pursed lips indicating no feeling more distinct than composure, indifferent to the suffering of two boys.

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[101]Except perhaps for the tree of the organ turner, cousins of which occur in drawings of the late 1960s; see Cummings and others, Willem de Kooning, nos. 99 and 106.

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We wonder if the pleasure of having the prize is measured by the dissatisfaction of those who do not have it. And what is the prize? The successful boy's gaze is directed at the balloon, the means, and not at the girl, whose contented company we might presume to be his goal. The possibility that they are brother and sister makes such a displacement of satisfaction understandable.

When the young de Kooning made this drawing he must have mused on such issues, although surely he formulated them differently. The style of depiction insists that we take his commentary on human nature in a light-hearted manner, as does the vehicle for its presentation--the foibles of children.

Whether or not autobiography has a place in these drawings, we may see the ages of the three foreground actors as similar to that of de Kooning and his siblings. When Marie was fourteen, Willem was about ten and their half-brother Koos about two. It is one of the few drawings to treat the family dynamic: a young child among elders is ignored; and the woman has two suitors.

Conversations

In one sketch where children share the scene with adults, the boy and girl in the foreground literally and figuratively upstage their elders (fig. 271). Polite socializing, a forerunner of courtship, is initiated by the boy. The young girl whom he addresses is linked by the line

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of her clothing to a woman further back, a compositional device that may also imply the continuation of the young lives in the circle established by their elders. The adults have gathered for a conversation that must be more workaday and prosaic than that offered by the courtly boy.

Three Children

In a summary sketch that concentrates solely on the activities of children, a boy and girl walk together in the foreground, pointedly leaving another boy by himself in the distance (fig. 272). The compositional format is a diminishing triangle, similar to that of the Five Drunkards. The foreground boy's attention is directed behind him, making his triumph less the focus of attention than is the pitiable loss of the further boy. The drawing could seem a reversal of fate for the two older boys of Balloons, the one with the cap now taking the girl from the blond boy; there are enough differences, however, in clothing and in the girl's hair to suggest that a continuing narrative was not intended.

The girl seems to have the awareness of a sleep walker. Her role in the drama as presented is primarily to have set it in motion. In a 1968 interview with de Kooning, the Dutch writer Bibeb commented that women are fascinating, to which de Kooning responded, "not so much in themselves, but

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rather through what they provoke in you."[102] It is a viewpoint that is apparent in many of the early drawings.

Further Observations: Children and the Cartoon-like Drawings

In these drawings de Kooning depicts children with empathy and as active agents. It is as if the young artist, close in years to his own childhood, retains an awareness of the child's existence, whereas in later works, he presents the child more as an attribute of the fulfilled life, as in Woman and Child of 1967.

If the early children show the foibles of human nature, it is on their own account, rather than as innocent gauges for a debauched society, as occurs, for instance, in the drawing "The Metropolis" (fig. 273) by Karl Arnold that appeared in Simplicissimus in January 1926.[103] De Kooning's cartoon-like works lack the mordancy of Arnold's vision. Although the youthful de Kooning may have had a cool and critical view of contemporary society, he remained

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[102]Niet als zodanig, wel om wat ze bij je aanrichten; Bibeb, "Willem de Kooning: Ik vind dat alles een mond moet hebben, en ik zet de mond waar ik wil," Vrij Nederland (Amsterdam), 5 October 1968, 3; translated into French in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 239.

[103]Simplicissimus 30, no. 41 (11 January 1926): 600, back cover. The caption reads, "'Quatsch nich! Deine Mutta is ja viel zu dick -- die kann nich als Nutte jehn.'" ("'Don't hand me that. Your mother is much too fat. She can't be a streetwalker.'") Translation from Stanley Appelbaum, Simplicissimus: 180 Satirical Drawings from the Famous German Weekly (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975), 32.

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enthralled with the glamour, toughness, folksiness, or drama of his subjects. His critique of society, whether the actors are children or adult, is ancillary to the human drama.

The Arnold drawing for Simplicissimus relies upon a caption for its full humor. In my view, de Kooning has let his drawings function without the need for words. Any ambivalence in meaning seems intended.

The Saturday Evening Post was aimed at an American family audience and cover illustrations with children often set this tone. Two images with children and automobiles by Norman Rockwell (fig. 274) and J. C. Leyendecker (fig. 275) from the early 1920s make instructive comparisons with de Kooning's cartoon-like works. If de Kooning emulated the careers of the American illustrators, his messages and life experiences were not theirs. And he did not work in the extension of academic rendering which they used. His drawing style is nearer to the abbreviated and exaggerated lines of Karl Arnold.

Caricatures or Comics?

The drawings from de Kooning's European years that I have called "cartoon-like" are neither caricatures nor comic strips, two categories used by Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik in charting a cross-fertilization between high and low art forms in the 1991 exhibition catalogue, High & Low: Modern

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Art Popular Culture.[104] The two authors, in an essay penned by Gopnik, explore an intriguing polarity between caricature and the comic strip: the former is satiric, cold, divisive, ambivalent, morally muddled, cruel, ephemeral, while the latter is warm, reconciling, mythic, timeless, and clear, the answer to Goethe's dream of a collective popular culture. The tradition of caricature, they suggest, provides a reservoir with which the pessimist-modernist might image "fragmentation, anxiety, and alienation" and recognize and embrace ambiguities; the comic strip offers to an optimist-counterpart "puns and ironic jokes, ... representational schemas and symbolic imagery." Gopnik continues,

> If, by offering an unpretentious, ready-made tradition of stylization, caricature offered a shortcut into abstraction, the comic strip eventually offered a shortcut back out again.[105]

This working-hypothesis of polarity and the two essays on "Caricature" and "Comics" challenge one to place de

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[104]Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, High & Low: Modern Art Popular Culture (New York: The Museum of Modern Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991). The two authors did not have de Kooning in mind when they planned their exhibition. In their essays he figures only as the mature artist, the maker of the culturally-sanctioned Abstract Expressionist "calligraphic and painterly idiom"; ibid., 94, 98. His development of "a new manner of abstraction that suggested a new way of looking at graffiti sharply different from that of Brassaï," is only briefly suggested and ellided with that of Pollock in generalizations that are limiting to both artists; 81. More recently, Michelle Bogart deals with the issue of high and low

[105]Ibid., 153-54.

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Kooning's early and mature works within an identified trajectory, especially alluring as a means to understand the way de Kooning's art slips in and out of abstraction.

Yet de Kooning's oeuvre crosses both categories. His early drawings do not appear to be charged portraits, true caricature; rather, they seem to offer stock characters, readily understood contemporary types, the domain of the comics. The lineage of caricature, to Gopnik and Varnedoe, includes Toulouse-Lautrec and caricatural journals, key parts of de Kooning's lineage, but of the comics' as well. De Kooning was formed in the 1920s, the "heroic age of the comics," with their "popular embodiment of avant-garde values,"[106] and he followed them well into the 1930s and beyond. To Sally Yard in 1976, de Kooning said,

> I used to draw from a comic-strip called "That's My Pop." There's the fluidity and versatility of someone who's worked on them for years. I used to draw from them, not looking. And Bill Steig--his drawings got better and better.[107]

This stated interest in the comics bypasses the issues of figuration, culturally resonant characters, and storytelling--without disclaiming them--and attends rather

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[106]Ibid., 183, 167.

[107]Willem de Kooning, interview by Sally Yard, 14 October 1976, in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 189; English transcript on file at Willem de Kooning Office, New York. Milton Gross's strip "That's My Pop" began in January 1935; Maurice Horn, The World Encyclopedia of Comics (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1976), 294. Steig was a staff cartoonist for the New Yorker from 1930; idem, The World Encyclopedia of Cartoons (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1980), 525-26.

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to finely-honed linear skills.[108]

Portraits and Portrait-like Works

Works that relate to portraiture form a special subdivision of de Kooning's early drawings, and the one surviving oil painting from the early 1920s is a portrait (fig. 307). With the exception of one drawing, all are brought to a high degree of completion, and each of the drawings features a frontally posed head of a man (figs. 276, 278, 291). In the painting, the one certain portrait in the group, the subject is a child; her head is only slightly turned to the side, allowing her features to keep many of the frontal shapes used in the other works, with which they have a surprising consonance.

Man with Medal

The cartoon-like drawing in this group is the most somber (fig. 276). A bald man who holds his head low to the line of his shoulders has a grave expression accentuated by the high placement of his irises, giving his eyes an inward, aggrieved cast. He wears an attribute that may be read as a cluster of military decorations.[109] A Dutch near-

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[108]Meyer Schapiro, interview by Harry F. Gaugh, 23 October 1982, cited in Gaugh, De Kooning, 8, has said, "De Kooning has the simplicity of a craftsman. He respects skill. For that reason, he's always admired commercial artists, those who are not original."

[109]They are worn on his right breast, a departure from the norm which may or may not be intentional.

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contemporary of de Kooning commented of this drawing, "They have put him off with a medal but he is hungry all the same."[110] Whether the man is an old soldier neglected by the state or some other personality, there is strength as well as suffering in his face.

Much of the strength is conveyed by the rectangularity of the shapes: eyebrows, lower eyelids, mouth, and chin form distinct horizontals while almost all interior shading is made by unvaryingly vertical lines. For the large expanse of forehead and pate, the spacing of verticals is wide, narrowing on cheeks, and narrowing and darkening beneath the nose and cheeks to indicate a swarthy stubble. This use of vertical lines has been observed in Bernard Romein's Five Kings of the Amorites of ca. 1916-21 (fig. 103). The lines that define the features and wrinkles retain an Art Nouveau curvature, gracefully lilting on the forehead, squaring off into cartouche curves around the eyes, right cheek, and chin. Short hooks punctuate the broader curves like a pungent seasoning on the cleft of the chin, nostril, upper eyelids, and right eyebrow. These hooks are similar to the stylization in the musculature of Thorn Prikker's preliminary studies of men (fig. 277) for his mural commission for Rotterdam Town Hall, exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in 1921 and probably at the Boymans

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[110]Nico Benschop, interview by author, 27 May 1986, Rotterdam.

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Museum after they entered the collection in 1922.[111]

Male Portrait Head

Male Portrait Head (fig. 278) must be placed apart from the other drawings in style and subject. It is the only one in which the parallel hatching is so carefully modulated to show a subtle variety of planes. More than any of the other drawings, it appears to be a portrait from life, although the sitter is unknown.[112]

In its directly frontal representation the drawing may be likened, among these de Kooning drawings, only to two other heads of men. Of the three--all of them ordinary people--both the worker/father and former soldier appear downtrodden, whereas this man in the buttoned sweater has a buoyant quality. His gaze is allowed to connect with that of the viewer and his lips have a sharp enough division between them to be on the verge of speaking. Both these effects are heightened by the prominent hatching which is worked to radiate outward from eyes, mouth and body,

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[111]Tentoonstelling van Werken van J. Thorn Prikker, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 16 October - 6 November 1921, RKK archives, inv. no. 244; Verslag Museum Boymans (1922): 2. De Kooning surely knew Thorn Prikker's work yet he didn't mention him to Martha Bourdrez in 1950 when he spoke of Dutch artists whose work he had known during his years in Holland or, later on, to Thomas Hess. In 1985 he did recall "outstanding artists in Germany" whose work he knew through Bernard Romein; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 25 April 1985.

[112]In 1985 de Kooning no longer remembered the person portrayed; interview by author, 21 April 1985.

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intensifying not only the gaze and potential for speech but the moral fervor of the person himself. A stubble of beard creates an intriguing visual texture and keeps the image attuned to everyday experience, grounding the transcendent nature of the frontal view and aureole.

The directly frontal view was often used by Jan Toorop in representations of holy figures, which he would otherwise depict in a precise verism, as well as in a number of portraits. Toorop's drawing of the Apostle Bartolomeus was exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in 1918[113] and pendant drawings of De Geloovige (The Believer) and De Opstandige (The Rebel, fig. 279) of 1919, each a strong and frontal male figure, were exhibited there in 1923.[114] De Kooning's Male Portrait Head is less hieratic than Toorop's frontal figures, whether portraits or symbolic figures, and the younger artist aims for a stronger stylization in the face.

De Kooning's aureole made of parallel dashes must ultimately descend from the work of van Gogh. In van Gogh's drawings and paintings, however, the elongated *pointilles*

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[113]Tentoonstelling van Moderne Teekeningen, Aquarellen en Pastels, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 10 November - 8 December 1918, RKK archives, inv. no. 241.

