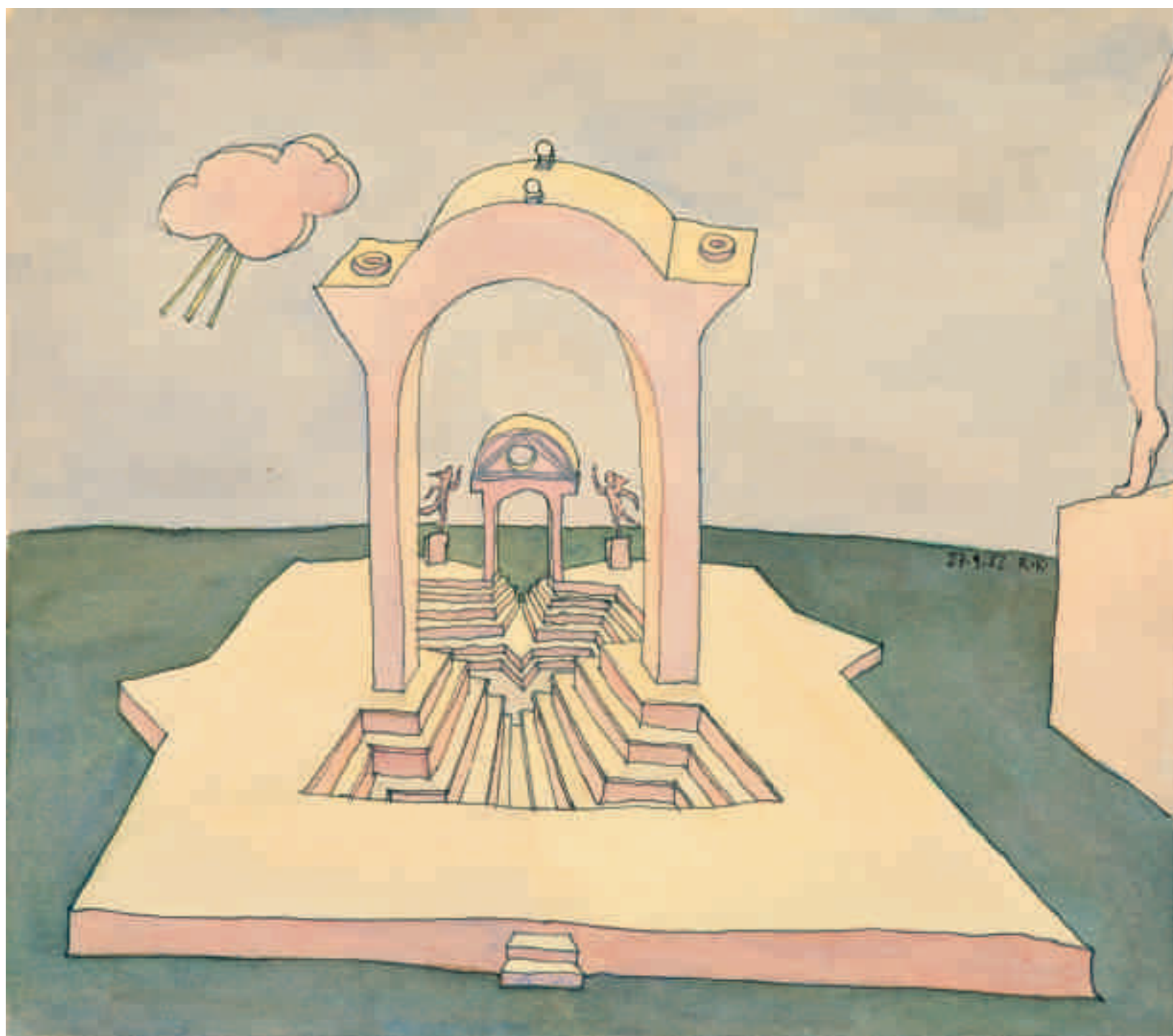
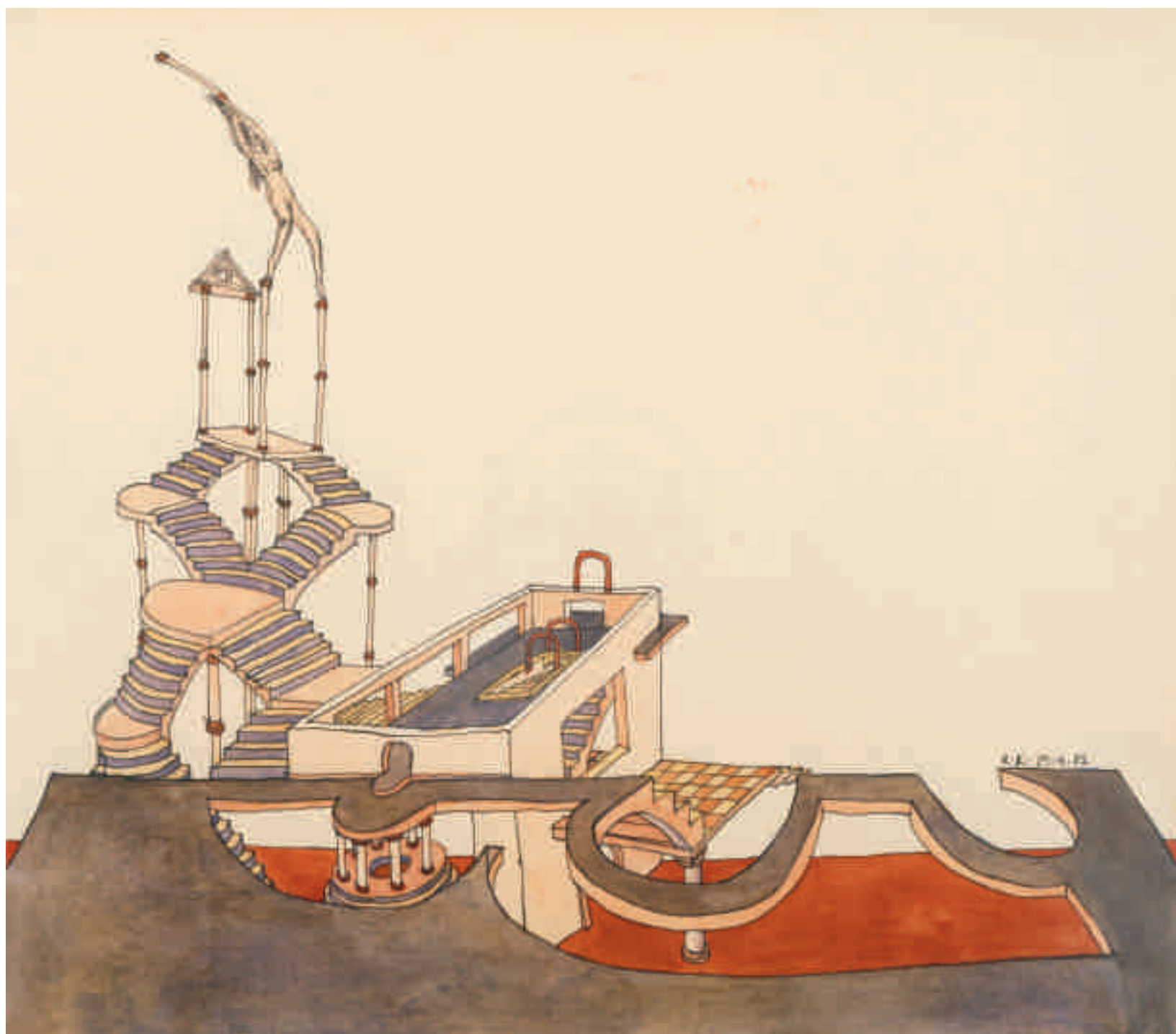
