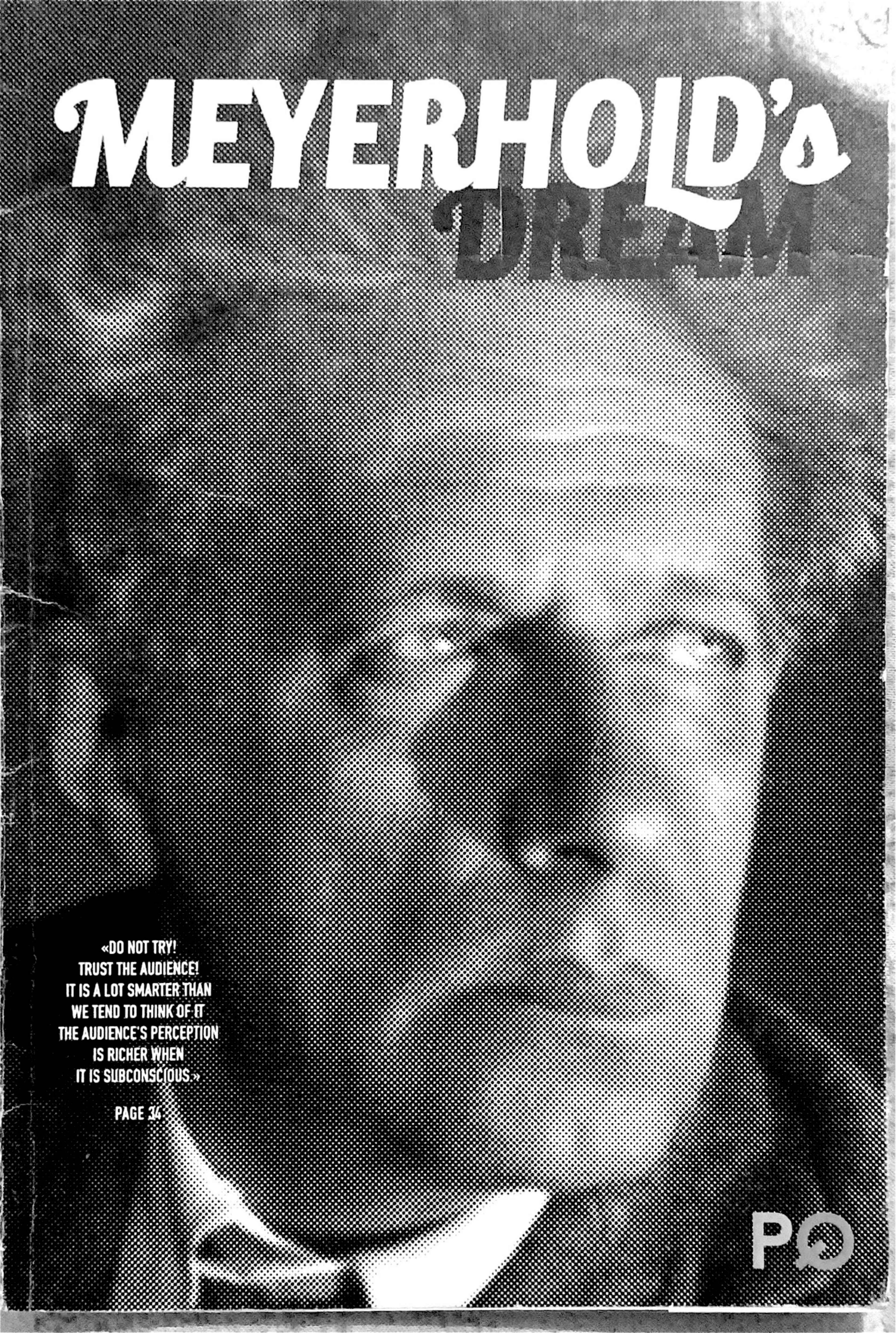


MEYERHOLD'S



«DO NOT TRY!
TRUST THE AUDIENCE!
IT IS A LOT SMARTER THAN
WE TEND TO THINK OF IT
THE AUDIENCE'S PERCEPTION
IS RICHER WHEN
IT IS SUBCONSCIOUS.»

PAGE 34

PQ

For the 140th anniversary of the birth of Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold.



13TH PRAGUE QUADRENNIAL RUSSIAN NATIONAL EXPOSITION
June 18-28, 2015 Prague / September 29, 1933 Moscow

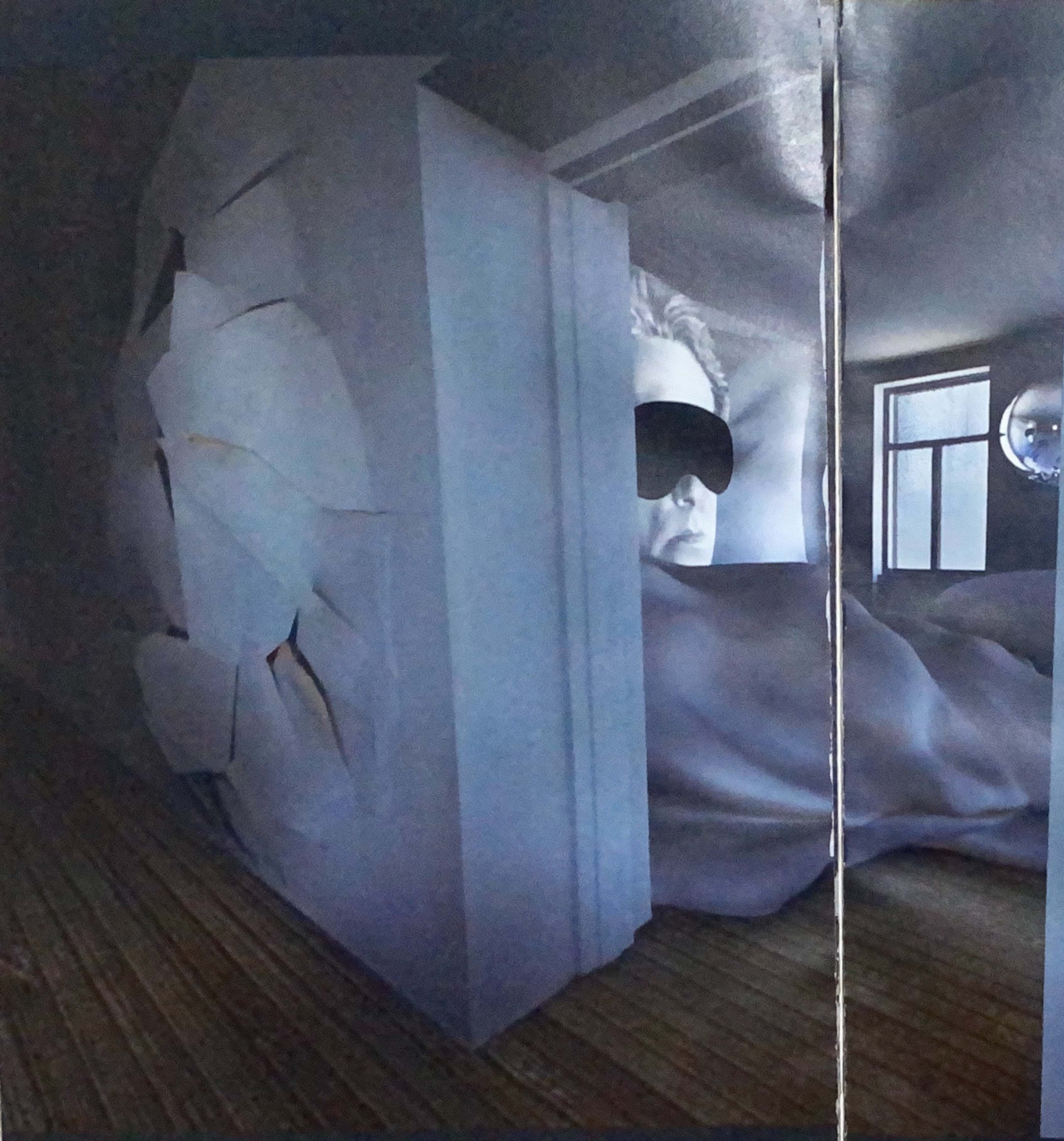
"The secret doors to the Wonderland stood in the night."

Scene: **Moscow, 12 Brusov lane, appt. 11**

Weather: **Autumn. Drizzle.**

Date: **29 September 1933, 1.42 pm**





A Big Man is sleeping. He is breathing
steadily under his giant blanket.
An enormous and incomprehensible figure
in the realm of legends. He is cramped.
He is Meyerhold.



*"I often wake up at night in cold sweat at the thought that I'm getting banal,
that everything is too well in my life and that I will die under a thick bed quilt.
I think I've stopped being inventive".*

p.14 A director-reformer, actor, educator, theatre researcher, creator of the acting technique called "**biomechanics**". Meyerhold is daring, unpredictable, incomprehensible, like Russia itself. A tireless experimentalist, he challenged the traditional theatre and spent his life searching for his own, new one.

Meyerhold was an ideas man and tried practically everything. "*My rival*" – Picasso jokingly called him. Almost every performance created by Meyerhold is a new theatre. In 1907, in the performance of "**The Puppet Show**" by Blok, he drew audiences' attention to the methods of theatricality and literally "undressed" **p.26** the stage. Audiences were outraged. Starting from 1917 he put on innovative "Soviet plays" like "**Mystery-Bouffe**" (author **Mayakovsky**, artist **Kazimir Malevich**) and performances-rallies. In 1922, together with the artist Popova, he hoisted on stage the constructivist setting for "**The Magnanimous Cuckold**". He thought of constructivism not as a new style of the stage design, but a way of destroying the stereotype of the audience's perception. Meyerhold did things to the fullest, as he passionately plunged into the extremes. "*He who hasn't given everything to art has given it nothing.*"

p.32

He and Lissitzky conceived an unprecedented helix-shaped set. He made scenery sound in "**Bubus, the Teacher**" (1924) and brought cinematic techniques to the theatre: closeups, **p.26** dissolves, and titles in "**The Government Inspector**" (1926). Meyerhold was successful in finding novel approaches to a performance, as he grasped the importance of associative moves in the theatre and the need to think of a space as a whole, as a "model". "*The audience's perception is richer when it is subconscious. I met artists who help to awaken the unconscious, and the soul conceives a new world.*" Once, Meyerhold appropriated the name of the Hoffman's abductor of reflections and was referred to as Dr. Dapertutto. It was a transparent pseudonym, ironic, but actually more than serious. Meyerhold was one of the first to see through the tone of the play which can be not only primitively domestic, but also musical: a certain state can be awoken in a viewer by the rhythm of action, tone of voice, pauses, color of the space, light, and sound. "*The Wonderland's doors stood ajar*" for him.

Once, walking along the street, the husky Meyerhold slipped and, while falling down on his left side, he had to tilt both his hands and his head to the right. "*I realised then – Meyerhold said, – that the driving nature of movement is always based on the loss of balance and the restoration of balance.*"

This law of motion underwent an artistic development in the biomechanics classes, defeating the inertia of an actor's body. "*It's good to apply a production process to acting; I work on the verse in a same way,*" – approved Mayakovsky. **p.14**

Around Meyerhold there is always an element of scandal, insults, surprise, and delights.  He was both hated and worshiped. Actors reproached him for turning them into puppets. Others looked for any means possible to get in touch with him. The great **Kommisarzhevskaya** got annoyed and fired him, after she had invited him to her theatre. The atmosphere during discussions of his performances could get so tense they resulted in fighting. While, on the other hand, one theatre magazine advertised among its subscribers to collect funds for the construction of two aircrafts: "Yermolova" and "Meyerhold".

His life constantly changed with the wind; from the height of admiration to persecution. Life events were flitting by. His life wasn't always a fairy tale. But defeat and disaster made him rise unusually fast, he became saturated with energy.

Meyerhold searched inquisitively for everything that could be useful in the theatre, reading newspapers "for the future", looking at prints and reproductions "in store". He strongly recommended that his actors shouldn't pass by the scene of a street fight, but stay and observe, even if police tell them to leave. 

He drew inspiration from everywhere, and he dragged all his observations back to the theatre. He sought his colleagues among the most advanced. Meyerhold felt fine changes in the environment and attracted the leaders of new art: **Vladimir Mayakovsky, El Lissitzky, Kazimir Malevich, Lyubov Popova, Pablo Picasso,**  **Alexandr Rodchenko, Dmitry Shostakovich, Alexandr Golovin,** his student **Sergei Eisenstein,** as well as **Petrov-Vodkin** and **Andrei Bely,** who would be teaching the Mastery of Stage Production course. Meyerhold insisted that the director be an artist and an actor, and a carpenter. Demanded his students learn to draw and invent their own space for the performances.

Meyerhold was always laughing. He had an excellent sense of humor and self-irony, he presented on the topic: "MEYERHOLD AGAINST MEYERHOLDNESS." *"In the art he was a rebel, but more often he rebelled against his own, yesterday self, and even against his own rebellion."* *

Meyerhold dreamed of a "round theater",  looked forward to moving to a new GosTIM (Meyerhold State Theatre) building which had an unprecedented architectural design. But being a powerful artist, he realised that it is the environment which directs which path the creation will take.

The pace of his career slowed down in the 1930s, as if he started to choke. Not enough air. The atmosphere in the country has changed. The regime began to impinge upon the freedom of drama productions, the press and various ideological bodies were opposed to almost every talented play. Time was suddenly fractured. Cosy rain outside turned into the flurry of the regime and the atmosphere became suffocating.

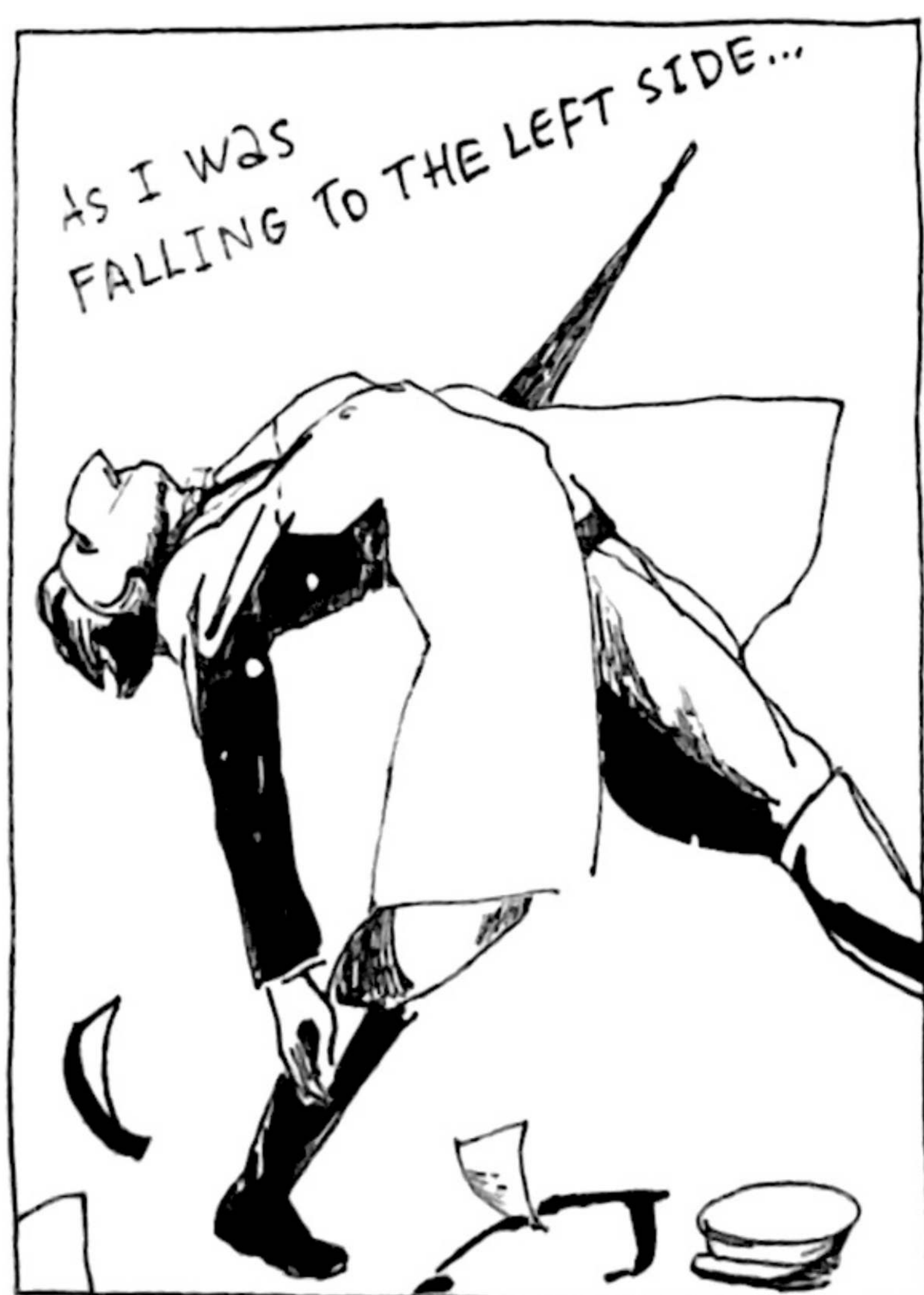
The word "Meyerhold" itself during his time was more than just a name, even though the man actually existed, ate, slept, wore a jacket, rehearsed in his comfortless theatre, and carried out debates. *"He could not wait, there was something in him in a hurry."* ** Meyerhold was discovering and leaving the discovered all the time, as if leaving the doors ajar for his successors.

