

Heat of Man Project Paul Klee

Volunteer:

Date:

Grade Level:

Artist: Paul Klee

Print/Sculpture: Head of Man

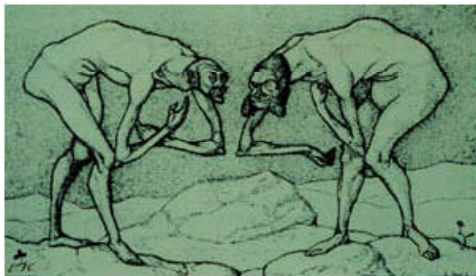
Art Vocabulary: Modern Art, Abstract Art



Paul Klee

I The Artist

Paul Klee was born in Switzerland outside of the city of Berne over 100 years ago in December of 1879. He was born into a family of accomplished musicians and soon became a fine musician himself, playing the violin nearly every day for his entire life. His father was a music teacher and his mother was a singer. He had one older sister who became a teacher.



Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other to Be a Higher Rank", 1903

But at age 19 Klee choose another course other than music for his life and moved to Munich to attend the Art Academy. In 1901, at age 22, he traveled to Italy and was attracted to and subsequently influenced by the works of several famous Italian artists, one being Michelangelo. Being a nature lover, he was fascinated by the marine animals at the Aquarium in Naples. After his extended visit to Italy, he return to Berne the next year and began to produce pictures with very angular strokes then later pictures with very dark backgrounds, depicting a baroque influence. (See "Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other to Be a Higher Rank" at left.)

(See, "The Artist's Sister, 1903").



The Artist's Sister

In 1906 he held his first exhibition of his work and also got married to Lily. They settled in Germany. In 1907 Lily gave birth to their only child, a son named Felix.

Over the next several years, Klee slowly developed his style, associating himself with other forward-looking artists of the time who had new ideas regarding art.

(See, "Girl with Jugs", 1910, "Garden in St. Germain", 1915,

#6: "Two Ladies", 1911,

#7: "Quarry at Ostermundigen", 1915).

World War I disrupted Klee's progression as a artist, but in 1921, after the war had ended, Klee began his teaching career at the Bauhaus in Wainar, where he then settled with his family. It was during



Girl With Jugs, 1910



Garden at St. Germain, 1915



Cat and Bird, 1928

this time that he painted "Head of Man" which is the picture we will be looking at today.

Klee's work was increasingly being exhibited throughout Germany and in 1924 his work was first exhibited in the United States at a gallery in New York City.

Klee traveled frequently and his work was greatly influenced by one such trip to Egypt in 1928.

(See, "Cat and Bird", 1928 and
#9: "Necropolis", 1930)

His art was continually undergoing changes and although he had not completely abandoned his compositions from the early 1920's, now he preferred paintings with geometric shapes, multiple use of color, and no reference to reality.

(Show #10: "Fire in Evening", 1929).

In the early 1930's, he would paint using the pointilliste technique of small dots.

(Show #11: "The Light and Much Else", 1931).

In the early 1930's Klee decided to leave the Bauhaus because of the unstable politics at the time in Germany. He went to teach at the Art Academy at Dusseldorf where

he stayed for a number of years until his move back to Switzerland.

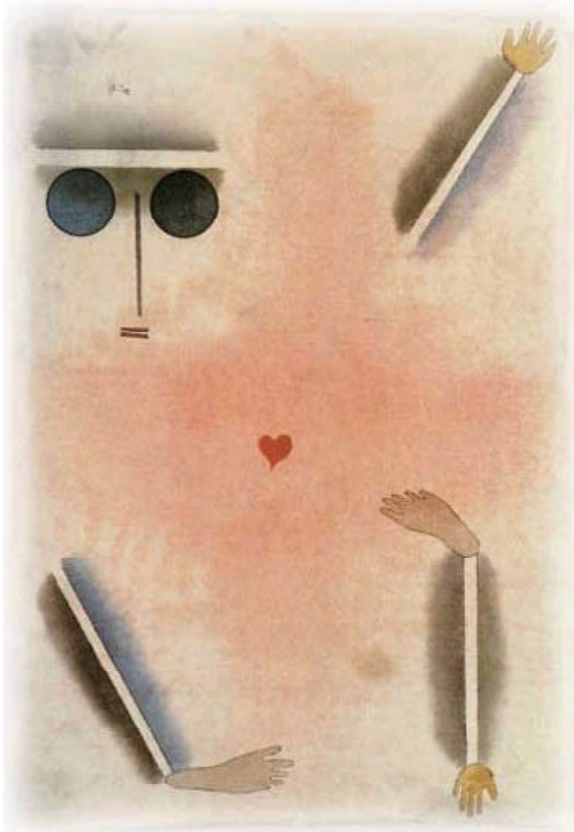
Although Klee became ill in 1935, he continued to paint, although he did so sitting down instead of standing up. In 1937 he completed 264 pieces of artwork. (See, "Super Chess", 1937).

His works were now widely shown throughout the world.

The paintings from his final period, beginning in 1936, differed largely from his earlier works. Many of his final pictures reflected his unease not only because of his illness but because of the political unrest



Death and Fire, 1940



One eye sees, the other feels

in Germany. (Show #13: "Death and Fire", 1940).

Many were not completed because of his eventual death in 1940.

II The Painting: Head of Man (1922)

Paul Klee (write name on board, explain pronunciation) was born in 1879 in Switzerland (briefly discuss location, someone from Switzerland is called Swiss).

As a young adult, he couldn't decide whether he wanted to become a poet, a musician, a teacher, or an artist, so he became all four. Today, we mostly remember him because of his artwork.

His father was a music teacher and his mother was a violinist, so he heard fine music every day, which is common in Europe. His mother taught him to play violin at the age of 7, and he received his first set of colored chalks when he was 4, so Klee got an early start at what he loved most his whole life.

When he was a boy, he spent time in his uncle's restaurant. The tabletops were made out of a stone called marble that has lots of lines in it. Klee loved to

look at these lines to see if he could find any pictures in them. He also tried to copy the shapes that he saw in the marble onto paper -- these were some of his first drawings. He was interested in lines is whole life, as we'll see.

He started with realistic drawings and paintings with subdued color. As he got older, his pictures became abstract, which means that he no longer expected objects or people to look realistic. It also means you usually need to know the name of an artwork before you can understand it.