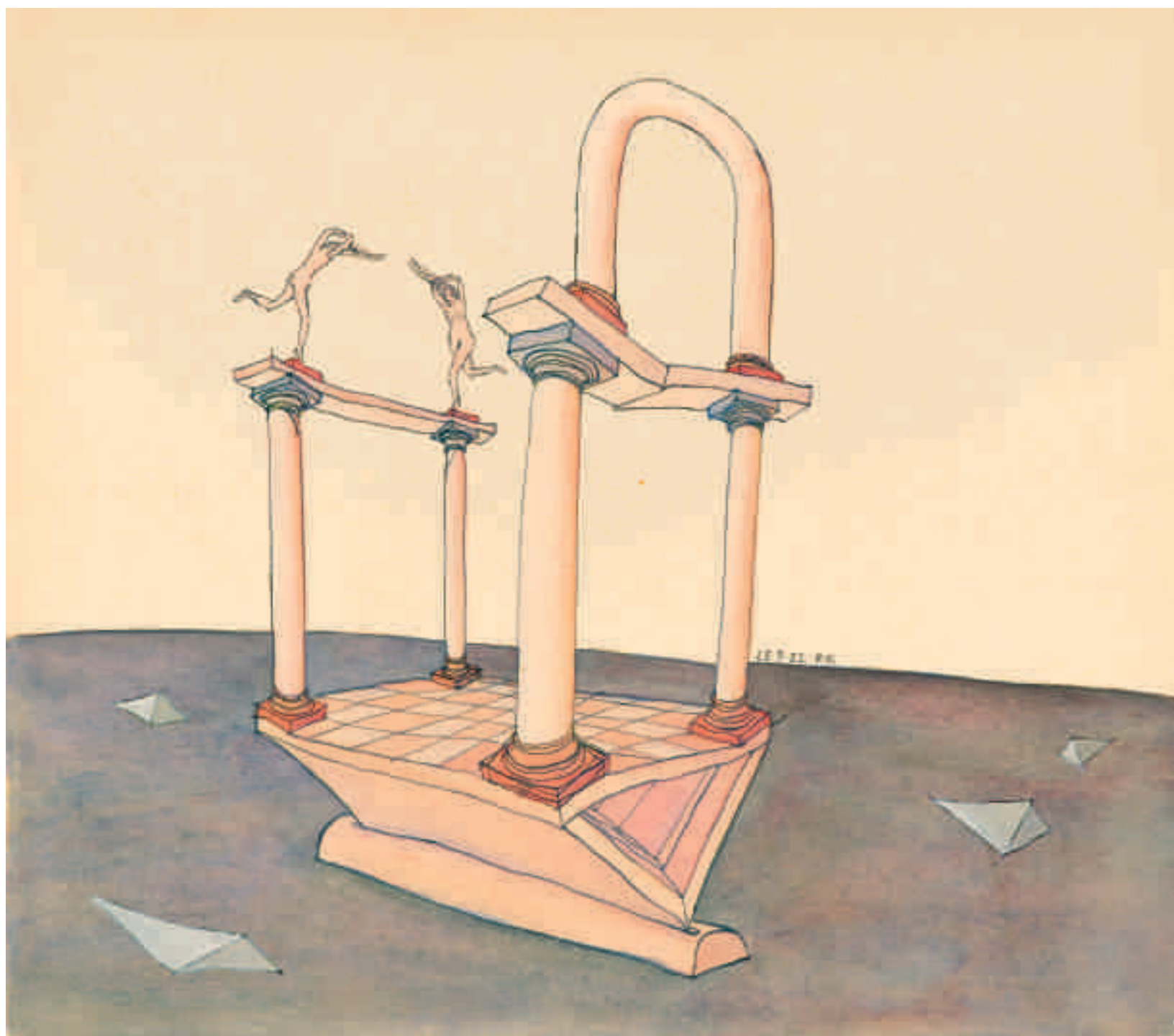








