

**Nachschöpfungen and Sophie Taeuber-Arp's artworks at the III Bienal de São Paulo.**

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The first exhibition of artworks by Sophie Taeuber Arp in Brazil was brought and organized by the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo in 1949, under the direction of Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho, who invited Leon Degand to be director of the Museum<sup>1</sup>, The exhibition was named *From Figurative to Abstractionism*, inaugurated on the 8<sup>th</sup>. March 1949. Two works from Sophie Taeuber were exhibited there. The first entitled Plans, bars and undulating lines, 1943, oil on paperboard, dimensions 57 x 48 and also Arising, falling , Adhering, flying, from 1942, oil on canvas, 100 x 73, both artworks were part of the Hans Arp collection, in Meudon in France. Leon Degand inaugurates in São Paulo and in the Brazilian context, together with a small exhibition of Alexander Calder organized by Mário Pedrosa in Rio de Janeiro, the first efforts to exhibit abstract art in Brazil.

In that year of 1949, the exhibition, organized by the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, had been held in factory sheds in Brás

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<sup>1</sup> DEGAND, Léon, and Sérgio Milliet. 1949. Do figurativismo ao abstracionismo [exposição], Museu de arte moderna, São Paulo, Brasil, 1949. São Paulo: Museu de arte moderna.

neighbourhood (industrial area in São Paulo). The context of the relation between abstract art and industrialization was contemplated. The catalog also provides a sample of how forces were divided in Brazil at that time. The debate on figurative art and abstraction was heating up. So much that Sergio Milliet was also invited to write in the catalog. As is well known, his position was openly reticent about abstract art. Degand had contact with the leading abstract artists who passed through France, especially the Abstraction-Creation and the Grasse Group, and also had close contact with Michel Seuphor who was a painter and specially art's critic of the couple Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber.

Leon Degand's interest in abstract art and the knowledge of Sophie Taeuber's previous trajectory in concretism would set the precedent for the possibility that the artist's painting would be chosen for the acquisition prize at the first Biennial of São Paulo in 1951. This awarded work at the First Bienal de São Paulo is entitled *Triangles point sur pointe, rectangle, carrès, barres*, oil painting on canvas, dimensions 81 x 65 cm, contains in its back a seal of Meudon, corresponding to the general classification of Sophie Taeuber, 1931/5. A type of choice for the abstract chain was defined in Brazil. This separation tried to be surpassed by the artists of the São Paulo group, who obtained small success in works of the period. It should be noted that even in the Big exhibition Sophie Taeuber's Constructive art at the Biennale was not present the dresses and decorative objects produced by her. The Bienal de São Paulo was also understood within the traditional separation between minor and major art.

The III Bienal in 1955, held a Sophie Taeuber's with 43 works, among oil paintings of various sizes and materials, gouaches, drawings, constructions and reliefs in wood or similar material, alongside of 4 photographs of marionettes from 1918 and an album of lithographs made by Hans Arp, Sonia Delaunay, Alberto Magnelli for the *Nourritures Célestes*, edition of 1950. This was intended to be and truly was the first great exhibition of the Taeuber Arp artworks after her premature death in 1943, putting together works of different compositional phases. The exhibition Swiss artist exhibition was well received by local newspapers, like on this article by Geraldo Ferraz, published in *O Estado de São Paulo*, on the occasion of the 1951 Bienal opening, where he

addresses precisely to the two women painters represented at the Bienal which paved the way for abstract research, Sonia Delaunay and Sophie Taeuber Arp. Ferraz finishes the text saying "despite their important contribution to abstractionism, she was the second generation of the abstract trend. It came to abstractionism when all the logical factors of melodic and rhythmic composition had already been ordered and established by the researches of Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Mondrian, Doesburg, and Arp."<sup>2</sup>