As Klee's paintings became more abstract, they also got brighter and more colorful. At the end of his life, he was sick and rather sad because World War II was coming, so his artwork got rather dark again. He died in 1940.



Super Chess, 1937

He wanted his art to be childlike – like you kids – you just draw or paint whatever you want to, without worrying about whether someone else will like it or think it's good. You also don't spend a lot of time thinking about what to do – an idea usually just pops into your head, so you draw or paint it. Adults tend to think a lot more maybe too much – before they create something.

Show several drawings. Klee described his technique here as "taking a line for a walk." (Compare this to taking a dog for a walk-you don't know exactly where you'll end up.) Klee also said, "A line is a dot going for a walk." These drawings show motion, don't they?

Show print: "One eye sees, the other feels." - Paul Klee



Klee wrote those words to describe how he created art, but it seems like they apply to this painting, doesn't it? (Which eye sees, which one feels??)

How can you tell right away that it is a piece of modern art?

The artist used geometrical shapes and unusual colors to paint a head. Indeed, the painting does not look much like a head. Contrast it with a figurative work of art, such as one of

Raphael's Madonna heads.

The Madonnas are examples of traditional, figurative art. They, look like the heads of real ladies, like photographs, except perhaps that the faces are more beautiful and pure than the faces of any living women.

After the invention of photography in 1826, art changed drastically. Painters realized that they could not compete with the camera. It was no longer necessary for them to imitate nature, to reproduce things exactly as they look. The camera could do it better. Instead, they tried to express new things on their canvases, such as the vision of the world they had inside their minds. Paul Klee painted the Head of a Man in the early 1900s. It is a MODERN painting.

What do you call modern art which does not represent things as they look?

ABSTRACT art. There are different degrees of abstraction. Some abstract paintings are made up of bright colors and shapes which do not relate to any particular object. Klee's painting is not totally abstract. You can tell it is meant to represent a head.

Which features of a head do you notice here?

The general round shape of a head; the outline of a nose; a little square for the mouth; spaces for the forehead, cheeks, and chin; no ears (Something strange as Mr. Klee was an accomplished violinist; he played his violin almost every day. Music was a great source of joy to him. He went to every important and not so important concert and musical event in his hometown.

You could have expected him to stress the importance of the sense of hearing. But for some reason, here as in many other heads he painted, he chose to ignore hearing); the eyes and eyebrows. The eyes are prominent features; they are the one thing you notice right away and which makes you says: Here is a face.

Why do you think eyes are important to Klee?

Klee is a painter. You have to see things in order to paint them, and you have to see in order to appreciate a painting.

Moreover, eyes are the pathway into the mind. By looking at a person's eyes you can know that person best. You can tell if he is scared, happy, or sleepy. You can tell if he is intelligent, alert, curious.



Fire in Evening, 1929

Notice that the left eye of Klee's head has two little lines across, like the shutter of a camera. It looks as if the head were taking a picture and putting it inside.

The head is made up of a variety of GEOMETRICAL SHAPES.

Which geometrical shapes do you recognize?

Circles, ovals, rectangles, squares? Some of these shapes are precisely drawn; others are not clearly defined. There is a contrast between the clear forms and the unclear (fuzzy, nebulous, blurred) forms of the portrait.

At the time Klee was painting, there was a famous group of French painters (including Pablo Picasso) who used ONLY geometrical shapes, sharply defined shapes, in their pictures. They were called the CUBISTS. Their art was called CUBISM.

Do you know what symmetry is?

Demonstrate symmetry by folding a piece of paper in half and cutting strange shapes around the fold. Open up the papers. The shapes on either side of the fold are identical but turned around like a mirror image; they are symmetrical.

Are the shapes in the painting symmetrical?

No.

Is YOUR face perfectly symmetrical?

No.

In Klee's painting, one eyebrow is triangular; it is raised like a question mark, and suggests curiosity, open-mindedness. The other eyebrow is a soft oval, like the ones in the faces of Raphael's Madonnas. It suggests a turning inward. Look at the eyes closely, the right eye looks outward, into the world, far ahead; the left eye is turned slightly inward; it is more withdrawn.

Notice also that in spite of the lack of symmetry in the face, there is no sense of conflict or tension there.

What feelings does the painting arouse in you?

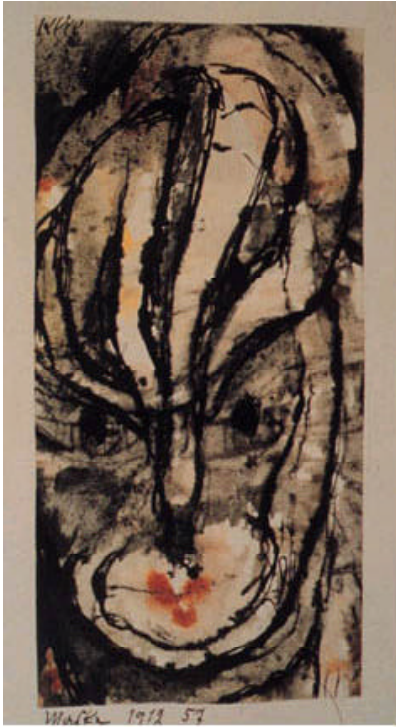
Peacefulness, calm. (Many children said "sleepiness.")

The soft colors help create an impression of calm. Here are none of the bright primary colors (red, yellow, blue), none of the bright secondary colors either (orange, green, purple). Only soft, pastel colors. Klee was an excellent colorist. Show photographs (see for ex. Will Grahmann's Paul Klee, pp. 125, 195, 255, 263, 323, 329, 345, and 350).

Mr. Klee has given us his own idea of man: a being who looks curiously at the world, observes what is all around him, and then turns that perception of the world into knowledge he can use for his personal growth. We look out, then we look in. We take things in, and then we transform them into something else. The painting is more than a head, it is an image of the learning process through which we perceive things, take them in, feed them to our minds, and change them into something new that is truly our own.

Kr. Klee's paintings often look very simple, even childish.

Don't you feel that you could paint something like that easily? (The children's response was a resounding "NO.")



Mask, 1912

In fact, Paul Klee worked very hard to give an appearance of simplicity to his work. He envied the drawing abilities of children and in particular of his own little boy, Felix. He tried hard to imitate the simplicity and spontaneity of children's works.