[114]Keuze Tentoonstelling ter eere van het regeeringsjubileum van H. M. de Koningin: Werken van Hollandse meesters uit de laaste vijf en twintig jaren, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 5-23 September 1923, RKK archives, inv. no. 246. The latter was also reproduced in Het Leven, 1 November 1921, 1403, on the occasion of a large Toorop exhibition in Haarlem.

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are only once employed radiating outward as background to a head, that of the angel painted after an engraving attributed to Rembrandt; it is a work that de Kooning must have known, though, because it was exhibited at the Boymans Museum in 1923 (fig. 280).[115] Van Gogh's outward-radiating strokes occur in conjunction with arcs that repeat the inner form, used by de Kooning only as longer lines by the ear. Stipples within longer dash forms, as used by van Gogh in Sower with Setting Sun, 1888 (F422, fig. 281), for example, are a formal precedent for the pencil marks that create chin and beard in de Kooning's man, but other aspects of the young artist's modeling do not recall the drawn or painted strokes of van Gogh.

The aureole effect in the de Kooning is nearer to Charley Toorop's paintings of 1914 and 1915 (fig. 282), influenced by van Gogh, van Dongen, Kandinsky and her interest in theosophy.[116] The Expressionist work of Jan Sluyters made use of such radiating aureoles as well, as may be seen in his Nursing Mother (fig. 283), exhibited in Amsterdam and Rotterdam in 1923 and reproduced in the popular weekly journal, Het Leven.[117]

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[115]See Chapter 5.

[116]Brederoo, Charley Toorop, nos. 23, 27, 99. No. 99, here illustrated as fig. 282, was reproduced in Huebner, Die neue Malerei in Holland.

[117]Het Leven, 8 December 1923, 1619. Sluyters's work--thirty-four paintings and four drawings--was exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 11 February to 11 March 1923.

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An aureole was used as well by applied artist and designer Chris Lebeau in portraits of the teen years and early 1920s. Frontal heads suspended in long, outwardly radiating lines were made for reproduction in Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift, including a portrait of H. P. Berlage in 1911 (fig. 284).[118] There may be a theosophical underpinning to such images, for Lebeau had studied at Lauweriks's and de Bazel's theosophically-oriented Vahana-school in Amsterdam in 1898-99, instruction that was to remain important throughout his career.[119] Lebeau's India ink drawing of his companion Ditte van der Vies-Heijting of 1923 has short parallel strokes nearer to those used by de Kooning, although here his subject is not frontal.[120] In these portraits by Lebeau stylisation never intrudes on the naturalistic rendering of the features.[121]

Within the head of de Kooning's man, the hatching is meant to convey the three-dimensionality of the complicated turnings of the forms. Yet in every instance its boundaries are subservient to channels of flat linear curves and hooks. At the sides of the head these linear divisions lessen,

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[118]Mechteld de Bois, Chris Lebeau 1878-1945 (Assen: Drents Museum, 1987), 217-20. Carel Blotkamp mentioned Lebeau's portraits to me in relation to this drawing by de Kooning.

[119]Ibid., 39.

[120]Ibid., 47, fig. 40.

[121]Ibid., 218-219; de Bois refers to them as idealizing and also as good likenesses.

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causing an illogically flat expanse between eye and ear on the shaded cheek.

In this one drawing only, de Kooning's radiant hatching within swinging linear curves approaches the blend of Cubism and Expressionism that was the mainstream of modernist art in Holland between the wars. We may see the similarity in a comparison with an early, transitional work of Wim Schuhmacher, an oil portrait of the artist's mother of ca. 1919 (fig. 285) in the Gemeentemuseum Arnhem. Despite the apparent similiarites between these images, de Kooning seems to be looking for lines across the surface of the image rather than breaking that surface into a series of discrete rhyming arcs. In this respect, Schuhmacher's image is related to Lodewijk Schelfhout's 1912 charcoal Portrait of Jan Toorop (fig. 286) and to Cubist facetting of surfaces, while de Kooning's is not.[122] Rotterdam artist H. F. Bieling experimented with such facets (fig. 287) in the late teen years and images of his work in this vein would have been available to de Kooning, who seems not to have been interested.[123]

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[122]Loosjes-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst, fig. 145, reproduces Schelfhout's Portrait of Jan Toorop and compares it to a Le Fauconnier study for the head of Abundance; the work was reproduced in Huebner, Lodewijk Schelfhout, where it was dated 1913.

[123]Bieling's work was on view in De Branding exhibitions and reproduced in its catalogues; see Brinkman, De Branding. His drawing Paulus was reproduced in Huebner, Die neue Malerei in Holland.

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De Kooning's antecedents belong more to the world of Art Nouveau, most likely the linear facial topographies of Bernard Romein and Thorn Prikker. Romein's faces of Peer Gynt and his mother (figs. 288 and 289)[124] and Thorn Prikker's Anchor Draggers (fig. 290)[125] offer the closest comparisons. In these works the linear contours and divisions and repetitions of forms are unaided by the hatching that plays so large a role in Male Portrait Head, although Peer Gynt does have a dotted stubble of beard. De Kooning's hooks and curves have a rhythm that is more tentative than that of the other two artists, perhaps because he is reconciling stylization with the portrayal of an observed individual. The nature of his forms seems nearer to Romein's than to Thorn Prikker's, where there is a tendency toward the rectangularity of sections of shale.

Thus this portrait drawing belongs within a primarily Symbolist frame of reference, proclaiming only an incipient leaning toward Expressionism and no connection with Cubism.[126]

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[124]The drawings are undated, but are similar to other works dated 1922; see Chapter 4.

[125]No. 5 in Tentoonstelling van Werken van J. Thorn Prikker, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 16 October - 6 November 1921, RKK archives, inv. no. 244. Joop M. Joosten has conveyed to me that this watercolor fresco cartoon of 1911, 104 x 146 cm., was in a private collection in Germany (August Stein, Düsseldorf) and lost during World War II.

[126]Zakian, "Representation and Illusion," 140, offers a fine, brief analysis of this drawing, concluding that, "This portrait, while neither naturalist, symbolist or

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The Family

The most finished watercolor and pencil drawing in the works of de Kooning's youth presents a worker's family (fig. 291-294).[127] It is one of the two early drawings signed with the artist's full name, "Wim Kooning," as he was giving it at the time, and the strongest of all the early works. In this family group of father, mother, pre-adolescent daughter, somewhat younger son, and infant child, the ages of the children correspond roughly to those of the household in which de Kooning grew up, but they do not bear a particular resemblance to the individuals.[128] In fact, they seem not portraits at all but actors recruited from de Kooning's imagination.

They are arranged as for a portrait, although not preened for the occasion: the father's stubble of beard indicates the roughness of his life, perhaps the irregularity of his work; the daughter's hair scraggles across her brow. Grouped in an arc of both two and three

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expressionist, contains elements of all these modes, with each adding dimension to the final image."

[127]The medium may include conté as well.

[128]In Balloons the children had a similar spacing of ages; here they are several years younger. While the similarity may be noted, there is no reason to believe de Kooning consciously intended to refer to his own background. Asked about any family resemblances, de Kooning's half-brother Koos Lassooy, interview by author, 25 April 1985, did not consider the father a likeness of his own father, de Kooning's step-father Lassooy: "My father had a mustache, but soft eyes, not like that." To him the father in the drawing was like a "dock worker."

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dimensions around the man, the four dependents share or support his attitude of stalwart endurance. Mother and father are linked in partnership by a shared contour, as in The Kiss, although here they face in different directions. The man's face is directly frontal but a sheen on his eyes makes his attention seem elsewhere. The daughter also faces the viewer but from a slight angle; yet only she can be said to address us directly. Her pale irises make her gaze disquietingly anemic, and the curl of her lips verges on cruel. This curiously sinister little girl is one of the more noteworthy characters in all the early works.[129] The older boy, whose coloring repeats that of the mother, gazes downward with his own thoughts.

The style of the Family appears to be an amalgamation of de Kooning's curvilinear Symbolism and his cartoon-like drawings. This merger seems less a willed stylistic development than a consequence of the subject and de Kooning's more naturalistic intentions for it. The close-range attention seems to be the main difference between the treatment of the Family and the Five Drunkards. In The Kiss, made the following year, the near vantage point

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[129]Her broad face and pale eyes suggest Khnopff's 1898 pastel drawing and lithograph The Blood of the Medusa (fig. 295), Robert L. Delevoy, Fernand Khnopff, 2d rev. ed. (Brussels: Cosmos Monographies, Lebeer Hossman, 1987), 151, 312-13. The differences are greater than any similarities with the Khnopff women. Bernard Romein often depicted eyes with irises uninflected by pupils. In de Kooning's early works the device recurs only in the sketchbook Man with Medal, where the irises also hover close to the upper lids.

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results only in chic generalizations.

It is intriguing to contemplate the degree to which this naturalistic presentation is based upon awareness of Neue Sachlichkeit attitudes from Germany. This issue will be deferred until after discussion of de Kooning's Portrait of Renée.

Among Dutch artists, Charley Toorop approaches the German Neue Sachlichkeit in her work.[130] It is apparent that de Kooning knew and admired her close-range portraits, many of which depicted family groups, such as the Familie Klomp, c. 1921 (fig. 296).[131] While it is unclear which Charley Toorop works de Kooning may have seen, the similarity of compositional device and sober mood is striking. De Kooning, however, uses far less shading than Charley Toorop and relies on filigrees of linear marks or fields of watercolor wash for definition.

In these stylistic preferences, de Kooning's Family is closer to the work of Bernard Romein, especially the illustrations of Peer Gynt (figs. 288 and 289). Romein's Aase and Peer are very near to de Kooning's treatment of the worker and his wife. Waving fronds of hair and an exclusively linear expression of facial topographies in

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[130]See discussion of Charley Toorop in Chapter 5.

[131]Brederoo, Charley Toorop, no. T74. Of the works shown in Rotterdam in 1922 the group portraits that can be identified are not as similar to the de Kooning as is the Familie Klomp but collectively they might provide inspiration for his image.

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Romein's work appear to be an important source for de Kooning's drawing style. Even the shading with parallel lines in the de Kooning Family, similar to the vertical lines of his Man with Medal, is nearer to that in an early Symbolist work by Romein, than to Charley Toorop's diagonal hatching.

Romein's drawings rely more than de Kooning's upon crisp, precise line; and his use of wash is more dramatically liquid and less unrelated to definition of volume in his figures than is de Kooning's. For de Kooning line is an expressive means but has not been distilled into the precision of Romein's; perhaps commercial techniques of reproduction were less a consideration in this work than they were for Romein. De Kooning relies less on beautifying wash and more on a linear depiction of character.

The theme of the family is treated fairly often in Dutch art of the late teens and early 1920s. Often it is related to the artist's own experience as a young father or mother, as was the case in the work of Hendrik Chabot whose painting The Family (fig. 226) has been mentioned. Charley Toorop often portrayed her own children in this period, although she painted many other family groupings as well. Other representations of the family can be found from around this time with wide stylistic variations yet based on the artists' own experiences: Vilmos Huszár's stained glass window De Familie (fig. 297) was made in 1916 for the

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nursery in his own house;[132] in 1919 Laurens van Kuik represented himself, his wife and child (fig. 298) in what he called his transcendental-realism, meant to express the psychic structure of their experience;[133] and Marius Richters's boldly painted but far more realistic De Familie, 1917 (fig. 299), remains in the collection of his family (another painting by Richters of the same title had been in the Boymans Museum since 1921).[134] Unlike this wide array of works, de Kooning's representation of the family was not a celebration of his own experience; if it had any bearing upon his own life, it would have been as re-scripting the dynamic he had known as a youth.

A related image, pertinent for subject and presentation, may be van der Plas's Als het koren rijpt of 1924 (When the Grain Ripens, fig. 300), exhibited in Rotterdam and reproduced in Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunst in 1925.[135] It places a frontal man, gazing to the viewer, protectively holding his woman by head and hands, before a landscape background, the title suggesting that a new family member is in gestation. This Symbolist drawing has elements of de Kooning's Kiss as well as of his Family.

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[132]Sjarel Ex, "Vilmos Huszár," in De Stijl: The Formative Years, ed. Blotkamp and others, 86-88, fig. 69.

[133]Brinkman, De Branding, 102-103.