The Brazilian critic Geraldo Ferraz was led by misconceptions generalized at that time because it is well known that Sophie Taeuber's work was innovative in the sense of establishing firsts bases to the concrete art with the research of form and color. As Heinz Keller would say, in a catalog made by the Swiss representation for the special room of Sophie Taeuber's special room at the III Bienal, in 1955, besides being the artist's great solo exhibition until that moment, "it was with great satisfaction that Switzerland accepted the invitation to present for the second time - and with the emphasis that was not possible in the first Bienal de São Paulo - the work of Sophie Taeuber Arp. It is not only her participation in the Dada of Zurich, which makes this extraordinary woman one of the pioneers of modern art; already in 1916 - in a surprising parallel, but independent of the group "Stijl" - she attacks the problems of the concrete art. Her painting and graphic work, as well as reliefs, murals decorations and designs for fabrics, are the expression of a personality that is always creative, intensely clear and harmonious."<sup>3</sup>

In this exhibition, her rooms followed a scheme of arrangement according to the criteria of organization of the raisonné catalog of Sophie Taeuber Arp, like the following: 1920-21, rectangular stains in colors; 1916-1925 vertical-horizontal compositions; 1927-1928, vertical-horizontal compositions: Aubette; 1930-1939 static compositions with circles, squares and rectangles; 1931-1934, dynamic compositions; 1932-1939 compositions with multiple spaces; 1933-1939 compositions with symmetrical and asymmetrical

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<sup>2</sup> FERRAZ, G. Sophie Taeuber Arp, O Estado de São Paulo, sem data. Artigo pertencente ao *dossier* Sophie Taeuber Arp na Bienal de São Paulo, c. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> HEINZ, Keller. Introdução In Catálogo Suíça: Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Alois Carigiet, Hans Fischer. III Bienal de São Paulo, 1955, p. 02.

elements; 1936-1938, compositions within a circle; 1935-1939, reliefs; 1938-1942, lines; 1942, latest buildings. A series of photographs of Aubette and an album of lithographs made with Arp, Sonia Delaunay and Alberto Magnelli for the book "Aux Nourritures Célestes", an edition from 1950.

On October 11, 1954, the Federal Department of Interior of Switzerland sent a letter to the president of the Bienal de São Paulo, the entrepreneur Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho, announcing the Swiss representation in the third Biennial of 1955, after the absence in 1953: "Mr. President, we have the honor to refer to the correspondence that we have exchanged with you on the subject of Swiss participation in the III Bienal (...) and then announces that the retrospective exhibition of Sophie Taeuber Arp was proposed by the Department Swiss"<sup>4</sup>.

Perhaps Tauber-Arp's exhibition was executed from a suggestion of Hans Arp or Heinz Keller, and according to the expectations of the Brazilian organizers who wished for a painter representing Swiss abstractionism, the document states: "According to our proposal, at the letter of October 2, to officially participate again in this exhibition and entrusted to our department the task of organizing the participation of our country. According to the desire expressed by Brazil, we anticipate a retrospective of Sophie Taeuber Arp, to which will be added a collection of prints and drawings of one or several contemporary Swiss artists."<sup>5</sup>

In a letter dated from 26<sup>th</sup>. October, 1954, Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho wrote to the Brazilian ambassador to Switzerland, Raul Bopp, in Bern, commenting on the fact that the country had decide, after being absent in the second Bienal to send a retrospective dedicated to Sophie Taeuber Arp's work : "It is with great satisfaction that I address my dear friend - who has just communicated to us the ambitious Swiss participation in the third Bienal, with a room dedicated to the work of Sophie Taeuber Arp - to express our sincere

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<sup>4</sup> Carta do Departamento Federal do Interior da Suíça para Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho, 11/10/1954. Material pertencente ao acervo da Fundação Bienal de São Paulo.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, ibidem.

gratitude for the success achieved”<sup>6</sup>. Matarazzo was happy with the great exhibition of the Swiss artist, after the first Bienal had acquired a significant work of the painter, namely: Triangles pointe sur pointe, Rectangle, Carrès, Barres, oil on canvas, 1931.

