Sophie Taeuber-Arp

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SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP

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SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP

Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Munich, c. 1913

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CAROLYN LANCHNER

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

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This exhibition and catalog have been realized out of a conviction that the work of Sophie Taeuber-Arp is of such quality and international importance that it should be made known to a larger public than the relatively small group of artists, critics, and cognoscenti who have long been its admirers. It is our hope that this presentation will serve to expand its popular and critical appreciation. On behalf of the Trustees of The Museum of Modern Art, I wish to acknowledge a great debt of gratitude to all those whose support and assistance have made this project possible.

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Carolyn Lanchner

SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP: AN INTRODUCTION

FOR SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP, pictorial abstraction was not at the end of an exploration but at the beginning. In this she is set apart from most of her peers in the generation that pioneered the development of abstract language in painting. Most arrived at their mature styles between 1910 and 1920 through a progressive schematization of the forms of objective reality. Wassily Kandinsky's worry that color and form might not be "compositionally fitted for survival" was not hers.[1] It is partly owing to this untroubled acceptance of the innate expressive effectiveness of the means of painting that her work, even at its most severely geometric, exhibits a sense of freedom often startling in the context of its formal rigor.

The foregoing is not to suggest that Taeuber-Arp began making abstract work somehow removed from the fertile atmosphere of the second decade of this century. Quite the contrary, she had spent 1911 and 1913 as a student in an experimental workshop in the Munich of the Blaue Reiter epoch, when the impulse to abstraction was very much "in the air," and the early phases of her own career took place in Zurich between 1915 and 1920 at the very center of Dada activity in that city. That early on Taeuber-Arp had seen the work of Kandinsky, Robert Delaunay, and Paul Klee, among others, is much more probable than otherwise. All art reflects its time to some degree, and Taeuber-Arp's development of an abstract geometric style around 1915 is as much witness to this phenomenon as is the contemporaneous development of de Stijl in Holland and Suprematism and Constructivism in Russia.[2] But for Taeuber-Arp, the transition to an art without recognizable image apart from geometric form was less fraught with doubt than for her contemporaries, less consciously an extrapolation of Cubist vocabulary; and, because it was free of romanticist interpretations of the machine or nature, it was nonprogrammatic. As she did not come to see abstraction as an end in itself, she, like Klee, was able to work simultaneously with abstract and representational means.[3]

Taeuber-Arp did not sign or date her work until the last two years of her life, and she has left us very few writings, but we have the eloquent testimony of Jean Arp, with whom she collaborated closely in Zurich and whom she was to marry in 1922.[4] He recalled: "I met Sophie Taeuber in Zurich in 1915. Even then she already knew how to give direct and palpable shape to her inner reality. In those days this kind of art was called 'abstract art.' Now it is known as 'concrete art,' for nothing is more concrete than the psychic reality it expresses. Like music this art is tangible inner reality. . . . she was already dividing the surface of a watercolor into squares and rectangles which she juxtaposed horizontally and perpendicularly [Pl. 1]. She constructed her painting like a work of masonry. The colors are luminous, going from rawest yellow to deep red or . . . blue."[5]

Over the course of her career, Sophie Taeuber's work tended to evolve in groups, each characterized by a distinctive use of formal elements.[6] From approximately 1915 to 1920, the prevailing format was, as Arp notes, based on a horizontal-vertical sectioning, most often of a square or vertical-rectangular ground. Taeuber's use of this compositional structure probably had much less to do with an extrapolation from Cubism than with her training in textile techniques. She had specialized in textiles at the schools of applied arts in Saint Gallen and Hamburg, and was a Professor of Textile Design and Techniques at the School of Applied Arts in Zurich from 1916 until 1929. But this adaptation of the warp-and-woof structure of textile to painting was more than a simple transfer of craft to art; the craft became a source of discovery of relations between colors and forms, a wellspring of pictorial possibility. The need to justify abstract painting as revealed by the theosophy of Mondrian or the "higher intuition" of Malevich troubled Taeuber-Arp relatively little because of her conception, expressed in an article entitled "Remarks on the Instruction of Ornamental Design," that "the wish to produce beautiful things—when that wish is true and profound—falls together with [man's] striving for perfection."[7] Such an elevated view of the drive "to make beautiful" carries with it the most tenuous division between ornamentation and "high art," and the true believer can move in both realms without a "change in understanding"[8] or philosophy; it is a conception close to Mondrian's idea of art as "the union of the individual with the universal."[9] Remembering those Zurich years when Taeuber and he often worked together, Arp wrote: "We humbly tried to approach the pure radiance of reality. I would like to call these works the art of silence. It [the joint work] rejects the exterior world and turns toward stillness, inner being, and real-

ity.... We wanted our works to simplify and transmute the world and make it beautiful."[10]

The period of Zurich Dada was for Taeuber a time of extraordinary activity, and, we may assume, of youthful happiness and fulfillment. She had met Arp, her one great love and the companion of her life; she was finding herself as an artist; she was totally involved in the exciting and stimulating circle of the Cabaret Voltaire, where she often performed as a dancer; and her appointment as Professor at the School of Applied Arts gave her and Arp the means to support themselves. Hans Richter, a close friend, recalls: "During the Dada period she had a job teaching at the school of arts and crafts, as well as being a painter and a dancer. In all three capacities she was closely associated with Arp. The first things of hers I saw were embroideries by Arp[11] and later of her own designs. There were abstract drawings, extraordinary Dada heads of painted wood [Pls. 3–5] and tapestries, all of which could hold their own alongside the work of her male colleagues. She was Arp's discovery, just as he was hers, and in their unassuming way they played a part in every Dada event. I was engaged at that time in a search for the elements of a language of sign and image, and Sophie's work was always a stimulation to me. She had lectured at the Zurich museum of arts and crafts for years, and had by necessity acquired the skill of reducing the world of lines, surfaces, forms and colours to its simplest and most exact form.... Her preliminary sketches, especially, revealed the sensitive artistic endeavour which lay behind the extreme formal simplicity of her pictures....'"[12]

Out of a need to throw off the weight of past pictorial traditions and an idealism partially engendered by reflections on Taeuber's vertical-horizontal compositional structure, Jean Arp and Taeuber abjured working in oil between 1916 and 1918. Arp recalled: "The clear tranquillity of Sophie Taeuber's vertical and horizontal compositions influenced the diagonal, baroque dynamics of my abstract 'creations.'... The pictures she was doing at that time exercised a decisive influence on my work. Vertical movement of a clear life rising above everything, horizontality of repose extending into reflection; the essential elements of construction were here stripped of baroque proliferations. Sophie's work became a symbol for me of divine 'creation,' which men in their vanity have demolished and soiled. Sophie Taeuber and I resolved never to use oil colors again. We wanted to discard any reminder of oil painting, which seemed to us to belong to an arrogant, pretentious world.... During the years that we abstained from oil painting, we used in our works exclusively paper, cloth, embroidery, as spiritual exercises, as a discipline that allowed us to recapture painting in its original purity."[13]

When Taeuber did return to working in oil, it was to paint the major work of her early period, the triptych *Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Reciprocal Triangles* (1918), now in the Kunsthaus in Zurich (Pl. 15). Even as she returned to the use of oil, the urge to shake off the legacy of post-Renaissance art remained strong. Incorporated with rectangles in hues of blue, red, brown, and orange are others in diverse intensities of muted bronze-gold, the use of which, as Arp notes, had been repudiated since "the development of naturalistic painting."[14] Taeuber's use of gold as well as her choice of the triptych format constitute a homage to Byzantine and sacred medieval paintings, which in their clarity, flatness, frontality, use of symbolic color, and universal address were near to her own sensibility.

Imbued with an extraordinary serenity, *Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Reciprocal Triangles* has been likened to a "diagram of meditation" and compared with Mark Rothko's triptych for his chapel in Houston.[15] In its sensitive calibration of color and form, the triptych embodies Theo van Doesburg's idea of the "truly exact" work of art which "gives truth in the way of beauty... purely by the artistic means available for the purpose and becomes an independent, *artistically alive* (plastic) organism in which everything counterbalances everything else."[16] As in a gouache probably executed the year before (Pl. 1), the dark, relatively heavy planes of the edges are balanced by thinner bands of the complementaries, orange and blue holding the center. In the earlier gouache, however, the sectioning of ground and counterpointing of form yields more easily to analysis than in the triptych. A harmonically exquisite work, the gouache belongs wholly to Taeuber's first period and is more closely related to transpositions from textile design than is the triptych. Although it would be inaccurate to characterize Taeuber's intuitive arrangements of form as systematic, her early work is not as bold or individually quirky as it was to become.[17]

New in the triptych is the introduction of triangles. Their precariously poised vertexes articulate the overall balance of the composition, create a sense of movement within stasis, and carve the zones of neutral hue into unorthodox shapes that counterpoint in their forms the stimulation of the surrounding colors. The rhythmic play of elements in the triptych anticipates Taeuber's later work and, like it, probably owes much to her study of the dance.

During the Dada Zurich years, Taeuber combined her activities as artist and teacher with those of a dancer. By all accounts her performances at Dada

soirées were memorable.[18] Emmy Ball-Hennings remembers: "At the time I met her, she was in the prime of her youth, but she was already aware of the demands of life and was ripening her vocation as an artist. She was slim, of medium height; her way of walking and moving was of a beauty filled with grace. There was nothing stiff about her, nothing heavy. She was studying dancing at the Ecole Laban. ...I can still see Sophie Taeuber dancing at the Galerie Dada. There several dancers who went on to become famous, such as Mary Wigman, showed us their talent. But none of them left us with such a vivid impression as Sophie Taeuber. Hugo Ball, to whose poem 'La Caravane' she had once danced, was to write in his diary after many years: 'Ah, the days when Jean Arp would read us for the first time his poems, his "cloud-pumps," and Sophie Taeuber would dance between two Kandinsky paintings! Ah, the evenings of enthusiasm, bursting with invention, with plans for spectacles and exhibitions!' Just as one cannot describe music to someone who has not heard it himself, it is hard for me to give an idea of Sophie Taeuber's dancing. I saw in Sophie Taeuber a bird, a young lark, for example, lifting the sky as it took flight. The indescribable suppleness of her movements made you forget that her feet were keeping contact with the ground, all that remained was soaring and gliding....Many of us thought that Sophie Taeuber was a great dancer. She would certainly have had a brilliant career, and although when it came to her art she was modest to the point of shyness, she must nevertheless have had an idea of her gifts as a dancer. But how strong her love for painting must have been! She gave up dancing in order to devote herself exclusively to the plastic arts...."[19]

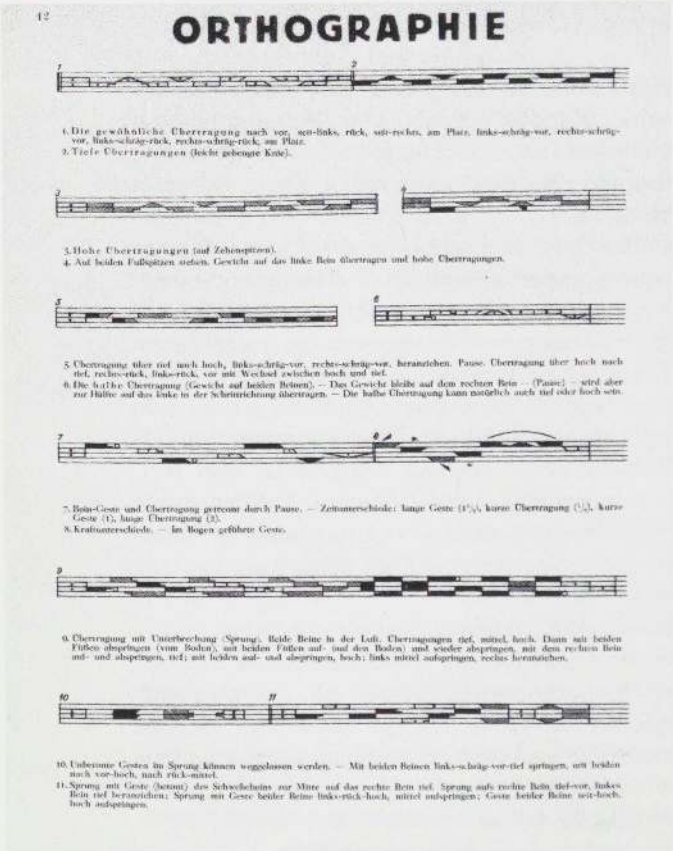


Fig. 1. Dance notations from Rudolf von Laban's *Schrifttanz* (Script Dancing), published Vienna-Leipzig, 1928

The impulse to integrate life and art was very strong in Taeuber, and her transmutation of the rhythmic pattern of dance to the two-dimensional surface would have been completely natural, especially as notations for the dance (Fig. 1) can resemble the patterns of abstract painting.[20] Her gift and feeling for dancing were, to judge by the accounts of Hennings, Ball, Richter, Tristan Tzara, and others, high and intense and were to play a role in her art long after she had given up its actual practice. Ludmila Vachtova's description of Taeuber's experience as a student in the Laban studio is relevant to the development of the artist's work: "[She] learned dance with Laban not as chance improvisation but as a creative game with variable rules that unfolds in time and space as a unique, moving, ephemeral sculpture."[21]

The last full year of Dada activity in Zurich was 1919, and towards the close of this period—between 1918 and 1920—Taeuber made a series of four heads in turned, polychromed wood, most of which are Dada portraits of Arp (Pls. 3–5). Incisively witty, these heads are more Dada objects than sculptures, yet they capitulate Taeuber's feeling for form. Each is the simple, severely elegant pear shape of a hat stand, which indeed is its "real-life" function; Hugo Weber called them a "feminine nuance of the Dada game: nonsense with a utilitarian purpose."[22] Each is painted in largely curvilinear, highly stylized patterns, which, in spite of their near abstraction, unsettlingly evoke the presence of Jean Arp.

The end of the Dada period in Zurich must have brought with it significant changes in Taeuber's life. Because economic necessity made it impossible for Taeuber to leave her post at the School of Applied Arts, she was forced to remain in Zurich when, at the end of the war, her former Dada comrades departed, many of them for Paris. Although she and Arp were married in 1922, he traveled frequently and was often in Paris; it seems unlikely that the Zurich of the early twenties can have been a very happy place for Taeuber. Conjecture, however, is suspect; what we do know is that this artist, so extremely active in the preceding years, seems to have produced relatively little work between 1920 and 1926.

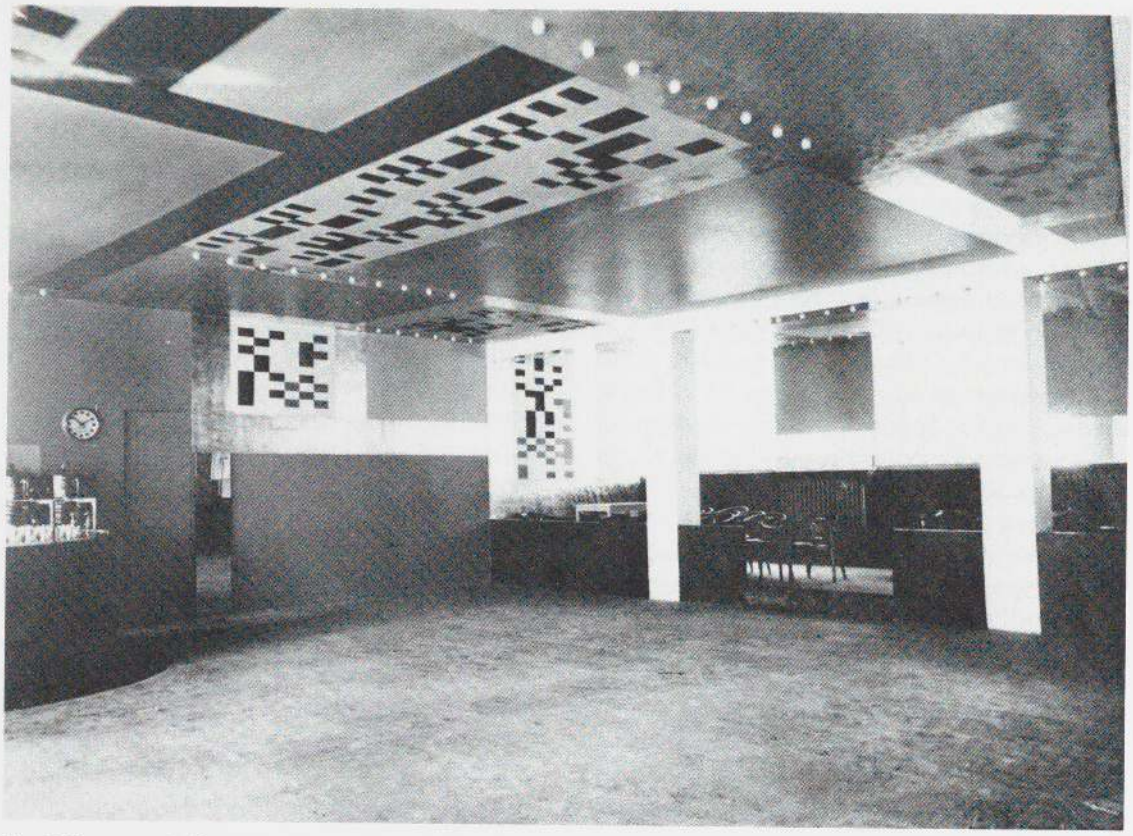


Fig. 2. Tearoom, Café de l'Aubette, Strasbourg, c. 1928

A series of luminous, chromatically rich watercolors dates from the decade's early years (Pl. 17). Composed of quadrangular brushstrokes loosely juxtaposed laterally and vertically, they are free variants of the vertical-horizontal formats of the previous years, and may owe something to the compositionally similar work of Klee with which Taeuber was certainly familiar.[23] Although abstract at first glance, almost all these watercolors are allusively figural, often evoking dancing figures. Hugo Weber has commented somewhat cryptically: "These works give a feeling of joy and strong health. And yet Sophie Taeuber painted them during a period of unrelieved sadness."[24] Although tightly controlled, they nonetheless convey a sense of untamed nervousness that is seen elsewhere in Taeuber's work only in the last two years of her life, when she suffered another period of disruption.

Apart from costume designs (Pls. 18–20), there would seem to be little more than five gouaches dating from the period between 1922 and 1925.[25] After a trip to Pompeii in 1926, she resumed productive activity with a series of works which, while highly schematized, are characterized by clearly readable figural motifs. From intersections and contrasts of crosses and circles, curves and right angles emerge motifs of the café, the beach, the dance, birds, and boats. Aside from landscape drawings, which she made on and off throughout her life, this was the last distinct appearance of figuration in Taeuber's work, and the only period in which it was a dominant compositional component.

The one major work Taeuber-Arp appears to have executed in the first half of the twenties was a mural painting in the house of the Strasbourg architect Paul Horn. In 1926 Horn and his brother André commissioned Taeuber-Arp to decorate and furnish the interior of the Café de l'Aubette in half of an eighteenth-century building that dominates the Place Kleber, the main square of Strasbourg.[26] The Horns, who wanted the Aubette to serve a variety of public uses—it was to be a café-restaurant-bar-tearoom-cinema—gave Taeuber-Arp complete creative freedom. Taeuber-Arp asked Jean Arp and Theo van Doesburg to undertake the project with her, and so was born, in the shelter of the "gravely conventional, drolly anachronistic"[27] facade of the Aubette, one of the first important public environments in which the modernist aspiration to integrate art and function was realized. Each artist played an equal role in the project; the precise areas of their activities are enumerated by van Doesburg in a special 1928 issue of *de Stijl*.[28] Van Doesburg had written in *Principles of Neo-Plastic Art*, published by the Bauhaus in 1925,

that "'Reality' for each individual is only his relationship with his environment, and in fact his relationship is determined by the limits of his possibilities of experience."[29] The Aubette was the perfect vehicle by which to extend those limits. For twelve years after its opening in February of 1928, that function was served, but a new proprietor—out of what Michel Seuphor calls a "lamentable bankruptcy of judgment"— removed Taeuber's stained-glass windows and covered over the reliefs and paintings of the three artists. The little that was left was destroyed by the Nazis as *entartete Kunst* ("degenerate art"). Fortunately, there remain good photographs (Fig. 2) as well as working maquettes (Pls. 21–23) and drawings. Even through the secondhand medium of reproductions, Emmy Ball-Hennings experienced the Aubette as an environment to modify the viewer's perception of reality: "The interior arrangement was by Sophie Taeuber, who painted the house with Jean Arp and Theo van Doesburg. The walls, covered with paintings, give the illusion of almost endlessly vast rooms. Here painting makes the visitor dream, it awakens the depths in us. The house may become a treasure box, a reliquary, and one can always look at it with new eyes. And since the image itself does not change, it is the spectator who lets himself be transformed by the image. It is like owning the lamp with which Aladdin lighted the marvelous cave."[30]

The Aubette commission gave Taeuber-Arp sufficient economic freedom to allow her to leave her post at the School of Applied Arts in Zurich and with Arp to begin the construction of a house in Meudon-Val Fleury just outside of Paris. The house, a few paces up the street from that built by Theo van Doesburg for himself and his wife Nelly, was built from plans conceived by Taeuber according to principles very similar to those of the Bauhaus.[31] There were two floors, the second given over to Taeuber-Arp's studio and the greater part of the first to Arp's. Nothing was superfluous; everything was designed with the greatest economy to serve its purpose in the easiest possible way. The result was a modest structure of elegance and harmonious proportion. The furniture, painted a pale blue-gray, was also designed by Taeuber.[32] The critic Margit Stäber notes: "The Meudon house, its furnishings, its order, and its arrangement all come together from that functional thought that makes Sophie Taeuber's work a part of the world in which art finds its place alongside utilitarian possessions, thus closing the circle of relations between man and objects."[33]

For Taeuber, the move to Meudon brought the freedom to devote herself to her work, close contact with the Parisian avant-garde, and personal fulfillment. The twelve years with Arp at Meudon were the period of the mature consolidation of her work. Taeuber's friend Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia remembers: "This Meudon period was particularly happy and fruitful for both of them. The days flowed rapidly by, filled by the passionate interest that they took in their mutual works and experiments, by their participation in exhibitions and avant-garde movements, and the visits of friends, most of them artists and writers, with whom long discussions would go on for hours, often leading us to the farthest limits of the conceivable. For Sophie this was the period of the so-called four-space, six-space, and twelve-space paintings, of the Triptych of static circles, of the 'Equilibria,' the 'Shells,' the wooden Reliefs. . . ."[34] With the exception of a group of works executed in the mid-thirties, in which the compositional elements often suggest details of larger forms (Pl. 34), Buffet-Picabia has enumerated the major groupings of Taeuber's work of the thirties.