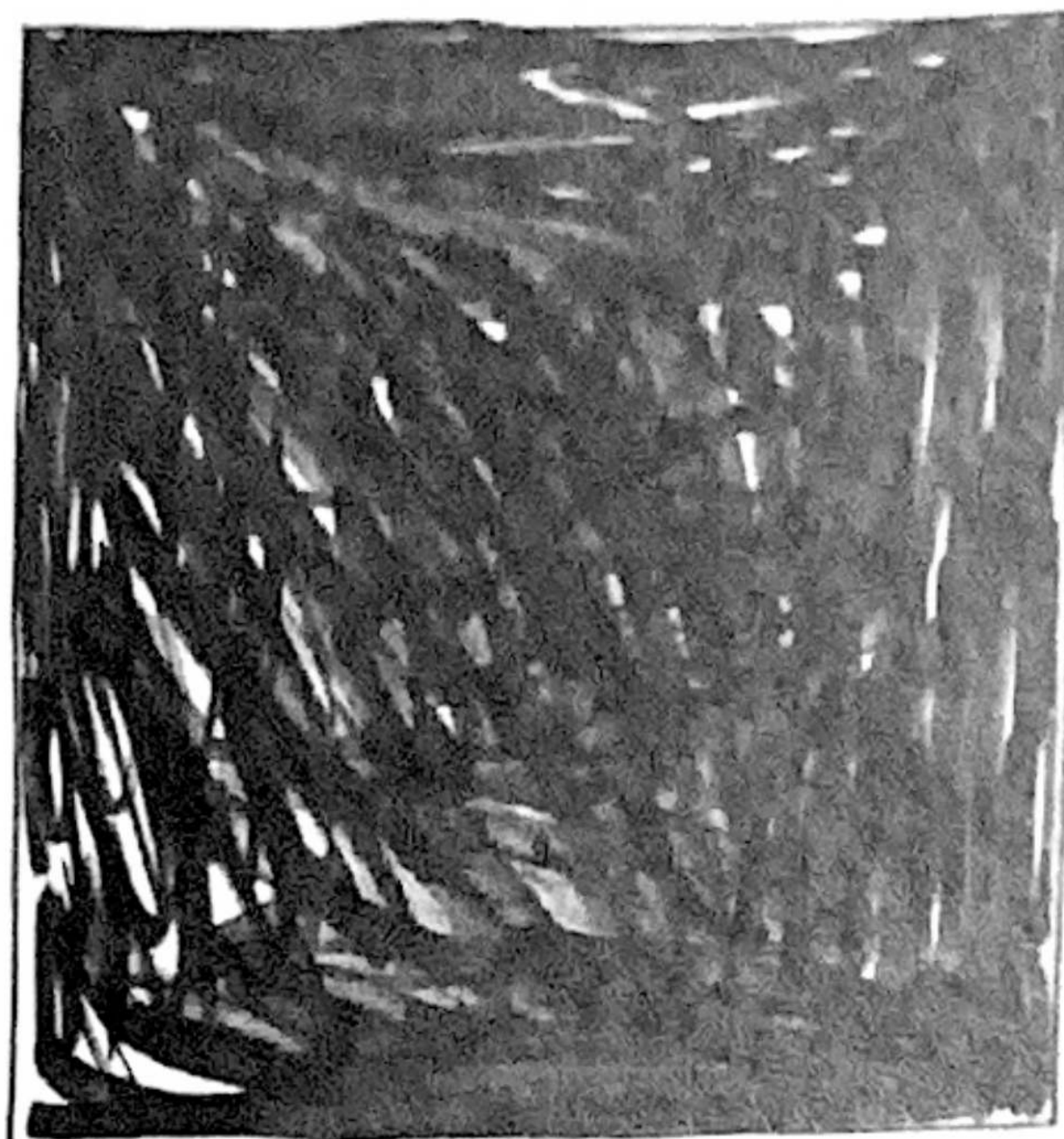
.....
* A.K. Gladkov
** M.A. Chekhov



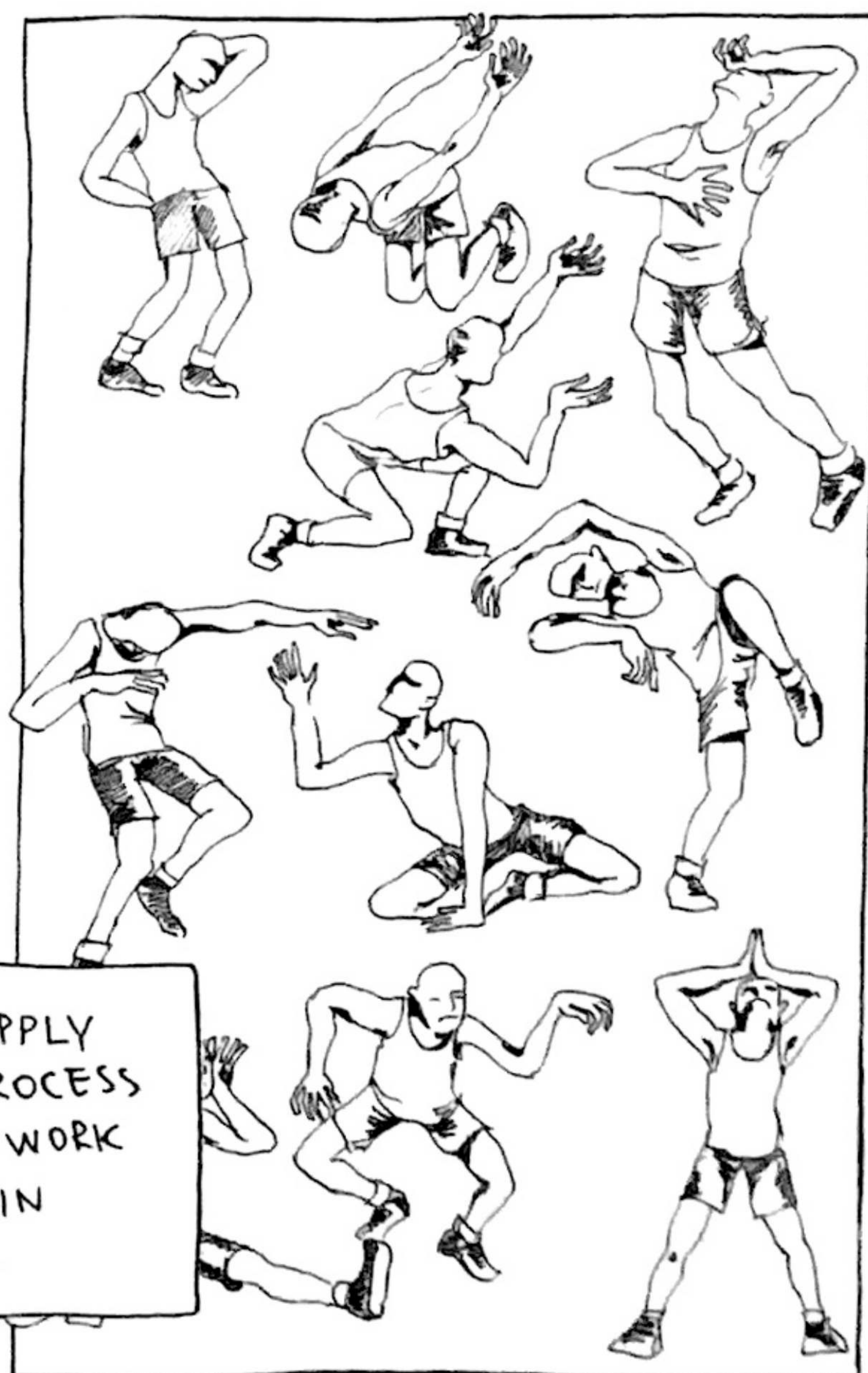
1. Vladimir Mayakovsky 2. El Lissitzky 3. Kazimir Malevich 4. Lyubov Popova 5. Pablo Picasso
6. Varvara Stepanova 7. Alexandr Rodchenko 8. Dmitry Shostakovich 9. Konstantin Stanislavsky

10. Alexandr Golovin 11. Sergei Eisenstein 12. Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin 13. Andrei Bely 14. Erast Garin
15. Vera Komissarzhevskaya 16. Sergei Prokofiev 17. Zinaida Reich 18. Igor Ilyinsky 19. Leon Bakst





THE BASIC LAW OF **BIOMECHANICS**
IS VERY SIMPLE: THE ENTIRE BODY
PARTAKES IN EVERY MOVEMENT.



IT'S GOOD TO APPLY
A PRODUCTION PROCESS
TO ACTING! I WORK
ON THE VERSE IN
A SAME WAY.

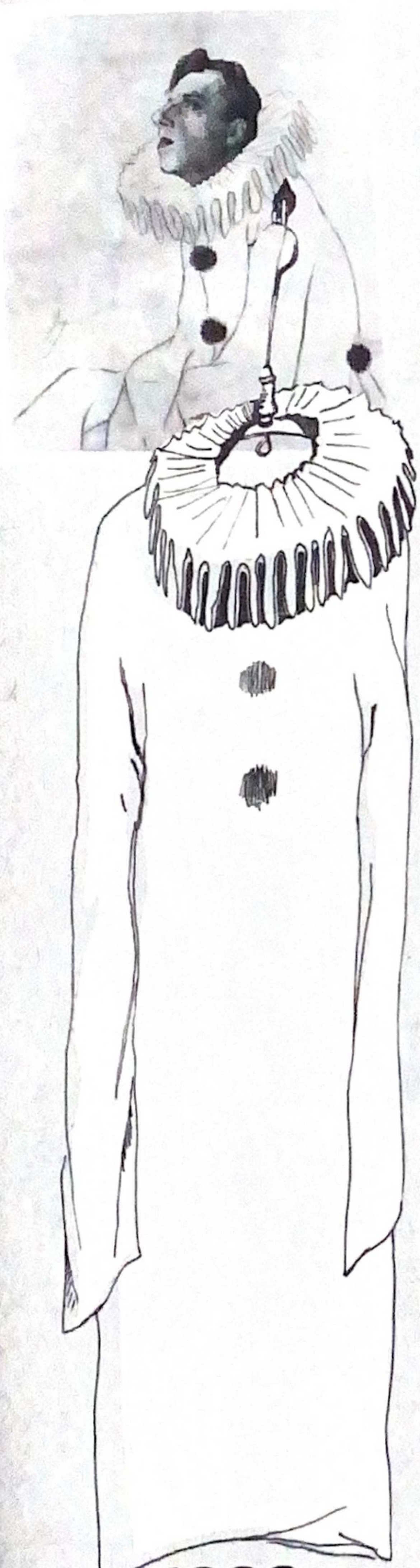
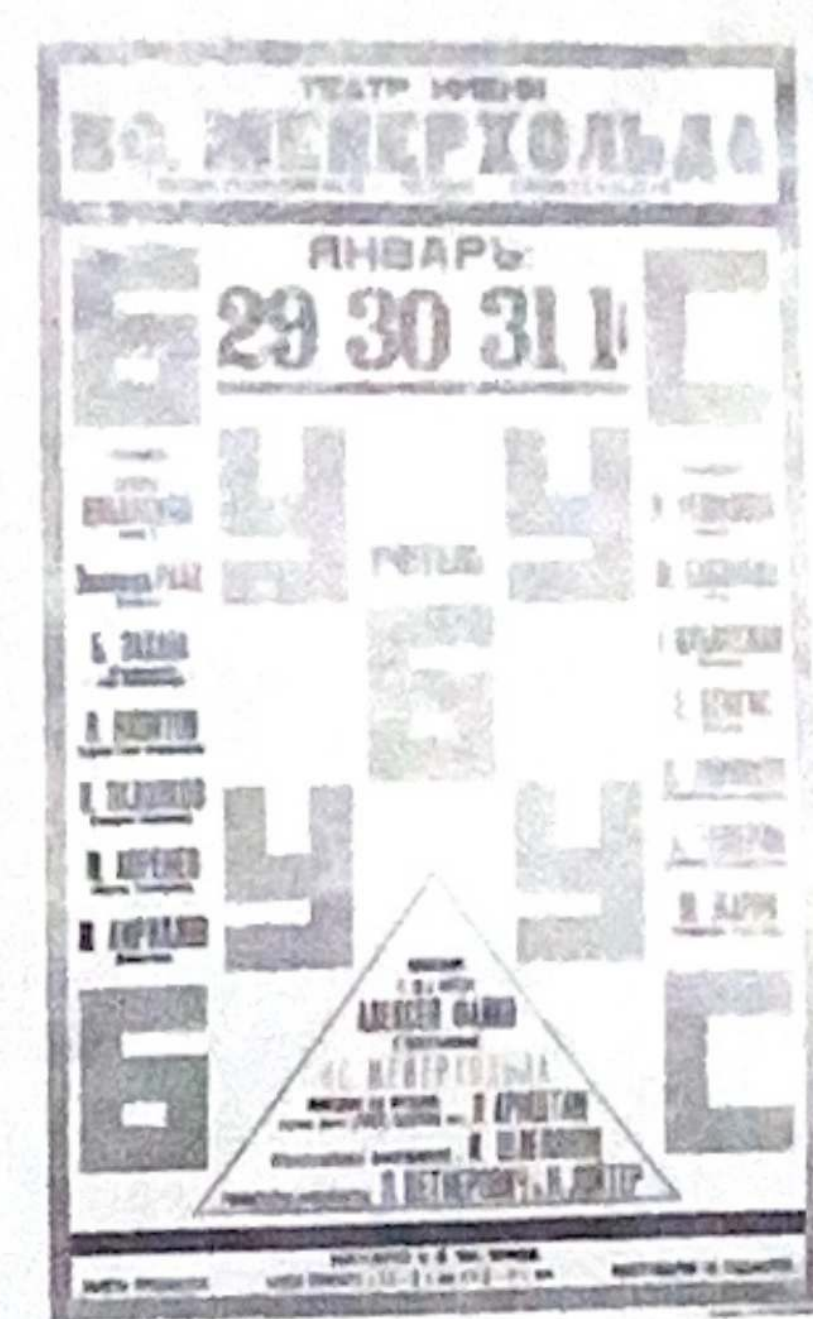
* BIOMECHANICS was a system of actor training, which relied on motion rather than language or illusion. The techniques of Biomechanics were developed during the rehearsals of a series of plays directed by Meyerhold in the 1920s and 1930s when Socialist Realism was at its height in Russia. Biomechanics system was a precursor to the 20th Century's physical theatre and has influenced its development immensely.







