

Narratives, captions, and images from *The Composer's Eye* exhibit
 in UB Music Library (1st floor, Baird Hall)
 Olivia Mattis: curation, research and text composition
 Steve Gerber: image capture, production, and design
 May 15-Sept. 30, 2003

The Composer's Eye

This exhibit, organized as a complement to the festival *June in Buffalo 2003: Music and Visual Image*, presents five composers with deep connections to the visual arts: Paul Hindemith, Edgard Varèse, Morton Feldman, George Gershwin and Arnold Schoenberg. Each display case contains works of art created and/or admired by the composers, as well as a musical score with an important visual element. The musical examples presented here exemplify five different kinds of links between music and the visual realm: an illustrated score (Hindemith), a graphic score (Varèse), a soundtrack to a film about an artist (Feldman), a color reference (Gershwin) and a depiction of changing colors (Schoenberg).

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was a consummate doodler, producing over 350 fanciful and witty drawings from 1921 to 1963. As a young man he was a devotee of the surrealist party game “cadavre exquis” (“exquisite corpse”), whereby one person starts a drawing, then folds it to reveal only the edge of the image, which is then passed around the room with each successive person adding to the drawing and folding it in turn. The resultant picture, when finally unfurled, inevitably resembles some strange, fantastical creature that starts off as one thing and metamorphoses into something else entirely—a style that later found expression in Hindemith’s freehand drawings.

Suggested reading:

Susanne Schaal and Angelika Storm-Rusche, eds., *Paul Hindemith: The Composer as Graphic Artist*, Zurich:Atlantis Musikbuch-Verlag, 1995.

Paul Hindemith, *Trio*, ink and colored pencils on paper, n.d. Collection Paul Hindemith Institute, Frankfurt. These wild musical instruments rival any of the fantastical contraptions conceived by cartoonist Rube Goldberg.



Photographer unknown, Paul Hindemith,
photograph, n.d. Collection Paul Hindemith
Institute, Frankfurt.



Paul Hindemith, untitled, ink and colored pencils
on paper, ca. 1945-50. Collection Paul Hindemith
Institute, Frankfurt.



Paul Hindemith, *Strauß dirigiert*, pencil on paper, ca. 1921. Collection Paul Hindemith Institute, Frankfurt. This caricature of Richard Strauss conducting is a pun on Strauss's name, which means "ostrich" in German.



Paul Hindemith, *Ludi Leonum*, 1950. Collection Paul Hindemith Institute, Frankfurt. This illustrated version of Hindemith's 1942 piano work *Ludus Tonalis* was a gift to Hindemith's wife Gertrud for her 50th birthday. As she was born under the zodiac sign of Leo, she is depicted as a lion throughout the volume. The composer, a Scorpio, depicts himself as a scorpion on the first and last pages of the piece. Notice the depictions of the lion in the "Fuga secunda in G" movement: the tempo marking "Gay" is reflected in the lion's party attire, and each successive entrance of the fugue subject is marked by a new appearance of the lion. When the fugue entrances overlap at the bottom of the page, two lions are shown joining hands.



Paul Hindemith, untitled, ink and colored pencils
on cardboard, n.d. Collection Paul Hindemith
Institute, Frankfurt.



The Composer's Eye

Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) was deeply involved in the world of visual arts from 1905 to 1965. As a student in Paris he was an assistant to, and model for, the sculptor Rodin, and he participated in the cubist journal *Les Soirées de Paris*. In Berlin he became deeply interested in Futurist painting, through his teacher and mentor Ferruccio Busoni, who bought the monumental futurist work *La città sale* (the city rises) by Boccioni now owned by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. After Varèse emigrated to New York in late 1915 he participated there in the birth of the New York Dada movement with Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Alfred Stieglitz and Walter Arensberg. Varèse's International Composers' Guild (1921-27) was financially supported by sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, founder of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and had its offices within the nascent museum's walls. After World War II Varèse served as a mentor and role model to many of the painters of the abstract expressionist movement, known as the New York School.

Suggested reading:

Olivia Mattis, "Edgard Varèse and the Visual Arts," Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1992.

_____ "The Physical and the Abstract: Varèse and the New York School," in Steven Johnson, ed., *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002, pp.57-74.

_____ "Varèse and Dada," in James Leggio, ed., *Music and Modern Art*, New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002, pp.129-61.