As Mondrian may be considered the artist of the right angle, Taeuber may be considered the artist of the circle. For Mondrian, the right angle represented the meeting and resolution of extremes; for Taeuber, the circle was the cosmic metaphor, the form that contains all others. Around 1930, Taeuber-Arp began making works on monochrome black or white grounds in which the dominant play of circles is descanted by a judicious ordering of rectangles. Color is confined to the primaries plus green; often, several compositional structures are interwoven (Pls. 24–27). As with her other work of the thirties, these paintings were carefully worked out, frequently undergoing transposition from pencil drawing, to gouache or watercolor, to oil. Although described by Weber as "static" compositions to distinguish them from those (painted during the same era) he characterizes as "dynamic" (see Pl. 33), they nonetheless contain, as Weber observes, a sense of "latent movement," and can be compared, he goes on, to "the imperceptible trembling of the limbs in sacred Oriental dances, whose rhythm is transmitted in tiny quivers to the fascinated spectator. . . ."[35] Sophie herself referred to her work of this period as *boulisme*, or as "ping" pictures.

Typical of the static paintings is *Triptych* of 1933 (Pl. 24). Carefully arranged, almost a diagram of disciplined order, the composition is tense with an energy that derives from the fastidious balancing of its basic structural parts, the square versus the circle, black opposed to white. A working pattern of five is set up only to be broken and varied. Of five vertical rows of circles, only the two in the first panel, where the five unit is most prevailing, are alike. In the path of circles variously pressed together and pulled apart that bisects the three panels, no cluster of five is

allowed. The center panel has only one five-unit configuration, and that is askew. The only color circles permitted to cluster are pure red and saturated blue: the blue in an asymmetrical balance of five in the third panel, the three red dots poised in the center of the middle panel, finding their missing complement only in the two balanced on the edge of the white rectangle of the third panel. The two white rectangles that invade this circle world and weight it seesaw fashion are the disproportional morphological complements of the three, square ground panels. Wedged against each other, clustered and floating, the circles are of equal size, activating the composition through their positional relation to each other and their color accents (whereas in some other work of the period proportional differences in shapes of the same form play a greater role).

More than the triptych of 1918, the one of 1933 invites a left-to-right scanning, which subtly, almost subliminally, leads the viewer to quasi-narrative interpretations. The verticals and rectangles of the 1918 triptych seem fixed as if by immutable law, whereas the circles of the 1933 triptych appear to possess some immanent volition that at any moment might lead to variations in their positions. Although in no sense anthropomorphic, the geometric forms of Taeuber-Arp's work of the thirties often appear animated as if by their own inner batteries. To judge by a collage of 1938 (Bahnhof Rolandseck), in which an aberrant circle slipping out of the composition at the left framing edge is labeled *méchant* ("naughty"), we may assume that Taeuber sometimes humorously regarded the variant shapes in her compositions as geometric actors endowed with animus.

Although Taeuber-Arp's work of the thirties is a different enterprise from the late American paintings of Mondrian, his *Broadway Boogie Woogie* of 1942–43, for example, establishes a beat that is comparable to the rhythm set up in Taeuber's work. As Weber has pointed out, "the choreographic element" was of fundamental importance in all of Taeuber-Arp's work.[36] Her ability to create an art in which the rule of ordered, rhythmic harmony is undisturbed by the sometimes anarchic play of forms owes much to her study of the dance, and it is in her work of the thirties that this influence is most strongly felt. Vachtova notes: "Sophie's memory of the dance and transposition of movements that are at one moment dramatic, eccentric, and then are governed by a delicate rhythm, lead to an art of *unregelmässig-Regelmässigkeit* [freely translated, to a nonregular regularity, an eccentricity within conformity], uninterrupted harmony obtaining."[37]

The works Weber calls "dynamic" are, like the static paintings, composed of geometric elements painted with a palette confined to the primaries plus green, black, and white. In the dynamic works, however, the ground—most often white—is more open, triangles balance precariously, truncated lines indicate directional movement, and circles in magnetic interplay with the lines slide, hover, perch, and fall from their edges and are sometimes skewered whole (Pl. 33).

In 1932, Taeuber-Arp began to explore a new compositional structure with which she would experiment on and off for the next several years. In these works, called by Taeuber-Arp "space paintings" (Pls. 32, 46), the ground is divided along a symmetrical grid that is far more straightforward than in the vertical-horizontal compositions of the early Zurich years. The resulting four, six, eight, or twelve rectangles or squares, as the case may be, are bisected and joined by lines, crosses, circles, angled bars, and fragments of rectangles;[38] when squares appear they are isolated within their own "spaces." Color, no longer severely limited, sometimes appears in delicately nuanced hues of violet or pink and functions along with rhyming of shape to unify the compositions. While forms are every bit as "hard-edged" as in Taeuber-Arp's other contemporary work, contrast of figure and ground is subsumed in the equal division of surface as planes and shapes seem to slide against each other in the same space. Concomitantly, imagery is decentralized, each area of the composition being equally weighted.

During the decade between 1910 and 1920, in centers largely isolated from each other by war, artists took the implicit lessons of Cubism to develop a new kind of nonreferential art of "pure" abstraction. The theoretical basis of this new nonobjective art was, as exemplified in the writings of Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Malevich, among others, directed towards the spiritual condition of man. During the twenties, especially under Bauhaus influence, the simplified vocabulary of geometric abstraction was co-opted to serve the utilitarian ideal of man in harmony with the machine in a socialized society of mass production. Meanwhile, Surrealism proposed automatism as the Ariadne's Thread leading away from the exterior world to the real world of man's inner being. During the thirties, acolytes of the various ideologies of abstraction came together in Paris, and from the interplay of their activities—more than through conscious surrender of faction—there emerged a freedom that disengaged abstraction from its polemical basis and made it the more widely available—in fact prepared the way for post-World War II painting.

Sophie Taeuber-Arp, whose art had never been

founded on any didactic philosophical or sociological apprehension, was at the center of thirties activity in Paris. She was a member of the short-lived Cercle et Carré group, the first organization to bring together artists dedicated to nonfigurative art, and participated in their first exhibition in April of 1930 at the Galeries 23.[39] As John Elderfield has pointed out, the exhibition was "remarkable in representing—within only some thirty artists—all the advanced groups that had fostered abstract art of one kind or another: a former Futurist (Prampolini), Dadaists (Arp, Taeuber, Schwitters, Richter, etc.), Bauhaus artists (Moholy, Kandinsky), other German abstractionists (Baumeister, Buchheister), a Constructivist (Pevsner), a member of the Polish Blok group (Stazewski), French Cubists (Léger, Charcoune) and Purists (Ozenfant and Jeanneret), members and ex-members of de Stijl (Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Vordemberge) and more beside."[40]

Owing in part to the illness of one of its founders, Michel Seuphor, Cercle et Carré lasted hardly a full year; it was, however, almost immediately succeeded by Abstraction-Création-Art Non-Figuratif, which was officially inaugurated on February 15, 1931, as an association ready to accommodate all nonfigurative artists of whatever stylistic persuasion. Its notebooks (*cahiers*), issued yearly from 1932 to 1936, often published Taeuber-Arp's work as well as that of other group members, and were one of its most significant proselytizing, propagandistic activities; they "were a meeting place for illustration and comment on new abstract art. As a kind of correspondence society it was truly international. . . ."[41] The increasing suppression of art in Germany, the growing strength of Fascism there and totalitarianism elsewhere, reinforced the commitment of *Abstraction-Création* to the ideal of intellectual and artistic liberty. In 1933, in the second notebook, this statement appeared: "We place Notebook no. 2 under the sign of total opposition to all oppression, whatever kind it may be."[42]

The militant tolerance of this position did not, however, always extend to the accommodation of figurative art. In 1934, when she was a member of Abstraction-Création's directing committee, Taeuber-Arp, along with Arp, Jean Hélion, Otto Freundlich, Fernandez, Antoine Pevsner, Naum Gabo, Delaunay, and Georges Valmier withdrew from Abstraction-Création, in part to protest Auguste Herbin's policy of excluding from the group's manifestations work in which figuration could be discerned in favor of "pure" abstract work of lesser quality.[43] Acceptance of abstraction as style was, however, already well on the way, as is manifest in Jan Brzekowski's comment in a 1934 review of an exhibition of work by Arp, Ghika, Hélion, and Taeuber-Arp: "The general line of the period 1918–30 in which movements grouped artists no longer exists."[44] The following year in Lucerne, the exhibition *Thèse-Antithèse-Synthèse* brought together a catholic roster of artists—Arp, Braque, Calder, Chirico, Derain, Ernst, Fernandez, Giacometti, Gonzalez, Gris, Hélion, Kandinsky, Klee, Léger, Mondrian, Nicholson, Paalen, Picasso, and Taeuber—as further testimony to the gradual relaxation of doctrinaire attitudes, and in its stylistic juxtapositions, approached the wry wisdom of Arp's "Do you like the clouds bare or covered with plumage?"[45]

Although Taeuber-Arp had officially dissociated herself from Abstraction-Création, she remained in contact with its members and was always cognizant of its effectiveness as an artistic forum and means of making new art visible. After its notebooks ceased publication in 1936, she founded and edited the review *Plastique/Plastic* in the next year. A magazine intended to be both European and American, its first issue in the Spring of 1937 stated: "*Plastique* is a magazine devoted to the study and appreciation of Abstract Art; its editors are themselves painters and sculptors identified with the modern movement in Europe and America."[46] The first issue was devoted to Malevich, with essays on his art by Herta Wescher and Siegfried Giedeon, but it also carried an article by George L. K. Morris, "On the Abstract Tradition." Although necessarily modest, *Plastique*, in the five issues that appeared before it was forced by the war to cease publication in 1939, was important in keeping artistic and intellectual channels of communication open. Its third issue was largely given over to abstract art in America and illustrated work by Josef Albers, A. E. Gallatin, Balcomb Greene, John Ferren, and others. During its lifetime, *Plastique* reproduced work by Albers, Max Bill, van Doesburg, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, El Lissitzky, Pevsner, and Francis Picabia, among others, and ran articles by such well known figures as Arp, Gallatin, Kandinsky, Richter, Schwitters, Georg Schmidt, and Georges Vantongerloo.

In the period between her official break with Abstraction-Création and the founding of *Plastique*, Taeuber-Arp's art took a new direction, which might be characterized as her personal incorporation of "Thèse, Antithèse, Synthèse," the title of the 1935 exhibition in Lucerne. The terms are extreme, but loosely the thesis might be the cerebral geometry of her previous work; the antithesis, her conceptual assimilation of Surrealist abstract biomorphism; and the synthesis, a marked tendency to create work that is organic in mood but largely or entirely geometric in form. From this time until the last two years of her

life, the triangle disappears; the circle, rectangle, and square are dominant and are often segmented—sometimes quite regularly, as in *Composition with Circles and Half-Circles* of 1935 (Pl. 30), and at other times asymmetrically, to produce undulant, almost voluptuous curves, as in *Planes Outlined in Curves* (Pl. 34).

This move towards the organic probably derives from the contemporary work of Arp, with whom she had once more begun to collaborate on paintings and sculptures; and the compositions of such works as the two mentioned (from the first group of pictures to display the new tendency) may reflect memories of Arp's earlier collages "arranged according to the laws of chance." *In Planes Outlined in Curves*, the intruding form on the left is tipped up as if in a hopeful effort to effect an impossible jigsaw liaison with the solidly anchored shape on the right. The nonalignment of the two shapes, whose profiles suggest that they are fragments of larger forms, upsets our expected sense of stability. Furthermore, the ground area between them becomes a fluid, torsolike form charged with an energy derived from the tensions set up by the delicate touch of point to plane at the lower center, combined with the more cumbersome approach of bulge to bulge at the top. Taeuber-Arp's sophisticated manipulation of compositional device in *Planes Outlined in Curves* anticipates its similar use by Leon Polk Smith in certain of his work, such as *Expanse* of 1959 (Fig. 3).

This silhouetting of form and ground, combined with a general resurgence of interest in object-making among artists in Paris in the second half of the thirties, led Taeuber-Arp to execute an extraordinarily rich series of wood reliefs. Initially, the circle, the square, and the rectangle were the sole constructive elements; then the relief was entirely built within a circle; and in the final group the rectangle was the ground plane on which were positioned forms at once curvilinear and straight-edged, almost a three-dimensional extension of the shapes in *Planes Outlined in Curves*.

Taeuber-Arp's earlier circle ("ping") paintings on black or white grounds were likened by Arp to a "chessboard of the night," in which "white, red, and green spheres serve as pawns for the night. The night plays with the visible and the invisible. The invisible beats the visible."[47] This description is equally applicable, if not more so, to Taeuber-Arp's first series of reliefs (Pls. 38, 39), which are compositionally the sculptural counterparts of the earlier paintings. On dark blue, black, or white grounds, the circle, the square, and the rectangle, painted in bright primaries, green, gray, black, and white, retreat and advance, counterpoised by circular and rectangular voids cut into the ground planes. The play of negative and positive space is as ambiguous as in *Planes Outlined in Curves;* there, the lateral shapes seem to push towards each other, creating a new shape from the ground between them, while their deftly illusioned movement onto the canvas plane implies an extension beyond it. In the reliefs, the areas cut into the grounds function as void countering thrust and equally as shape counterpointing shape, while their occurrence on outside edges merges the space of the surrounding wall with their own.

Although the earlier reliefs of this first group are more rigidly constructed than those that followed, all the works of this series are remarkable in their evocation of natural phenomena by means of a severely reduced geometric vocabulary. They might well serve Seuphor's evangelical advocacy of the circle and the square, which were, he writes, "the sky and the earth as symbolized by the ancient Oriental religions; they formed a kind of rudimentary alphabet by means of which everything could be expressed with the most limited means."[48]

When, after Taeuber's death, Kandinsky was asked for an appreciation of her work, he chose these reliefs as his subject, writing as follows:

"Sophie Taeuber-Arp expressed herself by means of the 'colored relief,' especially in the last years of her life, using almost exclusively the simplest forms, geometric forms. The forms, by their sobriety, their silence, their way of being sufficient unto themselves, invite the hand, if it is skillful, to use the language that is suitable to it and which is often only a whisper; but often too the whisper is more expressive, more convincing, more persuasive, than the 'loud voice' that here and there lets itself burst out.

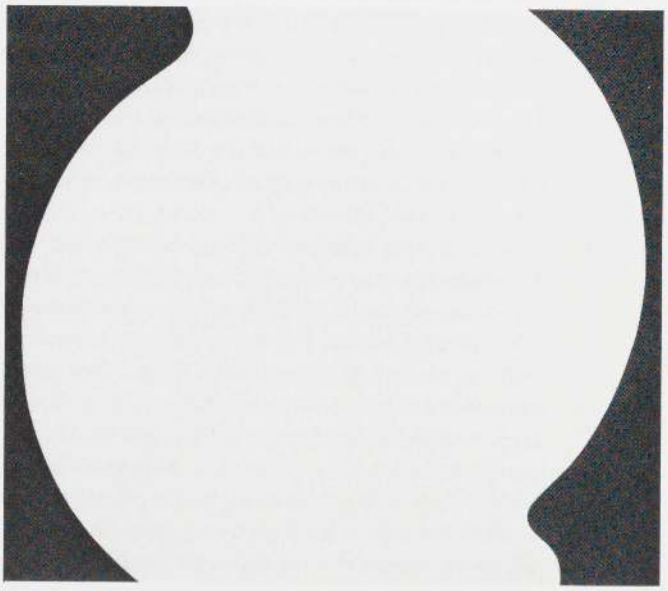


Fig. 3. Leon Polk Smith. *Expanse*. 1959. Acrylic on canvas, 68 x 74 in.

"In order to possess the mastery of 'mute' forms, one must be endowed with a refined sense of measure, to know how to choose the forms themselves, according to the harmony of their three dimensions, according to their proportions, their height, their depth, their combinations, their way of contributing to a whole—in a word, one must have a sense of composition.

"... To the beauty of the volumes in Sophie Taeuber-Arp's 'colored reliefs' is added the mysterious, moving power of color, which now heightens the voice of the simple form, now lowers its tone; which indicates the hardness of one form while imparting softness to another; emphasizes this projection, ineffably attenuates that other. And so on to infinity. A resounding voice, a fugue.

"The arsenal of the means of expression is of an inexhaustible richness. The greatest contrasts are: 'loud voice,' 'low voice.' Against the thunder of kettledrums and trumpets in a Wagner overture is set a quiet, 'monotonous' fugue by Bach.

"Here, thunder and lightning splitting the sky and shaking the earth; there, a smooth and gray sky in all its expanse, the wind has receded and has reached faraway places, the smallest bare twig remains motionless, the weather is neither warm nor cold.

"Quiet language.

"Sophie Taeuber-Arp, '*sans peur et sans reproche*,' infallibly approached her goal."[49]

As the reliefs of the first group may be thought of as metaphors for the field of the heavens, those of the second (Pl. 36), encompassed within circles, may be regarded as allusive to celestial spheres—the earth itself, the moon, the sun, the orbit of the planets. The earlier of these round reliefs are painted in triads and tetrads of brown, green, yellow, and blue set off by white areas; the later ones are all white or yellow and white. The relief of form is accomplished by layering panels of variously contoured wood. On an initial whole circle, Taeuber superimposed two or three additional panels—irregularly straight-edged and curvilinear but conforming to each other in that, if rotated, their outside edges would always define a perfect 360-degree circle. Although constructed through a process of building forward, the effect of these reliefs is to reveal depth through surface. Shifting patterns of light and shadow gather along the curved and straight edges cut into the forward panels, establishing multileveled tulip- and shell-shaped forms. This actual or "concrete" exposure of structure acts conversely, almost disguising method in effect, as though the surface of a solid had been unfolded to reveal the interior secrets of its form. These reliefs bring to mind Kandinsky's words on abstraction: that it permits man "to touch under the *skin* of *Nature* its essence, its 'content.'"[50] These reliefs are rich in poetic connotation; usually titled "Shells and Flowers," they hold within their spherical forms others symbolic of earth and sea.