[134]Brinkman, De Branding, 73.

[135]P. K., "Rotterdam," Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunst 2 (1925): 24; van der Plas, Adrianus van der Plas, fig. 12.

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The family in de Kooning's drawing is clearly working-class, and of a lower social standing than that in which he grew up. The worker was a widespread subject in this period. Rotterdam artists Hendrik Chabot and Adrianus van der Plas placed workers in rhythmic Symbolist compositions. For Chabot a worker and his growing family were subjects of a series of etchings called "Levenslop" (Course of Life, fig. 105) which culminates in the man's death before the factory building.[136] A wash drawing of 1922 depicts a worried frontal man with city houses in the background who may be an unemployed worker; the drawing is titled Slum (fig. 301).[137] Jan van Heel, who worked in Rotterdam until 1926, portrayed a frontal worker in the 1920s (fig. 302), explaining in 1986 that he found the symbolic content of the martyred Christ and the worker to be similar.[138] Charley Toorop often treated the subject of workers in these years. Two such images with families are among the works that de Kooning could have seen: her Symbolist-Expressionist Worker's Wife with Two Children, 1918 (fig. 303), may have

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[136]Ibid., figs. 3-5; Ott, Chabot, 45-48.

[137]C. Doelman, Hendrik Chabot (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1967), fig. 1.

[138]Jan van Heel, interview by author, translated by Robin Adèr, 19 June 1986; photo in RKD, confirmed by van Heel as his work. Van Heel co-founded an artists' group "De Werkers" in 1928; Welling, Jan van Heel, 18.

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been exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in 1922[139] and her large realist drawing, Mensen uit de Borinage, 1923 (fig. 304), was in the collection of the Boymans Museum and on view in the Van Hogendorpsplein annex from 1924.[140] Toorop's 1922 trip to the Borinage and keen attention to the lot of the workers and their families was inspired by her identification with the social concerns of van Gogh.

Dutch art historian Hans Mulder finds the subject of the powerful worker, alone or in the company of wife and child, in illustration work of the teen years through the 1930s to represent victorious socialism.[141] An example might be Amsterdam artist Fré Cohen's 1930 poster for the Dutch Federation of Trade Unions-Social Democratic Workers' Party (fig. 305). This particular work was made four years after de Kooning's departure from the Netherlands, but it provides a foil against which we may assess his emphasis. Cohen comes to her subject with the force of R. N. Roland Holst's social convictions; she was his student and moreover had been born into a family of diamond workers and had

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[139]Tentoonstelling van werken van Charley Toorop, Matthieu Wiegman, A. Colnot, O. van Rees, Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 15 January - 5 February 1922, RKK archives, inv. no. 245; no. 4, Moeder en kinderen, (coll. H. P. B.), may be Arbeidersvrouw met twee kinderen, Brederoo, Charley Toorop, no. 131.

[140]Installation photograph in Verslag Museum Boymans (1924): opposite p. 9.

[141]Mulder, "De politieke spotprent," 207, n. 44.

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strong socialist sympathies.[142]

Roland Holst's ideas were important in Rotterdam circles as well. It was he who had recommended Jac. Jongert to head the division of Decorative and Applied Arts at the Rotterdam Academy in 1918, and after that year students and others in the community had additional access to Roland Holst's thoughts as respected and developed by Jongert. Adrianus van der Plas's son has written that his father's pastel drawings of workers of 1922 to 1924 were influenced above all by admiration for Roland Holst and for socialism as the "new ideal for mankind"; van der Plas's workers (fig. 306) were not portraits of existing people but symbols of socialism. For him the worker was also the symbol of life, which he considered to be hard and tragic.[143]

In its subject and presentation, de Kooning's Family can be seen to fit securely within its time. While it does not present a modernist formal invention, it may be related to the majority of the works within de Kooning's knowledge. It does not seem to rely on any particular work that I have found, with the exception of the strong affinities for the work of Bernard Romein.

Sympathy for the worker implies generally leftist

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[142]Franciscono, Modern Dutch Poster, 22-23, fig. 72. On the artist, see also P. van Dam and others, Fré Cohen 1903-1943: Leven en werk van een bewogen kunstenares (Abcoude, 1993).

[143]Van der Plas, Adrianus van der Plas, 18.

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political inclinations, not unusual among artists of the period. Indeed, de Kooning has been attentive to the social standing of his subjects, and we note that he has made them neither underfed nor triumphant. His meditation leads us to wonder what will become of these people, especially the children, in quite a different way from the programmatic expectations that we are stirred to imagine for Fré Cohen's family. Work and suffering are certainly the lot of de Kooning's family, and their future may well have the hard end programmed by Chabot's Symbolist Levenslop, yet de Kooning gives his characters more psychological complexity and a certain indeterminateness, nearer to that of Charley Toorop's people of the Borinage. An important difference between the de Kooning and Chabot on the one hand and the Toorop on the other is that for her realist image, Toorop worked from actual people. De Kooning's Family has the stylization and generalization of Symbolism.

Portrait of Renée (Child in Red)[144]

When de Kooning offered to paint a portrait of his employers' niece in 1924 (fig. 307), he was selecting yet another image of a child. Here the child is a real person and we may gauge the artist's stylization against photographs (fig. 308). The view of human nature and

[144]The title in parentheses is that preferred by the son of the sitter. I have favored a more straightforward designation without relinquishing the nuances of the other, which I, too, find related in spirit to de Kooning's image.

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society offered by this portrait is not given within a group dynamic as in de Kooning's other presentations of children.

This painting is the earliest surviving oil to be made after de Kooning's studies at the Academy. The technique is neither academic nor does it suggest the Impressionist landscapes he and Willem Klop were making for the Van Genechten business; rather, it is an extension of de Kooning's cartoon-like style. The portrait was painted with a moderate variety of stroking techniques, often made with a stiff brush. In places a blunt tool has made indented borders of shapes. An under-drawing, perhaps in conte, was allowed to remain visible and to define the structure of the face and hands. This way of working the colors in a partnership with the linear structure may be a result of de Kooning's greater experience with drawing and with water-based paint for rendering the figure, or it may be an intentional essay in a personal and, in his view perhaps, modern style.

In considering this first known portrayal in oil of a figure by de Kooning, one can't help but think of his 1950 statement, "Flesh was the reason why oil painting was invented."[145] In this early work we see a respect for the rich softness of the flesh, conveyed by an adequate amount of oil in the medium. We see also the willingness to

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[145]Willem de Kooning, "The Renaissance and Order," talk delivered at Studio 35, New York, February 1950, in Hess, 1968, 142.

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experiment of an original mind. The impasto capacity of oil paint is played with in an unusual way in the left forearm: the chubby little oval segment is highlighted by a row of short counter-strokes, all in the same color as the surround. The hair is both visibly brushed oil paint and a veristic rendering; as if to contain its potential for amorphousness, a barely visible channel has been grooved into the lower edge of the bangs with an implement such as the wooden end of a brush. The red paint of the dress, as it curves over the left knee, has been applied with additional, subtle wavy shimmers.[146]

The modelling accomplished by the oil paint shows no lessons learned from Rubens, nor from Heyberg: there are no translucent rosy layers atop blue and green. A soft fleshiness is achieved nonetheless by the application of carefully calibrated orange and pink tones in the sections of the face already set forth by the drawing. A thin line of warm pink at the left edge of the face catches the back light and quietly enlivens the whole painting.[147] A sophisticated plum tone is deftly stroked to create a shadow

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[146]This last quality, barely visible here, recurs in de Kooning's later paintings, for example in Untitled, 1977 and Untitled V, 1981; reproduced in Prather, Willem de Kooning Paintings, nos. 73 and 75; it is an instance of the ways in which this oil portrait is a surprising seedbed of work to come.

[147]A similar effect occurs in de Kooning's academic Still Life: Bowl, Pitcher and Jug (fig. 76), on the left side of the pitcher.

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at the eyelashes of the right eye; its counterpart on the left eye is thinner and more a shadow than lashes. Highlights on eyes, nose, and mouth, are an unvarying white, but are scrimmed and dotted across the surface to offer variety of texture if not of hue. In an effort to indicate the more pronounced recession in the cheek to the left, de Kooning has made waving lines like those on the shaded cheek in Male Portrait Head. A sienna stroke in oil follows a part of the curve but usually the dark underdrawing, at times with a glow of light ground, is abutted and not overpainted. The brows are not painted but drawn.

The strength of the drawing provides the strength of this work. We are riveted by the firm set of the brows and mouth. For a remarkably accurate record of the child's features, the face is stylized in a way that also occurs in de Kooning's other work at this time: he imparts a slight rectangularity to the features. This gives a surprising family resemblance to a little girl of the upper middle class and the rough workingmen of the sketchbook drawings and watercolor.[148] The child becomes stalwart, perspicacious, serious, even more in the painting than in the photographs.

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[148]The face is especially similar to the Man with Medal (fig. 276). Asked whom she resembled, Mrs. De Prins said that when she was young she looked more like her father than her mother. When de Kooning was in Belgium, Mr. Lemmens worked as a civil servant at the post office; he eventually rose to the position of Director-General; Renée De Prins, interview by author, 2 April 1993.

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In fact, Renée was a strong-willed child. When asked about this in 1993 she admitted to deserving the adjectives "volontaire" and "têtue," willful and headstrong.[149] De Kooning surely must have admired these qualities. In later years, a doll from the southwestern United States (fig. 309) captured his imagination.[150] De Kooning walked over to admire it quite often in March 1988, when it was placed at the side of the dining table. His comment for it, "such a strong face," was the same that he offered six months later when shown a photograph of the Portrait of Renée.[151]

The stylization evident in the face and hands might be categorized most readily as belonging to the Art Déco period. While it relates to the forms of Bernard Romein and Thorn Prikker, it might also be seen to have general parentage in the Art Nouveau cartouche, widely visible in Brussels. Coincidentally, the very department store where Georges Van Genechten sold the canvases of de Kooning and Klop, A l'Innovation (fig. 310), was designed by Victor Horta in 1901 and had slightly rounded rectangular forms not unlike the lines of Renée's brow.

The underdrawing of the portrait sets forth a structure

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[149]Ibid. Mrs. De Prins became an equal business partner with her husband in the 1940s and remains active in the business, now run by her son.

[150]Sent to his address as a gift for Lisa de Kooning, it was so admired by the artist that it stayed in his house.

[151]Willem de Kooning, interviews by author, 12 March 1988 and 4 September 1988.

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to follow within the face, but, with the exception of interior lines at the knuckles, only an exterior contour seems to have prompted the arms. (The contours of the left arm and between the finger and book have been additionally emphasized: they have been scored with a blunt tool.) Perhaps a linear definition for the wrists was painted over. The curves of knuckles, fingers, thumb bone and wrists provide snappy shapes which de Kooning apparently would not relinquish to further working. Mrs. Lemmens, the mother of Renée, seems justified in considering the arms unfinished;[152] the modulations of colors in relation to the linear structure are not so subtle there as in the face.

The respect for the outline in this painting is similar to Bernard Romein's work in gouache. Even the shapes themselves are similar to a calendar illustration Romein made in 1927.[153] The month of September (fig. 311) shows a chubby child who represents the theme of the calendar, "Eat Bread." The child's right hand, resting at his side and partly holding a piece of bread, bears a close stylistic

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[152]Marguerite Lemmens, interview by author, 26 May 1990.

[153]This calendar for the Nederlandsche Gist- en Spiritusfabriek first appeared in March 1927; it is discussed in chapter 4. De Kooning never saw this calendar, but I make the assumption that earlier works by Bernard Romein, available to de Kooning, had the same distinctive forms.

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relationship to both of Renée's hands.[154] De Kooning has not found a way to bring more subtlety and finish to the arms without losing a desired quality; sympathising with this dilemma, one can see more clearly how much he accomplished in rendering the face.

The curves of the skirt are more dimensional and removed from linear planning than those of the arms. Such a curve of skirt over knees is in no way untoward here and it is quite what a short dress would do when its wearer is a child asked to sit still for a while, but when one stops to notice this feature, it gives pause as being on the verge of tactless. It is in fact quite different from the photograph in which Renée is seated on a stool with her dress carefully pulled over her knees. De Kooning's treatment of the skirt gives visual interest and depth to the lower part of the painting. It also reiterates the curves of the child's facial features and helps to unify the composition. With hindsight, we can see it as an early instance of a motif that will later provide significant curves in the paintings of seated women in the early 1940s (fig. 312); and variations on it will subsequently infuse the abstract

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[154]This linear "shorthand" for foreshortening gives an irregular line for knuckles and the contour only for fingers, all of which have their tips folded out of view except for the curved forefinger. Unlike Romein, de Kooning has kept the thumb from view.

