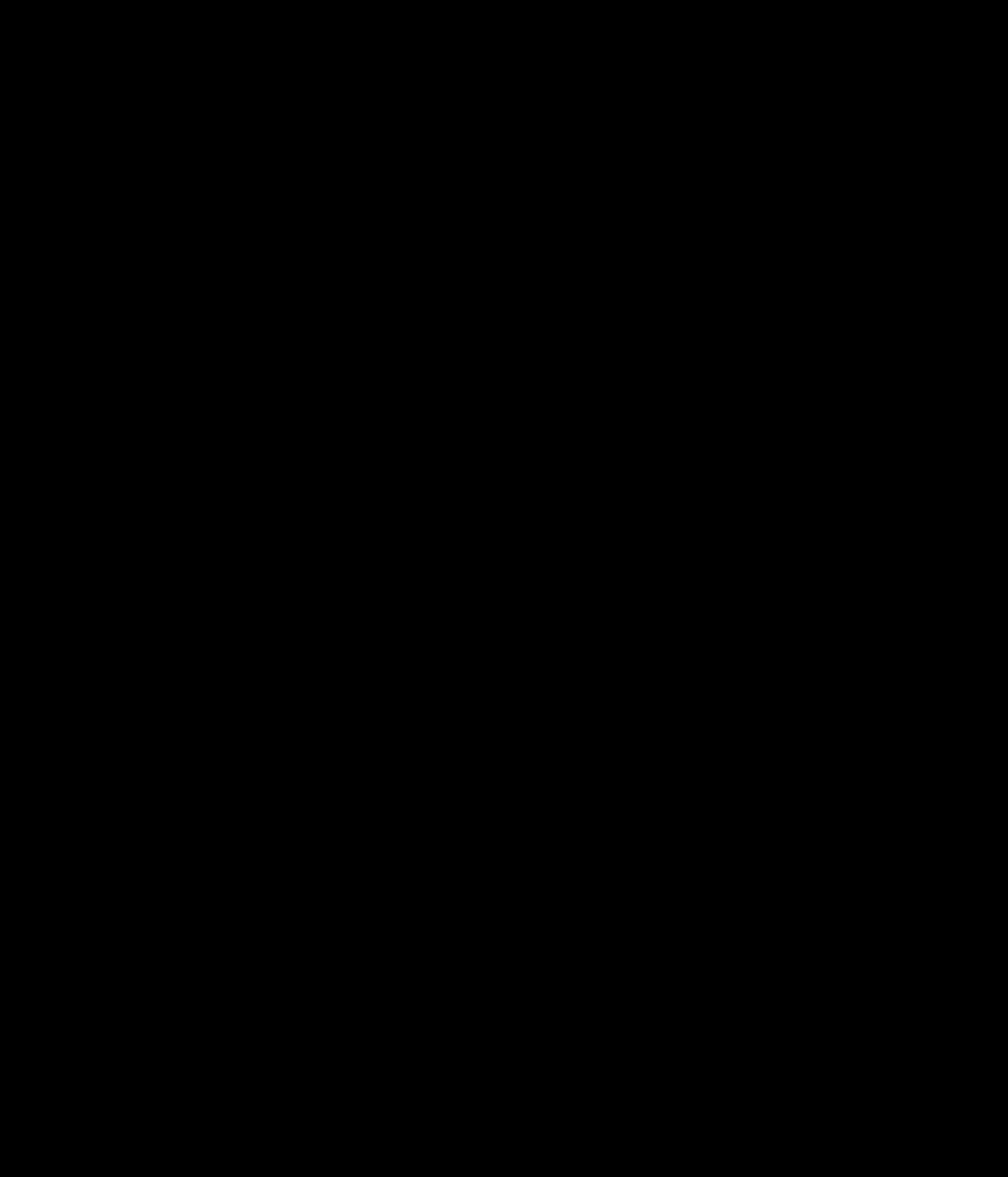


**KOBRO
& STRZE-
MIŃSKI**

AVANT-GARDE PROTOTYPES

















KATARZYNA

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&

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AVANT-GARDE PROTOTYPES

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Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951) and Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1952) are among the silent protagonists of the European avant-gardes, to which they contributed by both fostering and questioning the legacy of modernism with a plastic and theoretical oeuvre that was as fertile as it was complex. Dedicated to experimentation on pure forms—Kobro fundamentally in sculpture and Strzemiński in painting—and closely related to international artistic movements like the Bauhaus, neoplasticism and constructivism, their work is pivotal for an understanding of abstract art in the Central Europe of the first decades of the twentieth century.

The Museo Reina Sofia presents a retrospective on their work made up of drawings, paintings, collages, sculptures and designs ranging from the typographical arrangement of a poem to furnishing concepts or the projection of architectural spaces. With exhibits dating from the early 1920s to the late 1940s, the show functions as an exegesis of their heterogeneous production through a description of the artistic transitions that marked their careers. Clearly influenced at first by such great avant-garde figureheads as Tatlin, Rodchenko and Malevich, their work moves on to their unist creations, their great contribution. Unism was abandoned with the arrival of the economic crisis, and after a period dedicated to an art they classed as “recreational” and, simultaneously, to the practice of functionalism, Kobro and Strzemiński took different paths. At the end of the Second World War, she made sculptures of nudes close to cubism, while he started to sketch out a realist theory ver-
tebrated by works where afterimages live side by side with abstraction.

The appearance of abstraction in the context of revolutionary Russia gave rise to a new situation in art history. Until then, the plastic arts had been the reflection of the visual content of an epoch, but when the birth of a new social model coincided with the emergence of abstraction, an attempt was made to “create” an epoch out of specific visual content. The contribution of unist theory was to prove crucial both for an understanding of that historical juncture and for articulating the previous and subsequent careers of these artists.

After the October Revolution, with functionalism and abstraction as a starting point, suprematism and constructivism vied for the responsibility of offering new “visions of life,” to use Malevich’s phrase, for the construction of the newly born Communist society. In the wake of these two main tendencies, Strzemiński formulated unism, whose principal objective was the materialization of organic forms parallel to those of nature. The artwork and the medium were to be viewed as a whole by

contrast with the dualism of the baroque, characterized dynamism and action, since such temporal phenomena had no place in pure art. In these conditions, the artist generates pictorial and sculptural prototypes for later integration in society through its inhabitable spaces, as formulated through architecture, design, and city planning.

At the same time, unism envisaged a division of artistic labor similar to that found in a factory, where different subjects help to generate a single collective predicate. The biopolitical nature of these theories is evident in Kobro's claim that "Sculpture should become an architectural issue, a laboratory-like effort to organize methods of planning space, movement, and city landscapes to resemble a functional organism, stemming from the production capabilities of modern art, science, and technology."

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to the Muzeum Sztuki for its collaboration with the Museo Reina Sofia on the organization of this exhibition, where the plastic and theoretical oeuvre of Kobro and Strzemiński reveal their importance not only in the artistic context of avant-garde Europe but at the very heart of modernity. Their legacy goes beyond the strictly material, since it points us toward a new model of thought that broadens and liberates the spectrum of possibilities from which we can understand art, science, and history.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
CULTURE AND SPORT

The works and artistic theories of Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński are among the most revealing of all those that appeared around functionalism and the new sociopolitical paradigm that stemmed from the triumph of the Russian Revolution in 1917. The total reorganization of the country in social, political, and economic terms made it necessary to create strong normative foundations on which to construct a new society and a new man, and this in turn required the creation of an imagery capable of vertebrating an identity. In such a context of readiness for the great task of relaunching society, it comes as no surprise that the construction of new formal foundations for the socialist project should have been allotted to the artistic avant-garde, then immersed in a revolutionary process of its own. Unsurprisingly, too, the attempt to drive away both the phantom of the previous regime and the liberal chaos resonating from the West was grounded on the rationalization of a neopositivist empiricism where science and art were two faces of the same pedagogical machine.

The Russian avant-garde was oscillating at that moment between pure artists like Kandinsky and Malevich, who argued for the independence of art, and Tatlin and Rodchenko, who called for a practical art at the service of society. Both sides defended the utopianism of art, which they credited with the undeniable value of a capacity to change the world, but they differed over the degree to which art should be engaged with didacticism and propaganda when presented to the citizens in pursuit of its purpose. Malevich's suprematism and Tatlin's constructivism were the two reference points around which Soviet plastic culture revolved in its attempt to "organize" forms of life on the basis of the principles of vital economy, with the goal of constructing a world of ideal unity.

The laboratory schools created for the diffusion of pedagogy based on constructivism and suprematism ultimately failed, and were replaced—first by Lenin, and afterward, with more virulence, by Stalin—by propaganda art and industrial design, whose tendency toward figuration was more easily accepted by the people. However, theories of abstraction and the search for new mental processes to support them were to leave a profound mark on art history and modernism. In later decades, as we shall now see, Kobro and Strzemiński became not merely the heirs to such theories but perhaps their wisest ideologues, especially in Poland.

For Kobro and Strzemiński, Malevich's suprematism was the starting point from which to reach the unity of the artwork, which had to be found through coherence between the principal objectives defining its nature and the means employed. Malevich referred to strictly pictorial

characteristics, purified of everything alien to them, that would open up a gap leading to reality. Kobro and Strzemiński, on the other hand, departed from these premises in search of a lateral reality, equatable to the first but marginal to it.

Unism, the theoretical materialization of this quest, was based on the creation of models, of “organic forms, parallel to nature.” This idealist concept is not arbitrary, nor is it simply a way to “illustrate” ideology or give it a recognizable form. The search for abstract unist objects is subject only to the compression of pictorial and sculptural practice into preliminary phases, rather like sketches or—to borrow the term employed by the curator of this exhibition, Jarosław Suchan—prototypes. These prototypes are created for the fundamental purpose of being inserted into larger structures like architecture, design, or city planning, all articulated in their turn to function as parts of an even larger whole, society. The vision of art based on collectivity and assemblage, similar to the work done on a factory assembly line, reveals the strongly biopolitical nature of unism and the objective it clearly pursues: to serve humankind, making human life more rational by freeing it from emotional instabilities and turning society into an organism whose parts are perfectly coordinated so that it can advance in a single direction. According to Kobro, “spatial composition generates emotions based on the triumph of the active forces of the human intellect over the existing irrationality and chaos. ... The aim of art is to contribute to the triumph of superior forms of the organization of living. Art’s field of action is the production of form in the realm of social utility.”

In the 1930s, Strzemiński abandoned pictorial unism to work on cityscapes and seascapes, and Kobro started to approach cubism through the figurative nude and to explore works in which sculpture ceases to present itself as an organizer of space, one example being *Kompozycja przestrzenna (9)* (Spatial Composition (9)). Unism had been a consequence of the revolutionary optimism of the 1920s, and of the economic, industrial, and technological development that had done so much to encourage a faith in man and rational social reform. Its abandonment came with the arrival of crisis, the urge to overcome it, and the need to give a voice to the visual content of the period.

The socioeconomic developments laid bare the worldwide synergies that were then starting to form, and the chaos that apparently ensued from them eclipsed the search for self-enclosed, uncontaminated objects in favor of a visual content that would assume this dependency. The cubist afterimage, of which surrealism, according to Strzemiński, had become

the heir, had already acknowledged this in striving to manifest the individual's loss of faith in liberal society. Surrealism does not associate elements that are close to one another, as cubism does, but works with the most disparate ideas, creating a distorting mirror of reality whose result is an atrocity, the reflection of absolute pessimism owing to a discredited humanity's inability to use reason to change what is destroying it. In such circumstances, when it came to furnishing an epoch with visual content, there was no longer any sense at all in regarding existence through the a priori ideas proper to abstraction.

From this view, painting had ceased to be an ideal construct because the new context demanded attention not only to reality but to observation itself, and to the observer's psychophysiological reactions during observation. In formulating the principles of his humanist realism, Strzemiński distanced himself from the official realism of the régime, which he dismissed as ahistoricist and unrelated to contemporary visual consciousness. He called on the other hand for a realism capable of responding to the new socialist reality, where the object to be gauged would be "the human being as such, his muscles, his nerves, his psychophysiological structure: the real organism of the real human being."

The works of the late 1940s clearly show his investigation of after-images, whose significance seems to have traced itself around a synthesis of the two forms of realism Strzemiński was then trying to combine in his theories: that which regards vision as an act subject to psychological and physiological factors, and that which understands it as a historical phenomenon. Owing to the death of the Polish artist and theorist, his new project never advanced beyond the planning stages, and his proposals for confronting the complex new situation cannot be grasped today in their full magnitude.

Notwithstanding the relatively predictable failure of a project as vast and revolutionary as unism, their works and final theories are among the great landmarks of art history, that great process to which Kopro and Strzemiński contributed so laudably. Perhaps they did so in the knowledge that there is no end for anything that can be contained in history except as a subterfuge for seeking the next contradiction or the next act of faith on which to embark the modern ego by making it believe it does not build chaos as it makes order out of it.



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**KOBRO & STRZEMIŃSKI:
PROTOTYPES OF A NEW
————— THINKING**

Jarosław Suchan

The experience of modernity is deeply ambivalent, Marshall Berman wrote a quarter-century ago, charging his contemporaries with a proclivity toward creating oversimplified images of it in order to facilitate either uncritical acceptance or haughty rejection.¹ Today, our attitudes toward modernity have become complex enough that some have been calling for a reset thereof, a purge of the meanings it has accrued, and a restart of the “programs” that have been generated over the course of the modernist project.² Although their reasons differ, both Berman and the proponents of the restart suggest the same thing: a return to more incipient formulas of modernity, driven by the hope that it will allow us to better understand both ourselves and the direction we should be heading. I would like to treat this retrospective of the oeuvre of Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński in a similar manner—not as an archaeological reconstruction of one of the more interesting moments in the history of modernism but as an opportunity to rethink at least some of its “programs,” because I believe they still might be of some use to us.

Yves-Alain Bois once said that Strzemiński and Kobro were “perhaps the only modernist artists,” thus suggesting that in some respects modernity was fully expressed only in their work.³ Simultaneously, he uses the phrase *entre-deux* to denote that work’s specific temporality, emphasizing its irreconcilability with the predominant narrative of modern art history. In Bois’s opinion, Strzemiński and Kobro’s work is suspended, outside any chronological order, between two consummate moments in the history of modernism. The first peaked with Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich’s mystical essentialism; the other with the materialistic

1. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1988), 24. ● 2. *Reset Modernity!* was the name of the exhibition (and its companion publication) curated by Bruno Latour, Martin Guinard-Terrin, Christophe Leclercq, and Donato Ricci and hosted at the ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe in 2016. ● 3. Yves-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 127. ● 4. *Ibid.*, 126. ● 5. Historicism is not the same as historicism. The latter stems from the belief that human reality is historically determined, and thus all ideas, laws, and solutions should be examined in light of the circumstances of their creation. The former assumes human civilization is developing along a preestablished plan, is heading toward specific, absolute objectives, and therefore the laws that govern it are absolute and timeless. ● 6. The subject of prototype in art remains mostly unexplored. Of the published investigations into the topic, one should give particular attention to Catharina Manchanda, *Models and Prototypes* (St. Louis: Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, 2006); Susanne Küchler, “The Prototype in 20th Century Art,” *Visual Communication* 9, no. 3 (2010); and *Visuelle Modelle*, ed. Ingeborg Reichle, Steffen Siegel, and Achim Spelten (Paderborn: Verlag Wilhelm Fink, 2008). ● 7. Eleanor Rosch, “Principles of Categorization,” in *Cognition and Categorization*, ed. Eleanor Rosch and Barbara Bloom Lloyd (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1978), 30.

essentialism of Clement Greenberg.⁴ Compared with these moments, the work of Strzemiński and Kobra is simultaneously “belated” and “premature.” On the one hand, this “untimeliness” makes anchoring the work in the international canon of the modernist avant-garde difficult; on the other hand, it complicates interpretations of the work. In effect, these interpretations fluctuate between regarding the art of the duo as an extension of the art of their predecessors (Malevich, Mondrian, László Moholy-Nagy, Hans Arp) and seeing it as a precursor of future aesthetic and artistic concepts (Greenberg’s theory, monochromatic painting, all-over composition, minimalism, the Zero movement, etc.).

Entre-deux describes not only the temporal indeterminateness but also spatial location “between” different concepts of modernism. This “inbetweenness” does not stem from a deformation of these concepts or a deviation from modernist orthodoxy. On the contrary, it is derived from the radicalism in bringing them to their extremes. Bois identifies three modernist “motivations” that Strzemiński and Kobra’s art supposedly actualized to an extent managed by no other: essentialism, historicism, and utopism. The essentialism would entail the quest for the essence of each individual art (painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.), the historicism would involve the belief that art develops in a necessary manner and according to inexorable laws, and utopism is the belief in the political power of art and its ability to radically transform the world.⁵ All these motivations converge and, more important, become problematized in the concept of prototype, which can serve as an interpretative key to Kobra and Strzemiński’s oeuvre.

Here, *prototype* is understood as a device, material thing, or conceptual scheme devised for experimental purposes to verify the assumptions made during its construction and measure the efficiency of applied solutions. A prototype, therefore, is a test model, a template for future target devices. The meaning of the term ranges from *matrix*, *exemplar*, *archetype*, and *original* to *trial run*, *example*, *mock-up*, and *sample*.⁶ Cognitive science has a slightly different understanding of the term, combining it with the process of categorization. This discipline defines *prototype* as the chief specimen of a given category, or, in the words of Eleanor Rosch, the architect of prototype theory, as an exemplar containing “attributes most representative of items inside and least representative of items outside the category.”⁷ A prototype, therefore—and this is the most important aspect of this interpretation—is only an approximation, and the ideal exemplar does not exist. What characterizes prototypes, in their cognitive and technological interpretation, is their temporariness. They are by no means permanent solutions, as they become outdated the moment another, better prototype (one closer to the unattainable ideal) is constructed or when they are replaced by the production model as mass production is launched.

We will not find the notion of prototype in Strzemiński and Kobra's writings; neither is it utilized by modernist theory. However, it may prove useful in untangling the nexus of finalist and historicism, autonomy and utilitarianism, that has made such a deep mark on modern art. I am referring primarily to the Russian avant-garde art of the October Revolution period, which Kobra and Strzemiński negotiated in their own artistic practice. It is that art that compelled the three motivations identified by Bois to radically confront one another. This confrontation in turn had a powerful impact on the further development of Kobra and Strzemiński's theory and practice, embedded in the center of which was the *device* we call the prototype.

THE RUSSIAN FACTORY

As noted by Andrzej Turowski, Russian avant-garde art ranged from extreme idealism to extreme materialism, from metaphysics to analytics. "On the one hand," he writes, "we were dealing with a neopositivist rationalisation of empiricism, conferring a measure of scientific qualities upon artistic exploration, and on the other—a neoromanticist pantheism, expressing itself in the desire of transcending individual experience of life in order to find oneself in the immortality of the Universe."⁸ The glue that held the Russian avant-garde artists together despite these extreme differences was the shared belief that art should participate in the process of transforming the world. Their disputes revolved around the character and the extent of that participation and, consequently, the social dimension of artistic practice. These disputes were incredibly intense, and lines of division shifted often. Nevertheless, on one side of the dispute were the proponents of "pure art," while on the other side were those who believed art made sense only when it realized utilitarian aims. The leaders of the former included Kandinsky and Malevich, who believed that exploring the problems of structure in painting or sculpture would facilitate the recognition and articulation of a universal order. The leaders of the latter faction included Vladimir Tatlin and, a little later, Aleksandr Rodchenko. This group gave rise to "laboratory constructivism," a concept based around the assumption that the artist is supposed to investigate the constructional and textural properties of materials, the results of which investigations would then be used by industrial designers, engineers and factory workers.⁹ Over time, the attitudes espoused by members

of this group were gradually radicalized, leading to *the passage of the artist from the laboratory to the factory*; that is, to the direct engagement of artist in designing for industry.¹⁰ They postulated the replacement of analyses of materiality conducted in the field of art with the artists' involvement in the transformation of their environment in keeping with the precepts of the new revolutionary aesthetic and the needs of the socialist society.¹¹

The social-utility imperative also influenced the positions of the “pure art” protagonists that became affiliated with the Moscow INChUK (Institute of Artistic Culture) when it was headed by Kandinsky, and the Unovis (Champions of New Art) group, established by Malevich in Vitebsk. In the program Kandinsky drafted for INChUK, which he called a “laboratory school,” the analysis of art’s basic elements and their psychophysical influence was supposed to yield knowledge that would enable production of so-called monumental art; that is, a range of synthetic inventions combining architecture, sculpture, and painting, which were intended to transform human living space and humankind itself.¹² Similarly, in Malevich’s program art was to support the formulation of new “visions of life” through diagnosis of the rudiments of the life’s economy that permeates all reality and should function as a possible foundation for all human cooperation toward the creation of a world defined by perfect unity.¹³

As the cultural policy radicalized and the achievements of the avant-garde were increasingly accused of being useless, expectations that the artist would serve the Soviet state in a more practical manner grew more intense. This gradually marginalized experimental/laboratory practices, eventually leading to their replacement by propaganda-oriented art and,

● **8.** Andrzej Turowski, “Tradycja, historia i myśl rosyjskiej awangardy artystycznej,” in *Między sztuką a komuną: Teksty awangardy rosyjskiej 1910–1932*, ed. Andrzej Turowski (Kraków: Universitas, 1998), 23. ● **9.** See Maria Gough, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Maria Gough, “In the Laboratory of Constructivism: Karl Ioganson’s Cold Structures,” *October* 84 (Spring 1998): 91–117. ● **10.** Osip Brik, “Into Production!” (1923), trans. Richard Sherwood, in *The Tradition of Constructivism*, ed. Stephen Bonn (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 83–85. ● **11.** Turowski, “Tradycja,” 32–33. ● **12.** Wassily Kandinsky, “Program of the Institute of Artistic Culture” (1920), in *Experiment: A Journal of Russian Culture* 8 (2002): 143–55. ● **13.** Kazimir Malevich, “Unowis: Artykuł programowy” (1921), in *Między sztuką*, 174–77.

to a lesser degree, by involvement in industrial design.¹⁴

This was the artistic landscape that served as the breeding ground for Kobro and Strzeziński's work.¹⁵ The first manifestations of that work are a testimony to their openness to impulses coming from different directions. Kobro's earliest sculpture, *ToS 75—struktura* (ToS 75—Structure), of which only a photograph remains, probably was created in 1920 and was a Tatlinian assemblage of ready-made elements (or ones resembling such), expressing a fascination with modern technologies, materials, and textures that are considered typical of the artists from Tatlin's circle. In Kobro's subsequent works, *Konstrukcja wisząca (1)* (Suspended Construction (1)) (fig. 1) and *Konstrukcja wisząca (2)* (Suspended Construction (2)), developed in 1921 (or 1922), inspiration from Rodchenko's hanging compositions blends with reminiscences of Malevichian suprematism, the latter slated to become the most important reference point for the couple's art. A similar scope of references can be found in Strzeziński's early works. Echoes of Tatlin's experiments with materials and textures reverberate in reliefs such as the 1919 *Licznik* (Counter) and *Narzędzia i produkty przemysłu* (Tools and Products of Industry), created 1919–1920. In turn, the propaganda posters he designs after moving to Smolensk and strengthening his ties to Malevich and Unovis reveal the influence of suprematist art, particularly its graphic incarnation popularized by El Lissitzky's work.¹⁶

Strzeziński laid out his thoughts on Russian avant-garde artists in the first essay he wrote after arriving in Poland, entitled “O sztuce rosyjskiej—Notatki” (Notes on Russian Art).¹⁷ He used the interpretations and evaluations included therein to mark a position and articulate

● 14. Turowski, “Tradycja,” 33–34. ●

15. Before he devoted himself to art, Strzeziński, a Pole born in the Russian-controlled partition, had extensive military experience and served as a tsarist officer in WWI. Badly wounded in action, he eventually lost an arm, a leg, and vision in one eye. His artistic career began in the Moscow hospital where he was recuperating from his injuries. This turn toward the arts was supposedly influenced by Katarzyna Kobro, then a volunteer nurse's aide caring for the sick and wounded soldiers. Kobro, a daughter of a wealthy Riga merchant family of German extraction, was already an amateur sculptor. Strzeziński started approaching artistic circles around 1918, which is when his name first appears on the session attendance lists for the Fine Arts Section of the People's Commissariat for Education (Izo-Narkompros). In the fall of 1918, Strzeziński enrolled in the Free State Art Studios (SVOMAS), which is probably where he and Kobro met again. They become a couple and professional partners. See Zenobia Karnicka, “The Life and Work of Władysław Strzeziński—Chronology,” in *Władysław Strzeziński 1893–1952: On the 100th Anniversary of His Birth*, exh. cat. (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1994); and Zenobia Karnicka, “Chronology of Kobro's Life and Work,” in *Katarzyna Kobro 1898–1951*, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute; Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1999).

● 16. For more on Strzeziński and Kobro's ties to Russian art, see Christina Lodder's essay “Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzeziński in Russia,” in this catalogue, 103–117. ● 17. The article was published in issues no. 3 (1922) and no. 4 (1923) of the avant-garde magazine *Zwrotnica*. For the English version, see “Notes on Russian Art,” in *Art between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 272–79.



FIG. 1: Katarzyna Kobro, *Konstrukcja wisząca (1)*
[Suspended Construction (1)], 1921/1972

a basic assumption around which he would continue to build his oeuvre until at least the 1930s. The assumption was that the unity of an artwork stemmed from accordance of the means used in its creation with objective laws defining its nature. In light of such a definition of *artwork*, the first prototype emerges: Malevich's suprematist painting.

According to Strzemiński, suprematism was the crowning achievement of all art that came before it. Its accomplishment lay in the creation of a cohesive system that allowed one to unite “abstract elements in an organic whole made according to objective law.”¹⁸ That system assumed that the painting should be based on “properties specific to painting itself” and purged of any “alien means.”¹⁹ Suprematism argued that the essential value of painting is its flatness, which invalidates all attempts at creating an illusion of three-dimensional space or, as Strzemiński writes, “punching holes in the canvas.” The abandonment of illusion, resulting in an ever-tighter bond between forms on the painting and its surface and the achievement of a compositional equilibrium, defined the direction toward which the historically determined evolution of painting had been moving, with suprematism as the culmination of that process.²⁰

By embracing suprematism as a paragon, Strzemiński undertook to criticize other trends in Russian avant-garde. He considers them either derivative or a product of a misinterpretation of the essence of art. Thus, he claims Kandinsky and Tatlin are behind the times, calling the former a mere epigone of impressionism and reproaching the latter's work as the product of a superficial reception of cubism and its experiments with material.²¹ He then accuses Rodchenko and his fellow artists of lacking historical awareness of the forms they are using. Strzemiński points out that they are working toward creating this “so-called ‘new art’ not by trying to develop or move specific artistic matters and issues forward, but rather by compiling together pieces of other artists' works.”²² He reserves his fiercest criticism for art that exploits machine aesthetics to manifest its own progressiveness, as well as for the idea of the artists' direct involvement in industry. Strzemiński openly calls the latter “the microbe causing the decay of Russian art” and claims that reducing pure formal solutions to practical, utilitarian projects will undoubtedly lead to the stagnation of art itself. Moreover, it results, according to him, in the conclusion that further evolution of art—“the investigation of the attained form—and invention of a more perfect form”—has become redundant.²³ Strzemiński labels “manufacturists” those artists who subordinated themselves to the concept and accuses them of bluster (i.e., the practical applicability of their solutions is more declaration than fact), confusing art with technology (“engineerism,” or an “art trend that emerges when an artist, losing his artistic credibility, resorts to using engineering forms and objectives”) and even opportunism (“manufacturer directions are a point of convergence for

the interests of this new art and state authorities of the USSR”).²⁴ One consequence of their domination of contemporary Russian art is its rejection of that which is crucially important; namely, “the solution of the matter of organic unity of form and space.”²⁵

Reading Strzemiński’s two-part essay, one may get the impression that he supports the historicist belief that the development of artistic form inevitably leads to suprematism and that in suprematism the history of painting finds fulfillment. Even if that is the case, the optic changes quickly. The suprematist painting stops being the “ultimate painting” and becomes a prototype, the best of all existing “approximations” or, as cognitive sciences would have it, a central exemplar in the category: *a painting*. Does this imply the suspension of the typically modernist finalism, turning it into a historicism of incessant flux, or is it only a postponement of the attainment of the ultimate goal, performed by assigning himself the task of ending history? A semblance of an answer can be found in another of Strzemiński’s essays, published in the catalogue of the 1923 *New Art Exhibition* in Vilnius. The essay culminates with a call “forward without a pause,” after which the author concludes that, although the accomplishments of cubism and suprematism allowed for the creation of “the most perfect style of contemporary applied art” (“as invention of electricity allowed to build up the electrotechnics of the present day”), it should not be the task of pure art. Its primary objective is to “secure the possibility of persistent development,” and therefore it has to “investigate what has been achieved and steadily pursue a more perfect form.”²⁶ We may draw the following conclusions from that passage: creating pure art is not the pursuit of an ultimate ideal but a serial prototyping process that,

● 18. Władysław Strzemiński, “O sztuce rosyjskiej: Notatki,” *Zwrotnica*, no. 4 (1923): 113. ● 19. Władysław Strzemiński, “O sztuce rosyjskiej: Notatki,” *Zwrotnica*, no. 3 (1922): 82. ● 20. *Ibid.*, 79. ● 21. *Ibid.*, 80. ● 22. Strzemiński, “O sztuce rosyjskiej” (1923), 114. ● 23. *Ibid.*, 112. ● 24. *Ibid.*, 113. Later in the essay, Strzemiński adds, “It is only because to the benefits the authorities are planning to reap that this new art is allowed to exist. In Russia, all art exists as state-sanctioned art or it doesn’t exist at all.” ● 25. *Ibid.* ● 26. Władysław Strzemiński, “Określam sztukę...,” in *Katalog Wystawy Nowej Sztuki* (Vilnius: Lux, 1923). For the English translation, see *Constructivism in Poland 1923–1936: Blok, Praesens, a.r.*, ed. Ryszard Stanisławski (Essen: Museum Folkwang; Otterlo, the Netherlands: Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, 1973), 68.

first, is separate from the implementation process (in this case, the realization of “applied arts”); and, second, is repetitive in nature because in the laboratory drafting and perfecting new forms and solutions never ends.

For Strzemiński, the subsequent stage of these artistic endeavors is unism. His suprematist experience plays a fundamental role in its formulation. Nevertheless, the productivist lessons Strzemiński and Kobro rejected will not remain without influence and in the 1930s, in tandem with impulses coming from Bauhaus and De Stijl, will result in the modification of another prototype, a unist one.

UNISM

In the aforementioned essay, “Notes on Russian Art,” Strzemiński claims art is creation of “the unity of organic form, by its organicity parallel with nature.” Such unity can be achieved only when creation abides by laws specific to the created art. For painting, these laws include flatness (stemming from the flatness of the stretcher), geometry of forms (stemming from the geometric shape of the canvas), “localization of the painterly action within a picture,” and “simultaneity of the phenomena.”²⁷ This necessarily has to result in the rejection of anecdote and any and all references to what exists beyond the painting (the real world, literary content, the artist’s inner experience), as well as to the elimination of dynamism (understood here as spatiotemporal phenomenon).²⁸ A work of art becomes “real” only “when it constitutes an end for itself and does not seek justification in values that subsists beyond the picture.”²⁹ The evolution of art drives it toward the creation of such a piece; every direction and every new trend pushes it closer toward that ultimate goal, but none of them—not even suprematism, the most advanced and forward-oriented trend—has managed to attain it, because none of them has rejected everything that could undermine or subvert that self-sufficiency.³⁰

According to Strzemiński, our aesthetic sensibilities still bear the marks of baroque influences, despite strenuous efforts on the part of subsequent generations of artists to root them out. In his opinion, *baroque* implies a duality of forms, which in turn produces a dynamism that shatters the unity of the painting. The baroque painting is characterized by its “central” structure—which detaches the forms from the edges of the picture, their natural support, thus



FIG. 2: Władysław Strzemiński, *Unizm w malarstwie* [Unism in Painting], 1928. Cover designed by Henryk Stazewski

creating an illusion of movement—as well as by the contrasting juxtapositions of shapes, lines, and colors amplifying the effect of dramatic action. Strzemiński notes that movement and action are spatiotemporal phenomena, completely foreign to painting, which operates within two-dimensional space and exists “outside time.” In baroque paintings, time appears not only as an element of the painterly illusion; it becomes a constituent component of the act of reception: “Clear movement, weaker or so weak as almost nonexistent, static parts, impacts of different strength, places where line disappears soaked into texture or color—all of this causes such a time content in baroque picture that we must almost read,” whereas “the picture is, or rather it should be, an object destined to be only looked at.” A painting is a flat surface covered with paint, a “purely visual phenomenon”³¹ (fig. 2). Elsewhere, Strzemiński’s claims grow even fiercer: “A work of art does not express anything. A work of art is not a sign of anything.”³² Everything that transcends the logic of the painting itself renders the work that is nonidentical with itself and thus must be rejected. Introducing any foreign elements breeds conflict between the “inherent qualities of the painting ... and what is ultimately painted on its surface” and is “proof of the violation of its organicity.”³³

That is why, in Strzemiński’s opinion, dualistic art had to be replaced by unism. The ideal of the latter is a “picture as organic as nature itself.” Instead of central composition—a rule of equivalence: “Every square inch of the picture is of equal valuable and plays part in the picture’s construction in the same degree.” All divisions and contrasts (contrast tears the body of the picture asunder, thus causing its death) have to be removed, because “Every division

● 27. *Ibid.*, 68. ● 28. Władysław Strzemiński, “To, co się prawnie...,” *Blok* 2 (1924):2. ● 29. Władysław Strzemiński, “B = 2,” *Blok* 8–9 (1924). For the English version, see “B = 2,” in *Between Worlds*, 497–503. ● 30. Strzemiński, “B = 2,” in *Between Worlds*, 500–1. ● 31. Władysław Strzemiński, “Unizm w malarstwie,” *Biblioteka praesens*, no. 3 (1928). Available in English translation as “Unism in Painting,” in *Between Worlds*, 652. ● 32. Strzemiński, “To, co się prawnie...,” 2. ● 33. Władysław Strzemiński, “Notatki,” *Zwrotnica*, no. 11 (1927): 243.

of the picture means that the time is needed to unite it visually. Only a completely uniform picture can be extra-temporal, purely spatial.” That is why even suprematism, because of its division of the canvas into a series of separate shapes, the connection of which takes time, is not unencumbered by the error of dualism.³⁴

In 1923, Strzemiński began to create paintings in which, starting from suprematism, he tried to abolish the contradictions implicit in the suprematist program and transcend baroque dualism. This explains his abandonment of central composition and his preference for static forms, attenuated color contrasts, and softened edges of color fields that diminish the divisions introduced by the last of these. This approach is further developed in the *Kompozycje architektoniczne* (Architectural Compositions) series he created from 1926 to 1929 (figs. 3–5). Therein, he focused primarily on eliminating the figure-ground scheme and maximizing the cohesion of the whole. He tried to achieve the former by balancing color fields and anchoring them in the edges of the canvas (so they do not float in indeterminate space, as in Malevich’s work). The latter goal he tried to achieve through subordination of the shapes and arrangement of said fields to “a uniform numerical expression” derived from the ratio of the height and width of the stretcher, the fundamental “innate properties” of the painting. This was to result in the “complete unity of what is painted with the surface plane on which it is painted” so that none could “break away from the whole forming a separate and distinct part.”³⁵

FIG. 3: Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja architektoniczna 1* [Architectural Composition 1], 1926

Pages 30–31:

FIG. 4: Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja architektoniczna 5b* [Architectural Composition 5b], ca. 1928

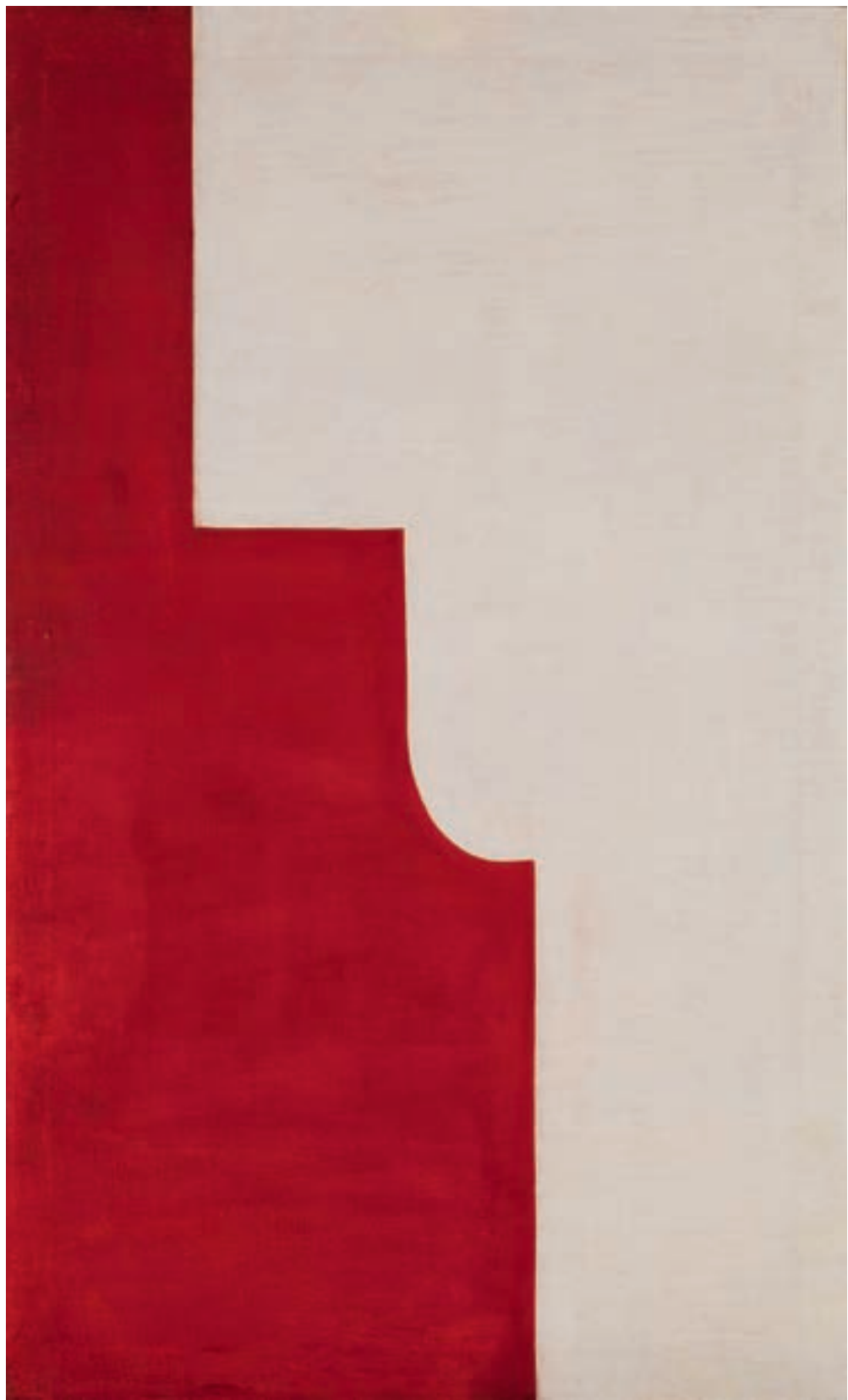
FIG. 5: Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja architektoniczna 6b* [Architectural Composition 6b], 1928

● **34.** Strzemiński, “Unism in Painting,” 653–55. ● **35.** *Ibid.*, 655–56.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]





All these efforts are encapsulated in Strzemiński's unist paintings created from 1931 to 1934 (figs. 6, 7, and 8). All divisions underwent gradual nullification, all contrasts and other elements that could give an impression of movement or three-dimensionality were eliminated. In the final paintings of the series, the surface is uniformly covered with a single color, but—to avoid the unwanted impression of depth—the paint has been applied in the form of a relief pattern. Thus, the painting constantly reminds the observer of its own material nature, of the fact that it is just an “object.”