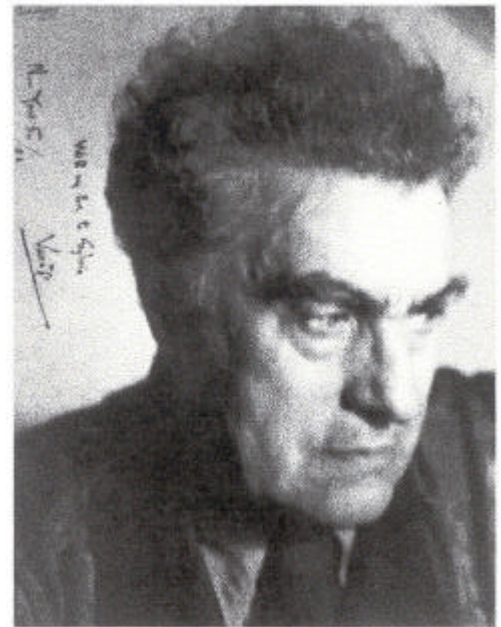
Marc Treib, *Space Calculated in Seconds: The Philips Pavilion, Le Corbusier, Edgard Varèse*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

This gouache by Fernand Léger from 1943 was in Varèse's personal art collection, given to him by the artist in 1945. Varèse and Léger had

known each other since World War I, when they served in the French army together, and Varèse later lived in Léger's art studio in Paris in 1924. This painting was Léger's way of thanking Varèse for contributing the musical soundtrack to Thomas Bouchard's documentary *Fernand Léger in America—His New Realism* (1945). This page is from the catalogue of Butterfield & Butterfield, the San Francisco auction house where Varèse's art collection was sold in March 1991 for the heirs of the composer's second wife, Louise. This painting sold for \$26,000.

[Realia—the object shown in the exhibit is a page from the auction catalog, open to the painting noted]

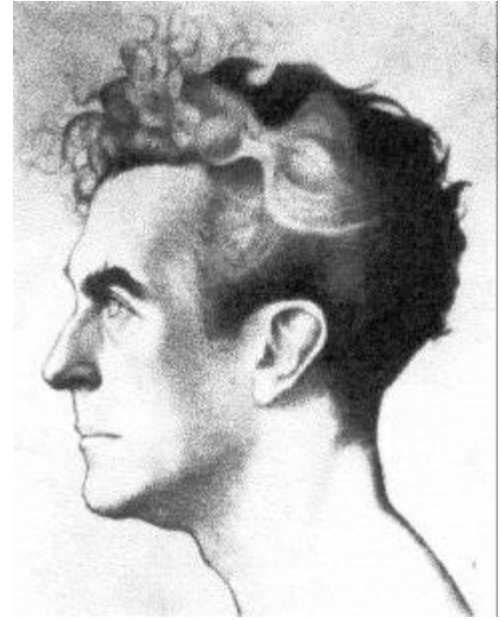
Thomas Bouchard, *Edgard Varèse*, photograph, 1953. This particular print is autographed by the composer to his wife's young granddaughter, Sylvia Norton. Bouchard and Varèse collaborated on the creation of two films on artists: *Fernand Léger in America—His New Realism* (1945) and *Around and About Joan Miró* (1955). According to Bouchard, "Varèse selected portions of his *Octandre*, *Intégrales*, *Ionisation* and *Hyperprism* for the film's score. These portions which Varèse edited with me express exactly the rugged, modern power of Léger's paintings."



Alexander Calder, *Edgard Varèse*, wire portrait bust, 1931. Collection Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Varèse met Calder in Paris around 1930 and attended demonstrations of his famous wire circus in the home of Robert and Youki Desnos. This sculpture is one of the very first wire portrait busts that Calder made.



Joseph Stella, *Edgard Varèse*, silverpoint drawing, 1921. Collection Baltimore Museum of Art. Stella, like Varèse, was a European immigrant to New York. He is most famous for his depictions of the Brooklyn Bridge in the 'teens. He and Varèse were close friends in New York and spoke Italian together.



