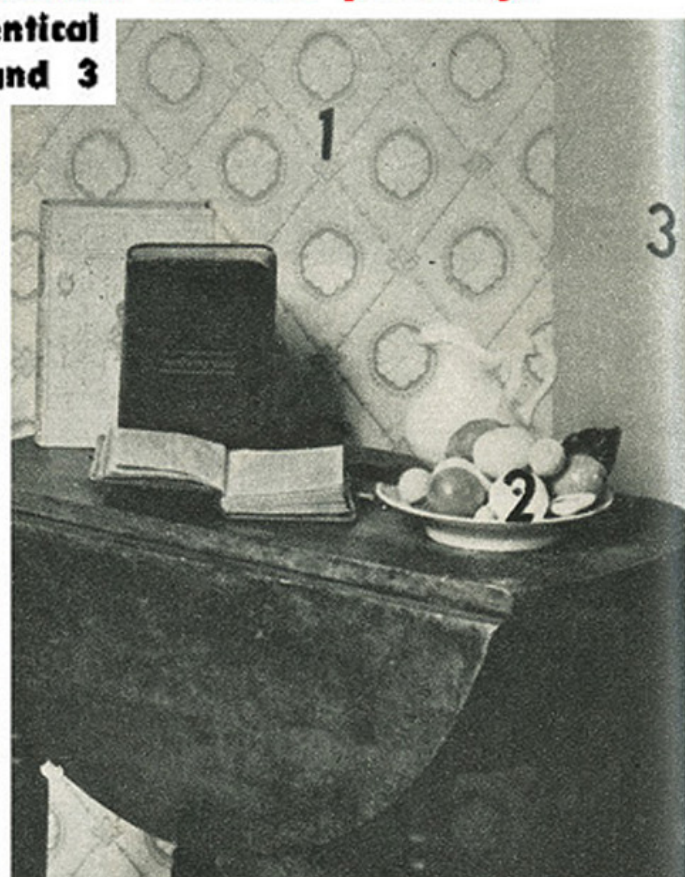


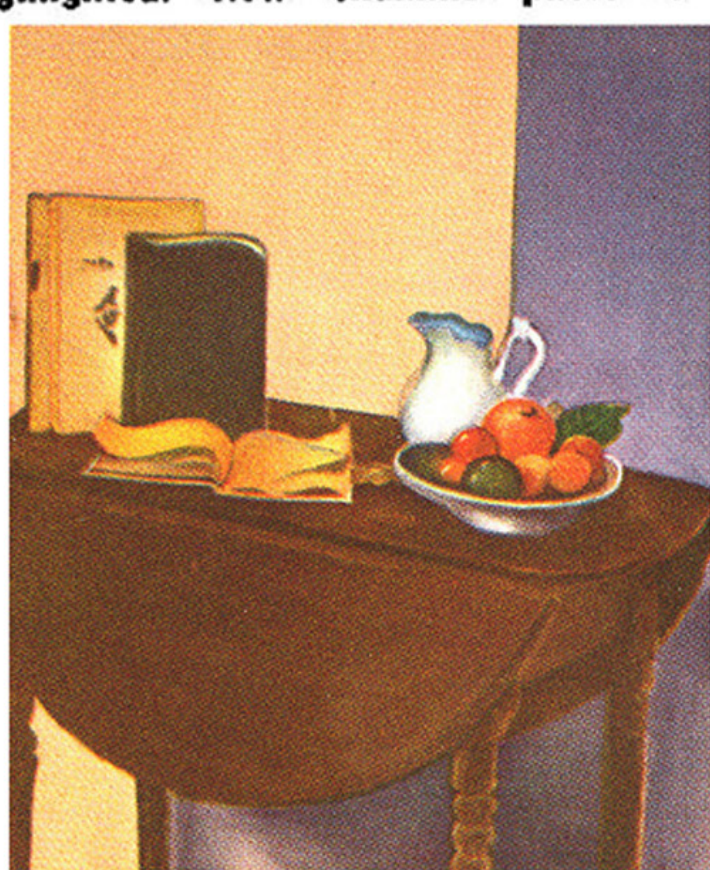
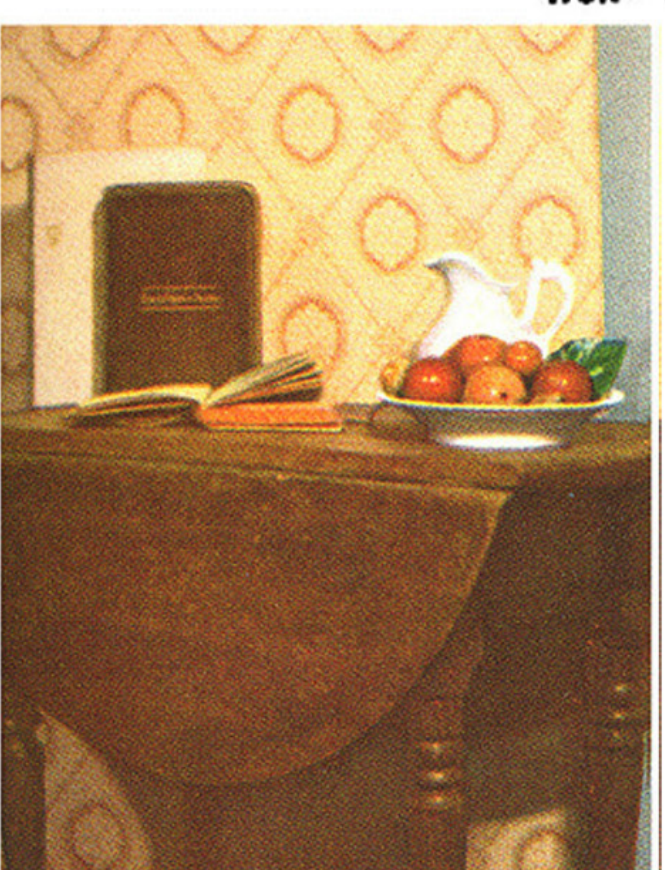
INVENTION OR UGLIFICATION