Although there is no official photographic record of Taeuber Arp's special room at the III Bienal, a list of works in the catalog proves that the exhibition of Deux cercles, plans et croix, 1931/16, belonged to the Museum of Lodz in Poland. This exact painting was donated to the museum in Poland, along with two other compositions in the year of 1931, on the occasion of the realization of a great international constructivist exhibition in the museum of Lodz. These works were Composition verticale à cercles, carrés et rectangles, 1930, classification 1930/9, and composition of the year 1931, unidentified, with measures of 30 x 23 cm in size. The 1930/9 painting did not take part in the Bienal exhibition in 1955, but it is an interesting case of how Hans Arp dealt with the absence of some works that he considered essential to the exhibition of Sophie Taeuber's work.

On a precise occasion, he determined the reproduction of Sophie Taeuber Arp's work for exhibitions in Europe and in other parts of the world during the years of 1950. What is known is that Sophie Taeuber's painting of classification number 1930/9 was reproduced, According to instructions from Hans Arp by Marcel Schneider. As can be read in the inscription on the back of the picture made and signed by the second wife of Arp, Marguerite Arp: "This is not an original picture of Sophie Taeuber Arp but a replica (...) made by Jean Arp \* due to the fact of which the original had been (illegible) made before the war. The original is in the Museum of Lodz, Poland.”<sup>7</sup>

The copy of the 1930/9 painting today belonging to the collection of the Arp Foundation in Berlin, was made by Schneider that probably have used as a model a photograph or other reproduction in black and white, perhaps the model was even the image reproduced in the Sophie Taeuber Arp's Catalog

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<sup>6</sup> Carta de Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho para Raul Bopp, 26/10/1954. Material pertencente ao acervo da Fundação Bienal de São Paulo.

<sup>7</sup> Inscrição no verso do quadro 1930/9.

from 1948<sup>8</sup>. In the Schneider's Copy, the original colors were suppressed, which were beyond the shades of gray, black and white, light blue and red. This undoubtedly gave a more austere appearance to the painting, allowing to see only the dynamics concern with the shape configuration and not to the color. This understanding of color as a subjective datum in concrete art becomes an alibi for suppressing color in many cases of formal Gestalt exercises. But that was not the case in the painting reproduced by Schneider.

Sandor Kuthy, in his article Nachschöpfungen, talks about the authorship of some artworks by Sophie Taeuber Arp, which were reproduced by Hans Arp and presented at exhibitions such as the Bienal de São Paulo: "1954: In diesem Jahr dürften die Kopien nach zwei gemälden von Sophie Taeuber aus den jahren 1930 bzw. 1931 entstanden sein. Da Arp von diesen seit 1931 im Kunstmuseum Lodz (Polen) hängenden bildern keine genauen angaben hatte, weichen die Wiederholungen in den massen wie in den farben von den originalen ab. In dem unter der leitung von Hans Arp durch Hugo Weber 1948 erstellten verzeichnis der werke Sophie Taeubers sind die originale von Lodz aufgeführt: abgebildet ist das gemälde von 1931/16. Arp zeigte 1955 an der Biennale von São Paulo die kopie von Zwei flache kreise und kreuze, 1931/16, al sein originalwerk von Sophie Taeuber"<sup>9</sup>

The image of the artwork 1931/16 was published in a special section of the magazine O Cruzeiro on the Bienal de São Paulo, together with the reproduction of Douze espaces à plans, bandes angulaires et pavês de cercles, from 1939, with classification number 1939/3, in addition to those works those images were reproduced in a different perception from their correct orientations, what need to be said is that seemed to be a difficulty to well understand the perception or spatial orientation in an abstract or a concrete painting, it was also verified on the Lodz catalog. There was also on the O Cruzeiro magazine page with the reproduction of two portraits of the artist one famous from the dadaist

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<sup>8</sup> Schmidt, Georg. 1948. Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Basel: Holbein-Verlag.

<sup>9</sup> Taeuber-Arp, Sophie, Jean Arp, and Sandor Kuthy. 1988. Sophie Taeuber, Hans Arp: Künstlerpaare, Künstlerfreunde : [Ausstellung], Kunstmuseum Bern, Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck, Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal, 1988/1989. Bern: Das Kunstmuseum, p. 181.

phase of Taeuber Arp of 1918 and another less known probably in France of 1940.