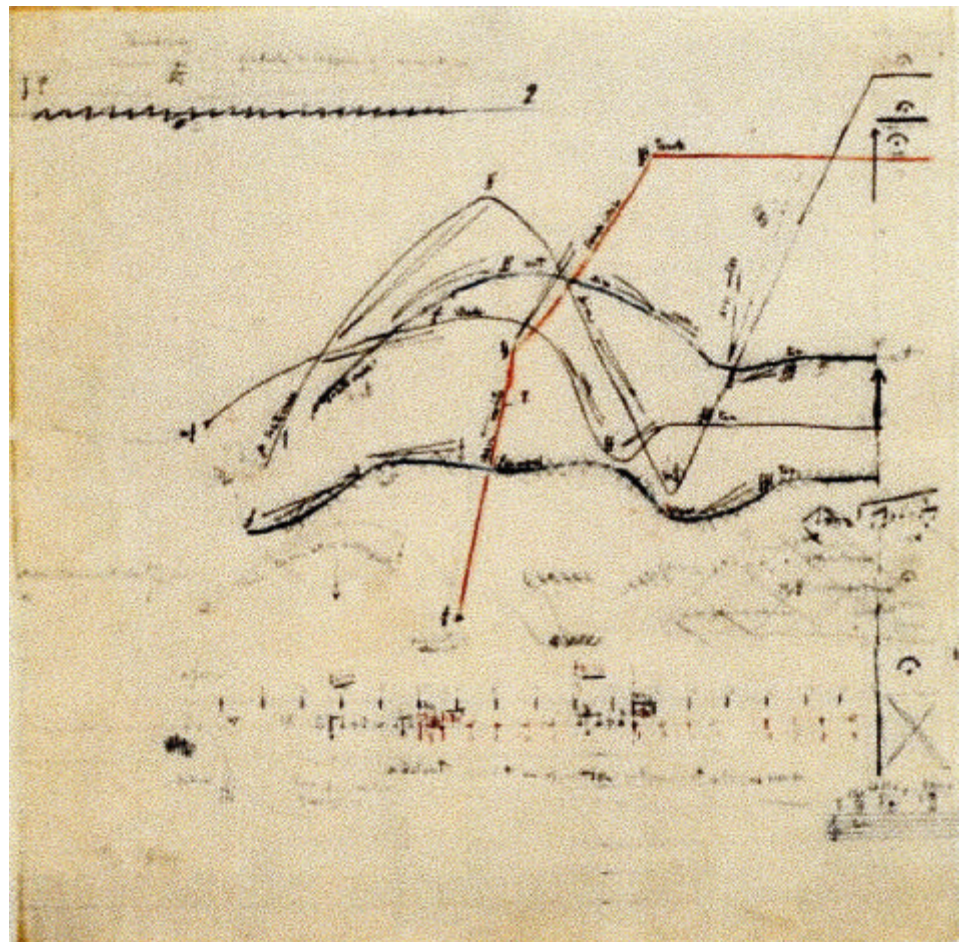
Edgard Varèse, *A Toto*, gouache and ink on paper, 1953. Private collection, Paris. This painting was made at the time that Varèse was frequenting the circle of abstract expressionist artists known as the Eighth Street Artists Club. "Toto" was one of Varèse's nicknames for his wife Louise.



Edgard Varèse, untitled, pencil and colored crayon on paper, ca. 1952. Private collection, Paris.



Edgard Varèse, *Poème électronique*, 1958. This page of score is housed in the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University.



This is an essay by Varèse published in the catalogue to Michel Cadoret's exhibition *La Passoire à Connerie*, New York, 1960. Its circular configuration is Varèse's nod to Cadoret's theories on "cyclism and circlism." The text is a version of a lecture Varèse gave at Princeton University in 1959 called "Autobiographical Remarks" and later published under the title "Rhythm, Form and Content."

[Realia—the object shown in the exhibit is an exhibit catalog opened to Varèse's handwritten essay]

The Composer's Eye

Morton Feldman (1926-87), while not a painter himself, was a close friend and ally of the painters comprising the New York School. He was part of a small nucleus of composers—John Cage, Edgard Varèse and Stefan Wolpe being the others—who attended abstract expressionist gatherings on a regular basis. Feldman composed numerous works in homage to his painter friends, including *For Franz Kline* (1962), *Piano Piece (to Philip Guston)* (1963) and *Rothko Chapel* (1972) as well as soundtracks to the documentary films *Jackson Pollock* (1951) and *De Kooning* (1963) and many essays on the subject. He was also fascinated with patterns on Persian carpets and other textiles, which served as his point of departure for such works as *Why Patterns?* (1978), *Crippled Symmetry* (1983) and *Coptic Light* (1985). He served on the faculty of the UB music department from 1973 until his death, holding the title of Edgard Varèse Professor of Music. He founded the *June in Buffalo* festival in 1975.

Suggested reading:

Amy C. Beal, “Time Canvasses’: Morton Feldman and the Painters of the New York School,” in James Leggio, *Music and Modern Art*, New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002, pp.227-45.

Jonathan Bernard, “Feldman’s Painters” and Steven Johnson, “Jasper Johns and Morton Feldman: What Patterns?” in Steven Johnson, ed., *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002, pp.173-215; 217-47.

