



O DI STORIA
DELLE ARTI

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A DEGLI STUDI
VENEZIA

EARL KERKAM



February 23—March 19, 1960

EARL KERKAM

“...There came the major revelation of Cézanne, the master to whom he is still most closely linked; the study of Rembrandt and other masters; of the Impressionists and his own contemporaries—and long hours of drawing from the model at the Grande Chaumière. An exhibition of his drawings was held in Paris in 1931, but his painting in oils did not begin in earnest until he returned to New York, penniless, in 1932 and went to work on the Federal Art Project. He returned to Paris several times, spending five years there after World War II in quarters near Montparnasse once occupied by Soutine, and always drawing at the Grande Chaumière, to which he was admitted free in exchange for criticism of students' work. (It is difficult to imagine how he carried out the latter assignment since he claims, 'I can't talk French, but I can paint French.') Although he knew American painters abroad, Kerkam had little contact with

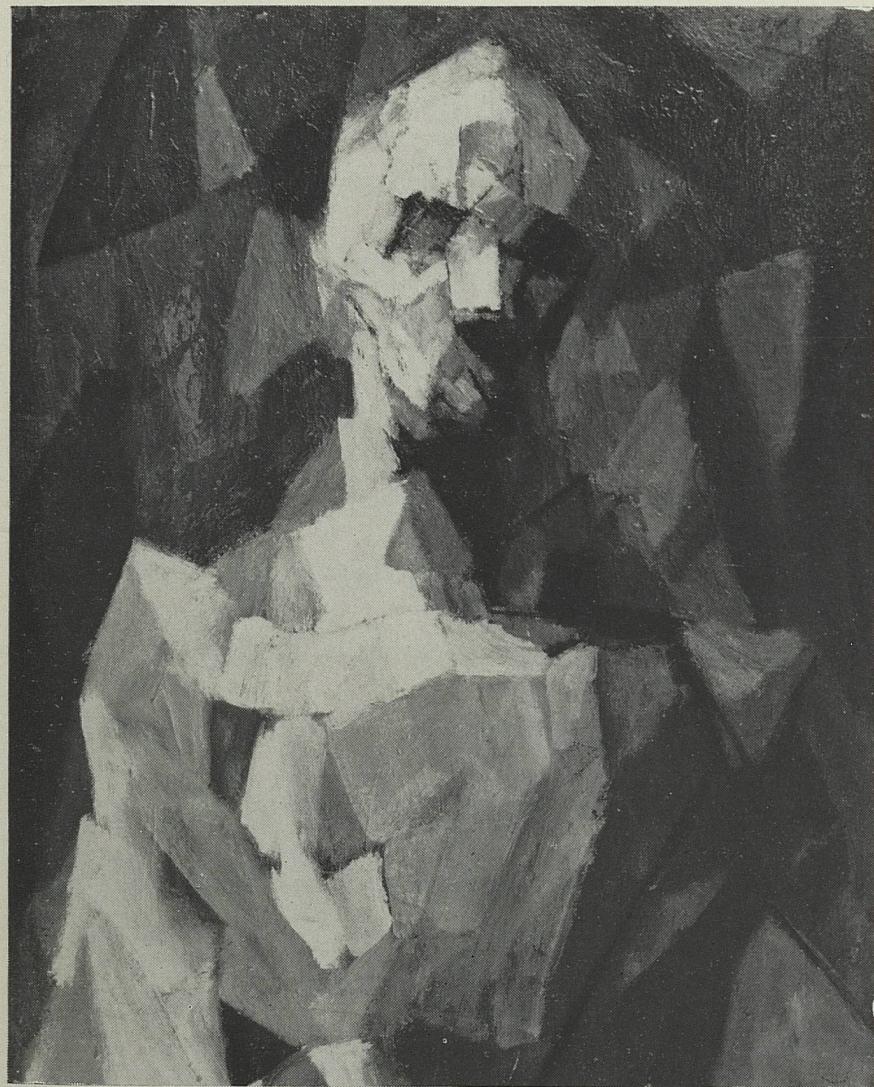


French artists of the School of Paris, except through their work.