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works.[155]

Like the arms, the body underneath the dress has not received the structural planning of the face. Shoulders and upper arms are depicted as relatively flat shapes. The pose of the body does not come from any existing photographs and may have been determined when Renée posed. The dress itself is a fabrication of the artist; in fact, Mrs. Lemmens was taken aback to discover her child in bright red, insisting that the only colors she had ever worn were pink and blue.[156] One wonders if the implication of leftward political views may have been intended to annoy the conventional side of the family.

The toy, a doll with ruffled collar and dark green stick-body, is also an invention of the artist, in Renée's awareness. Its head leans forward so that the brow obscures the eyes, a form that occurs in several other de Kooning works of this period, most notably in the watercolor of the Family where the infant and the boy share aspects of the doll's pose just as the father carries some of Renée's features.[157] The shaded lower part of the doll's face and collar are several tones of lavender and purple, a

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[155]Janis and Blesh, De Kooning, figs. 27-32, make this point.

[156]Marguerite Lemmens, interview by author, 26 May 1990.

[157]One wonders if the artist were placing himself in the picture. It may be possible to locate the doll in the history of toys, and to learn if the collar has any particular reference.

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coloristic surprise in a painting where most shadows are made with black and gray; the yellow cast of the top of the doll's head leads one to wonder if complementary colors were considered. In the variation of paint texture, the ruffles of the collar allow one to sense a delicate freedom in the paint application. The Lemmens family has always considered the rectangle held in Renée's right hand to be a small Bible; it is an unmodelled lavender, more neutral than that used in the doll. Perhaps the background is unfinished; it is simply painted in visibly separate strokes laid on vertically and diagonally, a deep mahogany brown for the room and neutral green and ochre tones for the curtain at the right.

This early oil painting by de Kooning is an important document in technique and subject matter. First of all, it shows him putting forth a markedly unacademic technique. This may be a result of scant training, but even that, ultimately, was a matter of choice. The technique which the young artist presents here is directly related to all the other works we know by him from the period (all of them drawings), different as they may be from one another and from this portrait: the Symbolist drawings, the cartoon-like drawings, the blend of the two modes in the Family watercolor, and the stylized verism of the pencil Male Portrait Head. The lines of the child's hands have the character and definition of anatomy in Women and Tree, seen

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as well in some of the cartoon-like drawings, for instance, Boy Stealing; the bangs recall the woman's hair in The Kiss and the interior lines of the tree trunk of Women and Tree; the shapes of the eyes are repeated in those of the adults in Family; parallel strokes in the arms recall the hatching in Male Portrait Head. While the overall character of the portrait appears purposely unacademic, its maker's formation at the academy cannot be disregarded. The academic experience might underlie a seriousness of approach. Surely, the thin edge of pink along Renée's left cheek is a subtlety learned from the close observation that produced the light sliver along the left edge of the pitcher in the academic still life drawing. In comparing the portrait to de Kooning's contemporaneous drawing styles, what he has left out is as revealing as what he has included in the oil medium. Some omissions may be a factor of the subject more than of medium: all elongated curves and points are here blunter and rounder. But the radiating cross-hatchings which would be suitable to the subject and the medium have not been brought to the painting, unless one credits the collar of the doll with carrying on this sensibility; it is, however, far from the van Gogh/Charley Toorop/Jan Sluyters aureole. And the flowing ethers that exist only in The Kiss and Women and Tree are not continued here.

These Art Nouveau and Expressionist features have been minimized in favor of a more sober vision, possibly

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influenced by Otto Dix's and Charley Toorop's recent portraits. Works by both artists were exhibited in Brussels in 1924 and were reproduced and favorably reviewed in Sélection magazine. De Kooning was surely already familiar with Charley Toorop's work. Dix's Two Children of 1921 (fig. 313), reproduced in the October 1924 issue, was ultimately bought by a Belgian collector; it is conceivable that it could have been on view in a back room of the gallery Salon d'Art Nouveau when de Kooning was in Brussels.[158]

For purposes of assessing de Kooning's participation in the realism of the 1920s, we might compare his Portrait of Renée with Dix's Two Children. Certainly de Kooning's vision is sober and unsentimental; but its realism in no way hovers on the gawky or caricatural as does Dix's scrutiny of teeth too big for a young face, or a little girl's insolence and self-possession beyond her years. Unlike that of Dix, de Kooning's representation does not harken back to old master techniques; it relies on a visibly stylized and personal line. This quality is even more apparent in The Family. While the sympathy with proletarian life expressed in The Family is in keeping with the politically left aspects of 1920s realism, that work ultimately belongs more to Art Nouveau/Symbolism than to Sachlichkeit mordancy. We may note that The Kiss was made the following year; any

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[158]See Chapter 7.

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interest in *sachlich* traits did not preoccupy the young artist.

Above all other considerations, de Kooning has attended to a quality of strength in his young sitter, melding it to an accurate portrayal of her individual features as well as to the stylized vocabulary of shapes which he had been developing.

Changing our focus from the 1920s to later decades, this oil painting from 1924 offers intimations of de Kooning's mature painting style. The tendency to respect a previously placed linear drawing in the application of paint is a quality I witnessed while watching de Kooning paint in the 1980s. Such a dialogue between linear structure and painterly color first becomes apparent, I believe, in de Kooning's mature paintings of the 1950s. The treatment of Renée's arms and hands may be compared with those of Woman IV, 1952-53 (fig. 314), where charcoal outlines--varying from piquant angularity to suave or nubby curves--hold their own over, under and around slathers of a uniform tone of pink paint. Red-orange and mustard-yellow colors set off by blue further link these distant cousins.

Range of Works

The body of work presented in this chapter, most of what remains from de Kooning's years in the Netherlands and his trip to Brussels, spans approximately two years. In assessing the works and de Kooning's artistic interests, we

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must bear in mind that what has survived is a small sampling, perhaps not at all indicative of the larger whole. The proportion of cartoon-like works to the artist's other studies may be entirely too large in the present group. There may have been a range of styles and subjects not even suggested by the surviving group. We have evidence of this in the verbal accounts of Impressionist paintings made at the Van Genechten studio and the landscape made in collaboration with Benno Randolfi. There are accounts of still life paintings, from flowers supplied by Jan Gidding[159] to fruit from the household supply: the artist's wrath was once incurred when his nephew Ton Breedveld made lemonade from an intended subject.[160]

Several indications, however, point to the probability that we may not be entirely misled. Two members from different branches of de Kooning's family found the cartoon-like drawings and their subjects to be familiar. Antonie Breedveld recalled in particular a drawing that seemed to be "expressing all the ills of the world." In it a "giant with a big head" was standing "like King Kong" and "vomiting male and female bodies, . . . nude, . . . all intermingled," in flowing forms. Such a scale discrepancy is a convention of caricature and illustration work, although not found in the extant drawings. The meaning of

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[159]Wallach, "Dinners," 24.

[160]Antonie Breedveld, interview by author, 5 July 1985.

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this drawing, as later explained to Breedveld by his mother, was syphilis. From this account we gain further insight to the iconography of the beautiful young prostitutes of the known drawings. Breedveld also remembered four small, vertical sheets, each about six inches wide, representing the seasons "in colored inks or pastel, landscapes and people and flowers; they were very beautiful."[161]

De Kooning's half-brother from his father's second marriage recalled a group of drawings, in color, given by the artist to his father that showed city scenes. That de Kooning gave similar drawings to his father is in itself revealing. They become more than portfolio pieces with which to seek employment. The images may have represented his best artistic production. The drawings were looked at and discussed enough to be recalled, but were rolled up and put in the back of a cupboard.[162]

In addition, we know of a de Kooning drawing with watercolor that had hung in the studio of de Kooning's good friend and fellow artist, Benno Randolfi, as recalled by Gerrit Randolfi, nephew of Benno. It had a subject that would fit in with the surviving drawings: a beautiful, expensively dressed young woman walking down the steps of the Passage, the shopping arcade in the center of Rotterdam,

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[161]Ibid.

[162]Leendert de Kooning, half-brother of Willem de Kooning, interview by author, interpreted by Jos de Kooning, 16 July 1985. See Chapter 6.

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stepping by and ignoring an impoverished young man begging for money. For Gerrit the subject brought out "the great difference in social stature" but there was "no blame" implied.[163] One can imagine elements of this work by combining Boy Kicked and the Flower Sellers in one's imagination.

Thus, the works presented in this study may not inordinately misrepresent de Kooning's early development. However partial, the view they provide of that early time offers considerable scope for reflection. It is a view that reaches forward and inflects our understanding of the well-known mature works.

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[163]Gerrit Randolfi, interview by author, 20 January 1985. The drawing was lost in the 1940 bombing of Rotterdam. In Mr. Randolfi's recollection, a vista of the arcade took up much of the drawing ("you could see the end, but not all the stores"), with the woman (about four inches high) and youth in the lower right segment of the drawing. He remembered blue and yellow colors, the "shapely legs" of the woman. The size was about 18 x 14 inches. Asked if the young man looked at all like de Kooning, he replied, "No, not at all."

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CONCLUSION

This study has presented a view of Willem de Kooning's life, training and work before he left Holland for the United States. What may be known of this period sheds light on our understanding of his career as a whole. A number of forward allusions have been made already in the course of the study. In these final pages I would like to summarize and offer further reflections on ways in which the early experience was a springboard for the oeuvre.

In Holland de Kooning worked in the planar media of wall painting and decoration, leaded glass, lettering and advertising signs. He was skilled at careful observation and rendering still lifes and plaster casts--of parts of the face and portrait busts--in charcoal and conté crayon. Especially related to the work in still life, he developed an aesthetic that took account of surrounding environment and mood, both qualities of the Dutch word *sfeer*. As he said in 1959, "I have this point of reference--my environment--that I have to do something about."[1]

From his earliest years, de Kooning's art activities were addressed to earning a living. In planning his career he directed his attention to making signs, lettering, window

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[1]Willem de Kooning, interview by Irving Sandler, 16 June 1959, in Sandler, "Conversations with de Kooning," 216.

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dressing, and illustration work.

De Kooning came to an appreciation and understanding of avant-garde European art, especially that from Paris, only after he arrived in the United States. In Holland his sensibility had taken in the flowing lines of Art Nouveau; he was exposed to the orientalizing and expressive forms related to the Amsterdam School and the buoyant, geometric descendants of Nieuwe Kunst decorations; he gladly made the short aesthetic leap to admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture; and he worked with the clean lines and asymmetrical formats of De Stijl applied arts, most likely laden with advertising images and Art Déco lettering. In his understanding, his focus on the applied arts was in itself modern. Appreciation for the art of Cézanne, Picasso, Matisse and other important influences on his mature work came to him in the United States, and functioned as an overlay upon an already securely laid foundation of academic training, work as a commercial artist, and drawings related to a career as an illustrator.

De Kooning's formation, combined with his predilection and talent, made him primarily an artist of line. The evening classes of the Academy offered him courses in drawing only, although this did not necessarily lead him to favor line per se. Dutch Symbolism accorded preeminent status to the linear over the painterly. Illustration work often required a linear emphasis. Bernard Romein's

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draftsmanship and Thorn Prikker's linear subtleties were crucial models for the young artist's experience. We do not know de Kooning's early Impressionist landscapes but no matter how painterly they may have been, in his 1924 oil portrait of Renée Lemmens he employed the strokes of his drawings.

De Kooning observed to Sam Hunter in 1975,

> To tell you the truth, all my paintings are "drawn." I draw while painting and I make no distinction between painting and drawing. . . . Soutine, whom I admire, . . . drew with the brush, like me.[2]

The character of the line in de Kooning's earliest works, whether cursive and graceful, taut and nubby, or stridently angular, announced qualities that recur in his mature art.

The unity of drawing and painting in de Kooning's work took a long and wayward path between the Portrait of Renée and the mature works. It was achieved with breakthrough crescendo in the work of the early 1950s, where line and shape were melded with free brushwork, charcoal with oil.[3] From that time on, de Kooning worked with masterful command

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[2]Pour vous dire la vérité, toutes mes peintures sont "dessinées." Je dessine en peignant et je ne fais pas la différence entre peindre et dessiner. . . . Soutine, que j'admire, . . . dessinait au pinceau, comme moi; Willem de Kooning, "Entretien avec Sam Hunter," in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 151-52. The original English transcription has been lost.

