

ARP

Stiftung Arp e.V. Papers

The Art of Hans Arp after 1945

Volume 2

Edited by Jana Teuscher and Loretta Würtenberger



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Director's Foreword

Engelbert Büning

Hans Arp's late work after 1945 can only be understood in the context of the horrific three decades that preceded it. The First World War, the catastrophe of the century, and the Second World War that followed shortly thereafter, were finally over. Thirty years of fearing for his life and living in dread of persecution were finally over.

It is therefore no surprise that the artist's speechlessness at the beginning of World War I was manifest in Dada poetry, which at the time was a new form of expression, having developed in response to Europe's dreadful launch into modernity. In Germany, there was only a short respite, which was characterized by hope for a new democratic future. What followed was the horrifying recognition that what were thought to have been the ghosts of the past were returning with still more disastrous consequences for the continent. As everyone knows, World War II wrought yet greater destruction.

After Arp's beloved wife and colleague Sophie accidentally died from carbon monoxide poisoning in 1943, Arp became so paralyzed that it is astonishing he could continue his work at all after 1945.

Since our primary responsibility is to promote Arp's artistic legacy and that of his first wife, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, we dedicated the Stiftung Arp's biannual conference in 2017 to this late body of work, which has found little resonance within the scholarly community. We are pleased to present the findings in this volume. Our hope is not only to share new research, but also to provide further stimulus for our fellowship program. Established in 2014, it supports research by both emerging as well as established scholars on the work of Hans and Sophie Taeuber-Arp and the wider context surrounding it.

On behalf of the Stiftung Arp e.V., I extend special thanks to the conference participants, who now present their conclusions and insights to a wider public in our series, the Stiftung Arp e.V. Papers. Our heartfelt thanks go to our conference host, the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, Netherlands, and especially to its Director Lisette Pelsers, who placed its stunning rooms at our disposal, and to her team members Renske Cohen Tervaert, Jannet de Goede, Wanda Vermeulen, and Lies Boelrijk. We also thank the Cultural Affairs Department at the German Embassy in The Hague for its generous support, which extended beyond financial backing. Last but not least, we are grateful to Loretta Würtenberger and our former Curator Maike Steinkamp for organizing the conference.

Foreword

Jana Teuscher and Loretta Würtenberger

The central aim of the Stiftung Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp e.V.'s bi-annual conference is to bring together researchers and interested parties from around the world to reflect on Hans Arp's work together, and to discuss specific facets thereof which have received all too little attention, despite their importance. In 2017, the conference was dedicated to the theme of "The Art of Arp after 1945" and focused on aspects of Hans Arp's late works.

Created during the period between 1945 and the artist's death in 1966, the late work is breathtaking in its resilience. It responds to the artistic currents of its time, while simultaneously continuing to pursue and fully realize themes of the pre-war years. And it does all of this in a manner true to Arp's beloved process of nature, which repeats annually, yet is perpetually and masterfully renewed. Arp reaped the rewards of outward success during these years. However, he did not stagnate, but rather—with Marguerite Hagenbach-Arp at his side from 1953—he increasingly took the latitude to develop his oeuvre further. It culminated in the *Threshold Sculptures*, surprisingly contemporary works in which the artist, who was then over sixty, developed an entirely new formal language. It was also a period marked by extensive travel, both in the literal sense to Greece, Mexico, and the United States, and in the figurative sense to the mysticism of the Middle Ages and to Asian philosophy.

Unrolling the intellectual map of these developments and tracing the ways Arp crisscrossed its territories was the great joy of the two-day conference in Otterlo, The Netherlands, which the Stiftung Arp e.V. organized in grateful cooperation with the Kröller-Müller Museum. Parallel to the conference, the Kröller-Müller Museum held an exhibition devoted to Arp entitled *The Poetry of Form*, which was accompanied by a catalogue of the same name.

With its distinguished collection situated in one of Europe's most significant sculpture parks, the Kröller-Müller Museum provided a rich framework for the conference. We extend our special thanks to the Museum's Director, Lisette Pelsers, and her team for their ongoing support and assistance with logistics and organization.

The authors address a wide spectrum of topics. For example, Jan Giebel and Simona Martinoli focus on the late works in their contributions to the present volume. On the one hand, Jan Giebel is concerned with the so-called *Threshold Sculptures*, which Hans Arp began after 1958. On the other, Simona Martinoli turns her attention to the *Forest Wheels* that Arp created a few years later for his garden in Tessin. Rudolf Suter turns his attention to Hans Arp's interest in mysticism and its influence on his artistic output. To that end, he consulted the many books on mysticism in Arp's library, which is largely preserved in the artist's former homes in Clamart, France and Locarno, Switzerland. Likewise, Isabella Ewig addresses the subject of Arp and mysticism in her exploration of his connections to Camille Bryen and Abhumanism. In her essay on the Brazilian Lygia Clark, Heloisa Espada brings our attention to an artist working outside of Europe, demonstrating Arp's wide-ranging impact once more. Alternately, Marta Smolińska addresses the avant-garde networks that had been established in the 1920s and 1930s, in which artists from Eastern Europe established highly influential positions. With this as her starting point, the art historian analyzes the neo-avant-garde in Poland and its fascination with Arp's work. To complement these studies on Hans Arp as a visual artist, Agathe Mareuge turns to Arp's poetry and analyzes the parallel processes he used to create both forms of art. The two final texts in this volume take up the subject of architecture, once again showing how Arp's influence transcended genres. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen explores curvilinear lines in the work of Hans Arp and the architect Alvar Aalto, tracing the connections and relationships between the two. Similarly, Dick van Gameren illuminates Arp's overarching significance for architectural form in the twentieth century. Overall, we hope that the essays in this publication will also lead to new scholarly engagement with the work and influence of Hans Arp.

Our third conference will be held in 2019, and once again we invite the circle of Arp enthusiasts to follow our plans as they develop. In accordance with our tradition of selecting a meaningful location, we have landed on the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen near Basel. The conference planned by the

Stiftung Arp e.V. will be dedicated to Arp's contributions to the development of the sculpture of the twentieth century. With an emphasis on Arp's work and those of his contemporaries, we hope to articulate the radical change that took place in sculpture over the course of the previous century.

We would like to thank the authors for sharing their insights. An international volume of conference proceedings that brings together scholarship by authors from around the world requires not only engaging scholarship, but also translations that are just as thorough and precise. We offer our heartfelt thanks to Sarah McGavran for the translation from the German, Lynda Stringer for translating the French passages, and Marcin Turski for the translation from the Polish. Not only did they translate these scholarly texts accurately, but they also transposed the words of the poet Hans Arp into English with great finesse. Last but not least, we thank Kai Fischer for his assistance in finalizing this publication.

The Art of Hans Arp after 1945

An Introduction

Maike Steinkamp

In March of 1954, the German art critic Will Grohmann wrote in a newspaper article: “Hans Arp is a phenomenon [...]. He is a man for whom there exist neither national borders nor intellectual and spiritual boundaries.”¹ According to Grohmann, the artist was one of the freest citizens of the world. What is more, he was one of the greatest contemporary sculptors, printmakers, and poets.

Indeed, Hans Arp (1886–1966) was a cosmopolitan whose oeuvre defies categorization in terms of both nationality as well as artistic style or movement. The French-German artist was a founding member of Dada in Zürich in 1916. By the mid-1920s, he was mingling with the Surrealists in Paris, and in the early 1930s he joined the Paris artists’ groups *Cercle et Carré* and *Abstraction Création*, which were dedicated to non-objective and geometric art. Arp was one of the major proponents of organic abstraction. Metamorphosis, or transformation and growth in nature, is a unifying theme in his work. He neither recognized artistic categories, nor did he limit his efforts to a single medium or genre. For Arp, poems, drawings, collages, reliefs, and from the early 1930s, sculptures, too, stood in close dialogue with one another.

Arp’s work from the Dada period and his stylistic development and ties to the international avant-garde during the 1920s and 1930s are well documented. By contrast, his late work has received relatively little scholarly attention.² This is surprising because Arp attained his international breakthrough as a sculptor only after 1945, when he began to receive numerous commissions for public works and was awarded multiple prizes. For instance, he produced two large-scale reliefs for Harvard University in Cambridge in 1950 (*fig. 1*). A commission for a sculpture at the university complex designed by Venezuelan architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva in Caracas between 1940 and 1960 followed in 1954. On the campus of the University City of

Caracas, there is a close interplay between architecture, city planning, and visual art. Many artists, including Miguel Arroyo, Alexander Calder, Fernand Léger, and Henri Laurens participated in the project. Arp contributed the large-scale sculpture, which stands on the covered plaza in front of an untitled ceramic relief by Matteo Manaure (*fig. 2*). In general, during this period, Arp's works increased in scale and expanded even further into the public sphere. This proves true for the bronze relief he designed for UNESCO in Paris and the multi-part aluminum relief on the façade of the Technical University in Braunschweig (*fig. 3*). As was the case with the commissions, Arp did not have to wait long after the end of the Second World War and his first successes in the United States for international recognition.³ At the 1954 Venice Biennale, he received the Grand Prize for Sculpture (*fig. 4*). Ten years later, in 1964, he was awarded the prestigious Grand Prix National des Arts in France.