Or what's the point behind abstract painting?

A. The scene in this photo is identical with photo B. But note areas 1, 2 and 3



B. Here the background is subdued, the fruit highlighted. Now examine photo C



C. This photo shows the everyday objects about as they look to the ordinary eye D. But the artist wants to show you something out of the ordinary. So he simplifies

AN ATOM, which no man has ever seen, can split apart with enough force to pulverize a city. An invisible X-ray can kill a cancer.

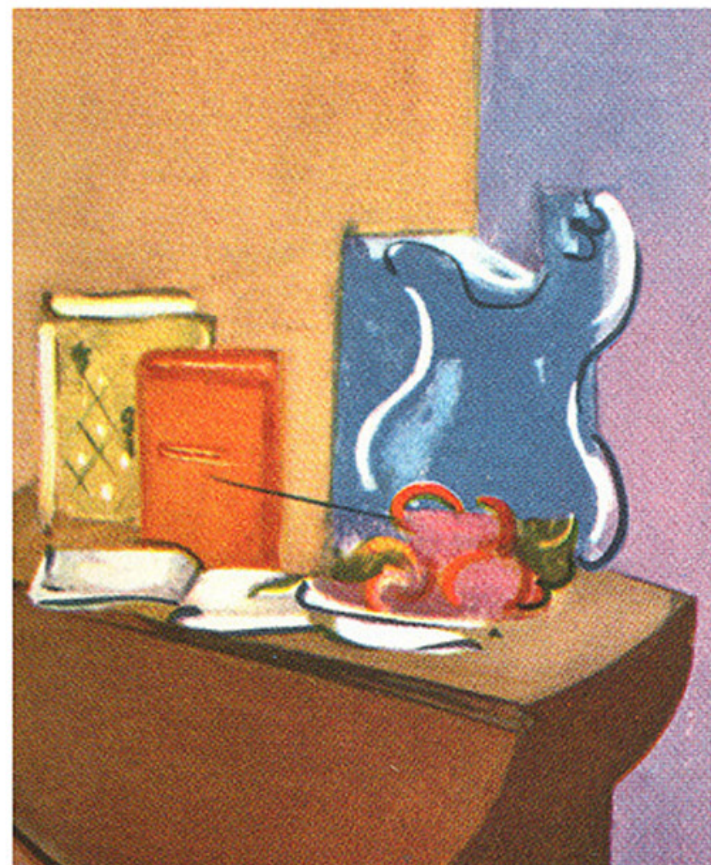
Nobody denies it—there's much more in the world than meets the eye. Man sees only the colored surfaces of things. But he's curious—he'd like to see more.