Steven Johnson and Olivia Mattis, “New York School,” in Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., v.17, London: Macmillan Publishers, 2001.

Olivia Mattis, “Music for the Film *Jackson Pollock* (1951)” in Felix Meyer, ed., *Settling New Scores. Music Manuscripts from the Paul Sacher Foundation*, Mainz: Schott Verlag, 1998.

Photographer unknown, *Feldman with cigarette*, photograph, n.d. Collection Morton Feldman Papers, Music Library, University at Buffalo.



Philip Guston, *Friend—to M.F.*, oil on canvas, 1978.
Collection Des Moines Art Center, Iowa.



Rolf Hanns, *Morton Feldman*, photograph, July
1984. Collection Morton Feldman Papers, Music
Library, University at Buffalo.



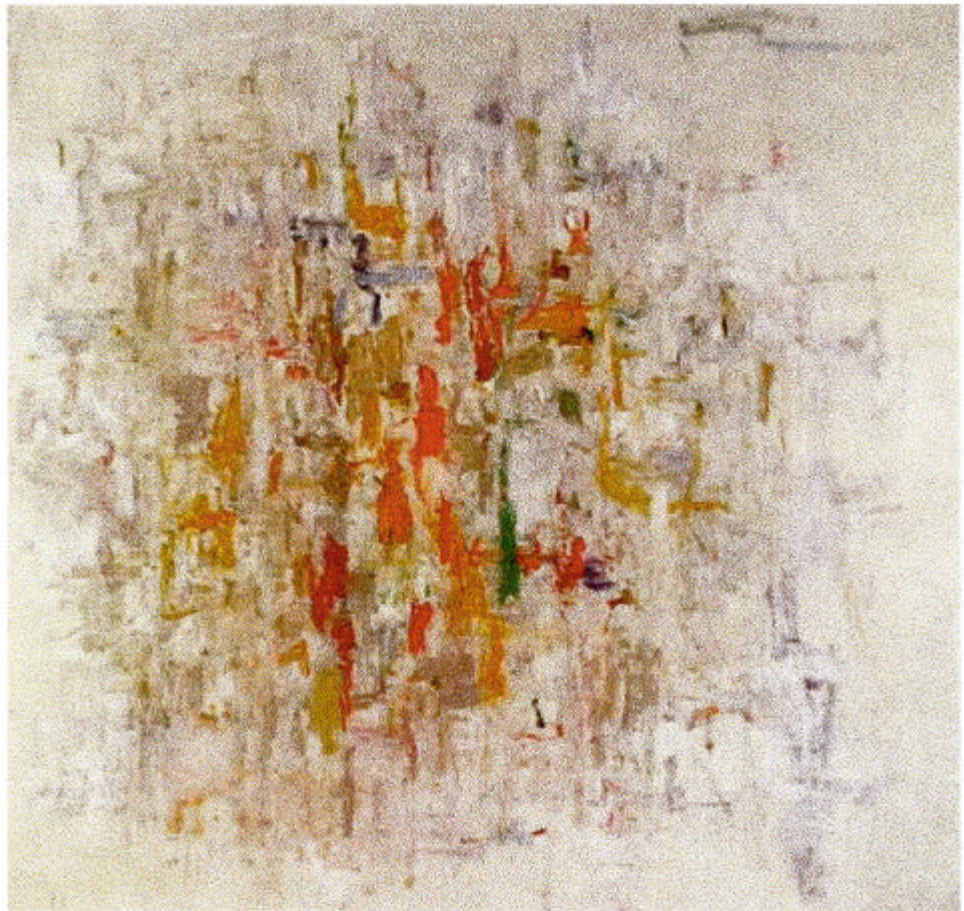
Francesco Clemente, *Morton Feldman*, watercolor
on paper, ca. 1985. Collection of Francesco and
Alba Clemente, New York.



Exhibition catalogue, *Six Painters: Mondrian, de Kooning, Guston, Kline, Pollock, Rothko*, curated by Morton Feldman, University of St. Thomas Art Department, Houston, Texas, February to April 1967. Collection Morton Feldman Papers, Music Library, University at Buffalo. In addition to selecting the works to be displayed in this exhibition, including some from his own private collection, Feldman contributed the essay “After Modernism” to the catalogue. He worked on this project with Dominique de M  nil, who was at that time the Chairman of the Art Department at the University of St. Thomas.