Arp's sculptures and reliefs were featured prominently at the first *documenta* in Kassel in 1955. Its organizer Arnold Bode wrote that the aim of this first major international exhibition to take place in Germany after the demise of National Socialism was to: "uncover the roots of contemporary art in all its manifestations."⁴ On view were primarily works by artists who

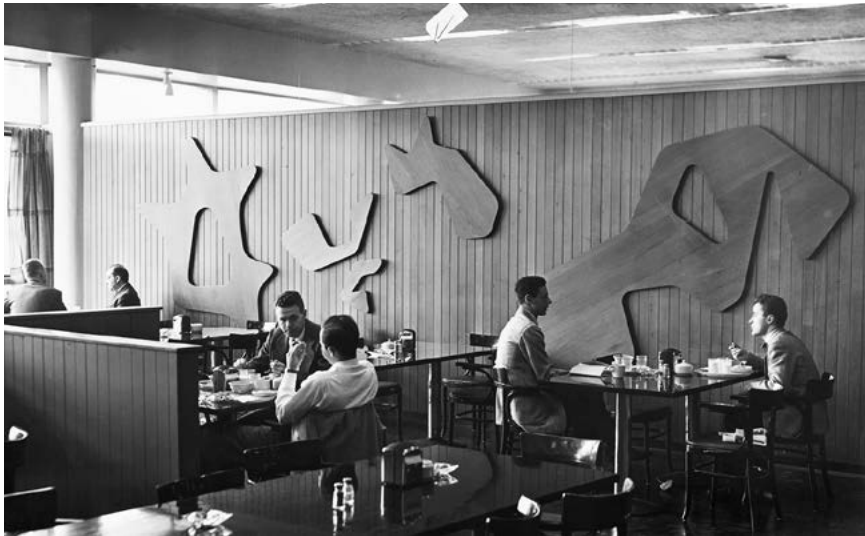


Fig. 1 Hans Arp: *Constellations*, 1950, Rau 397, American Redwood, Harvard Graduate Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth



Fig. 2 Hans Arp: Shepherd of Clouds, 1954, Giedion-Welcker 122, Bronze, 330 × 123 × 230 cm, in front of Matteo Manaure's untitled mural, University City of Caracas, Caracas



Fig. 3 View of the wall relief by Arp for the Auditorium Maximum of Braunschweig Technical University, taken in November 1960

had begun their careers in the first half of the twentieth century and whose art was denigrated by the National Socialists. *Documenta* presented their work as both retrospective and as anticipatory of future artistic movements and styles. Within this framework, Arp's work was understood as a signpost for subsequent generations of artists. His sculpture *Pagoda Fruit* (1949, Giedion-Welcker 97), which was not displayed on a base, was located at the entrance to the sculpture gallery at the Fridericianum. Centered along the main axis of this major exhibition space within the first *documenta*, it served as a pendant to Henry Moore's *King and Queen* (1952–1953). The gallery was lined with additional sculptures by Arp and by artists such as Alexander Calder, Barbara Hepworth, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and Berto Lardera (fig. 5). Arp's work was also well represented at the *documenta* exhibition that followed in 1959. Fifteen works by Arp were showcased there (fig. 6).

By the end of the 1950s, Arp ranked among the Olympians of the international art world. While his participation in *documenta* certainly played a role, major institutional recognition accounts for his newfound status: in 1958, the Museum of Modern Art in New York held an Arp retrospective,



Fig. 4 Hans Arp with Ptolemy I, 1950, Giedion-Welcker 128, Bronze or painted plaster, Venice, 1954

and a few years later, in 1962, the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris featured a survey of his work.

Arp's significance after 1945 is not limited to international institutional recognition, as this phase in his career is also marked by his numerous artistic innovations. He created new series, including the so-called *Threshold Sculptures*. In these sculptures that resemble reliefs, Arp used clearly delineated planes and angles to create a constructive counterpoint to the soft organic forms for which he had become so well-known. Moreover, his use of negative space establishes a dialogue with the works' surroundings. The sculptural group *Forest Wheels*, which Arp created between 1961 and 1964 at his last home in Locarno, mark an intensification of this integration of art and nature.

Arp's work from this period, however, was not limited to sculpture. After 1945, his oeuvre is also characterized by a multitude of new approaches and media. For example, his *découpages*—forms cut from black and colored paper and cardboard—had artistic merit as components of collages and as models for reliefs and sculptures. The way that Arp repurposed and varied *découpage* forms bespeaks the principle of transformation, which had been foundational to his art from the very beginning. Furthermore, he expressed anew his desire for the transgression and comingling of artistic genres in his *papiers déchirés* and *papiers froissés*. During this period of Arp's increasing renown, materials such as brass, duralumin, and Belgium black limestone also entered his oeuvre, reflecting editions produced in greater numbers and works in increasingly large formats. Across all media, Arp maintained an emphasis on a highly distilled visual language, which he explored in ever-changing formal and thematic constellations. In an article of 1952, Carola Giedion-Welcker wrote of a “formal elementariness” (*formaler Elementarismus*) in Arp's work that leaned towards the absolute, the simplified, and the essential, and whereby playfulness, clarity, order, and precision played important roles.⁵ After his first wife Sophie Taeuber-Arp died in 1943 and the end of the Second World War in 1945, Arp's inclination towards the absolute led him to antiquity, the mysticism of the late Middle Ages, and non-Western cultures.

After 1945, Arp's poetic work came into sharper focus as well. It is significant that in the review quoted above, Grohmann praised Arp's poems alongside Arp's visual art. In the 1950s, he published multiple volumes of poetry in both German and French. In the process, Arp alternated between the two languages just as easily as he moved across artistic genres.

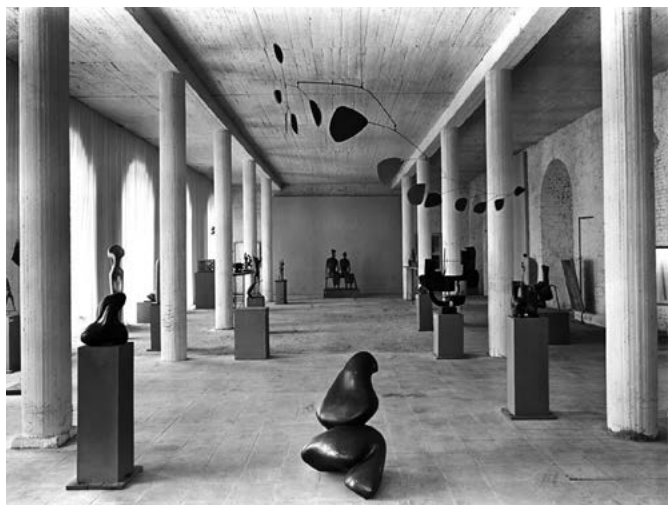


Fig. 5 Hans Arp: *Pagoda Fruit*, 1949, *Giedion-Welcker 97*, Bronze (2/3, cast 1954) and *Mirr*, 1949, *Giedion-Welcker 98*, *Granit* (1/1), displayed with works by Henry Moore, Alexander Calder, Barbara Hepworth, Raymond Duchamp-Villon and Berto Lardera at the *documenta* in Kassel, 1955

In addition to these artistic achievements, Arp's late work also resonated with other artists during his late period. Many painters and sculptors of the younger generation, including the American artist Ellsworth Kelly, the French artist and poet Camille Bryen, who was a major proponent of Art Informel, and the German painters Günther Fruhtrunk and Karl Otto Götz were inspired by his work. It is significant that Arp's work was fascinating to proponents of Art Informel and of geometric abstraction alike. The latter group included Kelly, Fruhtrunk, and the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark, who referred to him in a letter as "mon Maître." Indeed, Arp's significance for the development of Concrete art in South America cannot be underestimated.⁶ Many Polish artists were either intrigued by Arp's work or directly influenced by it, as was Maria Papa Rostkowska.⁷ At the same time, Arp drew inspiration from the movements of the 1950s, keeping abreast of the development of Abstract Expressionism, Art Informel, and Tachisme while remaining true to his artistic roots.⁸ After 1945, he also maintained close contact with his artist friends and colleagues from before the War, including Hans Richter, Richard Huelsenbeck, Raoul Hausmann, Frederick Kiesler, and Michel Seuphor. Importantly, in this way he also became an intermediary between the artists of the pre- and post-war periods.

Arp's work also transcended and unified these generations, which is likely what fueled his popularity and international success after 1945. To be sure, after 1945, Arp's organic forms had become a cipher for modern art. They reverberated throughout the organic architecture of Le Corbusier, Hans Scharoun, and Alvar Aalto, and in the industrial design of the 1950s, which included the ever-popular kidney table. In her essay "Urelement und Gegenwart in der Kunst von Hans Arp", the art historian Carola Giedion-Welcker wrote that Arp's "vegetal Constructivism" is characterized by its positive resonance within the most divergent of artistic movements.⁹ She also noted: "Enriched by irrational currents and at the same time disciplined by an alert formal sensibility, these fantastic formations [of his art] seem to strike a balance between chance and rules, between the awakening of form and the deliberate coinage of a modern aesthetic conscience."¹⁰ The balance that Giedion-Welcker describes is likely the reason that Hans Arp's multi-faceted and seemingly boundless creativity left its mark on so many different artists, writers, architects, and designers. His work resonates to this day, and there is ample room left to explore its impact.