He used a beautiful image to describe the act of artistic creation. **Do you know what is creation?** The making of something new and original. Mr. Klee compared creation to a tree.

A tree has roots, which suck up water and minerals from the soil.

Our roots are the world around us and the people around us. They feed us, they give us all the materials we need to grow and mature.

Above the roots is the tree trunk. The artist is like a tree trunk. He has received all the nutrients, the sap from his roots, and he transforms then into something new, original...a creation. His creation or work of art is the foliage of the tree. The branches and foliage of a tree go in all kinds of directions, like the roots, and they occupy about the same space in the air as the roots occupy in the ground, but they do not look like the roots. Like the foliage of a tree which is a transformation of the roots, the work of art is a transformation of the world we perceive, and the artist is the trunk

through which this transformation takes place.

III Composition of Artwork

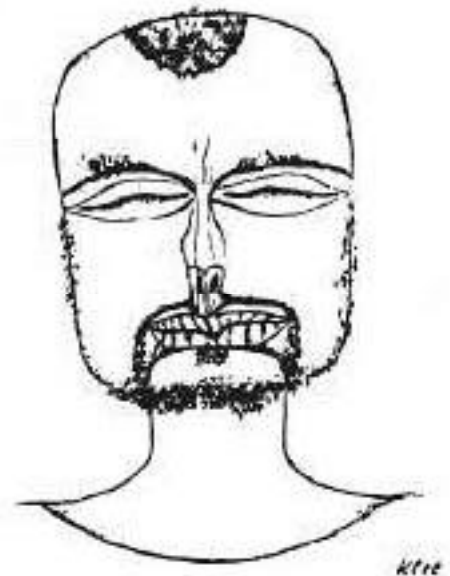
IV Artist's Materials or Techniques

V Students' Self-Expression: Guided Activity

The purpose of the activity is to reproduce Mr. Klee's method of creation. Ask the children to draw a head. But tell them not to decide in advance what kind of head it will be. It could become the head of a person, that of an animal, or a monster, or a bug from out of space, any kind of head. Tell the children to let the lines and shapes their hand draws decide what that head is going to be. Draw a series of shapes they might want to use:

- ◆ Big broad lines and little squiggles;
- ◆ Geometrical shapes;
- ◆ Dots: Little dots, big dots, clusters of dots, dots inside dots
- ◆ Cross-hatchings
- ◆ Letters or numbers, upside up or upside down, or sideways.

Think of the shapes, the forms first, and let the face emerge. Ask the children to use colors. Klee said that "A painting is finished when it looks at you." After the children have completed their paintings, let them decide on a title. Klee often gave titles to his works long after they were finished.



Lost in Thought, 1937

Use a display board to give examples of shapes and show how they express different emotions. The following heads by Klee can be displayed on the board:

- ◆ **Heads (1913)** which shows anger on faces involved in heated argumentation. Note the sharp lines and angles, the little beady eyes.
- ◆ **Mask [of Fear]** shows a face with a pinched nose, small eyes, a thin mouth. All suggesting the constricted sensations fear gives.
- ◆ **Lost in Thought** is a self-portrait which depicts concentration. Note the lines which run horizontally and vertically, the tight lips and eyes.
- ◆ **A Tear** shows a sad face drawn with a tangle of lines. That face looks confused, twisted up, as the lines which make it up are.
- ◆ **Persevere!** shows determination and a sense of purpose stressed by the lines at right angles. Note that this is the only head in the collection which is drawn with an ear, a large one.

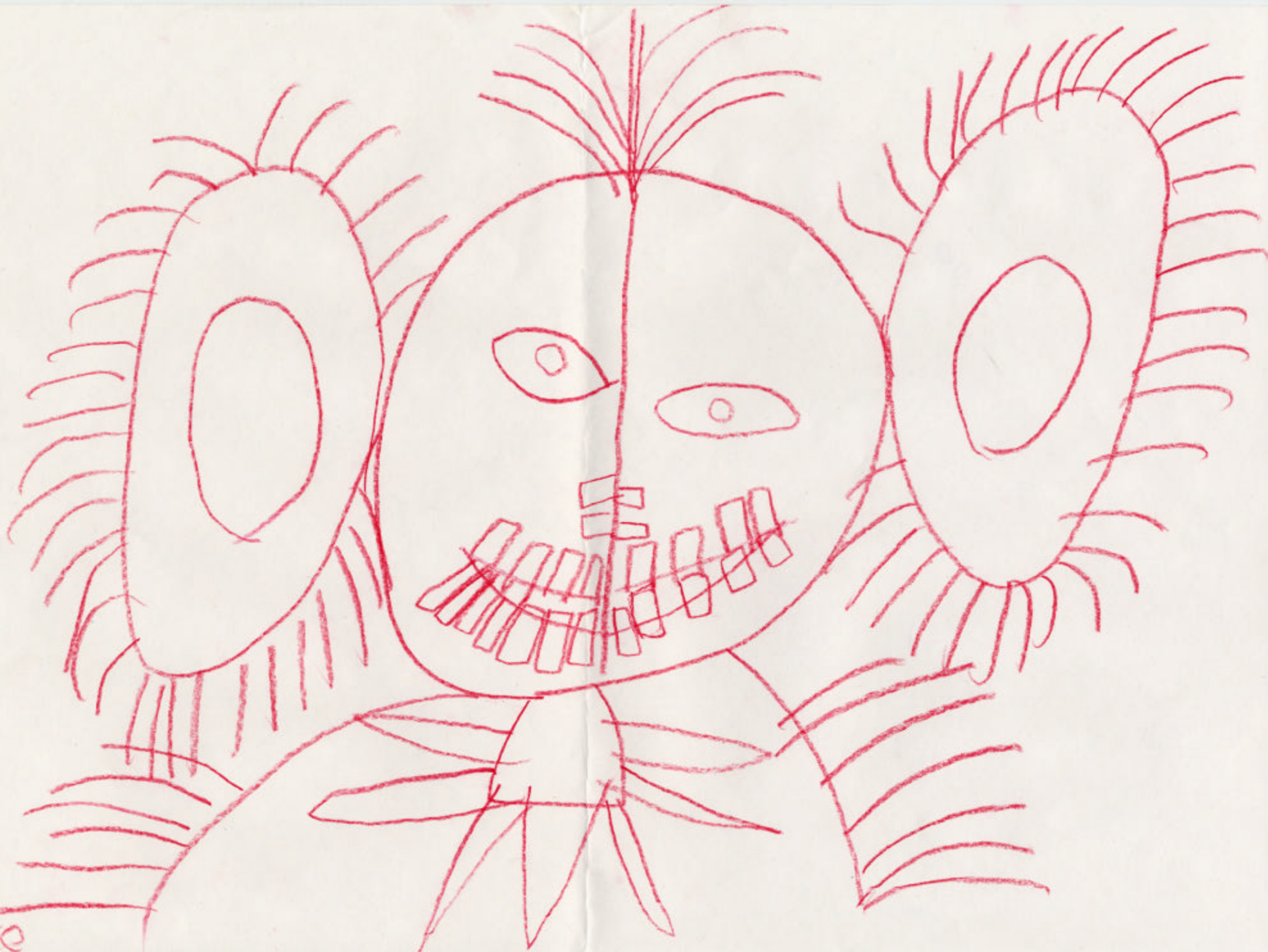
Mask of Fear (1932)