[Realia—the object shown in the exhibit is an exhibit catalog]

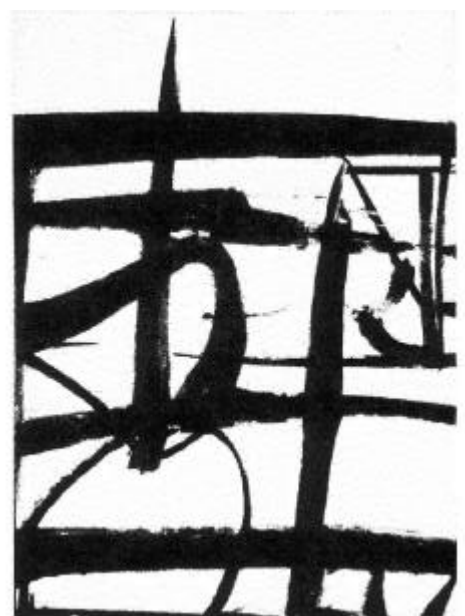
Philip Guston, *Painting*, oil on canvas, 1952. Collection Mrs. Albert Newman, Chicago. Exhibited in *Six Painters: Mondrian, de Kooning, Guston, Kline, Pollock, Rothko*, curated by Morton Feldman.



Willem de Kooning, *Immediate Offerings*, oil on newspaper, 1964. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Harold Diamond, New York. Exhibited in *Six Painters: Mondrian, de Kooning, Guston, Kline, Pollock, Rothko*, curated by Morton Feldman.



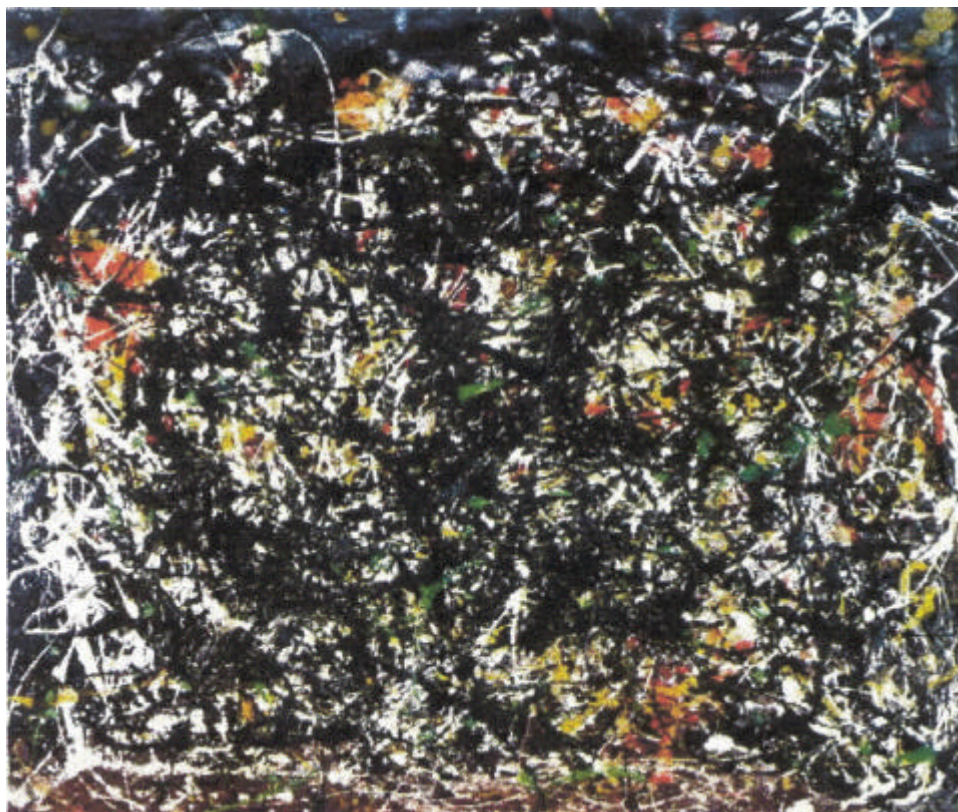
Franz Kline, *The Cardinal*, oil on canvas, 1950. Exhibited in *Six Painters: Mondrian, de Kooning, Guston, Kline, Pollock, Rothko*, curated by Morton Feldman.



Morton Feldman, *Jackson Pollock*, typescript, two leaves, n.d. Collection Morton Feldman Papers, Music Library, University at Buffalo.

[Realia—the object shown in the exhibit is a typed draft of a eulogy for Pollock]

Jackson Pollock, *No.6*, duco and aluminum paint on canvas, 1949. Collection Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Exhibited in *Six Painters: Mondrian, de Kooning, Guston, Kline, Pollock, Rothko*, curated by Morton Feldman.