A paradoxical object, however, as indicated by Turowski, because the loss of its semiotic properties brought the unist painting ever closer to a utility object but without “imbuing it with a distinct utilitarian value.” This, in turn, revealed the “purely theoretical meaning of the object.”³⁶ This purely theoretical nature should be understood as an attempt to create a physical model—a prototype—that would allow the falsification of a priori adopted assumptions about the essence of painting and thus to answer the question whether a painting can exist that is equal to nature in its *beingness*, that is equal to the rest of the world. Although the phrase “a painting is just an object among objects” bears a striking resemblance to Rodchenko's slogans, its meaning is radically different. For the Russian artist, the painting was a “laboratory sample” of sorts, a preparation distilled from reality. That is why experimenting on it was to yield knowledge that would enable proper utilization of the materials and structures that constitute reality. For Strzemiński, a unist painting was an object, but one radically separate from reality—an object *outside the world*, so to speak. In this regard, it was much closer to Malevich's *Черный квадрат* (*Black Square*, 1915) than to

FIG. 6: Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja unistyczna 12* [Unist Composition 12], 1932

FIG. 7: Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja unistyczna 14* [Unist Composition 14], 1934

● 36. Andrzej Turowski, *Awangardowe marginesy* (Warsaw: Instytut Kultury, 1997), 86.



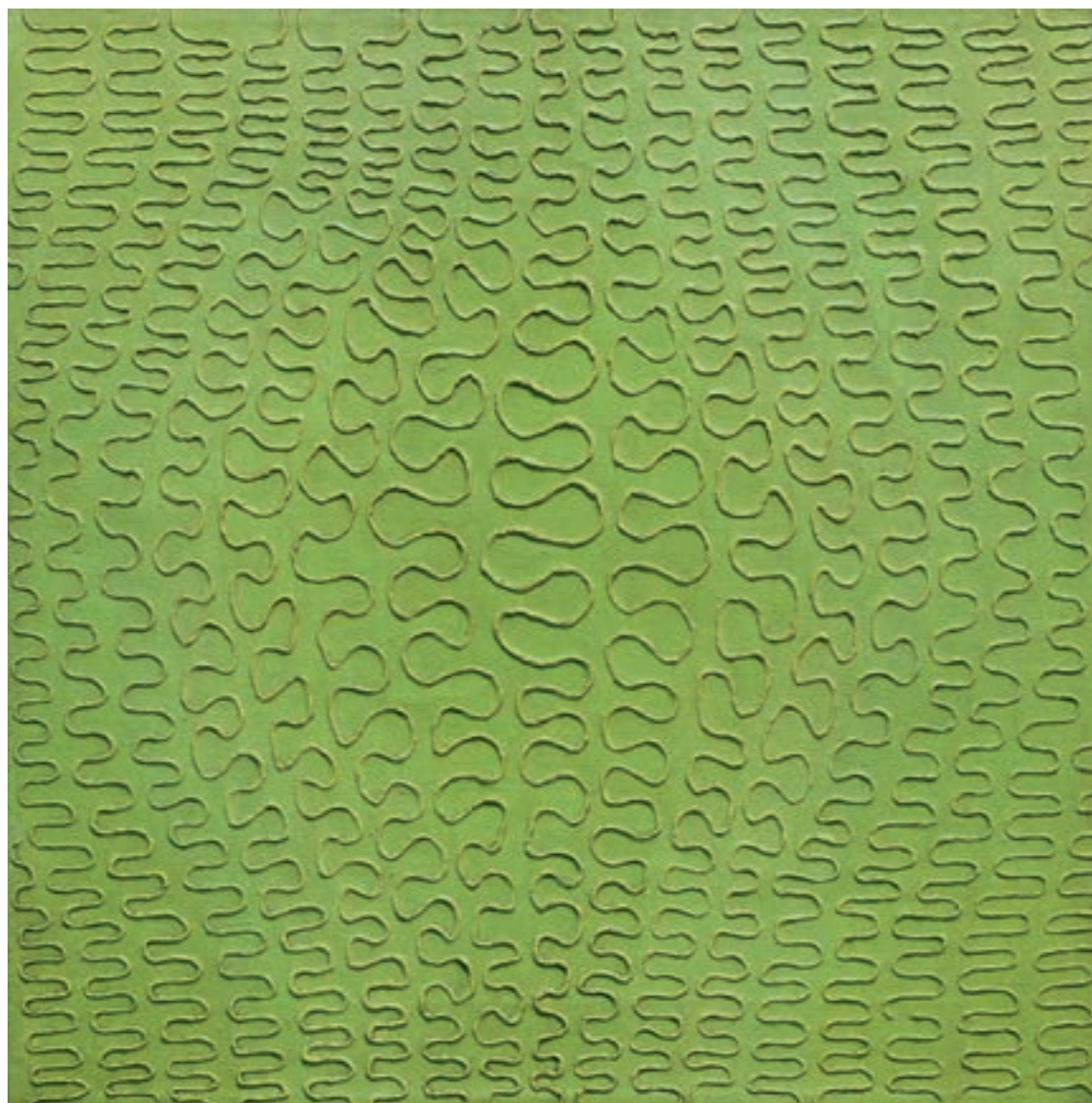


FIG. 8: Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja unistyczna 13* [Unistic Composition 13], 1934

Rodchenko's monochromes (from 1921). Like *Black Square*, the unist painting strived to be the "ultimate painting." The difference being that the suprematist painting was to be a portal to another reality ("a hole in the canvas"), whereas unist work was to be world unto itself—object equivalent to reality itself.

Unism aimed to build the "absolute structure" and, as such, was subsumed by the finalism specific to the modernist avant-garde.³⁷ That affiliation would supposedly find confirmation in Strzemiński refraining from painting any more unist pictures, understood here as reaching an objective, a moment in which the sought-after absolute is finally attained. We can, however, look at unism from an even more pragmatic perspective, one in which the unist picture is not the apotheosis of (art) history but a necessary stage—a stage not in the historical but the *production* process. For that sense to reveal itself, unist painting must be seen in the context of other areas of Kobra and Strzemiński's activity.

As Bois points out, Kobra and Strzemiński's concepts are related to *laocoönism*, a belief that all arts are separate from one another and that each art has its own unique laws.³⁸ That is why unist sculpture does not reference the criteria of unist painting but creates its own catalogue.³⁹ In their treatise *Kompozycja przestrzeni: Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego* (Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm) (fig. 12), Kobra and Strzemiński consider sculpture and painting to be separate phenomena that evolve side by side. They are linked only by the principal assumption that a work of art should be a single entity, its unity achieving through consistency of form with the innate properties of the work. From such a perspective, sculpture and painting seem

● 37. Władysław Strzemiński, "Integralizm malarstwa abstrakcyjnego," *Forma* 2 (1934): 10. ● 38. Bois, "Painting as Model," 127. ● 39. "Every being attains its organicity according to a law proper only to itself: thus for defining the law of organicity of artistic entities we cannot take the law of structure of any other thing (as it makes no sense to create a man on the image of a bridge, or a house in the shape of a wasp)." Strzemiński, "Określam sztukę....," 68.

wholly separate fields, governed by their own autonomous laws that—in the process of prototyping—allow them to approximate to the “absolute structure.” They also seem, however, simultaneously to exist as “portions” resembling those in the production processes of a Fordist factory.⁴⁰ The diverse nature of the arts would not only translate to different principles of construction of paintings and sculptures but would result in sculpture and painting receiving different assignments in the division of labor.

This same idea of the unity and organicity of the work of art, of its agreement with its own innate properties—which in painting separates the work of art from the world—unites the two in sculpture. To quote Kobra and Strzemiński: “The main condition for the existence of sculpture should be its complete unity with space. Sculpture should not be opposed to space and isolated from it but should unite with space and continue it.”⁴¹ Contrary to hitherto held beliefs, what determines the specific character of the sculpture is not the solid but the fact that sculpture is intrinsically a form of organizing and condensing space.⁴² The solid separates itself from space (cleaves space into an internal and external sphere), disrupting the innate contiguousness and inseparability of space and thus introducing a duality where once there was none. In Kobra’s interpretation, the history of sculpture is the history of an ever-deeper integration of the sculpture with space: from the primitive form, wherein the solid was completely isolated from what was beyond it, through gothic architectonization wherein sculpture is integrated with architecture, to the baroque dynamism that merged the sculpture with its nearby surroundings.⁴³ All of these approaches, up to and including suprematism (which stipulates a “kinetic balance” and, as such, is related to

the baroque), failed to produce a sculpture that would be fully uniform and ensure its complete integration with space.⁴⁴

That becomes possible only in unist sculpture, wherein the complete fusion of internal and external space is achieved through the subordination of composition to rhythm. “We define rhythm as a regulated sequence of spatial forms. The rhythm of unist sculpture is a complicated rhythm, composed of both spatial forms and planes of color. Regulating their sequence depends on bringing the relations between successive forms into a homogenous expression of measure.” Because the rhythm is anchored in arithmetic regularities, it can be developed beyond the limits of the sculpture: “open rhythm, which begins within sculpture, moves out into space, connecting sculpture with space.”⁴⁵ Rhythm is a spatiotemporal phenomenon; it determines the sequence in which consecutive shapes appear to us as a result of the movement of our bodies around the sculpture.⁴⁶

The close relationship between the sculpture and the issue of the organization of space links this type of art with architecture. In *Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm*, the analysis of sculptural space smoothly passes into a program for the new architecture. Like sculpture, architecture is no longer just a solid but becomes the orchestrator of the spatiotemporal rhythm of the human being performing such and such vital functions, a *sheath* directing his or her movements.⁴⁷

The presence of architecture in this context suggests an interpretation that sees sculpture as a field of experiments whose effects could be applied to house and urban planning—although *Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm* contains no suggestions of this sort. The treatise states only that sculpture and

● 40. In the text that heralded Strzeziński's unist explorations, art is compared to manufacturing, and the artist is compared to an engineer in a Fordist manufacturing plant. The task of the engineer is to perfect the labor organization systems in his portion of the production line. Strzeziński, “B = 2,” in *Between Worlds*, 497. ● 41. Katarzyna Kobre and Władysław Strzeziński, “Composing Space: Calculating Space-Time Rhythms,” *October* 156 (2016): 28–29; originally published as *Kompozycja przestrzeni: Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego* (Łódź: Biblioteka “a.r.” [1931]). ● 42. Katarzyna Kobre, “Rzeźba i bryła,” *Europa* 2 (1929): 60. ● 43. Kobre and Strzeziński, “Composing Space,” 15–16. ● 44. *Ibid.*, 23–24. ● 45. *Ibid.*, 66. ● 46. *Ibid.*, 37. ● 47. *Ibid.*, 37.

architecture are linked by their subject matter: space (or time-space, to be more exact). Only in an essay released years later will the issue be elaborated upon in a more exhaustive and direct manner. Kobra writes, “Sculpture should become an architectural issue, a laboratory-like effort to organize methods of planning space, movement, and city landscapes to resemble a functional organism, stemming from the production capabilities of modern art, science, and technology.”⁴⁸ To dispel any lingering doubts, she writes in another essay, “The ultimate test of art is its production utility achieved with the aid of means offered by contemporary industry.”⁴⁹ Kobra herself demonstrated how such vindication might look in practice when she created a mock-up of a preschool referencing the 1932 *Kompozycja przestrzenna (8)* (Spatial Composition (8)).

What does painting look like in all this? Should we look at it from the productivist perspective, as a preparatory stage in the process of designing functional objects? Formal parallels between Strzemiński’s *Architectural Compositions* and Kobra’s *Kompozycje przestrzenne* (Spatial Compositions) are easy to spot, and the latter are easily seen as potential models for architectural devices and solutions. However, we are not facing here that sort of simple causality, since the unist factory with its painter, sculptor, and architect working at different points along the production line is designed to produce not objects but ideas.⁵⁰ Rather than polish concrete designs, each individual stage perfects solutions for theoretical problems and does so necessarily according to its own internal principles—because only this can guarantee arriving at optimal solutions. This is the logic of the division of labor.

Architecture is not the ultimate goal either. Strzemiński declares, “The primary method

- 48. Katarzyna Kobra, “Dla ludzi niezdolnych...,” *Forma* 3 (1935): 14. ●
- 49. Katarzyna Kobra, “Sculpture Is...,” in *Katarzyna Kobra 1898–1951*, 169; originally published in “Rzeźba stanowi...,” *Głos artystów* 1–7 (1937). ●
- 50. Art requires “rational and objective collective effort—both in the implementation of already tested artistic concepts as well as in laboratory work—including inquiries into the social utility of hypotheses pertaining to forms and their development into fully formed concepts ready for implementation.” Władysław Strzemiński, “Surogaty sztuki,” *Budowa* 1 (1936): 6. ●
- 51. Władysław Strzemiński, “Co myślę o architekturze nowoczesnej” (1934), in Władysław Strzemiński, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, ed. Grzegorz Sztabiński (Kraków: Universitas, 2006), 50–51. ●
- 52. Kobra, “Sculpture Is ...,” 169. ●
- 53. “Our psyche is in a tangle, being over-complicated. Its entanglements are to a large extent due to the condition of the surrounding world—chaotic and disorganized. Being shaped by contradictory forces, society consequently produces a psyche that is uncoordinated and paradoxical in its various effects. If society were founded on the principle of functional fulfillment of its needs, we should be able to free ourselves from the condition overcomplicated. Katarzyna Kobra, “Functionalism,” in *Katarzyna Kobra 1898–1951*, 166; originally published as “Funkcjonalizm,” *Forma* 4 (1936). ●
- 54. “Dyskusja L. Chwistek—W. Strzemiński,” *Forma* 3 (1935): 4. Given the timeframe of the discussion, 1934, we can surmise that Strzemiński identified “the real state affairs,” that tries to conceal “behind the unist disguises” with fascism. He was well aware of the dangers of the biopolitics of unity when based on false premises.

of working with art involves experimenting with and inventing forms, both of which should yield consequences in terms of organizational methods and emotional attitudes, binding it to production and scientific management of labor and everyday life. The ultimate test for any given formal invention is the organizational coefficient it exerts on existing forms of life.”⁵¹ In her own writings, Kobro mirrors these opinions: “The spatial composition creates emotions deriving from the victory of the active forces of the human intellect over the current state of irrationality and chaos. ... The task of art is cooperation in achieving the victory of higher forms in the organization of life. The domain of art is the production of socially useful form.”⁵²

The objective of unism, therefore, is biopolitical in nature: The organization of human life, the rationalization of life activities was to extricate them from the yoke of emotional quivering and set them on a common course, so that in a joint effort with other human beings—thus creating a single organism, so to speak—a human being could change the world for the better, becoming happier in the process thanks to the feeling of purpose that this effort brings him or her. For both artists, labor was the ultimate model for all human activity: they envisioned a well-organized society as a Fordist factory and identified happiness with finding one’s own place in the social machine.⁵³ Society was to be the ultimate unist work of art: “The search for unity is the deepest and most universal moving force of our times. It provides a social foundation of unism. Changes in state organization favor the creation of supraindividual arrangements of interrelated elements, or else they conceal the real state of affairs behind unist disguises.”⁵⁴ Unism, therefore, was to be the answer to the crisis of the traditional forms of organizing societies, forms that are not organic because they are rooted in hierarchies (contrasts disrupting unity), individualism (lack of connection between pieces of the whole), and arbitrariness (i.e., relationships based on power rather than rationality).

Ceasing production of new unist paintings did not necessarily imply rejection of unism and its principles but indicated acknowledgment that tasks in the painting “section” of the unist production line had been accomplished and continuation of unism was possible—and made sense—only in the next sections along the line: sculpture, architecture, and urban or social planning.

MODELS OF FUNCTIONALITY

In the 1920s, Kobro and Strzemiński strenuously pressed the issues of autonomy of both individual arts and the artistic practice as such, with *autonomy* understood as independence from external norms and justifications. In the early 1930s, the rhetoric in their theoretical discussions started to shift. While still fiercely observing the precept that an artist's obligations stem directly from the specificity of the art he or she deals with, Strzemiński and Kobro both started to emphasize the extra-artistic aspect of their work. This translated into placing—in their theoretical writings—greater emphasis on the question of employing pure form experimentation in everyday life,⁵⁵ as well as into their involvement in design activity.

Both had been involved with design from the beginning of their artistic careers. While in Russia, they had designed propaganda posters for the state agency ROSTA. After their move to Poland, Strzemiński (and, to a lesser degree, Kobro) continued his activity in graphic design, creating layouts for his friends' poetic volumes as well as avant-garde magazines such as *Zurotnica*, *Blok*, and *Praesens*. Kobro, in turn, designed furniture and set decorations for theaters.⁵⁶ Both also tried their hand at architectural design. In 1923, Strzemiński created a model for the new railway station in Gdynia (fig. 9); it resembled a radically simplified Malevich *architecton*. In 1926, both join Praesens, a group of artists and architects that, like Bauhaus before it, focused primarily on industrial design. One of the group's projects was the interior decoration of the Ministry of Treasury Pavilion at the 1929 *Polish National Exhibition* in Poznań. The project was signed by the whole group, but Strzemiński's correspondence indicates it was mostly his and Kobro's work.⁵⁷ Both Strzemiński and Kobro also got involved with teaching, working in vocational schools to educate future typesetters, printers, and interior designers. Their teaching programs drew on Soviet art education from the revolutionary period and the didactic methods of the Bauhaus.

Although Kobro and Strzemiński considered themselves laboratory artists (dedicated to the exploration of pure forms), their involvement with utilitarian design was both methodical and long-lasting. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, they brought together both aspects under a single theoretical system—unism. This demonstrates the total nature of unist theory, which, depending on the authors' intentions, was to include not only painting and sculpture but industrial design, architecture (including its urban planning aspect), and graphic design. Unism stipulated separate rules and development programs for each of the disciplines. Simultaneously, however, Strzemiński claimed, "Modern utilitarian designing is based on abstract art."⁵⁸ Painting and sculpture were thus

FIG. 9: Władysław Strzemiński, *Projekt dworca kolejowego w Gdyni* [Design for a New Railway Station in Gdynia], 1923/1978



● **55.** “Abstract art,” Strzemiński wrote in 1932, “provides a space for laboratory exploration of new forms. The results of this exploration are implemented and become an indispensable element of our daily lives.” Then he added, “It does not tantamount, however, to the postulate of immediate utility of abstract art work, as art often works in mysterious ways.” Władysław Strzemiński, “Komunikat grupy a.r. nr 2,” in *Władysław Strzemiński: In memoriam*, ed. Janusz Zagrodzki (Łódź: Sztuka Polska, 1988), 179.

● **56.** See Karnicka, “Chronology of Koro’s Life and Work,” 37, 39. ● **57.** *Ibid.*, 41. ● **58.** Władysław Strzemiński, “Przedmiot i przestrzeń,” *Wiek XX* 21 (1928): 2. ● **59.** *Ibid.*

to provide conceptual foundations for applied arts. That is, they were to provide them with methods of organizing materials, rather than concrete formal solutions. In the laboratory of pure art, only the former were prototyped.

As in sculpture and painting, the fundamental method in industrial and utilitarian design was to be “shaping of each individual thing in agreement with its own discrete laws.”⁵⁹ This meant more than just designing in accordance with the “truth of the material.” In Strzemiński’s opinion, this was the hallmark of the constructivist approach (present in the Bauhaus, among others), which, although more advanced in comparison to earlier design methods (mostly based around “ornamentation”), was still inadequate. By purging the form of all redundancies and superfluities, it still did not provide instruction as to how to make that form a consistent,

cohesive whole. According to Strzemiński, such instruction can be generated only by systemic thinking: “It goes without saying that only interdependence, or a system in other words, can provide us with a uniform linkage ... of elements.”⁶⁰ The system had to be based on a mathematically determined ratio, and the issue of material’s truth was secondary and derivative.⁶¹ The fundamental assumption stipulates that “all objects are part of the space,” which means that the “spatiality” of objects is the most important issue here (*spatiality* meaning “the relationship between objects and the space surrounding it”). As Strzemiński later adds, the form is derived not from the material but the space, thus the “structure of space as a whole and the way in which the object is embedded in it and constitutes a part of the whole” is of crucial importance.⁶² The belief, held by him and Kbro, that art, either pure or utilitarian, should not be identified with the production of objects (paintings, sculptures, buildings) but with the mission of comprehensive transformation of reality, again rears its head. In the case of utilitarian art, that mission is closer to the issue of organizing individual elements of the societal organism in a harmonious manner than to the issue of a work of art’s adherence to its own innate properties and qualities. Unism thus becomes functionalism, even though the rhetoric espousing the idea of organic wholeness toward which everyone and everything should strive remained unchanged.

Strzemiński clarifies the matter further: “As a method, functionalism entails the reduction of man’s every activity in a given domicile to the simplest elements. It is derived from an in-depth analysis of his lifestyle; it assigns a place to every recurring function and provides appropriate tools that help discharge that function.

● 60. *Ibid.*, 3. ● 61. The point of reference for the ratio would be the human figure. See Władysław Strzemiński, “Sztuka nowoczesna w Polsce” (1934), in *Władysław Strzemiński: Pisma*, ed. Zofia Baranowicz, (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo PAN, 1975), 217. ● 62. Strzemiński, “Przedmiot,” 3. Strzemiński argues that thinking about architecture in terms of individual buildings is misguided because it leads to chaos and the disruption of space (which, in the artist’s opinion, is continuous and indivisible). That is why functionalism promotes architecture that opens onto the space that surrounds it, permeates the space, and binds individual buildings into a single, consistent whole. Functionalism architecture also takes great care not to disrupt the natural rhythms of activities making up our everyday lives. See Władysław Strzemiński, “Architektura współczesna na tle Wystawy Stowarzyszenia Architektów Polskich,” *Wiek XX* 13 (1928): 4–5. ● 63. *Ibid.*, 4. ● 64. *Ibid.* ● 65. Kbro, “Functionalism,” 166.

Thus, the arrangement of the interior becomes an orchestrator of man's movement within the domicile, organizing them to be as easy and as comfortable as possible. It becomes the task of the architect ... to arrange the interior to fit the domicile dweller's lifestyle and manage the economy of his daily efforts through proper placement of functionalized elements."⁶³ Simultaneously, Strzemiński acknowledged that human life constitutes a reality that is complex, fluid, and highly prone to fluctuations and, as such, is difficult to frame using simple, "symmetrical" structures. That is why architecture has to be based on a more complex system—one that Strzemiński calls the "asymmetric rhythm" system, being a reflection of the "asymmetry" (i.e., diversity) of human activity. Designing, therefore, should consider the regulatory function not only of shapes and spatial partitions but of colors and textures that might be used to manage "the ebb and flow of human functional energy." "As an extension of the functional rhythm, this esthetic rhythm becomes a human one, one fused with the pace of human life and its results. Not an unnecessary ornament, but life itself."⁶⁴

Aside from Kobro's preschool mock-up, Kobro and Strzemiński's project of a tobacco kiosk, reproduced in a 1928 issue of *Architektura i budownictwo* (Architecture and Construction), is the best illustration of what a practical application of functionalist assumptions would look like. The picture reprinted in the magazine depicts a simple structure based on the module of a rectangle, its walls always at right angles, fully open onto the space beyond it. The lightness and immateriality of the walls is further reinforced by specific color divisions and the introduction of a large-scale inscription. The black-and-white picture does not allow us to evaluate the color palette, but by analogy to their later works—for example, *Projekt kompozycji wnętrza mieszkaniowego* (Design of a Domicile Interior; 1930), reproduced in *Composition of Space*—we can surmise that the palette was typically neoplasticist, based around primary colors and the so-called noncolors white, black, and gray. Not only the color palette but the overall composition distinctively recalls the neoplasticism that, in the late 1920s, became a significant point of reference for Strzemiński and Kobro, more important than suprematism itself. Both believed that neoplasticism was the expression of the ultimate economy, condensing a multitude of shapes to just "verticals and horizontals in the plane of the painting, and to three directions perpendicular to each other, in sculpture and in architecture," thus producing "the greatest concentration of contrasting movements, perpendicular to each other, which follow the shortest possible lines of action."⁶⁵

Strzemiński's most important implementation of these principles was his postwar *Sala Neoplastyczna* (Neoplastic Room; designed in 1947, opened in 1948), created at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź. The room was built within the halls of the late-nineteenth-century palace in which the museum made its home after

WW2. According to the idea of the museum's then-director, Strzemiński's room was supposed to be the final in a series of rooms depicting, in chronological order, the evolution of modern art from impressionism to abstractionism. The walls, the floor, and the ceiling of the room were divided into rectangular and square planes filled with primary colors and noncolors. Against such a background, Strzemiński placed Kobra's sculptures and paintings hailing from the a.r. group's International Collection of Modern Art—started by Strzemiński himself—particularly those that were in any way linked with neoplasticism.⁶⁶ The room also contained furniture items and exhibition devices designed by Strzemiński, clearly referencing De Stijl aesthetics but much more austere in expression and sparse in terms of colors.

Discussions of the functional organization of space also brought up the question of graphic design. This surprising juxtaposition can be explained by one of the closing passages of *Composition of Space*, which stipulates that “The typographic page forms a sequence of successive (in the course of reading the text) spatial elements (printed surfaces) and should therefore be regulated according to measures and numbers.”⁶⁷ In an article published in 1933, Strzemiński lays out the theoretical foundation for graphic design and defines something he calls “functional printing,” an approach to printing he considers fundamentally different from its existing incarnation, which he calls “Renaissance-like” and believes to be characterized by an overreliance on pre-Gutenbergian, manuscript-like aesthetics and a proclivity toward overabundance of ornamentation that is in no way justified by the underlying composition. In Strzemiński's opinion, form in modern design should be a function of the content, should stem from it.

- **66.** The International Collection of Modern Art was established in 1929 by Strzemiński, Kobro, and the rest of the a.r. group: Henryk Stażewski, a constructivist painter; and the avant-garde poets Julian Przyboś and Jan Brzękowski. The international recognition of the group's members and their extensive contacts in European avant-garde circles allowed them to convince such artists as, among others, Arp, Max Ernst, Fernand Leger, Enrico Prampolini, Kurt Schwitters, Theo van Doesburg, and Georges Vantongerloo to donate their works to the collection. The collection was established as a deposit at the newly founded municipal museum in Łódź (today's Muzeum Sztuki) and was opened to the public on February 15, 1931. In 1939, the collection comprised 112 works of Polish and European avant-garde artists. See *Un mundo construido: Polonia, 1918-1939*, ed. Juan Manuel Bonet and Paulina Kurc-Maj (Madrid: Circulo de Bellas Artes, 2011). ● **67.** Kobro and Strzemiński, "Composing Space," 53. In another essay, Strzemiński brings up the "architectonics of print" and points out that both graphic design and architecture deal with the organization of movement: the movement of human body in the case of the latter, and the movement of the eye in the case of the former. Strzemiński, "Sztuka nowoczesna w Polsce," 218. ● **68.** Władysław Strzemiński, "Druk funkcjonalny" (1933), in *Wybór pism*, 91. ● **69.** *Ibid.*, 91–92.

Rather than embellishment, the “purposefulness of highly legible everyday prints” becomes the goal.⁶⁸ This legibility would be facilitated using contrasts; that is, by introducing graphical and typographical partitions in text to highlight individual sequences of meanings. These partitions—introduced, for example, by switching typefaces, font sizes, line spacing, as well as specific graphic signals—are supposed to establish a peculiar rhythm that should make reading easier while also directing the reader’s interpretational efforts. As Strzemiński mentions, however, because a given text has no single correct interpretation, there is no single correct way to represent it graphically.⁶⁹ Unist integrity would therefore be expressed in functional printing in the form of harmony between form and content first, and means and end second (the end being the greater legibility of the text). Examples can be found in Strzemiński’s communiqués released on behalf of the a.r. group (fig. 13) and books published in the “a.r. library” series, including *Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm* (1929) (fig. 12), authored by Strzemiński and Kobro; *Z ponad* (From Above, 1930) and *W głąb las. Poezje* (Into the Forest: Poems, 1932) by Julian Przyboś; and *Poezja integralna* (Integral Poetry, 1934) and *Zaciśnięte dookoła ust. Poezje* (Tight Around the Lips: Poems, 1936) by Jan Brzękowski, among others (fig. 10). Of these, only *From Above* (fig. 11) relies on strong visual signals and a very graphical approach to the text. The remaining projects are characterized by radical minimalism, a limited range of typefaces, large spaces left unoccupied by text, and the use of text blocks as primary drivers of page layout. Nothing distracts from the reading, and reoccurring typographical signals impose a rhythm on this act while simultaneously emphasizing important passages of the text.



For Strzemiński and Kobro, functionalism was not just another tendency in art and design that they decided to follow. Rather it was a method of shaping reality based on the principles derived from scientific organization of labor, emphasizing a maximum degree of rationalization.⁷⁰ On some level it was a response to the Great Depression and its social and political consequences. The feeling that the economic crisis was just a product of an “irrational game of blind forces and rushing blood, that shape recent historical events” could only exacerbate a belief they had always held, one that stipulated the necessity of transforming social reality via a rationalized system of organization.⁷¹ The Great Depression shifted their objectives toward working “to improve the organizing power of social forces, striving for purposefulness, economy, and planning in both art and social

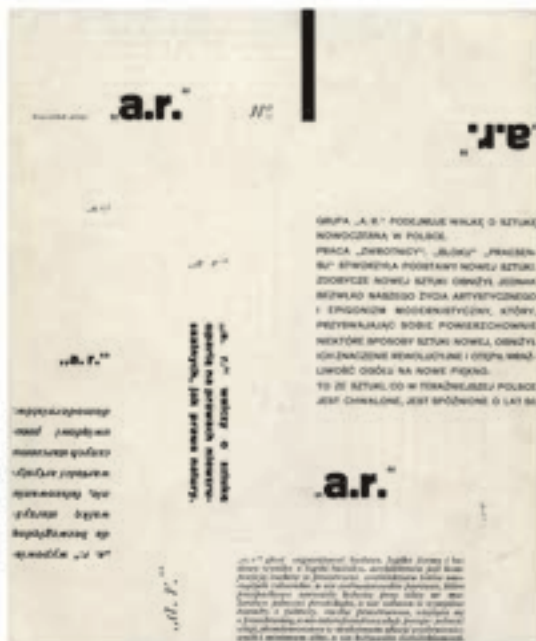
● 70. Kobro, “Functionalism,” 166. ●
 71. Władysław Strzemiński, “Aspekty rzeczywistości,” *Forma* 5 (1936): 12.

FIG. 10: Władysław Strzemiński, cover for the book: Julian Przyboś, *Oburącz. Poezje* [With Both Hands: Poems], 1926

FIG. 11: Władysław Strzemiński, cover for the book: Julian Przyboś, *Z ponad* [From Above], 1930

FIG. 12: Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego* [Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm], [1931]

FIG. 13: Władysław Strzemiński, design for *Komunikat grupy "a.r."* [Bulletin of the a.r. Group], [1930]



life altogether.” These could be achieved through “drafting utilitarian and organizational norms and methods of artistic practice or through actual collaboration between artist, social worker, and technician on direct shaping of forms of living.” In this new situation, confining the artist to nothing more than producing new paintings became socially irrelevant. “The painting,” Strzemiński declares, “becomes an experiment in form, a transitional stage in the process of working out a more perfect concept. This concept, however, is actualized not through painting but through utilitarian planning of the course of everyday life.”⁷² Fundamental change could be achieved “only through mass implementation, rather than producing singular pictures.”⁷³ And Kobra linked these changes with “a reorganization of the human psyche toward planned utilitarianism and purposeful activity in all areas of human life.”⁷⁴

It can be said, then, that the Great Depression led to the historization of unism. This was not, however, a violent change. Rather, it entailed the gradual introduction of new elements that ended up disrupting and transforming the theoretical system. Insofar as the unists initially believed the prototypes—drafted in laboratories of pure art—would be implemented in the utopia of a new society, over time they gradually reoriented their efforts toward reality “here and now.” And that reality yearned for solutions that could be implemented immediately and could produce tangible effects in the form of a transformation of social realities.

This did not necessarily translate into negation of pure art but into the abridgment of the prototype implementation process; that is, the passage from theoretical ideas developed in sculpture and painting to concrete practical applications.⁷⁵ The decision to stop producing new unist paintings was, therefore, not to be seen as a sign of defeat but as the belief that the prototyping stage had come to an end and was about to make way for the process of implementation in architecture, design, urban planning, and so on.⁷⁶

THE REALISM OF SEEING

In 1934, Strzemiński painted his final unist painting, *Kompozycja unistyczna 14* (Unist Composition 14). From here on out, he would dedicate himself to what one scholar calls the “realism of seeing.”⁷⁷ The first symptoms of that new direction include his 1931 urban and marine landscapes, as well as still lifes in which he combines soft, biological lines with a shift of the contour against the color—a formal device that was supposed to visualize the afterimage effect (figs. 14 and 15). The set of these solutions is present in nearly all the artist’s later works, including his final paintings, created in the late 1940s in a radically different social, artistic, and theoretical reality.

As Strzemiński was abandoning unism in painting, Kopro created her ninth and final spatial composition—one radically different from its predecessors—and then completely gave up this sculptural conception. In *Kompozycja przestrzenna (9)* [Spatial Composition (9), ca. 1933] (fig. 16), the artist abandoned rigorous geometric divisions, replacing them instead with biomorphic forms resembling those appearing at that time in Strzemiński’s paintings. Similar forms characterize a lost plaster sculpture, known only from photographs, that was created probably about two years later. Insofar as *Spatial Composition (9)* retains, despite its renouncement of geometry, the character of sculpture as primary organizer of space, this lost piece stands in stark contrast to that approach; it is a compact, synthetic form, shut off from space rather than open to any sort of interaction with it. The piece is probably the last Kopro created before the war. After the war, although she returned to artistic work, her efforts were much less intense. She sculpted the four nudes,

● **72.** Ibid., 11. ● **73.** Władysław Strzemiński, “Hasło przeciw stabilizatorom sztuki” (1935), in *Pisma*, 237. ● **74.** Kopro, “Functionalism,” 166. Strzemiński, on the other hand, writes, “The final end of architecture is not to building of convenient houses; it is also not the blowing up of abstract sculptures and calling them exhibition pavilions. Its aim is: to be a regulator of the rhythm of social and individual life. Władysław Strzemiński, “The Principles of New Architecture,” *Constructivism in Poland 1923–1936*, 109; originally published as “Zasady nowej architektury” (1931), 47.