from: Abstract Painting by Thomas E. Hess (Riverside Library 759•06 HES), pp. 81-82

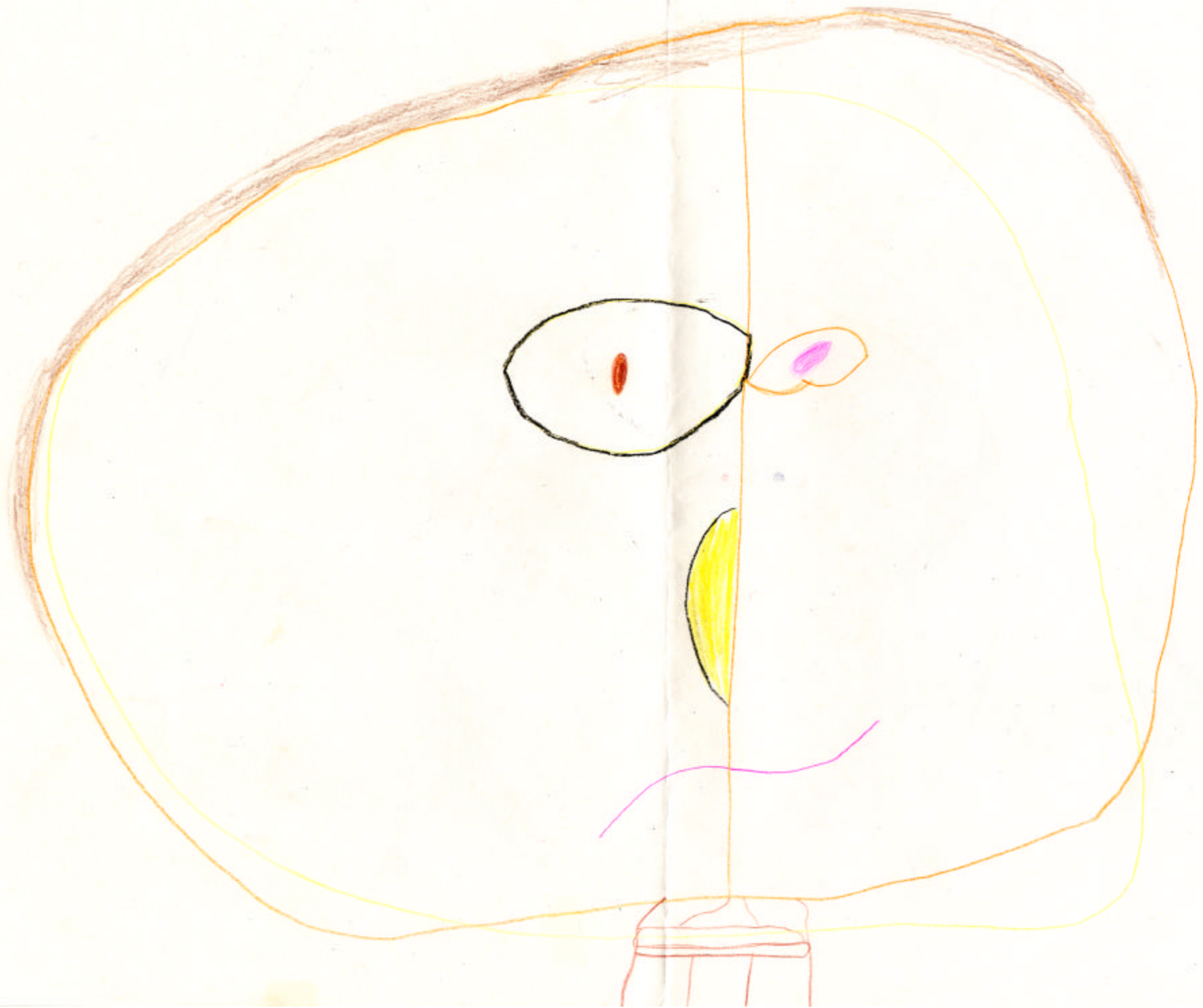
Colors, shapes, their arrangements, the rough surfaces and arbitrary hues of Mask of Fear could all be termed abstract, except, perhaps, for the four neat little black shoes. Yet they are fastened together into a ponderous totem with prophetic TV antenna and a dark, protruding arrow... The arrow suggests wounds or aggression, but it also keeps the whole composition from sagging badly at the top. The components of Klee's picture are conceived as abstractions in order to sustain an exploring fancy and humor. This involves dealing with the fantastic with laboratory methods: finding which line will suggest most succinctly an apprehensive stare, which colors help fish to fly, or a cat change into a flower. Like Matisse and Miro, Klee is not afraid of the urgency and directness of infantile expression, but he refined its forms and gestures even further than they, insisting on the "art" of each detail and its subordination to the planned drama of the picture.