Morton Feldman, soundtrack to Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg's 10-minute documentary film *Jackson Pollock*, manuscript score, 1951. Collection Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel, Switzerland. The visual image in *Jackson Pollock* begins before the soundtrack does. The viewer sees a hand signing "Jackson Pollock, 51." As the signature reaches "Pollock," the music begins; this direction is precisely indicated in the score. Feldman recalled his working method for this project: "I watched the film, got the exact span of time for each of the sequences—the shots of the studio and the Springs property, the painting on canvas, the two on glass—and then wrote the score as if I were writing music for choreography." The music is scored for two cellos; it was written for cellist Daniel Stem, who played both parts.



Irene Haupt, *Feldman examining Persian carpet*, photograph, n.d. Collection Morton Feldman Papers, Music Library, University at Buffalo.



The Composer's Eye

George Gershwin (1898-1937) and Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) are paired in this double case because they were daily tennis partners in Hollywood in the mid-1930's as well as great admirers of one another. Both composers were avid painters, and Gershwin was one of the most prominent collectors of modern art in his day. Gershwin once said that if his parents had given him a paintbrush and easel as a child instead of a piano that he would have become a professional painter instead of a composer. Schoenberg, in his youth, was a member of the circle of artists known as the "Blaue Reiter" group that included Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc and others; he participated as a painter in their exhibitions and wrote an essay for their *Almanac*. For both of these composers, their most famous compositions shown here, are musical representations of color: Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) and Schoenberg's "Farben" ("Colors") movement from his *Five Orchestral Pieces* (1909).

Suggested reading:

On Gershwin:
"A Composer's Pictures," *Arts & Decoration* (January 1934).

Florence Stevenson De Santis, *Portraits of Greatness: Gershwin*, New York: Treves Publishing Company, 1987.

Arnold Schoenberg, "George Gershwin", Louis Danz, "Gershwin and Schoenberg", Henry A Botkin, "Painter and Collector" and Isamu Noguchi, "Portrait" in Merle Armitage, ed., *George Gershwin*, New York, 1938, pp 97-98, 99-101, 137-60 and 209-10.

On Schoenberg:
Jelena Hahl-Koch, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, tr., John C. Crawford, London: Faber and Faber, 1984

Jane Kallir, *Arnold Schoenberg's Vienna*, New York Rizzoli, 1984

George Gershwin posing with his just-finished portrait of Arnold Schoenberg, January 1937.



George Gershwin, *Arnold Schoenberg*, oil on canvas, 1937. Collection Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The halo perhaps indicates the high regard in which the painter held his subject.



Photograph of Gershwin's penthouse apartment on Riverside Drive, New York, pre-1933. Notice the art deco furniture as well as the art collection of paintings and sculptures including *The Absinthe Drinker* by Pablo Picasso, a portrait sculpture of Gershwin by Isamu Noguchi and works by Maurice Utrillo, Jules Pascin and others.



George Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue*, 1924. The title of this piece, mixing a musical genre with a color name, is an homage to the art of James MacNeil Whistler, who gave his paintings such titles as *Symphony in White* and *Nocturne in Grey*. Gershwin originally wrote the piece in a two-piano version before it was orchestrated for jazz band and piano by Ferde Grofé. Shown here is a solo piano version.

Rhapsody In Blue

GEORGE GERSHWIN

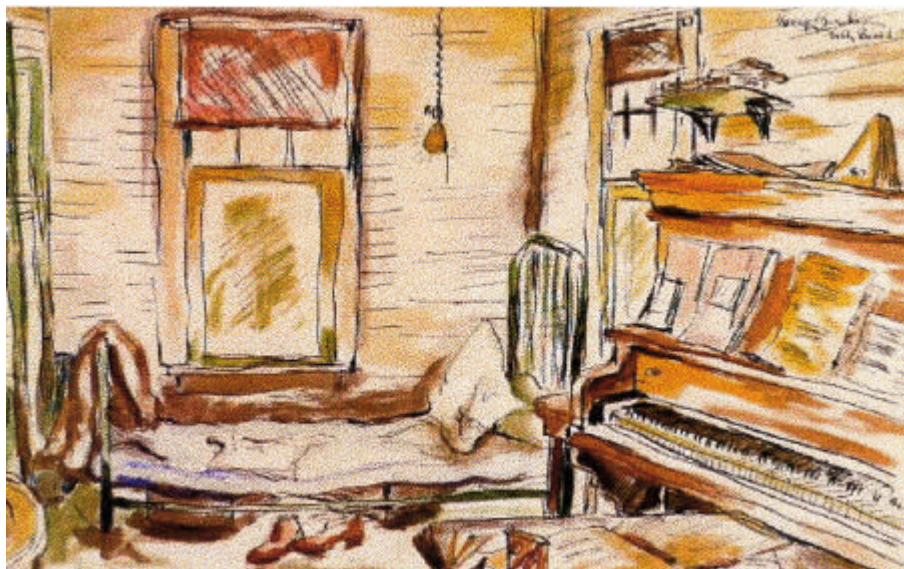
Molto moderato (♩ = 60)