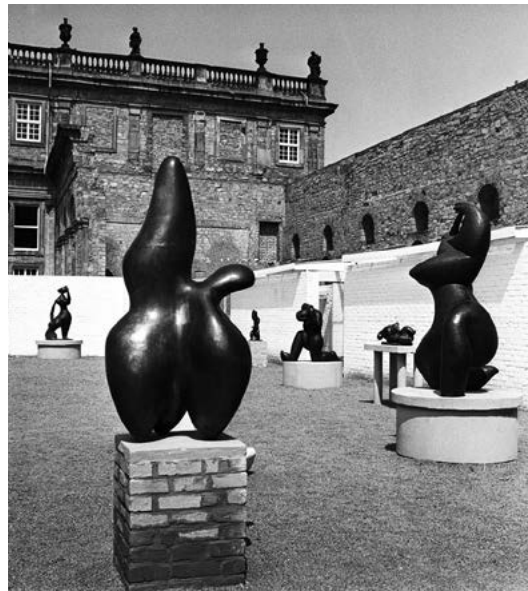


Fig. 6 Hans Arp: Shepherd of Clouds, 1953, Giedion-Welcker 123, Bronze (1/1), 152 x 74 x 60 cm, with works by Henri Laurens displayed at the Orangerie, documenta 2, Kassel 1959

- 1 Will Grohmann: Hans Arp. Maler, Plastiker und Poet, in: *Neue Zeitung*, Berlin edition, March 14, 1954, rpt. in: id. *Texte zur Kunst der Moderne* (ed. by Konstanze Rudert), Dresden 2013, pp. 212–213, p. 212.
- 2 The sole publication dedicated to Arp's late work is Rudolf Suter's dissertation: id.: *Hans Arp. Weltbild und Kunstauffassung im Spätwerk*, Berlin and Bern, 2007. Suter's biography of Arp that was published in fall 2016 also placed a strong emphasis on the late work. See: id.: *Hans Arp. Das Lob der Unvernunft*, Zürich 2016.
- 3 The first volume of the Stiftung Arp e.V.'s series traces the influences of both American museums and collectors as well as the American art market on Arp's artistic production after 1945. See: Maike Steinkamp and Loretta Würtenberger (eds.): *Hans Arp and the United States*, Berlin 2015.
- 4 "die Wurzeln des gegenwärtigen Kunstschaffens auf allen Gebieten sichtbar zu machen." Arnold Bode: *Exposé zur documenta 1955*, cited after: www.documenta.de/de/retrospective/documenta
- 5 Carola Giedion-Welcker: *Urelement und Gegenwart in der Kunst Hans Arps*, in: *Werk*, 52/39 (1952), pp. 164–172, p. 164.
- 6 Undated note from Lygia Clark to Hans Arp, probably from the second half of 1964, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth. See Heloisa Espada's essay in this volume.
- 7 See: Marta Smolińska and Maike Steinkamp (eds.): *A-Geometry. Hans Arp and Poland*, exhibition catalogue, National Museum, Poznań 2016.
- 8 See: Rainer Hüben: *Dolls and other Découpages*, in: *Poupées*, exhibition catalogue (ed. by Rainer Hüben and Roland Scotti), Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno, 2008, p. 13–34, p. 16.
- 9 Giedion-Welcker 1952, p. 172 and 164.
- 10 "Von reichen irrationalen Strömungen gespiessen und gleichzeitig von einer wachen formalen Sensibilität diszipliniert, scheinen diese phantastischen Gebilde [seiner Kunst] zwischen Zufall und Gesetz zu balancieren, zwischen dem Formerwachen und der bewussten Formprägung des modernen ästhetischen Gewissens." Ibid., p. 164.

At the Threshold of a New Sculpture

On the Development of Arp's Sculptural Principles in the *Threshold Sculptures*

Jan Giebel

The term “threshold” describes the passage between two locations—a space of transfer. It also relates to Hans Arp, a boundary crosser who always oscillated between the most disparate of artistic disciplines and who during his long artistic career continually traversed cultural, national, and linguistic borders. The *Threshold Sculptures*, a body of work Arp began in 1958, likewise seem to defy clear definitions and art historical categories. In contrast to his previous sculptures in the round, which invited viewing from all sides, these sharply-contoured vertical bronze pillars have two fixed viewpoints that are in effect identical. Arp's chronicler Carola Giedion-Welcker therefore deemed them “hermaphrodites,” because they span sculpture, relief, and architecture (*fig. 1*).¹

Although Arp created the *Threshold Sculptures* at a time when his international recognition was steadily increasing, they did not make a noticeable impact on the public image of Arp's sculpture.² Rather, the biomorphic sculptures in the round that Arp had been making continually and in large quantities since the 1930s shaped the public image of his work. Numerous snapshots and staged photographs that show Arp surrounded by plaster casts and sculptures in his studio in Meudon contributed to this image, as did the comparisons between Arp's sculptures and natural phenomena in Carola Giedion-Welcker's publication *Moderne Plastik*.³ Arp's own statements and text fragments about his sculpture likewise focus on his sculptures in the round. In fact, he never commented on the *Threshold Sculptures*. However, he did remark on the significance of the term threshold, which he described as the passage between life and death.⁴

Academic research has also prioritized more popular themes such as Arp's Dada years, his poems, reliefs and other sculptures over the *Threshold Sculptures*. Alongside the observations of his contemporaries Carola

Giedion-Welcker and Eduard Trier, Rudolf Suter's more recently published scholarship provides the foundation for analyzing this body of work.⁵

When Arp began working on the *Threshold Sculptures* in 1958, he already had an extensive oeuvre behind him. By that time, he had been making sculptures from plaster models for more than two decades. However, upon making the decision to abandon his customary method for this body of work, Arp himself arrived at the threshold of a new kind of sculpture. But how exactly did his methods change with the *Threshold Sculptures*? Can his new process still be considered sculptural? How are these works modern and in what ways do they represent a *Return to the Former* (1965, Trier 336), as the title of a *Threshold Sculpture* of 1965 suggests?

From the Wall into the Surrounding Space

Hans Arp's career as a modern sculptor commenced when he began working regularly on plaster models in the 1930s. However, his interest in three-dimensional objects started much earlier, as Arp did not draw or paint but rather had been cutting out forms since the 1910s.⁶ He thereby freed the form he had drawn from the two-dimensional picture plane and transformed it into an autonomous object, the outlines of which have a haptic quality. Later, some of these paper and cardboard cut-outs served as the bases for his wood reliefs, which as a rule the artist did not make himself. Rather, he hired trained carpenters to produce them.⁷ With their robust plasticity and considerable depth, some of these early reliefs projected from the wall into the surrounding space.⁸

Arp took the next consequential step in terms of his conception of space some time later, when he liberated wood reliefs from the wall and displayed them as free-standing sculptures, such as *Head-Stabile* (1926, Trier V), *Shell Profiles* (1930, Giedion-Welcker 1) and *Hand Fruit* (1930, Giedion-Welcker 2). The hard contours and fixed viewing points of such works are important precedents for the *Threshold Sculptures* Arp was to create much later (*fig. 2*).

Hans Arp began making fully three-dimensional sculptures in plaster around the same time as his first wood sculptures. His first experience with this material was before the First World War. According to Arp, the Swiss sculptor Fritz Huf had taught him how to work in plaster in the early 1910s.⁹ The two also traveled to Paris to visit Auguste Rodin's studio, although Arp



Fig. 1 Hans Arp: Threshold with Plant Crenellations, 1959, Trier 198, Bronze (0/5, cast 1976), 74 × 44.5 × 6.5 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

did not ultimately meet the French sculptor.¹⁰ Thus, Arp had engaged with contemporary sculptural tendencies and techniques at an early phase of his artistic career. Yet his own sculptural work would come later, in part because of World War I and the precarious economic circumstances it brought. A lack of studio space and other logistical issues may have played a role as well. It was only in 1929 that Hans Arp and his partner Sophie Taeuber moved into their home and studio in Meudon, which offered ample workspace. Shortly thereafter, he embarked on major works in plaster and stone.

The extent to which the artistic exchange with Fritz Huf shaped Arp's sculptural practice after 1930 cannot be determined. It may therefore be concluded that this exchange was more of a technical introduction to the materials and that Huf had little influence on Arp's formal language.



Fig. 2 Hans Arp: Head-Stabile, 1926, Trier V, Painted wood (1/1), 61 × 45 × 20 cm, Hilti Art Foundation, Schaan

Nevertheless, it is notable that Arp made two changes to his process when working in plaster. First, he sculpted in plaster himself and no longer let trained craftsmen carry out his designs, as he did with his reliefs.¹¹ Second, he abandoned the relief-like construction of the early wood sculptures mentioned above in order to focus on sculptures in the round that did not have fixed viewing points. Arp's new process was informed by this novel material and the working methods he learned from Huf, so their early exchange could indeed have borne some influence so many years later.

From 1930 through the late 1950s, Arp used additive and subtractive techniques to create his plaster models, as modern sculptors had been doing for decades.¹² Plaster offered him abundant possibilities to produce his abstract biomorphic forms “like a plant produces a fruit” and to use fragments of already existing forms as “germs of new plastic works.”¹³ Numerous photographs document Arp's working process at his studio in Meudon. Arie Hartog describes Arp's sculptural practice of these years as follows:

Arp did not work on his sculptures at eye level, but rather lower. Perhaps he learned to work at a lower height from masons, who use this perspective to monitor the actual spatial depth of the objects they strike. Working below eye level alludes to a process in which hapticity and spatial depth are more important than a viewpoint at eye level and creating a sense of distance.¹⁴

Contour, which also plays an important role in many of Arp's graphic works and reliefs as well as in the later *Threshold Sculptures*, was not as significant for these sculptures. Rather, the artist was interested in the intuitive and direct creation of abstract artistic forms that can be encountered as "bodies" in space and are clearly understood as such. Arp himself explained this haptic working process in his programmatic writings: "One work often requires months, years. I work until enough of my life has flowed into its body."¹⁵ After he finished this concentrated and lengthy work on the plaster model, it could be cast in bronze or produced in other materials. Arp continued to carry out his sculpture in this manner until his death in 1966.