● **75.** “It is self-evident that each subsequent abstract painting should come into existence only if there is an opportunity that it will produce data that none of his predecessors managed to yield. That is why abstract painting should be created only when the artist has something to say with it.” Władysław Strzemiński, “Nasza zawartość ...” *Forma* 2 (1934): 18. ● **76.** We should also remember that after the war and based on principles created during the functional unism period, Strzemiński drafted the concept for new urban planning and developed a couple of projects dealing with the reconstruction of the national economy. See Władysław Strzemiński, “Łódź sfunkejonalizowana,” *Mysł Współczesna* 11 (1947); and Władysław Strzemiński, “O przyszłości naszych miast i osiedli,” *Wiś* 26 (1948).

● **77.** Leszek Brogowski indicates that the “realism that Strzemiński deals with here does not rely on the imitation of forms populating the external world but is primarily a realism of seeing. The object appears indirectly, rather than directly; these paintings do not depict objects, but rather the process of seeing objects.” Leszek Brogowski, *Powidoki i po ... Unizm i “Teoria widzenia” Władysława Strzemińskiego* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2001), 55–56.



a reference to the series of cubist-like nudes she created around the middle of the 1920s. Where her previous nudes are characterized by synthetism, a tight integration of individual elements of the form, and a nearly classical tranquility of the composition, her postwar works are strongly disjointed and more dramatic due to the use of convexo-concave molding and fiercely geometrized edges (figs. 17–21).

“The process of sculpting a naked human evokes physiological and sexual emotions. I sculpt just like other people go to the movies, to relax.”⁷⁸ This is Kobra’s only known statement about her nonconstructivist work (interestingly, it has been illustrated with reproductions of her spatial compositions). Strzemiński discusses his marine landscapes in a similar tone, calling them his “relaxational” paintings.⁷⁹ When these works were created on the sidelines of their unist praxis, explanations like these probably seemed acceptable. Tired of the intellectual rigor demanded by unist creations, the artists allowed themselves these reprieves into more relaxed territory. But when it became



FIG. 14: Władysław Strzemiński,
Pejzaż morski w deszczu [Seascape
in Rain], July 24, 1933

FIG. 15: Władysław Strzemiński,
Pejzaż morski [Seascape], July 2, 1934

- **78.** Katarzyna Kobro, “L’action de sculpter ...,” *Abstraction-Création 2* (1933): 27.
- **79.** “Dyskusja L. Chwistek—W. Strzemiński,” 5.



the sole form of their pure art practice and the principles of unism were developed further only in functionalist design, the argument that these works were simply relaxational was no longer sufficient. The question then is: How is the emergence of these works connected to the artists' abandonment of unist abstraction, and how are these works connected to the functionalism the duo simultaneously practiced?

One of the answers involves the change in historic context. Unism was rooted in the revolutionary optimism that was sustained over the course of the 1920s by rapid economic, industrial, and technological developments, and aided belief in the power of the human mind and the possibility of a reason-driven transformation of the world.⁸⁰ The Great Depression fractured that vision, revealing the dark, irrational side of economic development, one that is beholden to the “games of blind forces” that brought the

FIG. 16: Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (9)* [Spatial Composition (9)], 1933

FIG. 17: Katarzyna Kobro, *Akt (6)* [Nude (6)], ca. 1948

worst dregs to the surface in the 1930s, “heralding the coming of an era in which the basest of social instincts would reign supreme.”⁸¹ Strzemiński and Kobro responded to the situation in a dialectical manner. On the one hand, they dedicated themselves to overcoming the negative tendencies of the era by fostering organizational impulses; on the other hand, their painterly and sculptural practices underwent a shift that can be connected with efforts to express the substance of the era they lived in. The former resulted in the move from unism toward functionalism and the latter in a fundamental shift in the forms of pure art they practiced.

● **80.** Strzemiński claims that the 1920s were a period during which Fordist rationalization “drastically decreased production costs and created serial, democratic methods of satisfying the needs of the entire human race.” The evolution of mass culture and its primary medium—the cinema—“allowed entire crowds of people to peek through the window of the screen and gaze at remote corners of the world, producing an illusion of the unity of humankind Armed with modern technology, man undertook tasks so grand as to far surpass the wildest dream of utopians of the past It seemed that the rapid development of production capabilities, in tandem with favorable economic conditions, could create the most perfect social systems and liberate humanity from the chains of history.” Strzemiński, “Aspekty rzeczywistości,” 12. ● **81.** *Ibid.*





The belief that a work of art expresses the substance of the era it exists in, usually unknowingly to its author, is one symptom of Strzemiński's intensifying historicism. The substance is expressed by the work's structure and the formal solutions it utilizes, reflecting the "visual content" characteristic of a given era; that is, the range of vision available to the human at that moment thanks to scientific, technological, and organizational advances. In Strzemiński's opinion, the visual content is closely linked to social and economic transformations.⁸² That is why in primitive and feudal societies, when the world consisted of isolated autarkies, the world was seen as divided into a series of unconnected objects, each one "distinct from the rest, isolated by its own local outline, color, and form."⁸³ Over time, as processes that bound "individual social and economic phenomena into a universal web of global interdependencies" grew stronger, "isolated, closed-off objects" started gradually disappearing from art, replaced by

FIG. 18: Katarzyna Kobro, *Akt kobiecy* [Female Nude], 1948

FIG. 19: Katarzyna Kobro, *Akt kobiecy* [Female Nude], 1948

● **82.** Władysław Strzemiński, "Z powodu wystawy w IPS-ie" (1934), in *Pisma*, 187–88. ● **83.** Władysław Strzemiński, "Sztuka nowoczesna a szkoły artystyczne" (1932), in *Pisma*, 154. ● **84.** Strzemiński, "Aspekty rzeczywistości," 8. ● **85.** Strzemiński, "Nasza zawartość ...," 18. ● **86.** Władysław Strzemiński, "Rozwój jednostki ...," *Forma 3* (1935): 17. ● **87.** Strzemiński, "Aspekty rzeczywistości," 8–9. A little later in the same essay, he writes, "The visual content, subjected to interference from extravisual stimuli, is transformed, creating a complicated nexus of constitutive elements that make up the psyche of every human individual."

visual content that “embraced the influences and dependencies of individual objects.”⁸⁴ Cubism, supposedly the most advanced form of the latter, visualized the relationships between each object using the afterimage effect, an optical illusion in which retinal impressions of an image persist after we move our eyes from one object to the next. As the new retinal impression is combined with earlier ones, our brains see “not a series of separate objects but rather a vision of a painterly continuity of the world and the ways in which individual elements of the form influence each other.”⁸⁵

In Strzemiński’s narrative, in the post-cubist era the process of developing the visual content is broken down into two distinct approaches: surrealist deformation and abstractionist constructionism. The abandonment of unist painting in favor of the “realism of seeing” should be investigated in the context of that split.

Surrealism that refers to the first approach initially was framed by Strzemiński as a development of the cubist concept of the afterimage. That development would supposedly entail a shift from combining overlapping representations of objects located next to one another to combining distant images.⁸⁶ This changes in his subsequent interpretations, which reveal that the true surrealist innovation is not the association of distant images but the consideration of the influence of emotion on the formation of visual content.⁸⁷ In this instance, surrealism would not create new visual content so much as serve as the symptom of its deformation caused by the emotional turmoil of the economic and social crisis. “Surrealism,” Strzemiński writes, “is a mirror in which the modern man sees both himself and his era in disarray, in decay caused by the blind game of forces in constant flux. Thus his absolute negativity and the pessimism

FIG. 20: Katarzyna Kobro, *Akt kobiecy stojący* [Standing Female Nude], ca. 1948



with which he approaches all of the values that the crisis-stricken and festering world can offer him. At its core a product of the blind interplay of forces created by economic liberalism and the most comprehensive visual expression thereof, surrealism is also a declaration of utter pessimism and negativity.”⁸⁸ Surrealism expresses the loss of faith in rational community, the rejection of everything that results in the socialization of the individual and the opening of oneself to the most primal impulses, the sort that is “common for all living beings.” That is why, Strzemiński points out, the biological contour is the most prevalent form in surrealism, “outlining the lumpy, formless mass—a beached amoeba—a galatea that pulsates feebly on the shore, under the blazing sun, and feels disjointed sensations.”⁸⁹ The same contour can be found in Strzemiński’s marine landscapes and other “relaxational” paintings from that period.

The second approach is related to abstract art that would supposedly be “a conscious systematization and purification of compositional methods derived from the foundation of a given visual content.”⁹⁰ Abstract art would supposedly differ from the hitherto prevalent art forms in that its formal structure would not reflect the visual content specific to a given era so much as try to drive it in a specific direction. Abstraction would therefore strive to reverse the chain of causal relationships between socioeconomic conditions, visual content, and painterly forms. In the abstraction, the third of these would, by shaping the second, eventually transform the first. Because of that, Strzemiński saw abstract art as an antidote against the deformative power of surrealism. Both Strzemiński and Kobro considered surrealism to be rooted in individualistic, antisocial, and destructive emotions that had to be overcome for the condition of society



FIG. 21: Katarzyna Kobro, *Akt (5)?* [Nude (5)?], ca. 1933–1935

● 88. Ibid., 11. ● 89. Ibid., 10. ● 90. Strzemiński, “Nasza zawartość ...,” 18. ● 91. “The deeply emotional contents of Surrealist painting bears witness to a distressed individual’s nostalgia for some direct access to productivity.” Kobro, “Functionalism,” 165. ● 92. Strzemiński, “Aspekty rzeczywistości,” 11. ● 93. Władysław Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2016), 92.

to improve.⁹¹ Abstract art could help with that because it brings up “what binds people together in a society—organizational, constructive emotions and attitudes.”⁹² Maybe this is the lens through which we should look at the final unist painting and final spatial composition. In both of them, the biological contour and amoeba-like form are subordinated to the organizational system that is supposed to produce organic unity. Possibly it was an attempt at using an abstract structure to arrange the chaos and randomness of human life laid bare by surrealism.

Why, then, was this attempt not continued? Unism was created for human beings seen as standardized individuals described by standard behaviors and standard needs. As such, a human was more an abstract eye or a piece of mathematic data to be used in spatiotemporal calculations than a living, feeling, thinking being. Surrealism complicated that image, thus invalidating the investigation of human existence in the context of abstract models based around a priori assumptions that were eventually replaced with the necessity of a more direct examination of the experience of life itself. Because of this empirical turn, the further development of abstract models became much less important than the matter of using practical solutions based around these models and less important than witnessing the emotions of the modern human being. This in turn was related to the recognition of painting as a domain of real visual experience rather than just idealistic constructs. Years later, Strzemiński stated that this real visual experience encompasses not only the observed reality but the “observation of the observer, as well as of his psychophysiological reactions elicited by the act of observation.”⁹³ As this assumption was internalized

and accepted, a new prototyping process was initiated—but in this instance its subject was realism itself rather than the painting.

As Strzemiński once indicated, over the ages, paintings were created “as if human being was purely visual being—a one, big eye, so to speak.”⁹⁴ That approach was first breached by the impressionists and the cubists, whose formal solutions took the corporeal aspect of seeing, and thus its dependence on processes taking place within the human body, into consideration.⁹⁵ Surrealists, in turn, demonstrated that seeing is also greatly influenced by emotion, thoughts, and other stimuli. “As the visual content is subjected to interference from extravisual stimuli, it is transformed,” Strzemiński writes, “creating a complicated nexus of elements that constitute the psyche of every individual.”⁹⁶ Strzemiński himself not only tried to provide painterly equivalents to these psychophysiological transformations; he attempted to use them to intentionally articulate his attitude toward reality. In *Bezrobotni* (The Unemployed), two lithographs from the portfolio entitled *Łódź bez funkcjonalizmu* (Łódź without Functionalism, 1936), biological, anxious contours become the medium for the artist’s emotional reaction to the pathologies that permeate the world around him, to situations in which people thrust into poverty and misery become shadows (*afterimages?*) of their former selves. His drawings created during the Nazi occupation also use similar “afterimages,” this time to depict razed cities and people suffering the horrors of war. The most striking effect Strzemiński achieved in *Moim przyjaciółom Żydom* (To My Friends the Jews), a series of works combining biological drawing with documentary photographs depicting crimes perpetrated during the Holocaust (figs. 22–31). The powerlessness of the photographs

● 94. Strzemiński, “Aspekty rzeczywistości,” 8–9. ● 95. *Ibid.*, 7–8. ● 96. *Ibid.*, 9.



Pages 59–61:

FIGS. 22–31: Władysław Strzemiński, works from the serie *Moim przyjaciołom Żydom* [To My Friends the Jews], ca. 1945

FIG. 22: *Śladem istnienia* [Following the Existence]

FIG. 23: *Lepka plama zbrodni* [The Sticky Spot of Crime]

FIG. 24: *Puste piszczele krematoriów* [The Empty Shinbones of the Crematoria]

FIG. 25: *Wyciągane strunami nóg* [Stretched by the Strings of Legs]

FIG. 26: *Śladem istnienia stóp, które wydeptały* [Following the Existence of Feet Which Tread a Path]



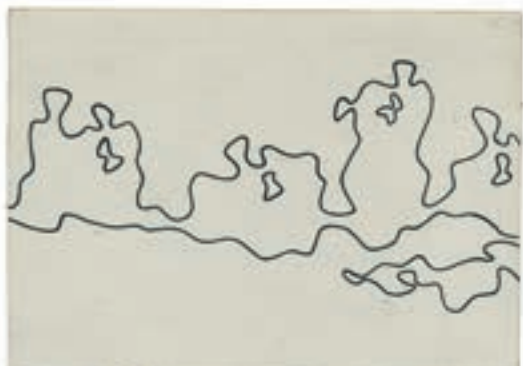
FIG. 27: *Piszczelami napięte żyły* [Veins Strung Taut by Shinbones]

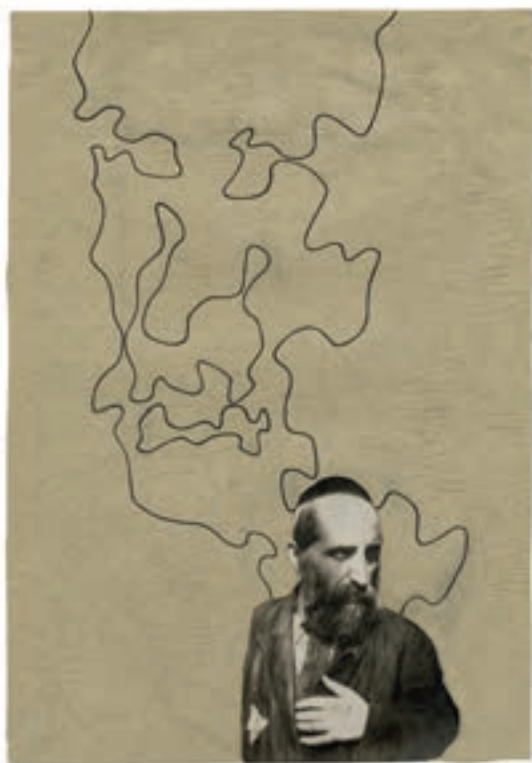
FIG. 28: *Ruinami zburzonych oczodołów. Kamieniami jak głowy wybrukowano* [With the Ruins of Demolished Eye Sockets: Paved with Stones like Heads]

FIG. 29: *Ruinami zburzonych oczodołów. Kamieniami jak głowy wybrukowano* [I Accuse the Crime of Cain and the Sin of Ham]

FIG. 30: *Przysięgnij pamięci rąk (istnień, które nie z nami)* [Vow and Oath to the Memory of Hands (Existences Which Are Not with Us)]

FIG. 31: *Czaszka ojca* [Father's Skull]





in the face of that horror is juxtaposed with drawing forms in which that which is seen is preserved as a “trace of loss,” an “afterimage of memory” recorded inside our bodies, even when our imagination (consciousness) refuses to accept it.⁹⁷

By binding the phenomenon of seeing with the entirety of human experience, including its corporeal aspect, Strzemiński’s interpretation of seeing essentially becomes a phenomenological construct wherein the reality of the world being perceived and that of the perceiving subject blend into one. “We are built from the same matter as everything else, no artificial isolating barrier can be built between us and the rest of reality. Matter is continuous and each of its parts influences every other one,” Strzemiński writes in *Teoria widzenia* (Theory of Vision), his most important theoretical work, written before his death and published posthumously.⁹⁸ Seeing, he adds, is related to the interaction between external matter and the human body, a process that takes place in material reality rather than in an abstract world.⁹⁹ Therefore, all art that tries to contradict the material nature of seeing cannot reflect the truth about the human experience of the world. That is why Strzemiński opts for “humanist realism,” which considers the “human himself, his muscles, nerves, his psychophysiological disposition, his entire real organism” to be the true measure of things.¹⁰⁰

As Strzemiński was laying the foundation for the idea of humanist realism, the new Polish authorities, following the Stalinist regime in the USSR, tried to implement the doctrine of socialist realism. Although his idea was based on much earlier thoughts and observations, it immediately entered into a polemic against it. He was not explicit in his criticism of socialist realism, but there could be no doubt

● 97. Paweł Mościcki, “Being on Time Too Late: On Strzemiński’s Encounters with History,” in *Powidoki życia: Władysław Strzemiński i prawa dla sztuki / Afterimages of Life: Władysław Strzemiński and Rights for Art*, exh. cat. (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 2012), 340–42.

● 98. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, 206. Strzemiński wrote the *Theory of Vision* from 1947 to 1951, but the first edition was released only after his death, in 1958. ● 99. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, 205. ● 100. *Ibid.*, 281. ● 101. *Ibid.*, 56. Over the course of writing *Theory of Vision*, Strzemiński gradually abandoned the concept of “visual content” in favor of “visual consciousness,” an attempt to further emphasize the relationship between seeing and thought: “Only what [a man] has realized, he has seen.” *Ibid.*, 54. ● 102. *Ibid.*, 56. ● 103. Brogowski, *Powidoki*, 41.

as to which doctrine he was picking apart when he spoke out against arbitrarily labeling one of the historical forms of realist art as “the paragon of realism.” He accused proponents of such a doctrine of ideologically driven ahistorism and willful denial of the “visual consciousness” of their time.¹⁰¹

In place of socialist realism, Strzemiński proposed true, wholly materialistic realism, one that would change along with material base (substructure). Such a realism has no room for rehashing historical forms, and it requires experimentation, or prototyping, to produce a form that will best fit the given timeframe. As the artist noticed, if realism is framed “in relation to human effort, as a product of the development of visual consciousness, then we must acknowledge its essentially infinite capability to evolve.” Then he emphasizes, “realism is not a metaphysical Platonic absolute.”¹⁰² Realism, therefore, does not describe a form of mimesis that we customarily consider a faithful reflection of reality, and that in fact reflects the perspective of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, so much as it becomes an open catalogue of ways in which to depict the world as it is seen by an individual steeped in history. This realism nullifies the difference between abstraction and figurativeness—both can be mere empty formalism, devoid of any factual link with reality, and both can constitute genuine realism; that is, a credible way of rendering historical truth.

In criticizing the form that socialist realism had taken in official cultural policy, Strzemiński did not negate the need to formulate a project of a new realism, one that would best respond to the new, socialist reality. On the contrary, he tried to formulate such a project. Before committing to the effort, he began an exploration of afterimages, which, as Leszek Brogowski indicates, are the most fundamental and direct data of those that draw our attention to the phenomenon of seeing, cause us to see seeing itself, and thus to realize its phenomenological, or “humanist,” aspect.¹⁰³ The exploration produced a series of pictures painted in 1948 and 1949. The pictures combine glimmering, polychromatic backgrounds and amoeba-like shapes resembling those from the landscapes Strzemiński painted in the 1930s, with stark, geometric schemata that are probably supposed to reflect the dynamics of subpalpebral seeing. The images look fairly abstract and only their titles—*Powidok światła: Kobieta w oknie* (Afterimage of Light: A Woman in the Window), *Powidok światła: Rudowłosa* (Afterimage of Light: Redhead), *Powidok światła: Pejzaż* (Afterimage of Light: Landscape)—allow us to retrace the real objects that were transformed into elements of these visual sensations. In later paintings from the *Żniwiarki* (Harvesters) (fig. 32) and *Kłosa* (Wheat) series, as well as in *Tkacz* (The Weaver), *Żniwa I* (Harvest I), and *Żniwa II* (Harvest II) (all created in 1950), Strzemiński combines elements of afterimage painting with more-mimetic representations of human figures and objects. Despite their mimetic

character, the figures and the objects seem to function in these paintings on the same level that abstract forms operate on—as symbols drawn from different visual code rather than as direct references to reality.¹⁰⁴ The meaning of these works is not at all clear. Some see them as a compromise between Strzemiński's own inquisitive aesthetic and doctrinal socialist realism. But the interpretation that diagnoses them to be a synthesis of two distinct forms of realism, constantly overlapping in Strzemiński's theoretical works—one that refers to seeing as a psychophysiologicaly determined activity, and the other that considers it a historic phenomenon—seems much more interesting. Whether that synthesis was intended to be a manifestation of Strzemiński's humanist realism or was only another stage in its prototyping is difficult to assess. Neither will we ever know the direction in which Strzemiński wanted to take this concept. The artist died prematurely, sidelined and forced into destitution by functionaries of the very ideology he and his art served throughout his entire life.¹⁰⁵

Kobro did not accompany Strzemiński in his final artistic endeavors. Accused of abandoning her Polish citizenship, constantly clashing with her husband, destitute and in failing health, Kobro essentially gave up making art.¹⁰⁶ The only pieces she created in that period, the series of four nudes, indicate that her focus had shifted to the intimate and the personal. Absent from this work is any notion of society as an instance that the artists refer to and that imbues their efforts with purpose and meaning. Only a bare human remains, but its nakedness has nothing to do with sensuality. If Kobro's sculptures are an expression of humanism, then it is not the humanism of hope placed in the new socialist

- **104.** See Ekaterina Degot, "Painting in History," in *Władysław Strzemiński: Readability of Images*, ed. Paweł Polit and Jarosław Suchan (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 2015).
- **105.** In 1950, the Polish minister of culture personally intervened to have Strzemiński fired from the Łódź State Art School, the same school the artist had cofounded five years prior. He was simultaneously removed from the Union of Polish Artists. Later that year, the *Neoplastic Room* he had designed for the Łódź Museum of Art was torn down. Destitute and in poor health, he finally died on December 26, 1952. See Karnicka, "The Life and Work of Władysław Strzemiński," 92–93.
- **106.** To protect her infant daughter, Kobro signed the so-called Russian list during the Nazi occupation. Citizens of Russian extraction who signed the list could count on lenient treatment at the hands of the German occupation authorities. After the war, people who signed the list (and others like it) were prosecuted *ex officio*. Kobro was eventually acquitted, but the case impacted her life profoundly and fed the growing conflict with Strzemiński. See Karnicka, "Chronology of Kobro's Life and Work," 57–58.
- **107.** Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 13–14.

reality so much as the humanism of a person trying to piece herself together after a great trauma. Her art no longer had room for grand projects, for prototypes of new social devices. The late works reflect only the weight of cruel history crushing the fragile, female body.

According to Berman, modernity is a state in which two great, contrasting forces clash: the desire for constant movement, for change and novelty; and the craving for security and stability.¹⁰⁷ Both these desires are evident in avant-garde theory and practice. They are characterized by the incessant quest for new forms and solutions. The driving force behind these quests, however, is the dream of creating the “ultimate picture” and establishing a social utopia—both of them existing outside time, perpetual and unchanging.

The work of Kobro and Strzemiński is similarly dialectical in character. Within it, a dream of absolute unity, perfect order, and total organization of both the artwork and the world—all these tranquil havens of a theoretical intellect—is intertwined with the feeling that absolutes, ideals, and totalities do not exist. Human reality is steeped in history and matter, both of which are incarnations of mutability. Although Strzemiński’s final unist paintings and Kobro’s final spatial compositions may suggest that the artists managed to reach the haven of certitude, their oeuvre is full of violent twists and shifts, and unism is just one of the directions their travels across the turbulent waters of modernity took them.

Unism entices with its intellectual rigor and radical consistency. As a result, Kobro’s and Strzemiński’s work is examined primarily through the lens of this finalist ideology. Thus, naturally in the case of finalism, crucial importance is conferred upon the question of whether individual efforts were in accordance with the historical aim, as well as the soundness of the aim itself. By placing the idea of the prototype at the center of our deliberations, I suggest shifting the optics and focusing on the process. I suggest we acknowledge the value of the process itself, autonomous from the undertaken objective that is either impossible to attain (because the ideal is an empty spot) or whose achievement is no longer a matter of art (because we assume that the implementation process proceeds beyond it). Such an understanding of modern art is presented by Berman as he quotes from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*: “Man loves to create roads, that is beyond dispute. But ... may it not be ... that



FIG. 32: Władysław Strzemiński, *Żniwiarki* [Woman Harvesting], 1950

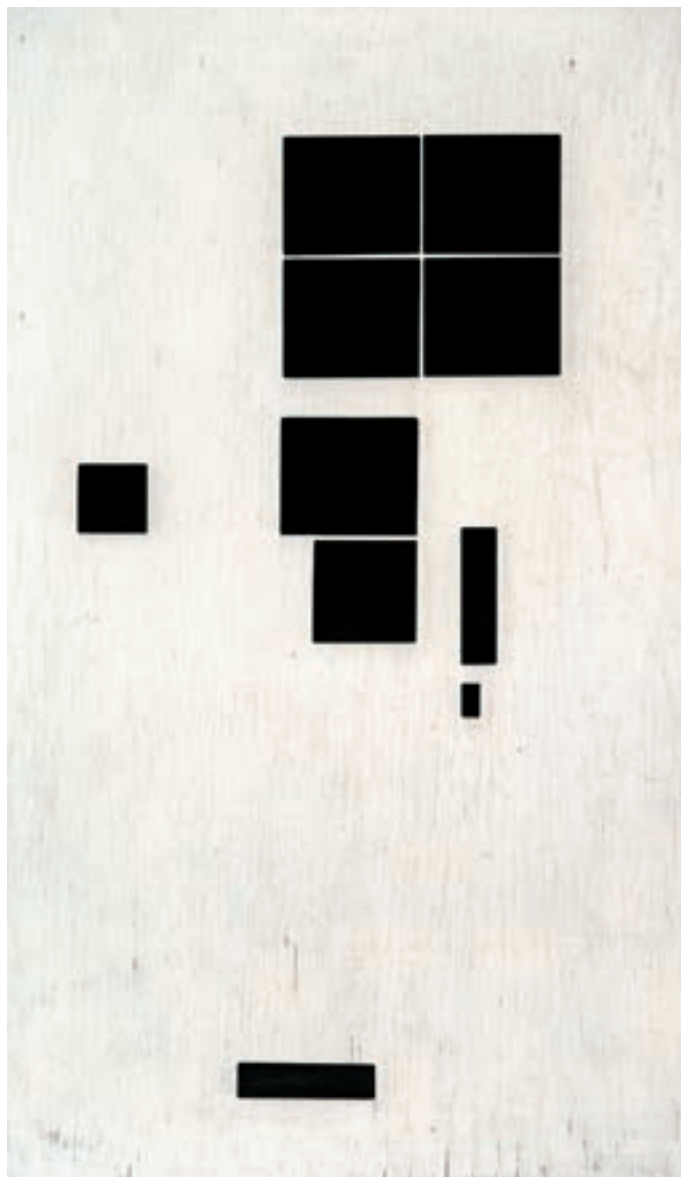
he is instinctively afraid of attaining his goal and completing the edifice he is constructing? How do you know, perhaps he only likes that edifice from a distance, and does not at all at close range, *perhaps he only likes to build it, and does not want to live in it.*¹⁰⁸

But what results would exposing the process itself produce? Most of all, it would highlight and bring additional importance to the very movement of thought, constantly stimulated in the prototyping process, perfecting itself and improving its critical acumen. “In the monumental era,” Strzemiński writes, “the work of art was supposed to work in a dazzling, nearly narcotic manner, forcing the observer to passively experience imposed emotions, passively receive suggestions and fluids; it was to mold an uncritical, passive, and compliant audience. [Modern] pure art invokes the intellectual and active elements of the psyche, demanding from the observer the ability to think in abstract terms, link remote notions, and actively develop concepts.”¹⁰⁹ A new model of thinking thus becomes the ultimate objective of the prototyping process, and in the quest for that model we should still dedicate ourselves to the study of Kobro and Strzemiński’s work.

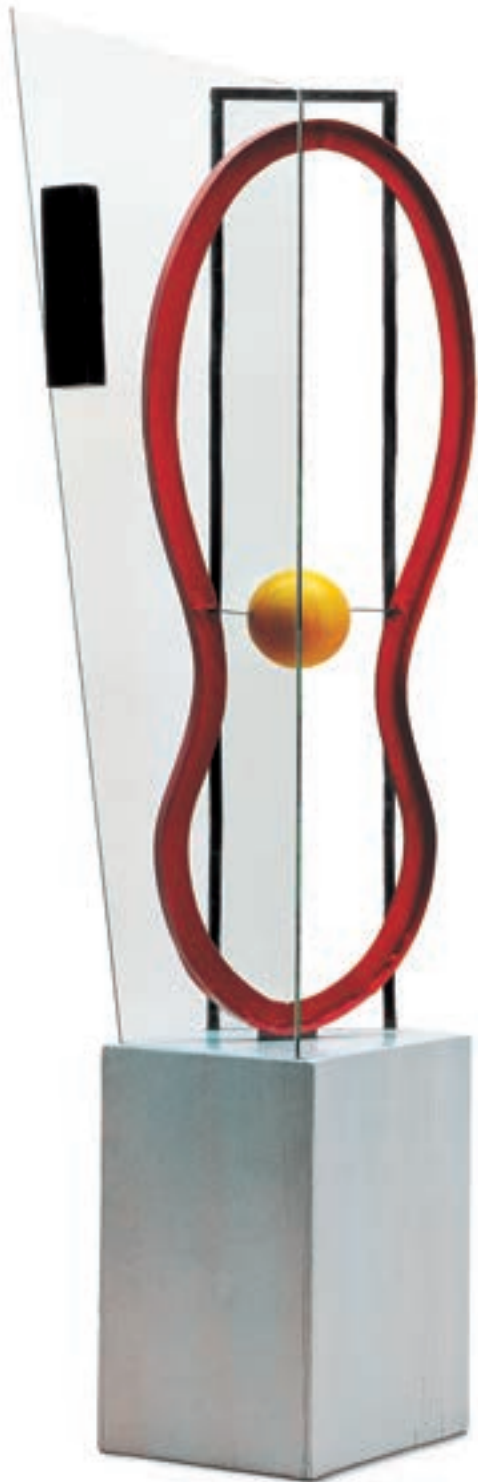
● 108. Ibid., 6. ● 109. Strzemiński, “Magiczność i postęp” (1934), in *Pisma*, 202–3.

Władysław Strzemiński, *Kubizm—napięcia
struktury materialnej* [Cubism—Tensions of
the Material Structure], 1919–1921





Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja (konstrukcja)*
[Composition (Construction)], ca. 1923



Katarzyna Kobro, *Rzeźba abstrakcyjna (1)*
[Abstract Sculpture (1)], ca. 1924

Katarzyna Kobro, *Rzeźba abstrakcyjna (2)*
[Abstract Sculpture (2)], ca. 1924/1972





Katarzyna Kobro, *Rzeźba abstrakcyjna (3)*
[Abstract Sculpture (3)], ca. 1924/1976

Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja abstrakcyjna*
[Abstract Composition], ca. 1924–1926

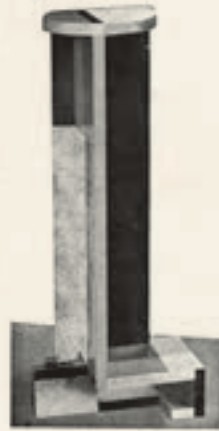
Katarzyna Kobro, *Rzeźba przestrzenna (2)*
[Spatial Sculpture (2)], (bottom) 1926



K. KOBRO-STRZEMIŃSKA



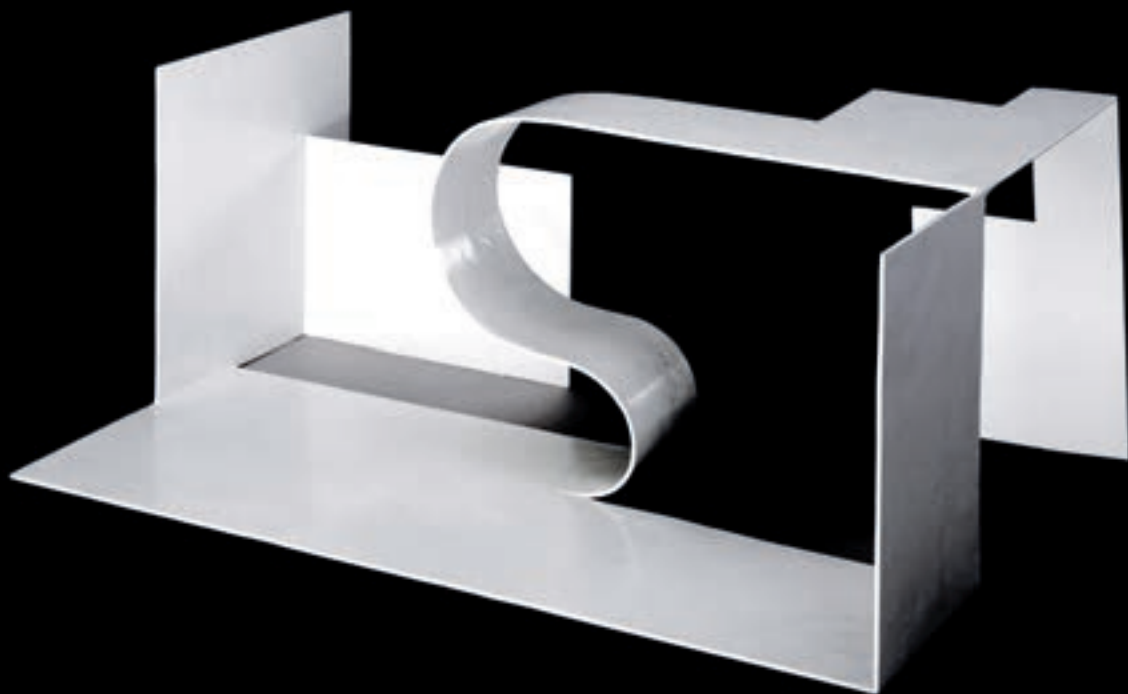
33. K. KOBRO 1925



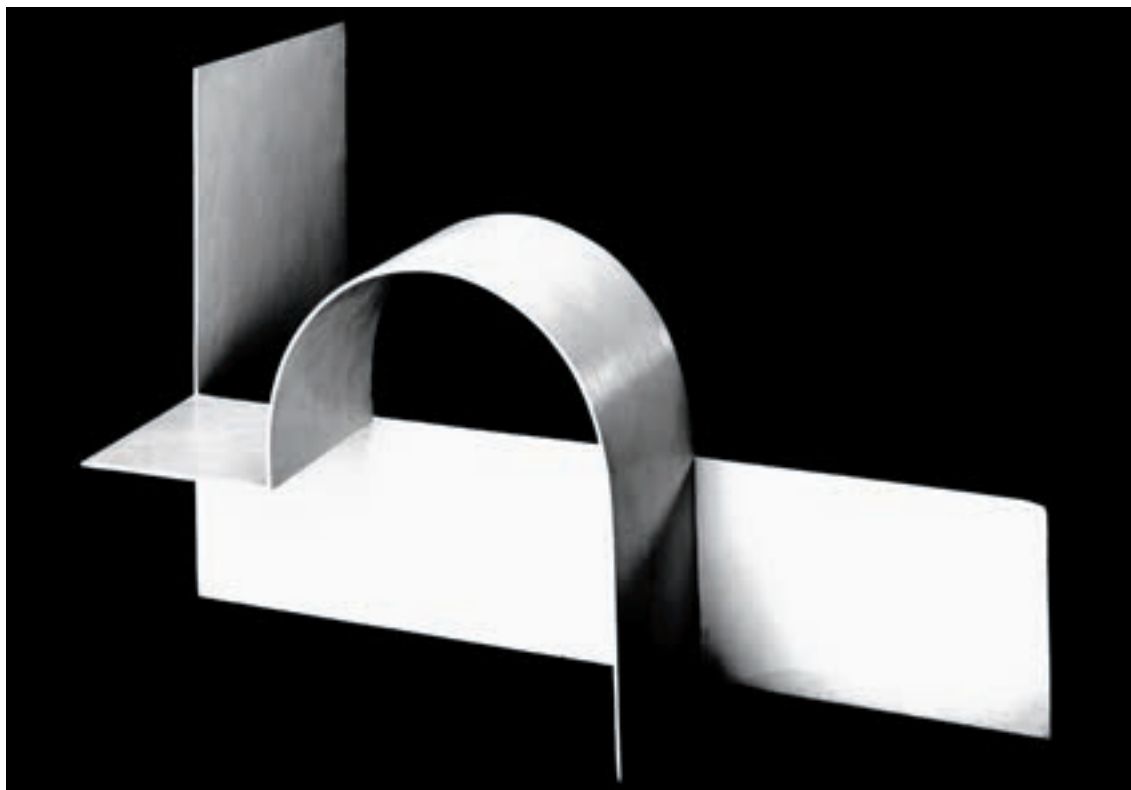
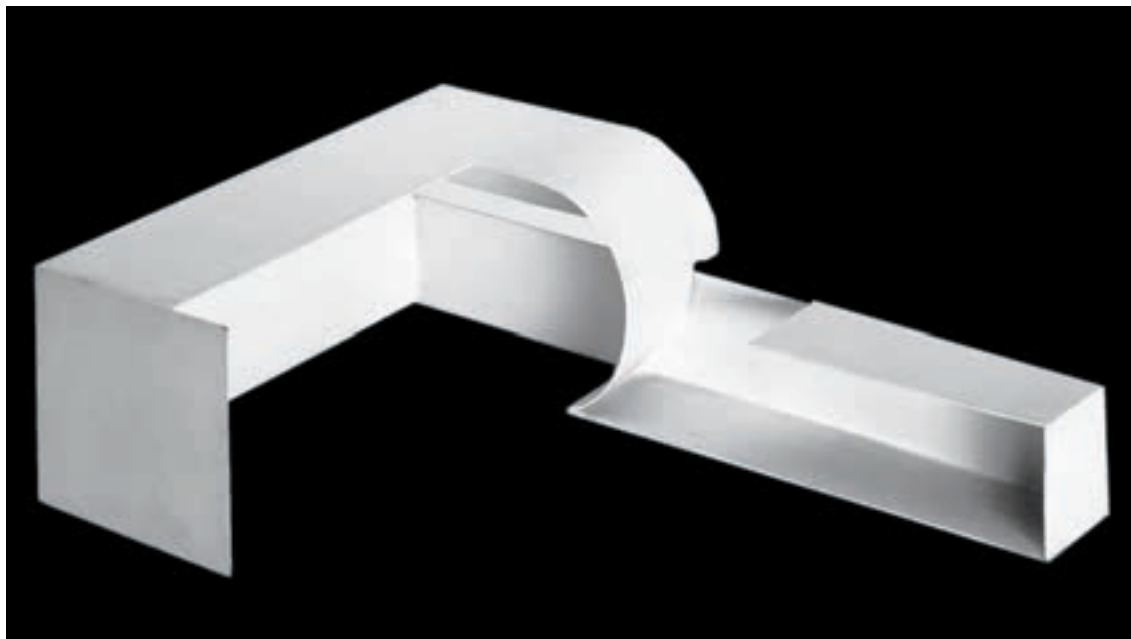
34. K. KOBRO 1926