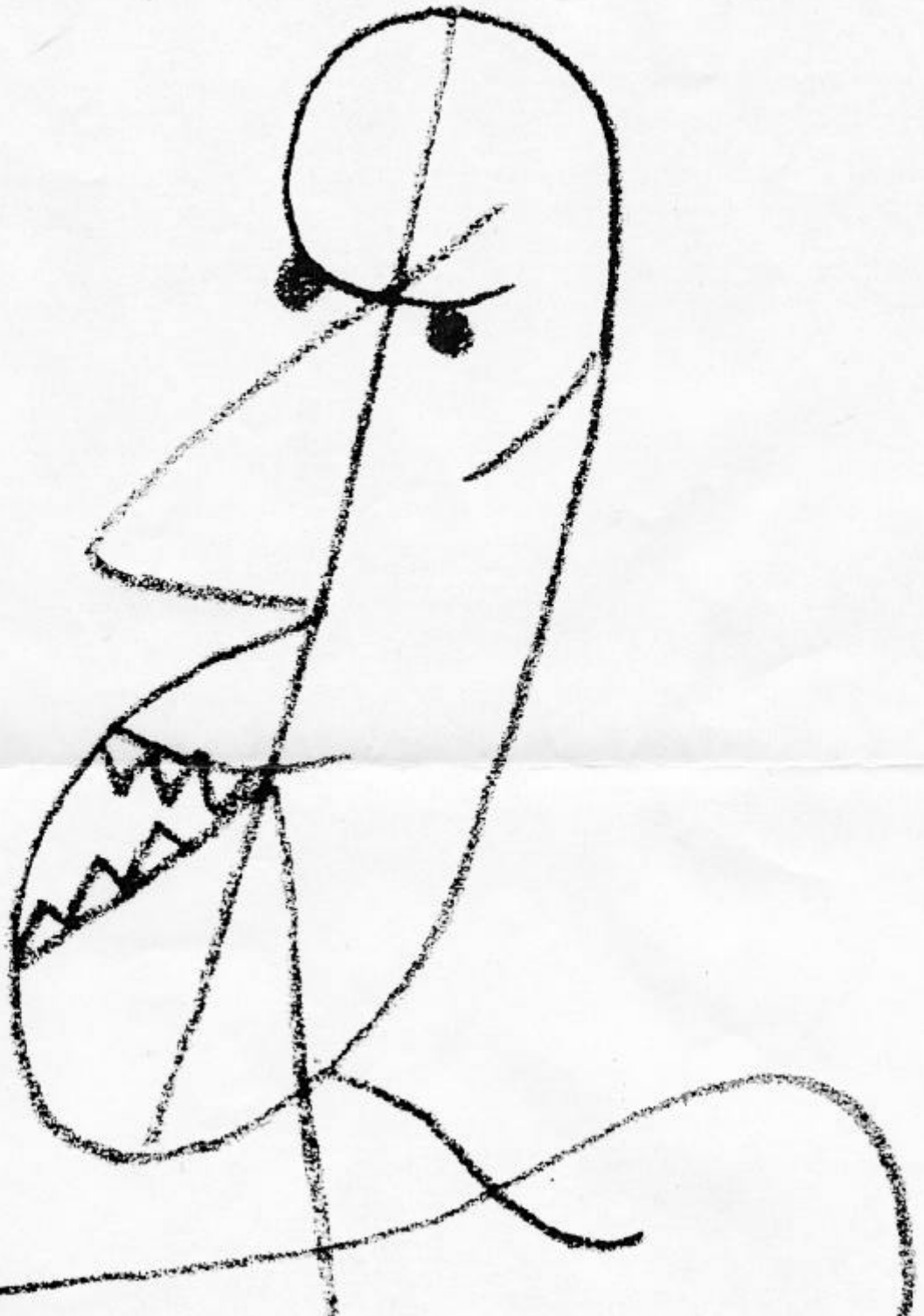
Project:

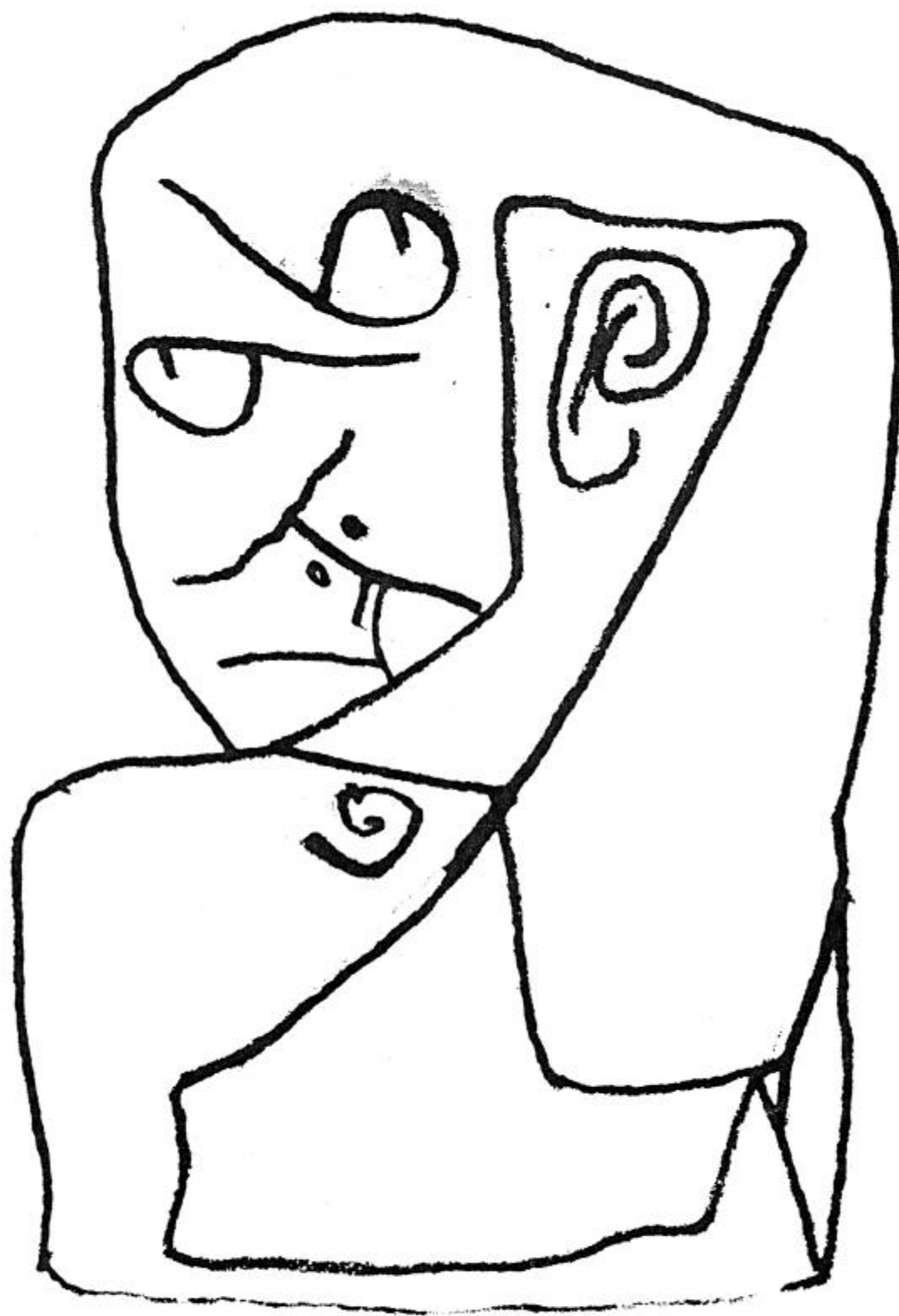
The art project was a black frame with was paper in it. We cut out squares of tissue paper and they made "stained glass." I said they could arrange the shapes any way they wanted and use whatever color they wanted. Some did patterns, some left blank spots and because this was abstract, anything was correct. They loved the project and it looked beautiful in the windows.