On the Construction of the *Threshold Sculptures*

In 1958, Arp embarked on a new group of sculptural works with the *Threshold Sculptures*, which recall his wood relief-like sculptures of the interwar years. Having worked almost entirely on sculptures in the round that could be viewed from any vantage point,¹⁶ with these wall-like objects he once again began creating freestanding sculptures with fixed points of view and clear silhouettes. Nevertheless, these new relief-like sculptures are distinct from the early wood sculptures of the 1920s and 1930s, which were closer to the reliefs in that the recto and verso were often clearly defined. By contrast, the *Threshold Sculptures* had two identical primary viewing points from the beginning. A further distinction between these two groups of work is the material. Arp did not use wood. Instead, he had the *Threshold Sculptures* executed in bronze, duralumin, steel, and marble. While the material aesthetic certainly evokes his sculptures in the round of the preceding years, this body of work represents a fundamental shift in Arp's sculptural practice and intention: until then the plaster models that he had sculpted and refined himself were the foundations of his bronze sculptures. Arp's new process for

the *Threshold Sculptures* made these three-dimensional models obsolete. However, this does not mean that he forfeited his established methods entirely. Rather, the series at hand represents a parallel path.

For the *Threshold Sculptures*, Arp applied a principle that he had been using since his early career, especially in the wall-mounted reliefs and collages. By using cut-out paper forms as the starting point for constructing bronze sculptures, he translated this principle into a sculptural concept. The *découpages* cut from cardboard and paper were made into templates from which the contours and enclosed negative spaces of the *Thresholds* could be transferred to bronze (fig. 3 and 4). Foundry workers then made two identical cuts into the prepared bronze sheets. The next step of assembling the individual pieces is shown in a photograph documenting the making of an enlargement of *The Three Graces* (1961, Trier 263) that now stands in Jerusalem (fig. 5). It is one of the few remaining sources to shed light on the production of the *Threshold Sculptures*.¹⁷ The photo depicts a connecting length of the same material that comprises the two sides and is welded perpendicular to all visible sides along the contour of the first cut-out (pictured here lying on the ground). The width of this material determined the depth of the *Threshold Sculpture*. Within the sculpture are stabilizing elements. It may therefore be assumed that Arp did not give concrete instructions but rather relied on the expertise of trained craftsmen. The final step, which is not shown in the photograph, was to weld the second cut-out to the piece that connected the two sides.

The *Threshold Sculptures* are not bronze casts made from continually reworked plaster models, but rather bronze cut-outs that are “assembled” into a sculpture from individual pieces. However, the two flat sides are welded together with a relatively thin band of material between them, creating the impression that the *Thresholds* are cut from massive single pieces of bronze or metal.¹⁸

Several templates for the *Thresholds* remain in the estate of Hans Arp and are held at the Stiftung Arp e.V. in Berlin.¹⁹ They are made of different materials such as wood, aluminum, and Masonite and often consist of multiple pieces. Some of these templates have traces of enlargement grids. This points to at one advantage of Arp’s process for the *Thresholds* over the bronzes that were cast from plaster models. With the aid of the enlargement grid, the two-dimensional template could easily be scaled. Arp thereby developed a genre of sculpture that is easily scalable and does not require the

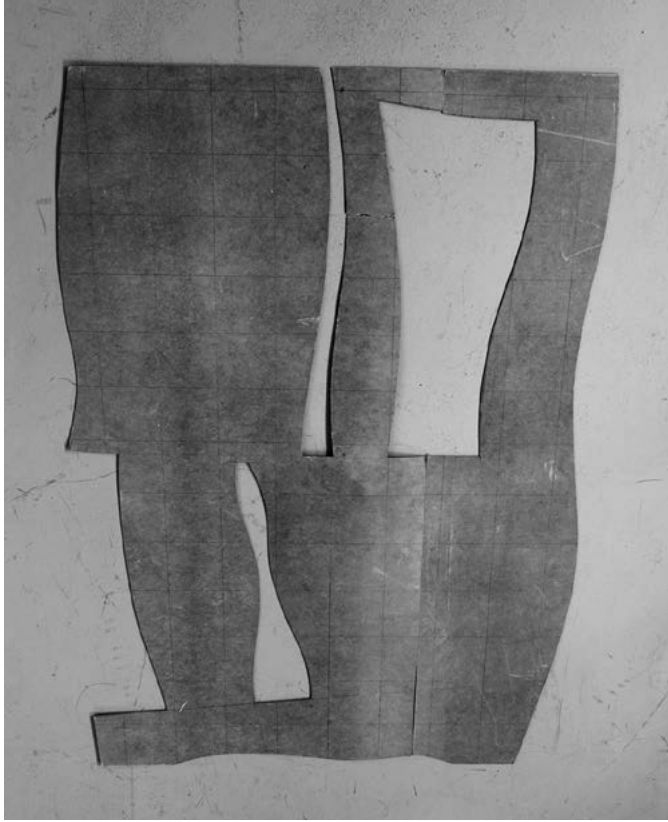


Fig. 3 Hans Arp: Template for the Threshold Sculpture "Threshold with Plant Crenellations," Cardboard, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth

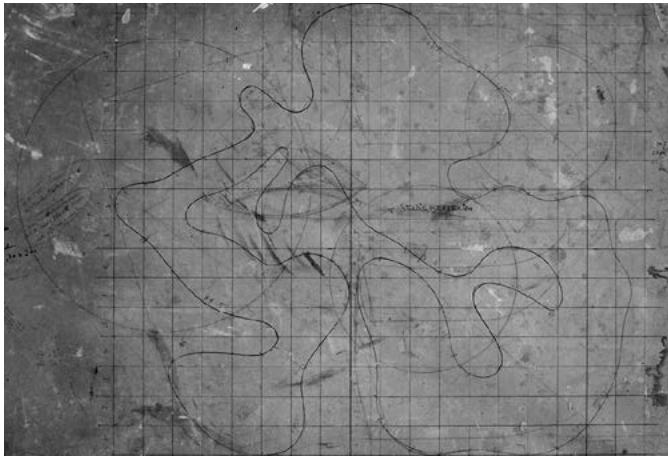


Fig. 4 Hans Arp: Template for the Threshold Sculpture "Seuil-réflexion," Cardboard, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth

artist to touch up the larger version. By contrast, Arp had to rework his enlarged plaster models in the round, as demonstrated by a photograph of the artist at work on *Shepherd of Clouds* for the University of Caracas (1954, Giedion-Welcker 122).²⁰

It is not a coincidence that Arp's *Threshold* concept took root during the time that he was gaining widespread recognition. When Arp received the Grand Prize for sculpture at the Venice Biennale of 1954, his public profile was heightened along with the commissions that followed. It is therefore conceivable that Arp developed a new process for easily enlarging large-scale sculptures in response to the increased demand for his work.

Due to this straightforward process, there are one or more enlarged versions of several *Threshold Sculptures*. Many of the versions of individual *Thresholds* that are far over life-size were realized after Arp's death. For example, in 1968 the collector and gallerist couple Madeleine and Arthur Lejwa (Galerie Chalette, New York) secured the rights from Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach to enlarge and manufacture several of the *Thresholds*.²¹ The latter sent several of the templates to the Galerie Chalette, as she wrote in a letter to Madeleine Lejwa: "Dear Madeleine, Ruth will deliver the cardboard templates for some of the *Threshold Sculptures* that you would like to enlarge."²² Some of these enlargements were produced and are now located in the public sphere or in museums. For instance, the Lejwas donated an enlargement of the aforementioned *The Three Graces* (1972, Trier 263a) (fig. 5) to the city of Jerusalem in the early 1970s. This group of three pillars stands in the Meir Sherman Garden under the title *On the Threshold of Jerusalem*, which was not chosen by Arp. The work was therefore posthumously transformed into a symbolic architectonic monument within the public sphere. As such, it appears to divide the space like a penetrable wall.

Architectonic Sculptures

Although the work in Jerusalem was realized after Arp's death, some of the projects he carried out during his lifetime suggest that it may nevertheless reflect his ethos. For example, Rudolf Suter has discussed a planned project by Hans Arp and Marcel Breuer for the Rotterdam department store De Bijenkorf with respect to the development of the *Threshold Sculptures*. As early as 1954, Arp had already planned a relief that could be passed through for

this building project, although the work ultimately never came to fruition.²³ The works Arp created for the Allgemeine Gewerbeschule in Basel also testify to his interest in large-scale architectonic sculptures. Arp's freestanding, edifice-like reliefs simultaneously create barriers and passages. A review from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in 1963 described them as such:

Hans Arp has contributed two life-size concrete walls, that are in part ruptured, in part furnished with reliefs: that which is used everywhere else with such solemnity as support or cladding, has here suddenly become the object of a delightful interplay of forms.²⁴

Architectonic Sculpture (1958, Trier 179) further built the momentum towards the *Threshold Sculptures*. It was the “by-product” of the architectonic works of these years, such as the large-scale relief Arp created for the UNESCO building in Paris that year.²⁵ Its seemingly programmatic title may however be understood as evidence of Arp's definitive interest in architectonic questions. The title of *The Small Theatre* (1959, Trier 194), a *Threshold* that he made a year later, likewise makes a clear reference to architecture. A few years later, Carola Giedion-Welcker wrote that Arp's *Threshold Sculptures* were “wall-like planes and sculptures around which space flows on all sides,” that “bore the stamp of a new architectonic ethos,” as was “already evident in the monumental reliefs at Harvard and in Caracas and Paris.”²⁶

Arp's “architectonic ethos” became stronger after the Second World War. Before then, it was his partner Sophie Taeuber who had cultivated a profound interest in architecture. In fact, she had designed their shared home and studio space in Meudon. Arp himself had been in dialogue with architects and the architectural historian Sigfried Giedion since the 1930s, but concrete practical and theoretical collaborations did not take place until the post-war period.²⁷

The commissions from Harvard, Caracas, and Paris transported Arp's reliefs from his own studio and the homes of artist friends and public and private collections to the great building projects of renowned architects like Walter Gropius. In the meantime, Arp became a sought-after artist for “art in building” projects. Once again his reliefs projected into space from facades and on the plazas outside of public buildings. However, in this case the artist was not concerned with creating plastic forms that could be viewed from all sides and that were integrated into the surrounding space, but rather with

conceiving sculptures that established a dialogue with architecture. The fact that Arp “built” his bronze sculptures from cut-out forms resembling edifices reflects this alignment with architecture. With their vertical orientation, shallow depth, and window-like openings, the *Threshold Sculptures* themselves almost appear to be elevations for facades. Moreover, in contrast to the sculptures in the round that Arp produced in parallel with the *Thresholds*, the latter have clear contours that invite viewing from a distance.