Katarzyna Kobro, *Rzeźba przestrzenna (1)*
[Spatial Sculpture (1)], 1925/1967



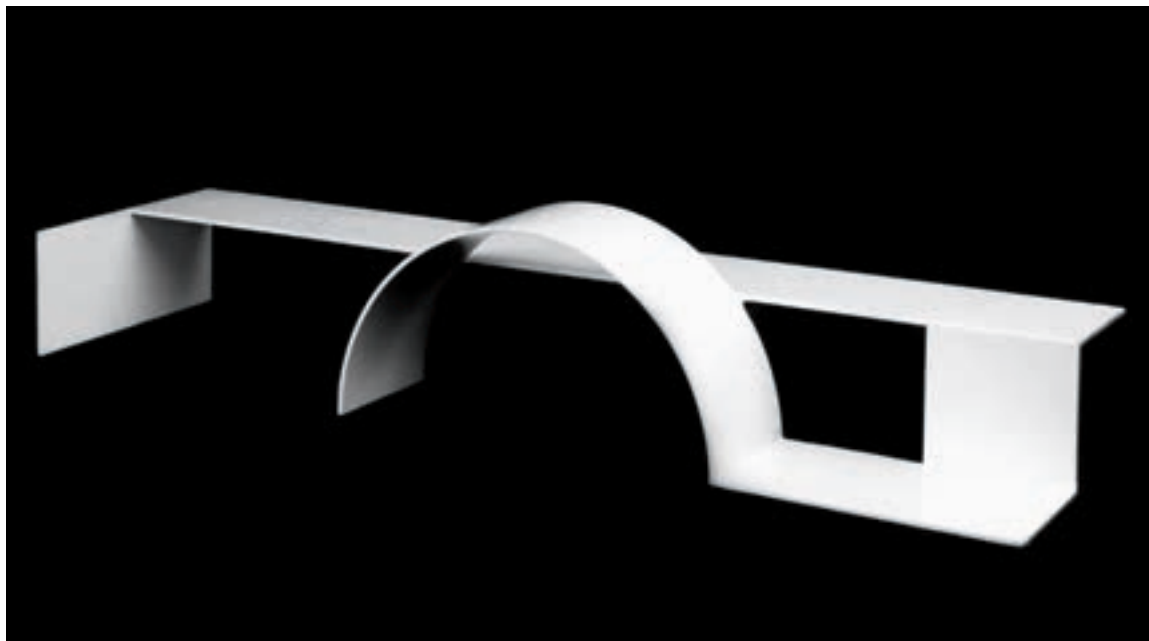


Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (5)*
[Spatial Composition (5)], 1929

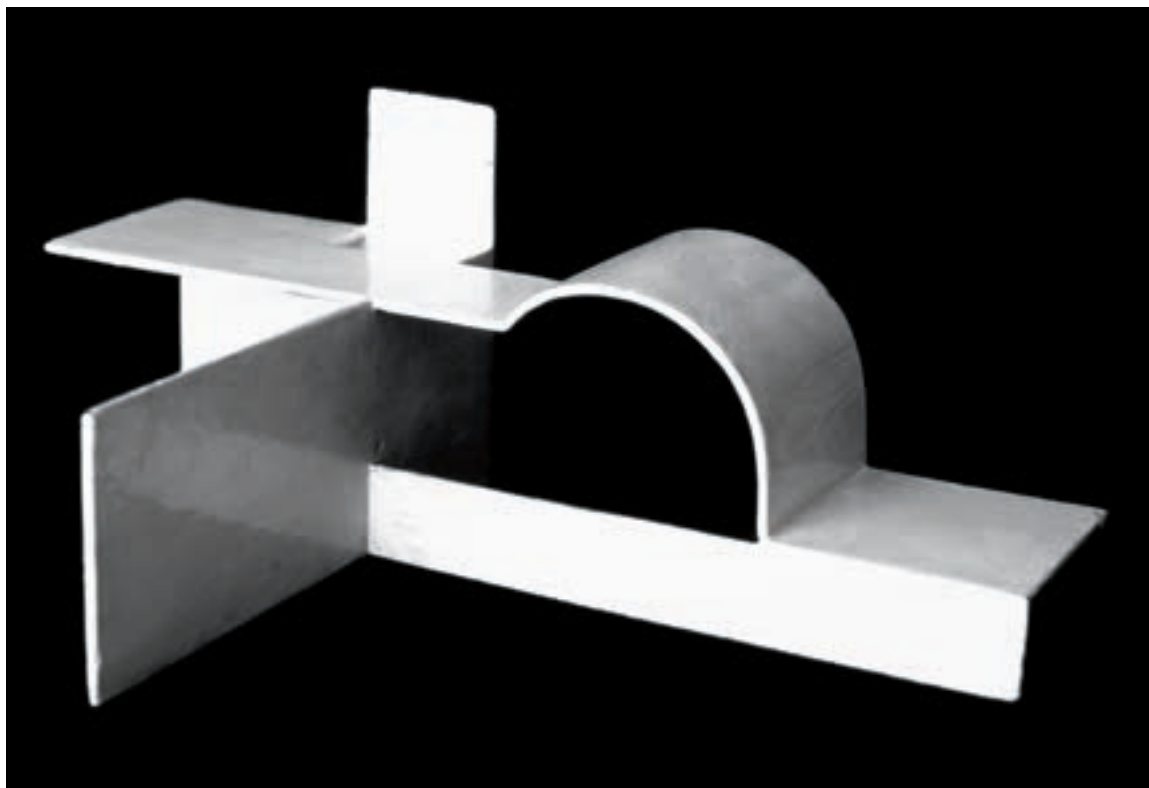


Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (1)*
[Spatial Composition (1)], 1925

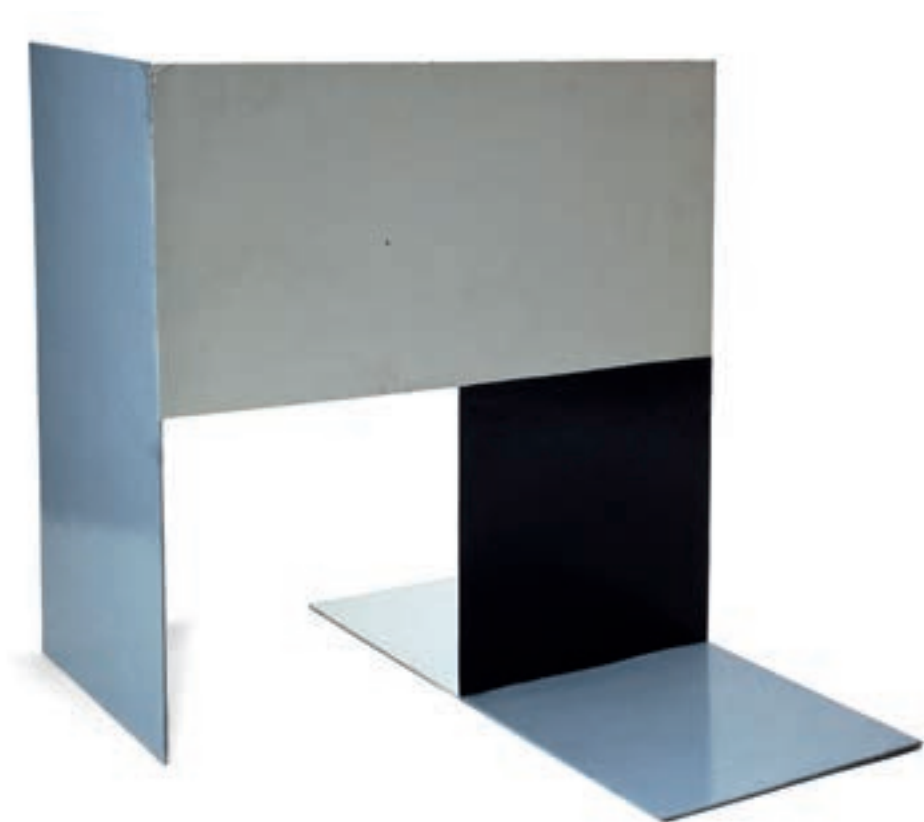
Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (3)*
[Spatial Composition (3)], 1928



Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (7)*
[Spatial Composition (7)], ca. 1931/1973



Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (8)*
[Spatial Composition (8)], ca. 1932



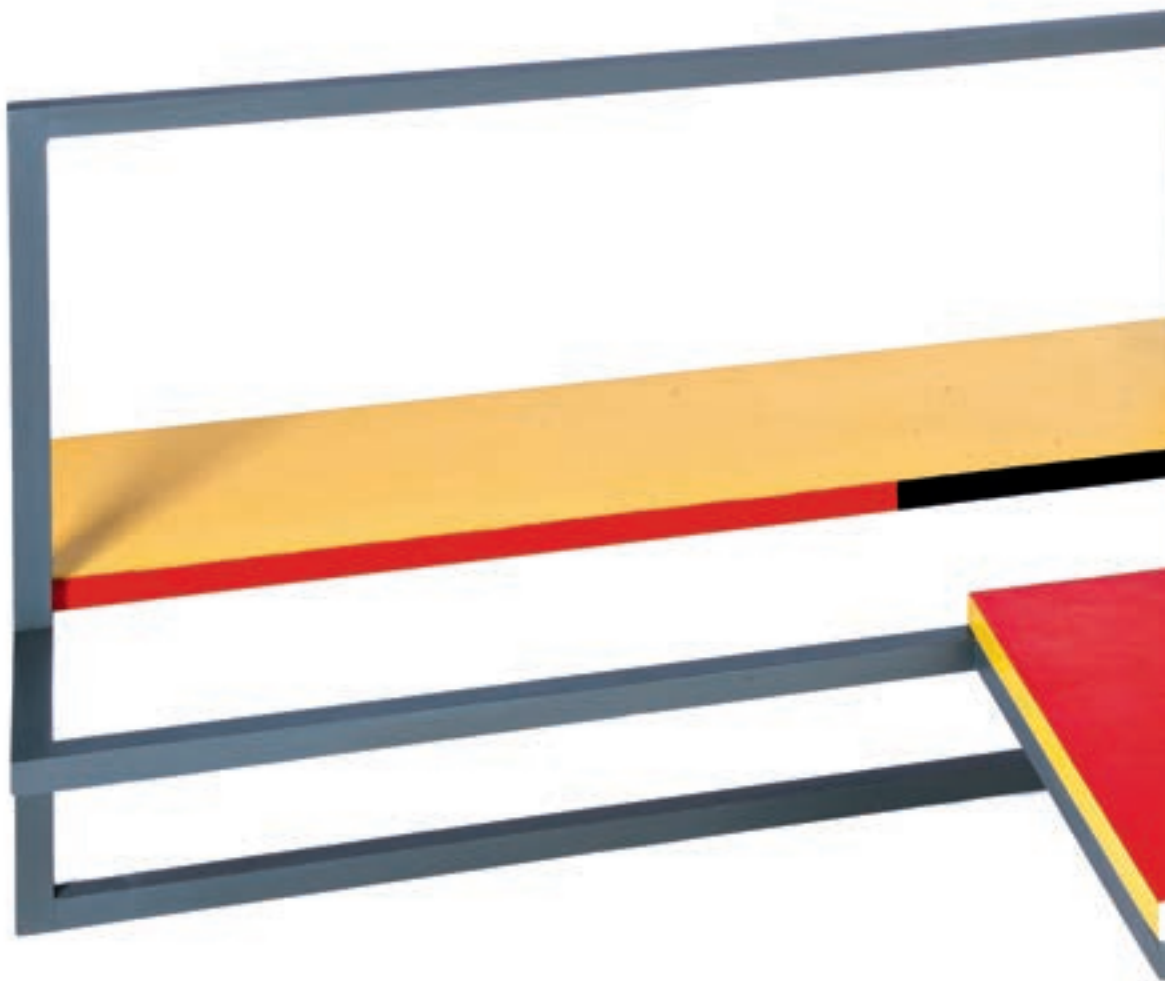
Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja
przestrzenna (2)* [Spatial
Composition (2)], 1928

Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja
przestrzenna (4)* [Spatial
Composition (4)], 1929



Władysław Strzemiński, *Projekt willi
dla Juliana Przybosa* [Design for a Villa
of Julian Przybós], 1930





Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (2)*
[Spatial Composition (2)], ca. 1948





Katarzyna Kobro, *Pejzaż morski*
[Seascape], ca. 1934–1935

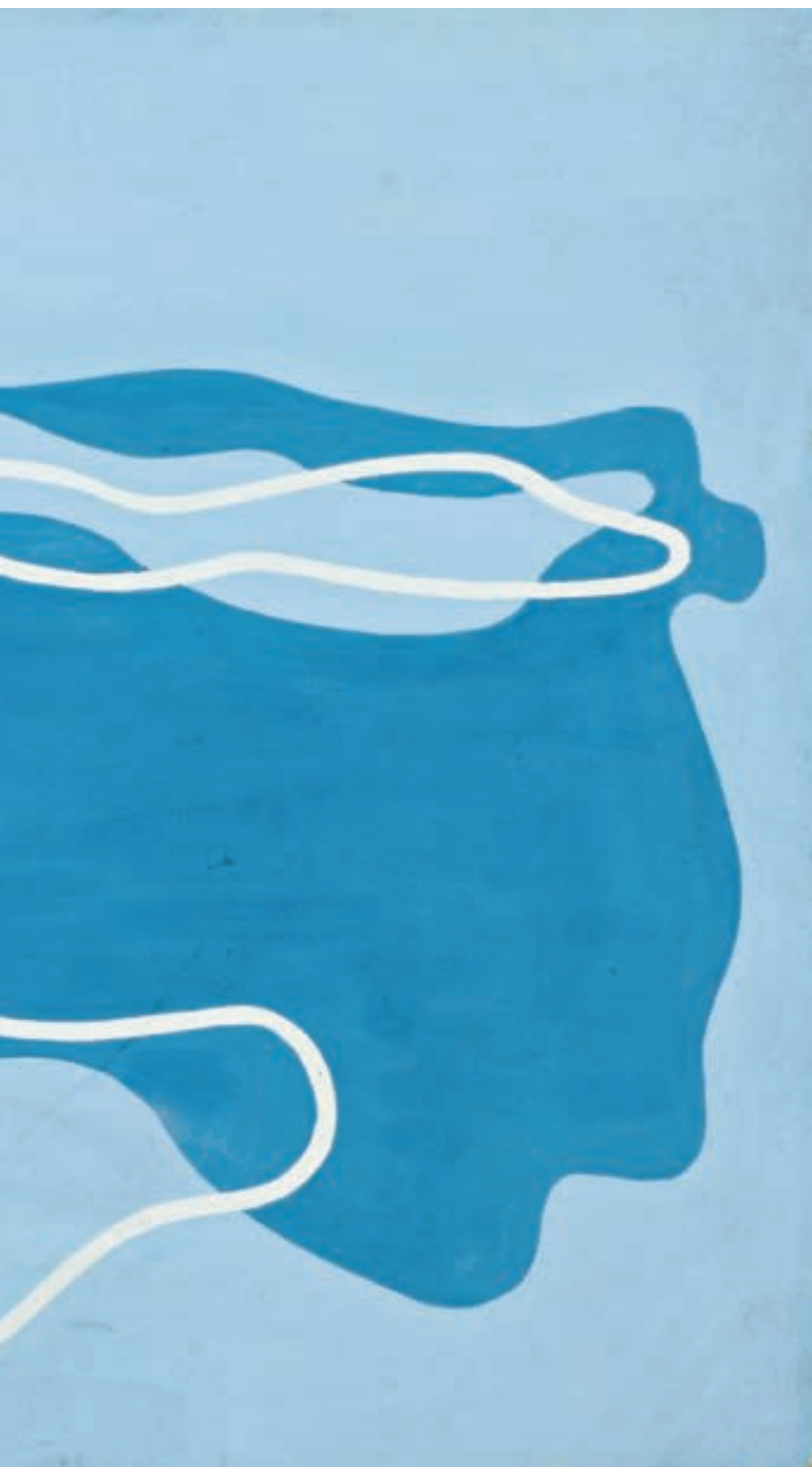


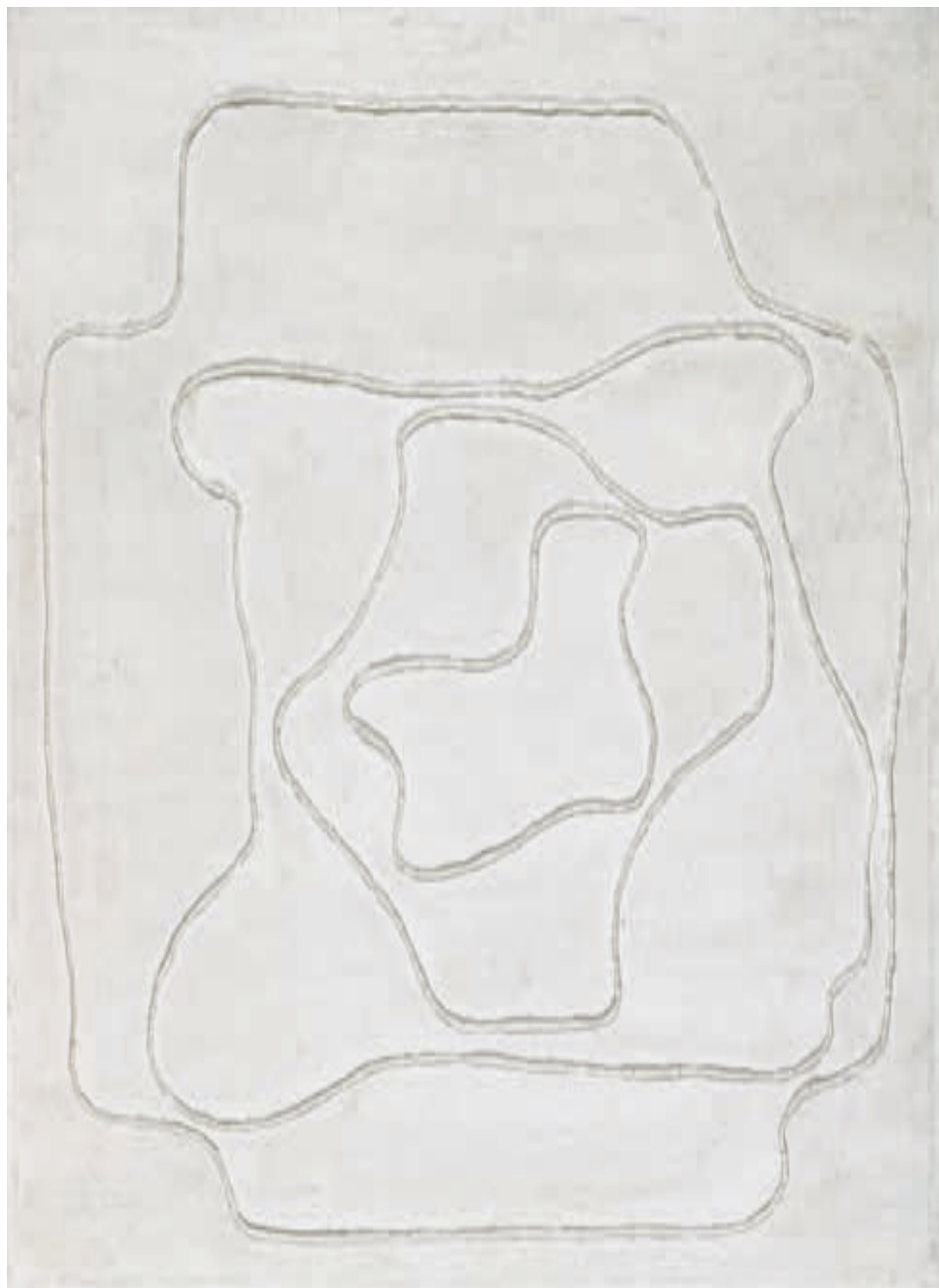
Władysław Strzemiński, *Pejzaż morski deszczowy* [Raining Seascape], July 25, 1934

Pages 88–89:

Władysław Strzemiński, *Pejzaż morski* [Seascape], August 5, 1934



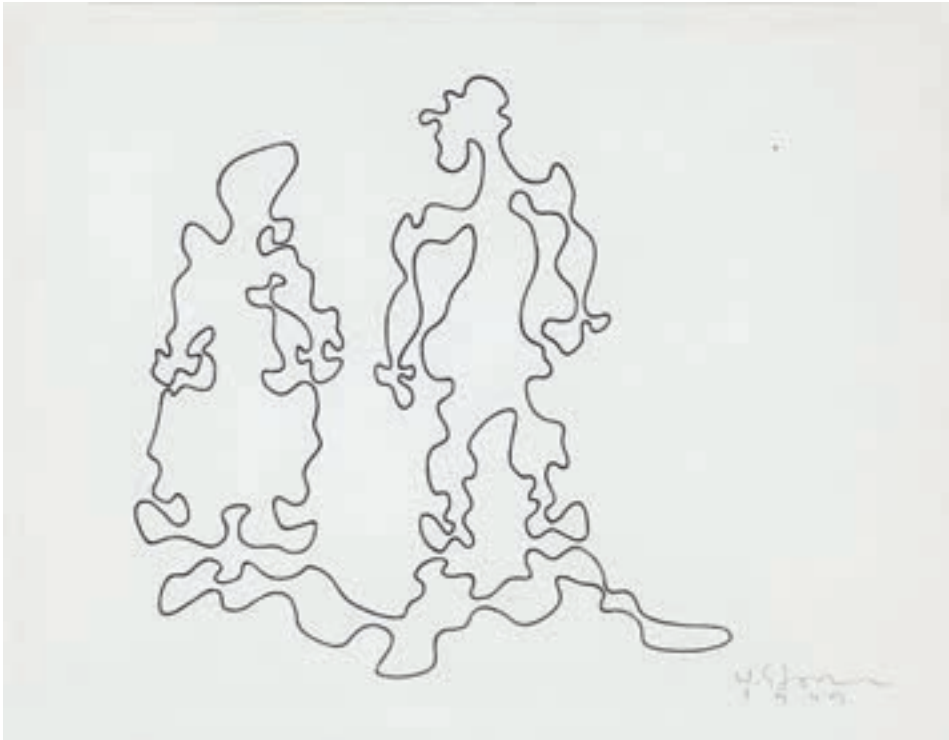




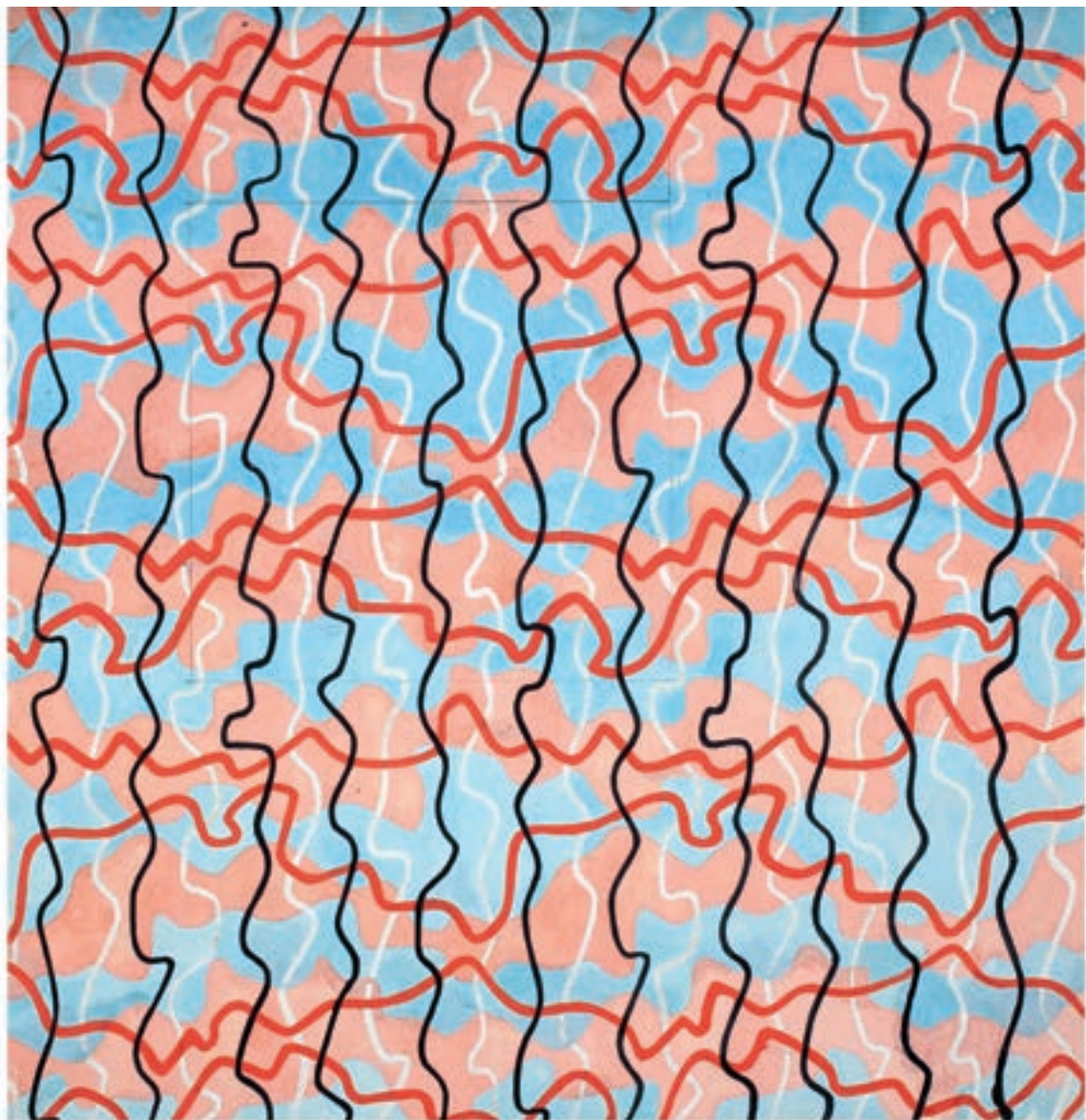
Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja*
[Composition], ca. 1934

Władysław Strzemiński, *Mężczyzna i kobieta, z cyklu:
Białoruś Zachodnia* [Man and Woman, from the Series:
West Belarus], 1939

Władysław Strzemiński, *Bez tytułu 2, z cyklu: Tanie jak
błoto* [Untitled 2, from the Series: Cheap as Mud], 1944







Władysław Strzemiński

Projekt tkaniny odzieżowej drukowanej
[Design for a Printed Textile], ca. 1948

Projekt tkaniny odzieżowej drukowanej
[Design for a Printed Textile], 1946

Projekt tkaniny odzieżowej drukowanej
[Design for a Printed Textile], 1946

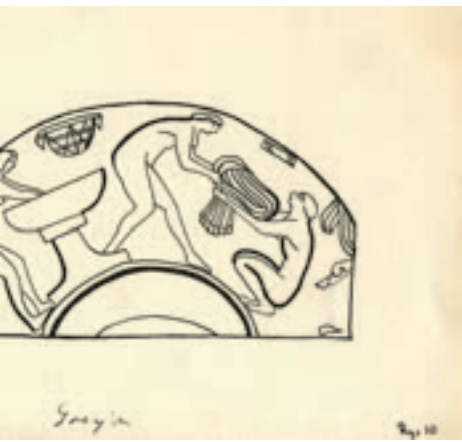
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Władysław Strzemiński, *Projekt tkaniny odzieżowej drukowanej* [Design for a Printed Textile], ca. 1946









Pages 96–97:

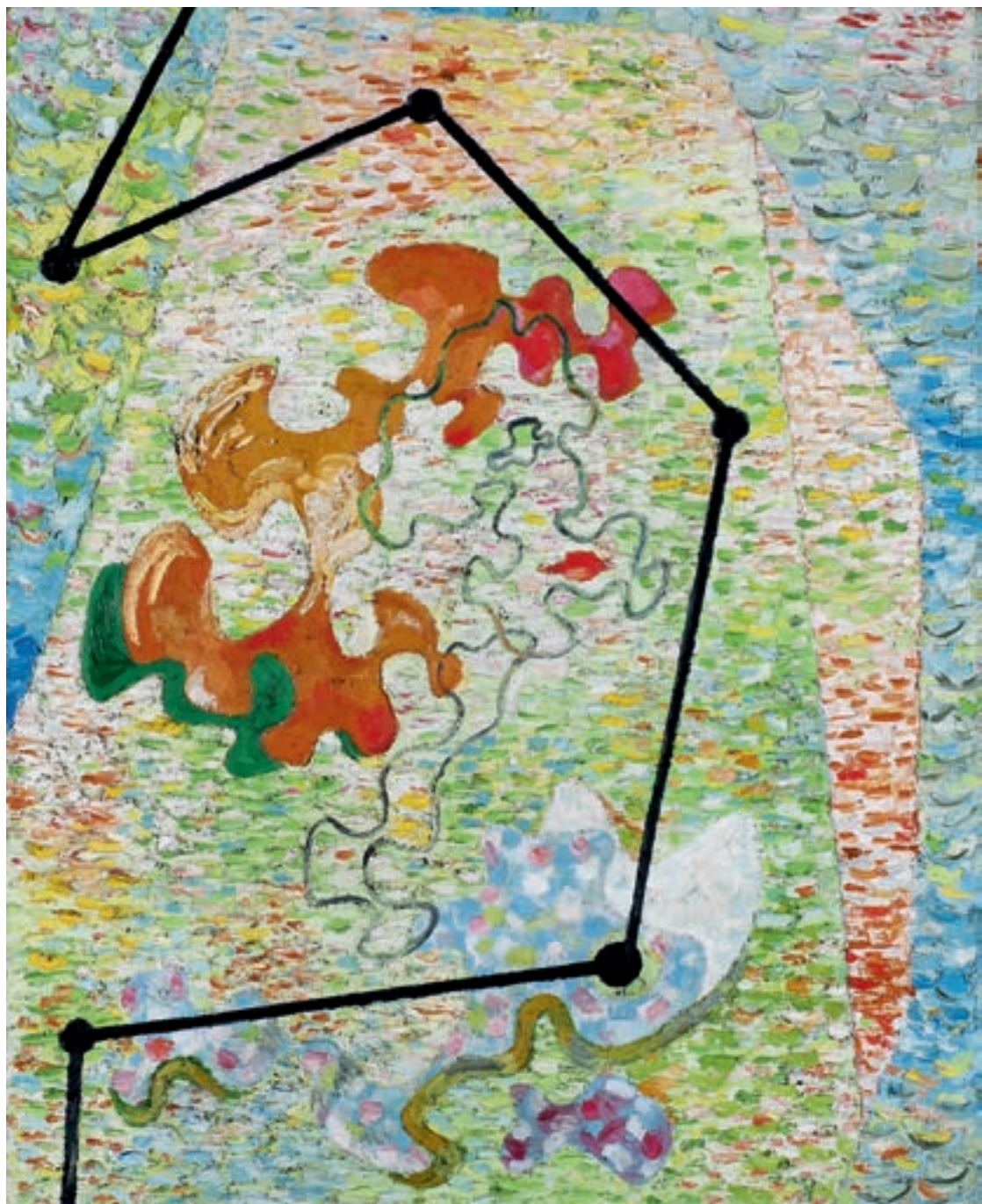
Władysław Strzemiński, *Rysunki do książki*
“*Teoria widzenia*” [Drawings for the book *A*
Theory of Vision], 1947–1950

Władysław Strzemiński, *Kobieta w oknie*
[*Woman in the Window*], 1948





Władysław Strzemiński, *Powidok światła. Kobieta w oknie*
[After-image of Light: A Woman in the Window], ca. 1948



Władysław Strzemiński, *Powidok światła. Rudowłosa*
[After-image of Light: Redhead], ca. 1949

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**KATARZYNA KOBRO AND
WŁADYSŁAW 
STRZEMIŃSKI IN RUSSIA**

Christina Lodder

Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński occupy a unique place in the history of Polish modernism. From the early 1920s onward they made a vital contribution to developing Polish constructivism and creating an innovative and vibrant artistic culture through their works, writings, theories, pedagogical activities, publishing ventures, design projects, exhibitions, group organization, and involvement in establishing the International Collection of Modern Art in Łódź.

Yet they were born, brought up, and educated in imperial Russia. While Strzemiński was ethnically Polish and educated at Moscow's elite Tsar Alexander II's Military Academy (1904–1911) and St. Petersburg's Tsar Nicholas School of Military Engineering (1911–1914), Kobro was of Baltic-German and Russian descent, educated in Riga and Moscow.¹ As professional artists, they received their training in Russia's art schools and were stimulated by their exposure to the achievements of the country's most innovative artists, especially the work of Kazimir Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin. During the revolutionary period (1918–1921), the couple became members of the heroic Russian avant-garde, which was responsible for breaking down the barriers between the arts, redefining the relationship between art and life, decorating the cities for the revolutionary festivals, reforming art education, promoting the scientific investigation of art, encouraging theoretical debate, producing propaganda, arranging exhibitions, organizing museums, publishing journals, and generally running artistic affairs.