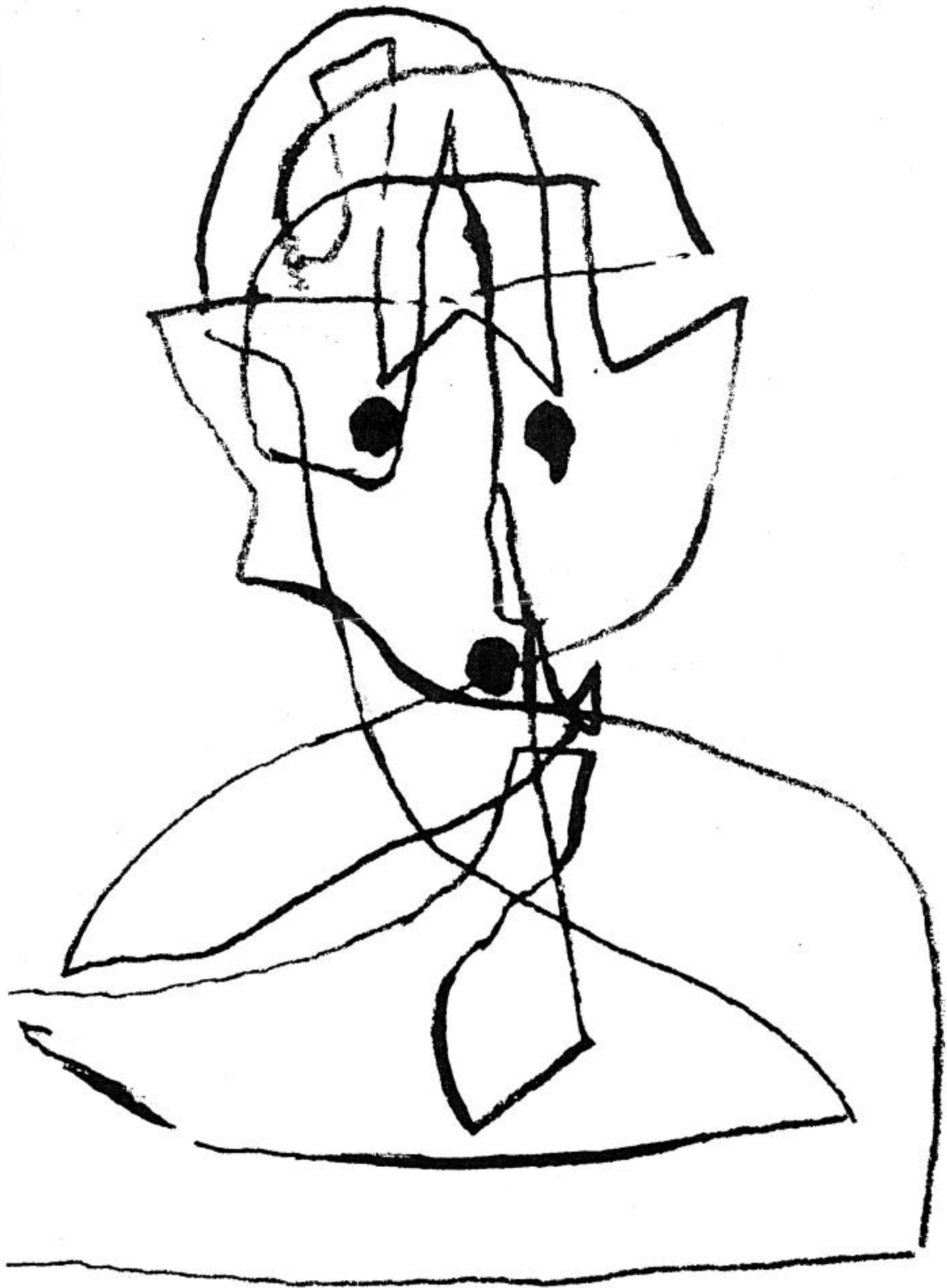
Vince



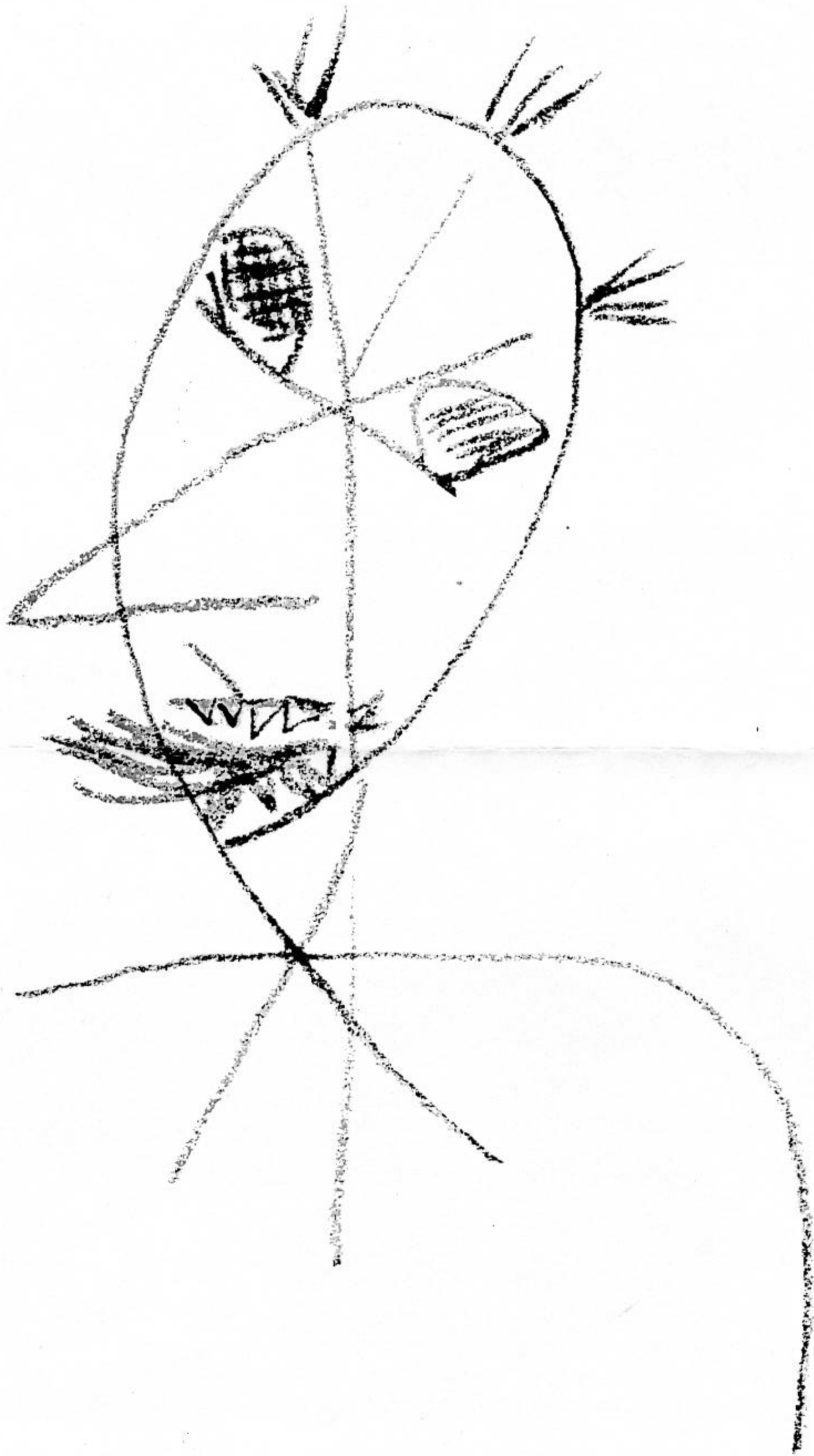