At the same time, it must be pointed out that Arp’s wish to incorporate architectonic ideas into his own work during these years was not one-sided. Rather, a sculptural architecture that was clearly influenced by the ideas and formal vocabulary of the visual arts developed in parallel to his work. Finally, this aspiration to synthesize architecture and art reflects a broader avant-garde tendency to see art and life as one.

“Interplay of Forms”

In Arp’s oeuvre, the “delightful interplay of forms” described in the review from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* transcends genres. Arp quickly incorporated the *Thresholds* into his wider practice of metamorphosing motifs across the most varied of media. Each of his *Thresholds* has a counterpart in at least one other genre. Many forms and motifs are repeated in the reliefs, and especially in the *Découpages* reliefs because they are similar to the *Thresholds* in terms of both material as well as process. The forms of the *Threshold Sculptures* also reappear in the artist’s two-dimensional prints and drawings. For example, the sculpture version of *Core* (1960, Trier 220) can be displayed two different ways (and is thereby a variation in and of itself). There is also a print with the same title in the portfolio *Soleil Recerclé* (1966, Arntz 250). Whereas a geometric delineation of negative space and organic contours create a sense of visual tension in the *Threshold Sculpture*, the monochromatic print addresses questions of the relationship between figure and ground (fig. 6 and 7).

This ongoing transformation of a single form is best seen in *Threshold Configuration* (1959, Trier 205) (fig. 8), of which the Lejwas donated an enlarged version to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1971. This form, which was first executed as a *Threshold* in 1959, was already present in Arp’s formal vocabulary in 1933. By 1964, he had reworked this

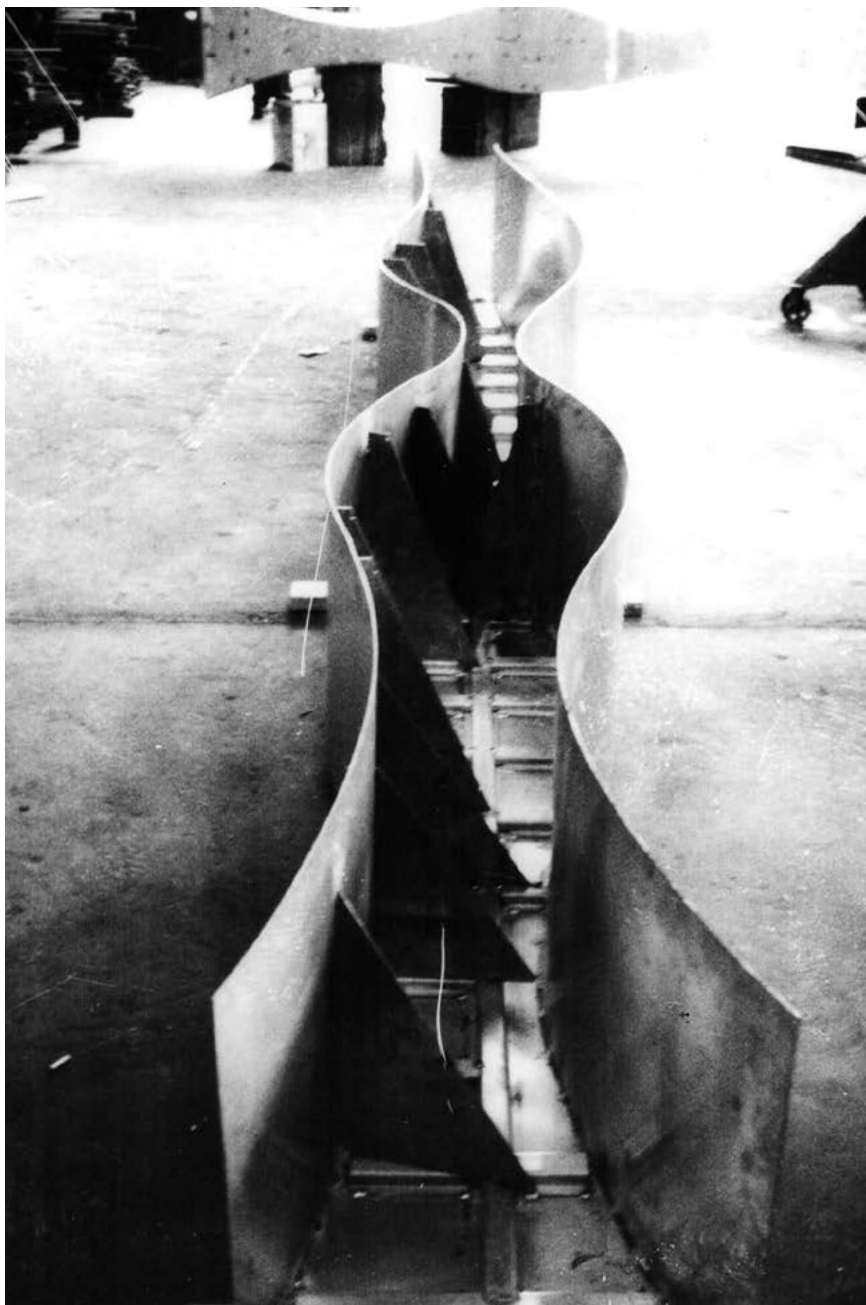


Fig. 5 Documentation on constructing the enlargement of the Threshold "On the Threshold of Jerusalem," c. 1972, Trier 263a, Duralumin (1/1, cast 1972), c. 1972, Fondation Arp, Clamart



Fig. 6 Hans Arp: Core, 1960, Trier 220, Bronze (0/5, cast c. 1983), 40.5 × 41 × 10.7 cm, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth



Fig. 7 Hans Arp: Page from the Portfolio Soleil Recerclé (Etui), 1966, Arntz 250, Woodcut, 46 × 37 cm, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth

form as five reliefs constructed in various materials and under different titles. In 1972, Henry Geldzahler, who was at that time a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wrote of the *Threshold* motif:

Threshold Configuration demonstrates forcibly why Arp is considered a major twentieth-century sculptor: it is at once simple, monumental, and unforgettable. Arp's precise model, illustrated here, has the same grace and appeal in approximately twelve inches that the sculpture has in more than ten feet stainless steel.²⁸

Geldzahler underscores Arp's constant search for a universal form of expression. His consistent development of existing forms and working methods across media is a clear indicator of Arp's modern approach. Arp understood artmaking as an ongoing process and always perceived his own work as something shifting and dynamic. For this reason, the artist whom Alfred H. Barr deemed a "one-man laboratory for the discovery of new form"²⁹ continued to develop new artistic principles during his late period, as he did for the *Threshold Sculptures*. Through this body of work, Arp decisively expanded his sculptural practice. The conceptual process, which stemmed less from sculptural methods than from his work in paper, allowed him to translate



Fig. 8 Hans Arp: *Threshold Configuration*, 1959/1971, Trier 205a, Stainless Steel (1/1), 335.3 × 345.9 × 80.6 cm, Gould Plaza, NY through 2009, Gift of Arthur and Madeleine Lejwa to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in honor of the citizens of New York City 1971



Fig. 9 Ellsworth Kelly: *White Ring*, 1963, Painted aluminum, 177.8 × 182.9 × 0.6 cm, Private Collection © Ellsworth Kelly Foundation

many of his two-dimensional forms into bronze sculptures. Freed from their grounds, these forms were ultimately realized as emblems in space.