MEYERHOLD'S LOOKS

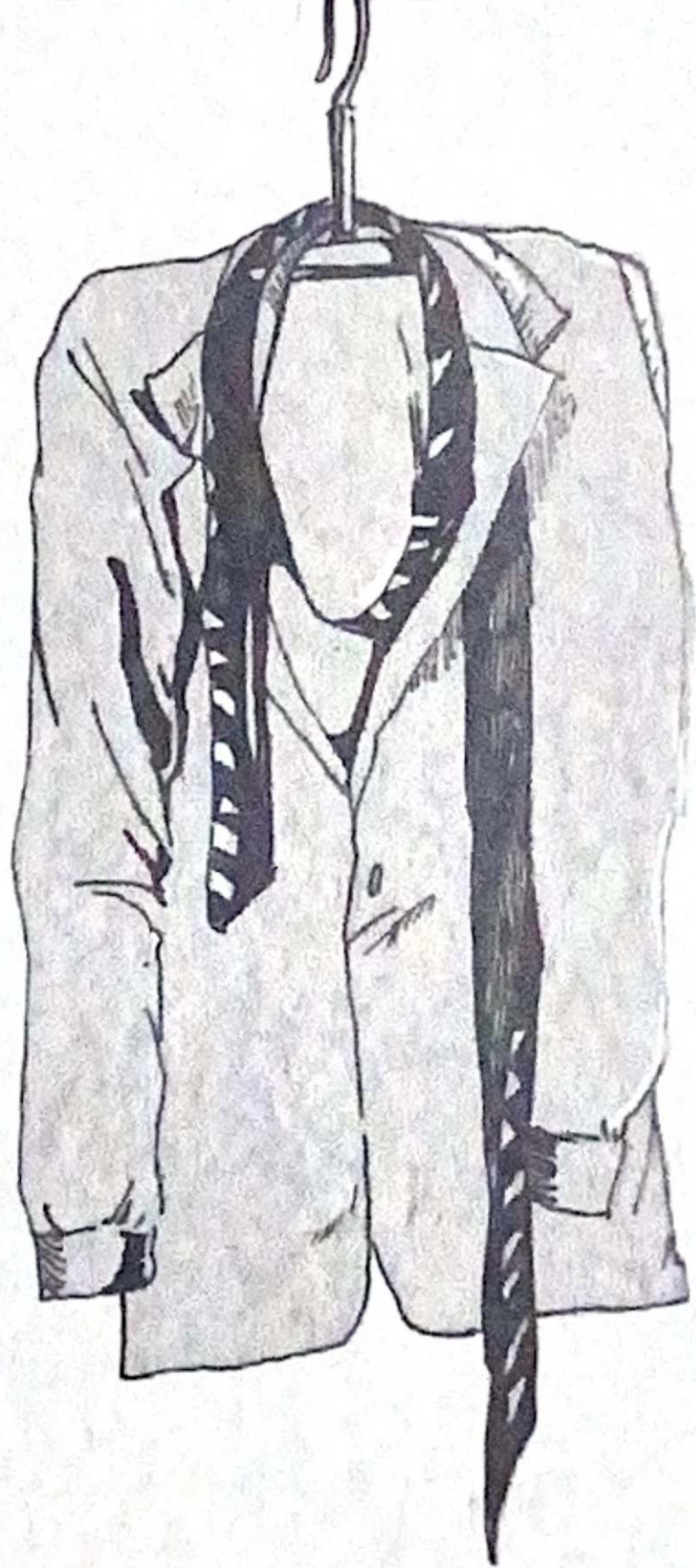


1908

7.8 НОЯБРЯ 1922
 МЫ ПОЭТЫ, КУДЮЖНИКИ, РЕЖИССЕРЫ И АКТЕРЫ
 ПРАЗДНУЕМ ДЕНЬ ГОДОВЩИНЫ
 ОКТЯБРЬСКОЙ РЕВОЛЮЦИИ
 Революционным спонсорским
 нами будет дана
 10 карт
 для кру-
 жной рисо-
 ванки картин
 с инвентарем.
 10 картин
 для кру-
 жной рисо-
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 с инвентарем.
 10 картин
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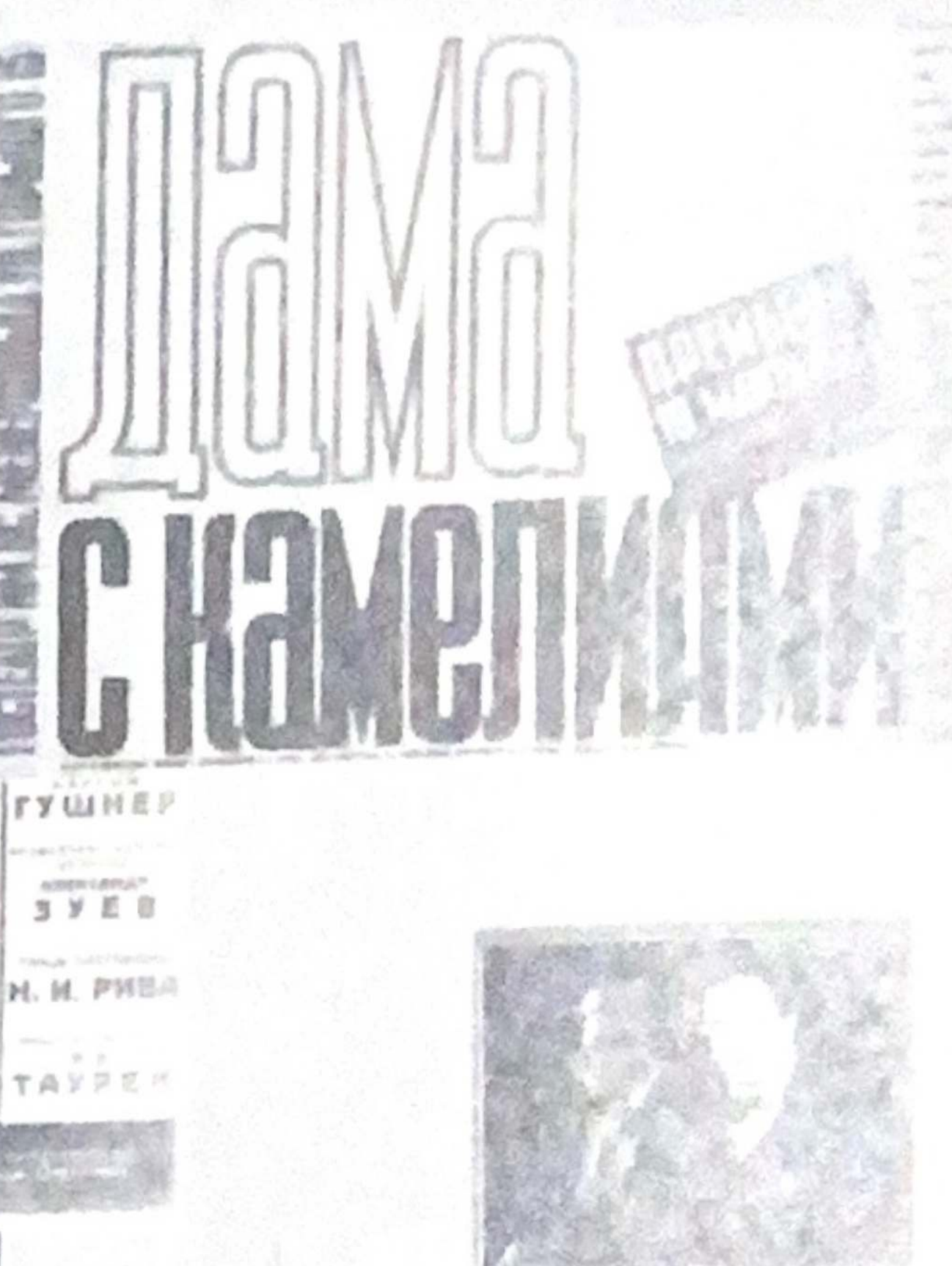
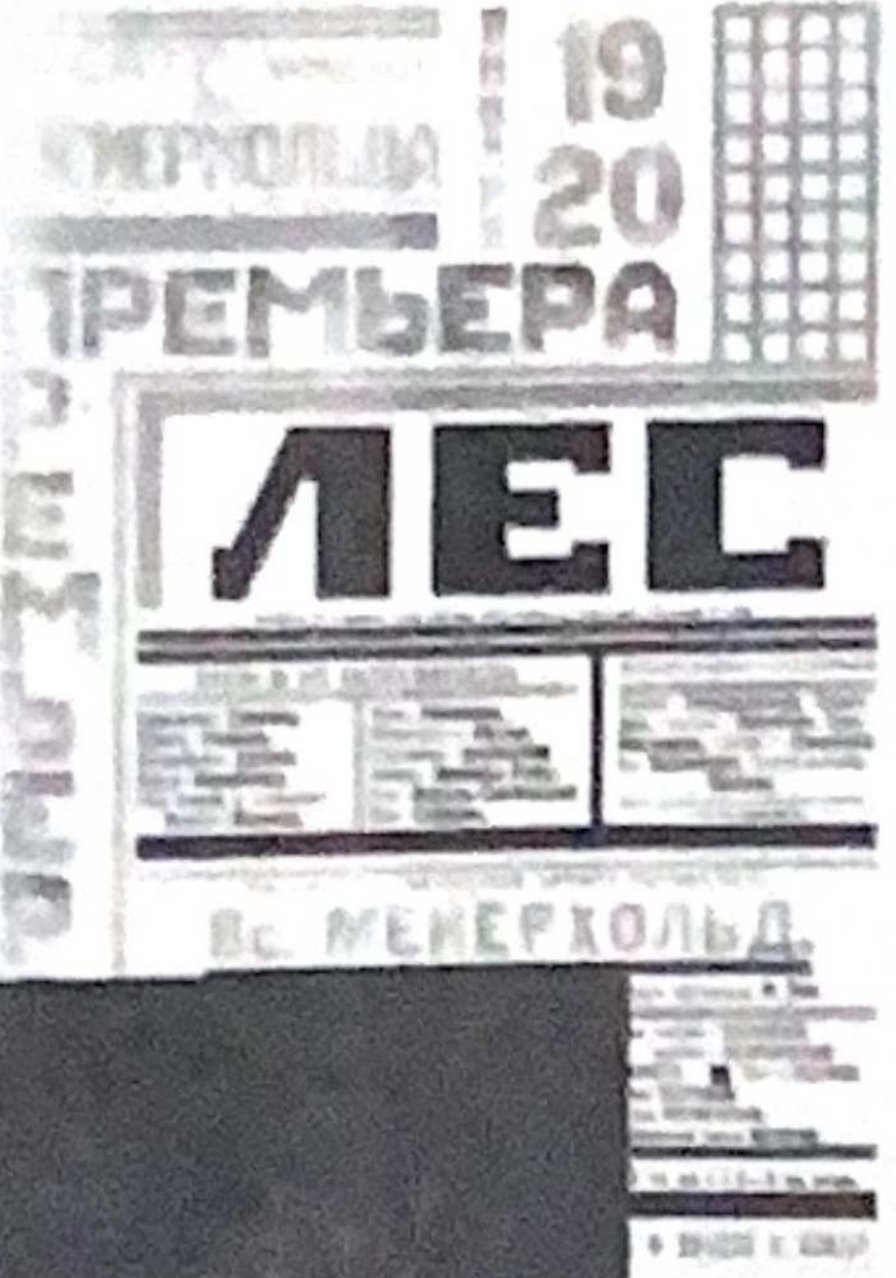