When asked, for example if he knew Villon, with whom he is temperamentally aligned, Kerkam replies that he's not acquainted, but 'I know Villon better than the people who really know him, because I know his painting. I learned something from him, but his is a romantic cubism. My paintings don't happen to be romantic.'

"... Often a casual reference will describe Kerkam as 'the man who always paints himself' but it would be misleading to classify these paintings as portraits or self-portraits. It is true that Kerkam must work from the model and that in recent years his model has been his own reflection in the mirror, and it is also significant that the works of art which touch him most deeply are the self-portraits of Cézanne, Van Gogh and Rembrandt. However, unlike Rembrandt who made some two hundred portraits of himself and was utterly absorbed in the study of his own physiognomy and the probing of the interior being reflected therein, Kerkam in his 'self-portraits' with a characteristic self-abnegation, minimizes the resemblance to a specific person and emphasizes the depersonalized and generalized aspects of the figure. In other words, one might almost say

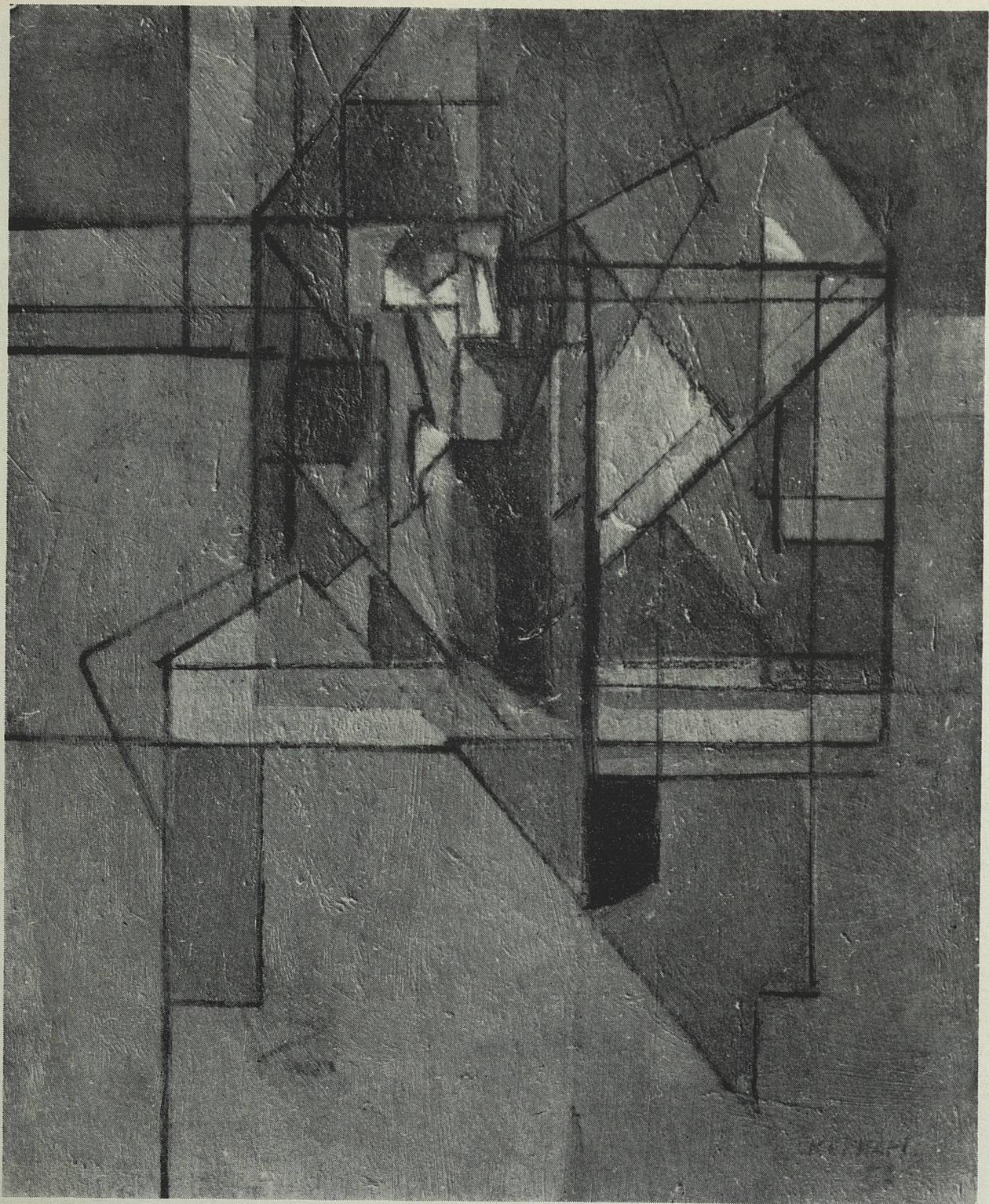
that the artist sits for himself solely in order to observe the effects of light on the head and torso of a man in a blue cloak against a yellow wall. Almost, but not quite. This is French painting as the artist most admires it—probity of form, intellectual clarity, delectable paint quality, but also psychological penetration. The artist is in close communication with his model. He paints himself because it is what he knows best, because through it he is able to communicate his most profound experience. If half the face is consumed in darkness, if face and body are painfully crossed in sharp diagonals, if the forms are so fractured that interior and exterior appear mingled, and if the figures are consistently solitary and isolated, the guiding impulse is a poetic rather than a purely formal one, and the complexity of the visual rendering is matched by the complexity of the man conveyed. Each painting is the same, yet wonderfully different; each bears long study and is subject to many interpretations, yet no single interpretation is sufficient. Their power is a growing and enduring one."