Arp's application of the principles of thin, contoured reliefs for freestanding sculptures undoubtedly influenced subsequent generations of artists. One prominent example is Ellsworth Kelly's *White Ring* (1963) (fig. 9). The young Kelly had met Arp in Paris a few times around 1950 and followed his work with great interest. This thin ring of fog is formally and technically comparable to Arp's *Thresholds* and elemental oval forms. Kelly later commented on this work: "I wanted to free shape from its ground, and then to work the shape so that it has a definite relationship to the space around it [...]." ³⁰ Perhaps he had also absorbed one of Arp's workshop legends in the process:

I remember colleagues who wore themselves out by endlessly drawing plasters, heads, nudes. I myself was near exhaustion. But when I began to cut out circles, circle-like ellipses, egg-like forms, triangles, rectangles in black, grey, blue, yellow, my pale cheeks regained their red flush. [...] I cut out mountains of paper in a great euphoria. ³¹

- 1 Carola Giedion-Welcker: *Schriften 1926–1971. Stationen zu einem Zeitbild* (ed. by Reinhold Hohl), Cologne 1973, p. 266.
- 2 Arp won the Grand Prize for sculpture at the Venice Biennale in 1954; the Museum of Modern Art in New York held a comprehensive retrospective of his work in 1958; a survey at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris followed in 1962.
- 3 Carola Giedion-Welcker: *Moderne Plastik. Elemente der Wirklichkeit. Masse und Auflockerung*, Zurich 1937.
- 4 Rudolf Suter: *Hans Arp. Das Lob der Unvernunft. Eine Biografie*, Zurich 2016, p. 291 f.
- 5 Giedion-Welcker 1973, pp. 264–268; Eduard Trier: *Hans Arp. Skulpturen 1957–1966*, Stuttgart 1968; and Suter 2016, pp. 289–292.
- 6 One of his earliest cut-outs is the collage *Female Nude* of 1911, which is in the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle. Arp collected so-called “découpages” of paper and cardboard in boxes during his late period as well. See: Rainer Hüben: *Von “Puppen” und anderen Découpagen*, in: *Hans Arp. Poupées* (ed. by Rainer Hüben and Roland Scotti), exhibition catalogue, Museum Linder Appenzell, Göttingen 2007, pp. 11–26.
- 7 Arie Hartog: *Der Bildhauer Hans Arp. Gibt es eine Moderne ohne Avantgarde?* in: *Hans Arp. Der Nabel der Avantgarde* (ed. by Julia Wallner), exhibition catalogue, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin 2015, pp. 78–86, p. 83.
- 8 For example, *Pferdevogel (Horse-bird)* of 1916 (Rau 11) is 12.5 cm deep and 18 cm high.
- 9 Arie Hartog (ed.): *Hans Arp. Skulpturen—eine Bestandsaufnahme, Ostfildern 2012*, p. 19 ff.
- 10 Franz Müller: *Fritz Huf. 1888–1970. Von der “Ausdrucksplastik” zur zweiten Ecole de Paris. Mit einem Werkkatalog von Plastiken*, St. Gallen und Lausanne 2004, p. 37 f.
- 11 Hartog 2015, p. 83.
- 12 For a detailed overview of Arp’s sculptural beginnings and methods, see: Hartog 2012, pp. 15–26.
- 13 Hans Arp: *Concrete Art*, in: *Hans Arp: On My Way. Poetry and Essays 1912–1947* (ed. by Robert Motherwell), New York 1948 (*The Documents of Modern Art*, Vol. 6), pp. 70–72, p. 70.
- 14 “Arp arbeitete nicht auf Augenhöhe an seiner Plastik, sondern tiefer. Diese Arbeitshöhe kannte er möglicherweise von Steinmetzen, die diese Höhe benutzen, um die tatsächliche räumliche Tiefe des geschlagenen Objektes zu kontrollieren. Die Arbeitshöhe weist auf einen Prozess, bei dem Haptik und räumliche Tiefe wichtiger waren als Augenhöhe und Fernbild.” Hartog 2015, p. 83.
- 15 Hans Arp: *The Germ of a New Plastic Work* in: id. 1948, p. 70.
- 16 One exception is the form of *Star* (1939, Trier 61), which is a formal precursor to the Threshold Sculptures.
- 17 The photograph is preserved in the Archive of the Foundation Arp, Clamart.

- 18 This is in fact the case for the smaller *Thresholds* made of duralumin, the weight of which demonstrates that they were cut from a single piece of material.
- 19 Additionally, the artistic estate holds smaller single cut-outs in bronze and brass that the artist did not develop further. It remains unclear whether they were originally intended for the *Thresholds* or the *Découpage* reliefs.
- 20 For a photograph of *Shepherd of Clouds* on site at the University of Caracas, see Maike Steinkamp's introduction in the present volume.
- 21 See the agreement on the casting rights between Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach and Arthur Lejwa of December 3, 1968, in the "Chalette" file, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.
- 22 "Liebe Madeleine, Ruth überbringt Ihnen die Kartonmuster für einige Schwellenplastiken, die Sie vergrößern möchten." Letter from Marguerite Arp Hagenbach to Madeleine Lejwa, March 14, 1969, from the "Chalette" file, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.
- 23 Suter 2016, p. 291.
- 24 "Ebenfalls von Hans Arp sind zwei mannshohe, teilweise durchbrochene, teilweise mit Reliefs versehene Betonwände: was überall sonst mit beinahe feierlichem Ernst als Stütze oder Verkleidung gebraucht worden ist, hat sich da plötzlich zum Gegenstand eines reizvollen Formenspiels gewandelt." Wilfrid Spinner: Die Allgemeine Gewerbeschule in Basel, in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, no. 1545, April 19, 1963, p. 13.
- 25 According to Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach, this work was the result of an architectonic commission for a Belgian collector. Suter 2016, p. 291.
- 26 Giedion-Welcker 1973, p. 266.
- 27 The exceptions are his murals for the Pestalozzi school in Zürich (1915) and the Aubette in Strasbourg (1925–1928). On Arp's collaboration with Sigfried Giedion and other architects during these years, see: Katrin Schwarz: Bauen für die Weltgemeinschaft. Die CIAM und das UNESCO-Gebäude in Paris, Berlin 2016, pp. 144–148.
- 28 Henry Geldzahler: Jean Arp, in: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series, Vol. 30, 5/1972 (April/May), p. 225.
- 29 Quoted from James Thrall Soby: Introduction. The Search for New Forms, in: Arp (ed. by id.), exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1958, pp. 7–11, p. 7.
- 30 Ellsworth Kelly: Fragmentation and the Single Form, in: Artist's Choice. Ellsworth Kelly, Fragmentation and the Single Form, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1990.
- 31 "Ich erinnere mich an Kollegen, die durch unaufhörliches Gipszeichnen, Kopfzeichnen, Aktzeichnen zu Schlacken wurden. Auch ich war nahe daran. Als ich aber Kreise, kreisähnliche Ellipsen, Eiformen, Dreiecke, Vierecke in schwarzem, grauem, blauem, gelbem, Papier auszuschneiden begann, wurden meine bleichen Wangen wieder rot. [...] Ich zerschnitt Berge von Papier in einer großen Euphorie." Hans Arp: Werkstattfabeln, in: id. 1955, p. 96–107, p. 96.

On *Forest Wheels* and *Forest Giants*

A Series of Sculptures by Hans Arp 1961–1964

Simona Martinoli

A small group of sculptures that Hans Arp created between 1961 and 1964 are among the innovations of his late period. They include *Forest Wheels I* through *VII*, the related sculptures *Chessman for Forest Giants I* and *II* (1962) and *Denture of an Old Heroine* (1964). Arp broadened his sculptural vocabulary considerably with these hybrids of sculpture in the round and reliefs.¹

The disc-shaped sculptures are made of a black limestone called petit granite or Belgium black limestone.² One side of the disc is fractured and raw, revealing the stone's natural fissures. It has hardly been modified, whereas the other side and the edges are burnished smooth.³



Fig. 1 Hans Arp and Annie Müller-Widmann in Arp's Studio in Locarno, c. 1961, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

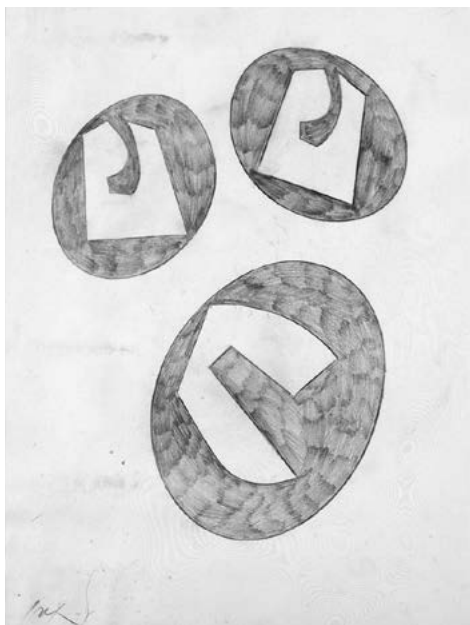


Fig. 2 Hans Arp: Precursors to the Wheels, 1959, Pencil on paper, 37 x 26 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno



Fig. 3 Hans Arp: Forest Wheel IV, 1961, Trier 267, Petit granite, 95.5 x 81.5 x 15.5 cm, Collection of the City of Locarno, Gift of Hans Arp, Marguerite Arp Hagenbach

Arp created the series at hand when he took up residence in Locarno in Ticino, which he had described as “*le plus beau pays dans l’Europe*” in a local television interview of 1964 when asked why he had moved to the Swiss Canton of Ticino.⁴ By analyzing this group of sculptures, this essay will attempt to show the significance of Locarno for Arp’s late work.