1922

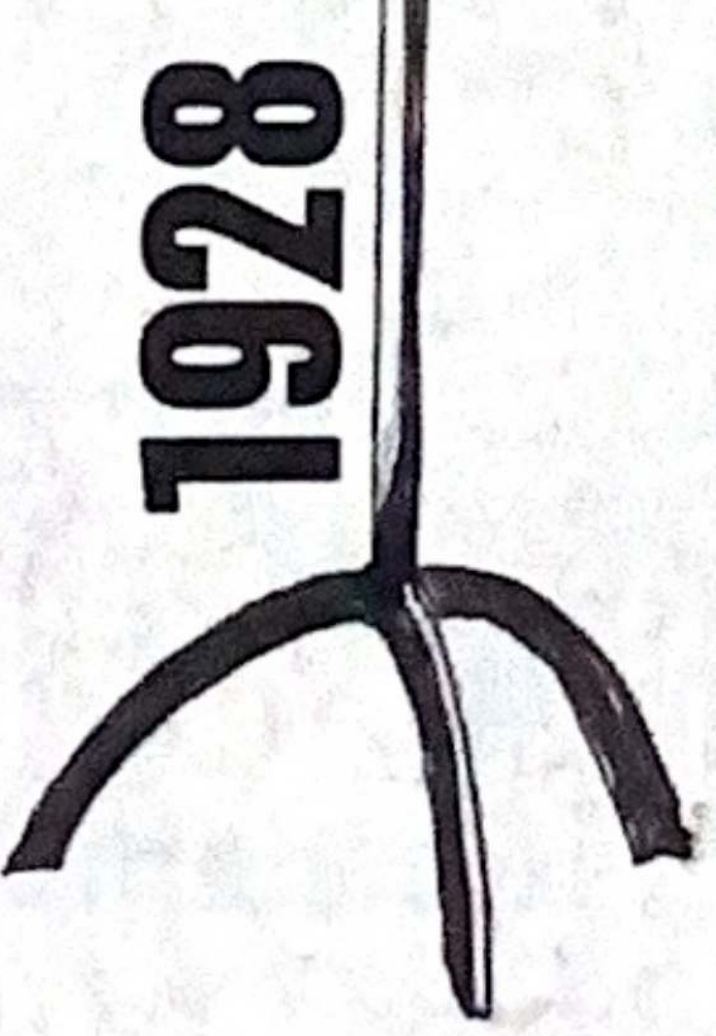


1925



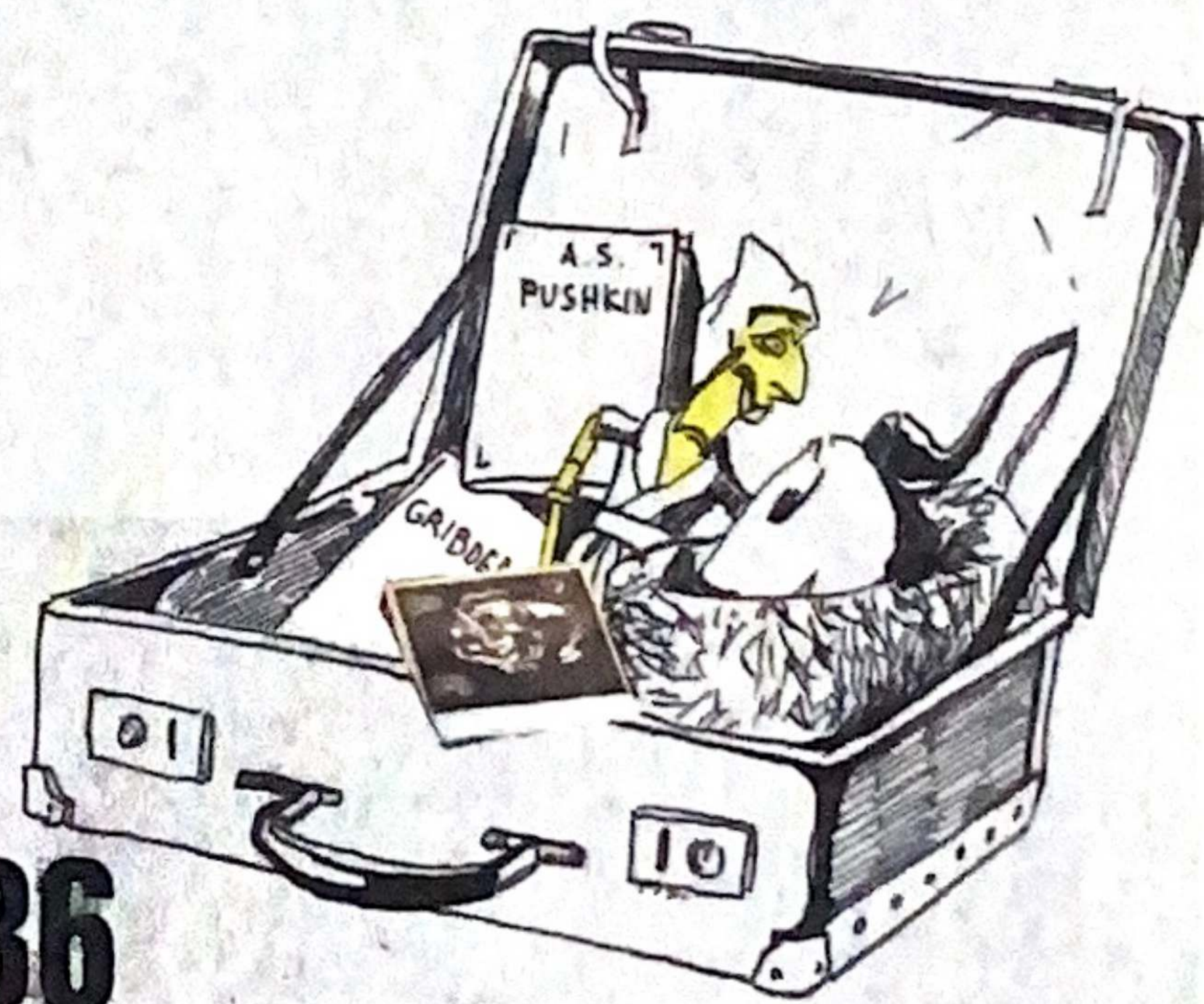


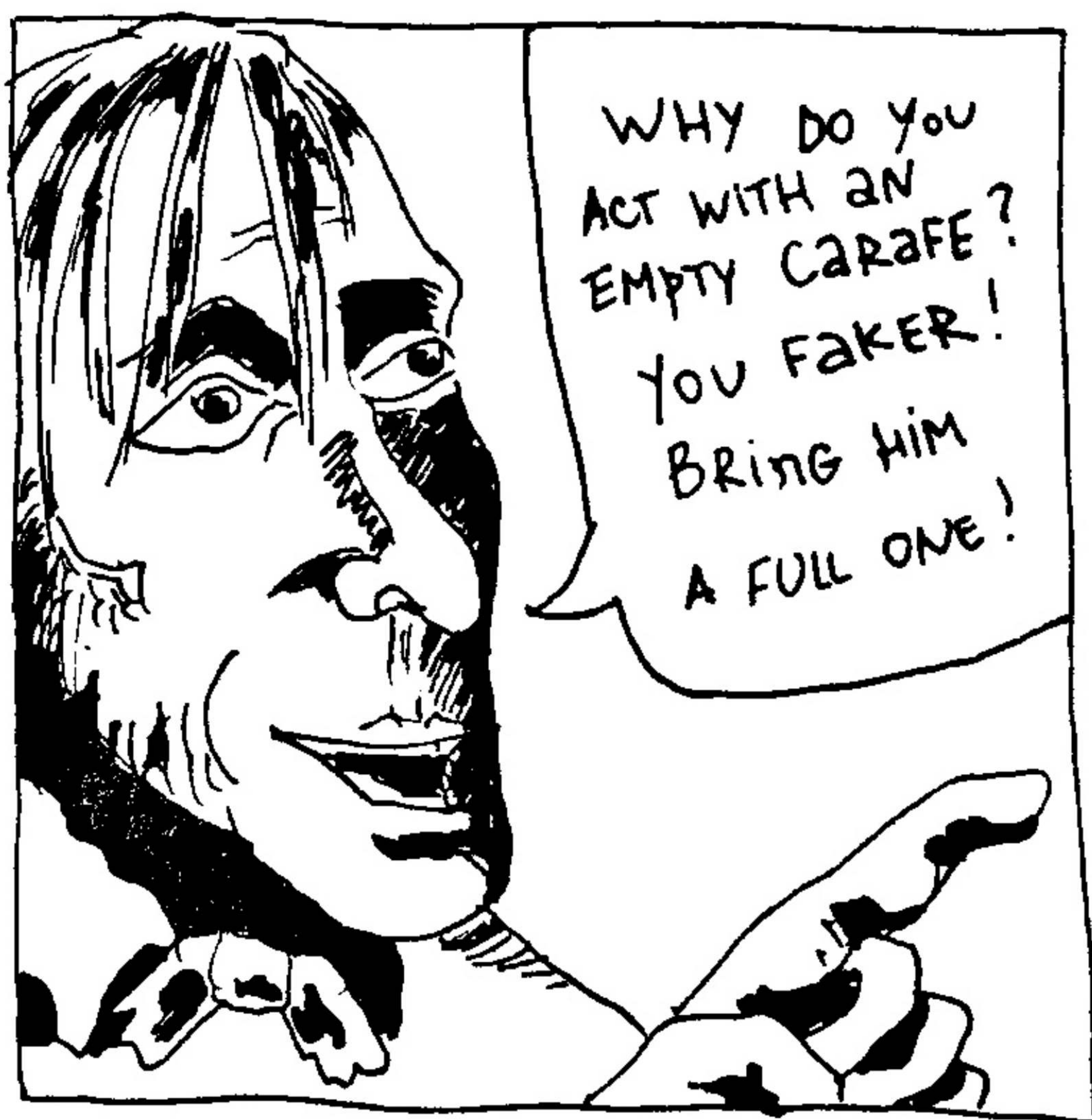
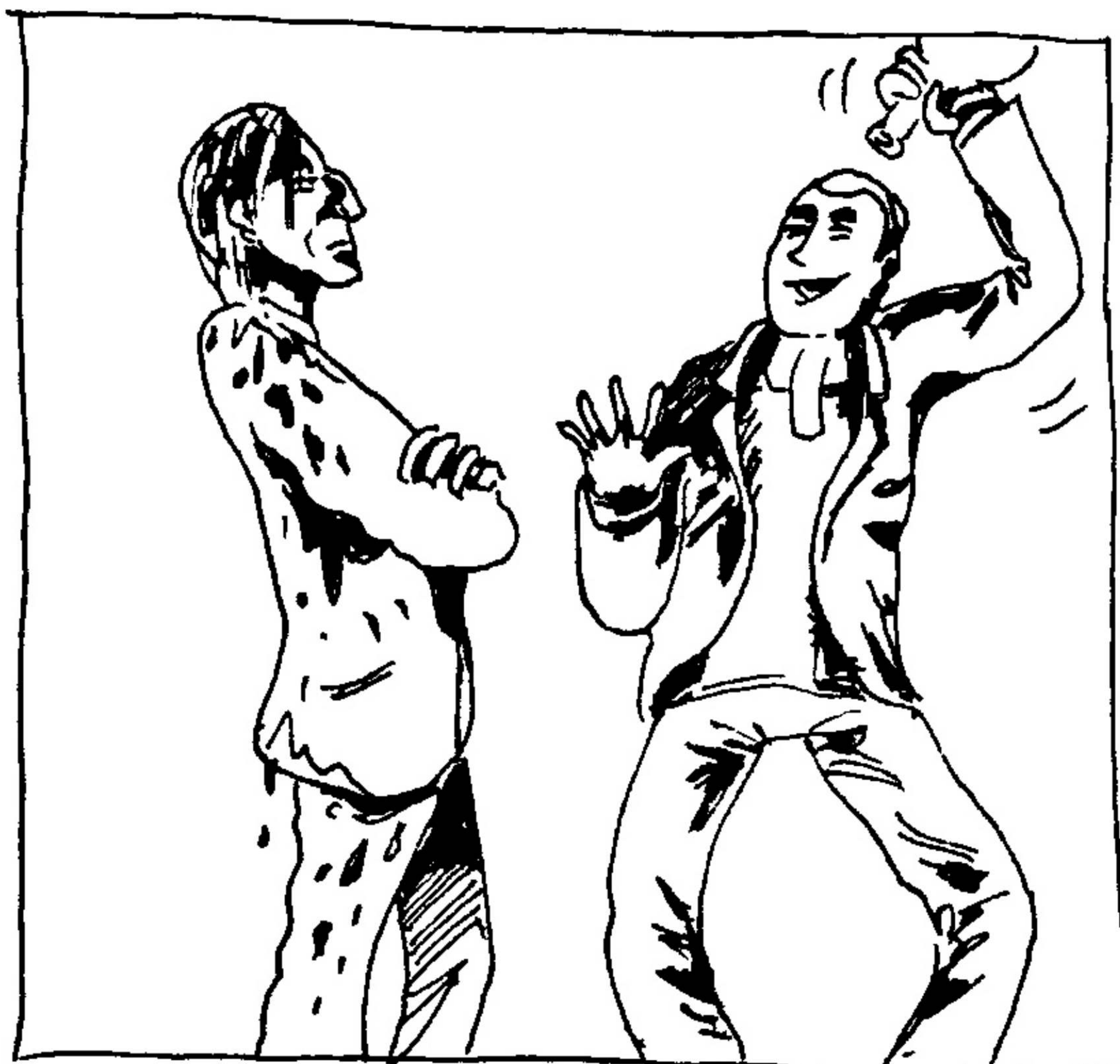
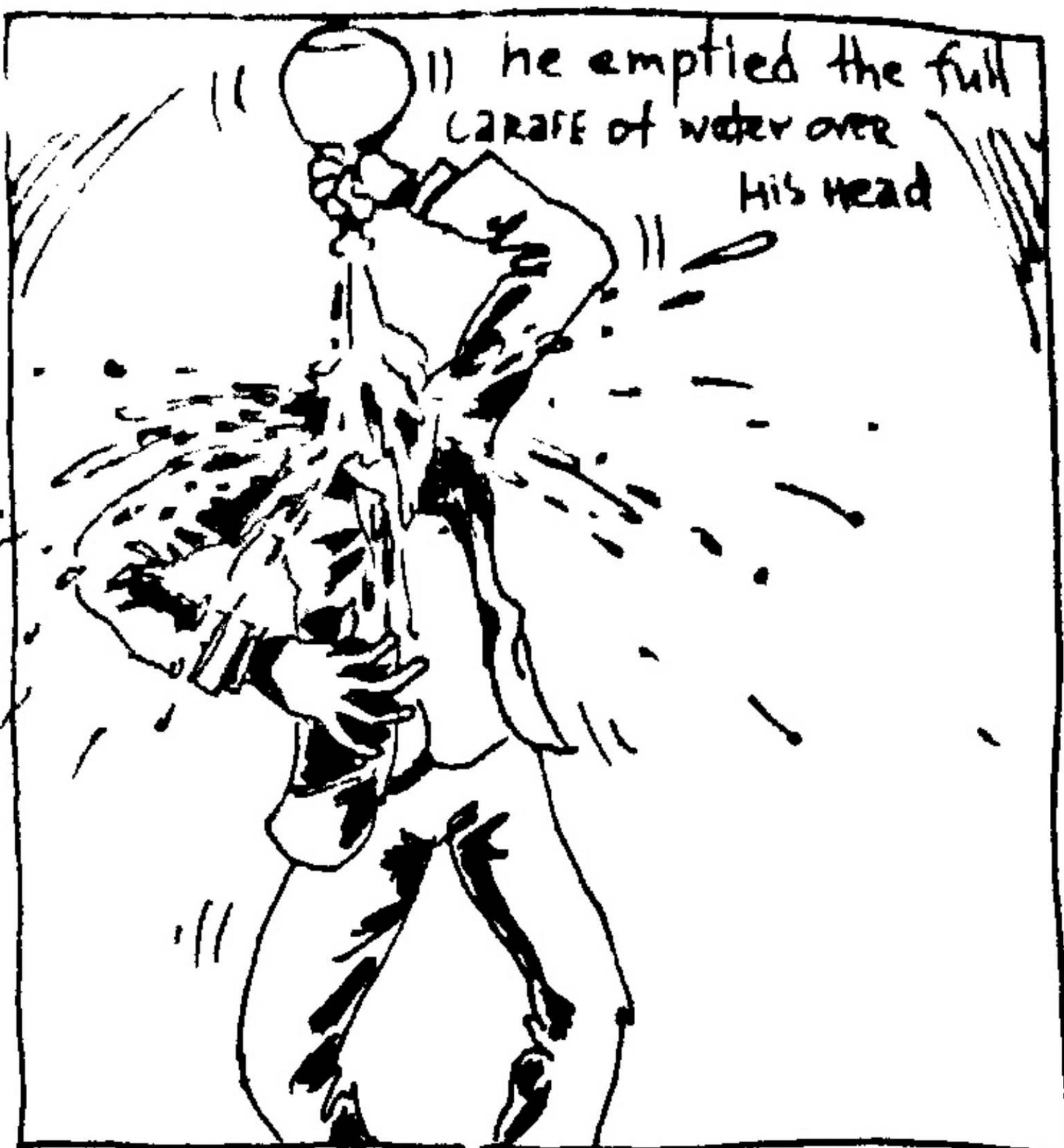
1926

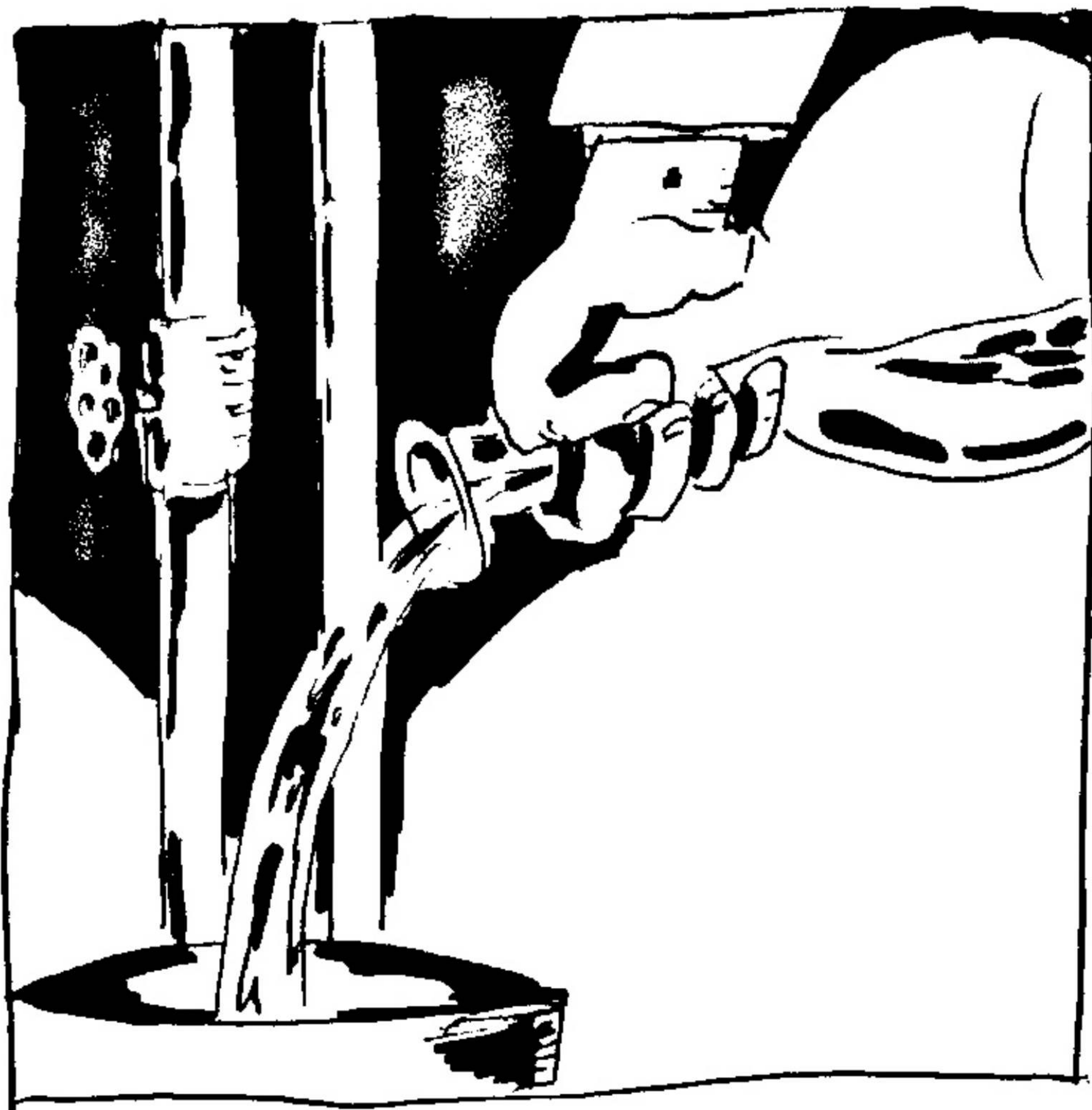


1928

1936







If Meyerhold has anything real about him
it is his fee!

Many thanks for "The Government
Inspector". It would be worth waking up
Gogol's spirit so that Gogol came
to the theatre to support you against all
these ring-puzzles in the press alleging
that you've killed Gogol's healthy
laughter, replacing it by some symbolist
devilry Andrey Bely 1926

The path you've taken
is the path that leads to
the puppet theatre. I look
the future straight in the eye
and I say we can't take this path
together. The path is yours.

MOVE ON FOR ANOTHER TWENTY
YEARS, MEYERHOLD!
YOU ARE A REINFORCED CONCRETE ATHLETE
AND AN EDISON OF TRILLION VOLTS.

not mine
you have
to go

Komissarzhevskaya
1902

I guess, no director
in the world has
been scolded as much
as I was. But would you
believe me if I say that nobody
has ever judged me as strictly as
I judge myself? However, I'm not
particularly keen on self-abuse in
public. After all it's between the two
of us, me and the other me... But
inner self-criticism is a weird thing.
There are victories you are
ashamed of and losses
you take pride
in.

MEGALOMANIA! HE CALLS HIMSELF THE AUTHOR OF THE PERFORMANCE!