[3]Using infrared reflectography and microscopic analysis of paint, Susan Lake and Judith Zilczer, "Painter and Draftsman," in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 172-79, present an important contribution to understanding the role of drawing in de Kooning's working methods.

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of the representational and rhythmic capacity of line allied with full painterliness.

In his accomplishment of the early 1950s, de Kooning may well have been conscious of incorporating several aspects of the illustration technique he had developed as a youth. In the 1975 conversation with Sam Hunter, Hunter noted the aspect of humor in the recent paintings of women. De Kooning commented that the humor in his women had been overlooked, going on to say, referring to the 1950s women as well, "I felt like a caricaturist. You know I like comic strips very much. They're true and funny, serious and silly at the same time. My Women are like caricatures."[4] In a 1969 conversation with Charlotte Willard, de Kooning said, "I have a lot of cartoonist in me," an observation tucked between remarks on the patience, even innocence, to spend a hundred hours on a painting and the comment that "my women

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[4]Je me sentais comme un caricaturiste. Vous savez que j'aime beaucoup la bande dessinée. Elle est vraie et drôle, sérieuse et bête en même temps. Mes Women sont comme des caricatures; Willem de Kooning, "Entretien avec Sam Hunter," in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 154. While we lack the exact words that de Kooning used, he seems to have linked caricature with comic strips. Judith Zilczer devotes a section of her essay "De Kooning and Urban Expressionism" in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 43-54, to the artist's "Expressionist Caricatures," and offers an insightful consideration of aggression in de Kooning's images of women based on psychoanalyst Ernst Kris's study of caricature. She suggests that the aggression was not against women but directed toward the viewer, that it arises from the need to "master an inner danger" (citing Kris) and that, for de Kooning, the danger may have been "the accumulated weight of Western artistic tradition and associated social conventions on the one hand and human mortality on the other."

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are very funny: I start out with a young girl and end up with her mother," something that happens because he "can sustain this emotion."[5]

The many drawings of the early 1920s channel into de Kooning's later art much as the practicing of scales serves the art of a musician.[6]

Throughout his career de Kooning was attentive to the work of illustrators and the imagery of commercial art work. In 1950 he added, collage-fashion, the mouth cut from a well-known advertisement for Camel cigarettes on the back cover of Time magazine to invigorate and widen the cultural range of a small painting of a woman (fig. 315).[7] Woman as a "symbol of civilization,"[8] was for him a continuation of the goddesses, idols, and saints in past art through to

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[5]Willem de Kooning, interview by Charlotte Willard, 1969, unfilmed handwritten and typed notes, Charlotte Willard Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. While accepting an affinity with caricature and the comics, de Kooning was mindful of the difference between comic strips and his own enterprise; as he said to Amei Wallach in the late 1970s or early 1980s, "I'm trying to make poses; they have to come by themselves, otherwise they look like cartoons"; Wallach, "Strokes of Genius," 36. This statement provides a curious implication: if consciously made, the "poses"--or postures or figures--would look like cartoons, betraying the summary nature of their representational style.

[6]De Kooning implied as much when he commented to Sally Yard about drawing from the comic-strip "That's My Pop," as noted in Chapter 8.

[7]He associated the collage technique with Surrealism; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 16 November 1980.

[8]De Kooning's words to David L. Shirey, "Don Quixote in Springs," Newsweek, 20 November 1967, 80.

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current billboards and advertising images. In responding to images from both the fine and applied arts, de Kooning united aspects of his own background.

As a youth, de Kooning's part in the cross-fertilization between high and low art forms was very likely not self-conscious. For the better educated of his Dutch elders, it might have been seen in the context of William Morris's ideas on art and society, as conveyed by Walter Crane's The Claims of Decorative Art, widely influential in Holland in the 1890s. These views were seminally important for Roland Holst and, through him, Jac. Jongert and perhaps for Bernard Romein as well.[9] Crane averred that a vital art could develop only if it grew like a plant with roots in the everyday creativity of the people. To Crane, a "class distinction" between the applied arts and fine arts cut through their organic unity and impeded the evolution of a higher, purer art.[10] De Kooning's attentiveness to popular culture thus had theoretical roots in turn-of-the century thought; in fulfilling the Crane/Morris aspiration, however, he used the individualistic medium of oil painting rather

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[9]This may only be inferred from Romein's comments on advertising and posters; see Appendix.

[10]Jan Veth, Kunst en samenleving. Naar Walter Crane's Claims of decorative art, in het Nederlandsch bewerkt (Amsterdam, 1894); discussed in Ernst Braches, Het boek als Nieuwe Kunst 1892-1903: Een studie in Art Nouveau (Utrecht: Oosthoek's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1973), 65.

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than the social one of architecture.[11]

If de Kooning's juvenilia show him to be an artist of line, they also declare the importance to him of the figure, often in a vignette with minimal background, and his interest in the human drama, conveyed by a single person or in condensed narrative interactions. He chose for his figures readily understood contemporary types.[12] The figure would remain de Kooning's dominant vehicle for meditating on the human condition, in my view, throughout his art. The sense of drama that early intrigued him came to be manifest in the mature works in the manipulation of forms and the application of paint.

The figure provides key thematic continuities in de Kooning's art: woman as a subject and eroticism are two; man as worker or artist or libidinous force is another; a theme that I would like to add on the basis of the early works is that of the family. Another important theme beginning in the early works had figures at its inception: the urban environment. In a 1981 conversation de Kooning confirmed that a lot of his painting "comes from people . . . but the

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[11]When de Kooning spoke to Sally Yard in 1976 of putting his paintings of women in a row like Byzantine saints, an architectural resonance is implied; Yard, First Twenty-six Years, 189.

[12]Michael Zakian, "Representation and Illusion," 135-38, also points out Kooning's early interest in "broad cultural stereotypes," seeing in them "conventional images to attain psychological clarity and concreteness."

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figure sometime is living in the city."[13]

In works from throughout de Kooning's career we may observe continuities of these themes, of linear facture, even of specific forms, and of social implications that were set in motion during his early years.

The cast of characters in de Kooning's early drawings were almost all from the edges or lower income levels of society. They were seen romantically, with an eye to the picaresque qualities of the demi-monde. The artist's own story of economic need and making his way in the world came through in his evolving iconography, even though by the 1940s, as he later qualified, he "didn't make it sociological," and his figures "stayed in the neighborhood of painting." In 1981 he said of The Glazier, ca. 1940, "I had in mind to call him The Glazier because it doesn't take any social, there's no social comment, you know. . . . He could have owned the shop or could have worked there."[14] In giving his subject equal opportunity for social interpretation de Kooning may have revealed his social expectations of his new country, Walt Whitman's land of democracy, a classless society.

In the early images the attractive young woman, when not linked with the forces of nature, made her secular way

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[13]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981. I had commented, "It seems to me as if a lot of your painting springs from people. Is that fair to say?"

[14]Ibid.

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in the Rotterdam demi-monde, brightly, boldly, despondently, or timorously, yet always a center of interest, and with physical attraction as her major asset. As the inscription, "always begging," reminds us, she had a more difficult past--socially, economically, physically, and emotionally--than might appear from the meditative sitters of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Seated Woman of 1940 (fig. 312), for instance, was braced with the opalescent dignity that Ingres conferred upon his wealthy nineteenth-century patrons as well as enmeshed in a host of formal possibilities indebted to Picasso.

The difficult lives of the early women better prepare us for the famously formidable Woman I, 1950-52 (fig. 316), made after a world war had devastated Rotterdam and altered world civilization and when de Kooning's marriage was foundering. The stridently presented women of the 1950s evolved in the next decade to lushly stroked sisters whose personalities included the jubilant frumpiness of Woman Accabonac, 1966 (fig. 317). De Kooning described Woman Accabonac as "maybe somebody from the garment center. For myself," he said in 1981, "I think she maybe is a woman who makes hats. She's kind of funny-looking; she's here [in East Hampton] for the weekend." Prompted a little, he said, "She's turning into her forties, I guess," and commented that he found her to be "sweet and friendly."[15] The 1960s

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[15]Wolfe, "Glimpses of a Master," 14.

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series of women painted on doors[16] makes an intriguing comparison with the early Prostitute in Doorway (fig. 236). This strand of his women's heritage comes to mind in de Kooning's 1957 explanation to Seldon Rodman, "you can't present sentiment, misery, and so on, today, without giving it a humorous or at least ironic twist, to avoid sentimentality. As in my 'women.'"[17] In the later work we appreciate the transformation from near-sentimentality to a more inclusive love, humor and irony, but also a social transformation from poverty to self-sufficiency and comfort. The social path of de Kooning's woman coincided with his own. And sometimes the monster-fighter or song-and-dance man revealed himself in her guise.

Closely related to the theme of women is that of eroticism. The Kiss of 1925 (fig. 209) heralded a theme that was always an undercurrent in de Kooning's art but that came to the fore in the mid-1940s. The pastel and pencil drawing of 1945 (fig. 318), called variously Abstraction, Study for Marsh Series, and Study for Pink Angels, is one of the few which seem to depict two partners. While the 1945 drawing seems all copulation with no heads, we see in it a

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[16]Woman Accabonac is on paper mounted on canvas, but the dimensions are those of a door. This series is the subject of a recent exhibition, the catalogue of which contains a short essay by Judith Zilczer; Judith Hoos Fox, Willem de Kooning's Door Cycle (Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, 1995).

[17]Rodman, "Willem de Kooning," 104.

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vocabulary of shapes and strokes and liberties taken with anatomy remarkably similar to those of the more clichéd image of twenty years earlier, surprisingly recognizable but so thoroughly shuffled that one could not infer their earlier incarnation.

Many of de Kooning's lines and forms reverberate throughout his oeuvre. The near-repetition of arm and shoulder in the Flower Sellers and Women and Tree (figs. 231 and 208) has already been pointed out. This shape, with its mixture of tension and voluptuousness, recurs years later, synthesized into one supple stroke for the left arm of Woman in Landscape IX, 1968 (fig. 319). A further echo of this shape, acting on its own, occurs in the blue-gray stroke on the extreme left of Untitled IX, 1975 in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (fig. 320).[18]

The most insistent formal link throughout the oeuvre, the curving vocabulary set forth in the 1924 Women and Tree (fig. 208), is especially notable in the 1940s and 1980s. This drawing and The Kiss are precedents for the planar, curvilinear compositions intended to express large truths of human experience like Black Untitled (fig. 321) of 1948 and Untitled III of 1982 (fig. 322). In this personal development we witness, on the cultural level, Symbolist

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[18]Hess, 1959, 15, observed that De Kooning "has gone back continuously to older shapes, re-creating new ones from them." Janis and Blesh, De Kooning, figs. 27-31, reproduce a series of details of paintings showing related shapes over the two decades from 1940 to 1960.

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concerns transformed to those of Abstract Expressionism.

A distinctive iconographic contribution to the Abstract Expressionist world view was de Kooning's attentiveness to street life. It began in the very early works and continued throughout the oeuvre, but mostly during the 1950s. As a subject, and even compositionally, the general bustle of everyday urban life of Street Vendors (fig. 263) bears comparison with de Kooning's abstract urban landscapes of the mid-1950s. In Gotham News (fig. 323) the scale, tempo and grit have intensified and specificities have been lost. The marks have become more varied and layered but they occasionally resemble the earlier facture of linear outline and brusque interior hatching. Along the top and left edges of Gotham News there are transfer images of advertisements, remaining from newspapers placed on the wet paint to slow its drying. They provide a tidier counterpoint to the hand-stroked forms intent on evoking the raw urgencies of street life, of which the tabloid is a suitable exemplar.

The narrative interactions in many of de Kooning's cartoon-like drawings have an after-life in the abstract pictorial drama of the later works. In Gotham News thick and thin strokes and scrapes of paint, starting and stopping across the surface carry the viewer's interest as did the glances and lines of vision of Boy Stealing (fig. 266). Opposing forces deflect attention from a unified response yet continuities of directions, forms, and colors surprise

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one into accepting the totality of the composition, just as our attention must resolve the opposing claims of contemporary living.[19]

Boy and Automobiles (fig. 269), as has been mentioned in Chapter 8, may be compared with the ostensible subject of Merritt Parkway (fig. 324) where the protagonist-maker has found his way inside the experience of the moving vehicle. Modern mobility is celebrated by swift, vast, yet unpretentious strokes; it is an inspired merging of the expressive linear fragments of a painting like Gotham News and house-painter-size slathers.