Arp in Locarno

On February 7, 1959, shortly before their wedding, which took place on May 14, Hans Arp and Marguerite Hagenbach bought the estate Ronco dei Fiori in Solduno, a suburb of Locarno.⁵ The expansive property encompassed two houses and a large, partially terraced and landscaped garden. The couple entrusted Bernese architect Fritz Bähler (1896–1964), who had established his firm in Ascona in 1930, with the renovation and expansion of the main



Fig. 4 Millstone in the Garden of Ronco dei Fiori, Locarno-Solduno

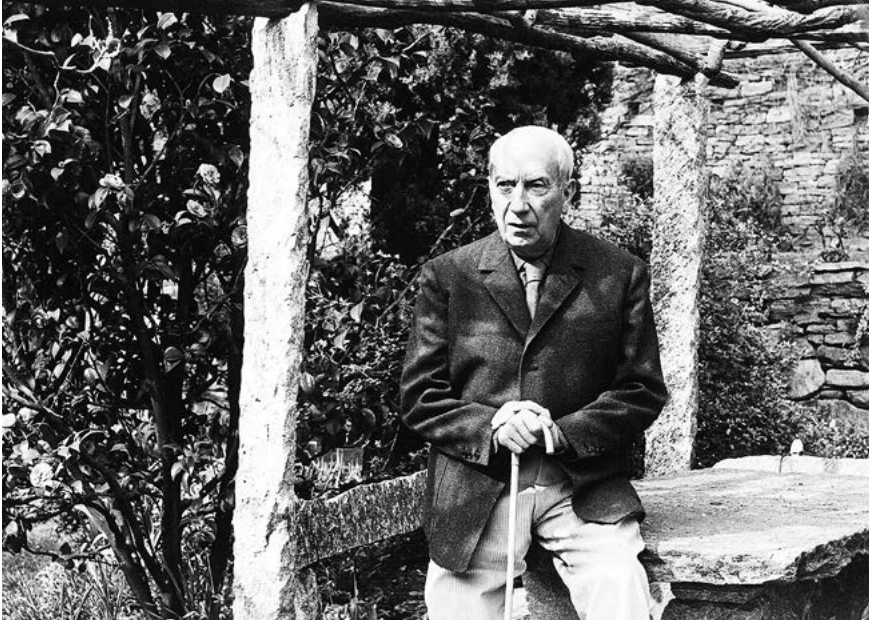


Fig. 5 Hans Arp in the Garden of Ronco dei Fiori, 1965, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

house. Bähler's home on Lake Maggiore was next to Villino Saleggi, the vacation home Marguerite's father Hans Hagenbach had bequeathed to his heirs. Arp had visited them there often, first with Sophie Taeuber, and later with his second wife.

In the summer of 1959, the final plans for the main house and studio were complete. The smaller house was repaired to serve as a residence for the Schelers, the Arps' gardener and housekeeper, while the villa underwent major renovations. On September 25, Arp wrote to his friend, the Basel collector Annie Müller-Widmann: "The construction on the house, which is really turning into 'Hans' house,' is progressing well."⁶ At the end of 1960, the couple was finally able to move into Ronco dei Fiori.⁷

"Hans' house" included a spacious and light-filled studio on the first floor, which Arp used for his writing and works on paper, including drawings, collages, and *découpages*. For his sculpture, Arp rented an additional studio in Locarno from his friend Remo Rossi (1909–1982), an established and extremely productive sculptor from Ticino. Rossi was an active member of several committees, including the Swiss Federal Art Commission, and his

entrepreneurial spirit meant that he was an important mediator in the cultural life of the time.⁸

The correspondence between the Arps and the Rossis reveals that Arp had begun to have sculptures produced in Rossi's studio at the beginning of the 1950s and that he trusted Rossi's technical knowledge pertaining to the different types of stones and their characteristics.⁹ The studio was on Via dei Marmi—as the street was called at that time—in Saleggi on the outskirts of Locarno, along with the marble warehouse owned by the stoneworkers Gualtiero and Ettore Rossi, Remo's grandfather and father.

A letter from Marguerite Hagenbach to Rossi dating to 1957 provides the first indication that Arp intended to rent a studio from Rossi, which he did by



Fig. 6 Henri Cartier-Bresson: Marguerite Arp in the Garden of Ronco dei Fiori in Solduno. In the Foreground Forest Wheel I, in: *Du*, no. 318, August 1967

1959 at the latest (*fig. 1*).¹⁰ It was here that Arp's late sculptures were realized with the help of his assistant Candido Epis, who also worked for Remo Rossi.

The studio complex grew larger and larger. Italo Valenti, Hans Richter, Fritz Glarner, Marino Marini, and other artists followed Arp. Of primary importance to Rossi was the cultural exchange that took place in this "anti-provincial" space, which also housed living quarters for artists. Additionally, he had direct contact with purveyors of material and collaborated with highly skilled Italian stonemasons, including Alberto Meli and a certain Molinari, whom he often hired for Arp's orders.

Remo's wife Bianca Rossi sent invoices to Marguerite Arp for the stonemasons' work, the purchase of blocks of stone, transport, and other expenses. In the accounts from 1961 to 1962 there are also references to the works at hand, including the purchase of four blocks of petit granite, as well as records of the work performed by Meli and Molinari on sculptures that the accompanying rough sketches identify as three of the *Forest Wheels*.¹¹

Such clues also lead to the Italian hometown of Alberto Meli (1921–2003), who worked for Arp between 1957 and 1966. A sketch that has a clear relationship to *Forest Wheel III* is held at the Museo d'arte contemporanea in Luzzana near Bergamo, which houses Meli's estate. It was identified and published as a sketch by Arp.¹² However, Meli himself likely created it, as Arp did not represent three-dimensional space in his drawings.¹³

The *Forest Wheels*

The question of how Arp came to realize the series *Forest Wheels* arises. A pencil drawing, which Marguerite Arp noted on the back was a "precursor to [the] *Wheels*," may be understood as an early conceptual sketch for the *Wheels* that the artist began making in 1961 (*fig. 2*). The three forms pictured resemble *Forest Wheel IV* (*fig. 3*). However, the theme of the wheel is widely present in Arp's work of this period, including in his writings. For example, his poem *The Wheel* (1963) comes to mind.¹⁴

The Arp literature suggests some sources that may have inspired *Forest Wheels*, including the artist's trip to Mexico of 1958, from which he returned "with full sketchbooks."¹⁵ Although scholars have already sought sketches of Aztec calendar wheels in vain,¹⁶ it is nevertheless possible that Arp's impressions of Mexico and Aztec art more broadly count among the sources of



Fig. 7 Hans Arp: *Cravates et tête*, 1925/1950s, Rau 71, Painted wood relief, 51.5 × 56 × 4 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

inspiration that eventually culminated in the *Forest Wheels*. For example, the library in Arp's studio in Ticino includes a 1929 edition of *Cahiers d'Art*, which has an article on Aztec art that reproduces a stone wheel similar to Arp's *Forest Wheels*.¹⁷ Additionally, the archived documents from the trip to Mexico include a brochure from Yucatan with the reproduction of a piece of jade jewelry that looks like a wheel.¹⁸ Another example of Arp's interest in the form of the wheel is a postcard from Vallauris, France that depicts an old oil mill with its bulky wheels.¹⁹

The literature also mentions the rose windows of medieval cathedrals, such as the rose window at Chartres Cathedral, the subject of Arp's eulogy "Gloire de mouche" (Flyweight Glory), as possible sources.²⁰ However, it is also worth considering the artist's statements on the cathedral in his

hometown of Strasbourg. As Arp explained in an interview with George Morris in 1957, its statues awakened his desire to become a sculptor.²¹ I suspect, however, that the primary impetus is to be found in the garden at Solduno, which harbors an old millstone; indeed, Greta Ströh drew a parallel between it and the *Forest Wheels* (fig. 4).²²

The millstone, which is roughly carved from sedimentary rock and has a hole in the middle, is displayed upright and stands out as the only “decorative element” in the landscaped garden. It testifies to the history of Solduno before the twentieth century, when its inhabitants dedicated themselves to the cultivation and processing of grain, and where mills along the river were first recorded in the fourteenth century.

There are several other prominent rustic elements at Arps’ estate in Solduno: the architectural details of the home studio, including its arches and terraces, the forecourt, and the design elements in the garden—its retaining walls, paths, garden furniture and the pergola—are all made of a rough, hand-carved granite (fig. 5).

The presence of the millstone and the estate’s rustic stone elements reinforce the idea that the location itself was a source of inspiration for the *Forest Wheels*. Although Arp had begun making *papiers déchirés* with irregular contours in the early 1930s and fashioned *papiers froissés* with active surfaces from crumbled packing paper since the beginning of the 1940s, the rough surface of the *Forest Wheels* was utterly new in Arp’s sculptural oeuvre. The contrast to the perfectly smooth sides—so perfect that they appear to be cast—exemplifies the antitheses between “in the rough” and “artistically enhanced.”²³

The *Forest Wheels* are generally meant to be seen from the sides that are roughly hewn—or natural, although this is not entirely clear from the multiple historical photographs thereof. Arp had Alberto Celesia, a photographer with whom he often collaborated and trusted, photograph the *Wheels* from both sides. Furthermore, he displayed *Forest Wheel I* with the rough side facing outward next to *Forest Wheel II*, which he oriented with the smooth side towards the viewer.²⁴

Forest Wheel I remains in the natural surroundings of the Solduno garden, but now stands in a different location. These wheels appear ready to roll away, and indeed can be repositioned, thereby altering their environment and exhibiting a changeability that is found throughout Arp’s oeuvre.