The Shell and Flower reliefs, like those of the third group, in which relieved white elements float free on white rectangular grounds, are related to drawings Taeuber-Arp was making at the time to illustrate Arp's book of poems *Mussels and Umbrellas* (1939). The rectangular reliefs are, however, more closely associated with this project than are the circular ones. The relieved shapes of the final series (Pls. 40, 42) often combine organic curves with straight edges and right angles, although occasionally they are entirely curvilinear; they move away from each other, press against one another, flee from and push against the outer limits of the ground plane, simultaneously creating illusions of resolved and unresolved stability. George Rickey writes of these reliefs: "Sophie Taeuber-Arp's work links all the forms with contact of a point against a line, which has different qualities from point-to-point, curve-to-curve tangents. In her *Parasols* [Pl. 42], the space between the forms is under pressure and is as palpable as the cut-out wood reliefs."[51]

The advent of the war in 1939 and the subsequent Nazi occupation of Paris in 1940 brought an end to the period of intense productivity at Meudon. In the summer of 1940, Taeuber-Arp and Arp fled Paris, stopping first at Nérac in the Dordogne, then in Veyrier in the Savoy. Finally, in 1941 they reached Grasse, where they would stay until the end of 1942. The disruption of her life at Meudon and the profound anxiety caused by the Nazi menace brought about a radical change in Taeuber-Arp's work. The calmly ordered arabesques and limpid geometry of her previous work gave way to networks of rapid, gestural lines that knot in spirals and shoot lightning-straight across their compositional fields. She briefly abandoned the evenly painted surface characteristic of her work for brushy grounds executed with a haste that anticipates Abstract Expressionism.

Taeuber-Arp had always titled her work in French, which she continued to do in this period, but the tone changed. With the exception of the Pompeii work of 1926 and the round and white-on-white reliefs, her previous titles were never more than descriptions of the elements of each compositon; adjectives described form, as in *Planes Outlined in Curves*. Only when verbal connotative implications were operative, as in *Rising, Falling, Clinging, Flying* (Pl. 33), did her titles suggest content apart from form. As for the titles of her figurative work and reliefs, they were essentially straightforward descriptions of objective

things represented. Many titles of her post-1939 work, however, suggest subjective, emotional states: *Lost Lines on Chaotic Background* or *Passion of Lines*.

The title of a colored pencil drawing Taeuber-Arp executed in Grasse in 1942, *Lines of Summer* (Fig. 5), suggests a commingling of emotion and ambience that can easily be read into the work itself. Although at first glance abstract, the drawing reveals on further examination two torsos, each floating in its own cloudlike area of gray joined only by sinuously intertwined black lines. The head and shoulder of the upper figure are a solid orange, and the chest is squared off by merging blue triangles. The lower figure is in many respects the converse of the upper; although it is also constructed by the juxtaposition of complementary color planes, the pairing is now green and red. Unlike the orange and blue, which seem to constitute the substance of the top figure, the curving contours of the red and green areas only delineate the outlines of a figure whose substance is nothing more than the negative space of the paper support. The lower figure recedes into the page; the reds and greens which give it form also appear to float over it. The protoplasmic gray around it, which is the contracted form of the elastically extended gray surround of the upper figure, compresses it. In contrast to the bold, emergent top figure, the lower appears ephemeral and obscurely threatened by the heavy black areas above whose upper convex curves weight them downwards.

It is not at all improbable that *Lines of Summer* is a deliberately symbolic, although eerily prescient, double portrait of the artist as the lower figure and Arp as the upper one. The time in Grasse was a period of bittersweet happiness for Taeuber-Arp; she was in a countryside that she loved, in the company of Arp and their friends Alberto Magnelli and Sonia Delaunay. Yet anxiety over the future and regret at the loss of the peace of Meudon were always present. Arp, recalling the period, wrote: "We lived between a well, a graveyard, an echo and a bell. A palm tree and some olive trees grew in our garden. Whenever the palm fronds began to rustle, there was rain. The olive trees were constantly animated by an almost imperceptible thrill; each day was brighter and happier than the preceding one, and Sophie equalled them all. Her inner clarity struck everyone who met her. She blossomed like a flower about to droop.... From her purity she drew the courage and confidence to endure the immense misfortune of France.... From the depths of the most intense suffering, blossoming spheres shoot forth. Lost and impassioned, she drew lines, long curves, spirals, circles, roads that twist through dream and reality...."[52]

Taeuber-Arp died in January of 1943 in Zurich. She and Arp had managed to leave the occupied country they loved so much and had arrived in Switzerland hoping to find a way to America from there. Spending an evening at Max Bill's house signing lithographs, Taeuber-Arp had become tired and was persuaded to spend the night there. She died in her sleep as a result of a malfunctioning gas stove. Seen against the tragedy of her death, Taeuber-Arp's works of the last period in Grasse assume a particular poignancy. It is too much to read into them certain presentiments of her own death, but their congestive tanglings of lines and pervasive sense of urgency, unprecedented in her previous work, unmistakably bespeak a profound crisis in her art and life.

In 1937 Taeuber-Arp had written to a goddaughter on the occasion of her confirmation: "I think I have spoken enough to you about serious things; which is why I speak [now] of something to which I attribute great value, still too little appreciated—gaiety. It is gaiety, basically, that allows us to have no fear before the problems of life and to find a natural solution to them."[53] This "natural solution" which had been Taeuber-Arp's clear goal throughout her life and art, the simple imperative that led to

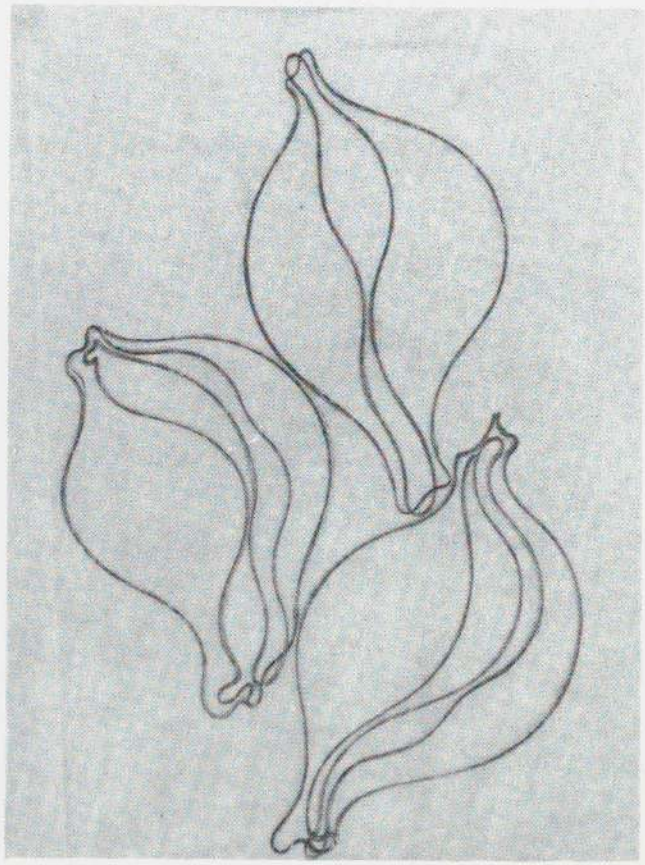


Fig. 4. Sophie Taeuber-Arp. *Sketch for Ex-Libris of Elisabeth Müller*. 1942. Pencil on paper, 10⅞ x 8⅛ in. Private collection. In exhibition

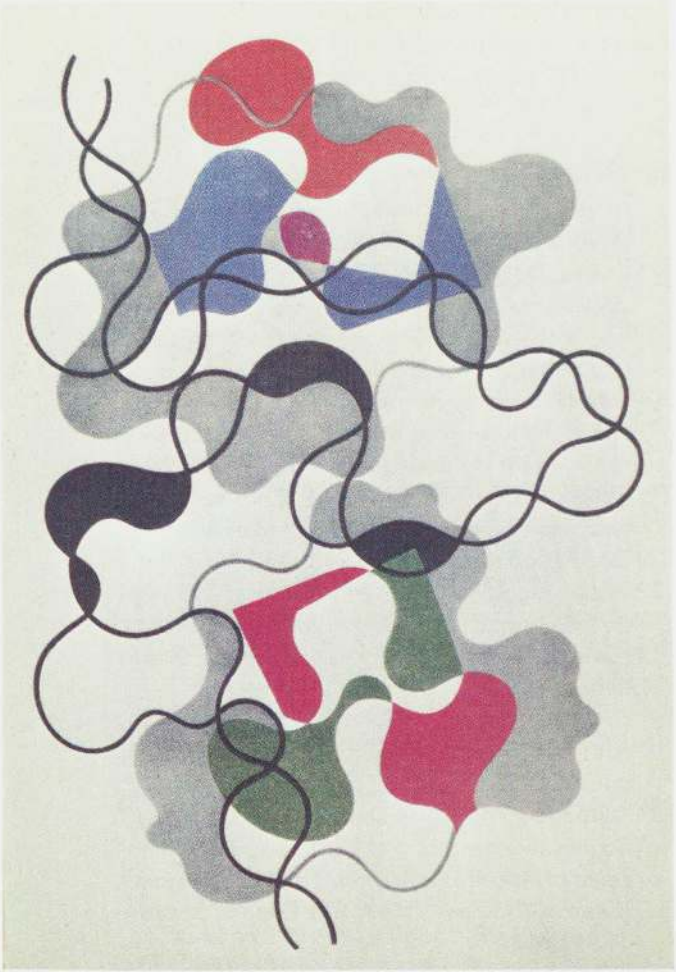


Fig. 5. Sophie Taeuber-Arp. *Lines of Summer.* 1942. Colored pencil on paper, 18⅛ x 15 in. Kunstmuseum, Basel, Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation

the first abstract work of 1915, was perhaps being found in the period of exile in Grasse in a series of line drawings (Fig. 4), some of which are abstract and some of which are renderings of plants and leaves. In spite of the most rigorous economy of means, these drawings have a sensual appeal that bears comparison with the studies of Matisse.

For Sophie Taeuber-Arp, life flowed seamlessly into art. While there is no denying the essential contribution of Cubism to her development, it would not be far from the mark to characterize Taeuber-Arp's work as a constructivist art of geometric abstraction organically evolved. To borrow terminology from Wilhelm Worringer, "in the circling orbit of the artistic process" the seeming boundaries between art and life were for Taeuber-Arp no more than natural areas of transition.[54]

The order that reigns in Taeuber's art allows room for chance; the functionalism that governed form in the construction and arrangement of her house in Meudon permitted ornamentation; the sobriety of her nature included gaiety. Her predilection for the circle in her art must surely have come from her perception of this form as the "natural solution" to the reconciliation of opposites. Jean Arp wrote after her death: "It was Sophie Taeuber who through the example of her clear work and her clear life showed me the right path, the road to beauty. In this world, up and down, light and darkness, eternity and ephemeralness are in perfect balance. And so the circle closed."[55]

NOTES

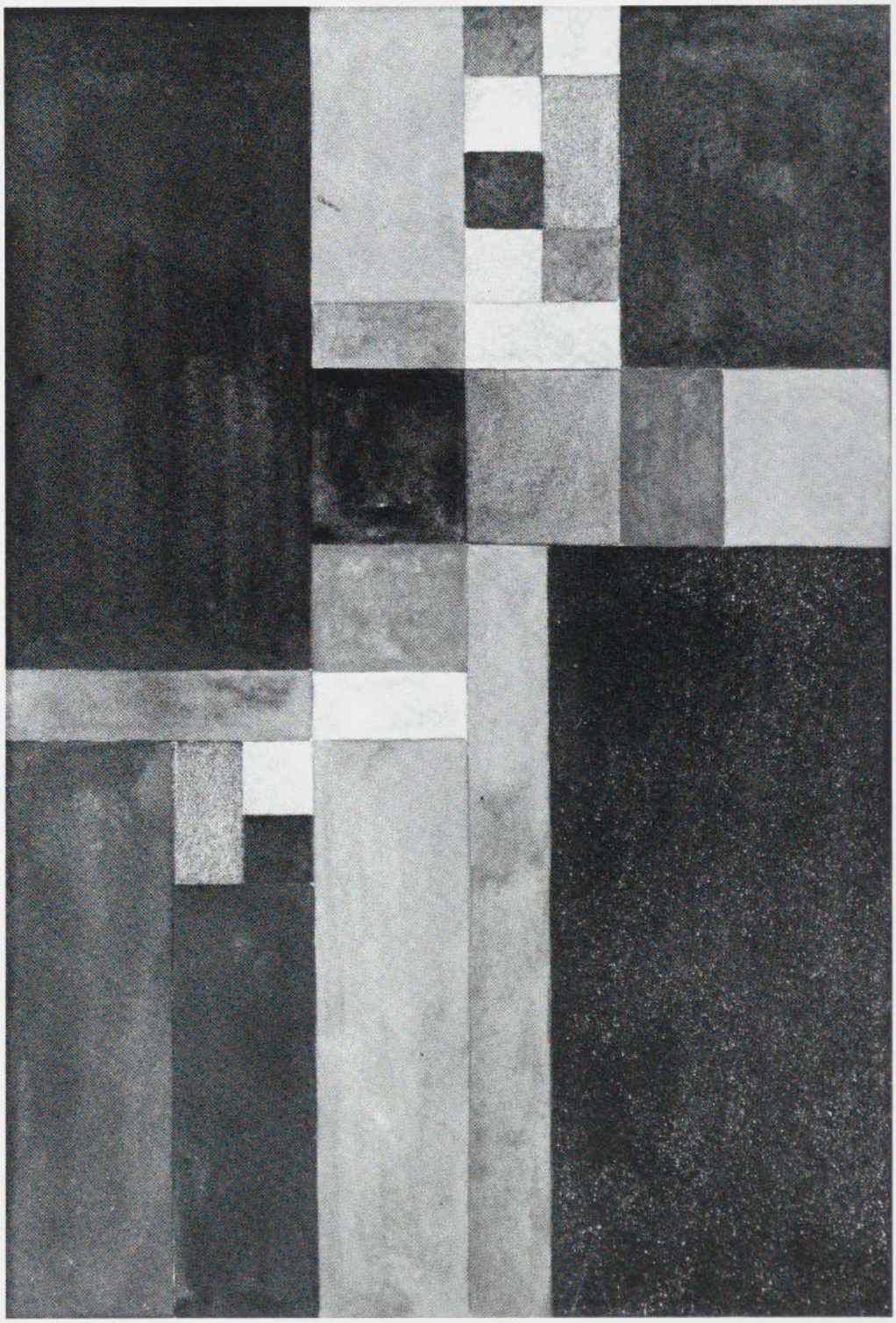
1. "Reminiscences" (1913), in Robert L. Herbert, ed., *Modern Artists on Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 32.
2. Largely owing to World War I, these related movements, all of which had their roots in Cubism, evolved independently of each other. Arp has recalled his and Taeuber's surprise to discover at the end of the war that abstract-geometric art similar to their own had also appeared elsewhere. See Margit Stäber, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Lausanne: Editions Rencontre, 1970), p. 16.
3. Taeuber was making work containing figurative imagery throughout the period from 1915 to 1920.
4. According to information supplied by Taeuber-Arp's niece, Regula Specht-Schlegel, of Basel, Sophie Taeuber and Jean Arp were married October 20, 1922, in the Ticino. The dating of Taeuber-Arp's works was established by Hugo Weber at Jean Arp's request, after her death, and published in the catalogue raisonné, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, ed. by Georg Schmidt (Basel: Holbein Verlag, 1948), pp. 118–40. For Taeuber-Arp's writings, see bibl., p. 51.
5. Jean Arp, "Sophie Taeuber-Arp," in *Arp on Arp: Poems, Essays, Memories*, ed. by Marcel Jean, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Viking Press, 1972), p. 222.
6. Hugo Weber has identified the main stylistic groupings of Taeuber-Arp's work in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), pp. 118–40, and Jean Arp has described them in less detail in *Arp on Arp*, pp. 222–24.
7. [Article], *Bulletin de l'union suisse des maîtresses professionelles et ménagères/Korrespondenzblatt* (Zurich), Jahrg. 14, no. 11/12 (Dec. 31, 1922), p. 156.
8. Robert Delaunay, cited by Peter Vergo in the catalog of the exhibition *Abstraction: Towards a New Art, Painting 1910–1920*, Tate Gallery, London, Feb. 6–Apr. 13, 1980, p. 11.
9. "Pure Plastic Art," in *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art 1937 and other essays, 1941–1943*, 3d ed. (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1951), p. 31.
10. "And So the Circle Closed," in *Arp on Arp*, p. 245.
11. In this Richter is almost undoubtedly mistaken, as the wool hanging he reproduces in his book, *Dada Art and Anti-Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), Plate 18, is one that Alastair Grieve in "Arp in Zurich," *Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics of Revolt* (Madison, Wis: Coda Press; Iowa City: The University of Iowa, 1979), p. 177, demonstrates to have been in Arp's 1915 exhibition *Modern Wallhangings, Embroideries, Paintings* at the Galerie Tanner in Zurich. As this is the exhibition at which Taeuber and Arp met, she cannot have worked the embroidery. According to Grieve, it is the work of Adrienne van Rees-Dutilh, who with her husband, Otto van Rees, had shared the Tanner exhibition with Arp.
12. *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, pp. 45–46.
13. *Unsern taglichen Traum: Erinnerungen, Dichtungen in Betrachtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954* (Zurich: Die Arche, 1955), cited in Stäber, pp. 14–15.
14. Ibid., p. 15.
15. Christian Geelhaar, [review], *Pantheon* (Munich), Jahrg. 35, Heft 3 (July-Aug.-Sept. 1977), pp. 272–73.
16. "Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst," *Bauhausbücher*, no. 6 (1925), reprinted in *Principles of Neo-Plastic Art*, trans. by Janet Seligman (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), p. 34.
17. I am indebted to Alastair Grieve for pointing out that Taeuber may have used the golden section to establish divisions in some of her early work, as may be the case with this gouache. The gold mat and frame Taeuber used here, as she often did at the time, may allude to this practice.
18. For Hugo Ball's recollections, see "La Danseuse Sophie Taeuber" (1917) in *Sophie Taeuber Arp*, (Basel, 1948), p. 20, and cited in Stäber, p. 23. The School of Applied Arts so disapproved of one of its professors dancing at Dada gatherings that she was forced sometime in 1917 to use a pseudonym on the occasions when she danced there.
19. "En souvenir de Sophie Taeuber-Arp," in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), p. 15, and cited in Stäber, pp. 41, 43.
20. Since Taeuber was also a choreographer, there is further justification for the theory that dance notations may have been an influence in the development of her art. Grieve in a letter to me pointed out the possible importance of these notations, and the editor of this book, Jane Fluegel, found the notation system published by

Taeuber's teacher, Rudolf von Laban (*Schrifttanz*, Vienna-Leipzig, 1928), of which Figure 1 is a page.