The theme of the family is not one generally associated with de Kooning's art. Yet among the early works that survive, it is the subject of the most finished and strongest drawing. The family members appear to be not actual people but a fiction offered by the artist. This fiction may have intrigued him in a number of his later works, growing from a portrait gathering to figures in an interior space and then arrayed at a beach outing. Among de Kooning's images of the 1930s are presentations of abstracted beings in a room that follow Picasso's artist and model paintings of the late 1920s. One small painting and an even smaller drawing for it from around 1938, in abstract

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[19]Thus the narrative interactions in de Kooning's youthful works suggest a precedent for what Harold Rosenberg would in 1952 call the "event" and "arena" of "Action Painting." Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," Art News 51 (December 1952): 22.

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forms derived from both Arp and Mondrian, were titled by de Kooning, Father, Mother, Sister and Brother (fig. 325). The painting, he explained, was an idea for a mural, most likely to be placed in a school. In 1983 the drawing appealed to him more than the painting; he liked its "atmospheric" and "romantic" qualities. In conversation with me, he side-stepped a comparison with his own family in Holland and chose to speak of American families, especially, in his words, "the Armenians and Greeks, if they could stick it out, now living in the U.S. The whole East side was Greeks. They wanted to go back. I remember."[20] The poignancy and drama of the drawing were thus derived, in retrospect at least, not from his own family background or current aspirations, but from the lives of friends and acquaintances who shared his immigrant status, although not his preference to remain in the new country. It is an unexpected variation on the celebration of the American family so widespread in the murals of the WPA Federal Art Project.[21]

Another small, untitled painting from the same time, about 1937 (fig. 326), was painted in a different style. Unfinished and accidentally damaged, it presents a puzzling subject that nonetheless allows for exploration in relation

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[20]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 27 March 1983.

[21]When I asked who was who in the drawing, I learned that the complex forms and teardrop shapes at the left overhang the sister; ibid.

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to a family dynamic. De Kooning has referred to this work as made "in the Le Nain manner."[22] Late in 1936 Knoedler's gallery in New York exhibited works by the seventeenth-century French painters, the Le Nain brothers, whose dignified scenes of peasant gatherings included children and adults, usually not limited to the nuclear family. In de Kooning's painting, a grown man in a work smock and a boy, somewhat out of scale to each other, flank a portrait on the wall. They might be father and son, or brothers, as in Self-Portrait with Imaginary Brother from the same period. The short essay in Knoedler's catalogue commented on the lives of the two elder Le Nain brothers, Antoine and Louis, as "exceptionally united and touching"; about five years apart, the French artists were first teacher and student, then close collaborators.[23] De Kooning liked artists' biographies, so he may have retained this detail. Even though he had a younger half-brother, he told Sally Yard in 1976 that both figures in the drawing were self-portraits.[24] As has been suggested in Chapter 4, Bernard Romein and his drawings might also have had a role in an

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[22]Rodman, "Willem de Kooning," 103.

[23]Paul Jamot, "The Brothers Le Nain," Loan exhibition of paintings by Georges de la Tour, Antoine Le Nain, Louis Le Nain, Mathieu Le Nain (New York: M. Knoedler and Company, 23 November - 12 December 1936), n.p.

[24]Yard, First Twenty-six Years, 54; published in Ecrits, ed. Sichère, 189; "I really drew myself twice in that"; English transcript on file at Willem de Kooning Office, New York.

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elder artist-brother meditation. At the time of these works, de Kooning's close friend Gorky was also painting family scenes, imaginary and remembered: Portrait of Myself and My Imaginary Wife and two versions of The Artist and his Mother. The center of de Kooning's 1937 painting is enigmatic, with an odd accumulation of furniture under the framed portrait. The person in that portrait had begun as a seated presence in the center of the painting, de Kooning told Seldon Rodman in 1957, but had been painted over and framed, leaving only the head and an imprint on the cushion.[25] If de Kooning were musing on his own past, perhaps the center figure was a difficult mother to younger and older Wim.

De Kooning's attitude to the theme of the family may have been revealed in a 1985 conversation when he was asked if he were interested in primitive peoples. His response was unenthusiastic; he went on to say that he had a mother and a father and a sister and brother and then made a few friends, but to go all the way back to the beginning, that didn't interest him.[26] One might enlarge upon his statement to interpret the theme of the family as de

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[25]Rodman, "Willem de Kooning," 103.

[26]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 20 January 1985. This was at dinner when Gerrit Randolfi was visiting; Rotterdam and family and friends were the general topics of the evening. The conversation took a turn when Mr. Randolfi mentioned that he was fascinated with the history of the earliest times; I asked de Kooning about his own interest in primitive peoples.

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Kooning's own exploration of the bedrock of human existence, the equivalent of Rothko's and Newman's germinating seeds. If the theme of the family afforded the perpetual hope of re-scripting the human drama, it also invited the full and messy truth, not absolutes.

In the 1970s and early 1980s de Kooning spoke of wanting to paint tableaux, multi-figured compositions that would put the single-figure paintings populating his studio together in one painting, "like a beach scene," he explained.[27] While beach gatherings were a part of everyday life in East Hampton, it is also possible that Cézanne's paintings of bathers were in his thoughts. When de Kooning mused further on this project, he always described it as something very ordinary, "a man and a woman and a baby . . . on a beach," with a sign in the background to show that they were outdoors.[28] His designated cast of characters was thus the nuclear family, or at least the components of it.

De Kooning's drawings and paintings from the 1950s

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[27]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 16 November 1980. This idea was first published in Cowart and Shaman, De Kooning 1969-78, 15. De Kooning spoke of wanting to paint a tableau to Harold Rosenberg in 1971; Willem de Kooning, interview by Harold Rosenberg, 1971, unedited typed transcript, tape 2A, p. 1, Estate of Elaine de Kooning. Elaine de Kooning recalled in 1981 that the concept of the tableau had been on de Kooning's mind since the mid-1960s; Wolfe, "Glimpses of a Master," 17.

[28]Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 14 April 1981.

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already announced the theme of a figure in a landscape and in 1967 he painted Woman and Child (fig. 327) in which the lush lady in a landscape setting is accompanied by a smaller being. Only in the drawings of this decade might we find a father, most likely in those that contain three figures. The family roles, however, are as malleable as the bodies. The trio ranged across one sheet (fig. 328) could be father on the left, mother, and adolescent daughter--de Kooning's daughter Lisa was twelve in 1968--but it could also be a man and two women. In another untitled drawing of about 1968 (fig. 329), a man is in the center in a Christ-on-the-cross pose, his lady is seated on a *chaise longue*, and there is a small crouching figure on the left; within this child playing in the sand, however, lurks an adult woman's head. In a related drawing, the small figure on the left is clearly childlike but the woman, here in the center, is joined by a bent-back beanbag of a person wearing high-heeled shoes.

A decade later, the figures in landscapes are harder to decipher. There are drawings where one can find two larger figures and one smaller one (fig. 330).[29] In an animated small painting of 1976 called Figures in a Landscape #2 (fig. 331) I find a large standing figure to the left and a small seated child in the lower right corner, above whom

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[29]For example, two untitled drawings of ca. 1975-80, in Cummings and others, Willem de Kooning, nos. 119 and 120.

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there may be at least one other figure. Rather than the theme of the family as it began in the 1924 watercolor, one might consider these later works as depicting de Kooning's family, in the sense of the beings who populate his works; they evolve from his personal experiences, general observations of life, images from museums or commercial art, his own previous works, and ongoing discoveries while drawing or painting.

Once our eyes are attuned to this family of figures, they become apparent even in a work so abstract as Untitled I, 1977 (fig. 332). The figure on the left has perceptible feet and perhaps a face sitting slyly on its belly; in the middle, we can make out legs, torso and head; to the right is a space where less defined or smaller figures might materialize. Within the heritage of these late figure paintings I would include the late works of Fernand Léger (1881-1955), especially Les loisirs, hommage à Louis David of 1948-49 (fig. 333).[30] De Kooning worked under Léger for a short time when he was in the mural division of the WPA and always admired him. The theme of workers and their families on vacation outings is consonant with the comments de Kooning has made about the content of his later work,

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[30]Léger considered "the creation and organization of leisure for workers" as the "cardinal point" of his discussion in an article published in New York. Fernand Léger, "The New Realism Goes On," Art Front 3, no. 1 (February 1937): 7-8; reprinted in Edward F. Fry, ed., Functions of Painting by Fernand Léger, The Documents of 20th-Century Art (New York: Viking, 1973), 116.

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especially Woman Accabonac.

The marvelously free brush strokes in Untitled I, 1977 are among the most thrilling aspects of de Kooning's work. While they subsume his longtime admiration for Cézanne's constructed stroke, they may also be as innate to him as a fingerprint, or a personal gesture, for they are similar to the two summarily sketched vertical forms in Boy and Automobiles (fig. 269), made fifty years earlier. The intervening experiences--many of them predicated upon Surrealist thought--brought de Kooning to value the spontaneously free line, but it took years consciously to tap and build his art from it. What may be considered an intrinsic form-making capacity ultimately merged with its opposite: the much-practiced form.

In de Kooning's paintings of the 1980s, figures and landscapes evanesced into airy realms where we often sense their continuing presence in curves that could be either limbs of women or elements of terrain. The freedom of de Kooning's airy late paintings invites a comparison with Matisse's late cut-outs (fig. 334).[31] But it is likely

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[31]Indeed in 1980 de Kooning said that Matisse had come to interest him even more than Picasso or Cézanne, saying of Matisse, "I wouldn't mind if I could be influenced by him"; Willem de Kooning, interview by author, 16 November 1980. He saw the Matisse drawing exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in the summer of 1982; idem, interview by author, 5 November 1982. In the early 1980s de Kooning spoke to Tom Ferrara about Matisse's late cut-outs, and expressed his interest in being assisted by attractive young women; Tom Ferrara, interview by author, early 1980s.

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that Matisse's Le bonheur de vivre (fig. 335), the landmark of modern painting that de Kooning knew in its large and intensely yellow presence from a visit to the Barnes collection, had long held a place in his imagination.[32] In many essential ways de Kooning's Untitled III, 1981 (fig. 336) may be likened to Le bonheur de vivre: both paintings offer humanity within nature, indeed, a resumé of the pastoral tradition in Western art, freedom, eroticism, energy, repose; "stylistic discordancies" of freely worked paint, expanses of flat color, and linear notations made to work together.[33]

In de Kooning's late work the theme of humanity, and specifically woman, enmeshed in the forces of nature has lost the torpor and night of the early Women and Tree (fig. 208); we see instead a mood akin to the daylight elan of the Flower Sellers (fig. 231). In fact, a surprising and spectacular reprise of the beautiful flower seller occurs in

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[32]In 1977 to Tromp, "Elke stijl," 13, he alluded to it as the painting that had set the young Picasso to work on the Demoiselles d'Avignon, a work that in turn had been an important inspiration to de Kooning in the 1940s; see especially Sally Yard, "The Angel and the Demoiselle--Willem de Kooning's Black Friday," Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University 50, no.2 (1991): 2-23.

[33]See Jack Flam, "Henri Matisse," in Great French Paintings from the Barnes Foundation: Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Early Modern, ed. Richard J. Wattenmaker and others (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 226-235. Lynne Cooke, "De Kooning and the Pastoral: The Interrupted Idyll," in Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection, ed. Zilczer, 89-109, discusses the pastoral aspects of de Kooning's later work.

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Untitled III, 1981: many of the forms and colors--from the freely blowing hair of the young woman, her bent arm (now blue), to the lines of her yellow bodice--resurface in the large painting made almost sixty years later and about fifty times the size of the earlier work.[34]

The works of de Kooning's youth help us to appreciate the distance of his remarkable journey and illuminate the evolving concerns in the work we already know.

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[34]De Kooning had seen a black and white photocopy of his early Flower Sellers late in 1980 but it is unclear whether or not he kept it; it seems not to have lingered among his possessions. He often commented in later years about re-doing an earlier work. Whether the Hirshhorn painting was a conscious or unconscious reprise, it is an extraordinary achievement. I thank Peter Fried for his question about whether the similarity was conscious or unconsious.