Frauenzimmer und Weibsbilder

Renate Kordon's Ariadne Drawings

'Minos contrived to hide this specimen in a maze,
A labyrinth built by Daedalus, an artist
Famous in building, who could set in stone
Confusion and conflict, and deceive the eye
With devious aisles and passages...'

*Ovid, The Metamorphoses*¹

'All things would be visibly connected if one could
discover at a single glance and in its totality the
tracings of an Ariadne's thread leading thought into
its own labyrinth.'

*Georges Bataille*²

Created mainly in her early thirties, Renate Kordon's extensive series of Ariadne drawings throng with images of fantastical, exuberant women dancing, stretching and floating through space. They sprout wings and mermaids' tails while their gravity-defying tresses of hair extend through and round space, and fleshy threads trail from their bodies in soft coils.

These Ariadnes are surrounded not by labyrinths but by a maze of classical temples, geometric architectures verging on the Escheresque: columns, boxes, impossible staircases, squares, triangles, tiers of arches reaching for the sky, pediments, paved floors stretching to the horizon. These women are finding their way in an incomprehensible, male-constructed space, 'feeling' their way through it. And yet this is not a narrative of limitations and restriction – rather, this is a joyful celebration

of instinct, escape and a profound, instinctive wisdom that transcends the maze.

In her essay *Architectureproduction*, Beatriz Colomina observes that 'Greek legend insists that Daedalus was the first architect, but this is hardly the case: although he built the Cretan labyrinth, he never understood its structure. [...] Instead it may be argued that Ariadne achieved the first work of architecture, since it was she who gave Theseus the ball of thread by means of which he found his way out of the labyrinth after having killed the Minotaur. Thus while Ariadne did not build the labyrinth, she was the one who interpreted it; and this is architecture in the modern sense of the term.'³ The implication is that, unlike building, architecture is an interpretive act that differs from the functional act of construction. In using her ball of red thread to read the labyrinth, Ariadne uncovered the precept of its design, its foundations, and unraveled the machinery of its conception. It is indeed Ariadne who grasps and defeats the labyrinth: Theseus is simply her tool for doing so. Far from being the victim of the story, it is Ariadne who, with her intuition and imagination, emerges triumphant.

In Renate Kordon's drawings, Ariadne's red thread also offers us an escape from two dimensions into three, four, and further dimensions. If we can manage to surrender ourselves to their playful fluidity, movement and energy, then they will lead us into the dismantling of dimensions, in space and in time, that runs throughout