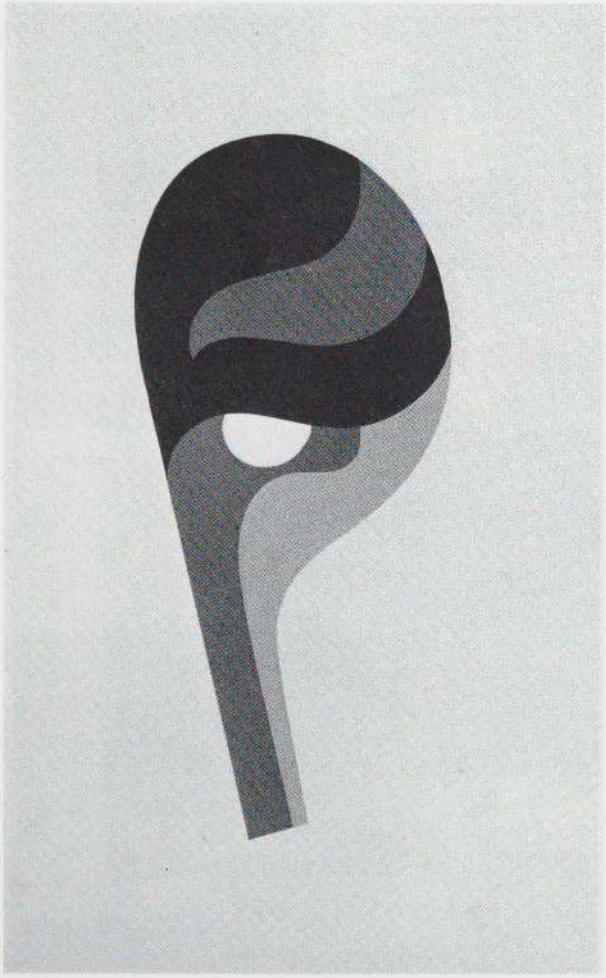
21. Ludmila Vachtova, [review], *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Zurich), vol. 24. no. 29/30 (Jan. 1977), p. 57.
22. Weber, in *Sophie Taueber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), p. 125.
23. She may have seen his work as early as 1912 in Munich, and must certainly have seen Klee's 1917 exhibition at the Dada gallery in Zurich.
24. Weber, in *Sophie Tauber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), p. 119.
25. Weber, op. cit., lists four, and the Foundation Jean Arp, Clamart, France, has another not cataloged by Weber.
26. For a detailed discussion of the Aubette, see Michel Seuphor, "L'Aubette de Strasbourg," *L'Art d'Aujourd'hui* (Boulogne-sur-Seine), série 4, no. 8 (1953), pp. 10–11; Theo Wolters, "Vor 40 Jahren: die Aubette. Ein Kunsthistorisches Ereignis in Strassburg," *Kunst Nachrichten* (Lucerne), Jahrg. 5, Heft 8 (May 1969); and Hans Haug, "L'Aubette de 1928 haut-lieu de l'art abstrait," *Saisons d'Alsace* (Strasbourg), no. 8 (1963), pp. 439–46.
27. Seuphor, ibid., p. 11.
28. *De Stijl* (Leiden), series 15, no. 87–89 (1928), pp. 609–40.
29. *Principles of Neo-Plastic Art*, p. 12.
30. "En souvenir de Sophie Taeuber-Arp," cited in Stäber, p. 89, and in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), p. 18.
31. Taeuber-Arp's underlying conception of the unity of the fine and applied arts and the application of the principle of form following function was close to the Bauhaus's, but her designs for articles of practical use were meant to create a personal, harmonious environment, and were not, as with the Bauhaus, intended to be mass-produced for a new, improved society.
32. Although her economic situation had eased, Taeuber in the late twenties and through the thirties from time to time accepted commissions to design furniture to supplement the household income.
33. Stäber, pp. 102–03.
34. "Chère Sophie," in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), p. 35.
35. Weber, in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), p. 121.
36. Ibid.
37. Vachtova, p. 57.
38. The angled bar had previously appeared in her fabric and costume design of the Zurich Dada period and was probably originally inspired by folk art, perhaps specifically Kachina dolls.
39. Founded in January of 1929 by Michel Seuphor and Joaquin Torres-García, the group published three issues of the periodical *Cercle et Carré* and mounted the exhibition at Galeries 23. The gallery, located at 23, rue de la Boétie, Paris, was on the ground floor of the building where Picasso was then living. For a discussion of Cercle et Carré's activities, see Michel Seuphor and John Elderfield in the catalog of the exhibition *Geometric Abstraction: 1926–1942*, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Oct. 7–Nov. 19, 1972. n.p.
40. "The Paris-New York Axis: Geometric Painting in the Thirties," in *Geometric Abstraction*, Dallas, n.p.
41. Ibid.
42. *Abstraction-Création* (Paris), no. 2 (1933), p. 1.
43. See Gladys C. Fabre in the catalog of the exhibition *Abstraction-Création 1931–1936*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, June 16–Sept. 17, 1978, and Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Landschaftsverband, Westfalen-Lippe, Apr. 2–June 4, 1978, p. 12.
44. "Les Quatre Noms Hans Arp-Ghika-Jean Hélion-S. H. Taeuber-Arp. A propos de leur exposition à a la galerie des Cahiers d'Art," *Cahiers d'Art*, (Paris), no. 5–8 (1934), p. 197.
45. Cited by Marcel Jean in his introduction to *Arp on Arp*, p. XXIV.
46. *Plastique/Plastic* (Paris-New York), Spring 1937, facing p. 24.
47. *Arp on Arp*, p. 223.
48. *Abstract Painting: Fifty Years of Accomplishment. Kandinsky to the Present* (New York, n.d.), p. 98.
49. "Les 'Reliefs colorés' de Sophie Taeuber-Arp" (Paris, June 1943), in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Basel, 1948), p. 88.
50. "Reflexions sur l'art abstrait," *Cahiers d'Art* (Paris), no. 7–8 (1931), p. 353.
51. *Constructivism: Origins and Evolution*, 2d ed. (New York: George Braziller, 1969), p. 128.
52. *Arp on Arp*, p. 224.
53. "Regula zur Konfirmation" (1937), in *Zweiklang: Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Hans Arp* (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1960), cited in Stäber, p. 13.
54. Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. by Michael Bullock (New York: International Universities Press, 1953), pp. 126, 127.
55. *Arp on Arp*, p. 247.

PLATES

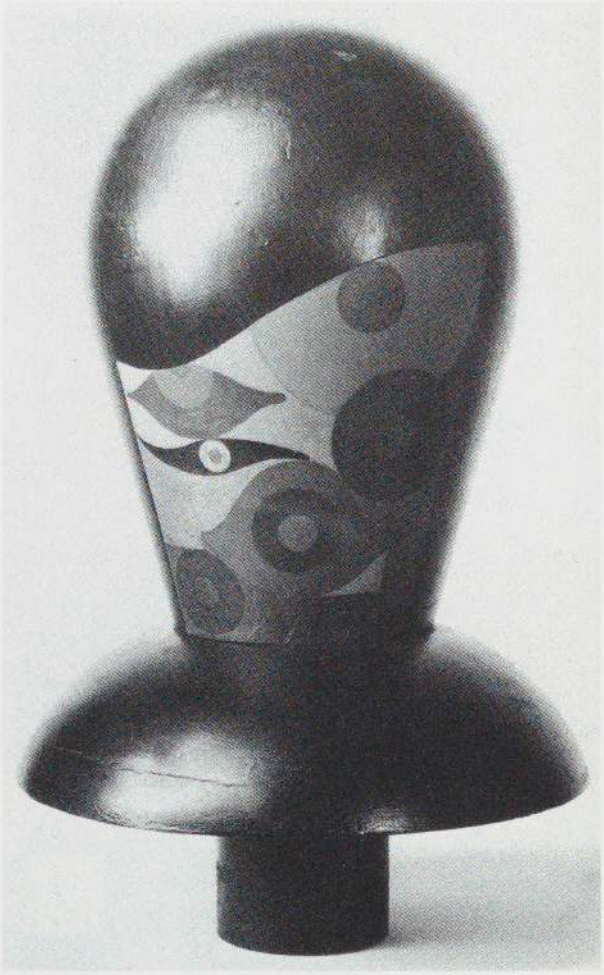
Pl. 1 *Vertical, Horizontal, Square, Rectangular.* 1917. Gouache, 9⅛ x 6⅛ in. Private collection



Pl. 2. Untitled. c. 1917–18. Gouache, 18½ x 10¼ in. Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland



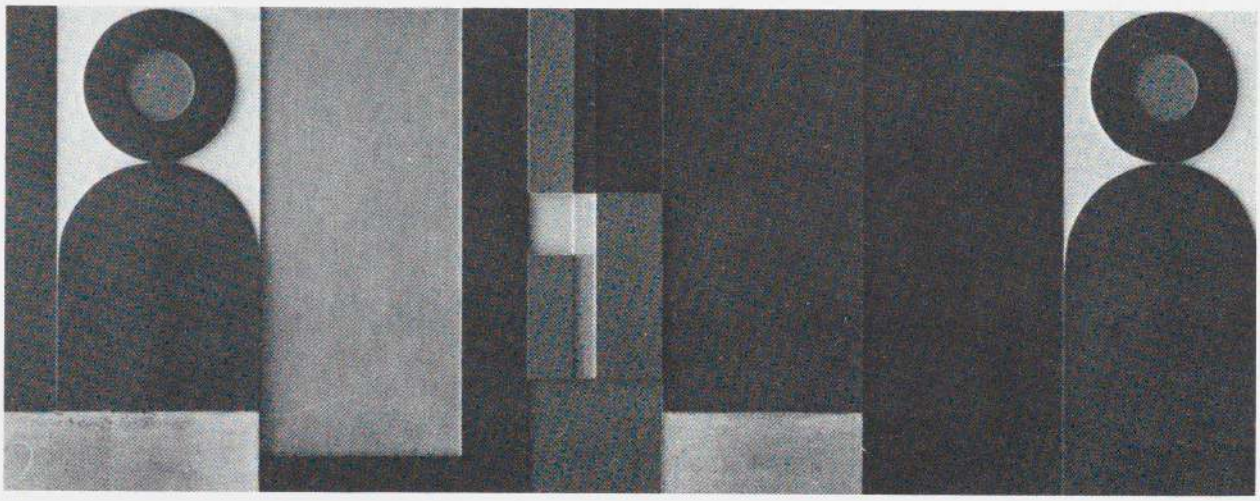
Pl. 3. *Portrait of Jean Arp.* 1918–19. Turned, painted wood, 13½ in. high x 7⅞ in. diameter. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Gift of Mme Arp

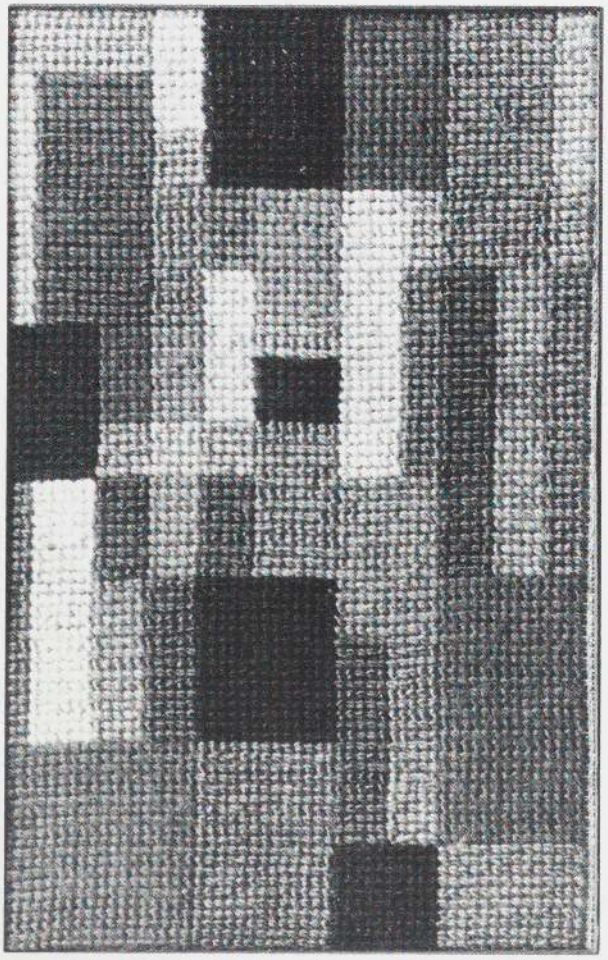


Pls. 4, 5. *Portrait of Jean Arp*. 1918. Turned, painted wood, 10 in. high. Private collection.

Pl. 6. *Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Abstract Motifs.* 1917–18. Oil on cardboard, 10¼ x 26 in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany

Pl. 7. Untitled. c. 1918. Wool embroidery, 7¾ x 4¾ in. Collection Werner Schlegel

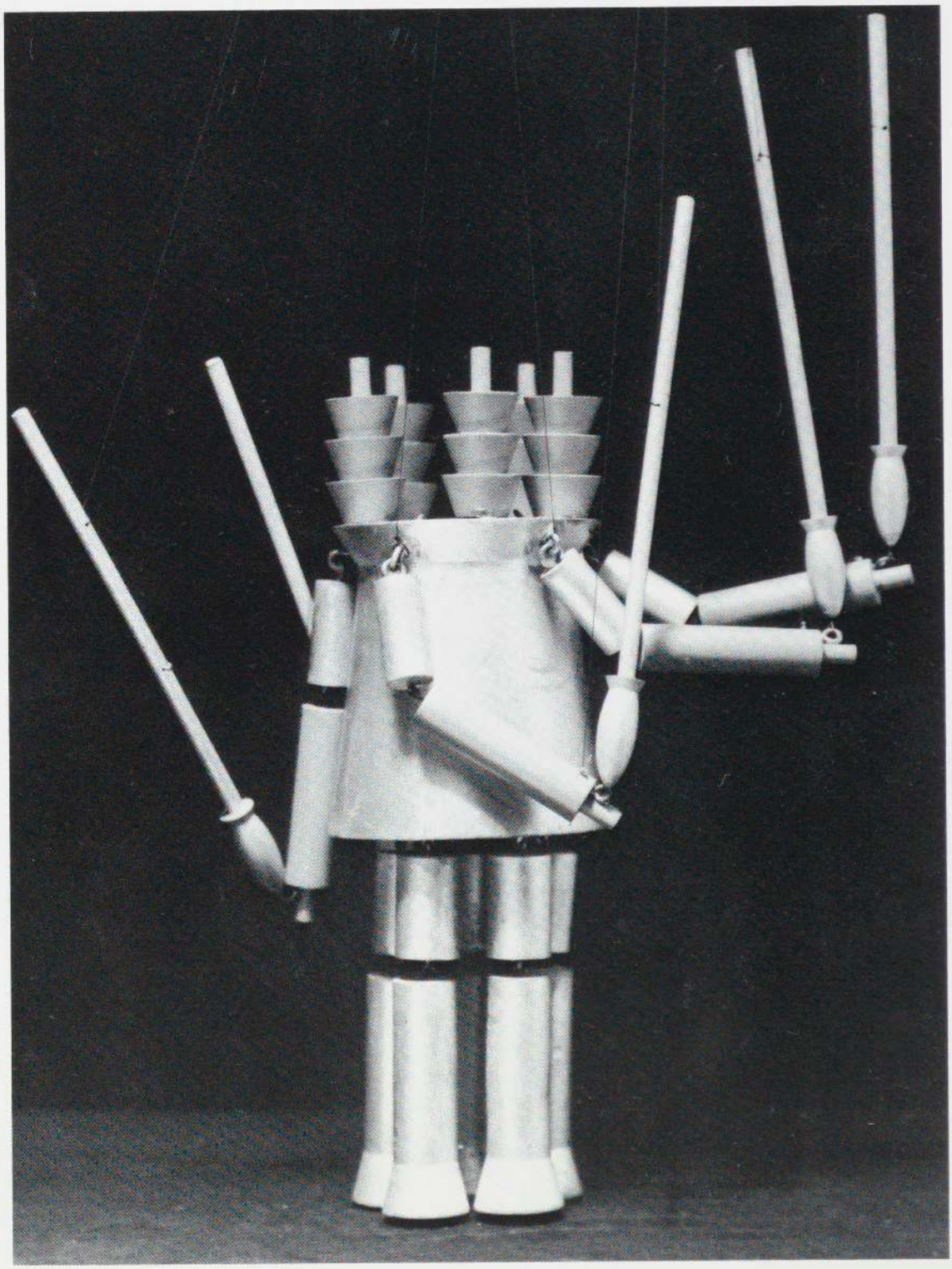




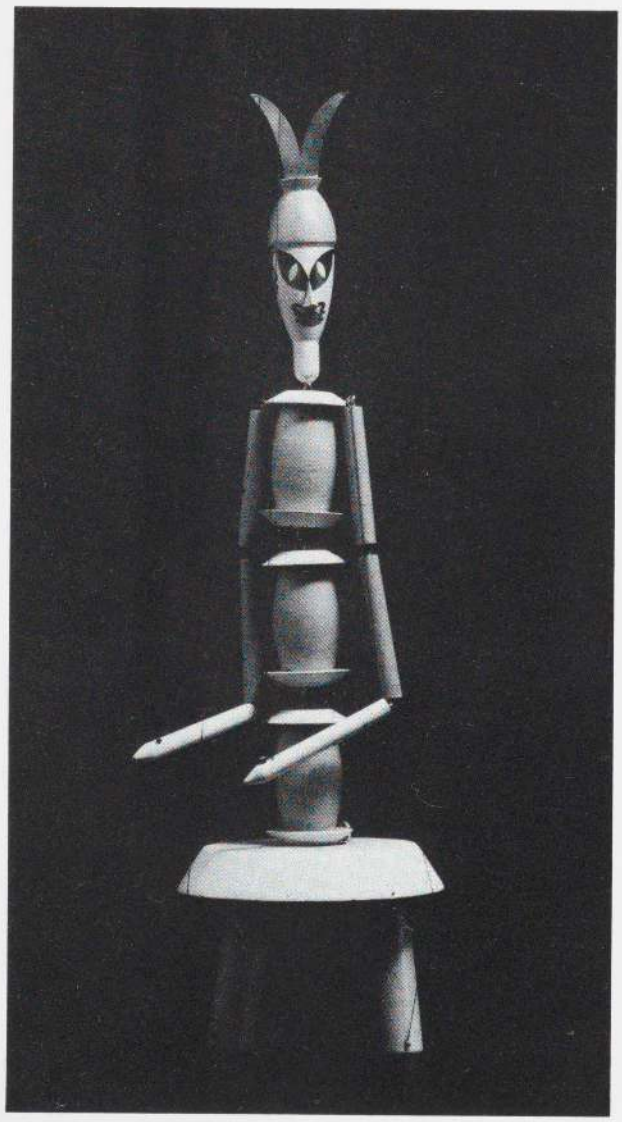
Pl. 8. Pillow Sham. c. 1916. Wool embroidery, 20¼ x 21 in.
Museum Bellerive, Zurich

Pl. 9. In collaboration with Jean Arp: *Dada Object*. c. 1918–19. Wood box with gilded edges containing stuffed silk and wool forms, 6 x 5 x 4¾ in. Private collection

Pl. 10. *Guard* (Marionette for *König Hirsch* by Carlo Gozzi). 1918. Turned, painted wood; overall, 16 x 5¼ in. Museum Bellerive, Zurich

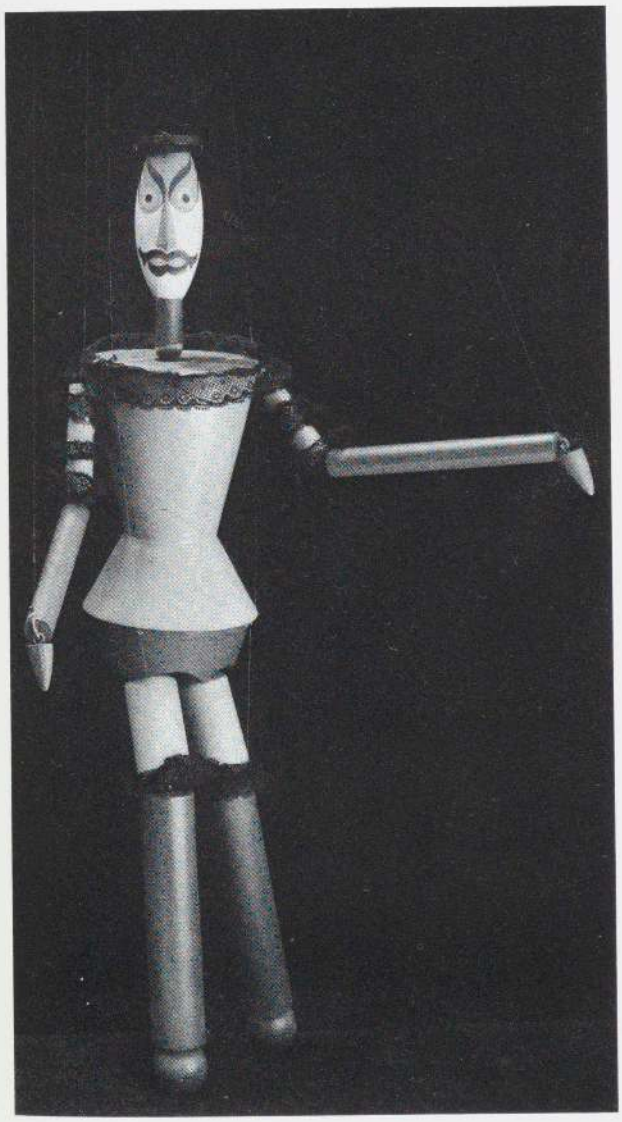


Pl. 11. *Freud Analyticus* (Marionette for *König Hirsch* by Carlo Gozzi). 1918. Turned, painted wood; overall, 24 x 6¾ in. Museum Bellerive, Zurich

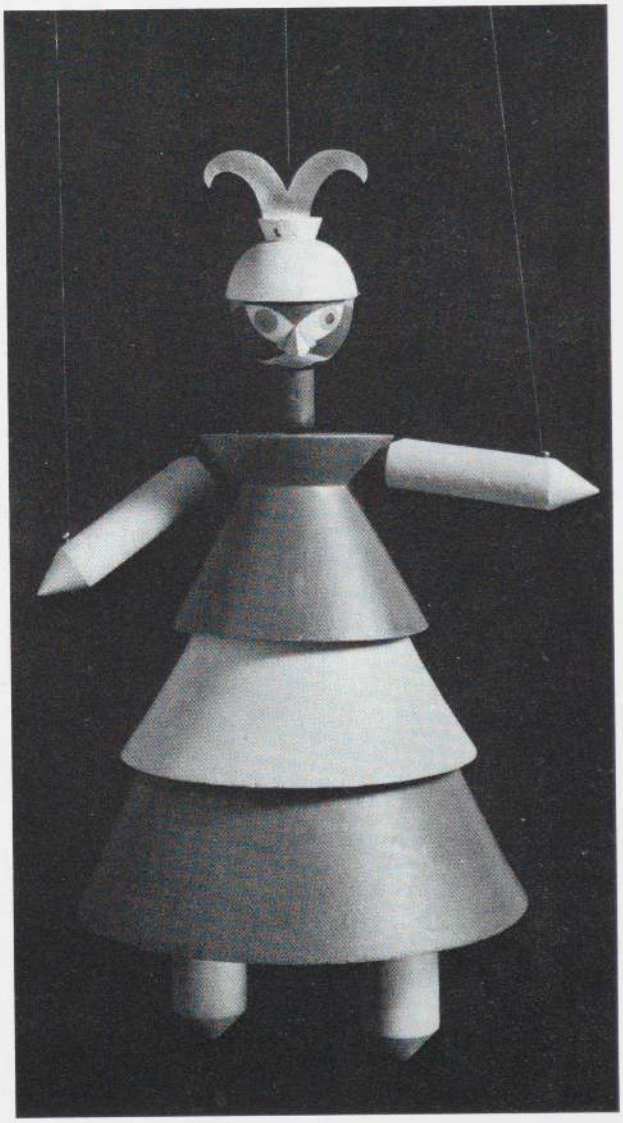


Pl. 12. *Angela* (Marionette for *König Hirsch* by Carlo Gozzi). 1918. Turned, painted wood; overall, 19⅛ x 4⅜ in. Museum Bellerive, Zurich