Strzemiński quickly came to prominence within this milieu. His rapid rise was almost certainly due to the fact that he had previously studied art at the studios of Ivan Tsioglinsky and

the School for the Encouragement of the Arts in St. Petersburg, before deciding to become a professional artist—a decision he made after losing his left arm and right leg during the First World War.² In 1918–1919, he apparently studied at Moscow’s State Free Art Studios (Svomas) with Malevich, whom he seems to have met before the war.³ In 1919, Strzemiński showed a relief at the *Third Exhibition of Paintings* in Ryazan and two works—*Research of a Russian Cigarette* and *Portrait of I. V. Zhukov*—at the *Eighth State Exhibition* in Moscow.⁴ The titles of these works suggest that they were essentially figurative. That winter, in Vitebsk, Strzemiński helped to organize the *First State Exhibition of Local and Moscow Artists*.⁵ The show contained works by Malevich, Wassily Kandinsky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Marc Chagall, and others. One reviewer remarked, “The problems of texture are successfully solved (by technical means and tricks) in the works of the artist Strzemiński, who having passed through the school of cubism and futurism shows an extensive knowledge of pure textures.”⁶ Strzemiński apparently exhibited *Натюрморт—тарелка* (Still Life with Plate, 1918), a tentative experiment with abstract shapes, comprising several rectangles and one circle, all of which are heavily textured, indicating an interest in *faktura* (from the French *facture*—denoting the surface texture of the material and how it was worked).⁷ The composition is flat, with no sense of volume or space, and the plate is treated as another abstract form. The closest parallels to this approach are to be found not among the works of Malevich or Tatlin but among the paintings of artists such as Nathan Altman who were experimenting with cubist collage, but in a way that gave them greater freedom both in terms of abstraction and in the use of additional textures.⁸

1. Olga Shikhireva, “Władysław Strzemiński,” in Yevgenia Petrova et al., eds., *In Malevich’s Circle: Confederates, Students, Followers 1920s–1950s* (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2000), 85; and Zenobia Karnicka, “Chronology of Kobro’s Life and Work,” in *Katarzyna Kobro 1898–1951*, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute; Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1999), 31. ● 2. Olga Szichiriewa, “Strzemiński w Rosji,” in *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952: Materiały z sesji* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1994), 99. ● 3. Aleksandra Shatskikh, *Vitebsk: Zhizn’ iskusstva 1917–1922* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul’tury, 2001), 107. ● 4. *Katalog: III wystawka kartin v Riazani* (Ryazan: Gubernskii otdel narodnogo prosveshcheniia, 1919); and *Katalog vos’moi gosudarstvennoi vystavki (Kartiny bez zhiuri)* (Moscow: Vserossiiskoe tsentral’noe vystavochnoe biuro. Otdel izobrazitel’nykh iskusstv Narodnogo Komissariat po Prosveshcheniiu, 1919). ● 5. Shikhireva, “Władysław Strzemiński,” 85. ● 6. M. O. [Mark Osipovich], “Gosudarstvennaia vystavka kartin v Vitebske,” *Izvestiia*, December 5, 1919, 4; cited by Shatskikh, *Vitebsk*, 109; and *1-ya Gosudarstvennaia vystavka kartin mestnykh i moskovskikh khudozhnikov* (Vitebsk: n. pub., 1919). ● 7. Shikhireva, “Władysław Strzemiński,” 85. *Натюрморт—тарелка* (Still Life with Plate), 1918, mixed media on canvas. Ivanovo Regional Museum of Art, Ivanovo. ● 8. See, for example, Altman’s *Композиция с материальными объектами* (Composition with Material Objects), 1920, oil, enamel, glue, plaster, and sawdust on canvas, 83 x 65.5 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.



FIG. 1: Władysław Strzemiński,
Натюрморт [Still Life], 1919

Strzemiński may also have shown the abstract *натюрморт* (Still Life, 1918) (fig. 1).⁹ Although the conical, transparent form may denote the residual form of a glass, indicating a cubist inspiration, the geometric planar forms floating against the white ground reflect the influence of Malevich's suprematism. The shapes are interlinked to produce a fairly tight grouping in the center of the composition, which differs from the more open arrangement of colored forms that tends to characterize Malevich's canvases.¹⁰ The emphatic textures (the rough plaster contrasted with the smooth enamel paint of the central conical shape) also distance Strzemiński's painting from Malevich's more restrained brushwork. The interest in *faktura* and the compact composition suggest affinities with works by Rodchenko and Liubov Popova, who were also experimenting with suprematism, without copying it, and employed intersecting curved planes on white grounds.¹¹

At this point, Strzemiński was evidently considered a follower of Tatlin. In March 1919, Vsevolod Dmitriev, of the Minsk Department of Fine Arts (IZO), described him as a prominent artist who had "rejected conventional easel painting" and was now making "constructions, studying materials and their arrangements ... employing wooden boards, veneers, sheet metal, iron and rope."¹²

This description evokes works like *Орудия и продукты производства* (Tools and Products of Industry, 1920) (fig. 2) and *Счетчик* (The Meter, ca. 1919), which are both constructed from various found materials, held within the confines of a virtual picture frame, and built out only to a limited extent from the picture plane.¹³ This approach possesses affinities with certain of Tatlin's reliefs, such as the *Bottle* of 1914 (now lost), which combined metal, glass, and plaster with an identifiable subject. Strzemiński's reliefs also

● 9. Shikhireva, "Władysław Strzemiński," 85. ● 10. See, for example, Malevich's *Супремус № 56* (Supremus no. 56), 1916, oil on canvas, 80.5 x 71 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

● 11. See, for example, *Rodchenko's Беспредметная композиция* (Non-objective Composition) (1917), oil on wood, 78 x 50.8 cm, Ivanovo Regional Art Museum; and Popova's *Pictorial Architectonics* (1916–1917), oil on canvas, 43.5 x 43.9 cm. Costakis Collection, State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki. ●

12. V. Dimitrev, "Pervyi itog," *Iskusstvo kommuny*, no. 15 (March 16, 1919): 2.

● 13. *Счетчик* (The Meter), ca. 1919, canvas, oil, cord, ceramic spools, and foil on board, 82 x 59 cm. Art Museum, Samara.

reflect a machine aesthetic and relate to Bolshevik ideology. In *Tools and Products of Industry*, the oval form, one portion of which is outlined in thick wire, evokes the shape of a human head, with the horizontal rounded metal shape denoting the forehead, the vertical curved dark tin suggesting a nose, the horizontal curved blade forming the mouth, and the brownish painted forms below indicating a beard. This arrangement is similar to the composition of Malevich's *Портрет Ивана Васильевича Клына* (Perfected Portrait of Ivan Kliun, 1913).¹⁴ *Tools and Products of Industry* may, therefore, have been conceived as a generalized portrait of the industrial worker, the new ruler of Russia, whose dual role at this time—as a person molded by industry who was nevertheless also considered responsible for its further development and the realization of a communist society—is reflected in the title. Because red is associated with communism and the Red Army, the prominent red dot may also allude to the ultimate triumph of communism. Similarly, *The Meter* is based on electrical circuitry and may refer to the Plan for the Electrification of Russia, inaugurated in early 1920 and approved by the Eighth All-Russia Congress of the Soviets in December of that year. Electricity was envisaged as a way of both literally and figuratively enlightening Russia, and the plan's aspirations were expressed succinctly in Vladimir Lenin's dictum, "Communism is Soviet power plus the Electrification of the Whole Country."¹⁵

After these reliefs, Strzemiński seems to have followed a more independent path. In contrast to his previous works, *Kubizm—napięcia struktury materialnej* (Cubism: Tensions of the Material Structure, 1919–1921) is less reliant on the experiments of his avant-garde colleagues. The painting focuses on purely pictorial textures, boldly exploring the potential of pigments to

FIG. 2: Władysław Strzemiński, *Орудия и продукты производства* [Tools and Products of Industry—Counter-relief], 1919–1920

● 14. *Портрет Ивана Васильевича Клына* (Perfected Portrait of Ivan Kliun), 1913, oil on canvas, 112 x 70 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

● 15. V. I. Lenin, "New External and Internal Position and the Problems of the Party" (1920), in *Collected Works*, vol. 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 516.





FIG. 3: Katarzyna Kobro, *ToS 75—struktura* [ToS 75—Structure], 1920

articulate the painted surface. The smooth letter “K” is used, as it is in late cubist canvases, to define the picture plane and emphasize the sheer variety of the different shapes, colors, and brush strokes used. The density of the composition underlines the materiality of the work and highlights the essence of painting as a material artefact. Although Strzemiński added cork to the surface, focus is on the pigments themselves. This concern points to Strzemiński’s later intense involvement with the unity of the pictorial surface, which led him to formulate the theory and practice of unism in Poland.

In contrast to Strzemiński, Kobro, who was five years his junior, apparently remained a full-time student at the Moscow Svomas until summer

- 16. Katarzyna Kobro, “CV,” July 9, 1949, in Archive of Nika Strzemińska; cited in Karnicka, “Chronology,” 31. ● 17. Karnicka, “Chronology,” 32. ● 18. Cited by Shikhireva, “Władysław Strzemiński,” 85. ● 19. Karnicka, “Chronology,” 32. ● 20. Andrzej Turowski, “Theoretical Rhythmology or the Fantastic World of Katarzyna Kobro,” in *Katarzyna Kobro*, 83–88.

1920, later avowing, “I studied sculpture and painting ... between 1917 and 1920.”¹⁶ Little information is available about this period, but it is possible that she contributed to the June 1919 Svomas exhibition, attended the First All-Union Conference of Art Teachers and Students, held in Moscow in June 1920, and visited the Kremlin as a delegate.¹⁷ Her activities are more fully documented after she moved to Smolensk in summer 1920, married Strzemiński, and started teaching.

The couple shared a studio, which the artist Aleksandr Korobov described: “It was piled high with crates, pieces of tin-plate, filings, and glass objects. This was the palette of constructivism. Works of the most fantastic form, which had nothing in common with the real world, were created from combinations of these heterogeneous materials ... constructions of whimsical forms standing on crates gleamed enigmatically.”¹⁸

The phrase “constructions of whimsical forms standing on crates” evokes a work such as Kbro’s *ToS 75—Stuktura* (ToS 75—Structure) (fig. 3), which was shown in spring 1920 at the *State Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture of Smolensk Province*.¹⁹ This freestanding sculpture was built up from wood, metal, cork, glass, and mass-produced machine parts such as screws, cogs, nuts and bolts, rings, pipes, and rods. The only existing photograph suggests that each element retained its identity and its distinctive formal, textural, and tonal qualities within the whole. The variety of forms, shapes, and colors would have been accentuated by the highlights and shadows caused by the numerous indentations and protuberances. In general, Kbro’s approach relates directly to Tatlin’s “culture of materials” and his method of building up the construction in space from various components, including found elements, and exploiting their expressive qualities and associations. Kbro also shared Tatlin’s enthusiasm for technology, as manifest in his *Модель памятника III Интернационалу* (Model for a Monument to the Third International) (1920).

Yet Kbro’s assemblage is far more explicitly technological and industrial than Tatlin’s counter-reliefs and more concerned with density than with incorporating space into the core of the construction. The use of glass recalls reliefs by Sophia Dymshits-Tolstaia and Tatlin, while the use of transparency and lettering refer to cubism. The long curved metal filament describes an oval shape, evoking the outline of a head, and, like Strzemiński’s *Tools and Products of Industry*, Kbro’s sculpture may represent a worker. Indeed, like Strzemiński’s reliefs, Kbro’s construction reflects the ideological importance that industry and the machine possessed for the Bolsheviks and the support that the party gave to the time-and-motion ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor—ideas Kbro later employed to generate aesthetic harmony in her sculptures.²⁰

The inscription “ToS 75” sounds quasi-scientific, like a label for a machine. It may refer to the 75 mm cannon developed by the French and used extensively

in the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921). The long curved wire might allude to the two wheels that gave the field gun its mobility. The construction would thus relate to Lenin’s 1918 statement about war: “Those who have the best technology, organization, discipline and the best machines emerge on top. ... It is necessary to master the highest technology or be crushed.”²¹ From this perspective, the allusions to a human head and the gun suggest that this abstract sculpture might have been conceived as a celebration of the heroic Soviet worker-soldier.

The only other works by Kobra that are documented from this period are *Konstrukcja wisząca (1)* (Suspended Construction (1); 1921) (fig. 4) and *Konstrukcja wisząca (2)* (Suspended Construction (2); 1921–1922)—both now lost. In both, the complexity and heaviness of *ToS 75* has been replaced by pure geometric forms that defy gravity, floating in space and rotating with the ambient breezes. The smoothly articulated curvilinear and rectangular forms produce a more purely scientific and mathematical resonance than the industrial and technological connotations of *ToS 75*. The technique of suspending sculptural forms relates Kobra’s construction to Tatlin’s *Угловой контррельеф* (Corner Counter-Relief) of 1915, but these were hung across the corners of a room and incorporated space fully into the heart of the structure.²² Similarly, Kobra may have derived some inspiration from the series of hanging constructions that Rodchenko exhibited in Moscow in May 1921. These were also based on geometric forms—the square, triangle, circle, hexagon, and ellipse—but each form was constructed from concentric rings of the given shape cut from plywood, which were then rotated to produce a skeletal form that was fully permeated by space.²³

FIG. 4: Katarzyna Kobra, *Konstrukcja wisząca (2)* [Suspended Construction (2)], ca. 1921–1922/1971–1979

● **21.** Cited by Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 147.

● **22.** See, for example, Vladimir Tatlin, *Угловой контррельеф* (Corner Counter-relief), 1915, reconstructed 1925, various metals, wood, and rope, 71 x 118 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

● **23.** See, for example, Rodchenko’s *Пространственная конструкция №12* (Spatial Construction no. 12), ca. 1920, plywood, aluminum paint, and wire, 61 x 83.7 x 47 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Another stimulus for Kopro's approach is found in Malevich's suprematist paintings. In her *Suspended Construction (1)*, the use of color, the emphasis on space, and the exploration of the spatial tensions generated by the suspended solids—the ellipsoid in relation to the rod, the cube, and the elongated cuboid form—suggest a strong connection with Malevich's compositions of 1916–1917, in which the interrelationships of rectilinear and curvilinear geometric forms are explored against a white ground evoking cosmic space.²⁴ Kopro seems to have transposed Malevich's pictorial vocabulary into three dimensions. In 1929, she acknowledged his continuing influence: "Malevich raises the problem of balance in the distribution of weights and masses in space, in his dynamic-spatial build-ups, and in his theoretical discussions."²⁵ Kopro's sculptures of the 1920s continue to emulate Malevich in the purity of their means and their systematic investigation of compositional permutations.

In *Suspended Construction (2)*, the influence of suprematism is fused with that of Rodchenko's hanging constructions. The metal ring and the cross relate to the triumvirate of suprematist forms—the square, the circle, and the cross—but they are attached to a metal band forming a Möbius strip that twists in space, creating an open composition. With ambient motion, the configuration changes for the static viewer, while light dematerializes the metal shapes, adding to the dynamic sensations of the whole and epitomizing Kopro's later definition that "sculpture is the shaping of space."²⁶

Alongside the art that they produced while living in Smolensk, Kopro and Strzemiński established a closer creative relationship with Malevich, who was based in nearby Vitebsk. They joined Unovis (Utverditeli novogo iskusstva; Champions of the New Art), which was

● **24.** See, for example, Malevich's *Супрематическая живопись* (Suprematist Painting), 1916–1917, oil on canvas, 97.8 x 66.4 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. ● **25.** Katarzyna Kobro, “Rzeba i bryla,” *Europa*, no. 2 (1929); available in English translation in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács eds., *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes 1910–1930* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 658. ● **26.** Id. ● **27.** “Primechanie k dvizheniiu Unovisa,” 13 April 1920, *Al'manakh UNOVIS*, no. 1 (1920), sheet 44v; cited by Shatskikh, *Vitebsk*, 108. ● **28.** Tat'iana Kotovich, “Unovis v točke sotsio-kul'turnoi situatsii nachala veka,” in *Malevich. Klassicheskii avangard. Vitebsk. Posvyashchaetsia 80-letiiu UNOVISa (Utverditeli Novogo Iskusstva)*, vol. 4 (Vitebsk: Vitebskii oblastnoi kraevedcheskii muzei, 2000), 7; and Olga Shikhireva, “Russkii period tvorchestva K. Kobri. Razmyshleniia ob istokakh slozheniia stilia,” in *Malevich. Klassicheskii avangard: Vitebsk*, vol. 4, 150. ● **29.** Andrzej Turowski, *Malewicz w Warszawie. Rekonstrukcje i symulacje* (Krakow: Universitas, 2002), 246. ● **30.** “Protokol Zasedeniia komisii po priemke i otsenke dekoratyvnykh rabot po ustroistvu politicheskoprosvetitel'noi demonstratsii k manevrom zapasnykh chasti Zapadnogo voennogo okruga,” in Fond 19, Opis 1, Edinits Khraneniia 1222, List 39, Historical Archives, Smolensk; cited by Turowski, *Malewicz*, 238. ● **31.** Shatskikh, *Vitebsk*, 110.

concerned to extend suprematism into the wider environment by designing textiles, clothes, posters, architecture, and so on. In mid-April 1920, Smolensk Unovis, which Strzemiński had organized, invited the Vitebsk group to perform *Victory over the Sun* and the *Suprematist Ballet*.²⁷ On 20 October 1920, the regional Unovis conference was held in Smolensk, followed by Malevich's lecture “Concerning the New Art.”²⁸

In Smolensk, too, Kobro and Strzemiński became directly involved with the production of Bolshevik propaganda. During the Polish-Soviet War, the Red Army's headquarters, the political administration for the western front, and a branch of the Russian Telegraph Agency (Rosta) were located in the city. Strzemiński evidently produced several posters promoting the Russian war effort, including *Increased Production and Improved Efficiency at Work Are the Best Guarantees for Success at the Front* (1920). He remained silent about his propaganda work, but Kobro openly acknowledged that she had produced posters for the local Committee for Political Education.²⁹ No posters have been traced or attributed to her, but she was evidently fairly active in the field of political propaganda. On 10 September 1920, for example, she chaired a committee of the Provincial Department of Education “for accepting and assessing decorative works prepared for the demonstrations of political education organized on the occasion of the Western Military District's maneuvers.”³⁰ This may relate to the relief (based loosely on El Lissitzky's 1919 poster *Клином красным бей белых* [Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge]) that she made for a local printing works.³¹ Such activities were merely one aspect of the couple's long-standing association with the Bolsheviks. Strzemiński seems to have begun working with the government as early as May 1918, when he

joined the staff of the recently established IZO within the Commissariat of Enlightenment.³² He worked in the Museums Office, became head of the Central Exhibitions Bureau, organized galleries, purchased art works, and ensured that these were distributed to galleries and museums throughout Russia.³³ Like Tatlin and others, he was clearly willing to work with the new regime in order to participate in reorganizing Russia's artistic life and "struggle more effectively against the old art."³⁴ Receiving regular food rations during the acute shortages of the civil war were a bonus.

In March 1919, Strzemiński was sent to Minsk, and then to Vitebsk.³⁵ By 18 November 1919, he was living in Smolensk and working for the art section of the Provincial Department of Education, initially as an instructor and then, from 4 April 1920, as head of the section.³⁶ He set up a teaching studio, where Nadia Khodasevich (later Nadia Léger) studied. She recalled his lectures on Giotto, Masaccio, Michelangelo, and Andrei Rublev, and his precept, "The cube, cylinder, cone, sphere—murderously complex simplicity."³⁷ Evidently, Strzemiński followed Malevich in encouraging his students to study the evolution of styles and, on June 29, 1920, talked about Raphael's "artistic solutions and spatial compositions."³⁸ Strzemiński was also active in organizing a museum of contemporary art for the city.³⁹ By July 1920, he was in charge of an independent art subsection of IZO that included actors and museum staff.⁴⁰ Appropriately, he and Kobro became involved in producing theatrical designs, some of which were exhibited that May at the *First State Art Exhibition* in Smolensk.⁴¹

There is no doubt that Kobro and Strzemiński's experiences in Russia had a lasting and generally positive impact on their artistic theory and practice. They had been creatively

stimulated by their encounters with the avant-garde. They had acquired a highly developed theoretical approach to artistic ideas and problems, which was encouraged by Malevich's writings and the analytical work conducted within IZO.⁴² In Russia, too, they became involved with exploring the connection between art, science, mathematics, and the principles of Taylorism. They also took with them to Poland a firm belief (developed both by Unovis and Russian constructivism) that artistic skills should be harnessed to improve the environment. As leaders of Polish constructivism, they used the term but rejected the strictly utilitarian position of Soviet constructivism, retaining a firm belief in art as the supreme organizing force.⁴³ In Poland, Kōbro and Strzemiński applied the practice and theory, as well as the pedagogical and administrative experiences that they had acquired in Soviet Russia and developed them further. But their Russian adventures also had a negative impact. The couple had learned to be wary of political entanglements, and in Poland they emphatically insisted that art should be completely independent from politics and the government.

● **32.** Turowski, *Malewicz*, 235, 398n24. By December 6, 1918, Strzemiński was chairman of the Exhibitions Office. ● **33.** V. Vlasova, "Iz istorii khudozhestvennoi zhizni revoliutsionnoi Moskvy: Deiatel'nost' Vserossiiskogo tsentral'nogo vystavochnogo biuro (1918–1921)," *Sovetskoe iskusstvoznanie*, no. 23 (1988): 334n18; and Konstantin Umanskiĭ, *Neue Kunst in Russland 1914–1918* (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag; Munich: Hans Goltz Verlag, 1920), 64. ● **34.** Władysław Strzemiński, "O sztuce rosyjskiej: Notatki," *Zwrotnica*, no. 3 (1922): 79–82; Władysław Strzemiński, "O sztuce rosyjskiej: Notatki," *Zwrotnica*, no. 4 (1923): 110–14; and Benson and Forgács, *Between Worlds*, 277. ● **35.** On the posting to Minsk, see Dimitrev, "Pervyi itog," 2. ● **36.** Shikhireva, "Władysław Strzemiński," 85. ● **37.** L. Dubenskaia, *Raskazyvaet Nadia Lezhe* (Moscow: Detskaia literatura 1981), 50–51, 58; cited by Shikhireva, "Władysław Strzemiński," 85. ● **38.** Cited by Turowski, *Malewicz*, 244. ● **39.** Shatskikh, *Vitebsk*, 108. ● **40.** *Ibid.*, 110. ● **41.** Shikhireva, "Władysław Strzemiński," 85. ● **42.** "Polozhenie otdela izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv i khudozhestvennoi promyshlennosti NKP po voprosu o khudozhestvennoi kul'tury," *Iskusstvo kommuny*, no. 11 (February 16, 1919): 2. ● **43.** "Co to jest konstruktywizm," *Blok*, no. 6–7 (1924); available in English translation in Benson and Forgács, eds., *Between Worlds*, 496–97.

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**THE WORK OF KATARZYNA
KOBRO AND THE NEOPLAS-
TIC ROOM BY WŁADYSŁAW
STRZEMIŃSKI AS MIRRORS
OF THE SOCIO-POLITICO-
AESTHETIC INTERACTIONS
OF THE AVANT-GARDES ■**

Gladys C. Fabre

“‘Transform the world,’ said Marx; ‘change life,’ said Rimbaud: for us, these two watchwords are one and the same.”

André Breton, 1935

No other exhibition subject could better reflect the originality of the interactions between neoplasticism and the otherisms of the international avant-garde, each of which contributed to forging a new vision of the world. But this unanimous proclamation was not enough: the direction to be taken still had to be determined, as well as the visual resources with which to undertake the journey.

Constructivism in Russia and Eastern Europe, De Stijl and L'Esprit Nouveau in the West—all agreed on the need to construct a new environment based on an elementary language applicable to all disciplines, and thus to create a harmonious life for all. But even at this level there were divergences. In harmony with what? The changeless Platonic order of the universe invoked by Piet Mondrian's neoplasticism or that of scientific discoveries such as Albert Einstein's space-time continuum, prized by Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky, and László Moholy-Nagy? Should harmony be attained by “reconciling the physiology of the eye and the abstract character of the mind,” as Władysław Strzemiński theorized after the war?¹ Or, was this a harmony determined by Marxist organization, which condemned individualism? Or was it based on the freedom “to be oneself,” in keeping with the universal humanist ideal that continues to be popular in France?²

Faced with these options, the most open-minded artists reflected on how to produce the best possible synthesis while appropriating modern conceptual methods and means: the machine, photography, cinema, and the new construction techniques. This explains the theoretical adjustments and the evolution of practices, going all the way to the idea of art as a laboratory for every kind of research. Artistic practice usually precedes theory, or, at most, the artwork and its justification are elaborated jointly. Strzemiński created, he said, “with the eye at the end of the brush.”³

Art history often creates misunderstanding by explaining a work in the light of writings that came afterward, attributing to the theoretician the preeminence of a visual originality he did not always initiate. Consequently, I wonder whether Strzemiński's eye was not set on Katarzyna Kobro's sculptures—albeit with the worthy intention of promoting his wife's art—and whether, in turn, his

point of view did not to some extent downplay the very source of his ideas.

Thus, Kobra's sculptures and the exhibition space conceived by Strzeminski late in his career cast light on the specific theoretical and concrete modalities by which the utopian aspirations that drove diverse imaginations and creations emerged from exchanges, exhibitions, journals, and encounters, notably with members of the De Stijl group. Amid all this activism we must also account for the difficulty women artists had in gaining real recognition.

THE HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN DE STIJL AND THE POLISH AVANT-GARDE

Kobra's use of three neutral colors (*Spatial Composition* (2) [Kompozycja przestrzenna (2), 1928]) and primary colors (*Spatial Composition* (4) [Kompozycja przestrzenna (4), 1929]; and *Spatial Composition* (6) [Kompozycja przestrzenna (6), 1931]) for her three-dimensional orthogonal constructions attests the influence of neoplasticism on her sculpture. This chromatic range is also evident in an oil painting by Henryk Stażewski, *Kompozycja* (Composition, 1930), although Strzemiński's unism rejected such an approach at the time. However, surprisingly, in 1948 he revisited neoplasticism. These works invite consideration of the circumstances in which the influence of the Dutch movement may have made itself felt on Polish art.

Henryk Berlewi was the first Polish artist to have contacts with the De Stijl group. Alongside van Doesburg and Vilmos Huszár, he attended

1. Andrzej Turowski, "The Physiology of the Eye," in *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1993), 36: "to reconcile the physiology of the eye and the abstract character of the mind." ● 2. "Being yourself in a country you have chosen," as advocated by the Italian Ricciotto Canudo in his novel *Les transplantés* (Paris: Eygène Fasquelle, Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1913). ● 3. Turowski, "The Physiology of the Eye," 36.

the Congress of Progressive Artists in Düsseldorf in May 1922, and, like them, he exhibited at the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung* of 1923. In 1924 he showed his *Mechano-Faktura* (1924) at the Daimler salon in Warsaw just as the recently founded Blok group (1924–1926) was exhibiting in the Polish capital with work by Kobro, Stażewski, Strzemiński, Mieczysław Szczuka, Teresa Żarnowerówna, Witold Kajruksztis, and so on. Through Berlewi and Stażewski the group's members were informed about De Stijl, and they even published in the fifth issue of their journal *Blok* (1924) an article by van Doesburg on “The Renewal of Architecture.” In 1926, through the intermediary of Stażewski and the architect Szymon Syrkus (who had been in Paris from 1922 to 1924), the first issue of the journal put out by the Praesens group (which followed Blok) included an article on architecture with illustrations by J. J. P. Oud, van Doesburg, and Gerrit Rietveld. In April, as Stażewski was making his first visit to the French capital, De Stijl was exhibiting at the *École Spéciale d'Architecture*. This show included some of the pieces shown at the *Galerie de l'Effort Moderne* in October 1923. Van Doesburg and Cornelis van Eesteren exhibited architectural models, two of which, *Hotel particulier* (Individual House) and *Maison d'artiste* (Artist's House), both from 1923, featured colored walls, along with gouaches by van Doesburg titled *Contra-Construction* (Counter-construction, 1923–1924) and *Construction de l'espace - temps* (Space-Time Construction, 1923–1924), which presented his conception of architecture. His objective was to break out of the confinement and static ponderousness of traditional architecture by opening large bays to allow the interaction of exterior and interior, while the division of the interior space by partitions in neutral and primary colors imparted

● 4. Władysław Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro, “La composition de l'espace, les calculs du rythme spatiotemporel,” in *L'espace uniste: Écrits du constructivisme polonais* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1977), 107; originally published as “Kompozycja przestrzeni: Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego” [Composition of Space: Calculations of space-time rhythm], (Łódź: Biblioteka a.r., vol. 2 [1931]).

FIG. 1: Theo van Doesburg, *Construction de l'espace - temps II* [Construction in Space-Time II], 1924



dynamism and a temporal dimension by encouraging the mobility of the gaze as it went from one colored wall to another. Here we may observe the interaction between van Doesburg's architectural projects and his painting, a process also at work in Kobro's sculpture. Van Doesburg's *Construction de l'espace - temps II* (Space-Time Construction II) (fig. 1) and *Counter-construction* exerted a significant influence on Kobro's *Spatial Compositions* as of 1928. These sculptures of Kobro adopted the colors of neoplasticism in order to impart dynamism, encourage movement, and thereby introduce time into the sculptural space.⁴ However, because it was placed inside the old building of the Poznański Palace, Strzemiński's *Sala Neoplastyczna* (Neoplastic Room) could not meet the objectives formulated by van Doesburg, nor those implemented by Rietveld in the Schröder House in Utrecht (1924).

For that reason, the room in Łódź should be compared to the atmosphere inside Mondrian's studio in Paris, also housed in an old building. Strzemiński's letters to van Doesburg (kept at the Netherlands Institute for Art History),

show that the two artists corresponded mainly in 1928 (when the first International Congress of Modern Architecture was held in La Sarraz, Switzerland), and their primary subject was documentation. In contrast, beginning in 1925 Strzemiński developed closer links with Mondrian and Michel Seuphor through the intermediaries of Syrkus, Stażewski, and Jan Effenberger-Śliwiński. The last of these had left Poland in 1922 for Paris, where he met Adolf Loos at the Salon d'Automne in 1923. That same year he opened the Au sacre du Printemps gallery, which became the venue for the meetings held every Saturday by the short-lived journal *Les documents internationaux de l'Esprit Nouveau* (1927) edited by Seuphor and Paul Dermée. These literary and artistic evenings brought together the Parisian avant-garde, from Enrico Prampolini to Mondrian, and including Georges Vantongerloo, Stażewski, and Tristan Tzara.

The other conduit of relations between neoplasticism and Polish art was the journal *L'art contemporain / Sztuka współczesna: Revue d'art international* (1929) (fig. 2), run by Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, a former student of Malevich and the Académie Moderne.⁵ Grabowska; her husband, Stanisław Grabowski; the poet Jan Brzękowski; and Stażewski managed to persuade members of the Parisian avant-garde to donate works (while Strzemiński mainly collected art gifts in Poland), which they hoped would form the basis of an exemplary collection for a future museum in Poland.⁶ Finally, all these artists committed to various isms (with the exclusion of the surrealists, apart from Jean Arp) were involved in the Cercle et Carré group formed by Seuphor in 1930. In early 1931, artists uniquely attached to abstraction or to Art Concret (a minigroup gathering together van Doesburg, Jean Hélion, Léon Tutundjian, and Otto



FIG. 2: Jan Brzękowski and Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, eds., *L'art contemporain / Sztuka współczesna: Revue d'art international*, no. 1 (1929)

● **5.** Amédée Ozenfant and Fernand Léger both taught at the Académie Moderne (1924–1931). ● **6.** The collection was open to the public in 1931 at the municipal museum in Łódź (now Muzeum Sztuki) and later transferred to Poznański Palace. The works featured in the *Neoplastic Room* were chosen for their geometric abstraction, which made them easier to integrate. They included works by Vantongerloo, van Doesburg, Huszár, members of De Stijl, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Berlewi, Stażewski, Strzemiński, and Kobro. ● **7.** Jean Hélion, “Les problèmes de l’art concret: Art et mathématiques,” *Art concret*, 1930, 8: “Pour que le tableau soit universel, précise Hélion, il faut que les relations réciproques de ses éléments soient déterminées par des constructions géométriques exactes, c’est-à-dire entre les éléments des relations numériques déduites d’un module originel.”

Gustaf Carlsund in 1930) were summoned by van Doesburg to form a new movement called Abstraction-Création. More coherent than Cercle et Carré and less restrictive than Art Concret, Abstraction-Création had some one hundred members in the years from 1931 to 1936, including Kobro, Strzemiński, and Stażewski, alongside old and new members of the De Stijl group: César Domela, Jean Gorin, Mondrian, Bart van der Leek, Vantongerloo, and Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart.

In addition to the influence of Mondrian and van Doesburg, Vantongerloo, like Gino Severini, argued for the use of mathematics to achieve perfect unity of plane and volume. He published his arguments in the first issues of the journal *De Stijl* and then in his book *L'art et son avenir* (Art and Its Future, 1924). Mondrian disapproved of this resort to mathematics, believing in intuition as the only means of unifying contrasting lines and colors. As for van Doesburg, he later became more receptive to the idea, as can be seen in his *Composition arithmétique* (Arithmetic Composition, 1930) and the *Art Concret* manifesto (1930). In this manifesto, the article “Les problèmes de l’art concret. Art et Mathématiques” (The Problems of Art Concret: Art and Mathematics) written by Hélion shows similarities to this theme with the ideas set out in *Unizm w malarstwie* (Unism in Painting, 1927; published in 1928 by the Praesens group), which confirms that the play of influence was multidirectional. “For the painting to be universal,” Hélion points out, “the reciprocal relations between its elements must be determined by exact geometric constructions, that is to say, between the elements of the numerical relations deduced from an original module.”⁷⁷

THE NEOPLASTIC ROOM: A JUSTIFIED YET CONTRADICTIONARY NAME?

Although Strzemiński's original intentions for this project are unclear, we can put forward three hypotheses:

- 1. From Zenobia Karnicka's investigation we can gather that Strzemiński initially sketched out a project for an autonomous neoplastic space with the aim of asserting and demonstrating the permanent power of art to change society's vision.⁸
- 2. In agreement with this same ideological approach, he opted for a collective demonstration promoting the works of the a.r. group alongside examples of geometrical abstraction collected in Paris in 1929–1930.
- 3. Finally, out of pragmatism, from the outset he accepted the functional imperatives of the museum, such as the unsuitability of the parquet floor of the room in 1948 (fig. 3).

Aesthetically, the space inaugurated in 1948 in the Muzeum Sztuki was largely in keeping with the norms of neoplasticism; it corresponded neither to the kind of interior architectural space championed by van Doesburg in 1924–1925 nor to the elementarist decor created for the Brasserie de l'Aubette in Strasbourg in 1926–1928.

For possible correspondences, we therefore need to look to Mondrian, to whom the Polish avant-garde was closer, and judge Strzemiński's room in relation to the neoplastic decor of the Dutch artist's Parisian studio or to the living room he conceived for the home of Ida Bienert in Dresden (January 1926). Mondrian later judged the latter to be unsatisfactory, and El

● 8. Zenobia Karnicka, "The Life and Work of Władysław Strzemiński—Chronology," in *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952: On the 100th Anniversary of His Birth*, exh. cat. (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1994), 91. ● 9. Anna Bentkowska-Kafel, Hugh Denard, and Dew Baker, *Paradata and Transparency in Virtual Heritage* (London: King's College, 2012), 123.

FIG. 3: View of
Sala Neoplastyczna
[Neoplastic Room], 1948



Lissitzky criticized him for having composed each wall of the room as a “still life seen through a keyhole.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, at the time of its conception Mondrian chose this project to illustrate his seminal essay “Le home—La rue—La cité” (Home—Street—City) published in the journal *Vouloir* (no. 25, 1927) (fig. 4).

In Mondrian’s sketch for the Bienert room, one detail stands out. Against all expectation, an oval table is placed in the center of the room. Its form, like the curve of the white wall near the entrance to the room in Łódź, breaks with the strict principle of orthogonality. We can interpret both examples either as an attestation of the freedom of artists, even the most dogmatic ones, or as adapting to material realities, whether (in Mondrian’s room) the well-being of the occupant or (in Strzemiński’s room) a possible camouflaging of the angular structure of the wall in Łódź. In Strzemiński’s case, the curved wall might also be a nod to and recollection of the curves in his *Kompozycji architektonicznych* (Architectural Compositions) and the spatial sculptures of unism. In any case, his white wall has a powerful presence in the ensemble and introduces a fine singularity that diverges from neoplasticism.

The *Neoplastic Room*, unlike Mondrian's Dresden project, is not a simple static decoration. How then does it compare to Mondrian's studio in Paris, where the mural decoration is designed to create a spiritual, meditative atmosphere conducive to a creative state of mind? Retrospectively, the production and targeted exhibition of paintings acts on the environment, to the extent of encouraging an occasional change of the wall composition. Aside from its usefulness to his practice, Mondrian also used his studio as a presentation space that, once tidied up for photographers or visitors, served as a visual demonstration of the spatial unity of painting and surroundings, of art and of life.

But the insurmountable obstacle to this linkage of the room in Łódź and Mondrian's studio is the fact that in the latter the paintings on the wall or on the easel are exclusively Mondrian's own, in stylistic harmony with the wall composition, which is not the case in Łódź.

Van Doesburg and Mondrian claimed that when neoplasticism had taken over the home, the street, and the city, there would no longer be a need to paint pictures. This disappearance was already confirmed by the neoplastic interiors of Huszár and Vantongerloo and by Rietveld's Schröder House, where only the functional objects (a clock or lamps) hung on the wall.