The camera shows him some things he can't ordinarily see. It sharpens what was fuzzy, stops what was whizzing. It shows which horse was first in a furious photo-finish. It freezes a bullet in flight. The camera "abstracts"—it leaves out some aspects of a scene and points up others. A photograph is not an exact reproduction of nature—it varies with the control and imagination of the photographer.

Similarly, paintings vary with the inventiveness and purpose of each artist. To imitate nature with technical accuracy is not the artist's job. The inventive artist departs from everyday reality to suit his particular purpose. Just as the scientist with his microscope or telescope wants to see more deeply into nature, so does the artist want to see beyond the surfaces. And he wants to show us whatever it is that he sees there.

Paintings E, D and F show how differently an artist may see the same scene.

Photographs: Francis Cookso
Paintings: Phillips Academy Studi



E. Now the artist has moved and modified F. Going further, the artist has reorganized objects to give a more interesting view



SHAPE AND SHORTHAND

Or why doesn't an artist paint things as they really look?

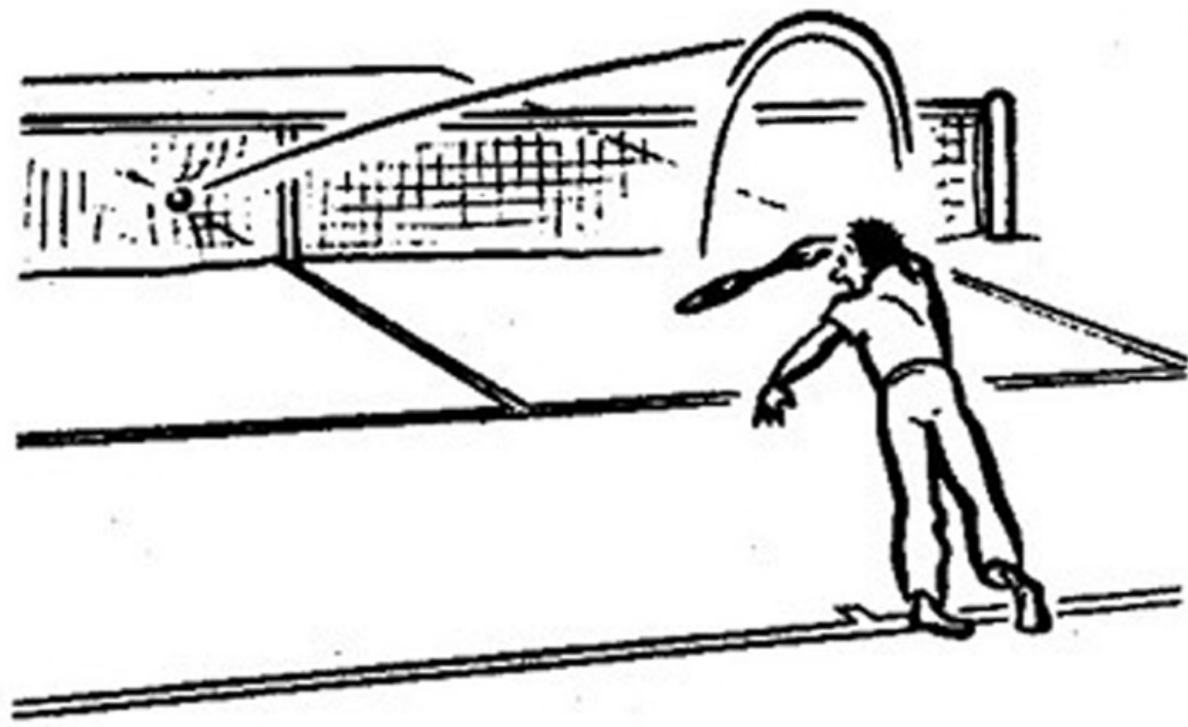
THE ARTIST simplifies, alters, and reorganizes nature for three reasons:

1. For pure pleasure in shape, color.
2. As a "shorthand" for actuality.
3. To express what we can't see.

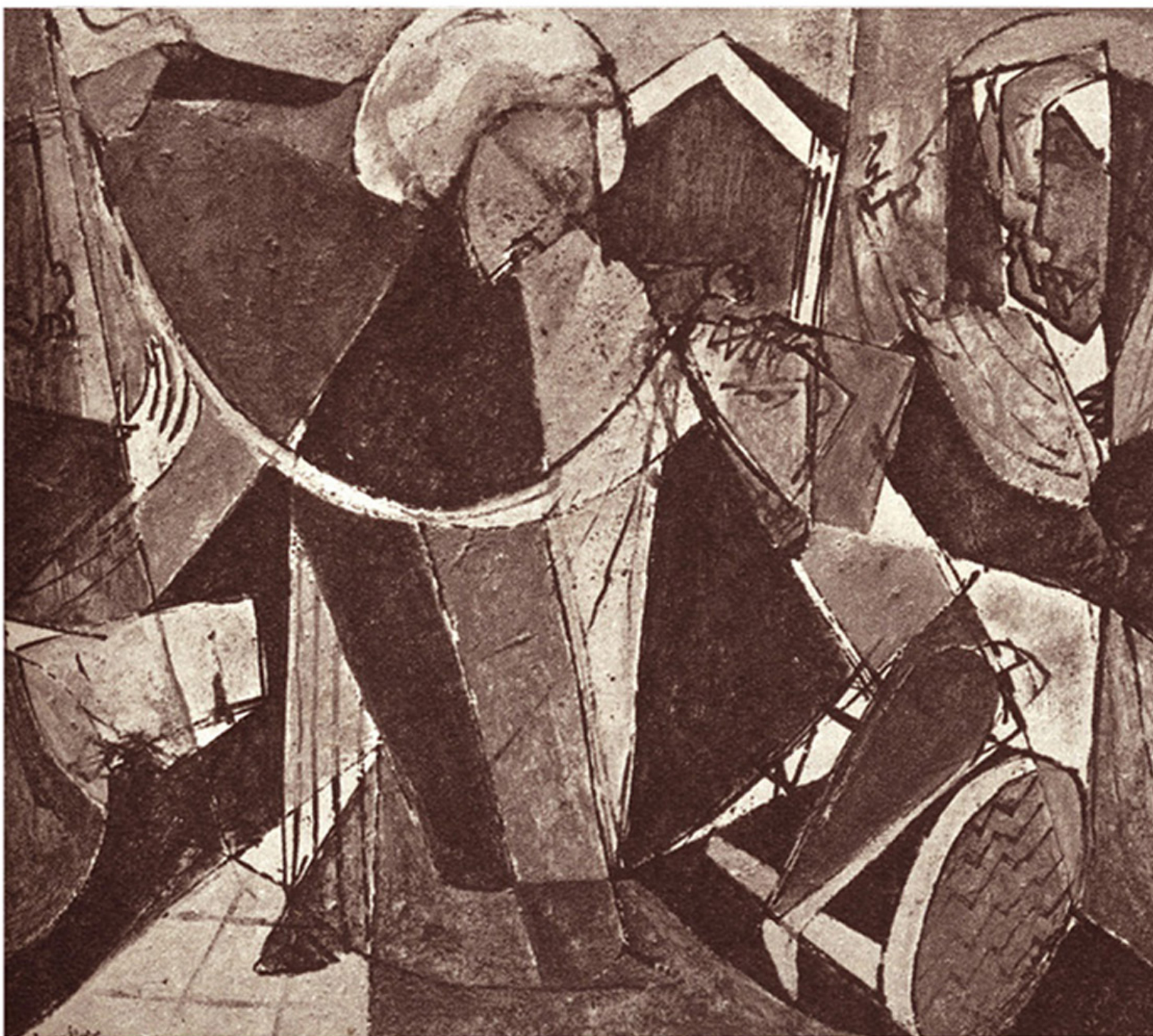
Petty has pulled the girl's leg lovingly over-long to dramatize the pleasurable shape of the figure. The shorthand squibbles at right depict nothing — yet may suggest men marching, gesticulating across a sun-scorched desert. Sometimes a picture shows us something the ordinary eye can't see — an angel, love, courage.