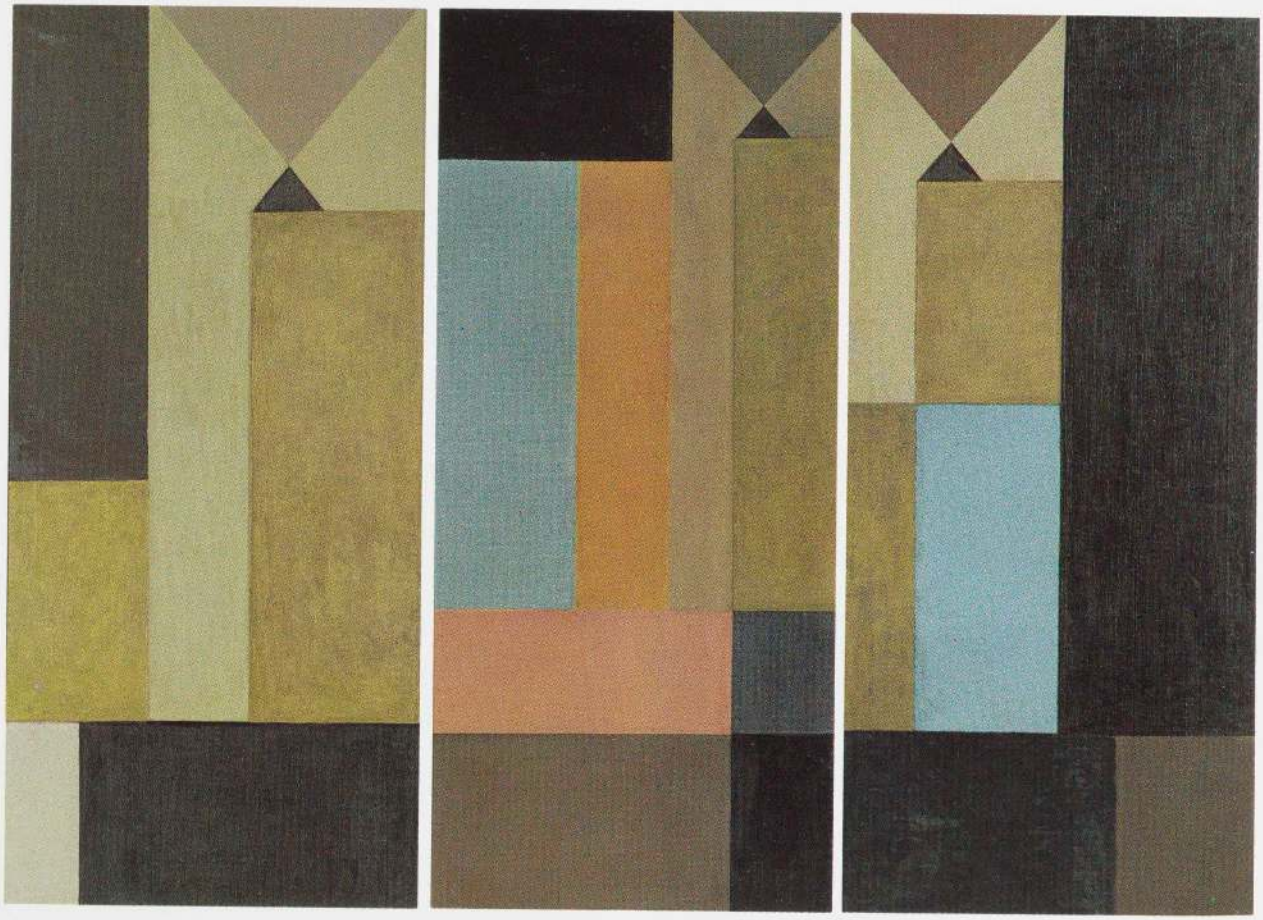
Pl. 13. *Leandro* (Marionette for *König Hirsch* by Carlo Gozzi). 1918. Turned, painted wood; overall, 20¾ x 4¾ in. Museum Bellerive, Zurich



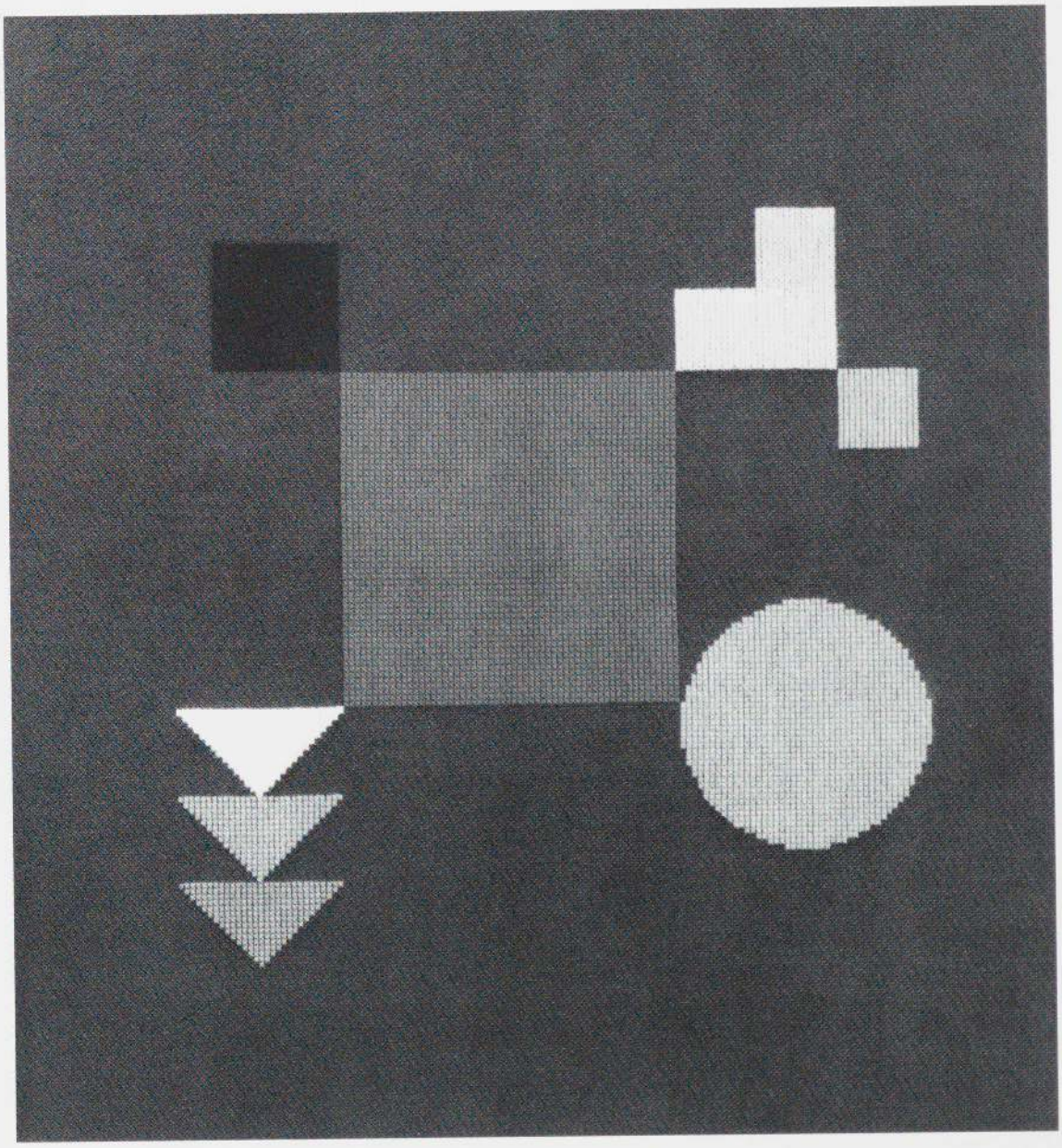
Pl. 14. *Dr. Complex* (Marionette for *König Hirsch* by Carlo Gozzi). 1918. Turned, painted wood; overall, 15⅛ x 8¼ in. Museum Bellerive, Zurich



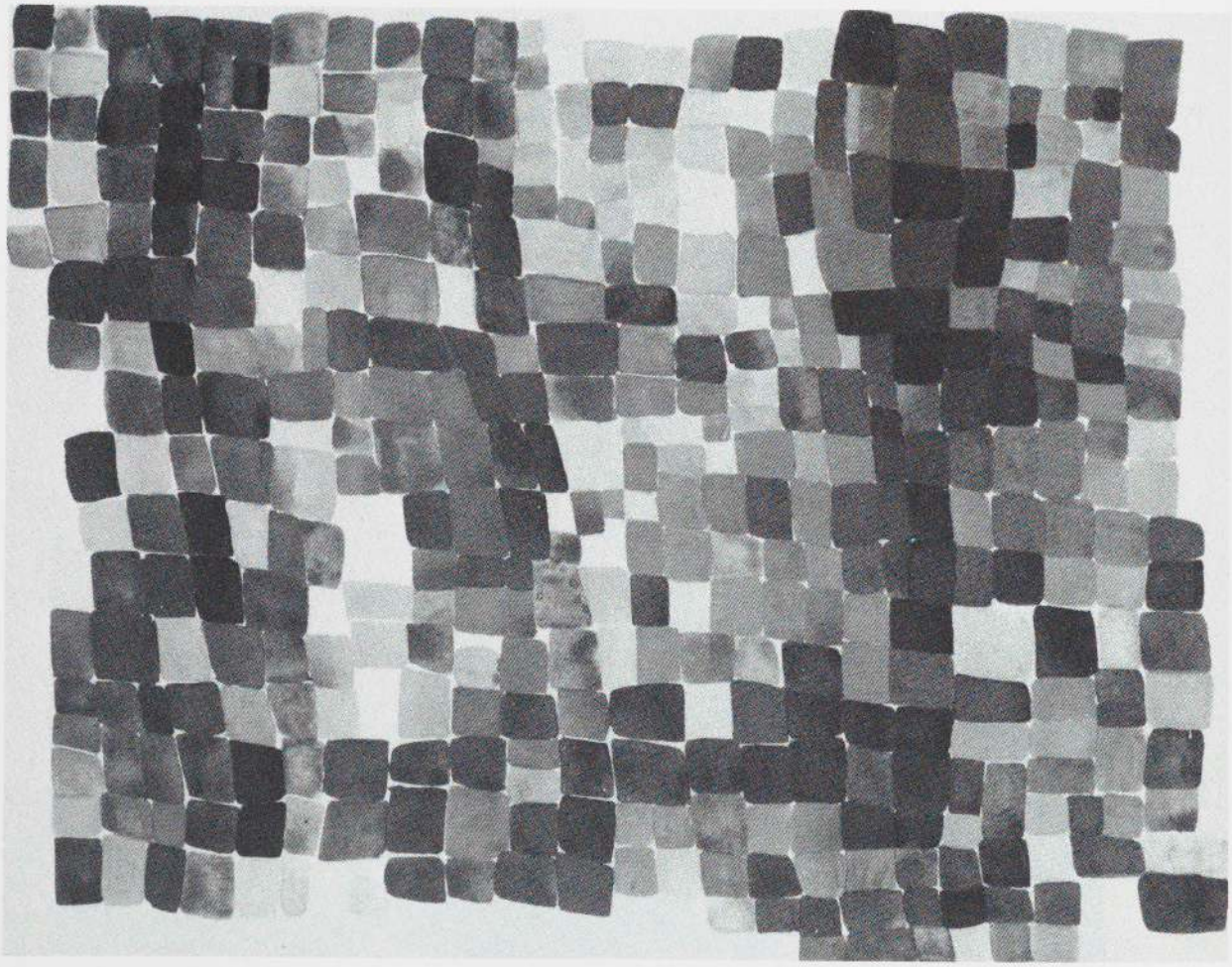
Pl. 15. *Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Reciprocal Triangles.* 1918. Oil on canvas; triptych, each panel, 44⅛ x 20⅞ in. Kunsthaus, Zurich



Pl. 16. *Composition with Squares, Circle, Rectangles, and Triangles.* 1918. Wool embroidery, 24 x 24½ in. Private collection



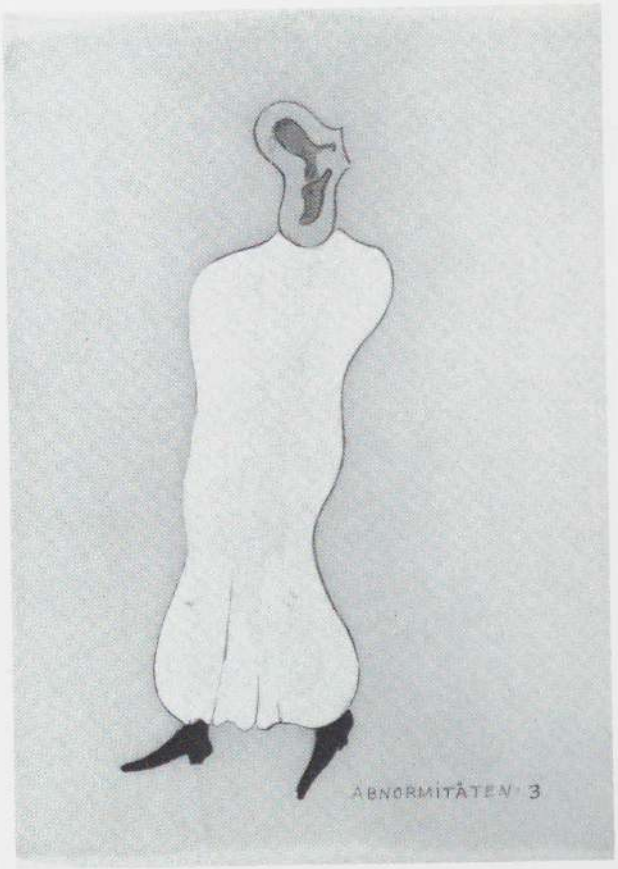
Pl. 17. *Composition in Quadrangular Brushstrokes.* 1920. Watercolor, 9 7/16 x 12 5/8 in. Private collection



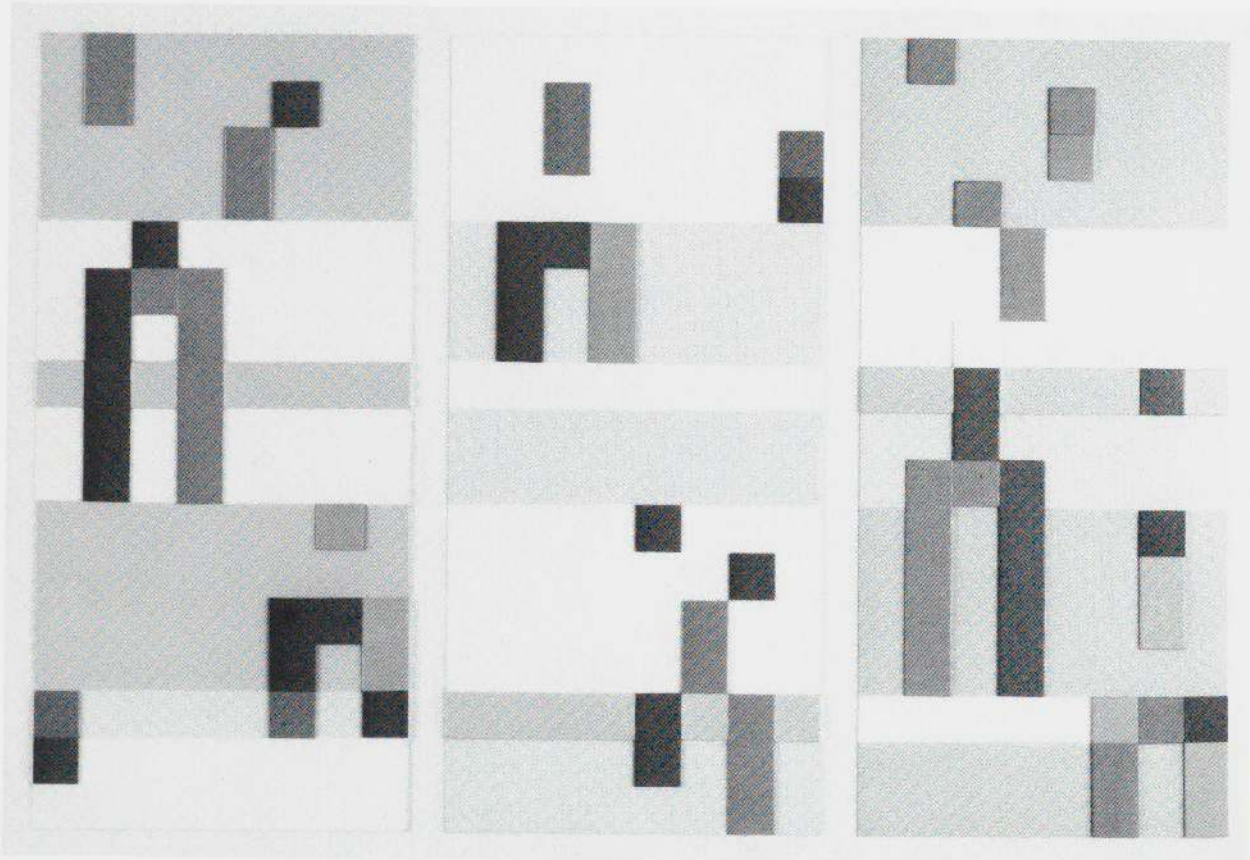
Pl. 18. *Costume Design: The Childish Ones.* c. 1925. Crayon and watercolor, 10¼ x 7⅜ in. Private collection

Pl. 19. *Costume Design: Freak.* c. 1925. Crayon and watercolor, 10 x 7½ in. Private collection

Pl. 20. *Costume Design: The Extrovert.* c. 1925. Crayon and watercolor, 10¼ x 7 in. Private collection

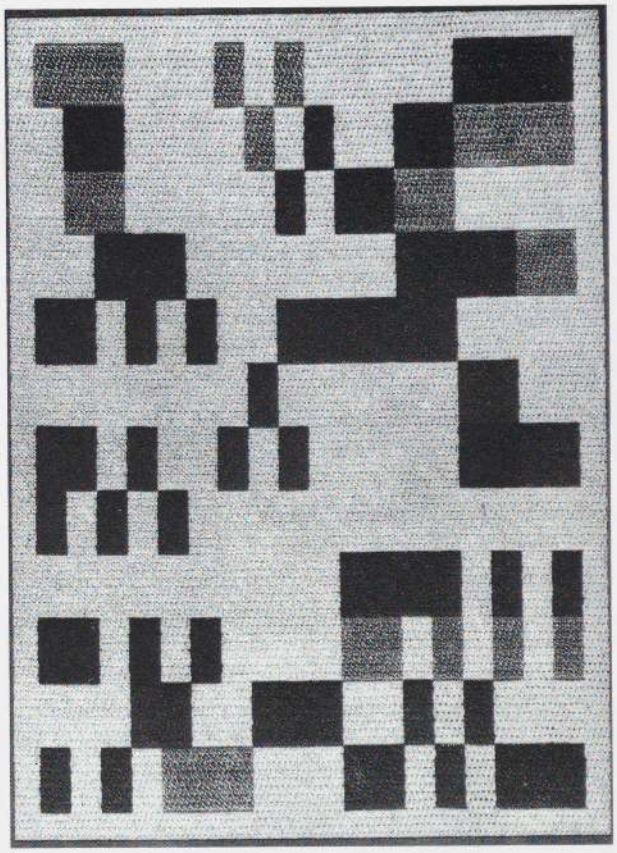


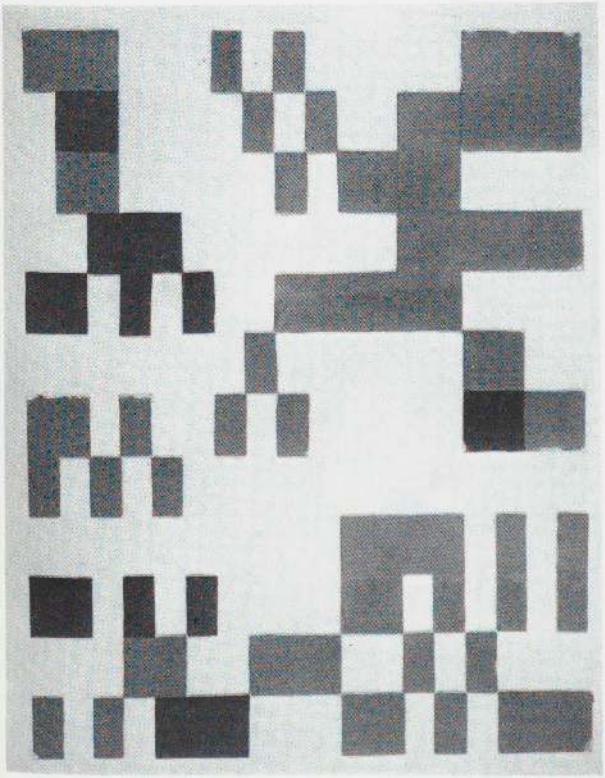
Pl. 21. *Aubette Triptych: Vertical-Horizontal Composition.* 1927–28. Oil on composition board, 40½ x 57⅛ in. Australian National Gallery, Canberra. Not in exhibition