Strzemiński's room, integrating paintings and diverging in other ways from the norms of neoplasticism, would not likely have found favor with the members of *De Stijl*. Indeed, they would have criticized the action of the mural space on the works and that of the works on their surroundings.

To understand the Polish artist's aim, we must invoke the utilitarian function of art affirmed by the Russian constructivists and, in their wake, by the Blok and Praesens groups

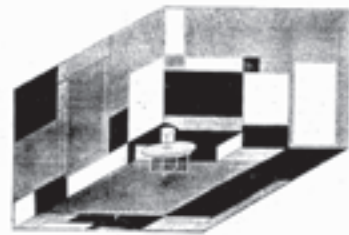
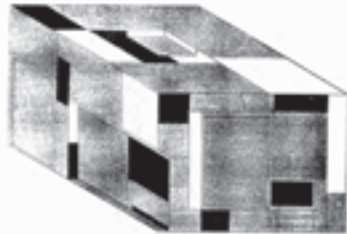


FIG. 4. Piet Mondrian, "Le home—La rue—La cité" [Home—Street—City], *Vouloir*, no. 25 (1927)

● 10. K. Kobro, "Funkcjonalizm" [Functionalism], *Forma*, no. 4 (1936); also in Katarzyna Kobro, "Le fonctionnalisme," in *L'espace uniste*, 166–71.

championed by Strzemiński and Kobra.¹⁰ The *Neoplastic Room* may thus be said to have been conceived from the outset as an exhibition space, a genre most spectacularly represented by the *Abstract Cabinet* created by El Lissitzky in Hanover (1927). Van Doesburg was the first (1925) to be considered by Alexander Dorner for this project, which was to house works by Francis Picabia, Pablo Picasso, Léger, Mondrian, and Vordemberge-Gildewart, among others. But van Doesburg's proposal was judged insufficient, and the commission went to El Lissitzky. The problem raised by the Russian artist was the same as the one put (or not) to Strzemiński: how to present relatively disparate, interchangeable works with a constructed space that obliges the spectator to take a visually mobile and creative approach? To this end, El Lissitzky conceived a wall made of narrow vertical strips painted white on one side and black on the other, in which he made hanging positions on a white or black ground, arranged from top to bottom on the sides in a clear, simple, and dynamic composition. As a result, each isolated painting retained its pictorial autonomy within the order of a neutral, kinetic setting that was white or black depending on the viewer's movements. Here, the design and constructivist style do not affect our appreciation of the works, nor are they limited to the traditional arrangement of paintings as seen in Łódź.

The excessive action of Strzemiński's mural composition on the paintings displayed is compounded by the work on Kobra's sculptures, because of the way the bases were made. These parallelepipeds are in glass, presumably to allow an appreciation of the interpenetration of space within the *Spatial Compositions*, but this transparency means that the white edges of their armature intervene in our vision of the sculpture. Furthermore, and no doubt out of a concern for visual unity, this armature of the bases recalls that of the constructivist furniture (bench-table) conceived by Strzemiński for this same room. This planned homogeneity may be taken to indicate that Strzemiński had a certain capture over his wife's work.

THE ASPIRATION TO UNIVERSAL UNITY AS “TRANSPARENCY” OF DIFFERENCE WITHIN SAMENESS

In her remarkable essay “The Point of Imbalance in the Old Dream of Symmetry,” Ewa Franus develops the idea that the unism championed in painting by Strzemiński and in sculpture by Kobra was, on one side, the expression of a revolutionary social utopia in which, under the pretense of equality, the difference between the sexes was neutralized in an idealist no-man’s-land, one nevertheless delimited by men; and, on the other side, constituted the mirror of the couple’s aspirations to live harmoniously by sublimating the differences between their respective characters and artistic disciplines.¹¹ Franus underscores the rift that developed between 1923, the date of the couple’s marriage, and 1948, the year the *Neoplastic Room* was created. Strzemiński’s presentation of Kobra’s art in the *Neoplastic Room* offset to some small extent his attempts to deprive her of custody of their child after their divorce in 1945 and his failure—a symbolic act—to invite her to the opening of the exhibition.¹²

The unistic idea of sublimating dualism by symmetry is the exact opposite of Mondrian’s position.¹³ On the one hand, Mondrian stigmatized the feminine/masculine opposition by making his horizontal and vertical lines intersect at right angles. On the other hand, he rejected symmetry, which he considered to belong to the order of nature. Instead he favored asymmetrical balance.

Because Kobra’s works predate Strzemiński’s pictorial formulation of unism, I am compelled to reconsider her originality and her impact on the pictorial evolution of unism. If the dating is exact, Kobra’s *Kompozycja abstrakcyjna* (Abstract Composition, 1924), by intertwining form and ground and obliging the viewer to a constant to and fro in his or her reading of the work, surely prefigures both the *Compositions* painted on glass by Strzemiński (1926) and his later *Kompozycje architektoniczne* (Architectural Compositions, 1926–1929). More than that, however, Kobra’s *Spatial Composition (1)* (1925) constitutes an organic unity combining geometry with biomorphic undulations that delimit a form in space and anticipate the unistic paintings of the early 1930s. And her *Spatial Composition (3)* (1928) looks like it could have served as a model for the *Architectural Compositions 26, 29, and 30* (1929). Strzemiński would have needed only to raise the sculpture vertically and copenstrate the concrete form of its rectangular base with the rounded virtual form drawn in space. Finally, as of 1925 Kobra was fully conscious, as was her husband, of the social implications of her art, but while he limited his contribution to typography, she set out to create an aesthetic applicable to architecture. *Spatial Composition (1)* (1925)—worked through in *Spatial Compositions (7)* (1931) and *(8)* (1932)—had an implicit architectural use,

as confirmed by her later model for a nursery school (1932–1934).

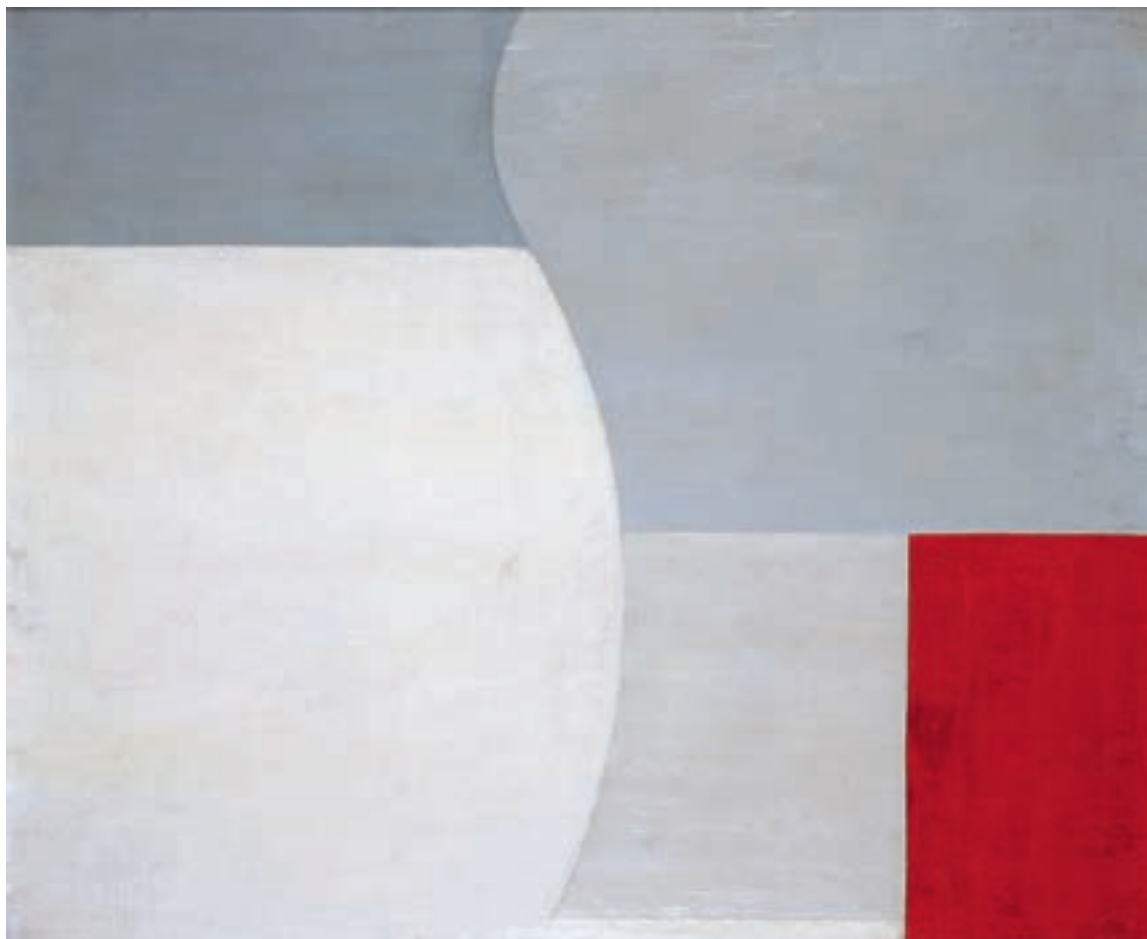
One could argue, too, that the contrast between the rectangular planes in neoplastic colors and the sinuous, always white curves seen in Kobro's sculptures of 1929 were her way of expressing the feminine by sublimating it in unity. However, this unity is not a whole within the painting, which, whether we like it or not, is limited by its format. In Kobro, it is a "volume in a process of becoming." Open, it melts into the external space, giving it a rhythm, a life. In freeing herself of volume and mass, Kobro could express at once the Mallarméan immateriality of whiteness, the infinity of Malevich, and the space-time of van Doesburg through the pure energy of color copenetrating space.

Rightly or wrongly, I observe a great difference between Strzemiński and Kobro. The former saw his existence *in* art; the latter envisaged hers *through* art, at least until the birth of her child in 1936 changed her life's path. Despite all the proclaimed revolutions over the years, the question of the woman artist remains relevant, as is the aspiration to find oneself confronted with international artistic expressions and the permanent chaos of society, as attested by Strzemiński's free divergences from the norms of neoplasticism. Nevertheless in 1948 he nominally referred to it again as an international and historical pedestal for a modern art rebirth.

● 11. Ewa Franus, "The Point of Imbalance in the Old Dream of Symmetry," in *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952: Materials of the Conference* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki Library, 1995), 128–37. ● 12. To this can be added the many problems Kobro's Germano-Russian origins caused her, including a prison sentence of six months, but finally she was absolved. ● 13. "The dualist conception must be replaced by the unist conception," Strzemiński writes in "Unizm w malarstwie" [Unism in Painting], *Praesens* 3 (1928), reprising the article "Dualizm i unizm," *Droga* 6–7 (June–July 1927). Published in French as "L'unisme en peinture," in *L'espace uniste*, 75.







Henryk Stażewski, *Obraz abstrakcyjny II*
[Abstract Painting II], ca. 1928–1929

Pages 132–133:

Władysław Strzemiński, *Sala*
Neoplastyczna [Neoplastic Room],
1948/1960. Reconstruction by Bolesław
Utkin; view of 1993

Henryk Stażewski, *Kompozycja*
[Composition], ca. 1929–1930

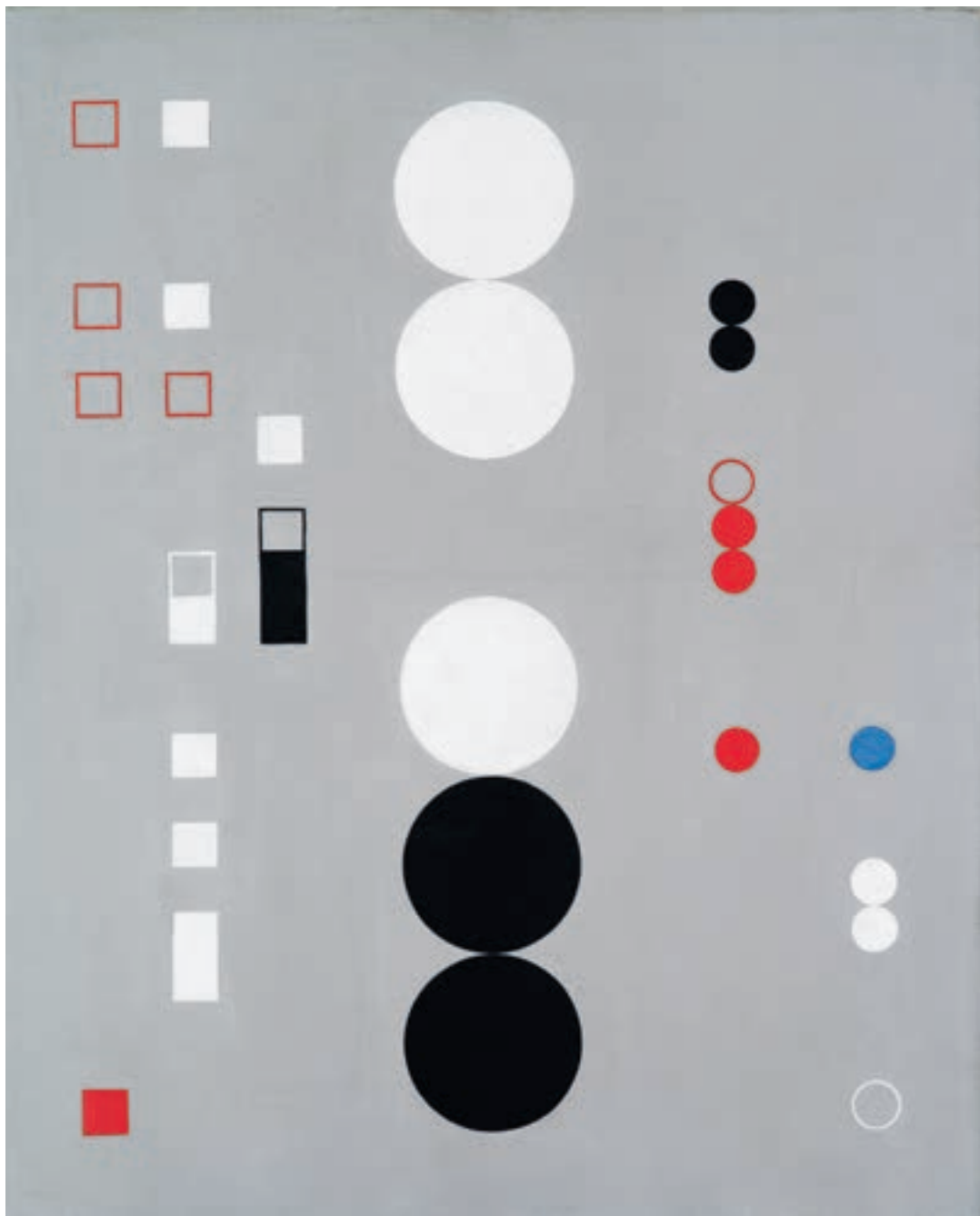


Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja
przestrzenna (6)* [Spatial
Composition (6)], 1931





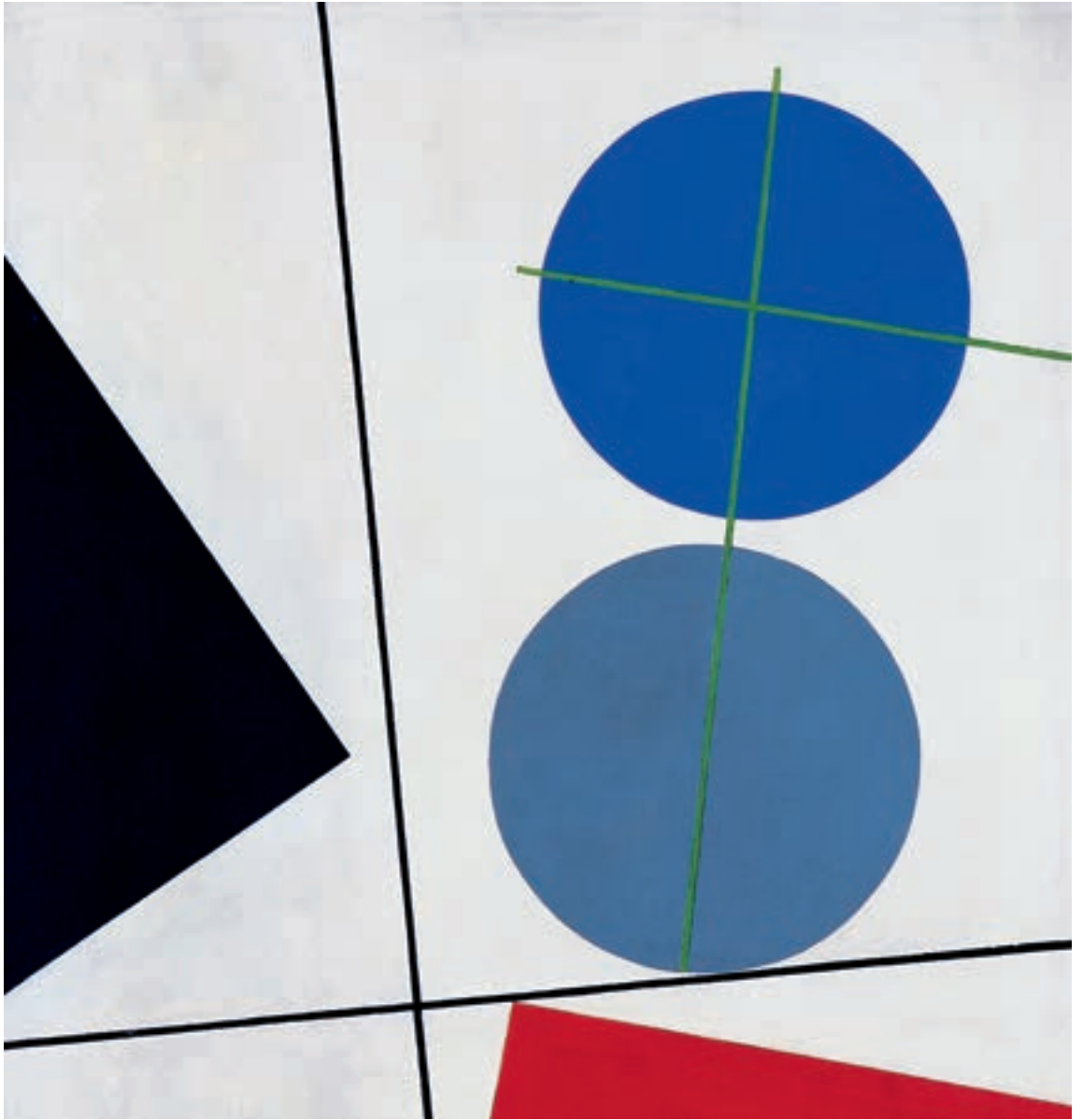




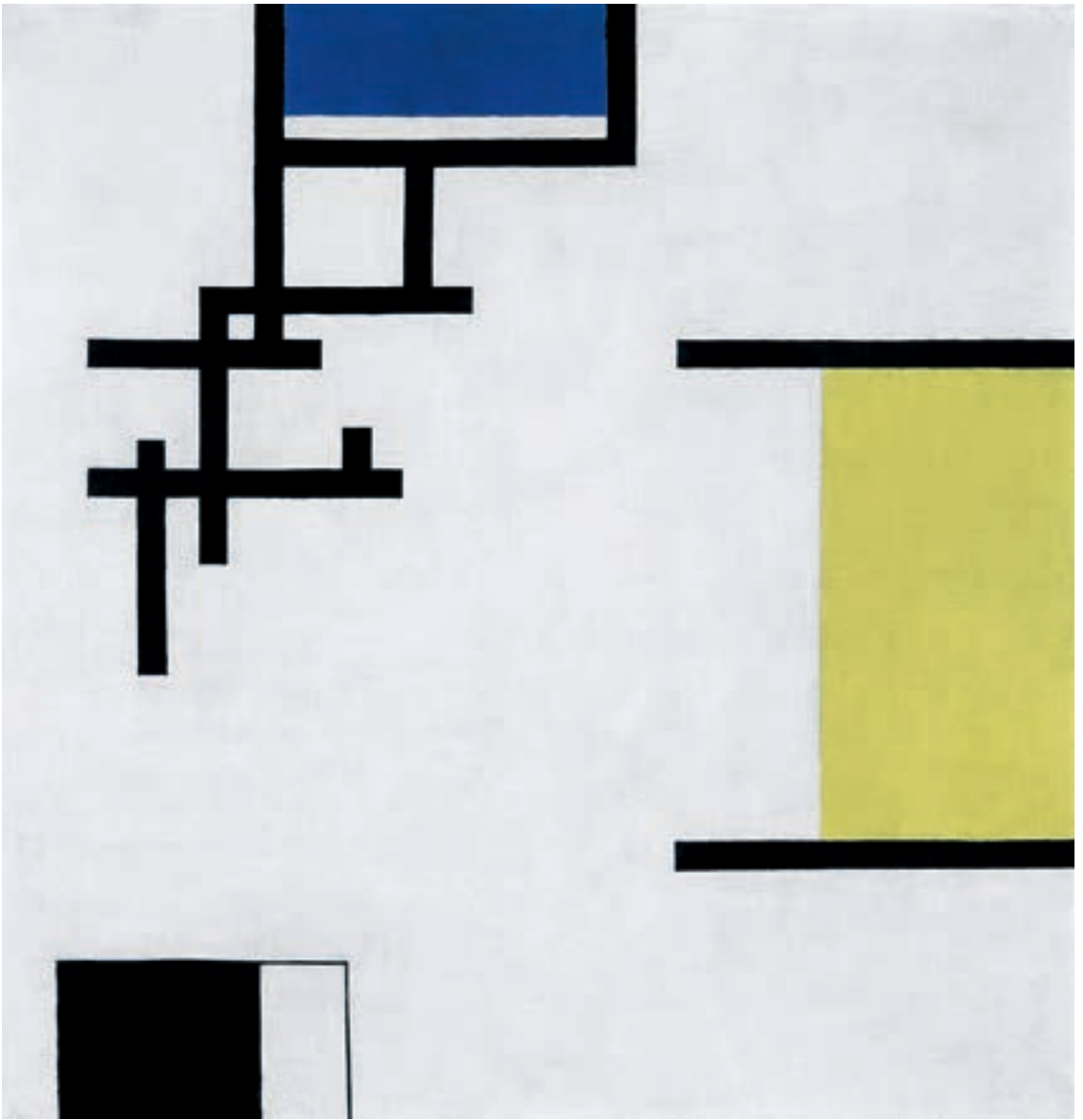
Pages 138–139:

Katarzyna Kobro, *Kompozycja abstrakcyjna* [Abstract Composition], ca. 1924–1926

Sophie Taeuber-Arp, *Composition* [Composition], 1930

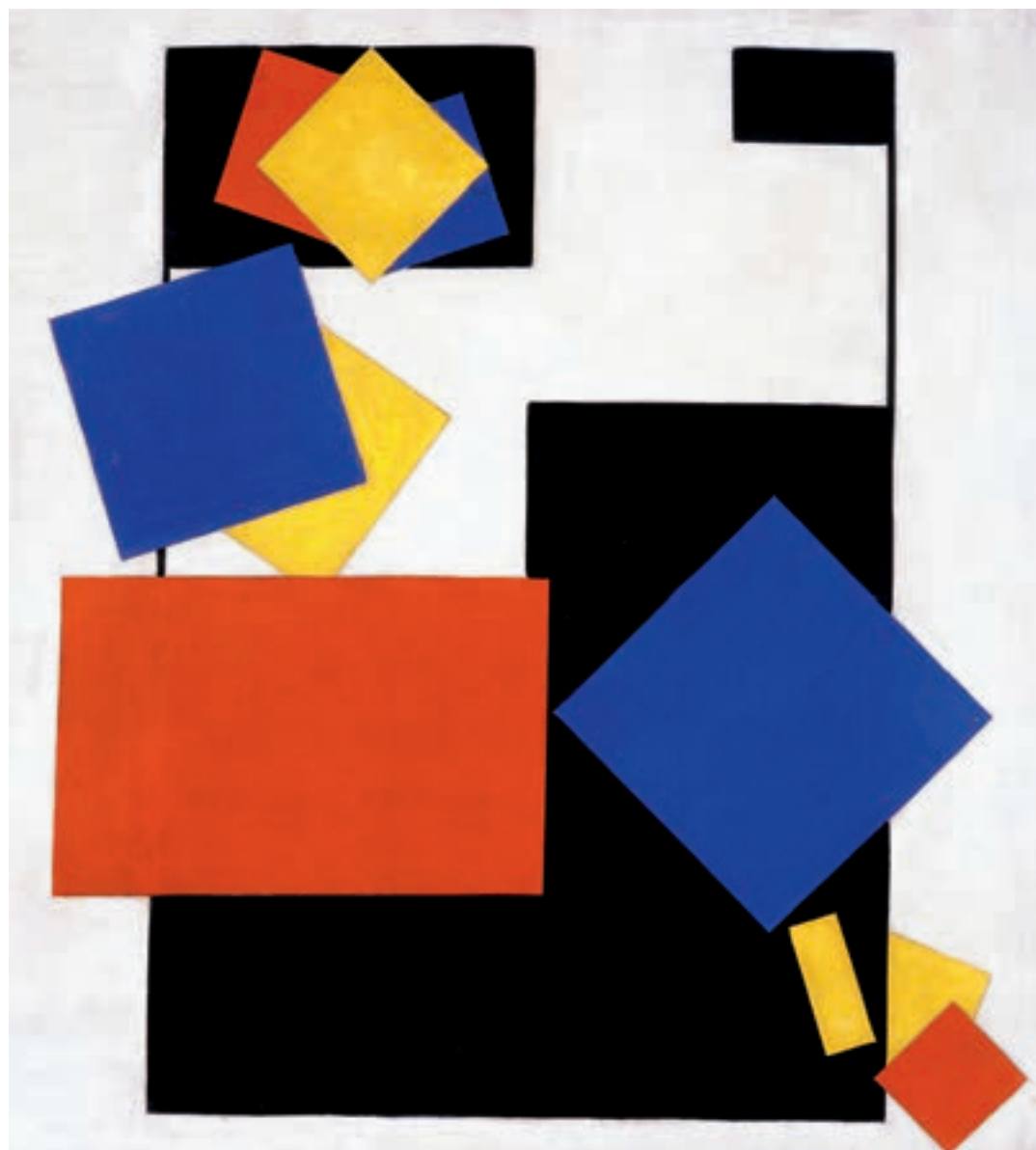


Sophie Taeuber-Arp, *Composition*
[Composition], 1931

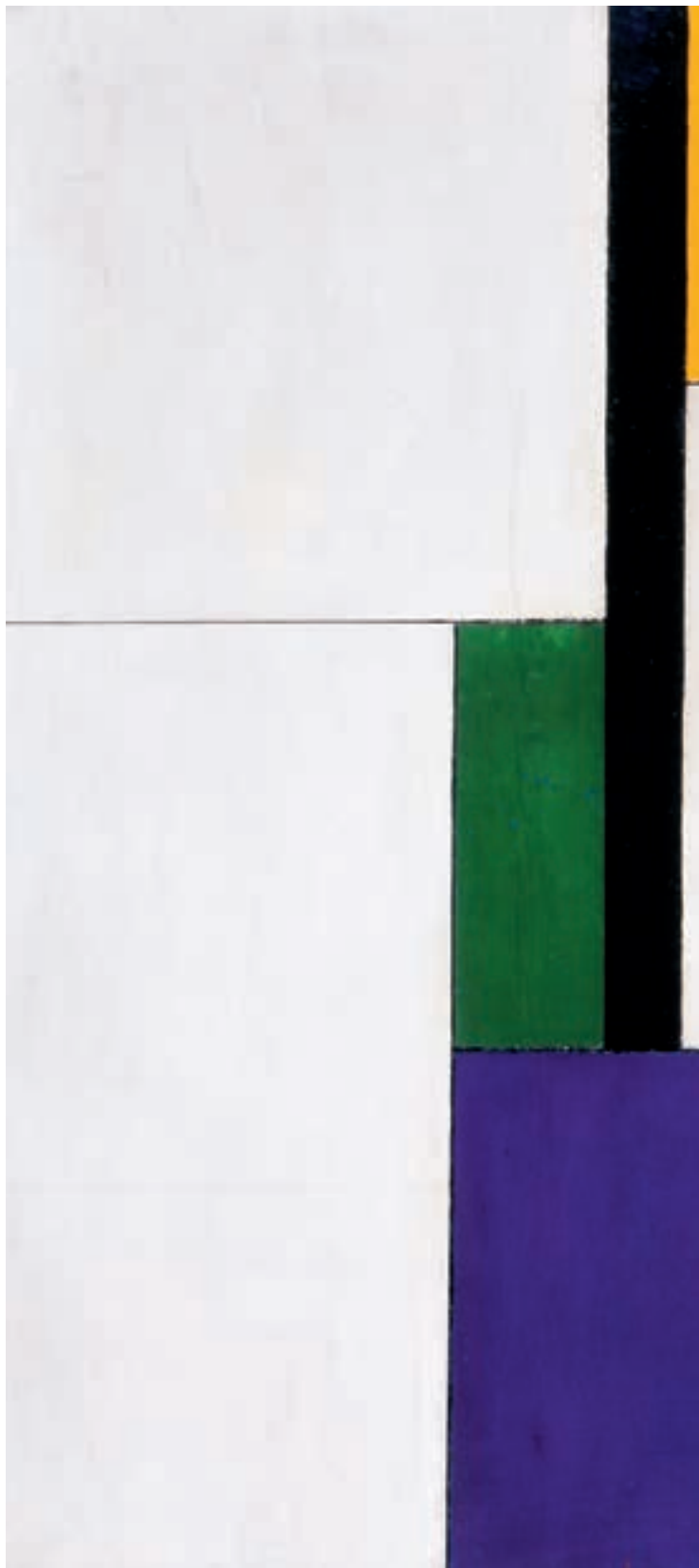


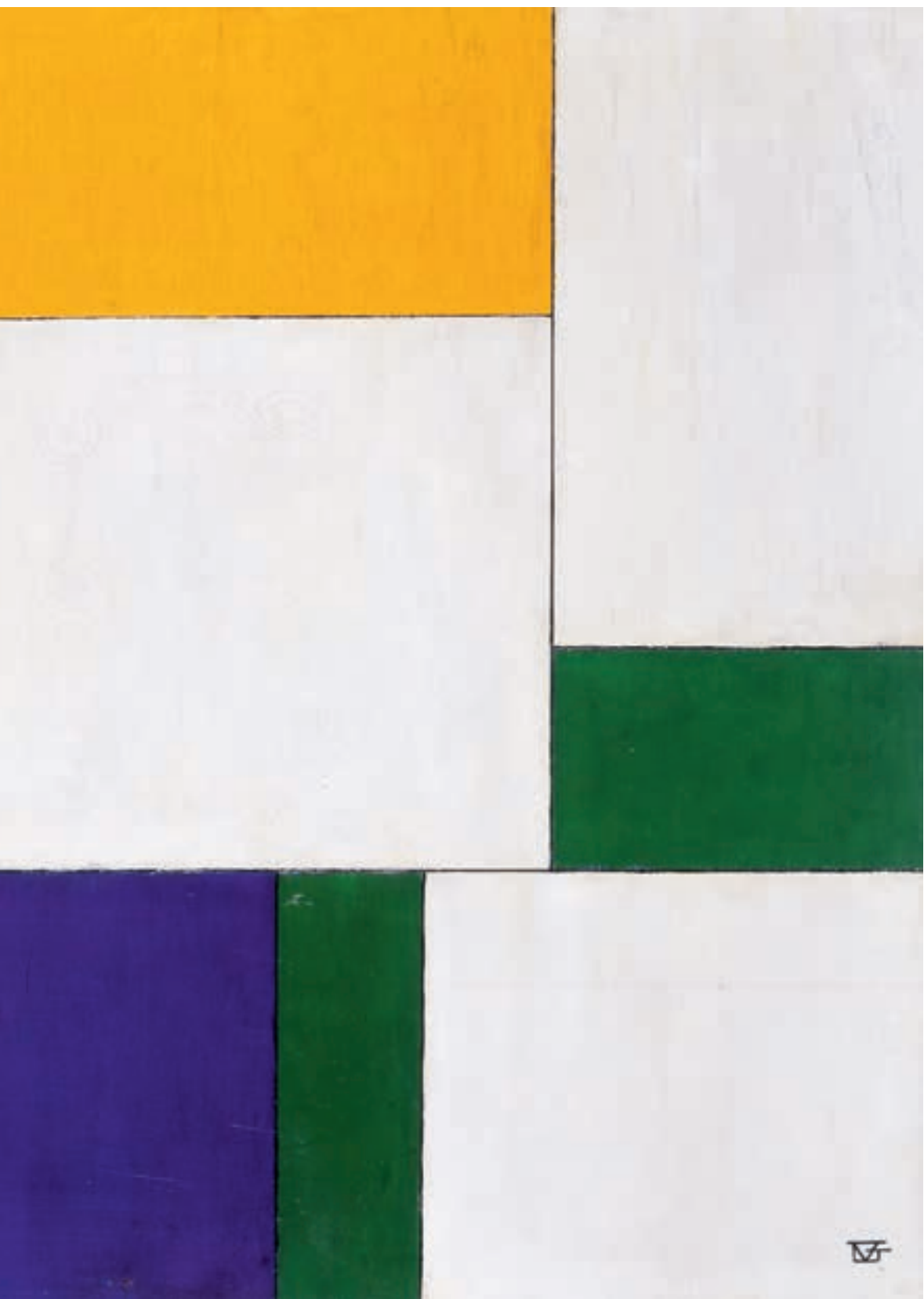
Jean Hélion, *Composition*
[Composition], 1930

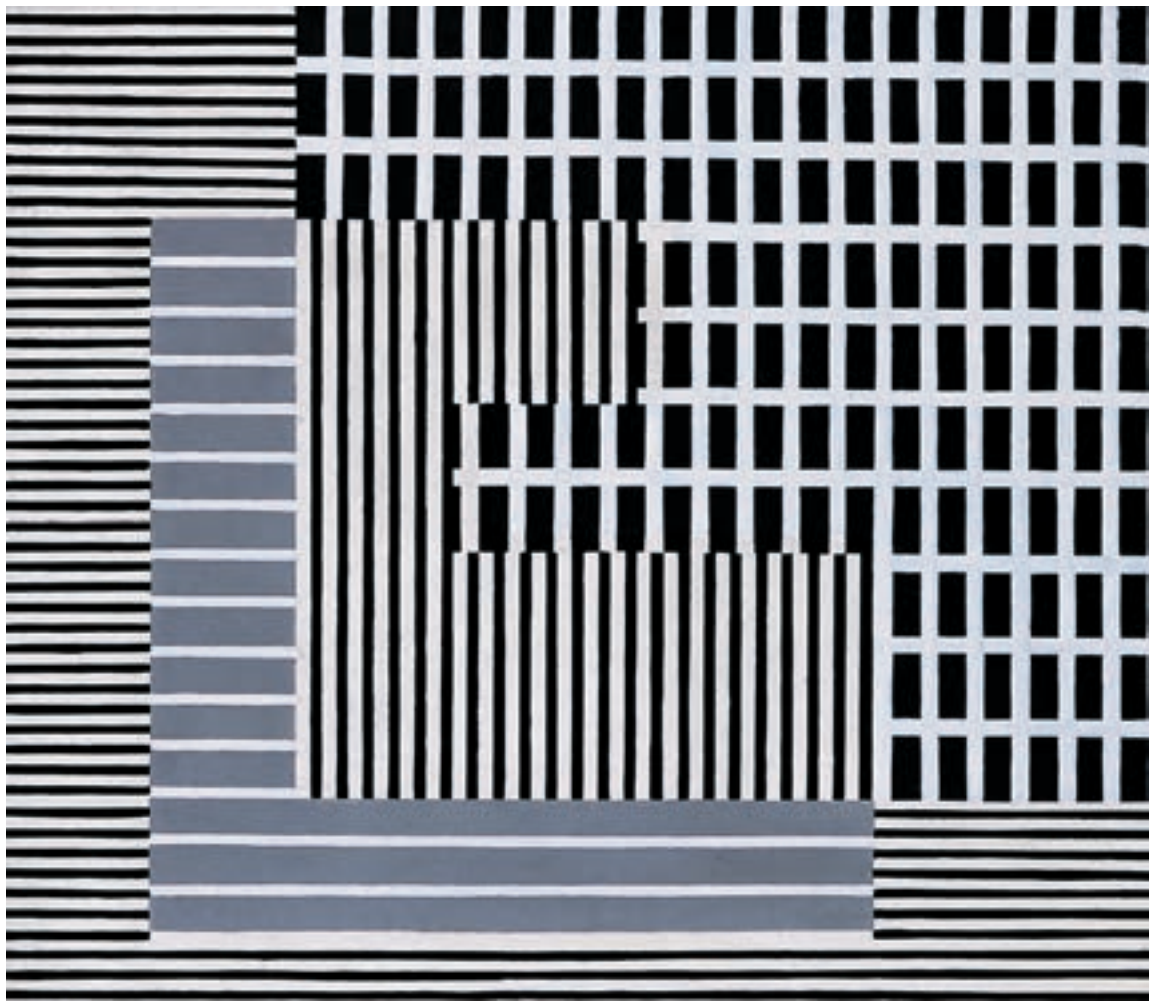
Vilmos Huszár, *Composition – Figure
Humaine* [Composition – Human
Figure] 1926



Georges Vantongerloo,
*Construction émanant du triangle
équilatéral* [Derived from
Equilateral Triangle], 1921







Henryk Stażewski, *Kompozycja fakturowa*
[Factural Composition], ca. 1930–1931



Theo van Doesburg, *Contra-composition XV*
[Counter-Composition XV], 1925

Pages 148–149:
Vilmos Huszár, *Composition*
[Composition], 1924







Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja przestrzenna (1)*
[Spatial Composition (1)], ca. 1948



Władysław Strzemiński, *Fotel. Mebel z zestawu do Sali Neoplastycznej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*
[Armchair: Furniture from a Set for the Neoplastic Room at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź], 1947–1948



Władysław Strzemiński, *Stół. Mebel z zestawu do Sali Neoplastycznej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*
[Table: Furniture from a Set for the Neoplastic Room at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź], 1947–1948



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**▬ PARALLELS BETWEEN
THE SPANISH AND ▬
POLISH AVANT-GARDES**

Juan Manuel Bonet

The history of the relations between the Spanish avant-garde (so closely tied to that of Latin America in those years) and its Polish counterpart begins in about 1914, when various Polish artists living in Paris were forced to move to Madrid by the outbreak of the First World War. Three of them, the painters Józef Pankiewicz, Władysław Jahl, and Marjan Paszkiewicz, had close links with ultraism, as did Robert and Sonia Delaunay, who also found refuge in Madrid during part of the European conflict. Jahl and Paszkiewicz featured prominently in the principal publications of *Ultra*, the latter mainly as a theorist and the former as an illustrator alongside the Argentine Norah Borges and the Uruguayan Rafael Barradas. Taking his first steps with them, the Polish poet Tadeusz Peiper also played a major role. After returning to his homeland, reborn as such after the end of the war in 1918, Peiper made Polish translations of compositions by the Chilean Vicente Huidobro, decisively active in Madrid during those years, and by the ultraists, including Jorge Luis Borges and Guillermo de Torre. The magazine Peiper published in Krakow, *Zwrotnica* (1922–1927), very much in the spirit (no pun intended) of *LEsprit Nouveau* (1920–1925), reported the appearance in 1923 of *Fervor de Buenos Aires* by Borges, *Hélices* by de Torre, and *Kindergarden* by Francisco Luis Bernárdez. The most active member of the Polish poetic avant-garde in the 1920s, Peiper thus had part of his formative experience in Madrid, and he might be described as a kind of Polish de Torre. De Torre mentions him in *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia* (1925) but appears to devote more attention to the writers of the Polish literary magazine *Skamander*. This led to bitter complaints about it from Peiper and a public exchange of letters in *Alfar*, a magazine

close to ultraism that was published in A Coruña. Not only did Peiper sever the Spanish connection, but he ended up doing his best to conceal it. What is truly important for the history of the Polish avant-garde is the director of *Zwrotnica's* close relationship with colleagues Jan Brzękowski, Jalu Kurek, and Julian Przyboś; with artists such as Tytus Czyżewski (also a poet; the Spanish journey he took during this period left deep traces in his work), Katarzyna Kobro, Timon Niesiołowski, Kazimierz Podsadecki, Henryk Stażewski, and Władysław Strzemiński; and with Kazimir Malevich, whom he would accompany to the Bauhaus in 1927.