WHAM-BAM

Leading the looker around by the eyes



LINES picturing the force and direction of motion are a familiar device in cartoons. The eyes, tracing the motion, impart a feeling of action. By such an arc of motion Bearden has indicated the path of Christ's arm in driving the money changers from the temple. Whether for fun or for function, the trick is effective and easy to follow.

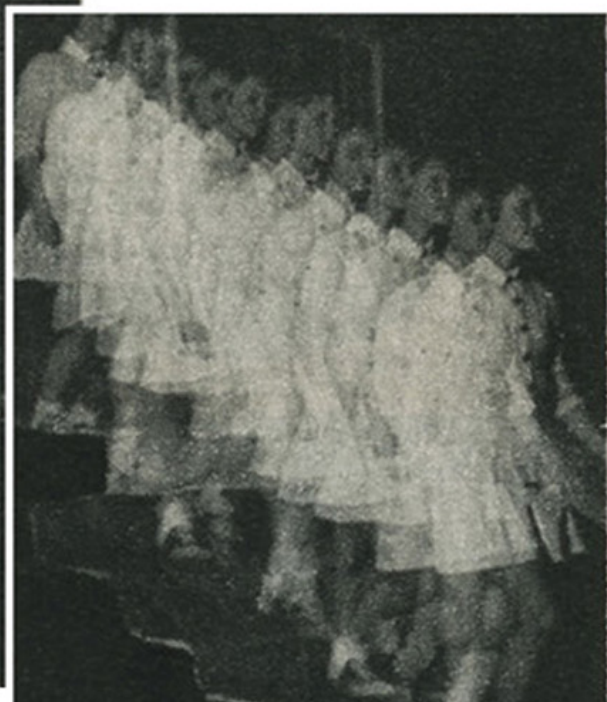




A



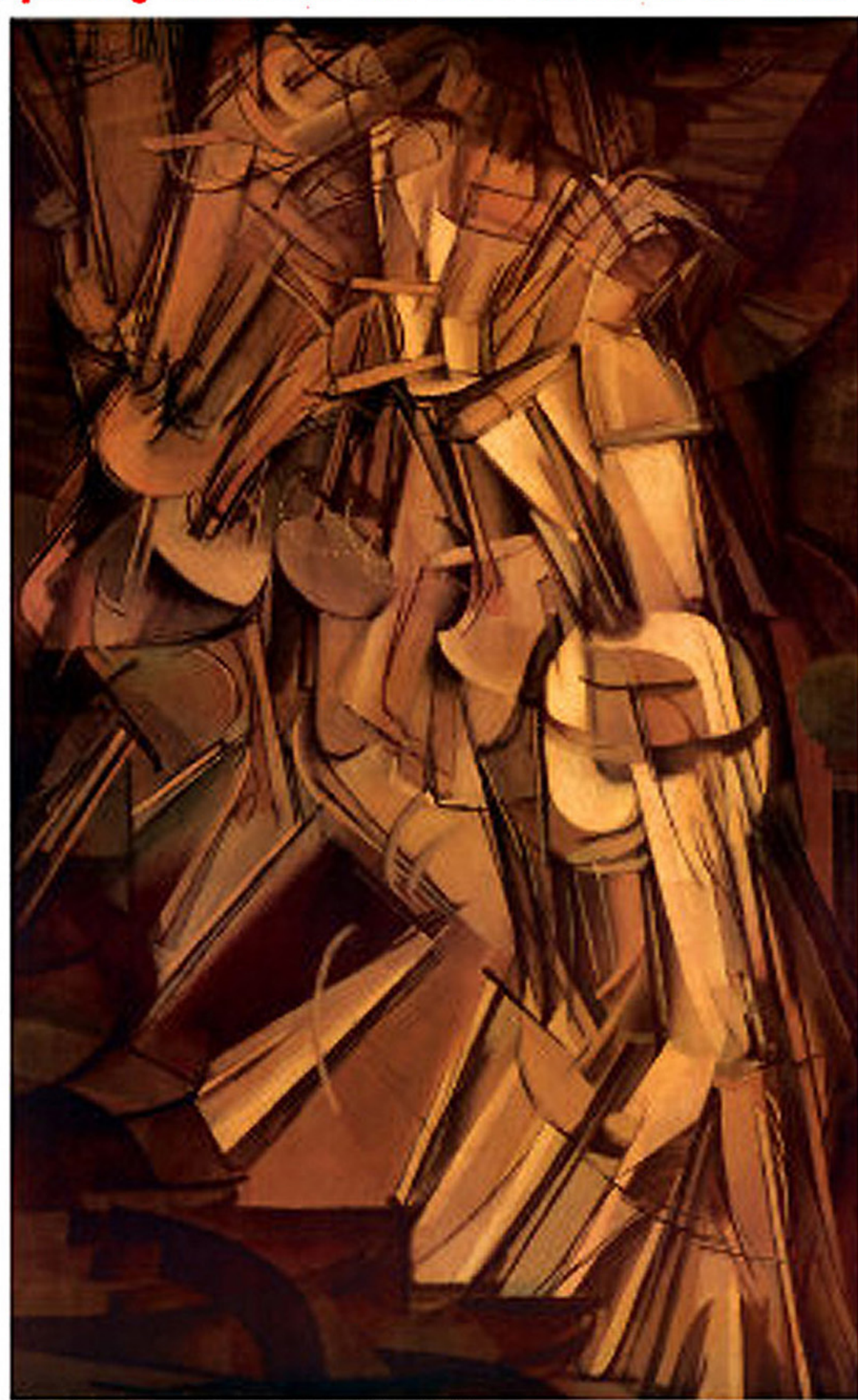
B



C

PICTURES WITH JITTERS

How a painting can sit still and move around at the same time



Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending the Stairs*
(Collection Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Arensberg)

WHEN *Nude Descending the Stairs* was exhibited a generation ago most lookers couldn't make head or tail of it. Today our eyes, accustomed to the multi-flash photos in the picture magazines, can see in it an almost photographic reality.

If you look at photograph A, you can't be sure whether the girl is moving or standing still. The blurring of photograph B records motion, but you can't tell what is moving—boy, girl or ghost—or whether it is whirling or moving downstairs. Clear-cut images in photograph C repeated one next to the other catch vividly the full nature of motion downstairs. This photo also shows that the multiple repetition of images tends to flatten the shapes into a series of overlapping planes.

Now look at Duchamp's painting. By abstracting the many planes of a body and repeating them, he has visualized movement progressing from the upper left to the lower right corner of the picture.