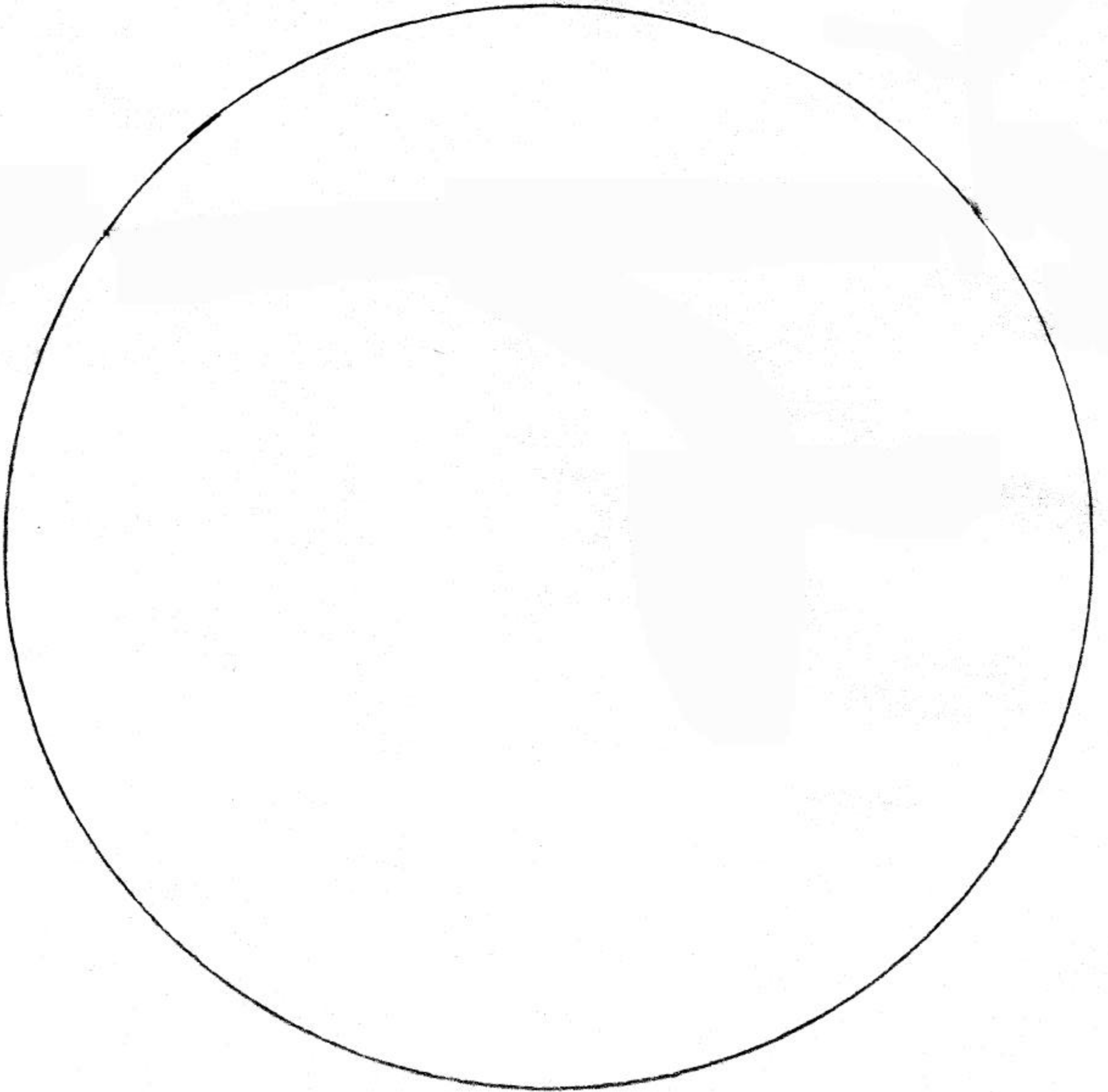
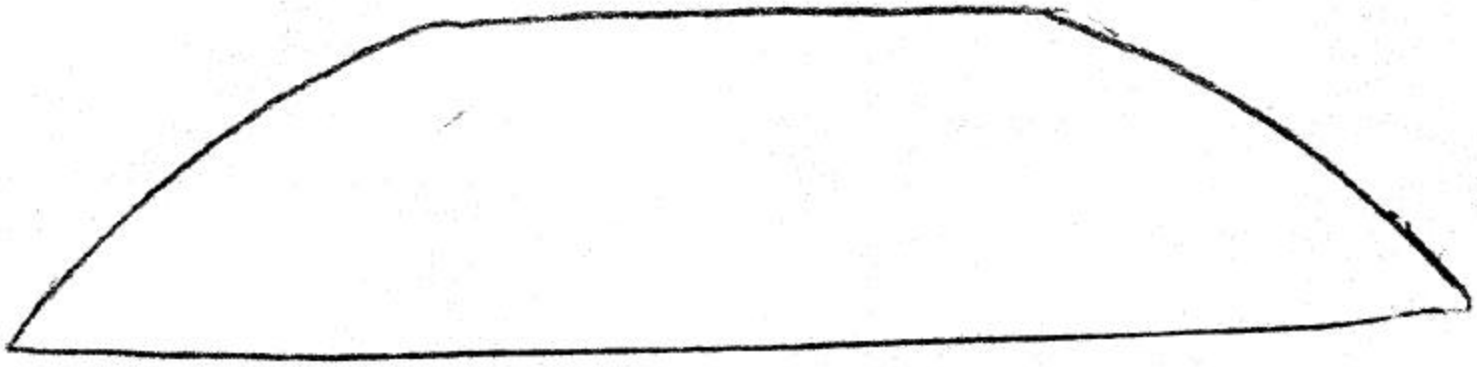