PIANO SOLO

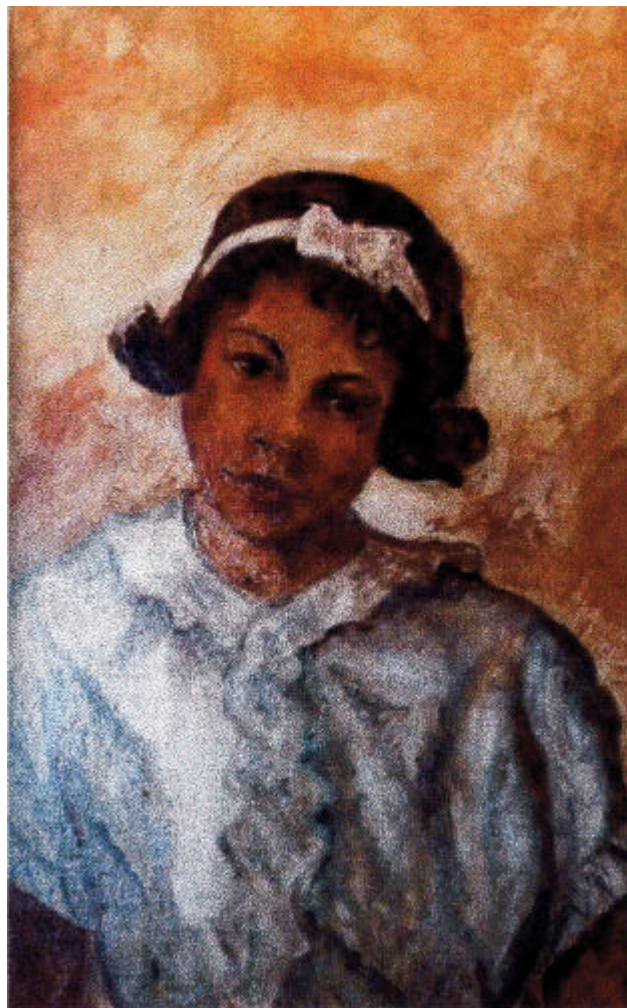
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George Gershwin, watercolor sketch of his decidedly non-ritzy living quarters in Folly Beach, South Carolina, where he composed *Porgy and Bess* using the southern Black dialect he encountered there, 1934.



George Gershwin, portrait of the young daughter of Paul, his valet, 1933. Collection Mrs. Arthur Gershwin, New York.



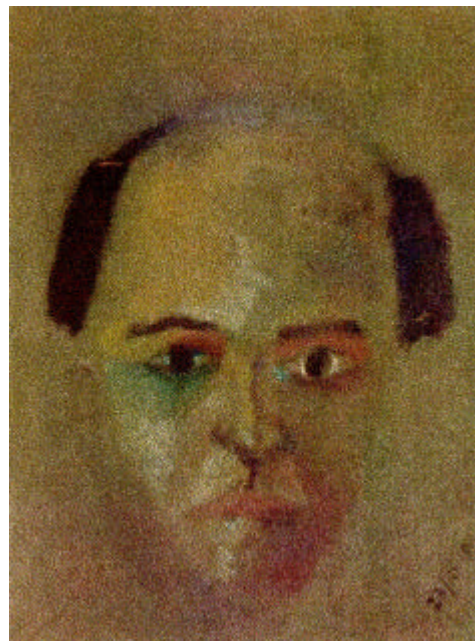
Gershwin sitting at the piano of his apartment on 72nd Street, New York, under his painting of Paul's daughter, ca. 1933. Notice the two Steinway pianos side by side.