Pl. 22. *Composition Aubette*. 1928. Cotton crochet, 29½ x 21⅝ in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany

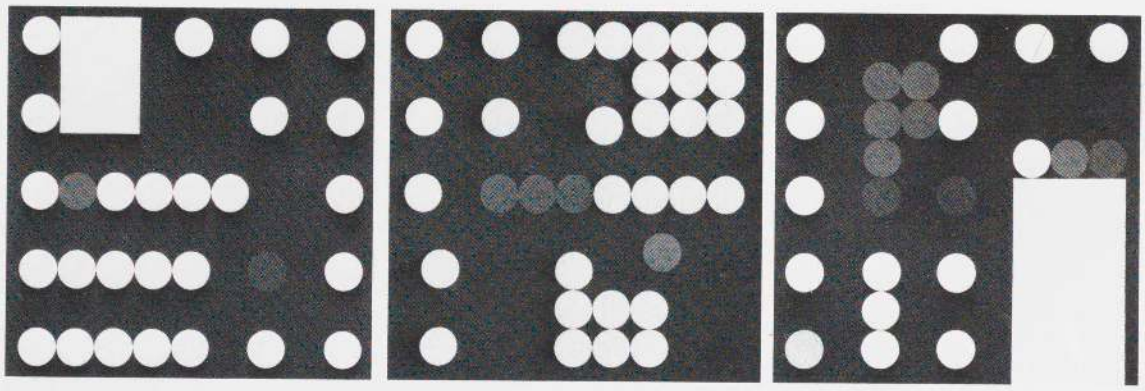
Pl. 23. *Composition Aubette*. 1927–28. Oil on composition board, 28½ x 21⅝ in. Musée d'Art Moderne de Strasbourg

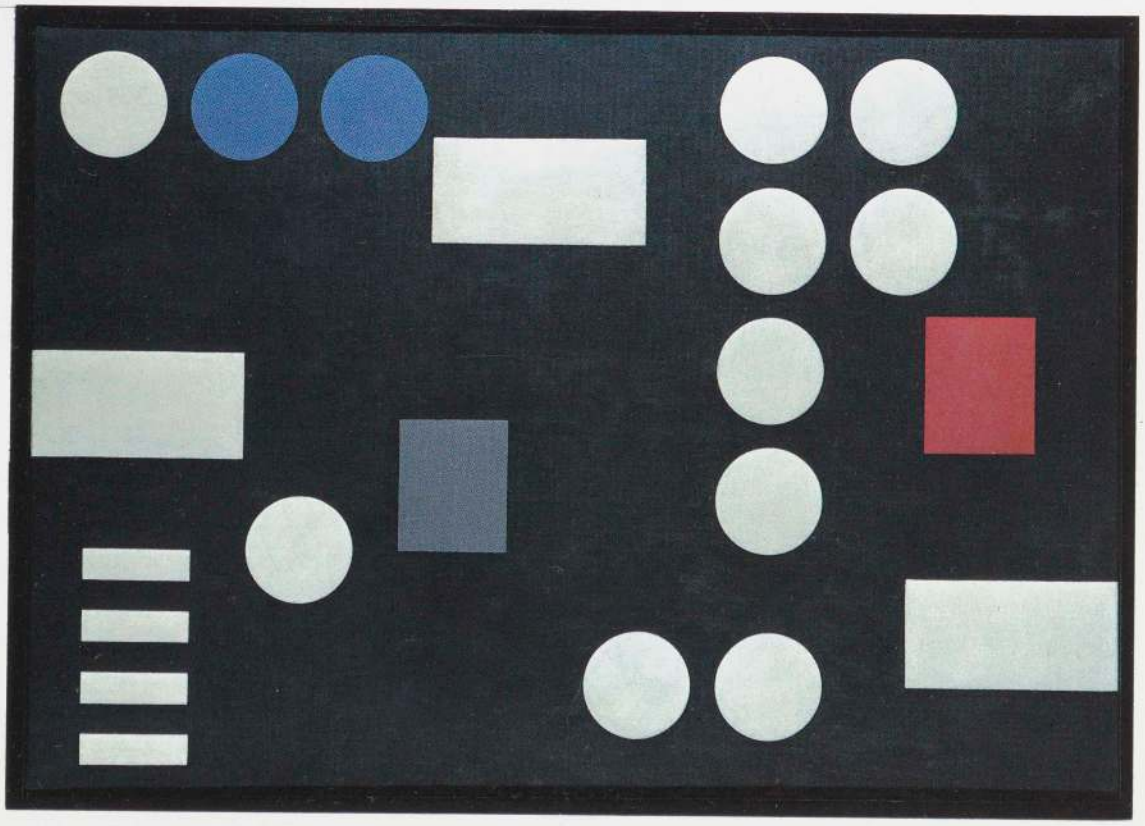




Pl. 24. *Triptych*. 1933. Oil on canvas, each panel, 21 5/8 x 21 5/8 in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Clamart, France

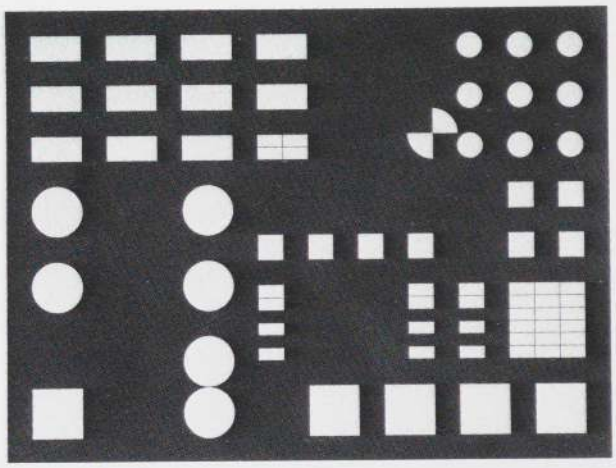
Pl. 25. *Composition with Rectangles and Circles on Black Ground*. 1931. Oil on canvas, 25 3/8 x 36 1/4 in. Kunstmuseum, Basel

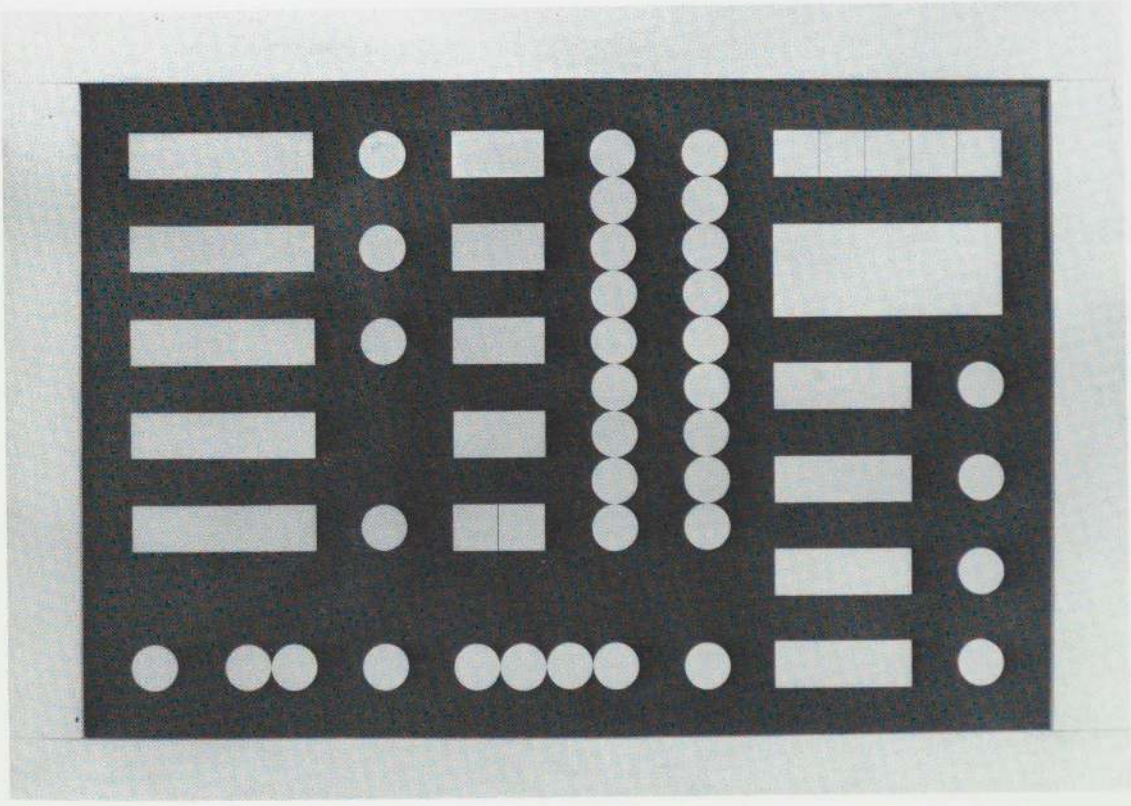




Pl. 26. *Schematic Composition*. 1933. Gouache, 14¼ x 18¾ in. Collection M. Arp-Hagenbach, Basel

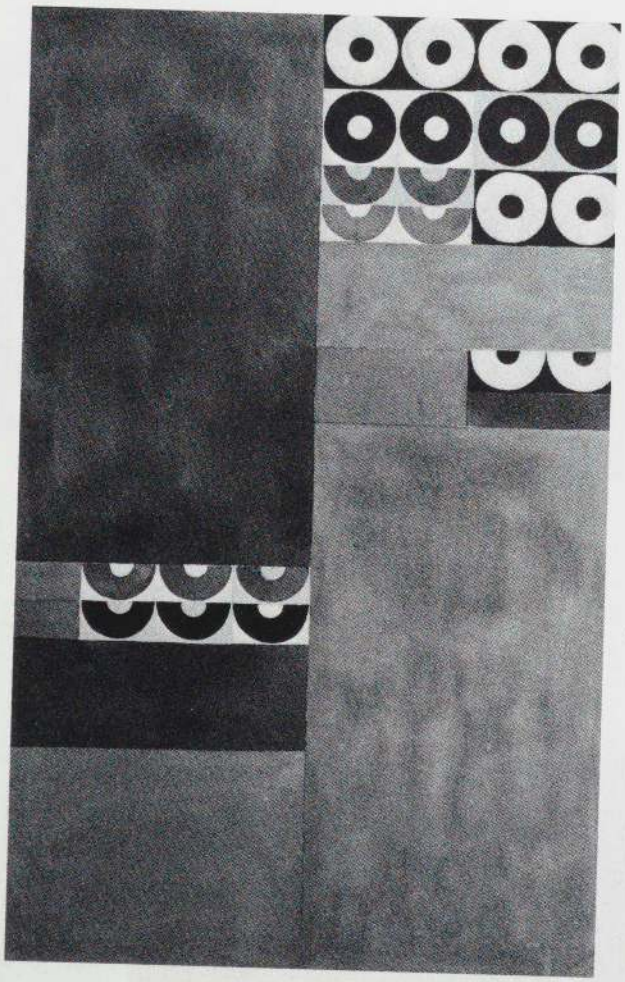
Pl. 27. *Schematic Composition*. 1933. Oil and wood on composition board, 35⅝ x 49¼ in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Silvia Pizitz, 1969

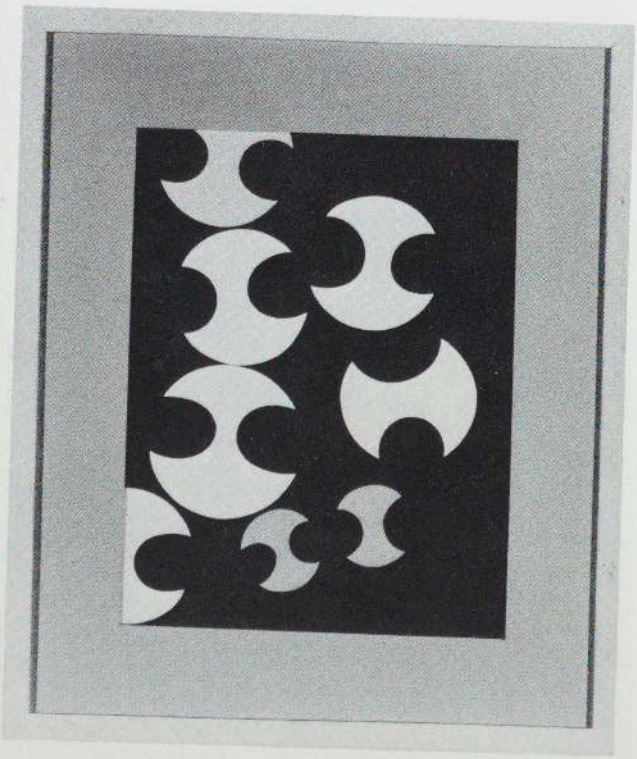




Pl. 28. *Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Circles and Half-Circles.* 1928. Gouache, 15 x 10⅞ in. Kunstmuseum, Bern

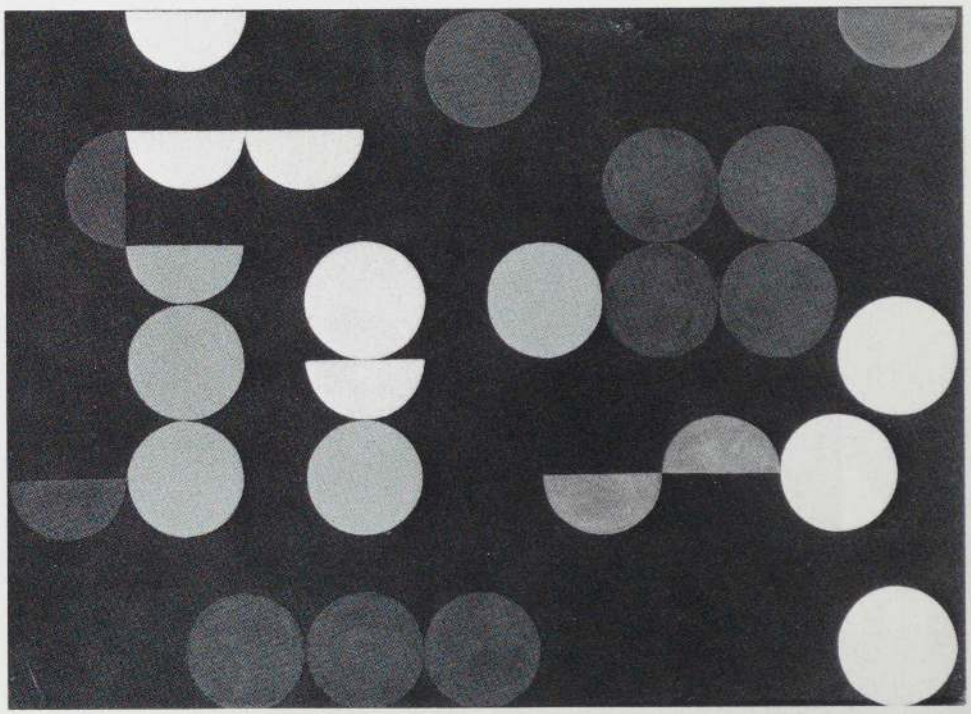
Pl. 29. *Composition with Circles Shaped by Curves.* 1935. Gouache, 13⅞ x 10⅝ in. Kunstmuseum, Bern

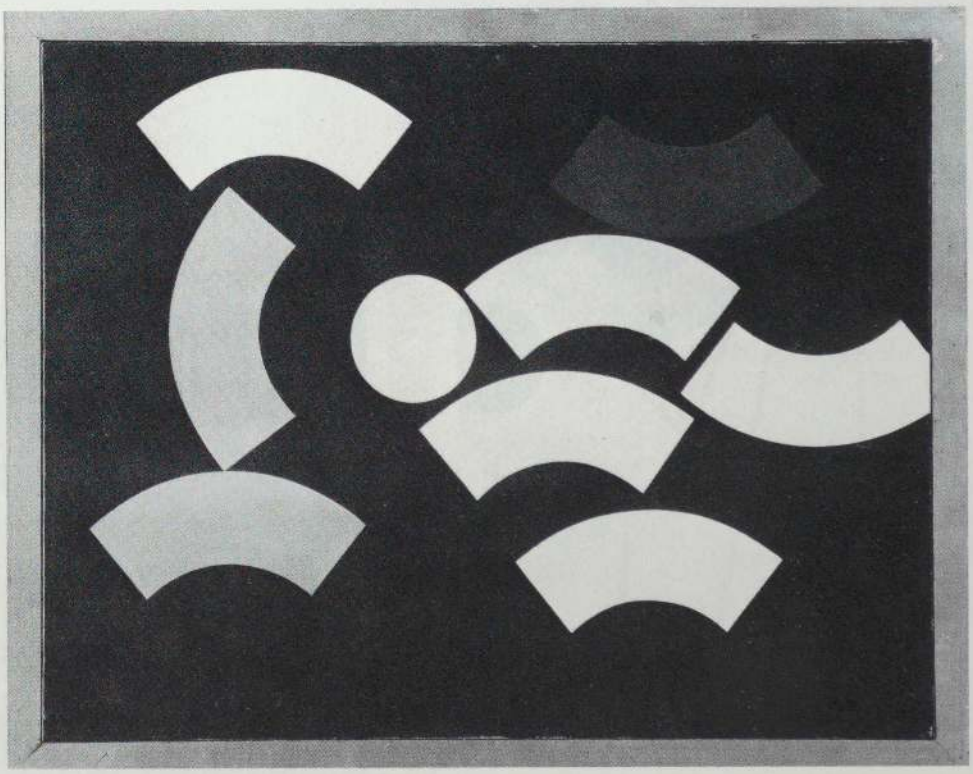




Pl. 30. *Composition with Circles and Half-Circles.* 1935. Gouache, 10¼ x 13¾ in. Vordemberge-Gildewart Estate

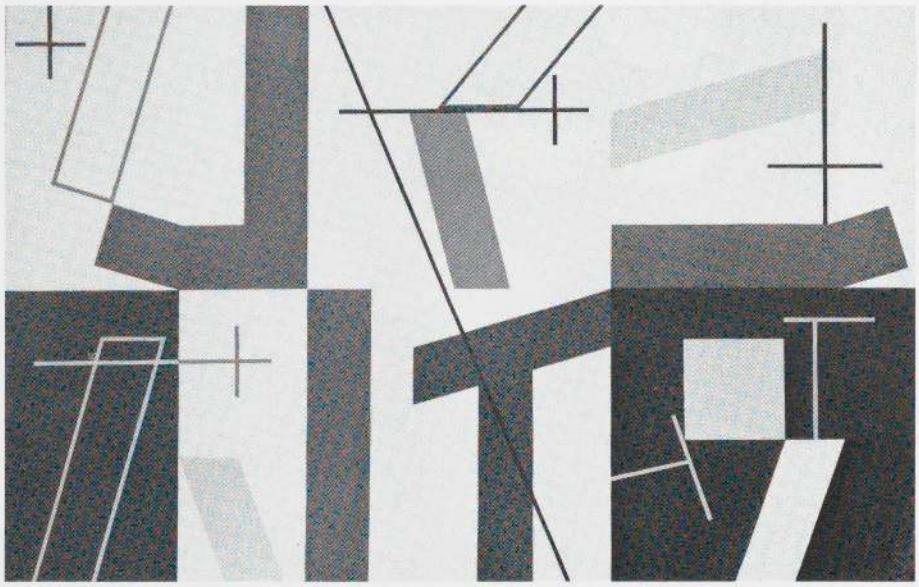
Pl. 31. *Composition with Circle and Circle Segments.* 1935. Oil on canvas, 19¾ x 25⅝ in. Kunstmuseum, Basel