Hans Arp's standard text on Sophie Taeuber's artwork, was published in the catalog of the Swiss representation for the III Bienal and in many newspapers, draws attention to the use of basic colors in her paintings from the 1930s, but does not serve as an indication that the copy of that specific work was actually colored *Deux cercles, plans et croix*, 1931, 1931/16. Says Arp: "Vers 1930, elle adopte un mode de composition par rectangles et carrés sur un fond unicolore, noir ou blanc. Parfois elle y introduit des triangles et des cercles. Elle joint souvent ces figures entre elles par des lignes droites et les anime, sur ces profondeurs blanches ou noires, d'un mouvement d'ascension, de chute, d'oscillation, ou les y maintient immobiles. Sa palette ne connaît guère que le bleu, le rouge, le jaune, le vert. Elle conçoit ses oeuvres dans de plus grandes dimensions, et les exécute à huile. (...) Quelques oeuvres de cette époque contiennent parfois quatre ou cinq compositions différentes enchevêtrées les unes dans autres. Ces toiles sont également composées sur un fond unicolore noir ou blanc. Elle peint le damier de la nuit. Des sphères blanches, rouges, vertes, servent de pions à la nuit. La nuit joue avec le visible et l'invisible. L'invisible bat le visible."<sup>10</sup>

Although Hans Arp's text and the whole official documentation of the Swiss representation are very careful, this material does not really mention, for the public's information, the fact that a copy of an original artwork have been presented for the understanding of the trajectory made by the Swiss artist, Sophie Taeuber, or other reasons. The fact is that Arp considered these paintings from the 1930s a very important stage in the artist's career, but this lack of information about the exhibition of copies in the III Bienal de São Paulo, painted either by Arp himself or by other people, for the Sophie Taeuber's retrospective is indeed strange. This is even more surprising when we verify that these works were put up for sale by Hans Arp himself during the Third Bienal.

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<sup>10</sup> ARP, Hans. Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943) In Catálogo Suíça: Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Alois Carigiet, Hans Fischer. III Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil, 1955, p. 03-04.

Another case of artwork “re-created” by Hans Arp to use the Sandor Kuthy term, which was exhibited in the Bienal de São Paulo in 1955 and is described in the Swiss documentation as part of the section of vertical-horizontal compositions made by Sophie Taeuber Arp between 1916 and 1925, is the Symmetrical Composition - model, 1922, oil in pavatex, 67.3 x 77.5 cm. However, before to taking part in the Bienal de São Paulo, this artwork had been exhibited in Germany in an itinerant exhibition that was held respectively in the cities of Hannover, Berlin and Freiburg in Brisgau, even the exhibition was included in a small catalog of the Kestner Gesellschaft of Hannover and in this catalog was registered the information, in small letters below of the title of the work, the fact that the work Composition Vertical-horizontal was a re-creation of Hans Arp. Perhaps all this is the result of the controversy between Georg Schimdt, Hugo Weber and Hans Arp, but the reasons have to be pursued in the Stiftung Arp und Sophie Taeuber correspondences.

In the little catalog of the Hans Arp / Sophie Taeuber Arp exhibition, held between 7 January and 13 February 1955 in Hanover, we find a written information that one of Sophie Taeuber's reliefs entitled Vertical-Horizontal-Composition was made: “Von Hans Arp überwachte ausführung einer werkzeichnung von Sophie Taeuber aus dem jahr 1922, öl / holz, 67x77 cm ”<sup>11</sup>. It must be said that the text of this catalog concerning Hans Arp was written by Alfred Hentzen and the text on Sophie Taeuber by Georg Schmidt. Hentzen's text emphasized the connection between the new architecture and the works carried out and acquired for the University of Caracas in Venezuela. Although Hans Arp won a sculpture award at the Venice Biennale and the efforts for sale Sophie Taeuber's or his artworks in Hanover, at the Springer Gallery in Berlin and in Freiburg, none of the works was sold. For Arp, its market seemed to be at that moment the American continent: United States, Venezuela and why not the Brazil? Of course, the Brazil.