This is a case where *abstraction* portrays movement more realistically than does the *realistic* photo A.

The world is full of motion, sound, space, weight, other non-visual aspects. And when the artist wants to show us these qualities, he must use abstraction.

ANTICS AND ABSTRACTION

Low-brows abstract just as much as high-brows



Frank Willard, Cartoon from "Moon Mullins"



Alfred Maurer, Head in Motion
(Bertha Schaeffer Gallery)

THE CARTOONIST frequently draws a head in several positions to represent a turning motion. Everybody understands it. The painter multiples the features in the same way. It's no harder to understand.

Everybody abstracts. The snapshot you take with a Brownie is an abstraction—it leaves out color, depth, motion and presents only black-and-white shapes. Yet it's simple enough to recognize this arrangement of shapes as your baby or your mother-in-law or whatever it might be.

To abstract means "to separate from." Whenever some qualities are chosen and others neglected, that is abstraction. Any picture from Joe Palooka to Pablo Picasso is an abstraction. Only some are more so.

ART AND YOU

When you see a picture you turn into an artist

A PICTURE is a point of view. It makes most sense to those who share with the artist the experience it represents. At first glance this painting may seem too "abstract." It's possible, though, to look at the picture in a way that recalls the

ART AND YOU*(continued)*

experience of pausing over a child's game of hopscotch while strolling along the sidewalk. Tender observation can perhaps discern in the harsh surface of the sidewalk a fugitive pleasure that has already died away. ■ ■



Loren McIver, *Sidewalk* (Addison Gallery)