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APPENDIX

BERNARD ROMEIN AFTER 1926

Career, 1926-1938

Much of what we can learn about Romein's thought and work is subsequent to the period of his contact with de Kooning; it is worth recounting for the light that may be shed retrospectively on his concerns during the early 1920s.

By 1930 many of Romein's commissions were coming from companies in Delft, and he and his wife moved to a comfortable neighborhood there early in 1931. Romein worked freelance for Calvé-Delft and the Nederlandsche Gist- en Spiritusfabriek as well as for other companies. Johanna Romein continued her painting career in association with a group of women painters in Amsterdam.[1]

Probably at the time of his marriage in 1926, Romein designed and made several pieces of substantial oak furniture for his home. Setting up a small forge in a backyard building to do the iron work, he made a large book cabinet, chest, table and chairs, and a wrought-iron chandelier, all in styles redolent of the Middle Ages: the

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[1]Jan de Fouw, letter to author, 13 April 1991, described her as having been one of the "'Amsterdamse Joffers', a group of women painters in the '20s and a very good, sensitive painter of landscape and still life." I have not investigated Mrs. Romein's associations; de Kooning apparently never met her.

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book cabinet, for example, has Gothic linen-fold panels. In this he followed the tradition begun by William Morris, and consciously carried on by Roland Holst, although Romein himself may not have seen his furniture in this perspective; in later years, he was not particularly interested in the English Arts and Crafts movement. It pleased him to keep a copy of "the first book ever printed by Plantin of Belgium," an early seventeenth-century Missal, on the massive oak and iron chest.[2]

Among the works from Romein's estate, there is a sampling of applied art made in Holland before 1938, including designs for brochures, stationery, and photographs of floats for parades and stands at trade fairs. Some of these applied art works may be dated. There are also undated drawings, paintings and sculptures--Romein's "free art"--which were made either in Holland in the 1920s and 1930s or later in Ireland.

Applied Art Work

The later 1920s and 1930s were a time of considerable professional success. In 1928 Romein was awarded a gold medal for his design of a large pavilion for the Dutch Metal

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[2]The furniture is in a private collection in the Netherlands. It is mentioned in "An Irishman's Diary," The Irish Times, 1 June 1948, along with the Missal, and by Jan de Fouw, letter to author, 13 April 1991, who also noted that Romein's ideas about abstract art were "not reflected in his domestic environment," and that he "showed little regard in principle for the Arts & Crafts movement."

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Association (fig. 337) at Nenijto, an industrial exhibition held in Rotterdam. One-hundred-twenty by sixty meters, it was a sculptural maquette for the New Waterway, with cranes and gates, towers and runways in a dynamic yet substantial arrangement of blocky, pointed and semi-circular forms.[3]

A book that Romein designed for the Nederlandsche Gist-& Spiritusfabriek in 1929 shows him manipulating many of the modern currents in graphic design. However much he may have been directed by the desires of the company, he had no qualms about combining the geometric clarity and asymmetry of De Stijl and Constructivism with a personal, handmade facture, traditionally formed letters, and exhuberant decorative motifs. He designed the cover, page decorations, and charts for the 136-page book celebrating the development and accomplishments of the company during the sixty years from 1860 to 1930.[4] From the back cover (fig. 338), one would infer a sophisticated appreciation of Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism; horizontal and vertical lines of varied widths create an asymmetrical, spare rhythm of red,

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[3]Alb. Otten, "De Nenijto," Bouwkundig Weekblad Architectura 25 (23 June 1928): 193, photograph p. 198. Certificate in Romein papers dated 1 October 1928 citing, "Het verdienstelijk ontwerp der omkleeding van de maquette van den Metaalbond" (meritorious design of the casing of the maquette of the Metaalbond).

[4]N. V. Nederlandsche Gist- & Spiritusfabriek Delft: De Ontwikkeling der onderneming in zestig jaren 1870-1930, Band-en Bladversiering van B. Romein (n.p.: N. V. Van Markens Drukkerij-Vennootschap, [1930]). The back cover is signed and dated, "ROMEIN '29".

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blue, gold, black and gray around a delicate gray rectangle made by spraying or spattering.[5] The front cover (fig. 339), however, is ornate and boisterous. The company's initials are set in red triangles, flanked by red and gold versions of the company emblem with its heraldic lion and further by the bubbles of its products, all forming a large vertical Amsterdam-School stripe in a Neo-Plastic plaid.

Four posters for a Calvé product, morning chicken feed, signed and dated 1930, are more successful to later eyes and show Romein's aesthetic incorporating further contemporary interests.[6] His masterful line is now subordinate to flat shapes, many arrayed on the diagonal. In one poster (fig. 340) an unframed white ground stretches into seeming infinity behind diagonal, trapezoidal planes and a half circle that is also a morning sun; in parts of a plane, a spattered middle value undergoes svelte gradations. Above these constructive forms Romein has placed the veristic contour of a chicken and eggs, playfully outlining the cluster of eggs with an aura of spatters so that the undifferentiated background and distinct foreground entities of the familiar world are made of the same white. Superimposed upon and interwoven with these shapes are the

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[5]A resist technique may have been used. More densely textured analogous areas had been used by El Lissitzky on a cover for Wendingen 4, no. 11 (1921).

[6]Mr. J. Bolsterlee made available to me these and other Romein works in the Calvé archive and pertinent information about the company history.

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letters of the product slogan, "Tok-tok, veel eieren in 't hok," (Cluck, cluck, many eggs in the hen-house), providing further consonances and calibrations of design. The subtleties of synthetic Cubism for use in commerical design are fully at Romein's command.[7] We see an affinity for the floating geometries of Russian Suprematism, known in Holland since the early 1920s.[8]

The same year as the Calvé posters saw another calendar for NGSF that continued the assured draftsmanship of the 1920s. Illustrations are contained by borders and the lettering is similar to that on the 1929 book. The drawing for January 1931 (fig. 341), which shows yeast being delivered by automobiles, was praised as a "Dutch winter view" in a favorable announcement in the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant.[9] Eloquently drawn pollarded willow trees share the foreground with a company car; in the distance are more willows and a windmill.

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[7]The composition has similarities to a painting by Lambert that was included in the Kubisten en neo-kubisten, 'La Section d'or' te Parijs exhibition that travelled in the Netherlands in 1920; this work, entitled La rencontre, was reproduced in "Kubistische Kunst in het Stedelijk Museum," Het Leven, 2 November 1920.

[8]See Frank Gribling, "Tussen De Stijl en het constructivisme: Duitsland-Nederland, een schakel in de internationale avant-garde betrekkingen," in Berlijn - Amsterdam, 269-279, and Chapter 5.

[9]Een Hollandsch wintergezicht; "Een kalender," NRC, 11 May 1930, clipping in RKD. A copy of the calendar is in the Gemeentemuseum Helmond; reproduced in Hogervorst, Mens en Werk, 126-32, nos. 223-34; other copies are in the archives of Gist-Brocade.

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The Calvé products for pigs were the occasion for a remarkable series of drawings, most likely from 1934 (fig. 342).[10] On friezes of horizontal bands with handsome, classical lettering are different breeds of the animal, one group depicted to show inner organs, musculature, and the skeleton. The consummate skill of Romein's draftsmanship, his industrious attention to anatomy, and his inventiveness and sense of humor in portraying the different breeds, as well as his sympathy for the creatures, show that he gave himself wholly to his advertising work.

From a commentary on Romein's career, we learn that his contributions to the Brussels Exposition of 1935 earned him the Grand Prix for Design.[11] One of his submissions was a poster for the resort of Scheveningen (fig. 343), known only from a postcard-sized photograph.[12] Details of the long view across strolling vacationers to a pleasure pavilion are indistinct in this document; we can appreciate two lithe and modish young women in the foreground, equally lean and curving sans-serif lettering for "Scheveningen," and the carefully graded modelling in spherical and egg-shaped clouds.

Svelte gradations of value and amusing rhymes of

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[10]One inscription proclaimed "animal food for 50 years"; the company was founded in 1884.

[11]"An Irishman's Diary," The Irish Times, 1 June 1948.

[12]Photograph on file at the RKD inscribed, "voor Brussel Expos. 1935."

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geometrical forms in image and lettering characterize a poster for Rynbende's jenever (fig. 344).[13] Undated, it is probably from the 1930s; in it we see the influence of the popular French designer A. M. Cassandre.

Romein surely paid attention to poster design in other nations and to its history as well. By the 1940s he had assembled a collection of "early posters and play-bills" of which he lent "56 historical pieces" to an exhibition at the National College of Art, Dublin; among them were works by Toulouse Lautrec, Chéret, and the Beggarstaff Brothers. In the 1930s he played an active role as a designer with an international outlook, preparing a series of posters for France shortly before the outbreak of World War II; the message was to alert young Frenchmen to the danger facing their country.[14]

Related in style and subject matter to the line drawings of Romein's earlier posters is a group of large drawings for Zola's Germinal (figs. 345-348).[15] Here the

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[13]Collection Gemeentearchief, Rotterdam. Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, interview by author, 1 May 1986, recalled that Romein did quite a lot of work for Rynbende.

[14]"An Irishman's Diary," The Irish Times, 1 June 1948.

[15]A folder in the estate papers, separated from its original contents, was inscribed, "Germinal Zola 16 Tekeningen." I am not certain just which drawings comprise the sixteen, but a mineworker, man with rabbit, and hunchback girl are distinctive subjects and are all on similar heavy paper of about 28 1/2 by 22 1/2 inches in size. Some of these drawings are now in the Helmond Gemeentemuseum and others are in the Okawa Museum of Art.

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gradations of darker accents are made with deft strokes of a wide conté crayon and play a more important role in defining musculature or folds of clothing than had the irregular wash of the previously discussed drawings. Full-scale studies kept in the estate allow us to see Romein's working process (fig. 349): in the studies his crisp line is superimposed on blurred and modelled areas that are the product of decisions about posture or facial expression or arrangement of the figures; in the final drawings, the line has been transferred unchanged and the shading artfully added anew. As has been the case with a number of Romein's other drawings, background detail is kept to a minimum in most of these drawings.

An undated notice within Romein's papers indicates that he may have designed a wall painting for the Rotterdam Volkshuis.

Paintings

An oil (fig. 350) by Romein of the same size as the *painting with the red square* is distantly reminiscent of van Doesburg's didactic series of abstractions of about 1917 based on the perennial Dutch subject, the cow (fig. 351). Rather than taut, flat planes, however, Romein has employed trapezoids and curving planes that appear to hover in space as they overlap one another. His colors, red, yellow-ochre, blue, black, white, and gray, are neither naturalistic nor observant of theoretical limitations of the period.

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Textures in the paint application keep the work from looking impersonal. The abundant white ground confers a tentative delicacy to the creature; no effort has been made to lock the figurative element into its borders, as was the case, for instance, in the Christmas songbook cover.

The pictorial vocabulary of the small cow is more richly orchestrated in a larger, fully abstract painting that Romein titled Children's Corner, after Debussy's composition of the same name (fig. 352).[16] Two of the planes have smoothly shaded edges near to Léger's paintings of the teens and later years and several seem to cast subtle shadows on the shapes just beneath them; yet other planes, like the large blue one at the left, are created from a deliberately mottled and scuffled application of a main color tinged with another, in this case black. The overlapping array of diagonals punctuated by circles, all floating on a white ground, is similar to the composition of Romein's 1930 poster for Calvé's chicken feed; the work could date from that time or later. The generating principle here seems nearer to Suprematism or a collage of

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[16]On the back is written, "Children's Corner [ ] on the [ ] of Debussy." This work has a label indicating that it was submitted to the 1953-54 São Paulo exhibition, but it is not listed in the catalogue. This painting differs from the others with a São Paulo label in its signature, having the monogram "BR" instead of the full name "Bernard Romein." It should be noted, though, that other works from the 1950s are signed with the monogram. Of this work, Mrs. van Wijngaarden-de Vos, interview by author, 1 May 1986, recalled, "One day he heard Debussy, whom he liked, and then he made this picture, instruments in a modern way."