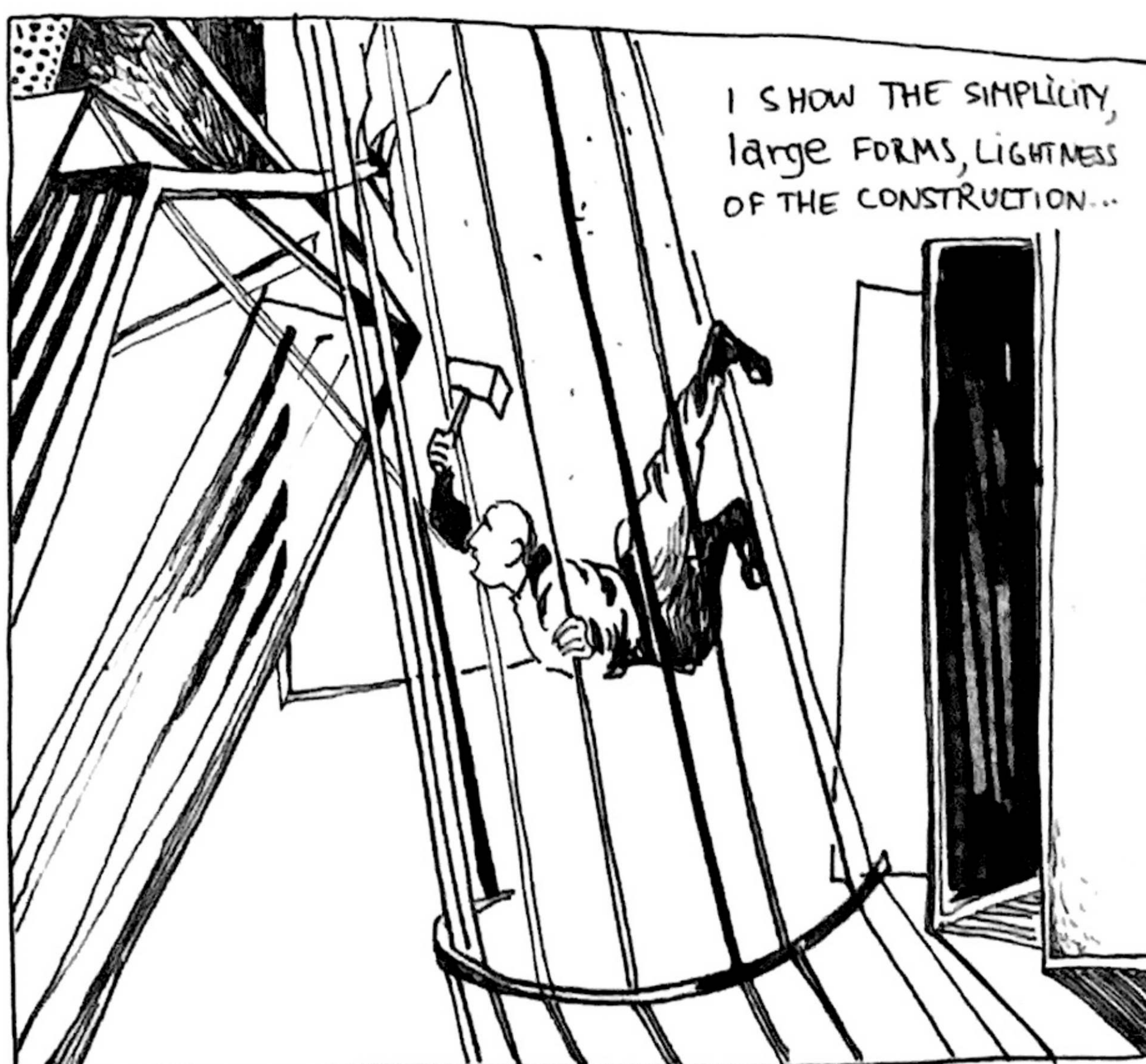
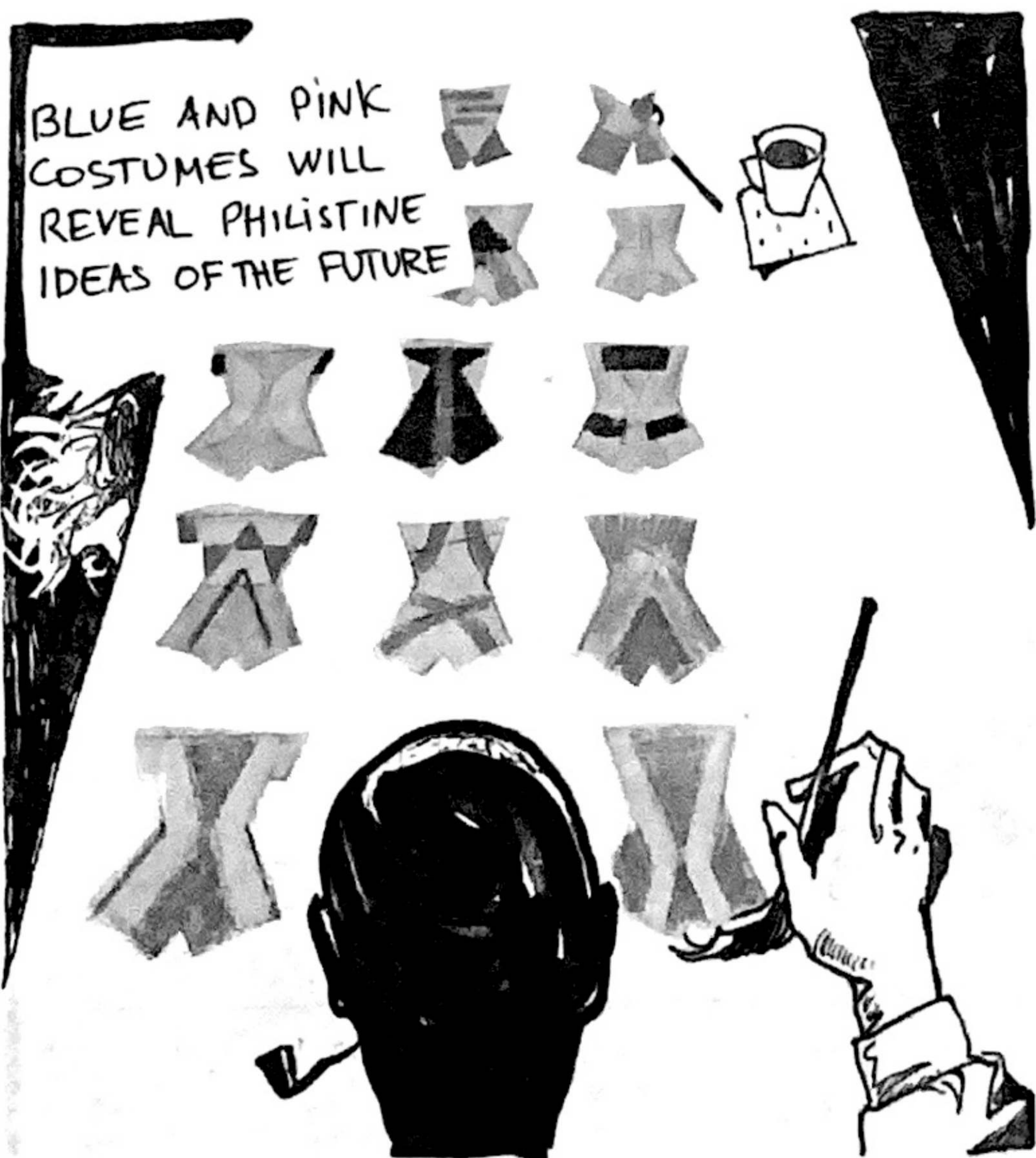
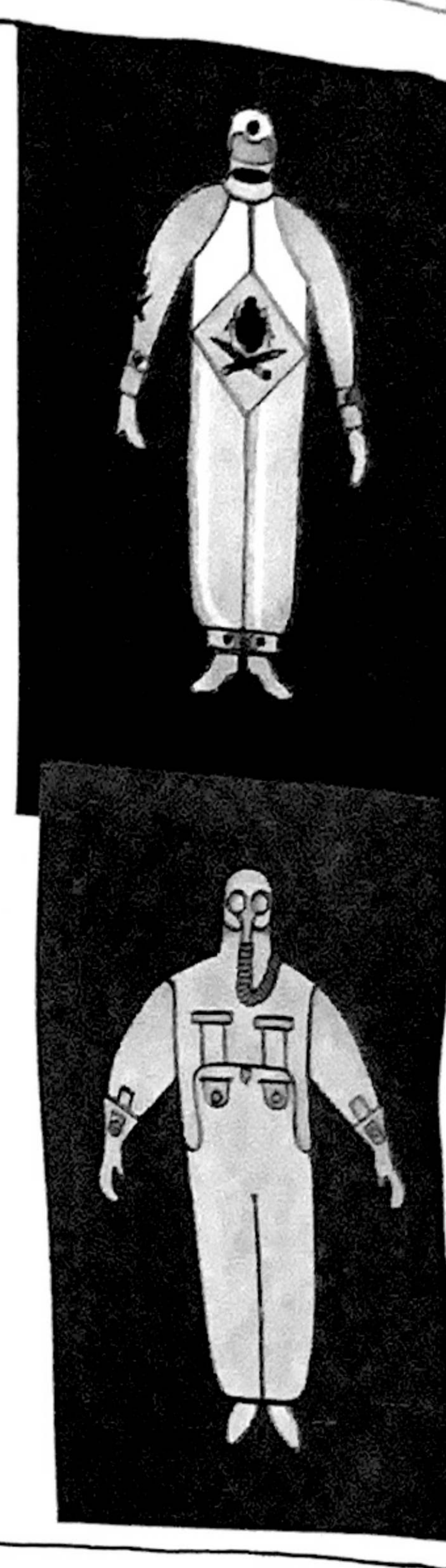
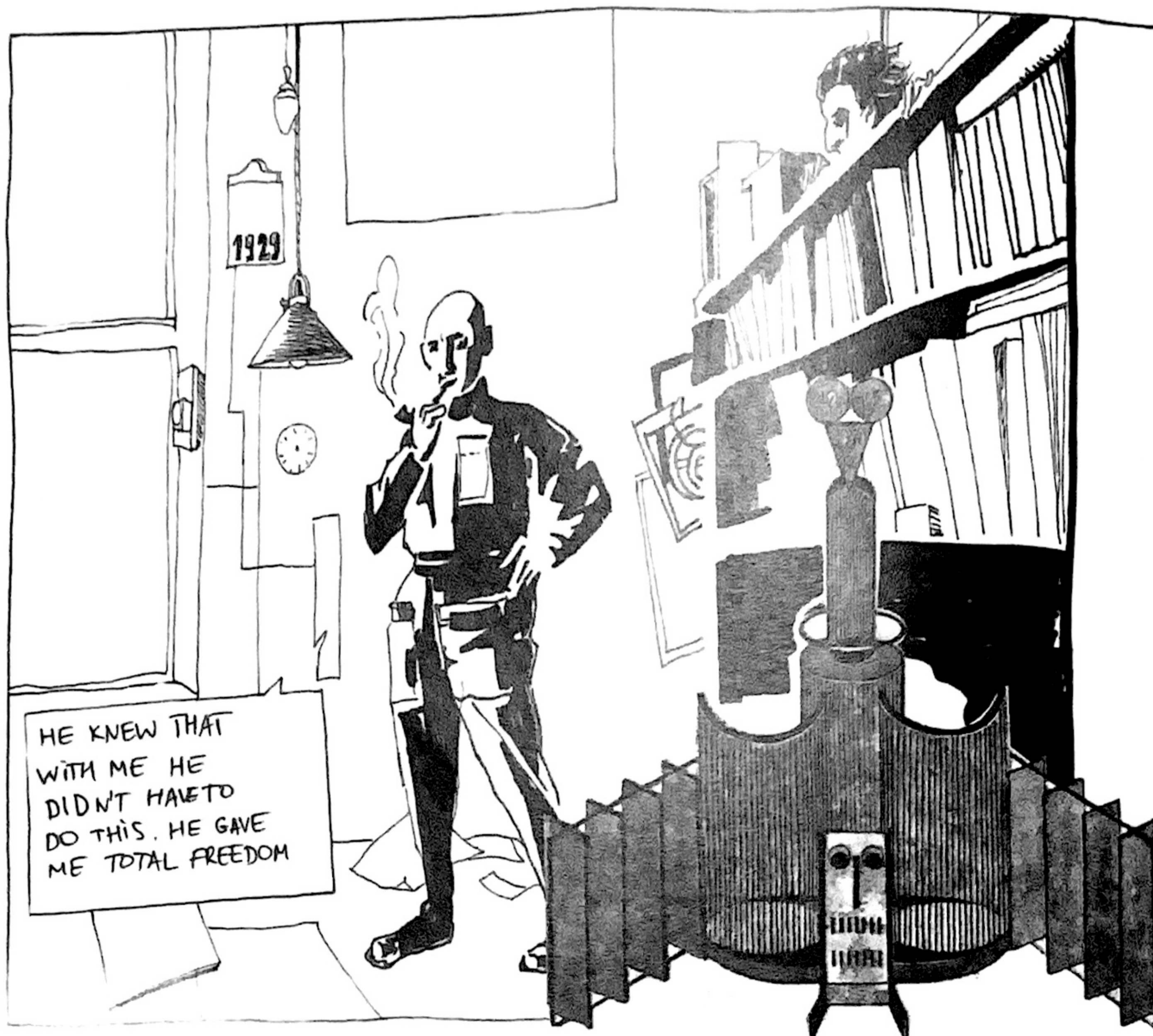
HORRIBLE YELLING
GLITTER AND CHATTER.
ONE CAN'T MAKE OUT
A WORD. IT WAS
NEAR A FIGHT...
--- VERBATIM OF A DISPUTE
ABOUT "THE DAWNS"
LATE 1920-S

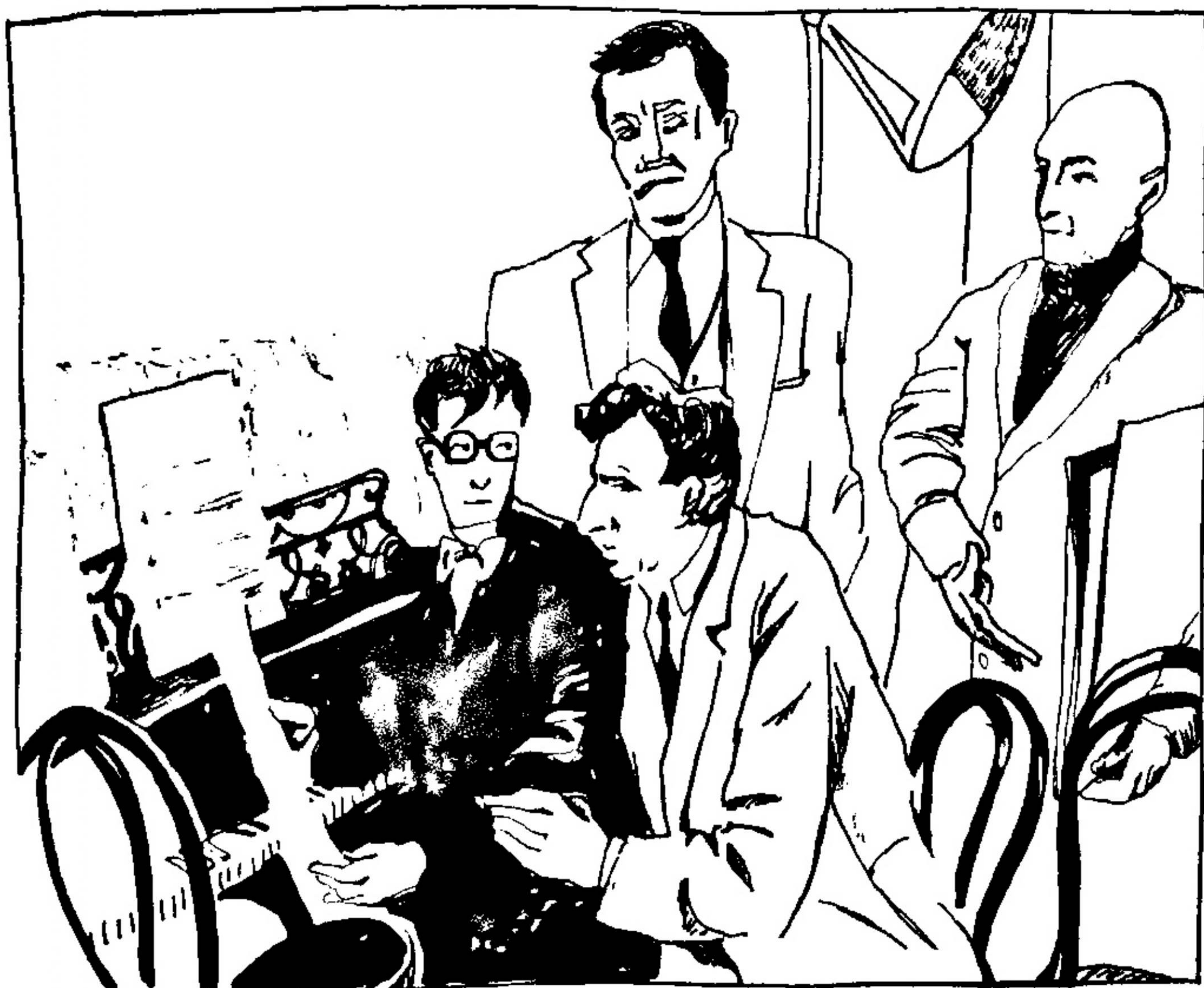
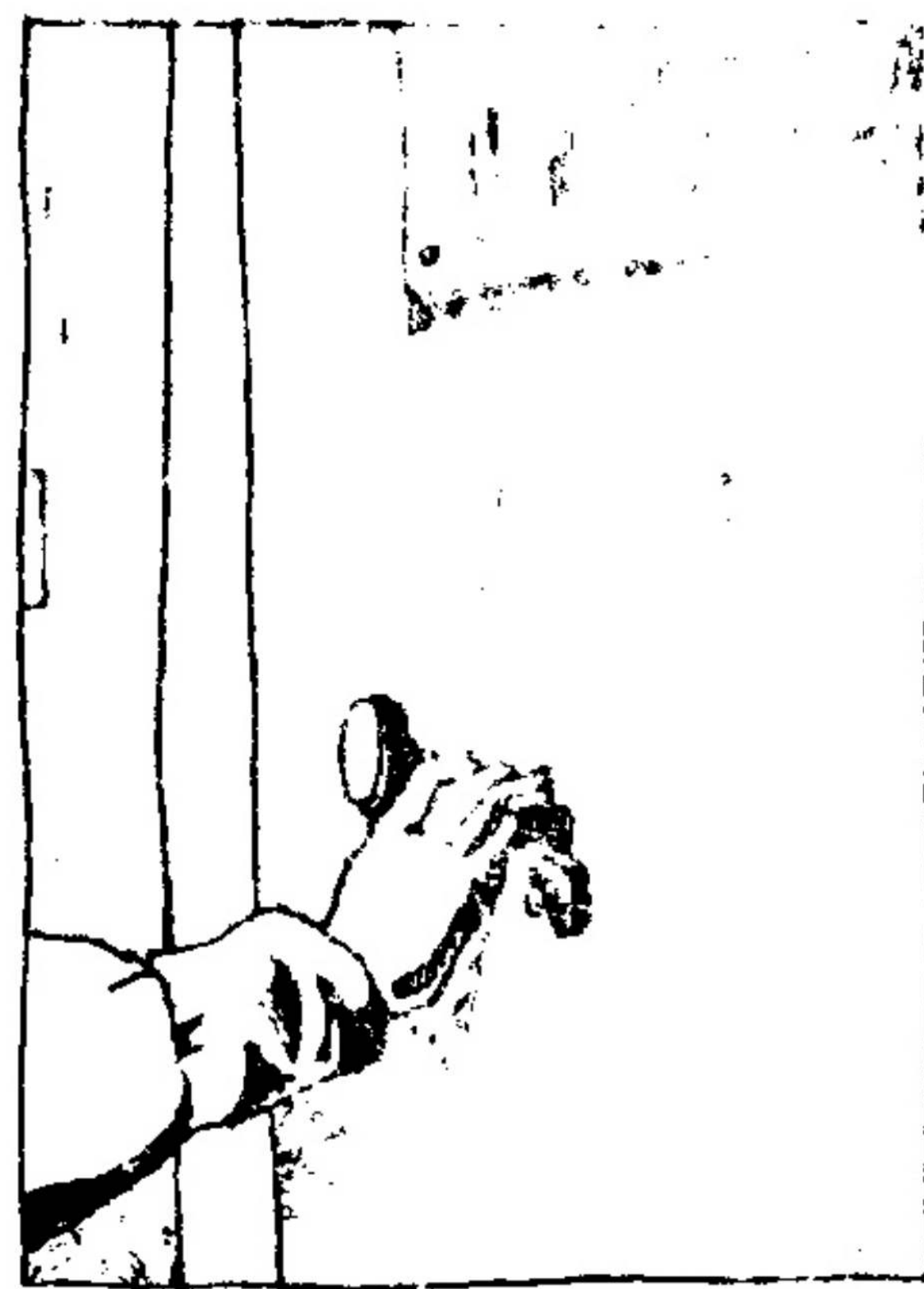
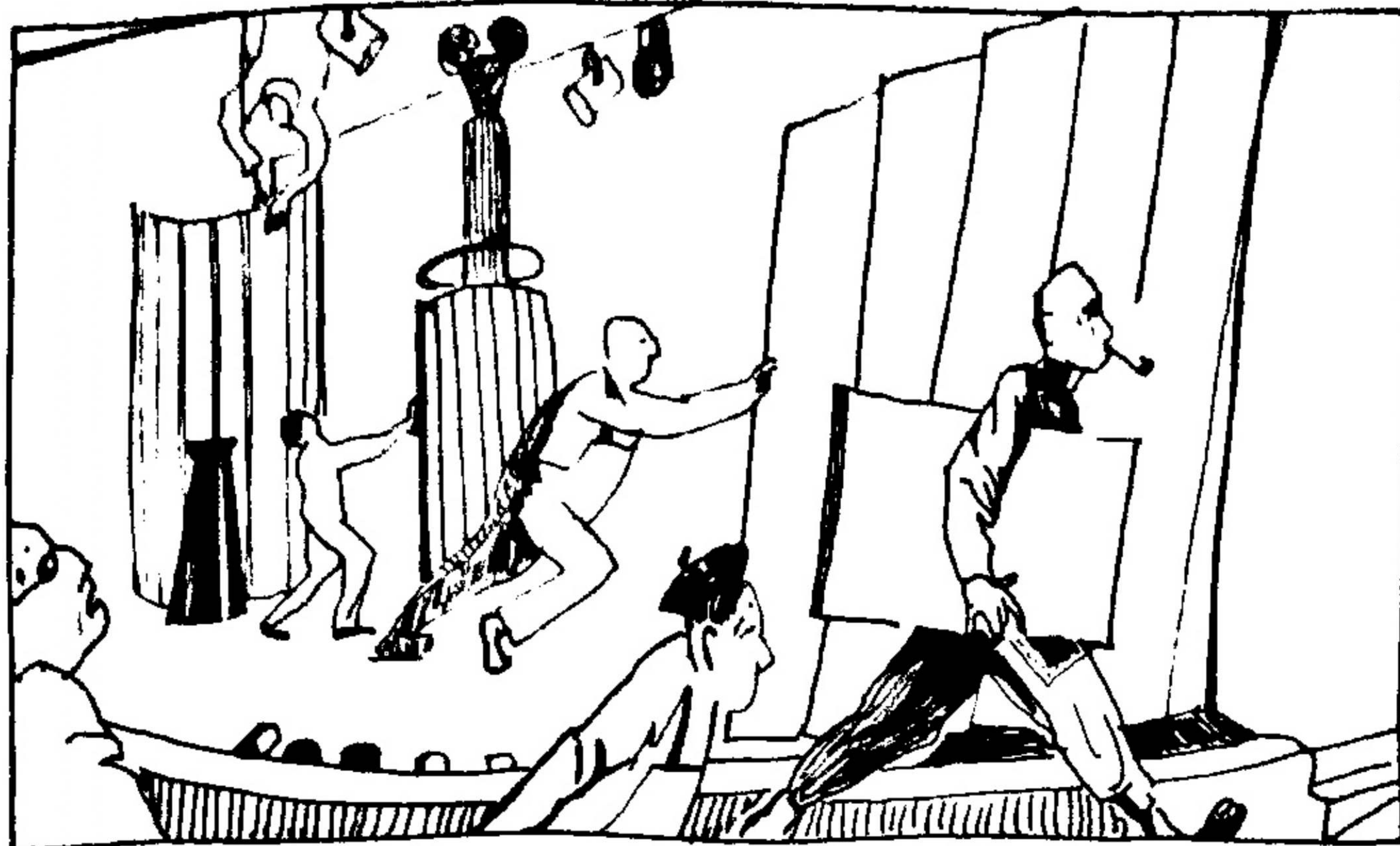
I'M SICK AND TIRED
OF RALLIES
TIME TO GO TO THEATRE
AND DREAM
Luvacharsky