2 Head Yellow 1958

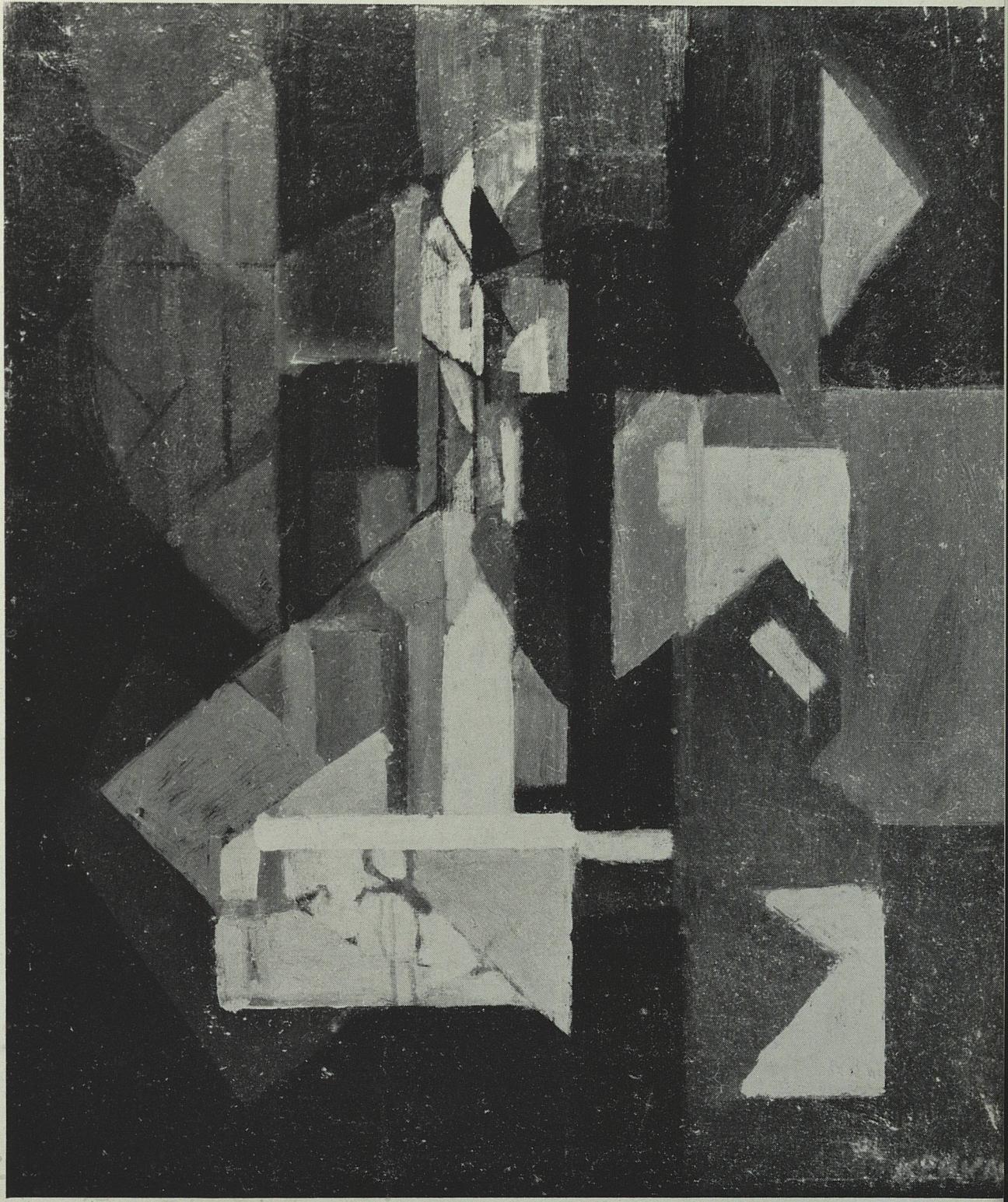
13 Head Ochre 1959





11 Head Ochre 1958

20 Head Blue 1959



RECENT PAINTINGS

1 Head Blue 1958 24 x 22 inches	13 Head Ochre 1959 30 x 25 inches
2 Head Yellow 1958 30 x 24 inches	14 Head 1959 29 x 18 inches
3 Head Blue 1958 28 x 22 inches	15 Head Blue 1959 24 x 20 inches
4 Homme au Chapeau 1958 21½ x 19 inches	16 Head Ochre 1959 24 x 20 inches
5 Head Red 1958 25¼ x 21½ inches	17 Head Blue 1959 24 x 20 inches
6 Head Green 1958 24 x 20 inches	18 Head Violet 1959 27 x 22 inches
7 Homme au Chapeau 1958 19 x 21 inches	19 Head Blue 1959 20 x 25 inches
8 Self-Portrait No. 8 1958 31 x 24 inches Collection Mrs. Henry Epstein, New York	20 Head Blue 1959 30 x 25 inches
9 Self-Portrait No. 3 1958 26 x 21½ inches Collection Mr. & Mrs. Alfred W. Kleinbaum, New York	21 Head Orange 1959 29¾ x 25 inches
10 Head Blue 1958 20 x 16¼ inches	22 Head Violet 1959 20½ x 17¾ inches
11 Head Ochre 1958 27¾ x 22¾ inches	23 Head Blue 1959 17¾ x 24¾ inches
12 Homme au Chapeau 1958 24 x 20 inches	24 Head Red 1959 14¾ x 11¾ inches

We gratefully acknowledge the generous loans made to this exhibition by Mrs. Henry Epstein, New York, and Mr. & Mrs. Alfred W. Kleinbaum, New York

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*You are cordially invited to meet
Earl Kerkam at the opening of
his exhibition on February 23rd
from 4 to 6 o'clock*