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abstract elements than to the nature-derived composition of the cow. Compositional precedents include late Cubist works in the Section d'or exhibition presented in Rotterdam in 1920;[17] Russian works available from 1921; and Schwitters's Das Grohze Ichbild shown at the De Branding exhibition in Rotterdam in January 1926.[18]

Career after 1938

A profound change in Romein's life came in the spring of 1938 when he and his wife moved to Dublin. A front-page article in Het Vaderland, 16 April 1938, announced his appointment as Professor of Design at the National College of Art, Dublin. The position was a new one, intended to be the keystone of the recently established College, which had formerly been the Metropolitan School of Art. Any elation over his new responsibilities, a culmination of so much professional work, must have been dampened by a year of protest in which the appointment of a foreigner was contested.[19] The controversy seems to have been resolved

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[17]La rencontre by Lambert has been mentioned above with regard to Romein's posters of 1930.

[18]Brinkman, De Branding, 118.

[19]An English-language Dublin newspaper clipping of the same day, 16 April 1938, also among the Romein papers, bore the headline "Foreigners in National Art Jobs" and discussed the protests. Bruce Arnold, Mainie Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 171, n. 1, offers this footnote on the situation without giving Romein's name: "John Dowling wrote in Ireland Today that 'the Professorship of Design was obviously

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with the issuance of a civil service certificate of qualification on 17 May 1939 and Romein's official appointment on 1 June 1939. Romein offered classes in "commercial art, decoration, poster design, stage settings and book illustration."[20] It is from Ireland that Romein conducted the rest of his professional career; he seems to have channeled his energies into teaching and into creating paintings and sculpture but not to presenting them in either Ireland or the Netherlands. Recollections of the elder staff at the National College of Art, gathered by art historian John Turpin in 1985, offer this picture:

> Romein was a very reserved, aloof person. He kept completely to himself and did not socialize. He never related to Irish artistic society or to the commercial scene in Ireland.
>
> He was a martinet, beginning his class sharply at 9:30 daily and refusing admission for the day to late comers. He specialized in illustration and poster work, and above all in Roman lettering drawn free hand; it is said that his criterion of perfect design was

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intended to be the Keystone of the new edifice', and he related this to the country's industrial design needs and their development. What looked at first like a brave development soon took on, in the view of both Dowling and others, an appearance of threatening changes designed to bring in from abroad a new and powerful teacher--'Herr van Something will be quietly introduced as the saviour of Irish Art'--and the immediate reaction of those who were already established in the school, now transformed into a college, was to block the appointment."

[20]Certificate in Romein estate. Date of official appointment provided by Dr. John Turpin, professor of art history, subsequently director, National College of Art and Design, Dublin, letter to author, 21 April 1985; there are no documents relating to Romein's background in the files of the school. List of classes from "An Irishman's Diary," The Irish Times, 1 June 1948.

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> that you could draw the Roman "O" freehand. His dictatorial and inflexible attitude meant that students were forced to copy his style absolutely; he did not tolerate individualism. Despite this, he was respected by his students, although not popular. He was not greatly liked by the Fine Art staff, because of his tight, disciplined, narrow approach to drawing. Because of the conservative and perfectionist approach to hand lettering, his students were not well received in the contemporary commercial world of Dublin advertising agencies during the 1950s. He never introduced typography and modern techniques. He had looked forward to returning to Rotterdam on his retirement but it is know that when he did so in 1959, he was bitterly disappointed.[21]

Jan de Fouw, a Dutch-born graphic designer who had studied at The Hague in the later 1940s and arrived in Dublin in 1951 at the age of twenty-two, met with Romein and his wife a number of times in the 1950s in a "friendly relationship [that] was one of 'professor' and student." He explained that Professor Romein,

> had a basic incomprehension of the convoluted rhetoric and national romanticism of the Irish and of his colleagues (Sean Keating, Muiris MacGonigal etc.) which was in direct contradiction with his pragmatic--and very Dutch--attitude. . . .
>
> A strict regimentarian with a precise work discipline B.R. expected the same from college officials and students. . . . The perfectionism of his teaching demanded attention to basic craft discipline of handlettering--i.e., producing the perfect O--before being allowed to progress to the next stage. His aversion to typography, with use of mechanical typesetting in metal for relief print, was based partly on the dislike of available industrial services and material . . . . In a way the time had stopped for him in a pre-war situation where he did a lot of his poster work for the Delft Slaolie Fabriek [Calvé]. . . .
>
> His disappointment of his isolation, emphasized by the war years, made him a difficult man to get to know. . .

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[21]John Turpin, letter to author, 21 April 1985.

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> . Typically, he once said that it was impossible for him to talk to people if art was not a common factor of interest.
>
> They both [Romein and his wife] looked forward to his pension which would enable them to return to Holland.[22]

Newspaper clippings of the 1940s indicate that Romein's teaching was successful, and his students' work well received.[23] In those years he was somewhat involved with the professional world around him: he painted panels for the Irish presentation at the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair; he lectured on modern Dutch architecture to the Architectural Association of Ireland in 1943;[24] and in 1948 gave the opening address at an exhibition of European posters in the gallery of the National College of Art, to which he also lent a number of posters from his own collection. His English, however, was never very good.[25] Mrs. Romein continued her career as "a portrait artist."[26]

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[22]Jan de Fouw, letter to author, 13 April 1991.

[23]Irish Independent, 16 January 1945, clipping in Romein estate; other clippings of 1940, 1943, and 1953 were related to students receiving honors.

[24]Irish Independent, 10 February 1943; The Irish Times, 10 February 1943; clippings in Romein estate.

[25]John Turpin, letter to author, 21 April 1985; "An Irishman's Diary," The Irish Times, 1 June 1948.

[26]Angela O'Brien, Hon. Secretary, The Irish Society for Design and Craft Work, a former student of Romein, letter to author, 24 April 1985. Later works by Mrs. Romein, in private collections in the Netherlands, include a portrait of her husband, an interior view of the couple's house in Dublin and two plump, fairy-tale-like shepherdesses.

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Romein's remarks on the occasion of the poster exhibition in 1948 have been recorded and offer insights into his thoughts.

> It is a commonplace to say that industry is the lifeblood of a nation. Equally, that art, if it is a healthy and natural thing, should be bound up with contemporary life. The case for combining art with industry is, therefore, a strong one. The best example of this combination is the art of the poster, the co-operation of businessman, artist and printer. The poster brings art to nearly all classes of people, that is its strength to-day.
>
> Art is a blessing, too long divorced from the man in the street. If there is a chance of bringing the masses back to an appreciation of things beautiful and to an elimination of the tasteless, this can only be achieved by improving modern publicity. The bill boards are the art galleries of the future.[27]

Arts and crafts ideas, constructively allied with industry, were not new in the Ireland of 1948, but bore repeating. Billboards as art galleries of the future could go back to socialist ideas from the teen years in Holland and Jongert's optimistic writings of the 1920s.

Romein continued his introduction to the exhibition with a short historical survey of the development of the poster, noting the invention of lithography, Daumier's magazine work, Toulouse Lautrec's 1891 La Goulue as the first modern poster, and "Theophile Steinlen, with his sensitive, dramatic work as his 'Le Coupable,' a real

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[27]Some of Romein's comments are included in "An Irishman's Diary," The Irish Times, 1 June 1948; an unidentified magazine article of the same time, pp. 3-4, clipping from Romein estate, appears to give the full range of the talk.

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masterpiece." He cited further turn-of-the-century figures in France, Belgium and England and mentioned major present-day poster artists in England, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Hungary. More time was devoted to Swiss posters, a collection of which had been given to the College and served as the occasion for the exhibition; Romein saw Hodler as the founder of the modern Swiss poster and praised the contemporary artists, including Herbert Matter.[28]

Early in his stay in Dublin, Romein undertook five panels depicting events from Irish history for Ireland's Cultural and Historical Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. An installation photograph (fig. 353), perhaps of the commission-in-progress, shows several panels and a series of box-like displays that also appear to have been designed by Romein. The large panel depicts medieval knights against a plain ground "after the manner of the Bayeaux Tapestry," as the commission had first stipulated.[29] On a map of the New York World's Fair grounds, the pavilion designated "Ireland"

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[28]Unidentified article, ca. June 1948, pp. 3-4, clipping from Romein estate.

[29]George Atkinson, Typewritten letter signed (copy) to Mr. Ryan, 24 May 1939, Romein estate. This letter indicates that the early plan evolved into more elaborate illustrations with backgrounds of considerable detail, after many changes in the subjects and arrangements of the sequence. The letter, a request for more money for Romein's work (noting that 25% would go to income tax), also indicated that Romein's colleagues Professor Keating and Headmaster George Atkinson at the National College of Art thought highly of the panels. The pavilion was discussed in "Ireland at the World's Fair," The Irish Times, 22 March 1939, clipping in Romein estate.

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can be seen near the U.S. Government building, at the far end of a long axis extending from the Perisphere and Trylon; de Kooning's painting was on the Hall of Pharmacy, quite near to the Trylon. Apparently de Kooning never saw these works by Romein.

Among the abstract paintings from the Romein estate, five have labels indicating that they were submitted to the São Paulo Biennial of 1953-54. The Children's Corner, already discussed, was not included in the exhibition. The three paintings that were exhibited were dated 1952 and 1953 in the catalogue.[30] Inundação, (Inundation), 1953 (fig. 354), has a partially recognizable figurative basis.[31] Against a ground of textured blues, black, and purple, float irregular collage-like shapes made of white, gray and yellow paint: two cows and a wooden shoe to the right, possibly a boat with oar in the upper center, and yet more speculatively, a standing man with rifle at the right. It is possible to invent a scenario for such a scene. The time-honored Dutch defense of the homeland, used with success against the Spanish and French in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was to flood its own lands, and this was the defensive plan even in 1940. But in World War II it was a scene of lament: the flooding was ordered by the

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[30]II Bienal, 52, nos. 24-26. The labels on the works bore no dates.

[31]Ibid., no. 26. Private collection, Netherlands.

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Germans for their own defense in the occupied Netherlands.[32]

The two other works exhibited in São Paulo have similarly dark themes: Desespêro (Despair / Desperation), 1952 (fig. 355) and Execução (Execution), 1952 (fig. 356).[33] The fifth work with a São Paulo label was titled Resurrection (fig. 357).[34] In title and cross forms, the last suggests a crucifixion, but a figurative basis for the other two is much less apparent. Romein made a number of small, felt-tip pen drawings in varying degrees of abstraction that could be sources for the forms in these paintings (fig. 358). Jan de Fouw, who visited Romein from 1951, did not know about the works sent to São Paulo.[35]

The Suprematist spaces implicit in these paintings and drawings are more sweeping and magisterial in works of the later 1950s made with the airbrush (fig. 359).[36] One

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[32]Walter B. Maass, The Netherlands at War: 1940-1945 (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 15, 233.

[33]II Bienal, nos. 24 and 25.

[34]In the Sotheby's sale: no. 322, Despiration [*sic*]; no. 323, Execution; no. 305, Composition with Yellow and Red Cross (Ressurection) [*sic*], reproduced in color on p. 75.

[35]Jan de Fouw, letter to author, 13 April 1991: "He did not mention his participation in São Paolo 53/54, as far as I remember."

[36]They are identified and dated by Jan de Fouw, ibid., "He also (late 50s) produced a series of abstracts, related to De Stijl as well as Mondriaan (colour), to sizes approx. 3 x 5 ft. on paper in airbrush technique, which was a novelty at that time." De Fouw also wrote, "Too late for the post-war developments and stagnant in his commercial

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thinks of relay stations in space as much as cosmological equivalents of human emotion.

Romein kept up his ties with the Netherlands in the time just after World War II; he designed five postage stamps for the Dutch government, then based in London.[37] He visited his sister in Holland after the war but seems to have dropped away from the Dutch art world.

In 1959 Romein and his wife returned to the Netherlands, buying a house in Tiel, a town southeast of Utrecht. Elder Dutch artists mentioned an exhibition of Romein's work during this time, but no record has yet come to my attention; it was not well received, in the verbal recounting.[38] Romein's papers reveal that during this time he sought out and corresponded with Herman Mees, a former professor at the Rotterdam Academy. Shortly after his return to the Netherlands Romein learned that he was seriously ill with cancer; he died on October 7, 1962.

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design methods, inhibited and not seeking exposure of his work as an artist, (never in Ireland), he remained obscure to the outside world. A great pity as his abstract work merited the greatest contemporary respect, in my view."

[37]De Moor, Postzegelkunst, 121-23.

[38]Information from Klaas van de Erve's numerous sources, most of them Dutch artists.

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