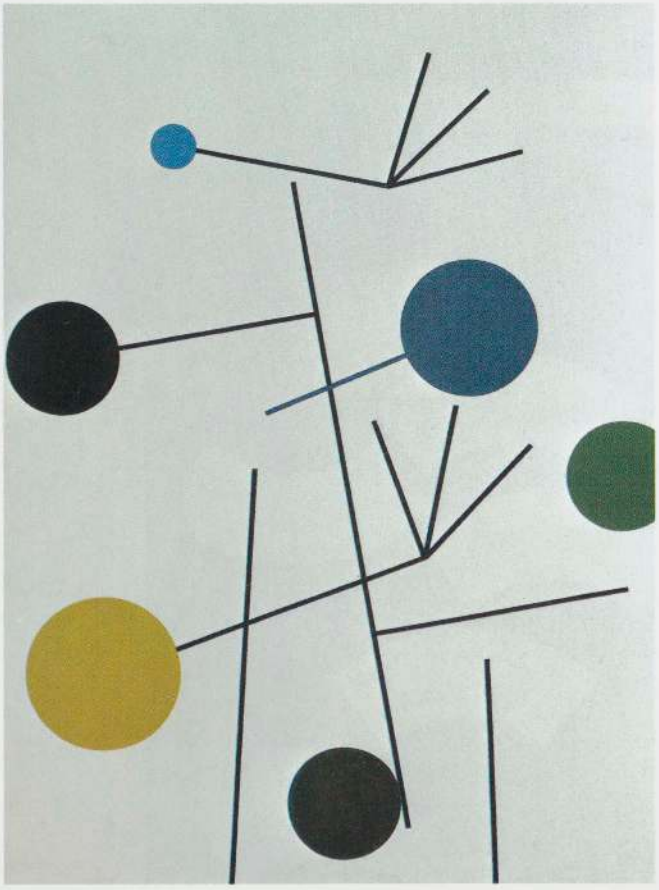




Pl. 32. *Six Spaces with Four Small Crosses.* 1932. Oil on canvas, 25⅜ x 39⅜ in. Kunstmuseum, Bern

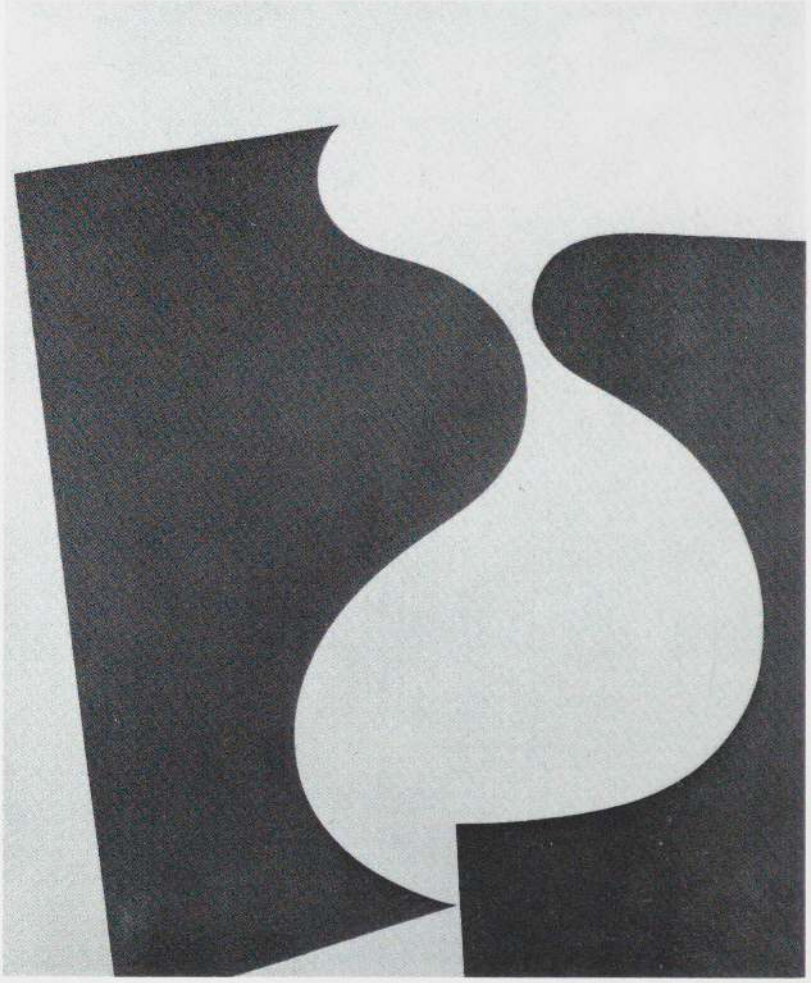
Pl. 33. *Rising, Falling, Clinging, Flying.* 1934. Oil on canvas, 39⅜ x 28¾ in. Kunstmuseum, Basel





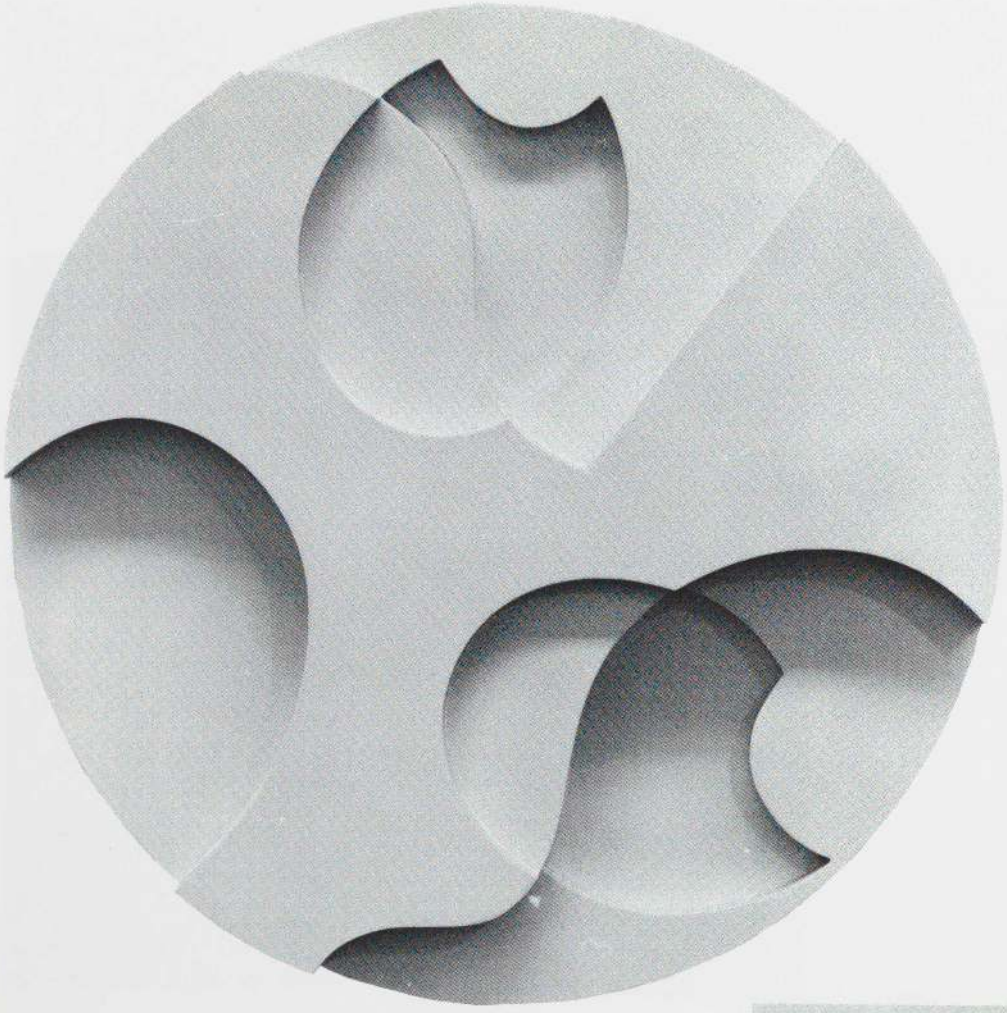
Pl. 34. *Planes Outlined in Curves*. 1935. Oil on canvas, 21 7/8 x 18 1/8 in. Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland

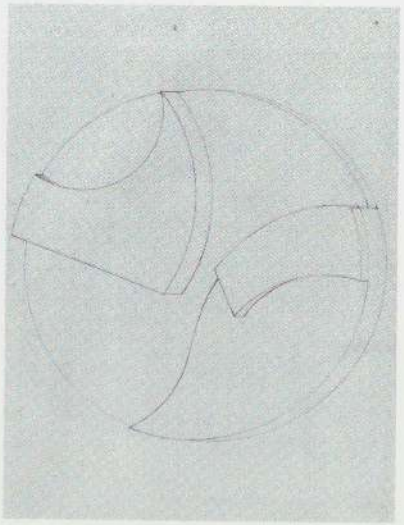
Pl. 35. Untitled. c. 1935. Gouache, 12 5/8 x 10 1/8 in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany



Pl. 36. *Shells and Flowers.* 1938. Painted wood relief, 23⅝ in. diameter. Collection Werner Schlegel

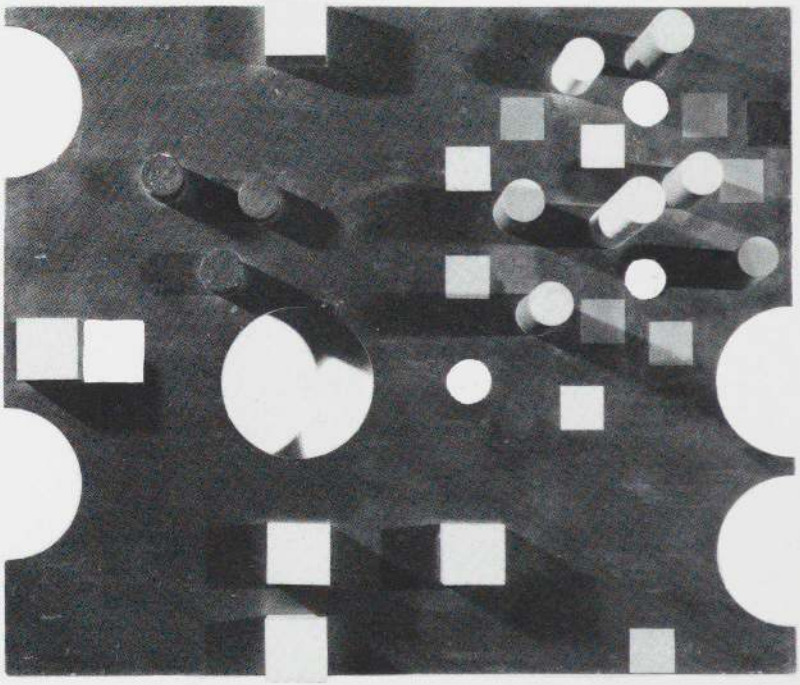
Pl. 37. Untitled (Study for Round Relief). c. 1936. Pencil, 13½ x 10½ in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany

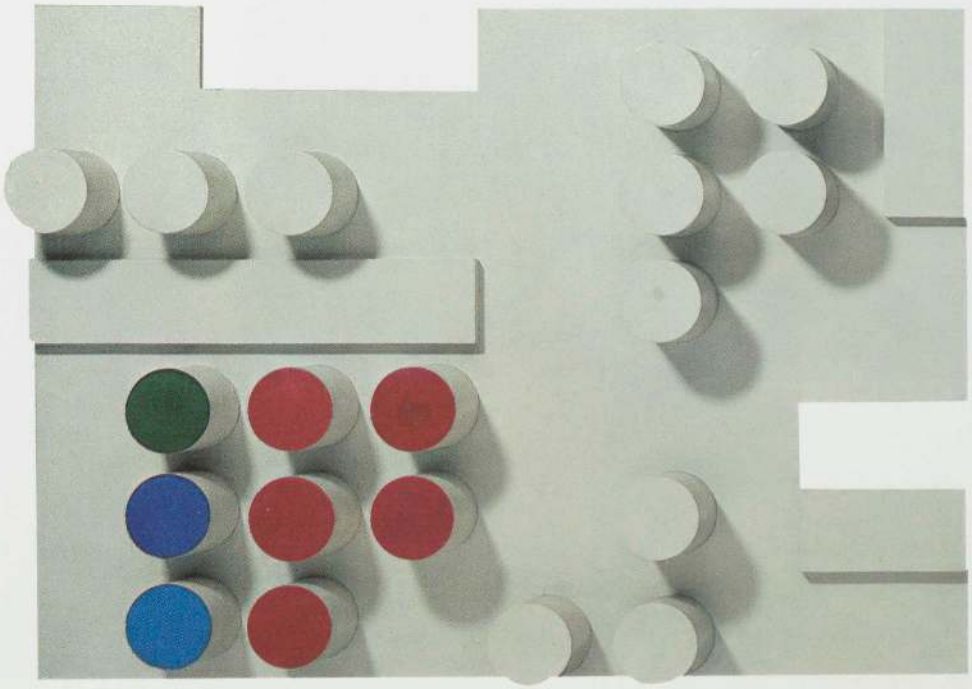




Pl. 38. *Rectangular Relief with Cutout Circles, Painted and Cutout Squares, and Rising Cubes and Cylinders.* 1938. Oil on wood, 21¾ x 25⅝ x 8⅝ in. Kunstmuseum, Bern

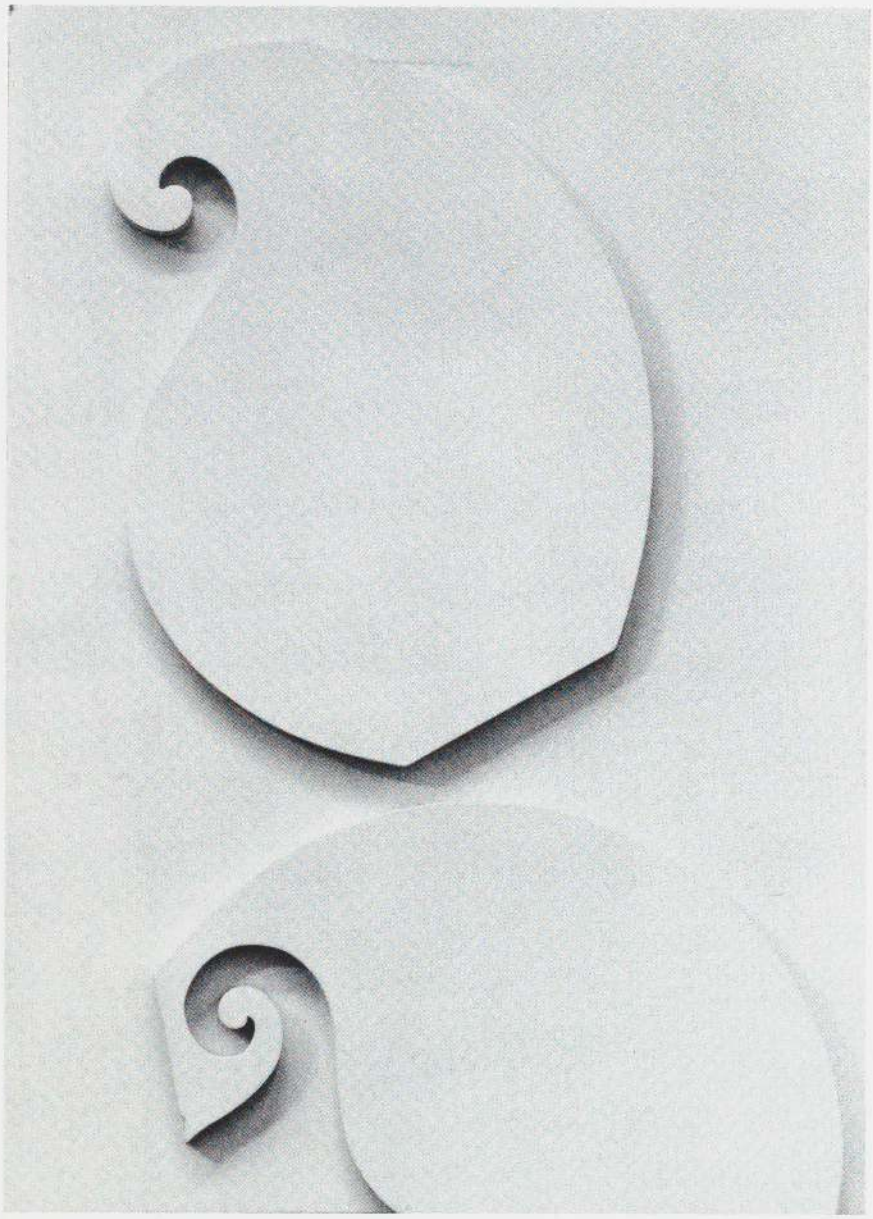
Pl. 39. *Rectangular Relief with Cutout Rectangles, Applied Rectangles, and Rising Cylinders.* 1936–39. Oil on wood, 19¾ x 27 in. Kunstmuseum, Basel

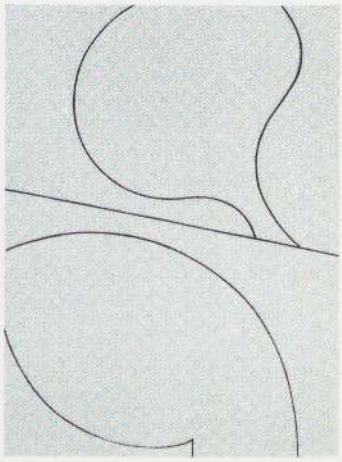




Pl. 40. *Shells, Rectangular Relief*. 1938. Oil on wood, 34⅝ x 24⅞ in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany

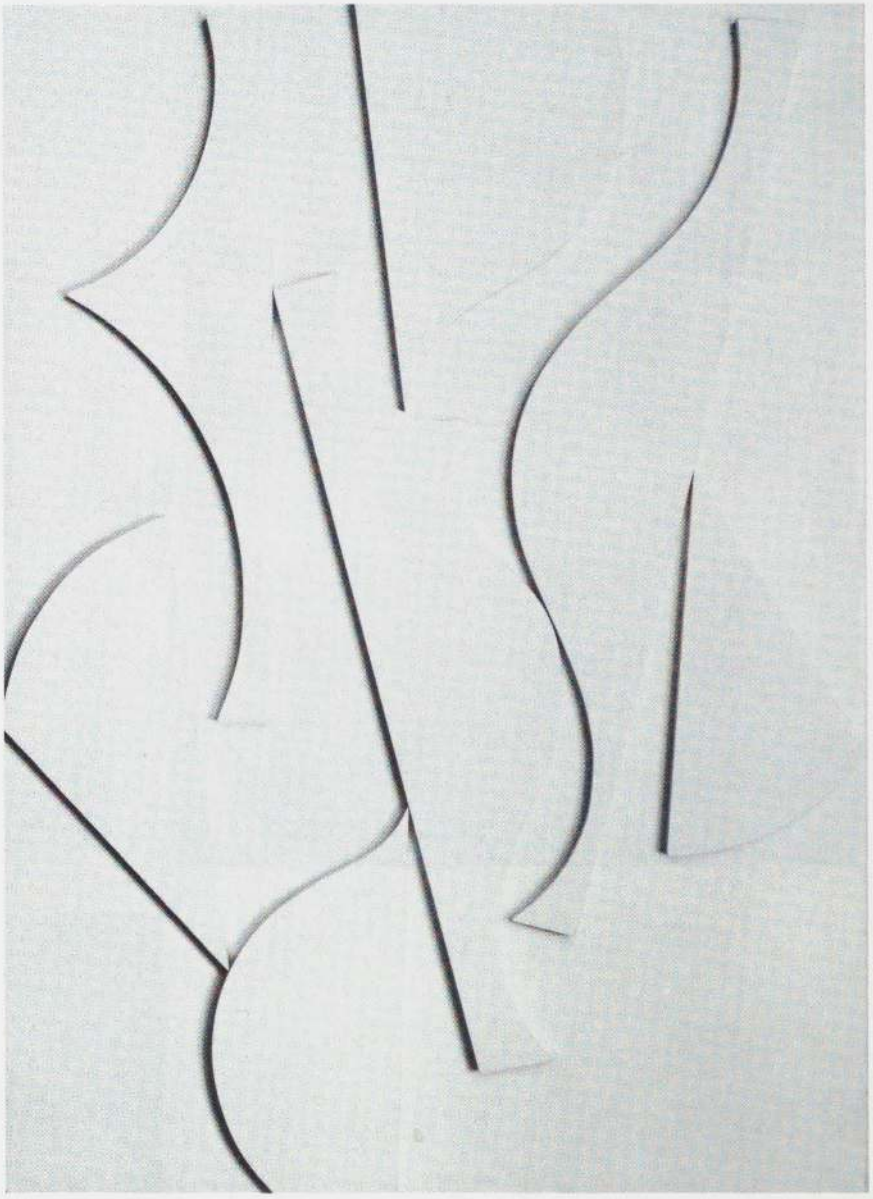
Pl. 41. Untitled. c. 1937. Black crayon, 12⅝ x 9¼ in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany