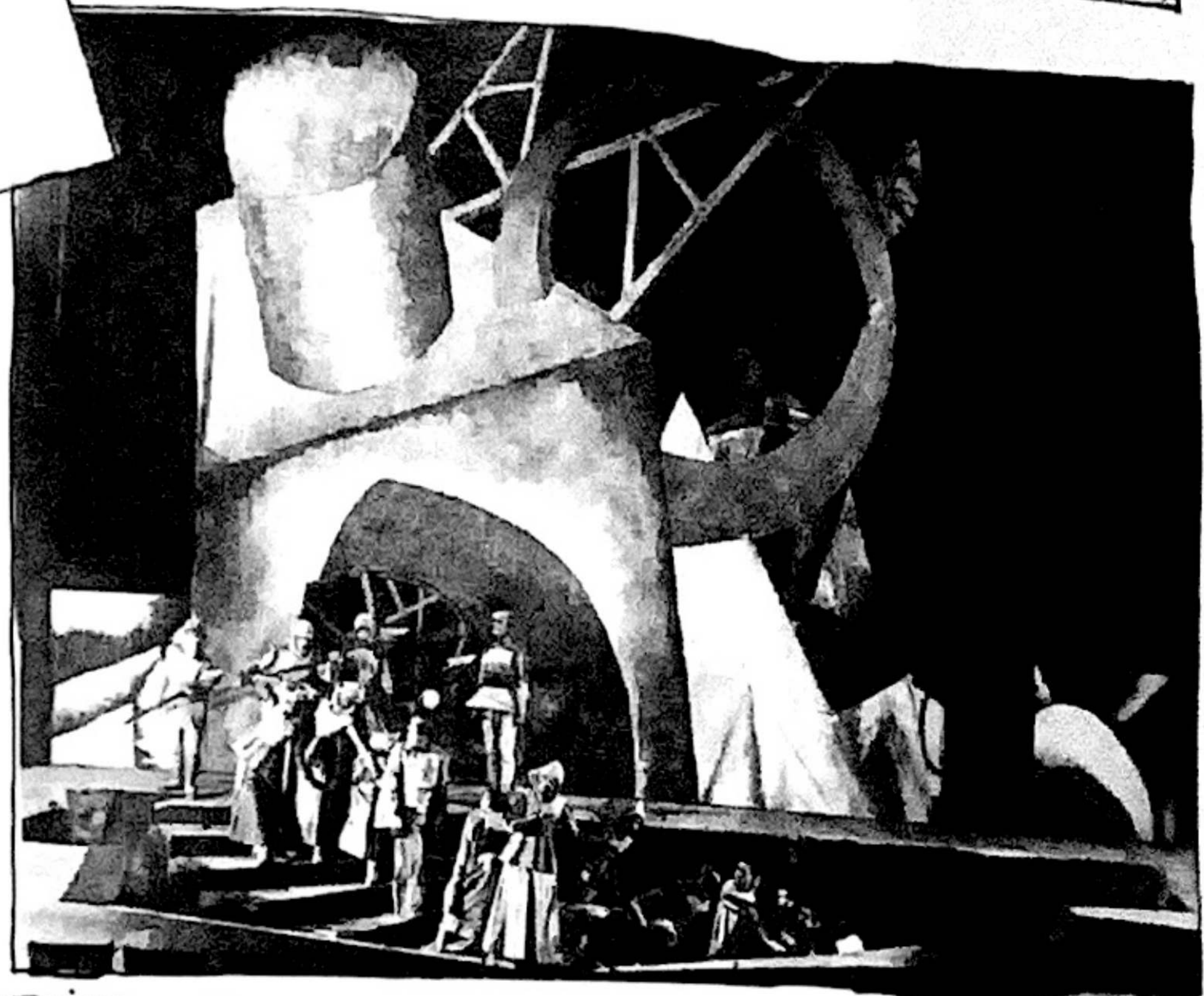
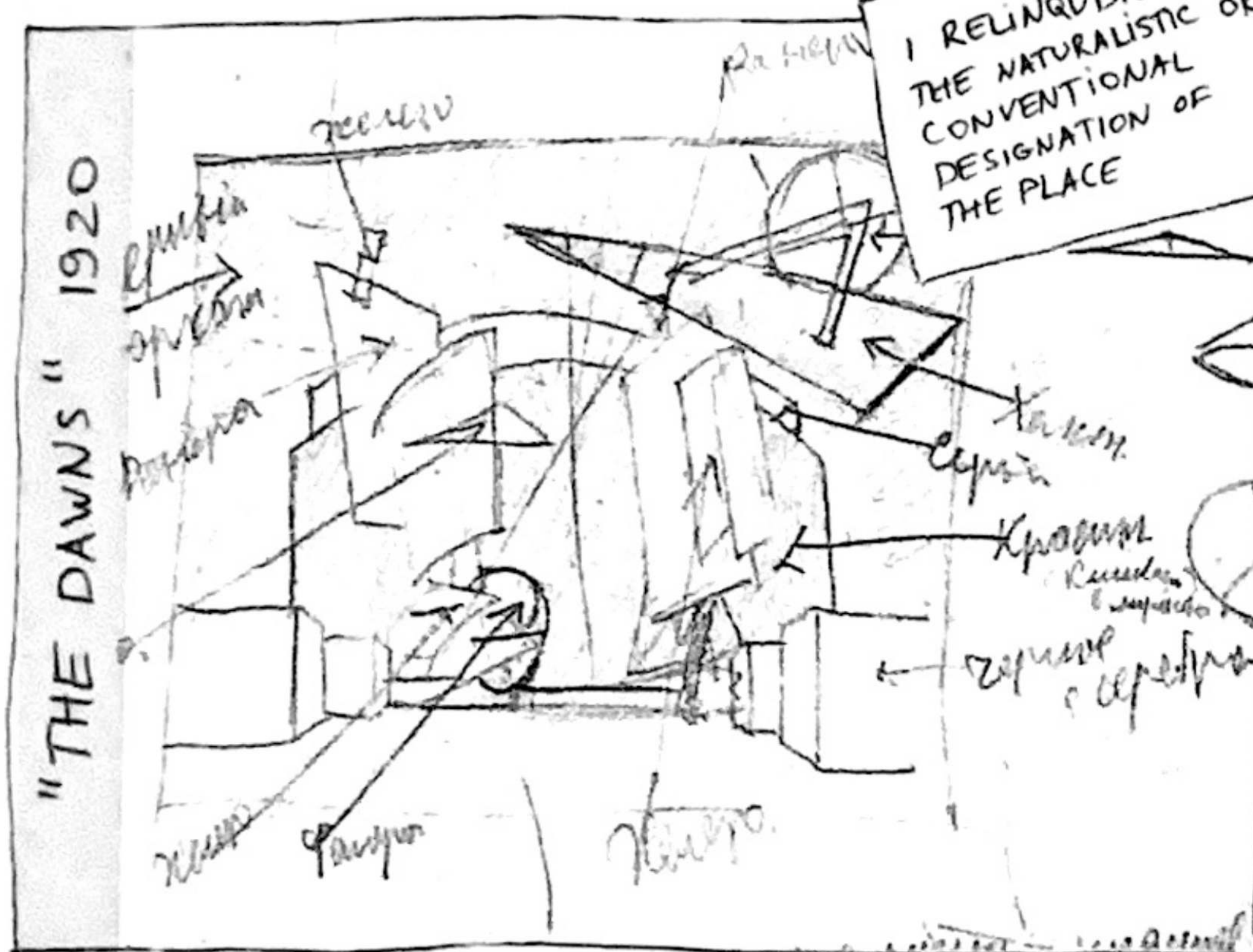
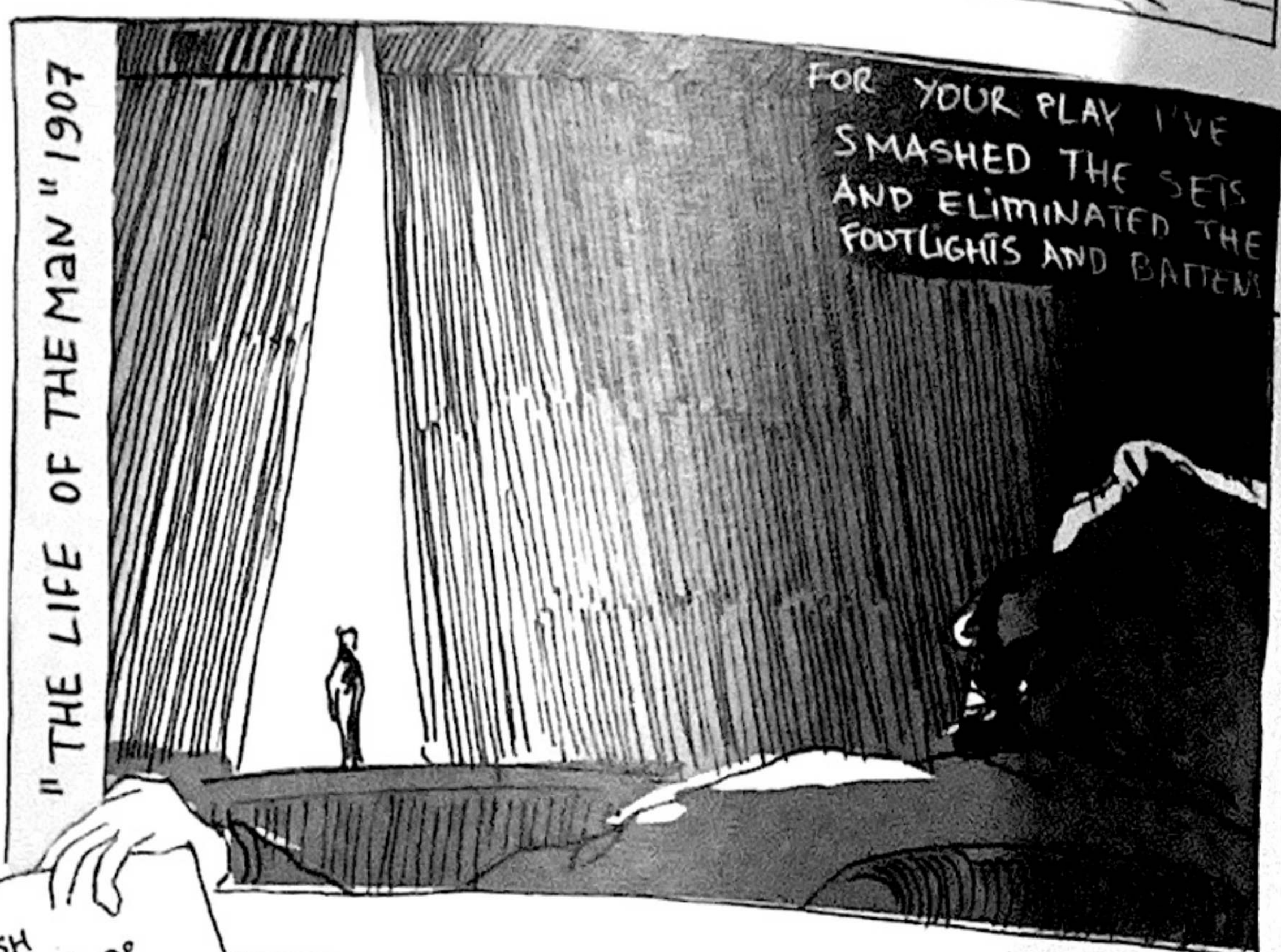
MEYERHOLD IS AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE.
I SAW HIM IN THE MOMENTS OF
SEARCHING, DREAMING, MAKING
MISTAKES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS
I LOVE HIM BECAUSE IN ALL
THESE MOMENTS HE WAS
OVERWHELMED BY WHAT HE WAS
DOING AND I HAD STRONG FAITH IN
HIS POWER

Stanislavsky

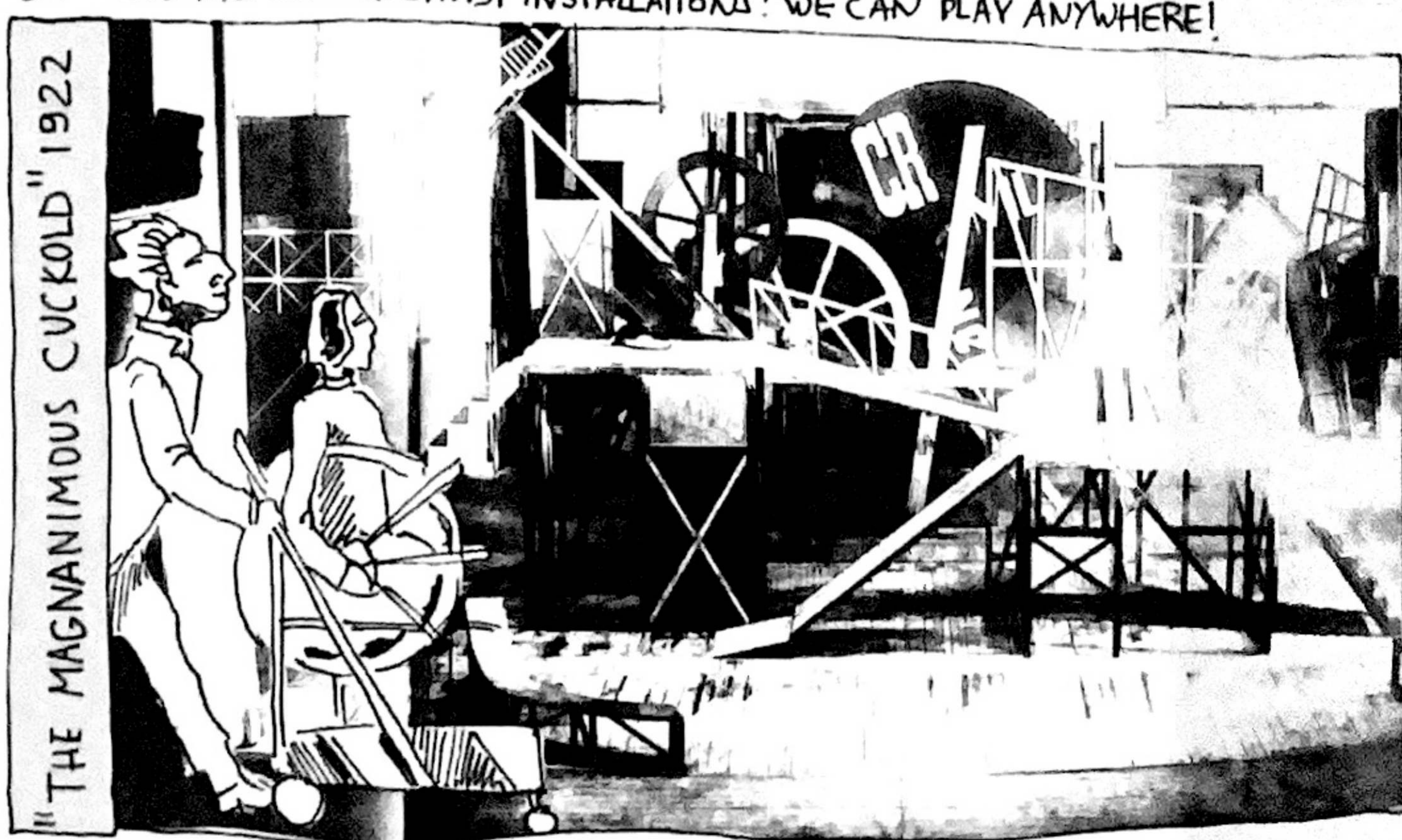
For THM







LONG LIVE THE CONSTRUCTIVIST INSTALLATIONS! WE CAN PLAY ANYWHERE!