In Huidobro's former library—once one of the great avant-garde libraries, rich in materials from Central Europe but now split between Santiago de Chile and the TEA in Santa Cruz de Tenerife—testimonies are preserved of the Chilean poet's relationship with Peiper and of the knowledge of the Polish avant-garde he gained through him. The library contains copies of Peiper's *Szósta! Szósta! Utwór teatralny w dwóch częściach* (The Sixth! The Sixth! A Play in 2 Parts, 1926) (fig. 1) and Julian Przyboś's *Śruby. Poezje* (Screws: Poems, 1925) (fig. 2), both with spectacular covers by Strzemiński, as well as issues of the Warsaw journals *Nowa sztuka* (1921–1922) and *Blok* (1924–1925), and a later title, *Croquis dans les ténèbres* (1944), published during his London exile by the multifaceted Stefan Themerson.

Besides the stays in Madrid occasioned by the First World War and prolonged only in the cases of Jahl and Paszkiewicz, the only other significant Polish additions to the Spanish artistic scene in the years before the Civil War are Mauricio Amster and Mariano Rawicz, two excellent graphic artists, both Communists at the time and now completely forgotten in the land of their birth. Eventually exiled to Chile, they never returned to Europe. Although devoted principally to graphics for far-left magazines and publishers, in 1936 Amster designed the catalogue (with a prologue by de Torre) and the poster for the Madrid venue of the pioneering Pablo Picasso retrospective organized in Barcelona by ADLAN (Amigos del Arte Nuevo [Friends of New Art]), with the special collaboration of Luis Fernández; and Rawicz was the graphic designer for the Madrid architecture and décor magazine *Viviendas*.

During the ultraism years, various poets of this movement appeared alongside Polish artists in many of the European magazines. Perhaps the most significant case is that of *Manomètre* (1922–1928), a journal edited in Lyon by the doctor, poet, and filmmaker (and occasional painter—consider his post—Óscar Domínguez *décalcomanies*) Émile Malespine, the inventor of two successive isms, *Suridéalisme* and *Babélisme*, which found no critical fortune. What was published, however, shows just how good the editor's contacts were: Hans Arp, Borges and his sister Norah, the Belgian architect Victor Bourgeois, the Dutch

author Tilly Brugman, Serge Charchoune, the Peruvian poet Serafin Delmar, Huidobro, Lajos Kassák, the Mexican stridentist poet Manuel Maples Arce, Pierre de Massot, the Croatian poet Ljubomir Micić, László Moholy-Nagy, Piet Mondrian, the Belgian painter Jozef Peeters, Peiper (the only Polish name in a magazine that includes *Zwrotnica* and *Blok* in its directory), Benjamin Péret, Kurt Schwitters (one of whose *merz* collages was owned by Peiper, who eventually donated it to the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź), Michel Seuphor, Philippe Soupault, de Torre and other Spanish ultraists, Tristan Tzara, Herwarth Walden... The names of Peiper, Huidobro, and de Torre are thus found close together, a frequent occurrence at that time.

From 1924 to 1930, the painter Stażewski, one of Peiper's interlocutors during the *Zwrotnica* years, spent long periods in Paris, where a large Polish artistic colony had flourished since the nineteenth century. As editor of the Warsaw journal *Praesens* (1926–1929), he soon connected with other members of the modernist network, such as Paul Dermée and his wife, Céline Arnould; Fernand Léger, Mondrian, Seuphor, Joaquín Torres-García, the Lithuanian poet Juozas Tysliava, Georges Vantongerloo, Ilarie Voronca; and others. Presumably thanks to Stażewski, a reproduction of a picture by Torres-García reached the pages of *Praesens*, and a work by Joan Miró appeared in the same magazine. In 1928, Stażewski designed the cover of the first issue of *Muba*, the Parisian journal of the Lithuanian Tysliava. In its pages appeared the inevitable Huidobro, together with Arnould, Jean Cocteau, Joseph Delteil, Dermée, the Pole Bruno Jasiński, Jacques Lipchitz, Malevich, Micić, Mondrian, J. J. P. Oud, Luigi Russolo, Seuphor, Vantongerloo, Voronca, and so on.



FIG. 1: Władysław Strzemiński, cover for the book: Tadeusz Peiper, *Szósa! Szósa! Utwór teatralny w dwóch częściach* [The Sixth! The Sixth! A Play in 2 Parts], 1925



FIG. 2: Władysław Strzemiński, cover for the book: Julian Przyboś, *Śruby. Poezje* [Screws: Poems], 1925

When Peiper eventually disappeared from the international circuits in which he was so active during the 1920s, he was replaced by another poet, his fellow editor Brzękowski, who was also to develop close ties with visual artists. From 1928, Brzękowski, too, spent long periods in Paris, a prelude to his future final residence in France. His memoirs, *W Krakowie i w Paryżu: Wspomnienia i szkice* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968), are entertaining despite some imprecisions and more than one factual error. Thanks to the kindness of Gilles Gheerbrant, I have a photocopy of “Paris artistique et littéraire des années trente,” an unpublished typescript in French with several variations on the *princeps*, which the poet prepared for an edition that never appeared. As Brzękowski recalls on the first page of the typescript, he had already learned about Paris in Krakow: he knew the drawings he saw pinned to the walls of Jockey in Montparnasse from the pages of *LEsprit Nouveau*, so important for the configuration of the *Zwrotnica* project, and the painting of Léger was familiar to him from Peiper’s magazine.

The Byelorussian painter Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska studied under Malevich and Strzemiński in Vitebsk. She settled in Warsaw in 1922, where she married her Polish colleague Stanislaw Grabowski. Two years later she moved to Paris, where she continued her studies with Léger (whom she was to marry in 1952, after which she was known as Nadia Léger) and Amédée Ozenfant at the Académie Moderne in Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, also frequented by Torres-García’s children. In 1929, Chodasiewicz-Grabowska decided to found an art magazine. Stażewski recommended her as an editor to Brzękowski, whom he had met in Paris through Dermée. The magazine, *L’art contemporain / Sztuka współczesna*, was, as its title

suggests, bilingual. Three issues appeared. In its pages are poems by Peiper, Przyboś, and others, as well as reproductions of works by various Polish and non-Polish artists, including, on the Hispanic side, Picasso, Torres-García, and Miró. In the case of Picasso, the illustrations were maliciously selected to accompany uncomplimentary articles by Brzękowski and Waldemar George. While the first was still a nobody in the Paris of the day, the same cannot be said for George, whose given name was Jerzy Waldemar Jarociński. An early defender of the cubists, of Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, of the stage designer Boris Aronson, and of Torres-García, he was active for a time in his support of the new photography and Jewish art. He was also close to Huidobro, who in 1922 introduced him to Gerardo Diego. At the end of the decade, George was given a platform in the deluxe magazine *Formes* (1929–1934) from which to voice his support for the *retour à l'ordre*, focusing his attention on Filippo De Pisis and other Novecento Italian painters, and on Christian Bérard and the neo-romantics. Around that time he also acquired fascist sympathies and was even received in 1933 by Benito Mussolini.

As recorded in a photograph centered on Mondrian, the first issue of *L'art contemporain* had its launch in the Galerie Żak, founded by the widow of the Polish painter Eugeniusz Żak. The gallery, which showed work by Grabowski, Torres-García, and others, was also where Torres-García organized the eclectic *Première Exposition du Groupe Latino-américain de Paris*, held April 11–24, 1930. Participants included, in addition to Torres-García, his Uruguayan compatriots Gilberto Bellini, Carlos Alberto Castellanos, and Pedro Figari; the Mexicans Germán Cueto, Agustín Lazo, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and Lola Velázquez Cueto; the Guatemalan Carlos Mérida; the Cuban Eduardo Abela; the Dominican Jaime Colson; the Ecuadorean Manuel Rendón; the Colombian Rómulo Rozo; the Argentinians Gustavo Cochet, Juan Del Prete, and Raquel Forner; the Chileans Mario Aurelio Bontá, Jorge Caballero, and Laura Rodig; and the Brazilian Vicente do Rego Monteiro—a long list, but representative of the period. Two of the artists, Colson and Cueto, were also members of the Cercle et Carré group (1929).

In 1930, Torres-García had been in Paris since 1926 and had already presented work in several individual and group exhibitions. Among the latter was a show at the Galerie Marck dedicated to the *5 refusés par le jury du Salon d'Automne*, where Torres-García's work was joined by that of the Catalan Pere Daura, the Frenchman Jean Hélion, the Belgian Ernest Engel-Rozier (now better known as Engel-Pak), and the Pole Alfred Aberdam. Torres-García had become familiar with the latest abstract trends through Theo van Doesburg, while separately he met Seuphor, who introduced him to Mondrian. Afterward came his attempt to “do something” against surrealism. In 1929, the idea took shape of forming

a constructivist group with van Doesburg. Besides the Uruguayan, the Hispanic components would include Cueto, Daura, and Fernández. Huidobro was also mentioned as a sympathizer, while the Polish representative was to be Stażewski. Torres-García organized a collective exhibition on this basis at the Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona. He also present at the *Expositions Sélectes d'Art Contemporain* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, organized by Pétro (Nelly) van Doesburg, where work by Daura and Fernández was shown too. In the same eventful year of 1929, Torres-García and van Doesburg were two of the four European artists asked by another Warsaw magazine, *Europa* (whose art section was directed by Strzemiński), to take part in a survey. The other two were Mondrian and Vantongerloo.

However, when Torres-García finally set up the group in 1930, it was not with van Doesburg but with Seuphor, then the Dutchman's great rival. The group was called *Cercle et Carré*. A journal of the same name was printed at the Imprimerie Polonaise Ognisko, at number 3-bis, Rue Émile Allez, which had also produced the second issue of *L'art contemporain*. Among the names inside is that of Brzękowski, who had previously contributed an article on new Polish poetry to the Antwerp journal *Het overzicht* (1921–1925), directed by Seuphor, whose other collaborators included Huidobro and de Torre. Like them, Brzękowski provided signed contributions to several publications at that time, including *Alfar* during its final phase in Montevideo. Thanks to Seuphor, whom he invited to collaborate in *L'art contemporain*, Brzękowski had met the principal artists in the group, including Torres-García. The first issue of *Cercle et Carré* included an untitled opinion column by Brzękowski on the need to construct in both painting and poetry, while the third issue contained his extensive text “Pour le film abstrait” (Toward abstract film). After some conceptual considerations that reveal the knowledge of the subject he had first shown two years earlier in an article for the Warsaw magazine *Wiek XX*, Brzękowski proposed a screenplay for a film he was never to make. That text—whose Polish version, “Kobieta i koła” (A woman and circles), came out in 1931 in the first issue of *Linia*, the Krakow journal he had founded with Kurek and Przyboś in 1931—appeared as part of a cinematic dossier along with four other contributions, by the Ukrainian Eugène Deslaw, the Austrian Raoul Hausmann, the German Hans Richter, and Seuphor. The script has recently been brought to the screen as *A Woman and Circles* (2004), a beautiful experimental film shot in black and white with a 1940s camera by the American Bruce Checefsky, a photographer and filmmaker from Cleveland who specializes in remakes of all kinds and has worked on vanished films by, among others, Maya Deren, György Gerö, Léopold Survage, and Stefan and Franciszka Themerson.

FIG. 3: Page from the book: *Międzynarodowa Kolekcja Sztuki Nowoczesnej. Katalog nr 2* [International Collection of Modern Art: Catalogue no. 2] (Łódź: Museum of Modern Art; J. and K. Bartoszewiczów, 1932)



Together with Stażewski and, at a distance, with Strzemiński and Kobra, who never trod the French capital, Brzękowski was among those instrumental from 1929 onward in building up the dazzling international collection of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź. Only two Hispanic painters joined that collection, however: Picasso, through a drawing donated by the writer and painter Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz; and Torres-García, erroneously identified in the museum’s modest first catalogue of 1932 as “Juan Torres-García” (fig. 3). The painting by the Uruguayan artist, one of the nineteen pictures in the collection that disappeared during the German occupation, was reproduced that

same year in the third issue of *Forma*, a magazine published in Łódź, as one of the illustrations for a dialogue between Strzemiński and his colleague Leon Chwistek; the painting then reappeared the following year in issue number 80-II of the Warsaw publication *Pologne littéraire*, where it illustrated Mieczysław Wallis's article on Polish museums.

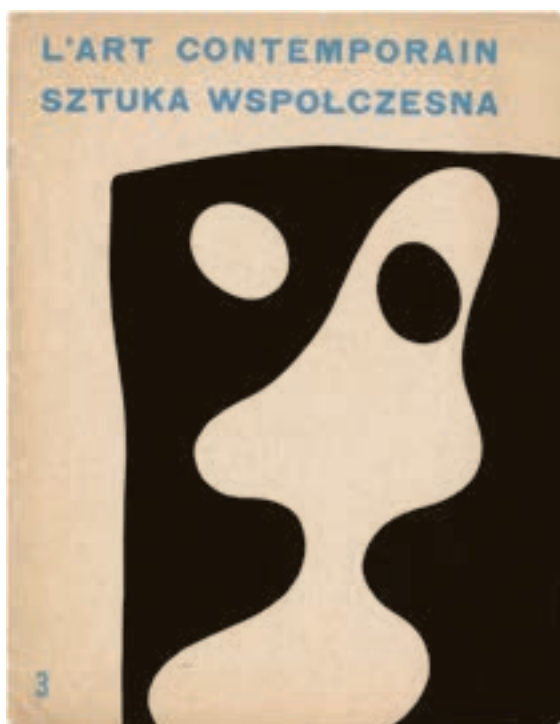
In the first issue of *Cercle et Carré*, the author the text "Vouloir construire" (Wanting to Construct) is given as "Juan Torres-García." The error in the Muzeum Sztuki catalogue was clearly induced by this earlier one, doubtless the responsibility of Seuphor, who was in charge of the magazine. In the second issue, a list of errata included a correction indicating that the author of the article was "Joachim Torrès-Garcia." Note the Gallicized spelling: "Joachim" instead of "Joaquín," "Torres" with an *accent grave* (also used by Francisco Bores, who thus became "Borès" in France), and "Garcia" without its acute accent. With the Uruguayan, Seuphor always got himself into a muddle. In *Peinture et avant-garde au seuil des années 30* (Painting and avant-garde on the threshold of the 30s; Paris: L'Âge d'Homme, 1984), her seminal book on *Cercle et Carré*, Marie-Aline Prat reproduces a letter typed on the magazine's letterhead in which Seuphor addresses his colleague as "Garcia-Torrès": three mistakes in two surnames.

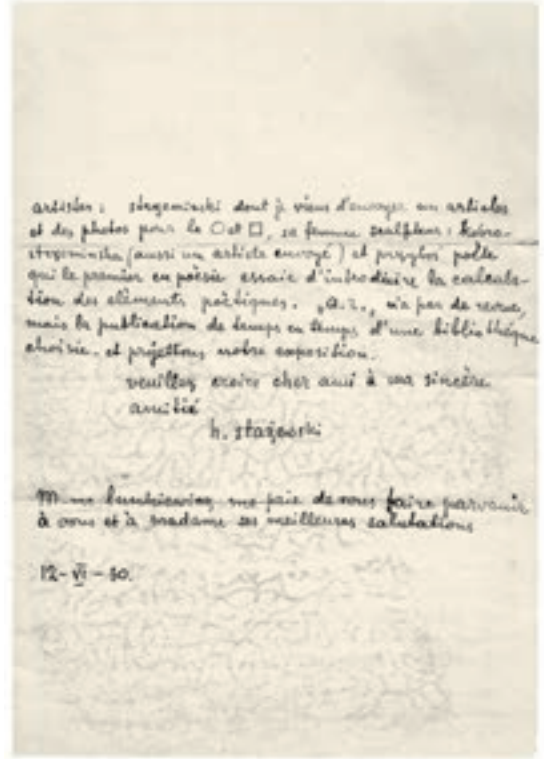
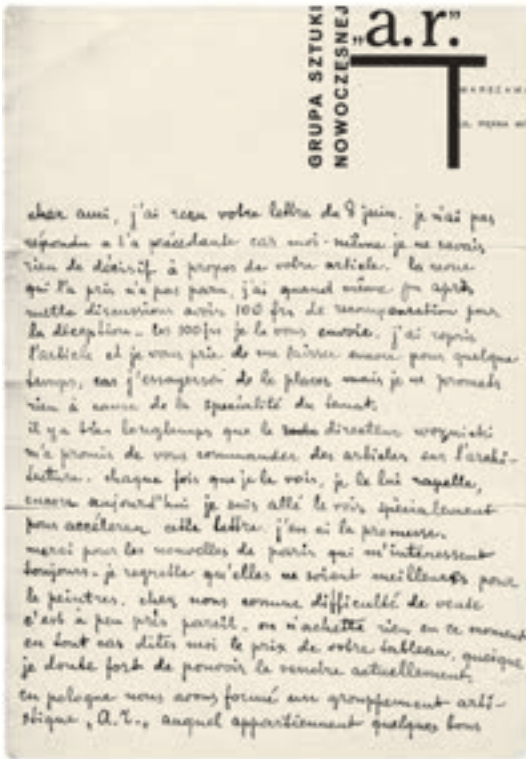
Brzękowski's artistic connections are bespoken not only by his key role in *L'art contemporain / Sztuka współczesna: Revue d'art international* (figs. 4 and 5) and his decisive action on behalf of the Muzeum Sztuki but also by the fact that some of his books, in both Polish and French, were illustrated by Sonia Delaunay, Max Ernst, Léger, and Arp (who also did the covers for the second and third issues of *L'art contemporain*, and to whom Brzękowski dedicated a short monograph published in 1936 in Łódź by a.r.). Strzemiński should also be added to this list, as he was responsible for the layout of both the monograph on Arp and the two volumes of poetry and the book of essays also published by a.r.

Stażewski is also present in the pages of *Cercle et Carré*. A short untitled statement of his appeared in the first issue, in the same group of texts as Brzękowski's. In the second issue, one of his pictures is reproduced in Vantongerloo's article "Plastique d'art (S=L2V=L3)." Ángel Kalenberg owns letter Stażewski wrote to Torres-García on June 12, 1930, in Warsaw, on notepaper with the a.r. group letterhead, which had just been designed by Strzemiński (fig. 6). In the letter, Stażewski informs his correspondent that he has been unable to secure the publication of an article entrusted to him in a magazine (he does not name it, but we know it was *Architektura i budownictwo* [1925–1939], a journal directed by Stanisław Woźniecki and to which van Doesburg contributed). He nevertheless forwards one hundred francs as payment for the article. He also tells Torres-García the publication in question would be interested to receive articles on architecture from him, announces the creation of the a.r. group, and informs

FIG. 4: Jan Brzękowski and Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, eds., *L'art contemporain / Sztuka współczesna: Revue d'art international*, no. 2 (1930)

FIG. 5: Jan Brzękowski and Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, eds., *L'art contemporain / Sztuka współczesna: Revue d'art international*, no. 3 (1930)





him of the dispatch of texts by Strzemiński and Kobra for *Cercle et Carré*, texts that were never published because the last issue of the magazine appeared precisely in June of that year.

The final issue of *Cercle et Carré* contains an enthusiastic review of the appearance of the second issue of the Warsaw journal *Praesens*. Torres-García also alludes to it in a letter to Seuphor of June 25, 1930. In the context of the differences that brought the adventure to an end, he frankly tells Seuphor that he finds *Praesens* too heavily oriented toward architecture and that he holds the same opinion of *Cercle et Carré*. The letter makes for curious reading. Presumably it was written before Torres-García received Stażewski's request on Woźniecki's behalf for articles on precisely that subject.

In *Cercle et Carré's* only exhibition, held in April 1930 at the Galerie 23 (located at that number on Rue de la Boétie), most of the geometrists in Paris took part. The exceptions were van Doesburg and the four others (Otto Gustaf Carlund, Hélión, Léon Tutundjian, and Marcel Wantz) who had joined together for the sole issue of van Doesburg's magazine *Art concret* (1930), which contains a reproduction of a work by a sixth painter (and occasional filmmaker), the enigmatic Swiss Walmar Shwab. The *Cercle et Carré* show included work by four Polish

FIG. 6: Jan Brzękowski
to Joaquín Torres-García,
Warsaw, dated June 12, 1930

painters: Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, Nechama Szmuszkowicz, Stażewski, and Wanda Wol-ska, who was to die in tragic circumstances in Cannes in 1933. Besides Torres-García himself (whose children Augusto, Ifigenia, and Olimpia had exhibited work at the same gallery a month earlier, with a catalogue whose prologue was written by Seuphor), three other Hispanic artists were featured. One was the Catalan Daura, an uneven painter who, nevertheless, had designed the group's anagram and painted some truly splendid pictures. The other two, already participants in the Latin American collective exhibition at the Galerie Źak, were the Dominican painter Colson and the Mexican stridentist sculptor Cueto, who was the nephew of María Blanchard, and who was highly regarded by Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Cueto exhibited two of his characteristic masks and two sculptures, one of which, carved in Reims stone and entitled *Napoleon* is currently in the collection of the Museo Reina Sofía, as is one of the pictures shown by Léger, *Peinture murale* (Mural Painting, 1924). Cueto also made the loudspeaker mask worn by Seuphor in his joint recital with Luigi Russolo, given on the day of the exhibition's closure. Torres-García's presence in Barcelona in the previous decade had coincided with another of the participants in the collective show, Charchoune, since both had exhibited at the pioneering Galeries Dal-mau. At Torres-García's request, the virtually penniless Russian was exempted from the fee for taking part in the collective exhibition, and the same courtesy was extended to Colson.

Another constructivist association with its epicenter in Paris was the ecumenical *Abstraction-Création* (1931–1936), which published five issues of an annual magazine of the same name. This demonstrates that the divisions formed during the days of *Cercle et Carré* and *Art Concret*

had been overcome. Among the artists of different nationalities who appeared in the magazine, two were Spaniards: the veteran Julio González and Fernández. Picasso's name should perhaps be added, too, since one of his pictures is reproduced in the fourth issue. The Hispanic contingent in *Abstraction-Création* was completed by the Italo-Argentines Del Prete (another participant in the Latin American collective show at the Galerie Żak) and Lucio Fontana, as well as the Chilean Luis Vargas Rosas. The Polish contingent comprised Strzemiński, Kopro, and Stażewski. The strong influence of Miró is evident in many of the works reproduced in *Abstraction-Création*. This influence is often combined with that of Arp. Together, they were the two finest representatives of what was then called "biomorphism," better known today thanks to the appearance of Guitemie Maldonado's *Le cercle et l'amibe: Le biomorphisme dans l'art des années 1930* (The Circle and the Amoeba: Biomorphism in the Art of the 1930s) (Paris: INHA, 2006).

Brzękowski's pamphlet *Kilométrage de l'art contemporain* (Mileage of Contemporary Art; Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1931) achieved a wide circulation. With front and back covers by Arp, it presents Picasso and Miró along with several geometers from the Paris circle, including Torres-García and the Poles Grabowska-Chodasiewicz, Stażewski, Kopro, and Strzemiński. The pamphlet was translated into Spanish, though it did not appear in Spain as a separate volume but in two consecutive issues (the ninth and tenth, in the first case surprisingly omitting the names of the author and translator) of *Art* (1933–1934), a magazine published in Lleida (fig. 7). The translation was the work of Manuel Viola, the future painter and member of El Paso, who then signed under the name of José Viola Gamón. He published poems and articles in *Art* on a variety of subjects, such as the Ballets Russes, the "Groupe des Six," Federico García Lorca, surrealist painting, and sculpture (offering harsh criticism of Arp and his exegete, the "accommodating" Torres-García), as well as drafts from his own book, "Oniro," which remained unpublished. The magazine, one of the most modern in Spain at that time, was directed by the graphic artist Enric Crous i Vidal, who, like Viola, was later exiled in France. *Art*, in common with other publications of the time, tended to slice through red tape, so the translation was probably unauthorized. Brzękowski makes no mention of it in his memoirs. Had he seen the pages, however, he would surely have protested the illustrations accompanying his text. Images he mentions by Henri Matisse, Léger, and Kurt Seligmann (or at least images consistent with those he mentions) appear alongside others that are entirely unrelated, such as a picture by Tsuguharu Foujita, sculptures by Chana Orloff and Emiliano Barral, and even a photographic portrait of Maurice Chevalier! In this and other issues of *Art*, reproductions, sometimes taken from Brzękowski's pamphlet, were published of works by Arp, Willi Baumeister, Herbert Bayer, Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, Wassily Kandinsky,



FIG. 7: Jan Brzękowski, “Quilometratge de la pintura contemporania” [Mileage of Contemporary Art], *Art: revista de les arts*, nos. 9 and 10 (1934)



Léger, Seligmann, Torres-García, and Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart.

In the last issue of *Art*, Crous i Vidal hailed the appearance of an even more important magazine belonging to the same ecosystem, the same galaxy. *Gaceta de Arte* (1932–1936), published in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, was directed by Eduardo Westerdahl, the driving force behind ADLAN-Tenerife and one of the people with the best international connections in the Spanish art scene of the time. In the final issue, number 38, which appeared in the fateful month of June 1936, Westerdahl announces that the next issue will be dedicated to abstract art; its publication would be curtailed by the outbreak of the Civil War. The planned issue was to contain essays by Brzękowski, Ricardo Gullón,

Hélión, and Anatole Jakowski, as well as Domingo Pérez Minik and Westerdahl himself. Although some today still regard it as a surrealist magazine (owing, on the one hand, to the organization of the 1935 *Surrealist Exhibition* in Santa Cruz de Tenerife and the visit to the island of André Breton, Jacqueline Lamba, and Péret; and, on the other hand, to the publication in Tenerife of the second issue of the *Boletín internacional del surrealismo*), the fact is that *Gaceta de Arte* was linked above all to the Constructivist International. Its director had strong Germanic connections and had visited the Bauhaus and other European modernist centers in 1932. The pages of this tabloid publication, whose last two issues came out in a more conventional format, featured articles on Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Baumeister, Ángel Ferrant and his objects (now vanished), González, Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Moholy-Nagy, Ben Nicholson, Ozenfant, Torres-García, and Vordemberge-Gildewart (who, like Schwitters, was first spoken of in Spain by Ernesto Giménez Caballero, who relates his visit to the *Abstrakten* of Hanover and the Bauhaus in the German chapter of *Circuito imperial* [Imperial Tour, 1929]). Among the essayists were Will Grohmann, Jakowski, Franz Roh (well known in Hispanic circles for his book about the *Magical Realism*, which was translated into Spanish by Fernando Vela as *Realismo mágico* [1927]), and de Torre. When de Torre wrote about Torres-García and his Grupo de Arte Constructivo in Madrid, which was partly made up of surrealists including Alberto, Maruja Mallo, and Benjamín Palencia, he did so with firsthand knowledge, as he had corresponded with the Uruguayan since 1919—that is, since the years of vibrationism and ultraism. Also in June 1936, an *Exposición de arte contemporáneo* (Exhibition of contemporary art) was held in Tenerife, and a modest catalogue brought out with typography inspired by the Bauhaus and Jan Tschichold. Alongside surrealist works, a good deal of geometry was seen at the exhibition, much of it in the line of *Abstraction-Création* (Fernández included). Also appearing in *Gaceta de Arte* are the principal functionalist architects of the interwar years, including the Spaniards of GATEPAC, whose journal, *A.C.* (1931–1937), contains references to *Praesens* and another Warsaw magazine dedicated solely to architecture, *Dom osiedle mieszkanie* (1929–1939), as well as a photograph of an interior by Helena Syrkus and Szymon Syrkus. This is unsurprising when one recalls Josep Lluís Sert's statement, "The Polish group was always one of the best, one of the most active and dynamic within the CIAM." *Gaceta de Arte* moreover published articles on the new photography (skillfully practiced by Westerdahl himself), on Tschichold's battle on behalf of the new typography, on *Abstraction-Création*, and on the exhibition *Thèse / Antithèse / Synthèse* (1935) held at the Kunstmuseum in Lucerne, with work by Fernández, González, Juan Gris (posthumously), Miró, and Picasso among others. The magazine even announced a trip to Arp and Taeuber-Arp's island, although this never took place.

The layout of *Gaceta de Arte*, the work of its versatile director, reflected the influence of new German typography, especially Tschichold. In the review section of issue number 37, a monographic issue on Picasso with a cover as Tschicholdian as the exhibition catalogue mentioned before, Westerdahl heaped praise on what was then the German's latest book, *Typographische Gestaltung* (Typographic design, 1935), the continuation of his classic *Die neue Typographie* (The New Typography, 1928). A Polish connection is found in the 1928 book's mention of the work of Mieczysław Szczuka, then recently deceased, while his second book stresses the enormous importance of Strzemiński, with whom Tschichold corresponded closely. Strzemiński took care of every aspect of the publication in Łódź in 1938 of *Druk nowoczesny*, the Polish version of the 1935 volume.

During that period, Tschichold and Roh's *Foto Auge* (1929), which had been reviewed in its day by Strzemiński for the seventh issue of *Europa*, was regarded by Westerdahl, who cites it in the note on the typographer's new publication, as nothing short of a bible. One reason, he later recalled in his "Pequeña historia inédita de *Gaceta de Arte*" [Short Unpublished History of *Gaceta de Arte*; *Fablas*, no. 68, December 1976), is the inclusion in the index of the addresses of the contributing authors, which gave him a list of international contacts he describes as a genuine "mine." The list proved of enormous use to him in his calculated strategies to approach the main modernist centers of Europe. The peculiar interrelation between the group in the Canaries, the Constructivist International, and the Surrealist one is illustrated by the fact that the cover for Westerdahl's 1935 monograph on Baumeister is the first decalcomania by Domínguez. The image startled the German



artist, who was unable to accept the cover as suitable for a monographic issue on his work. Baumeister designed the red, pink, and black cover of the June 1936 final issue, number 38. This issue was built on two pillars. The first was Miró, presented by Westerdahl with the accompaniment of a few select quotations, including one by Huidobro. The other was Kandinsky, presented by Grohmann. The end of the issue includes a reference to the three *pochoirs* by Héliou, Kandinsky, and Miró that had just been published by ADLAN-Barcelona. These *pochoirs*, or stenciled designs, recall the two by Miró—one on the cover and the other inside—published for the special Christmas 1934 issue on modern art of the deluxe Barcelona magazine *Dàci i dallà* (1918–1936), edited by Joan Prats (ADLAN) and Sert (GATEPAC). Inside are contributions by people from *Abstraction-Création*, such as Fernández (who was also an assiduous collaborator with A.C.) and Jakowski, together with images of work by Arp, Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dalí, van Doesburg, Marcel Duchamp, Ernst, Ferrant, Alberto Giacometti, González, Man Ray, Mondrian, Francis Picabia, and Gino Severini. The issue also includes references to the popular architecture of Ibiza, along with examples of the international style, among them another chalet by the Syrkuses. After the Civil War and World War II, this husband-and-wife team became close to Manuel Sánchez Arcas in his Polish exile, which began in 1946. The three participated actively in the reconstruction of Warsaw and in the Wrocław Peace Conference of 1948. One of the attendees was Picasso, who had also been to Warsaw and Krakow, and was hosted during the conference by Sánchez Arcas.

One last Hispano-Polish reference in this history of parallels—which, despite being numerous, ultimately failed to congeal because

no dialogues were generated or projects shared—is the coincidence of various names among the signatories of the *Manifeste dimensionniste* (Dimensionist Manifesto) (fig. 8), which deals with the fourth dimension and the dialogue, in space, between the art of Kobra, two Spaniards (Fernández and Miró), and a Chilean, naturally none other than the ubiquitous Huidobro, who was close in those years to Arp and Miró. The manifesto was entirely drawn up in Paris, in 1936, by Charles Sirato—that is, the Hungarian poet Tamkó Sirató Károly. The complete list of its adherents forms an epochal snapshot of a certain experimental Europe with its epicenter in Paris, though one suspects some of the signatories had only the vaguest notion of the true purposes of the Hungarian, who disappeared from Paris later that year. In addition to Kobra, Fernández, Miró, and Huidobro, other names appended to the manifesto are Pierre Albert-Birot, Arp, Camille Bryen, Alexander Calder, the Delaunays, César Domela, Duchamp, David Kakabadzé, Kandinsky, Frederick Kann, Ervand Kotchar, Moholy-Nagy, Nina Negri, Nicholson, Mario Nissim, António Pedro, Picabia, Enrico Prampolini, Anton Prinner, Siri Rathsman, and Taeuber-Arp, among others. Although this adventure seems not to have been echoed in Spain, a curious pamphlet appeared in neighboring Portugal: Dutra Faria's *De Marinetti aos dimensionistas* (From Marinetti to the Dimensionists; Lisbon: Edições Acção, 1936), the text of a lecture given on June 20, 1936, at the *I Exposição dos artistas modernos independentes*, with Pedro's translation of the manifesto reproduced as an appendix. Faria provides some information from his compatriot; for example, of those who were closest to Sirato: Kotchar, Prinner, and Pedro himself. That dimensionism should have drifted in this way over to Portugal is curious given the personality of the lecturer, who was successively an integralist, a National-Syndicalist, and a Salazarist and became one of the stalwarts of the Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional (National Secretariat of Propaganda), directed by the former avant-garde artist António Ferro.