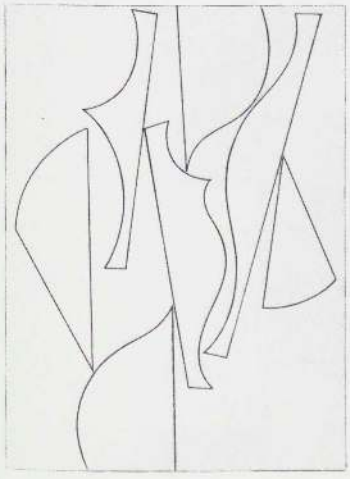




Pl. 42. *Parasols*. 1938. Painted wood relief, 34⅝ x 24¾ in. Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, the Netherlands

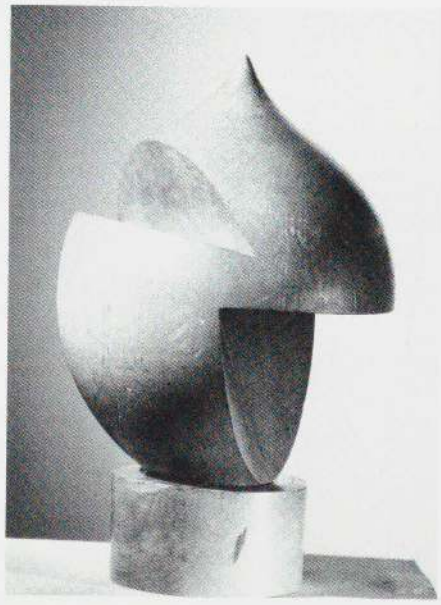
Pl. 43. Untitled (Study for Parasols). c. 1937. Black crayon, 13½ x 10 in. Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany



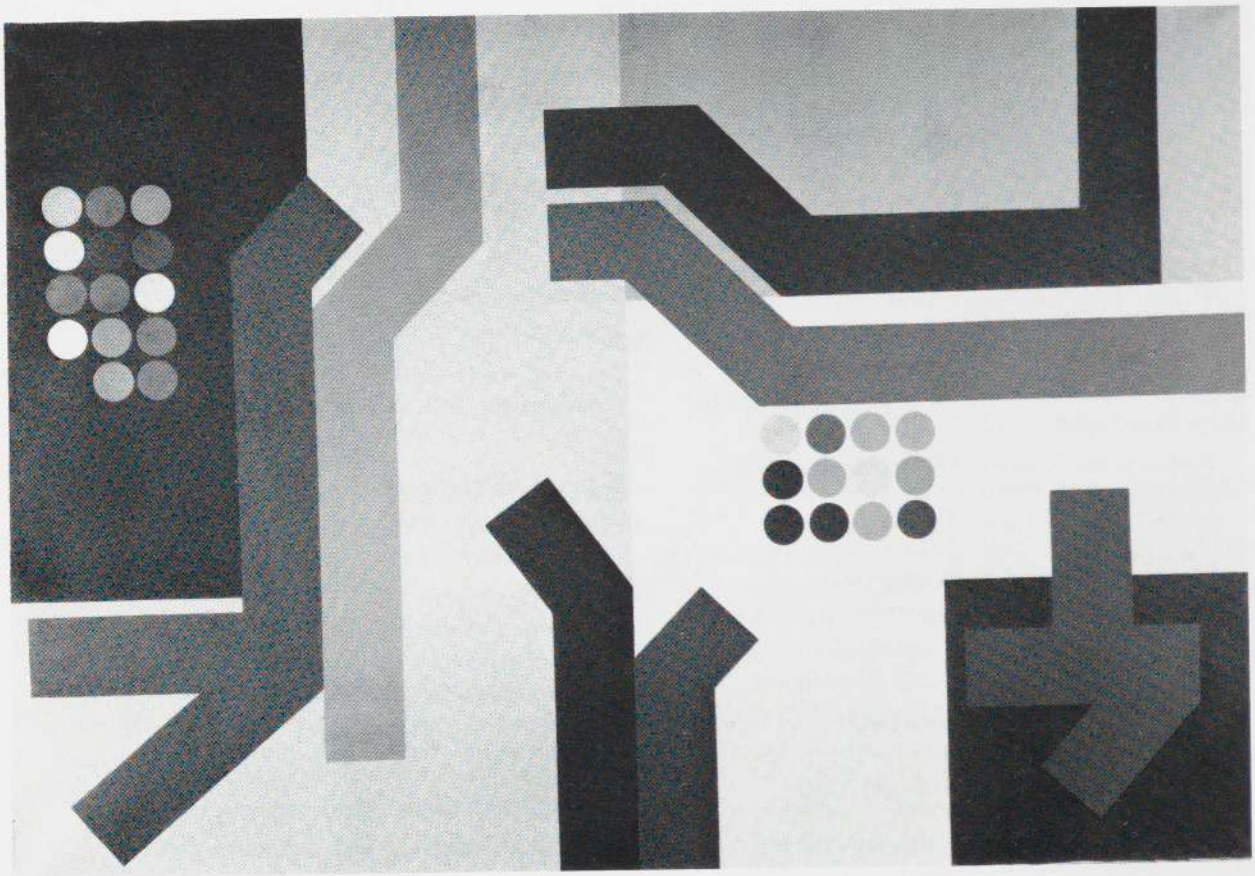


Pl. 44. *Gradation in Colors.* 1939. Oil on canvas, 25⅝ x 19¾ in. Kunstmuseum, Bern

Pl. 45. Untitled. 1937. Turned wood, 12¾ in. high. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, Gift of Jean Arp in memory of Sophie Taeuber-Arp



Pl. 46. *Twelve Spaces with Planes, Angular Bands, and Paved with Circles.* 1939. Oil on canvas, 31¾ x 45¾ in. Kunsthaus, Zurich



CHRONOLOGY

1889
January 19, born in Davos, Switzerland, to a German father and Swiss mother. Father dies of tuberculosis before Sophie is four. Brought up by mother, who is an amateur artist, with older brother and sister.

1908–10
Studies at the School of Applied Arts of Saint Gallen (Textile Section).

1911 & 1913
Studies in experimental art studio of Walter von Debschitz in Munich.

1912
Studies at the School of Arts and Crafts of Hamburg, Germany.

1915
Becomes member of Swiss Workshop.
November, meets Jean Arp at exhibition in the Galerie Tanner in Zurich.

1916
Appointed Professor of Textile Design and Techniques at School of Applied Arts of Zurich. Studies dance at the School of Rudolf von Laban.

1916–19
Participates in Zurich Dada group activities. Dances at Dada soirées.

1918
Makes marionettes and designs sets for *König Hirsch* ("The Stag King") by Carlo Gozzi, presented in conjunction with the exhibition of the Swiss Workshop in Zurich.

1922
October 20, marries Jean Arp in the Ticino.

1925
Serves on jury of Swiss section for the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

1926
Travels to Italy and visits Pompeii. Completes mural painting for the architect Paul Horn in Strasbourg.

1927–28
Executes commission from Paul Horn and his brother André to design and decorate the interior of the Café de l'Aubette in Strasbourg. Shares work on the Aubette with Jean Arp and Theo von Doesburg.

1928
Moves to Meudon-Val Fleury, outside of Paris, with Arp. Their house is constructed and decorated entirely from Taeuber-Arp's designs.

1929
Ceases teaching at School of Applied Arts in Zurich.

1930
Member of Cercle et Carré, Paris.

1931
Becomes member of Abstraction-Création-Art Non-Figuratif, officially established February 15.

1934
Resigns from Abstraction-Création with Arp and others in protest over its intransigence in excluding all figurative art.

1937
Founder and editor of the review *Plastique/Plastic*, published in New York and Paris. Member of Allianz (union of Swiss painters), Zurich.

1940
Because of the war, leaves Meudon with Arp, stopping first in Nérac in the Dordogne and then Veyrier in the Savoy.

1941–42
Stays in Grasse with Arp and their friends Sonia Delaunay and Alberto Magnelli. December 1942, returns to Zurich.

1943
January 13, dies in Zurich as the result of an accident.

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BY DANIEL STARR

WRITTEN, EDITED, OR ILLUSTRATED BY TAEUBER-ARP

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EXHIBITIONS

Limited to one-, two-, and three-person exhibitions.

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New York. Sidney Janis Gallery. *10 Paintings by Sophie Taeuber-Arp; 6 Paintings in Collaboration; 10 Reliefs & Paintings by Jean Arp.* Jan. 30–Feb. 25, 1950. Catalog.

Paris. Galerie Denise René. *Arp–Taueber-Arp.* June 1950. Catalog.

Liège. Salle de l'Emulation. [Exhibition of works by Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp]. Oct. 1953. Catalog: Seuphor, Michel. *Mission spirituelle de l'art.*

Berner Kunstmuseum. *Sophie Taeuber-Arp.* March 6–Apr. 19, 1954. Catalog. Also shown at the Kunstmuseum Saint Gallen.

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Paris. Galerie Denise René. *Arp, Taeuber-Arp: Gouaches, Collages, Reliefs, Sculptures.* May 24–June 22, 1957. Announcement.

New York. Galerie Chalette. *Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp.* Oct.–Nov. 1960. Catalog.

Paris. Galerie Denise René. *Arp–Taeuber-Arp: Sculpture, Reliefs, Collages, Gouaches.* Dec. 1962–Jan. 1963.

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London. J. P. L. Fine Arts. *Works on Paper by Sophie Taeuber.* Oct. 18–Nov. 30, 1977.

Rolandseck. Bahnhof Rolandseck. *Sophie Taeuber-Arp.* Nov. 1, 1977–Jan. 15, 1978. Catalog.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

As Taeuber-Arp did not regularly sign or date her work until the last two years of her life, much of its dating was, at Jean Arp's request, posthumously assigned by Hugo Weber and published in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, edited by Georg Schmidt (Basel: Holbein Verlag, 1948). The following entries conform in almost all cases to Weber's dates. The dimensions throughout are given in inches and centimeters, height preceding width.

Pillow Sham. c. 1916. Wool embroidery, 20¼ x 21 in. (51.3 x 53.3 cm). Museum Bellerive, Zurich. Plate 8

Vertical, Horizontal, Square, Rectangular (Vertical, horizontal, carré, rectangulaire). 1917. Gouache, 9⅛ x 6⅛ in. (23 x 15.5 cm). Private collection. Plate 1

Untitled. c. 1917–18. Gouache, 18½ x 10¼ in. (40.7 x 25.8 cm). Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland. Plate 2

Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Abstract Motifs (Composition verticale-horizontale à motifs abstraits). 1917–18. Oil on cardboard, 10¼ x 26 in. (26 x 66 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany. Plate 6

Composition with Squares, Circle, Rectangles, and Triangles (Composition à carrés, cercle, rectangles, et triangles.) 1918. Wool embroidery, 24 x 24½ in. (61 x 62.5 cm). Private collection. Plate 16

The five marionettes for Carlo Gozzi's *König Hirsch* ("The Stag King") in the exhibition are replicas of those created by Taeuber-Arp for a 1918 production of the play. The original marionettes, illustrated in plates 10–14, are in the collection of the Museum Bellerive, Zurich.

Angela. Turned, painted wood; overall, 19⅛ x 4⅜ in. (48.5 x 11 cm). Original, plate 12

Dr. Complex. Turned, painted wood; overall, 15⅛ x 8¼ in. (38.5 x 19 cm). Original, plate 14

Freud Analyticus. Turned, painted wood; overall, 24 x 6¾ in. (61 x 17 cm). Original, plate 11

Guard. Turned, painted wood; overall, 16 x 5¼ in. (40.5 x 13 cm). Original, plate 10

Leandro. Turned, painted wood; overall, 20¾ x 4¾ in. (52.5 x 12 cm). Original, plate 13

Portrait of Jean Arp. 1918. Turned, painted wood, 10 in. (25.4 cm) high. Private collection. Plates 4, 5

Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Reciprocal Triangles (Composition verticale-horizontale à triangles réciproques). 1918. Oil on canvas; triptych, each panel, 44⅛ x 20⅞ in. (112 x 53 cm). Kunsthaus, Zurich. Plate 15

Untitled. c. 1918. Wool embroidery, 7¾ x 4¾ in. (19.5 x 12 cm). Collection Werner Schlegel. Plate 7

In collaboration with Jean Arp: *Dada Object.* c. 1918–19. Wood box with gilded edges containing stuffed silk and wool forms, 6 x 5 x 4¾ in. (14.5 x 12.5 x 12 cm). Private collection. Plate 9

Portrait of Jean Arp. 1918–19. Turned, painted wood, 13½ in. high x 7⅞ in. diameter (34.3 x 20 cm). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Gift of Mme Arp. Plate 3

Composition in Quadrangular Brushstrokes (Composition en taches quadrangulaires). 1920. Watercolor, 9 7/16 x 12⅝ in. (24 x 32 cm). Private collection. Plate 17

Costume Design: The Childish Ones (Die Infantilen). c. 1925. Crayon and watercolor, 10¼ x 7⅜ in. (26 x 18.5 cm). Private collection. Plate 18

Costume Design: The Extrovert (Die Extravertierte). c. 1925. Crayon and watercolor, 10¼ x 7 in. (26 x 18.4 cm). Private collection. Plate 20

Costume Design: Freak (Abnormitäten: 3). c. 1925. Crayon and watercolor, 10 x 7½ in. (25.8 x 18.8 cm). Private collection. Plate 19

Composition Aubette. 1927–28. Oil on composition board, 28½ x 21⅝ in. (72 x 54.6 cm). Musée d'Art Moderne de Strasbourg. Plate 23

Composition Aubette. 1927–28. Oil on composition board, 26 x 22½ in. (66 x 57.2 cm). Musée d'Art Moderne de Strasbourg

Composition Aubette. 1928. Cotton crochet, 29½ x 21⅝ in. (75 x 55 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany. Plate 22

Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Circles and Half-Circles (Composition verticale-horizontale à cercles et demi-cercles). 1928. Gouache, 15 x 10⅞ in. (37.6 x 27.5 cm). Kunstmuseum, Bern. Plate 28

Composition with Rectangles and Circles on Black Ground (Composition à rectangles et cercles sur fond noir). 1931. Oil on canvas, 25⅜ x 36¼ in. (64.5 x 92 cm). Kunstmuseum, Basel. Plate 25

Six Spaces with Four Small Crosses (Six espaces à quatre petites croix). 1932. Oil on canvas, 25⅜ x 39⅜ in. (64.5 x 100 cm). Kunstmuseum, Bern. Plate 32

Triptych. (Triptyque). 1933. Oil on canvas, each panel, 21⅝ x 21⅝ in. (55 x 55 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Clamart, France. Plate 24

Schematic Composition (Composition schématique). 1933. Gouache, 14¼ x 18¾ in. (36 x 47.8 cm). Collection M. Arp-Hagenbach, Basel. Plate 26

Schematic Composition (Composition schématique). 1933. Oil and wood on composition board, 35⅝ x 49¼ in. (89.6 x 125 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Silvia Pizitz, 1969. Plate 27

Rising, Falling, Clinging, Flying (Surgissant, tombant, adhérent, volant). 1934. Oil on canvas, 39⅜ x 28¾ in. (100 x 73 cm). Kunstmuseum, Basel. Plate 33

Composition with Circles and Half-Circles (Composition á cercles et demi-cercles). 1935. Gouache, 10¼ x 13¾ in. (26 x 35 cm). Vordemberge-Gildewart Estate. Plate 30

Composition with Circle and Circle Segments (Composition à cercle et à segments de couronne de cercle). 1935. Oil on canvas, 19¾ x 25⅝ in. (50 x 65 cm). Kunstmuseum, Basel. Plate 31

Composition with Circles Shaped by Curves (Composition à cercles profilés par des courbes). 1935. Gouache, 13⅞ x 10⅝ in. (35 x 27 cm). Kunstmuseum, Bern. Plate 29

Planes Outlined in Curves (Plans profilés en courbes). 1935. Oil on canvas, 21⅞ x 18⅛ in. (55.5 x 46 cm). Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland. Plate 34

Untitled. c. 1935. Gouache, 12⅝ x 10⅛ in. (31.9 x 25.8 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany. Plate 35

Untitled (Study for Round Relief). c. 1936. Pencil, 13½ x 10½ in. (34.4 x 26.2 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany. Plate 37

Rectangular Relief with Cutout Rectangles, Applied Rectangles, and Rising Cylinders (Relief rectangulaire, rectangles découpés, rectangles appliqués et cylindres surgissants). 1936–39. Oil on wood, 19¾ x 27 in. (50 x 68.5 cm). Kunstmuseum, Basel. Plate 39

Untitled. 1937. Turned wood, 12¾ in. (32.4 cm) high. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, Gift of Jean Arp in memory of Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Plate 45

Untitled. c. 1937. Black crayon, 12⅝ x 9¼ in. (32.1 x 23.5 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany. Plate 41

Untitled (Study for Parasols). c. 1937. Black crayon, 13½ x 10 in. (34.4 x 25.6 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany. Plate 43

Parasols. 1938. Painted wood relief, 34⅝ x 24¾ in. (88 x 63.5 cm). Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, the Netherlands. Plate 42

Shells and Flowers (Coquilles et fleurs). 1938. Painted wood relief, 23⅝ in. (60 cm) diameter. Collection Werner Schlegel. Plate 36

Shells, Rectangular Relief (Coquilles, relief rectangulaire). 1938. Oil on wood, 34⅝ x 24⅞ in. (88 x 63.2 cm). Foundation Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, West Germany. Plate 40

Rectangular Relief with Cutout Circles, Painted and Cutout Squares, and Rising Cubes and Cylinders (Relief rectangulaire, cercles découpés, carrés peints et découpés, cubes et cylindres surgissants). 1938. Oil on wood, 21¾ x 25⅝ x 8⅝ in. (55 x 65 x 21.8 cm). Kunstmuseum, Bern. Plate 38

Gradation in Colors (Echelonnement en couleurs). 1939. Oil on canvas, 25⅝ x 19¾ in. (66.5 x 49.7 cm). Kunstmuseum, Bern. Plate 44

Twelve Spaces with Planes, Angular Bands, and Paved with Circles (Douze espaces à plans, bandes angulaires et pavés de cercles). 1939. Oil on canvas, 31¾ x 45¾ in. (80.5 x 116 cm). Kunsthaus, Zurich. Plate 46

Sketch for Ex-Libris of Elisabeth Müller. 1942. Pencil, 10⅞ x 8⅛ in. (27.5 x 20.5 cm). Private collection. Figure 4

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SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP

Carolyn Lanchner

Swiss artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp was in the vanguard of geometric abstraction throughout her career, from the Dada years of 1915–19 until her premature death in 1943. In her introductory essay, Carolyn Lanchner, Curator of Painting and Sculpture, examines the evolution of Taeuber-Arp's work from the early vertical-horizontal compositions of the mid-teens to the polychrome wood reliefs of the late thirties. Taeuber-Arp's work is considered in the context of the extraordinary developments in European art from 1910–20, as well as in the light of the artist's formal training as a textile designer and dancer. Special emphasis is placed on Taeuber-Arp's direct involvement with other artists of her generation, at first with those who formed the Zurich Dada group and later as a member of Cercle et Carré (1930) and Abstraction-Création-Art Non-Figuratif (1931) in Paris, and as a founder and editor of the review *Plastique* (1937). Taeuber-Arp's working relationship with Jean Arp, whom she married in 1922, is also explored.

The range of materials Taeuber-Arp used and the variety of projects in which she was involved underline Mrs. Lanchner's observation that "the impulse to integrate life and art was very strong in Taeuber." The catalog of a selective retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* illustrates her early abstract work, Dada heads in painted and turned wood, maquettes for the decoration (with Arp and Theo van Doesburg) of the Café de l'Aubette in Strasbourg, a selection of paintings and gouaches, as well as the series of wood reliefs of the late thirties that were characterized by Kandinsky as demonstrating a "mastery of 'mute' forms... combining the beauty of volumes with the mysterious moving power of color."

The exhibition, organized by Carolyn Lanchner, Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, is the first to present to an American audience an overview of Taeuber-Arp's career.

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