Madam Hagenback coment to Hentzen the specific desire to show and sell Sophie Taeuber Arp artworks non classified in the Third Bienal de São

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<sup>11</sup> Arp, Hans, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp. 1955. Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Kestner-Gesellschaft [Hannover, 7.1. - 13.2.1955]. Hannover: Vandrey, s/p.



Paulo: "Da die Biennale in Brasilien eine Gesamtschau von fünfzig Arbeiten von Sophie Taeuber zeigen wird, ist es das Beste, aus den in Hannover und Berlin ausgestellten Werken zu wählen. Ich besitze ein Triptychon von Sophie Taeuber aus dem Jahre 1918, welches der Restauration bedürftig wäre. Falls Sie dies nicht stört, werde ich es gerne schicken. Ausserdem ist mir Ihr Vorschlag sehr recht, zwei Gemeinschaftsarbeiten von Sophie Taeuber und mir auszustellen."<sup>12</sup>

The Vertical-Horizontal-Composition also appears in correspondence between Marguerite Hagenbach and Herrn Scherrer of the Kunsthalle in Basel, who was responsible for sending artworks for exhibition in Hannover. The list includes the artworks of Hans Arp for the exhibition in a total of fifteen pieces and thirteen works from Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Among these works was stated the number 5 as Vertical-Horizontal composition, the single one from 1922. This painting does not appear on the *raisonné* catalog, edited by Georg Schmidt in 1948, by Holbein-Verlag Basel. In the list sent by Madam Hagenbach, the following information appears: "Vertical-Horizontal-Composition (nach einer Werkzeichnung von 1922 von Sophie Taeuber Arp ausgeführt und von Arp überwacht), oil on pavatex, 70 x 80, with the sale price (verkaufswert of 1000 Deutch Mark). "<sup>13</sup>

The information of the sale can be found on the correspondence of Arp and this Vertical-Horizontal-Composition was not sold. Undoubtedly this is another curious case of "re-creation" by Hans Arp that was not considered by Sandor Kuthy in the episode of the III Biennial of São Paulo. Both the work (1931/16) and the vertical-horizontal composition (entitled for the biennial as symmetrical composition - mock-up) of 1922 were put up for sale, prices were respectively 15494.50 cruzeiros (sale price of 3500 Swiss francs) and for the vertical-horizontal composition, the value of 6640,50 cruzeiros (sale price of 1,500 Swiss francs) as can be seen in correspondence with a list sent by the Federal Department of Interior of the Government of Switzerland, dated April 18, 1955, for the organization of the Third Bienal de São Paulo.

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<sup>12</sup> Carta de Marguerite Hagenbach para Alfred Hentze, 07/04/1955. Pertencente ao acervo do Archiv der Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp.

<sup>13</sup> Carta de Marguerite Hagenbach para Herrn Scherrer, sem data precisa mas provavelmente do mês de julho de 1955.

The total of works for sale at the Bienal de São Paulo need to be studied both at the as Archiv der Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp and at as the Bienal de São Paulo Archive, but we have already found information about other Sophie Taeuber artwork that possibly was made by Arp and put to sale in the Bienal de São Paulo: it is Shells, number 38, (1938/32), oil on wood, 88.1 x 63, 2 cm for 4000 francs. Last curious case of re-creation the works of Sophie Taeuber by Hans Arp is precisely a relief presented for the III Bienal de São Paulo because its classification number is 1938/32. It occurs that this numbering does not exist in the catalog made by Hugo Weber for the Raisonné catalog of 1948<sup>14</sup>. The only "Shell" cataloged is number 1938/28 and there is the following information: "four or five rectangular reliefs are found in America". Everything suggests that Hans Arp probably attributed this new number for the new relief.

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<sup>14</sup> Schmidt, Georg. 1948. Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Basel: Holbein-Verlag, p. 141.