In *El manifesto dimensionista 1936* (Oviedo: Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias, 2003), Alfonso Palacio, the principal expert on the work of fellow Asturian Fernández, analyzes the brief and ultimately abortive history of dimensionism and its predecessors, two one-person isms, glogloism and planism, invented in Budapest by the author of the manifesto. Planism had a precedent, of which the Hungarian was doubtless unaware, in the Spaniard Celso Lagar, another of the artists Torres-García coincided with at Dalmau. Palacio lists three editions of the manifesto and provides details on each. The one he reproduces in facsimile appeared as a supplement to a Paris magazine, *N + 1*, that was never published, and which names José Corti, a bookseller and publisher close to the surrealists, as its depository. Another facsimile edition of the same version of the manifesto has since been published in Hungary: *Dimenzionista Manifestsztum* (Budapest:

MANIFESTE DIMENSIONNISTE

Pris : 1 D. 50

ch. sirato

Librairie José Corti
4, rue de Clugny, Paris 8^e

Le dimensionnisme est un mouvement général des arts, commencé inconsciemment par le cubisme et le futurisme, — élaboré et développé depuis continuellement par tous les peuples de la civilisation occidentale.

Aujourd'hui l'essence et la théorie de ce grand mouvement éclatent avec une évidence absolue.

A l'origine du dimensionnisme se situent également les nouvelles idées d'espace-temps de l'esprit européen (répandues plus particulièrement par les théories d'Einstein) — ainsi que les récentes données techniques de notre époque.

Le besoin absolu d'évaluer — instinct irréductible — qui fait que les formes mortes et les essences épurées sont devenues la proie des seuls dilettantes, oblige les avant-gardes à marcher vers l'inconnu.

Nous sommes obligés d'admettre — contrairement à la thèse classique — que l'Espace et le Temps ne sont plus des catégories différentes, mais suivant la conception non-euclidienne : des dimensions cohérentes, et ainsi toutes les anciennes limites et frontières des arts disparaissent.

Cette nouvelle idéologie a provoqué un véritable séisme et ensuite un glissement de terrain dans le système conventionnel des arts. L'ensemble de ces phénomènes, nous le désignons par le terme : « DIMENSIONNISME », / Tendance ou Principe du Dimensionnisme. Formule : « N+1 », (Formule découverte dans la théorie du Planisme et généralisée ensuite, en réduisant sur une loi commune les manifestations apparemment les plus chaotiques et inexplicables de notre époque d'art.)

ANIMÉS PAR UNE NOUVELLE CONCEPTION DU MONDE, LES ARTS, DANS UNE FERMENTATION COLLECTIVE (Intéropénétration des Arts) SE SONT MIS EN MOUVEMENT

ET CHACUN D'EUX A ÉVOLUÉ AVEC UNE DIMENSION NOUVELLE. CHACUN D'EUX A TROUVÉ UNE FORME D'EXPRESSION INHÉRENTE À LA DIMENSION SUPPLÉMENTAIRE, OBJECTIVANT LES LOURDES CONSÉQUENCES SPIRITUELLES DE CE CHANGEMENT FONDAMENTAL.

Ainsi la tendance dimensionniste a entraîné :

I. — la Littérature à sortir de la ligne et à passer dans le plan.

Calligrammes, Typogrammes,
(préplanisme)

Planisme.
Poèmes Électriques.

II. — la Peinture à quitter le plan et à occuper l'espace.

Peinture dans l'espace

« Konstruktivism »
Constructions Spatiales.
Compositions Poly-matérielles.

III. — la Sculpture à abandonner l'espace fermé, immobile et mort, c'est-à-dire l'espace à trois dimensions d'Euclide, — pour servir à l'expression artistique l'espace à quatre dimensions de Minkovsky.

D'abord la sculpture « pleine » (sculpture classique) s'éventre et en introduisant en elle-même le manque sculpté et calculé de l'espace intérieur — et puis le mouvement — se transforme en :

Sculpture Creuse,
Sculpture Ouverte,
Sculpture Mobile,
Objets Mobiles.

Ensuite doit venir la création
d'un art absolument nouveau:
L'Art Cosmique.

(Vaporisation de la Sculpture, Théâtre Synco-Sens dimensionnisme précoïnes). La conquête totale par l'art de l'espace à quatre dimensions / un « Vacuum Artis » jusqu'ici / : La matière rigide est abolie et remplacée par les matériaux gasifiés. L'homme au lieu de regarder des objets d'art, devient lui-même le centre et le sujet de la création et la création consiste en des effets sensoriels dirigés dans un espace cosmique fermé.

Voilà dans son texte le plus restreint le principe du dimensionnisme. Dédicatif vers le passé. Inductif vers le futur. Vivant pour le présent.

BEN NICHOLSON (Londres).
ALEXANDRE CALDER (New-York).
VINCENT HUIDOBRO (Santiago du Chili).
KAKABADZE (Tiflis).
KOBBO (Varsovie).
JOAN MIRO (Barcelone).
LADISLAS MOHOLY-NAGY (Londres).
ANTONIO PEDRO (Libonne).

HANS ARP - PIERRE ALBERT-BIROU - CAMILLE
BRYEN - ROBERT DELAUNAY - CESAR DOMELA -
MARCEL DUCHAMP - WASSILY KANDINSKY -
FREDERICK KANN - ERKANO KOTCHAR - NINA
NEGRÉ - MARIO NISSIM - FRANCIS PICABIA -
ENRICO PRAMPOLINI - FRINNER - SIRI RATHS-
MAN - CHARLES SIRATO - SONIA DELAUNAY -
TAUBER-ARP.

FIG. 8: Charles Sirato, *Manifeste dimensioniste* [Dimensionist Manifesto], detail, first page, 1936. Reproduction of the copy that was published in *La revue N+1*, 1936

Artpool; Magyar Műhely Kiadó, 2010), edited by Júlia Klaniczay and with an epilogue by László L. Simon.

The international dimensionist exhibition, due to be held in the autumn of 1936, never took place. The exhibition was to feature work by the signatories of the manifesto, but the list of names on which dimensionism hoped to establish itself was further broadened to include the likes of John Ferren, Gabo, González, Lipchitz, the Pole Louis Marcoussis, Roderick F. Mead, Pevsner, and Picasso. Literary contributions were expected from Bollinger, Jan van Heeckeren, and Jacques-Henri Lévesque.

To one side: Picasso, Miró, Fernández, and, above all, González; to the other: Kobro. Together they were to participate in a collective exhibition of a school that also wanted to include Huidobro but barely managed to exist outside the imagination of a wandering Hungarian in the Paris of 1936: fiction meets history to add one more moment to this sequence of parallel Hispanic and Polish stories.



A Room with the Artworks from the International Collection of Modern Art, 1932

LIST OF WORKS

JEAN HÉLION

Composition [Composition], 1930

Oil on canvas

50 x 50 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/22

p. 142

VILMOS HUSZÁR

Composition [Composition], 1924

Tempera and oil on plywood

30 x 40 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/34

pp. 148–149

Composition–Figure humaine

[Composition–The Human

Figure], 1926

Oil on canvas

61 x 54 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/35

p. 143

KATARZYNA KOBRO

ToS 75 – Stuktura [Structure – ToS 75], 1920–1921

Black and White photograph (exhibition print)

Original artwork is lost, photograph from:

Kobro Katarzyna and Strzemiński Władysław, *Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego* [Composition of Space: Calculations of Space–Time Rhythm] (Łódź: Biblioteka “a.r.” [1931]), vol. 2, fig. 14

Scientific Documentation

Department, Muzeum Sztuki,

Łódź

p. 110

Konstrukcja wisząca (1)

[Suspended Construction (1)],

1921/1972

Reconstruction: Bolesław Utkin (design and technical realization)

Epoxy resin, fiberglass, wood, metal

20 x 40 x 40 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/156

p. 23

Konstrukcja wisząca (2)

[Suspended Construction (2)],

ca. 1921–1922/1971–1979

Reconstruction: Janusz Zagrodzki (design), Bolesław Utkin

(technical realization)

Metal

26.2 x 39.6 x 28.6 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/142

p. 113

Rzeźba abstrakcyjna (1) [Abstract

Sculpture (1)], 1924

Painted wood, metal, glass

72 x 17.5 x 15.5 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/6

p. 71

Rzeźba abstrakcyjna (2) [Abstract

Sculpture (2)], ca. 1924/1972

Reconstruction: Janusz Zagrodzki

(design); Bolesław Utkin

(technical realization)

Painted metal, wood

70 x 28 x 21 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/150

p. 72

Rzeźba abstrakcyjna (3) [Abstract

Sculpture (3)], ca. 1924/1976

Reconstruction: Bolesław Utkin

(design and technical realization)

Painted wood, metal, plastic,

glass

65 x 24 x 22 cm

Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/261

p. 73

Kompozycja abstrakcyjna [Abstract

Composition], ca. 1924–1926

Oil on glass

24 x 32 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/44

pp. 138–139

Kompozycja abstrakcyjna [Abstract

Composition], 1924–1926

Black and White photograph

(exhibition print)

Original artwork is lost,

photograph from:

Praesens, 1926, no. 1, p. 21

Scientific Documentation

Department, Muzeum Sztuki,

Łódź

p. 75 (left)

Kompozycja przestrzenna (1)

[Spatial Composition (1)], 1925

Painted steel

14 x 39.5 x 53.5 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/15

p. 78 (top)

Rzeźba przestrzenna (1) [Spatial

Sculpture (1)], 1925/1967

Partial reconstruction: Janusz

Zagrodzki (design), Bolesław

Utkin (technical realization)

Painted metal, wood

50 x 78 x 56 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/48

p. 76

Rzeźba przestrzenna (2) [Spatial

Sculpture (2)], 1926

Black and White photograph

(exhibition print)

Scientific Documentation

Department, Muzeum Sztuki,

Łódź

p. 75 (right, bottom)

Kompozycja przestrzenna (2)

[Spatial Composition (2)], 1928

Painted steel

50 x 50 x 50 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/16

p. 80

Kompozycja przestrzenna (3)

[Spatial Composition (3)], 1928

Painted steel

40 x 64 x 40 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/17

p. 78 (bottom)

Kompozycja przestrzenna (4)

[Spatial Composition (4)], 1929

Painted steel

40 x 64 x 40 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/18

p. 81

Kompozycja przestrzenna (5)

[Spatial Composition (5)], 1929

Painted steel

25 x 64 x 40 cm

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/19

p. 77

Typography design

Ziemniaki i Zmęczeni

[Potatoes and Tired], 1930

Print on paper (exhibition print)

Original reproduction Julian

- Przyboś, *Z ponad*, 1930
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Kompozycja przestrzenna*
(6) [Spatial Composition
(6)], 1931
Painted steel
64 x 25 x 15 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/1
p. 137
- Kompozycja przestrzenna*
(7) [Spatial Composition
(7)], ca. 1931/1973
Reconstruction: Janusz
Zagrodzki (design),
Barbara Brzezińska.
Lech Siemienowicz
(technical realization)
Painted steel
12 x 64 x 16 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/169
p. 79 (top)
- Akt (4)* [Nude (4)], ca.
1931–1933
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Original artwork is lost,
photograph from:
Forma, no. 2 (1934): 14
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Kompozycja przestrzenna*
(8) [Spatial Composition
(8)], ca. 1932
Painted steel
10 x 24 x 15 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/42
p. 79 (bottom)
- Projekt przedszkola*
funkcjonalnego [Design
for a Functional
Nursery], ca. 1932–1934
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Original artwork is
lost, photograph of the
maquette from:
Forma VIII, no. 5 (1936): 11
- Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Projekt przedszkola*
funkcjonalnego [Design
for a Functional
Nursery], ca. 1932–1934
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Original artwork is
lost, photograph of the
maquette from:
“Budowa: czasopismo
literacko-artystyczne”,
1936, no. 2, p. 5
University Library, Łódź
- Kompozycja przestrzenna*
(9) [Spatial Composition
(9)], ca. 1933
Painted metal
15.5 x 35 x 19 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/43
p. 52
- Odpowiedź na*
ankietę w [Reply to a
Questionnaire], 1933
Print on paper
(exhibition print)
Original from *Abstraction-
création art non figuratif*,
no. 2 (1933): 7
Reprint Arno Press, New
York, 1968
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Pejzaż morski* [Seascape],
ca. 1934–1935
Tempera on paper
20 x 24.8 cm
National Museum in
Krakow
Inv. no.: MNK III r.a.
14362
p. 86
- Akt (5)?* [Nude (5)?],
ca. 1933–1935
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Original work is lost,
print from:
Abstraction-création art
non figurative, no. 2
(1933): 27
Reprint Arno Press, New
York, 1968
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
p. 56
- Akt kobiety* [Female
Nude], 1948
Plaster
21.55 x 29 x 22 cm
Werner Jerke Collection,
Germany
p. 54 (right)
- Akt kobiety* [Female
Nude], 1948
Plaster
29 x 23.5 x 29 cm
Werner Jerke Collection,
Germany
p. 54 (left)
- Akt kobiety stojący*
[Standing Female
Nude], 1948
Plaster
48 x 11 x 12 cm (base: 3.4
x 18 x 18 cm)
Starmach Gallery,
Krakow
p. 55
- Akt (6)* [Nude (6)],
ca. 1948
Plaster
24.8 x 19 x 22.4 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/40
p. 53
- KATARZYNA KOBRO AND
WŁADYSŁAW STRZEMIŃSKI**
- Projekt konkursowy nr*
19 kiosku do sprzedaży
papierosów: Grupa II,
nagroda II (konkurs na
kioski, gabloty do handlu
ulicznego w Warszawie
ogłoszony przez Magistrat
m. st. Warszawy) [Project
no. 19 Presented to the
Contest for the Design
of Tobacco Stands:
Group II, 2nd Prize
(Competition for Stalls
and Street Vendors
Convened by the City of
Warsaw)], 1928
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Original artwork is
lost, photograph of the
project from:
Architektura i
budownictwo, no. 8
(1928): 311, fig. 120
Library Warsaw
University of Technology
- Grupa Praesens, Wnętrze*
Pawilonu Ministerstwa
Skarbu [The Praesens
Group, Interiors of the
Ministry of State
Treasury], 1929
4 Black and White
photographs (exhibition
prints)
Original artwork is
lost, photograph of the
project from:
Architektura i
budownictwo, nos. 11–12
(1929): 66, fig. 121
Library Warsaw
University of Technology
- HENRYK STAŻEWSKI**
- Obraz abstrakcyjny II*
[Abstract Painting II],
ca. 1928–1929
Oil on canvas
63 x 76 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/45
p. 134
- Kompozycja*
[Composition],
ca. 1929–1930
Oil on canvas
73 x 54 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/41
p. 135
- Kompozycja fakturowa*
[Factural Composition],
ca. 1930–1931
Oil on canvas
70 x 80 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/40
p. 146

WŁADYSŁAW STRZEMIŃSKI

Орудия и продукты производства [Tools and Products of Industry], 1919–1920
Oil, cork, tinplate, metal, plaster, and canvas on wood
44.5 x 33 cm
The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg
Inv. no.: B 1665
p. 109

Kubizm—napięcia struktury materialnej [Cubism—Tensions of the Material Structure], 1919–1921
Oil, crumbled cork, canvas
22.5 x 17.5 cm
Inv. no.: MPW 1124
p. 69

Красная армия героически сражается на фронте. Красный тыл должен помочь красному фронту [The Red Army is Heroically Fighting at the Front. The Red Rear must Help the Red Front], 1920
Chromolithograph on paper
73 x 44.7 cm
National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg
Inv. no.: 218012

Устройте “неделю красного подарка” везде и всюду [Organise the “Red Donation Week” Everywhere], 1920–1921
Lithograph on paper
22.6 x 60.1 cm
Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art, Costakis Collection, Thessaloniki

Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь! Организация производств победа над капиталистическим строем [Proletarians of the world, Unite.

Organization of Production. Victory over the Capitalist System], 1920–1921
Lithograph on paper
17.5 x 45.5 cm
Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art, Costakis Collection, Thessaloniki

Projekt dworca kolejowego w Gdyni [Design for a New Railway Station in Gdynia], 1923/1978
Reconstruction: Janusz Zagrodzki (design), Ewa Zajęc (technical realization)
Oil and wood on canvas
60 x 60 x 65 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/275
p. 41

Cover design
Zwrotnica
no. 6 (1923)
Magazine (exhibition print)
Biblioteka Uniwersytecka UMK, Toruń

Kompozycja (konstrukcja) [Composition (Construction)], ca. 1923
Oil and wood on canvas
76 x 45.8 cm
Private collection
p. 70

Cover design
Władysław Strzemiński y Vytautas Kairiūkštis. *Katalog Wystawy Nowej Sztuki* [Catalogue of the New Art Exhibition]
Wilno: Lux, 1923
Exhibition catalogue
16.7 x 12.5 cm
Scientific Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Kompozycja typograficzna [Typographic Composition]
BLOK. Czasopismo awangardny artystycznej, no. 2 (1924)
Magazine

Scientific Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Cover design
Julian Przyboś. *Śruby. Poezje* [Screws: Poems]
Kraków: Zwrotnica, 1925
Book
23 x 18.3 cm
Scientific Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
p. 159 (bottom)

Cover design
Tadeusz Peiper. *Szósta! Szósta! Utwór teatralny w dwóch częściach* [The sixth! The sixth! A Play in 2 Parts]
Kraków: Zwrotnica, 1925
Book
22 x 17.5 cm
Scientific Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
p. 159 (top)

Kompozycja architektoniczna 1 [Architectural Composition 1], 1926
Oil on canvas
90 x 64 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/MI61
p. 29

Cover design
Julian Przyboś. *Oburącz. Poezje* [With Both Hands: Poems]
1926
Kraków: Zwrotnica, 1926
Book
23.5 x 16 cm
Scientific Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
p. 46 (left)

Tablica reklamowa “Zwrotnicy” – strony ogłoszeniowe [Advertising Board of “Zwrotnica” – Advertisement Pages], 1927
Letterpress print,

tempera, gouache, collage, paper, cardboard
70 x 98.5 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/37

Kompozycja architektoniczna 5b [Architectural Composition 5b], ca. 1928
Oil on canvas
96 x 60 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/167
p. 30

Kompozycja architektoniczna 6b [Architectural Composition 6b], 1928
Oil on canvas
96 x 60 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/172
p. 31

Unizm w malarstwie [Unism in Painting]
Warsaw: Biblioteka “Praesens,” 1928, vol. 3
Book
23 x 15 cm
Scientific Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
p. 27

Projekt willi dla Juliana Przybośia [Design for a Villa of Julian Przyboś], 1930
Gouache and pencil on paper
25.5 x 35.8 cm
Polish Modern Art Foundation in Warsaw
p. 83

Cover design
Julian Przyboś. *Z ponad* [From Top]
Cieszyn: Biblioteka “a.r.,” 1930, vol. 1
Book
21.1 x 19.1 cm
Scientific Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
p. 46 (right)

- Graphic design
Komunikat grupy "a.r."
[Bulletin of the "a.r."
Group], [1930]
Print on paper
31.5 x 23 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
p. 47 (bottom)
- Sztuka nowoczesna a
szkoły artystyczne. Plakat*
[Modern Art and Art
Schools. Poster], 1931
Print on paper
49 x 35,5 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/GR/1082
- Cover design
Katarzyna Kobro and
Władysław Strzemiński.
Kompozycja przestrzeni.
Obliczenia rytmu
czasoprzestrzennego
[Composition of Space:
Calculations of Space-
Time Rhythm]
Łódź: Biblioteka "a.r."
[1931], vol. 2
Book
23 x 15,5 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
p. 47 (top)
- Kompozycja unistyczna 12*
[Unist Composition 12],
1932
Oil on canvas
50 x 38 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/151
p. 33 (top)
- Graphic design
Drukarstwo nowoczesne.
Katalog wystawy
[Modern Printing:
Exhibition Catalogue]
Łódź: Instytut
Propagandy Sztuki, 1932
Exhibition catalogue
29 x 21,5 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Graphic design
Komunikat grupy "a.r."
2 [Bulletin of the "a.r."
Group: 2], ca. 1932
Print on paper
31.5 x 23 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Cover design
Międzynarodowa
Kolekcja Sztuki
Nowoczesnej. katalog nr 2
[International Collection
of Modern Art: Catalogue
no. 2]
Łódź: Miejskie Muzeum
Historii i Sztuki im. J. i K.
Bartoszewiczów w Łodzi,
1932
Exhibition catalogue
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Cover design
Przyboś Julian. *W głąb*
las. Poezje [Into the
Forest: Poems]
Cieszyn: biblioteka "a.r."
1932, vol. 3
Book
21,1 x 17,2 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Pejzaż morski w deszczu*
[Seascape in Rain], July
24, 1933
Tempera on cardboard
20 x 26 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/137
p. 50
- Kompozycja unistyczna*
13 [Unist Composition
13], 1934
Oil on canvas
50 x 50 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/150
p. 34
- Kompozycja unistyczna 14*
[Unist Composition 14],
1934
- Oil on canvas
50 x 50 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/149
p. 33 (bottom)
- Pejzaż morski* [Seascape],
July 2, 1934
Tempera on cardboard
21 x 27 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/132
p. 51
- Pejzaż morski deszczowy*
[Raining Seascape], July
25, 1934
Tempera on cardboard
20 x 25 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/130
p. 87
- Pejzaż morski* [Seascape],
August 5, 1934
Tempera on cardboard
20 x 25 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/136
pp. 88–89
- Pejzaż morski* [Seascape],
August 13, 1934
Tempera on cardboard
20 x 25 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/131
- Cover design
Jan Brzękowski, Leon
Chwistek, Przeclaw
Smolik y Władysław
Strzemiński
O sztuce nowoczesnej
[About the Modern Art]
Łódź: Wyd. Tow.
Bibliofilów, 1934
Book
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Kompozycja*
[Composition], ca. 1934
Oil on canvas
60,5 x 44 cm
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart,
Alemania
Inv. no.: LNA 1072
p. 90
- Cover design
Zaciśnięte dookoła ust.
Poezje [Tight Around the
Lips: Poems]
Cieszyn: biblioteka "a.r."
1936, vol. 7
21 x 17 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Cover design and
lithograph
Malewicz Kazimierz
1875–1925
Łódź, 1936
Book
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Mężczyzna i kobieta, z*
cyklu: Białorus Zachodnia
[Man and Woman, from
the series: West], 1939
Pencil on paper
30 x 38 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/54/4
p. 91 (top)
- Bez tytułu 2, z cyklu:*
Wojna domom [Untitled
2, from the series: War
Against Homes], 1941
Pencil on paper
29,8 x 38 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/56/2
- Bez tytułu, z cyklu: Tanie*
jak błoto II [Untitled,
from the series: Cheap
as Mud II], 1944
Pencil on paper
29,7 x 41,7 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/520/2
- Bez tytułu, z cyklu: Tanie*
jak błoto II [Untitled,
from the series: Cheap
as Mud II], 1944
Pencil on paper
29,5 x 41,7 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/520/3

Bez tytułu, z cyklu: *Tanie jak błoto* [Untitled, from the series: Cheap as Mud], 1944
Pencil on paper
29,4 x 41,8 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/59/1

Bez tytułu 2, z cyklu: *Tanie jak błoto* [Untitled 2, from the series: Cheap as Mud], 1944
Pencil on paper
29 x 42 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/59/2
p. 91 (bottom)

Bez tytułu, z cyklu: *Ręce, które nie z nami* [Untitled, from the series: Hands Which Are Not with Us], 1945
Pencil on paper
38 x 30 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/60/1

Bez tytułu, z cyklu: *Ręce, które nie z nami* [Untitled, from the series: Hands Which Are Not with Us], 1945
Pencil on paper
42 x 30 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/60/2

Śladem istnienia stóp, które wydeptały, z cyklu: *Moim przyjaciółom Żydom* [Following the Existence of Feet Which Tread a Path, from the series: To My Friends the Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera, and pencil on paper
33 x 23 cm
Yad Vashem Collection, Jerusalem. Donated by the artist, courtesy of his student Judyta Sobel-Cuker
74/1
p. 60 (bottom, left)

Lepka plama zbrodni, z cyklu: *Moim przyjaciółom*

Żydom [The Sticky Spot of Crime, from the series: To My Friends the Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera, and pencil on paper
33 x 23 cm
Yad Vashem Collection, Jerusalem. Donated by the artist, courtesy of his student Judyta Sobel-Cuker
74/4
p. 59 (right)

Oskarżam zbrodnię Kaina i grzech Chama, z cyklu: *Moim przyjaciółom Żydom* [I Accuse the Crime of Cain and the Sin of Ham, from the series: To My Friends the Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera, and pencil on paper
30 x 21 cm
Yad Vashem Collection, Jerusalem. Donated by the artist, courtesy of his student Judyta Sobel-Cuker
74/5
p. 61 (top, right)

Piszczelami napięte żyły, z cyklu: *Moim przyjaciółom Żydom* [Veins Strung Taut by Shinbones, from the series: To My Friends the Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera, and pencil on paper
30 x 21 cm
Yad Vashem Collection, Jerusalem. Donated by the artist, courtesy of his student Judyta Sobel-Cuker
74/7
p. 60 (bottom, right)

Projekt tkaniny drukowanej [Design for a Printed Textile], 1946
Tempera, ink and pencil on cardboard
38.5 x 52.2 cm
National Museum in Warsaw
Inv. no.: wzrt.479/8
p. 92 (bottom)

Projekt tkaniny odzieżowej drukowanej [Design for a Printed Textile], 1946
Tempaera on cardboard
35.2 x 34 cm
National Museum in Warsaw
Inv. no.: wzrt.479/6
p. 93

Projekt tkaniny odzieżowej drukowanej [Design for a Printed Textile], ca. 1946
Tempera, ink and pencil on cardboard
38.5 x 52.2 cm
National Museum in Warsaw
Inv. no.: wzrt.479/5
p. 94

Projekt lady wystawienniczej z cyklu *Projekty wystawiennicze* [Design for an Exhibition Counter, from the series: design for exhibition arrangements], ca. 1946–1948
Pencil and tempera on cardboard
26.2 x 41.7 cm (3)
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/1260/1; MS/SN/RYS/1260/2; MS/SN/RYS/1260/5

Łódź sfunkcjonalizowana [Functionalized Łódź]
Not dated typescript
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

Fotel. Mebel z zestawu do Sali Neoplastycznej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi [Chair: Furniture from a Set for the Neoplastic Room at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź], 1947–1948
Painted wood, plywood, and fabric
82 x 59 x 43 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SU/MEB/135
p. 152

Stół. Mebel z zestawu do Sali Neoplastycznej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi [Table: Furniture from a Set for the Neoplastic Room at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź], 1947–1948
Painted wood
80 x 60 x 45 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SU/MEB/134
p. 153

Krzesło. Mebel z zestawu do Sali Neoplastycznej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi [Armchair: Furniture from a Set for the Neoplastic Room at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź], 1947–1948
Painted wood, plywood, and fabric
56 x 55 x 55 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SU/MEB/142

Biurko [Desk], 1947–1948
Painted wood
69 x 127 x 77 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SU/MEB/242

Sala Neoplastyczna [Neoplastic Room], 1948/1960
Reconstruction:
Bolesław Utkin
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
pp. 127, 132–33

Rysunek do książki *Teoria widzenia* [Drawing for the book A Theory of Vision], 1947–1950
Pencil, ink and gouache on tracing paper stuck to cardboard
20 x 20 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/RYS/2168/45
p. 96 (top, right)

Rysunek do książki *Teoria widzenia* [Drawing for the book A Theory of Vision], 1947–1950
Ink on cardboard
14.9 x 21 cm

- Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/47
p. 97 (top, right)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
cardboard
14.9 x 21.2 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/49
p. 97 (top, left)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
19.9 x 19.8 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/51
p. 97 (center, right)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
19.9 x 20.8 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/52
p. 96 (center, right)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
18.1 x 19.5 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/57
p. 97 (center, center)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink on cardboard
21.1 x 14.9 cm
- Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/60
p. 97 (bottom, right)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
20 x 20 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/61
p. 96 (bottom, right)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
20 x 20 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/62
p. 97 (bottom, center)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
12.5 x 18.2 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/67
p. 97 (center, left)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
20 x 20 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/69
p. 96 (bottom, center)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
- tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
25.1 x 20 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/72
p. 97 (bottom, left)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
18.3 x 13.4 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/73
p. 96 (bottom, left)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink and pencil on
tracing paper stuck to
cardboard
19.8 x 20 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. No.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/77
p. 96 (center, left)
- Rysunek do książki
Teoria widzenia [Drawing
for the book *A Theory of
Vision*], 1947–1950
Ink on cardboard
22.2 x 26.8 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. No.: MS/SN/
RYS/2168/78
p. 96 (top, left)
- Kobieta w oknie* [Woman
in the Window], 1948
Oil on canvas
77 x 57 cm
Anna and Jerzy Starak
Collection
p. 99
- Projekt biurka* [Design for
a Desk], 1948
Tempera and pencil on
paper
55 x 42.7 cm
Piort Nowicki Collection,
courtesy of the Polish
Modern Art Foundation
in Warsaw
- Projekt kozetki* [Design
for a Settee], 1948
Tempera and pencil on
paper
29 x 50 cm
Piort Nowicki Collection,
courtesy of the Polish
Modern Art Foundation
in Warsaw
- Projekt łóżka* [Design for
a Bed], 1948
Tempera and pencil on
paper
32.5 x 55 cm
Piort Nowicki Collection,
courtesy of the Polish
Modern Art Foundation
in Warsaw
- Projekt stolika z
wysuwanyim blatem*
[Design for a Small Table
with Pull-out Leaf], 1948
Tempera and pencil on
paper
22.9 x 50 cm
Piort Nowicki Collection,
courtesy of the Polish
Modern Art Foundation
in Warsaw
- Projekt tkaniny odzieżowej
drukowanej* [Design for a
Printed Textile], 1948
Tempera on cardboard
44.5 x 35.2 cm
National Museum in
Warsaw
Inv. no.: t.479/2
p. 92 (top)
- Kompozycja przestrzenna
(1)* [Spatial composition
(1)], ca. 1948
Painted wood
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/20
pp. 150–151
- Kompozycja przestrzenna
(2)* [Spatial composition
(2)], ca. 1948
Painted wood
100.5 x 67 x 150 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/R/21
pp. 84–85
- Powidok światła. Kobieta
w oknie* [After-image of
Light: A Woman in the

- Window], ca. 1948
Oil on canvas
73 x 61 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/231
p. 100
- Powidok światła.*
Rudowłosa [After-image
of Light: Redhead], ca.
1949
Oil on canvas
82 x 65 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/232
p. 101
- Żniwiarki* [Women
Harvesting], 1950
Tempera on canvas
140 x 70 cm
Starmach Gallery,
Kraków
p. 66
- Tkacz* [Weaver], 1950
Color lithograph on
paper
44.8 x 42.7 cm
National Museum in
Warsaw
Inv. no.: Gr.W.3185
- Żniwa I* [Harvest I], 1950
Color lithograph on
paper
35.2 x 49.6 cm
National Museum in
Warsaw
Inv. no.: Gr.W.3184
- Żniwa III* [Harvest III],
1950
Color lithograph on
paper
31.6 x 47 cm
National Museum in
Warsaw
Inv. no.: Gr.W.3183
- SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP**
- Composition*
[Composition], 1930
Oil on canvas
52 x 42 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/ 28
p. 140
- Composition*
[Composition], 1931
- Oil and tempera on
canvas
55 x 46 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/18
p. 141
- THEO VAN DOESBURG**
- Contra-composition XV*
[Counter-Composition
XV], 1925
Oil on canvas
50 x 50 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/31
p. 147
- GEORGES VANTONGERLOO**
- Construction émanant
du triangle équilatéral*
[Derived from
Equilateral Triangle],
1921
Oil on board
48 x 55 cm
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
Inv. no.: MS/SN/M/29
pp. 144-145
- DOCUMENTATION**
- Katarzyna Kobro, Moscow,*
ca. 1918-1919
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Katarzyna Kobro on the
Gulf of Riga, Latvia, 1924*
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Blok & Kurier Bloku nr.
8-9. Red, 1924*
35 x 25 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
1/S.T/Dok/Spec/DDN
- Henryk Stażewski
Cover design
Praesens, no. 1 (1926-
1928)
Magazine
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Exhibition of Kazimir
Malevich in Polish Art:
Club in Polonia Hotel,
Warsaw, March, 1927*
2 Black and White
photographs (exhibition
prints)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Katarzyna Kobro y
Władysław Strzemiński at
Chałupy beach, August
15, 1928*
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Szymon Syrkus
Cover design
Praesens, no. 2 (1930)
Magazine
30.5 x 23.5 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Katarzyna Kobro,
Władysław Strzemiński
and Julian Przyboś,
ca. 1930-1931*
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
pp. 2-3 (detail)
- Władysław Strzemiński,
1932*
2 Black and White
photographs (exhibition
prints)
- Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- A Room with the Artworks
from the International
Collection of Modern Art,*
1932
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Photograph from
*Międzynarodowa
Kolekcja Sztuki
Nowocześniejszej. Katalog
nr 2* [International
Collection of Modern
Art: Catalogue no. 2]
Łódź: Miejskie Muzeum
Historii i Sztuki im. J.
i K. Bartoszewiczów w
Łodzi, 1932
Exhibition catalogue
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
pp. 15 (detail), 176
(detail)
- Modern Plastic Artists
Group Exhibition, 1933*
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
National Digital Archive,
Warsaw
- Karol Hiller
Cover design
Forma, no. 1 (1933); no. 2
(1934); no. 3 (1935);
no. 4 (1936); no. 5
(1937); no. 6 (1938)
6 Magazines
31 x 23.5 cm
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź
- Katarzyna Kobro with Her
Daughter, in Srebrzyńska
Street, Winter 1938/1939*
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź

Władysław Strzemiński,
Lena Kowalewicz, Halina
Ołomucka, and Jadwiga
Korejwo during a Painting
Session au plain air in
Nowa Ruda, 1947
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź

Władysław Strzemiński
with Students at the Film
School of Cinema, 1948
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź

Władysław Strzemiński at
Hospital, ca. 1951–52
Black and White
photograph (exhibition
print)
Scientific
Documentation
Department, Muzeum
Sztuki, Łódź

**OTHER ARTWORKS
REPRODUCED**

WŁADYSŁAW STRZEMIŃSKI

Натюрморт [Still Life],
1919
Oil, plaster, enamel on
plywood
38.2 x 26 cm
The State Russian
Museum, St. Petersburg
Inv. no.: B 1389
p. 106

*Wyciągane strunami nóg, z
cyklu: Moim przyjacielom
Żydom* [Stretchet by the
Strings of Legs, from the
series: To My Friends the
Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera,
and pencil on paper
30 x 21 cm
Yad Vashem Collection,
Jerusalem. Donated by
the artist, courtesy of his
student Judyta Sobel-
Cuker
74/2
p. 60 (top, right)

*Ruinami zburzonych
oczodołów. Kamieniami
jak głowy wybrukowano, z
cyklu: Moim przyjacielom
Żydom* [With the Ruins
of the Demolished Eye
Sockets. Paved with
Stones like Heads, from
the series: To My Friends
the Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera,
and pencil on paper

30 x 21 cm
Yad Vashem Collection,
Jerusalem. Donated by
the artist, courtesy of his
student Judyta Sobel-
Cuker
74/3
p. 61 (top, left)

*Przysięgnij pamięci ręk
(istnień, które nie z nami), z
cyklu: Moim przyjacielom
Żydom* [Vow and Oath
to the Memory of Hands
(Existences which are
not with us), from the
series: To My Friends the
Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera,
and pencil on paper
30 x 21.5 cm
Yad Vashem Collection,
Jerusalem. Donated by
the artist, courtesy of his
student Judyta Sobel-
Cuker
74/6
p. 61 (bottom, left)

*Czaszka ojca, z cyklu:
Moim przyjacielom
Żydom* [Father's Skull,
from the series: To My
Friends the Jews],
ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera,
and pencil on paper
30 x 23 cm
Yad Vashem Collection,
Jerusalem. Donated by
the artist, courtesy of his
student Judyta Sobel-
Cuker
74/8
p. 61 (bottom, right)

*Puste piszczele
krematoriów, z cyklu:
Moim przyjacielom Żydom*
[The Empty Shinbones
of the Crematoria, from
the series: To My Friends
the Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera,
and pencil on paper
33 x 23 cm
Yad Vashem Collection,
Jerusalem. Donated by
the artist, courtesy of his
student Judyta Sobel-
Cuker
74/9
p. 60 (top, left)

*Śladem istnienia, z cyklu:
Moim przyjacielom
Żydom* [Following the
Existence, from the
series: To My Friends the
Jews], ca. 1945
Collage, ink, tempera,
and pencil on paper
29.9 x 20.8 cm
National Museum in
Krakow
No. inv.: MNK III-r.a.-8115
p. 59 (left)

THEO VAN DOESBURG

*Construction de l'espace -
temps II* [Construction in
Space-Time II], 1924
Gouache, pencil and ink
on tracing paper
47 x 40.5 cm
Museo Thyssen-
Bornemisza, Madrid
No. inv.: 527 (1978.68)
p. 123

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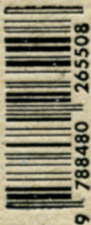
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