WE PUT TOGETHER 30 ACTORS ON A TINY PLATFORM AND

HERE YOU'VE GOT THE CLOSE-UP

"THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR" 1926

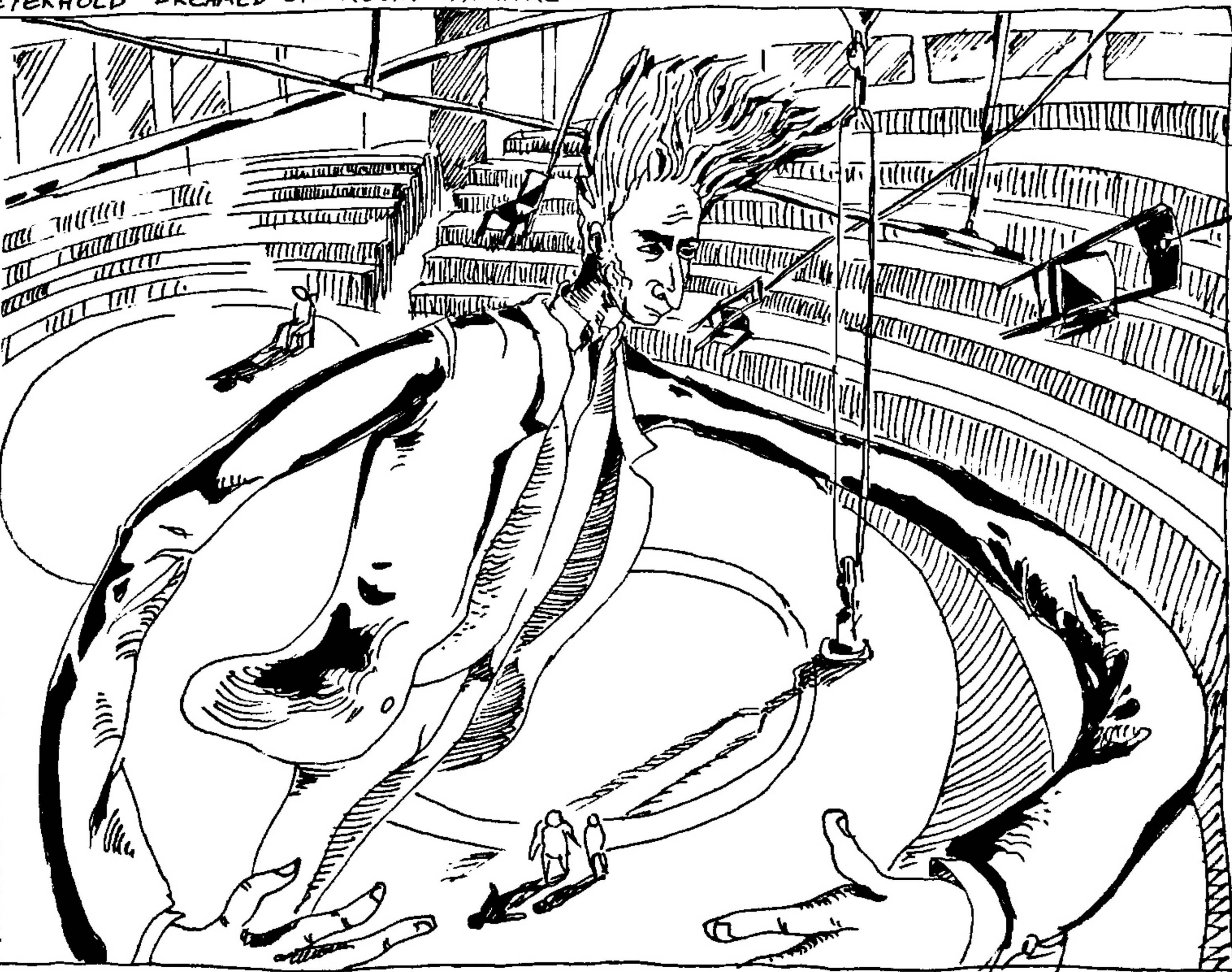


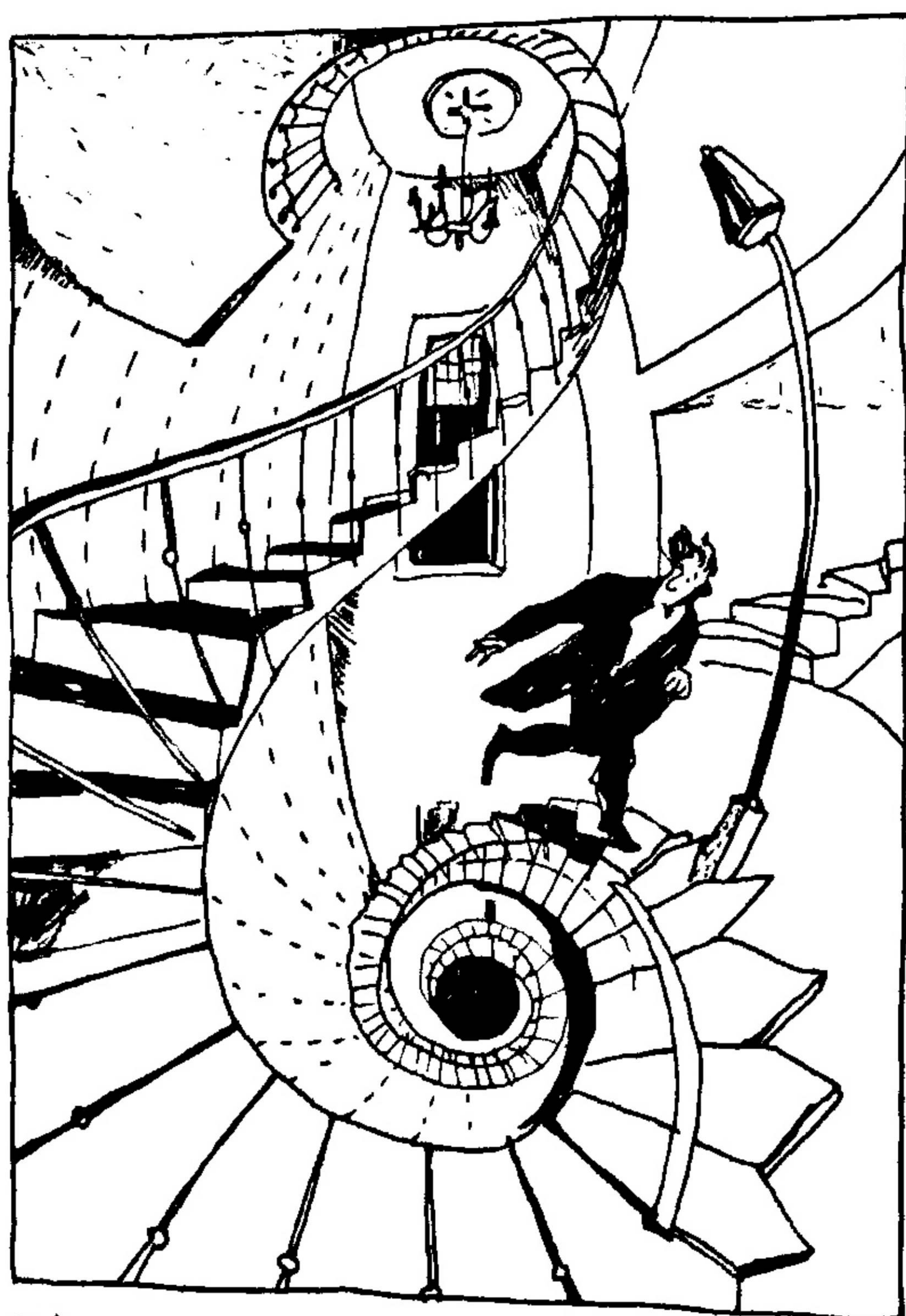
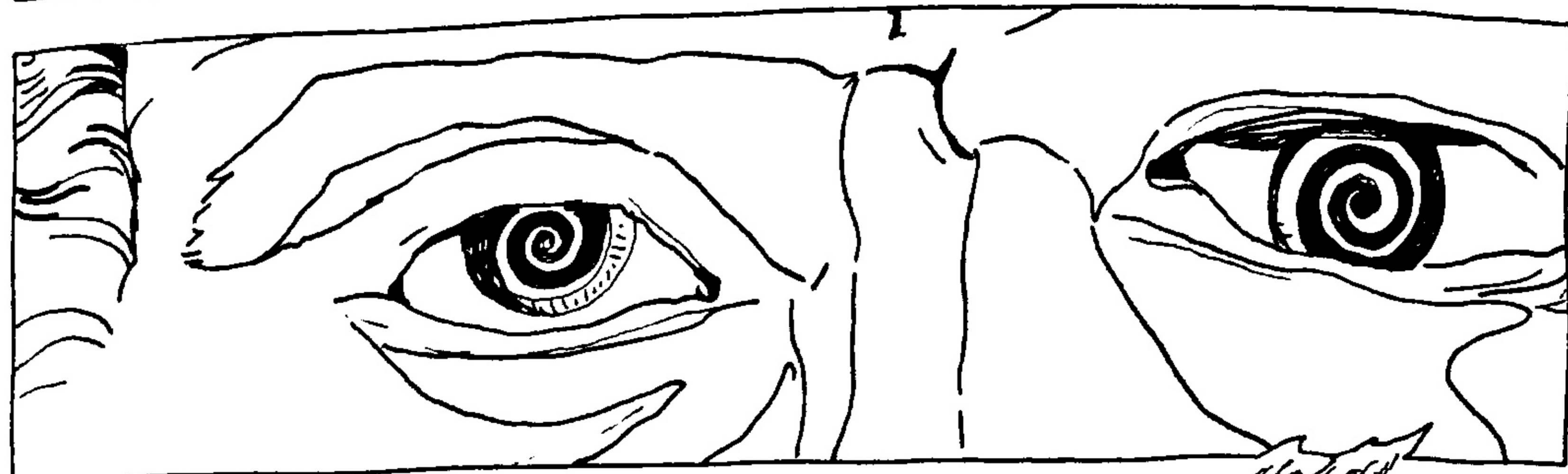
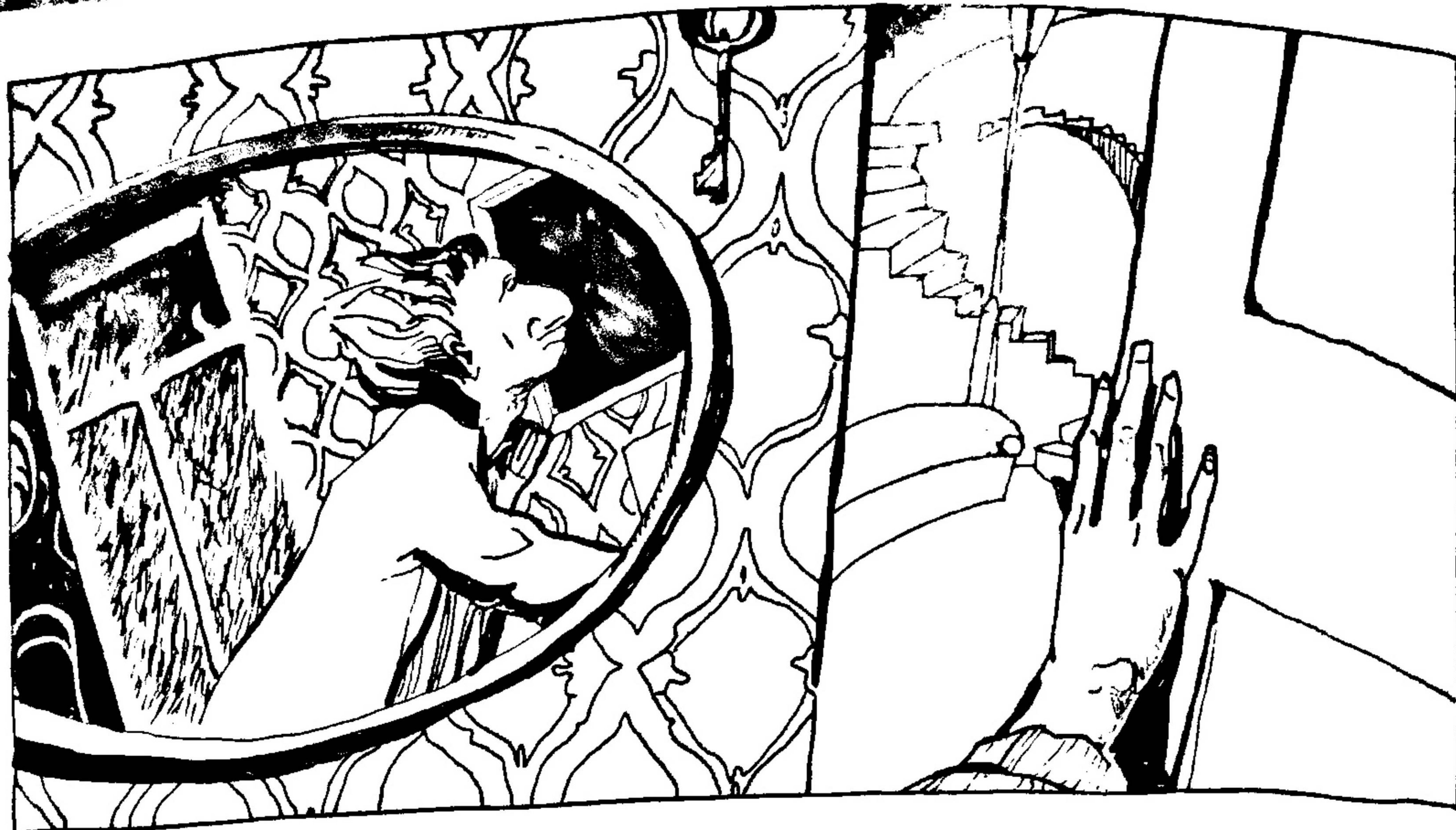
PUPPET DOUBLES INSTEAD OF REAL PEOPLE IN THE "SILENT SCENE"