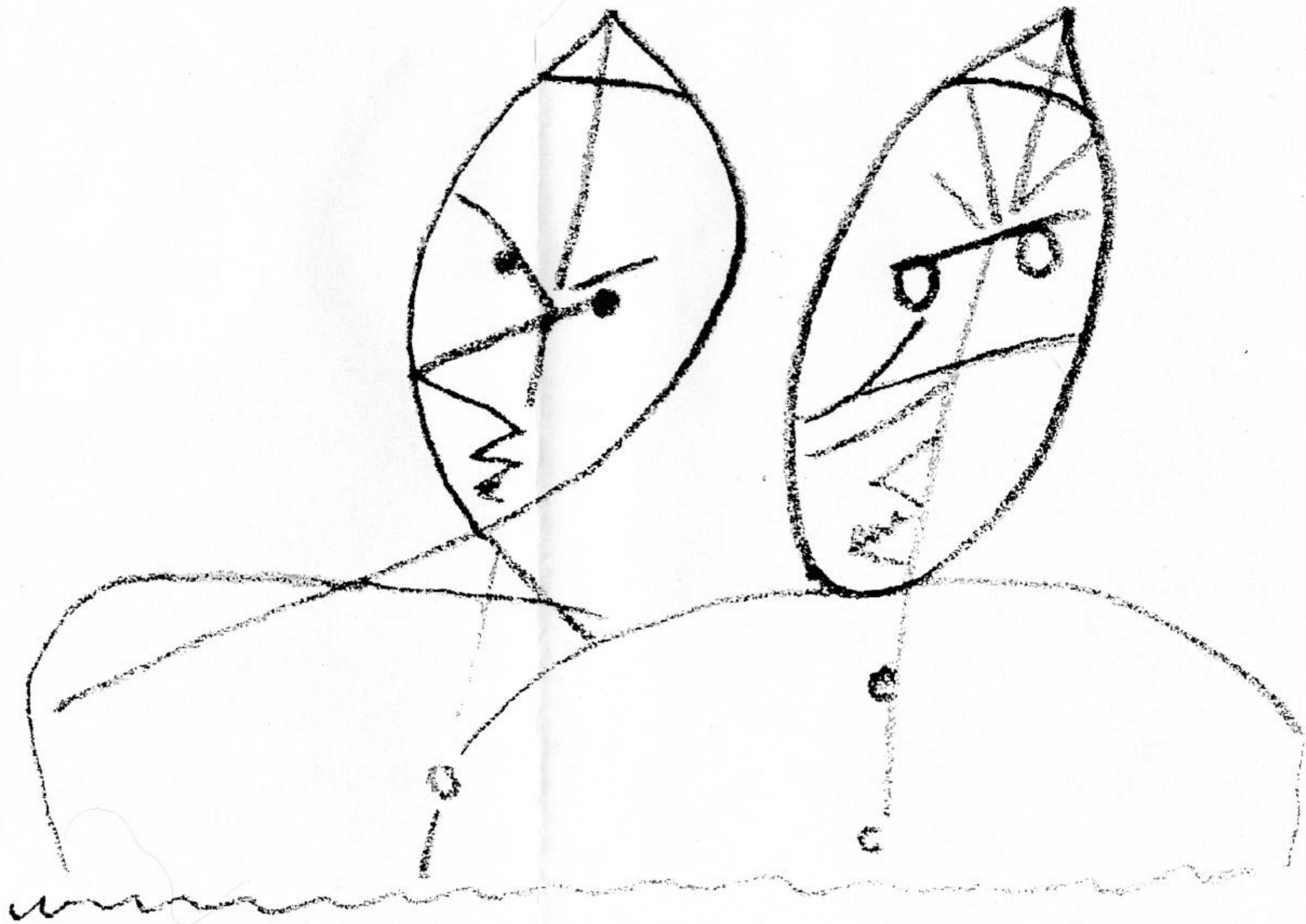
Paul Klee
Persevere!



Paul Klee
A Tear







PAUL KLEE HEADS, 1913