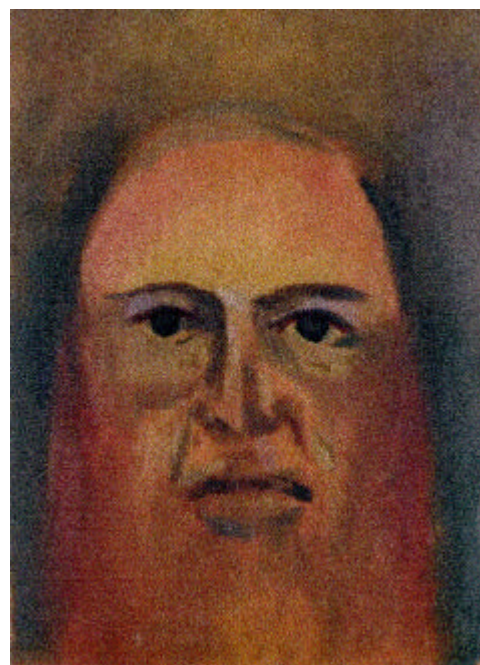
George Gershwin, *Self-Portrait in Evening Clothes*, oil on canvas, 1932.



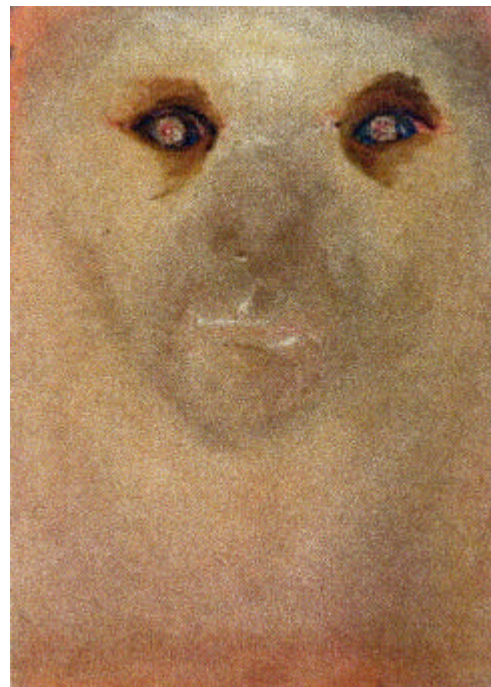
Arnold Schoenberg, *Green Self-Portrait*, oil on wood, October 23, 1910. Collection Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Los Angeles.



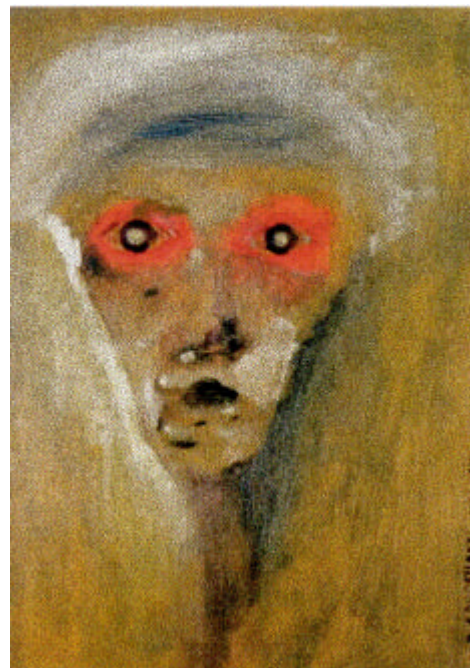
Arnold Schoenberg, *Self-Portrait*, oil on wood, 1910. Collection Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Los Angeles.



Arnold Schoenberg, *Gaze*, oil on canvas, 1910.
Collection Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Los Angeles.



Arnold Schoenberg, *Red Gaze*, oil on pasteboard, May 1910. Collection Municipal Gallery in the Lenbachhaus, Munich.



Arnold Schoenberg, “Farben” (“colors”) movement from *Five Orchestral Pieces*, op.16 (1909). Schoenberg’s performance instructions in the score begin as follows: “The change of chords in this piece has to be executed with the greatest subtlety, avoiding accentuation of entering instruments, so that only the difference in color becomes noticeable.”

[Realia—object shown in exhibit is an open music score]

Arnold Schoenberg, *Self-Portrait*, oil on pasteboard, 1911. Collection Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Los Angeles.



Gabriele Münter, a room of the first “Der Blaue Reiter” exhibition, Berlin, photograph, December 1911. Schoenberg exhibited four paintings in this show; his *Self-Portrait* is visible to the left of the doorway.



Arnold Schoenberg, *Alban Berg*, oil on canvas, ca. 1910. Collection Historical Museum of the City of Vienna.



Arnold Schoenberg, set design for *Die Glückliche Hand*, op. 18, scene 2, oil on cardboard, ca. 1913. Collection Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Los Angeles. Schoenberg designed both the sets and the costumes for this music drama, which was his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or “total work of art” in the Wagnerian sense.