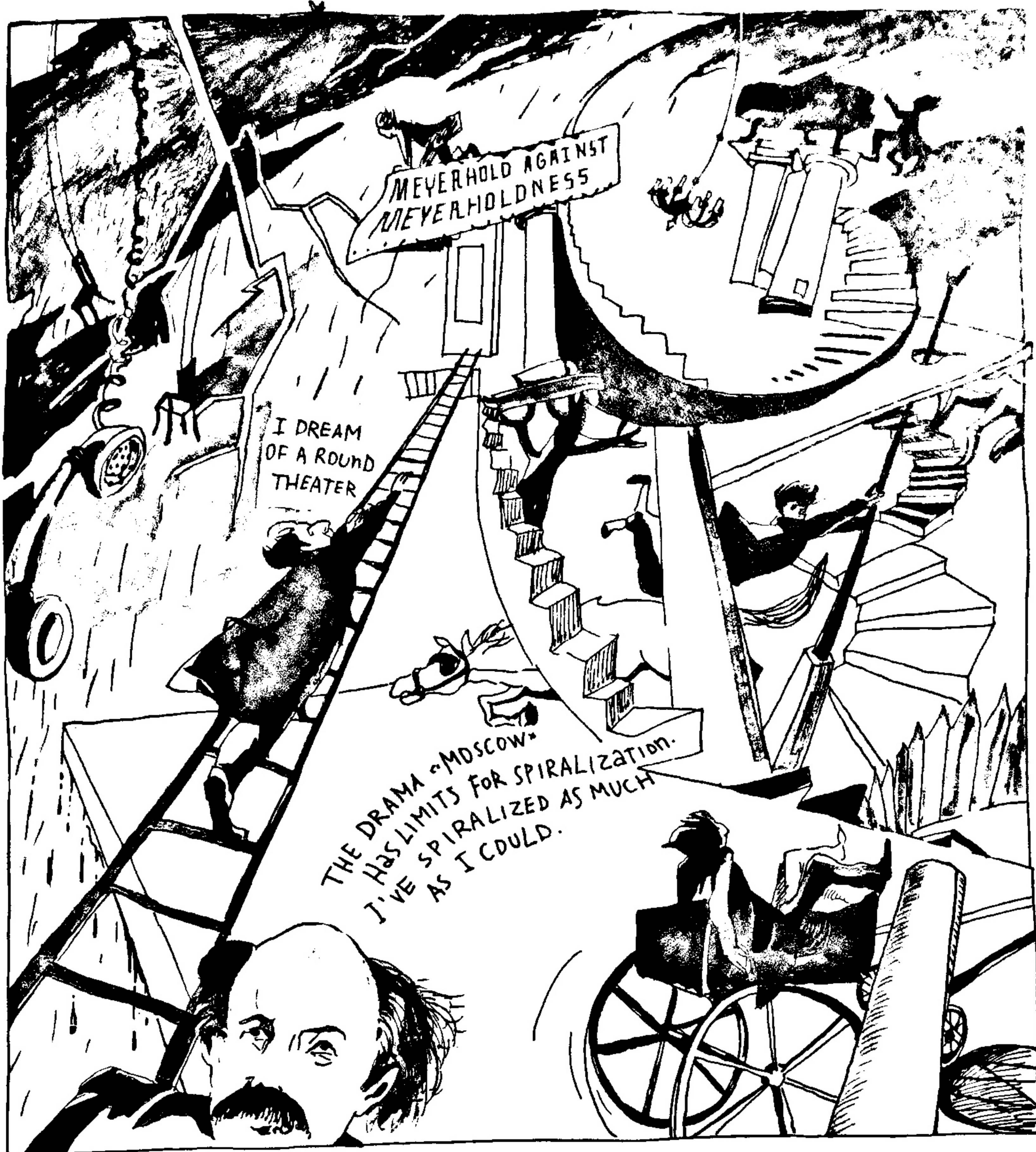


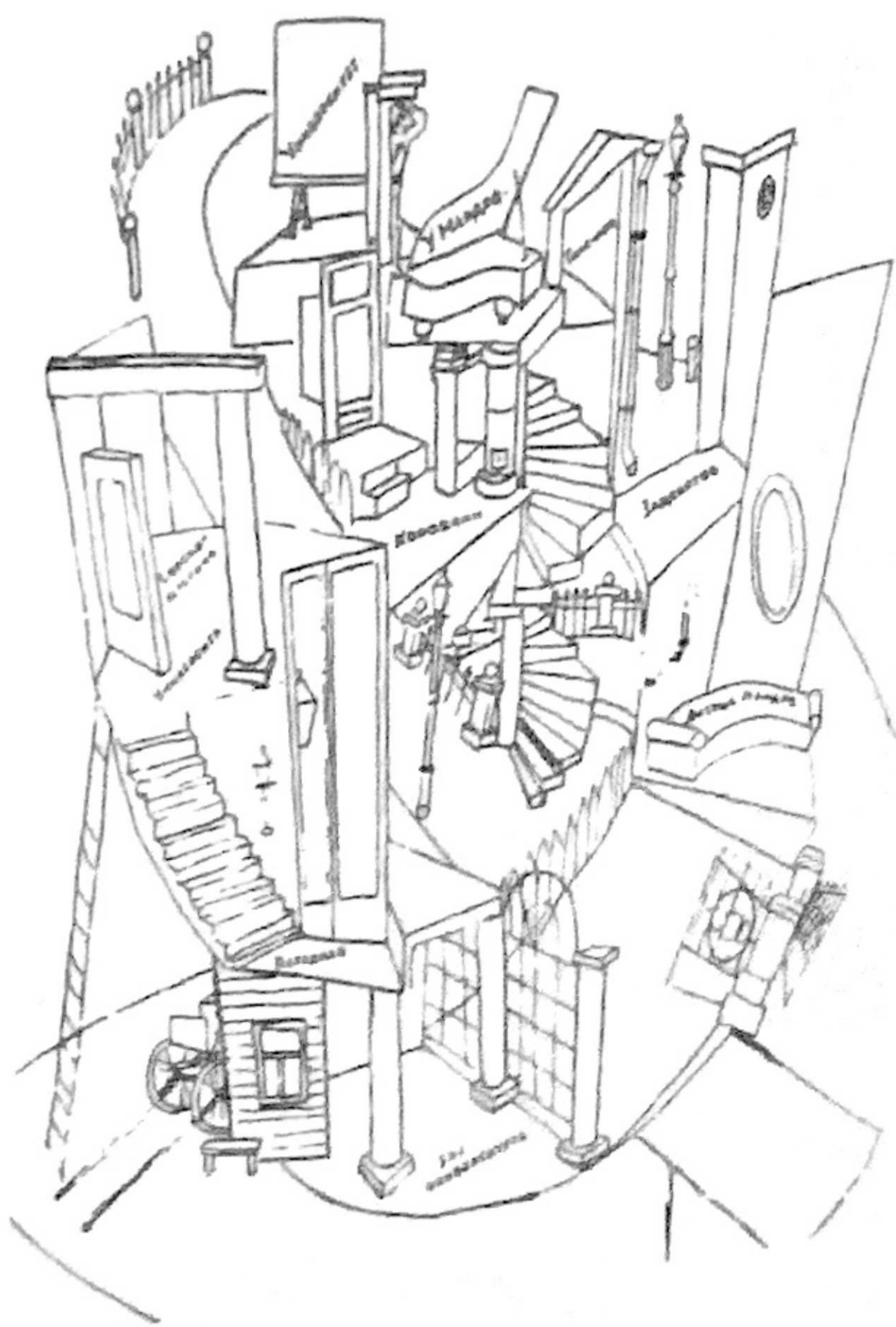
MEYERHOLD DREAMED OF ROUND THEATRE...

PROJECT OF NEW BUILDING FOR THE MEYERHOLD'S THEATRE, 1932

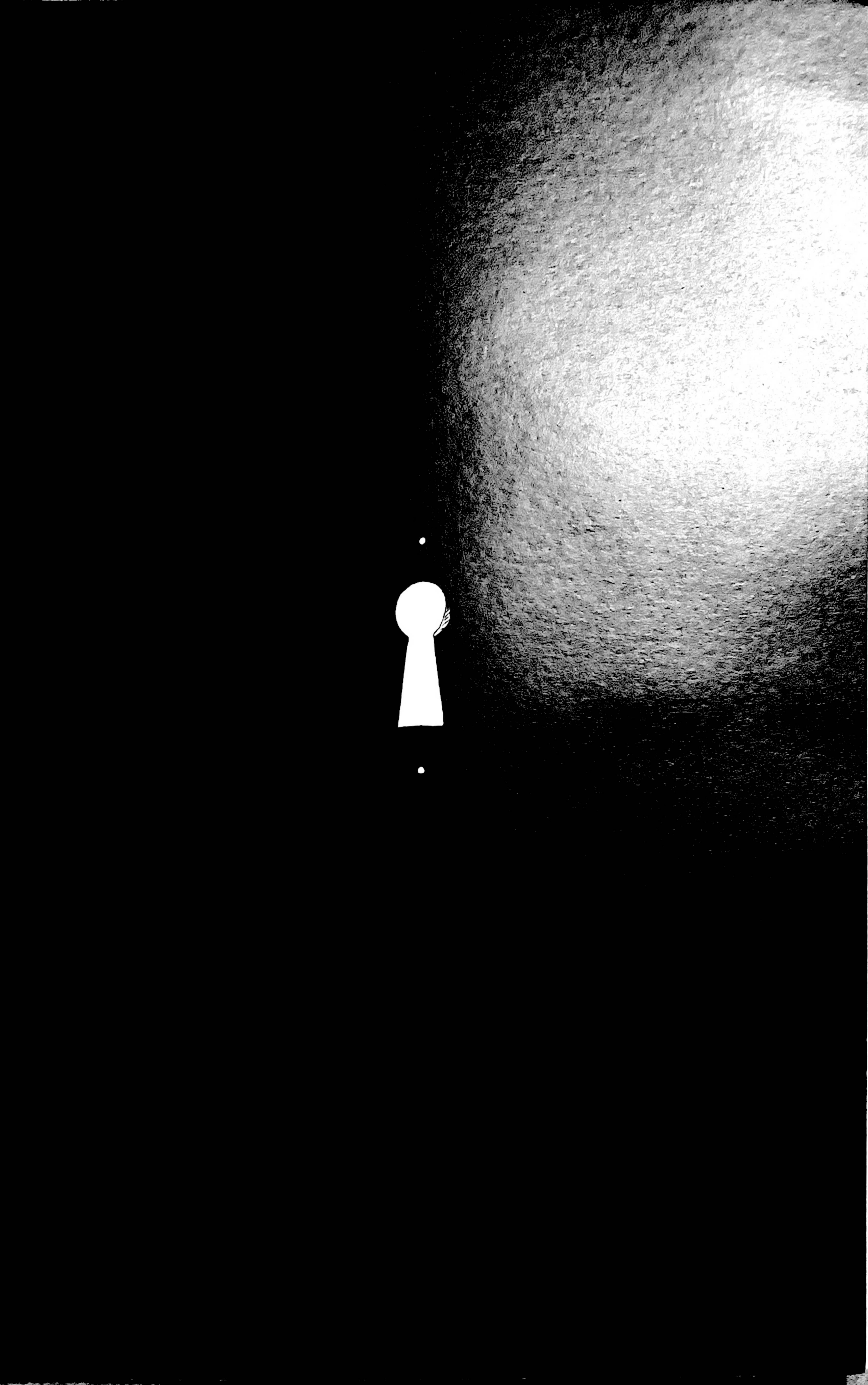






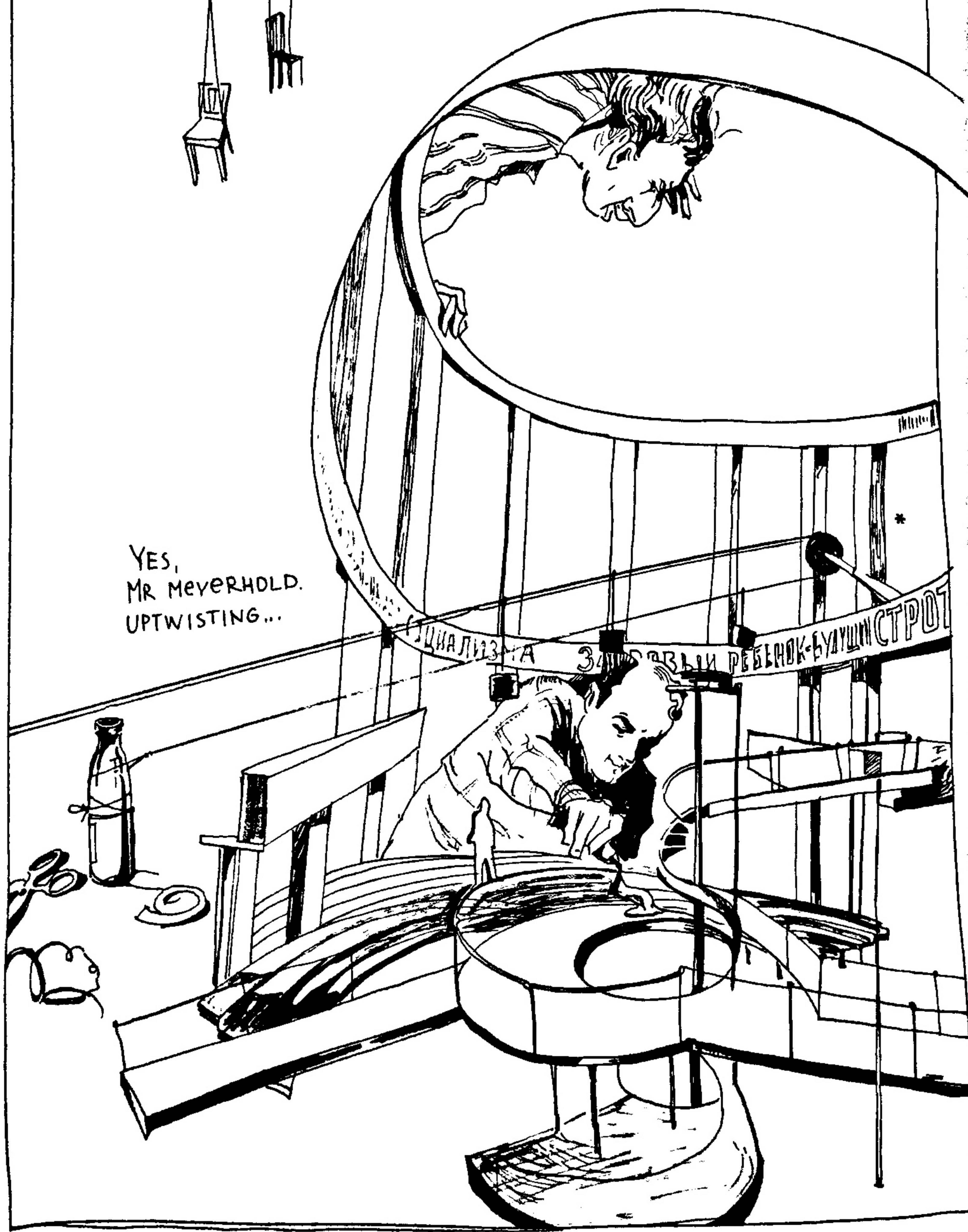


* "Moscow" by Andrei Bely. Sketch of basic set (not realised).



OH... THANKS GOD
LISSITZKY! IT'S YOU!

YES,
MR MEYERHOLD.
UPTWISTING...





MEYERHOLD'S RULES

*To have horror
of making
a mistake means
to never know
a fortune.*

*If I see a scandal in
the street, I always
stop and stare. You
can peek the most
diverse and intimate
human traits. Don't
listen to the policeman
if he asks you to go
away. Walk around
the crowd, stand on
the other side and
watch. If I ever miss
a rehearsal and you
will see some action in
the street, be sure —
Meyerhold is there.*

Do not try! Trust the audience! It is a lot smarter than we tend to think of it.
The audience's perception is richer when it is subconscious.

There are no sucker punches in the arts. There are only miscarriages.

The greatest misfortune in my life was when Stanislavsky once got angry with me. It was just before I quit Moscow Art Theatre. It was all the result of an ordinary theatrical scuttlebutt. He stopped talking to me. I wished to have it out with him but he didn't want to see me. Eventually it all came out in the wash and he was nice to me like never before as though he felt guilty. Then I fully realised how much Stanislavsky's attitude meant to me.

My favorite associations... Look for associative moves. Work with them. I was just getting aware of the enormous power of figurative associations in theatre. It's a vast range of opportunities.

Prettiess is the bitterest foe of beauty.

Mastership is when the "what" and the "how" occur simultaneously.

In art to fathom is more important than to know.

Don't confuse "tradition" with "cliché". A cliché is a hollow tradition.

In a drama the story is a system of regular surprises.

The most exciting thing about the art is that at every new stage you feel like an apprentice.

Use short words to scold a person: "bad", "poor"; and use long ones to praise: "fantastic", "magnificent", "extraordinary"...

The cadence of the dialogue must be maintained during pauses.

My creed is to use simple and brief theatre language that leads to complex associations. In this way I would like to stage "Hamlet" and "Boris Godunov".

Simplicity is the most precious thing in art. But every artist has his own idea of what simplicity is.

When I was directing "La Dame aux Camelias" I dreamed that every flier who saw the play would fly better afterwards.

No, I don't like working at the desk. I just don't like it. They say Stanislavsky has lately disliked it too...

A master differs from an amateur in that there is nothing neutral in his work. Every little thing works as a unit even if this is not all that obvious.

When I'm told: "You are a master!" I smile inside. Before each premiere I am very agitated as though I'm passing an exam to take the vacancy of the second violin.

Mayakovsky once observed: "One has to have a face to be able to laugh". Well said. Very well said!

I dream of a performance rehearsed with the music but performed without it.

Some people facing an abyss think of profundity, the others think of a bridge. I belong to the second type.





Prague Quadrennial
of Performance Design
and Space

13th International Exhibition of Scenography and Theatre
Architecture Prague Quadrennial

RUSSIAN NATIONAL EXPOSITION
June 18-28, 2015 Prague, Czech Republic

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Elizaveta Bomash

Curator **Inna Mirzoyan**
Technical director **Olga Pavluk**
Production by **Anatoliy Shikulya Company**

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O R U S T A T

Theatre Union of the Russian Federation
Russian Centre of OISTAT