By 1967, or 1968 at the latest, *Forest Wheel II* found its place atop a tall



Fig. 8 Hans Arp: Chessman for Forest Giants I, 1962, Trier 282, Petit granite (1/1), 42 cm × 63 cm × 23 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno



Fig. 9 Hans Arp: Chessman for Forest Giants II, 1962, Trier 283, Two pieces of petit granite (1/1), 45 × 66 × 24 cm, "Pedestal" 25 × 58 × 25 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

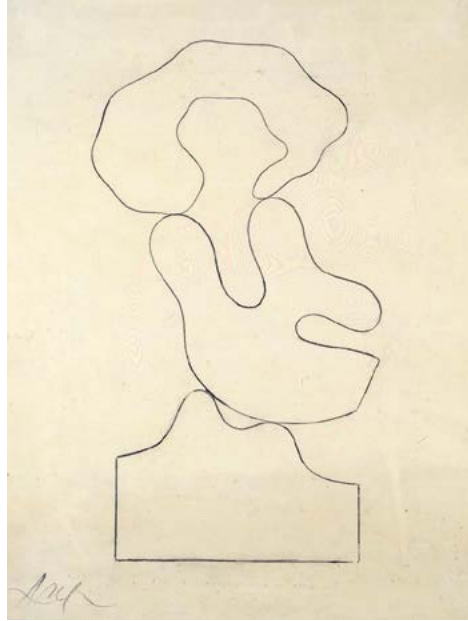


Fig. 10 Hans Arp: Sketch for Chessmen for Forest Giants, 1962, Pencil on paper, 45 x 34 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

cement stele at the playground of the Bachmatten school complex in Reinach near Basel, which was designed by the Basel architect Hans Peter Baur. Its placement testifies both to the new architectural ethos in Arp's work as well as to his collaboration with architects on various projects that integrated art and architecture during his late period.²⁵

The remaining works in the series are displayed in part in private gardens, including *Forest Wheels III* and *VII*. *Forest Wheel VI* marks the grave of the dealer Pierre Loeb at the Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris.

The oval form as symbolic of eternal change is especially befitting of a tomb.²⁶ Henri Cartier-Bresson's photograph of Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach published in the culture magazine *Du* in August 1967 supports this interpretation. The widow poses before *Forest Wheel I* in the garden in Solduno (fig. 6). Bresson's perfect staging of the hazy human figure in the background, so that she almost appears to float on the wheel, is dramatic. It is therefore tempting to interpret the empty space at the center of the wheel as a symbol of eternity. The number of *Forest Wheels* reinforces this notion: there are

seven in total, just like the days of creation, the virtues, the vices, the sacraments, and so on.

Negative Space

All seven *Forest Wheels* have a cut-out form like those Arp so often used, “because for him all eras continually flowed into one,” as Carola Giedion-Welcker wrote.²⁷ The negative space in *Forest Wheel I* is therefore related to the symbols suggesting ties in his reliefs of the 1920s, such as the wood relief *Cravates et tête* of 1925 (fig. 7).²⁸

Further parallels may be found in the empty space in *Forest Wheel II* and the relief *Arrow Letter* (1962), which Arp created shortly after the sculpture. Additionally, the cut-out form in *Forest Wheel IV* resembles the woodcut *Avant d’être musique* (1954) and the wood relief *26th Letter* (1962). The latter form throws into stark relief just how the cut-out forms of the *Forest Wheels* developed into “toys for forest giants.”

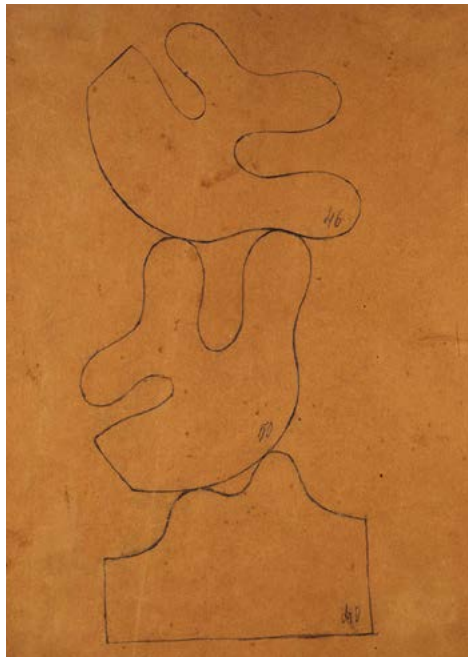


Fig. 11 Hans Arp: Sketch for Chessmen for Forest Giants, 1962, Pencil on paper, 44 × 30 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

Chessmen for Forest Giants

The sculptures indexed in Arp's catalogue raisonné as *Schachfigur für Waldriesen I* (*Chessman for Giants I*, 1962, fig. 8) and *Schachfigur für Waldriesen II* (*Chessman for Giants II*, 1962, fig. 9) likewise belong to the group of works at hand. The former stood upon an unmodified pedestal that is now lost, whereas the latter is comprised of two parts, one of which is placed upon the other so that it functions as a pedestal or stand.²⁹

Historical photographs and sketches demonstrate that initially, Arp did not intend for there to be a definitive arrangement of the two sculptures from the three pieces. Two pencil sketches for the group *Chessmen for Giants* depict the sculptures on top of one another and in two different combinations (figs. 10, 11). Moreover, one of the two drawings represents a piece that is now part of *Chessman for Giants II* twice.³⁰ The idea of stackable elements is also present in Arp's sketchbooks, including Sketchbook No. 11, which has sketches from 1950–1966.³¹ Structural reasons make it impossible to stack all three elements on top of one another anywhere but on paper. However, numerous professional photographs by Celesia and snapshots from the Arps' photo albums show that the artist nevertheless tried different configurations with two stacked elements and the third displayed nearby.

In a letter of 1961, Marguerite Arp wrote to Arp's brother François that one of the tradesmen was in the process of cutting three shapes from stone that Arp wanted to display on top of one another—most likely the *Chessmen*, which accordingly were dated forward.³² Two aluminum templates that correspond to two of the elements of the *Chessmen* likewise suggest that the creation of the two works had already begun in 1961 (figs. 12 and 13).³³ Furthermore, an invoice of March 18, 1961 documents that a certain Battista Cerutti had made three aluminum templates for Remo Rossi on Arp's behalf.³⁴

These templates are of special interest within Arp's oeuvre because they help connect the sculptures at hand to his reliefs. These aluminum “*découpages*” are counterparts to the forms Arp cut from cardboard to generate his reliefs, as he explained to the art critic Roger Bordier:

First I draw a little bit, just to get some ideas for shapes onto paper. Then, I cut the shapes from cardboard, arrange them, and the cutting out and the arranging continues until I have a model that appears satisfactory to me.³⁵

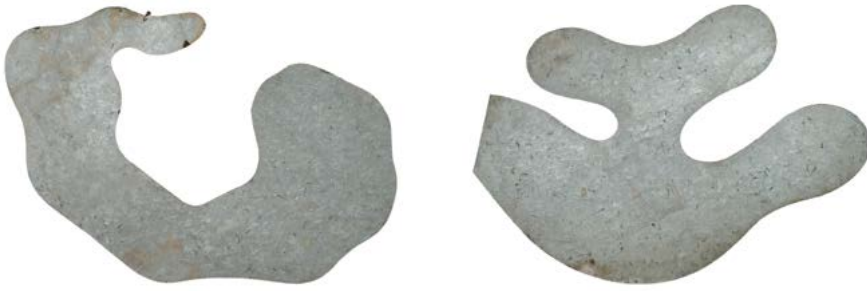


Fig. 12, 13 Templates for Hans Arp's Chessmen for Forest Giants, Fondazione Remo Rossi, Locarno

Further, as Denys Chevalier discovered from a conversation with Arp, the sculptures realized in petit granite are reliefs in space, so to speak. Arp's *Thresholds* reminded the art critic of his reliefs from which the background or support layer seemed to have been removed. The artist clarified: "It actually is the same principle of cut-out forms of the same thickness. Now I'm applying it to space."³⁶ Although Arp was referring to the slab-like *Threshold Sculptures*, his statement also applies to the *Forest Wheels* and related sculptures.

A few photographs show the sculptures in the Garden of Ronco dei Fiori in a condition that does not bespeak their current state. *Chessman for Forest Giants I* has a notch that was presumably sanded down to a flat surface later. That is, after the sculpture had been displayed in the artist's garden, it was reworked, in accordance with Arp's concept of altering "finished" pieces. The invoices from Rossi's studio provide records of such subsequent changes, as they itemize services such as "*ripreso*" and "*diverse modifiche*."³⁷

Photographs also show the sculpture set upon the upright "pedestal" that is indexed in the catalogue raisonné as a component of *Chessman for Forest Giant II*. A photograph of that sculpture was published in 1961 in the magazine *Quadrup* (fig. 14), which supports the above suggestion that these sculptures must be dated before 1962. Unless, in 1962, changes were made to *Chessman I* and to the arrangement of the elements comprising the two sculptures, in which case it can be argued that these two modifications count as the sculptures' date of origins.³⁸

These images offer a glimpse of how Arp let the *Forest Giants* play with their *Chessmen* in the garden and on the granite paving outside of his studio—despite their considerable weight.



Fig. 14 Hans Arp: Chessmen for Forest Giants in the Garden of Ronco dei Fiori, c. 1961, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp



Fig. 15 Hans Arp: Denture of an Old Heroine, 1964, Trier 326, Petit granite (1/1), 54 × 75 × 18 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

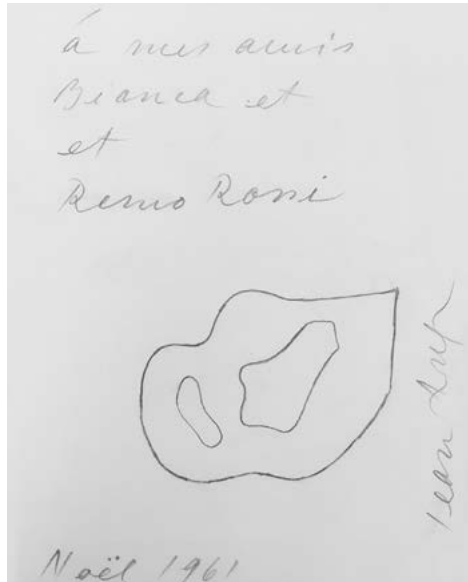


Fig. 16 Hans Arp: Drawing with dedication to Bianca and Remo Rossi, 1961, Fondazione Remo Rossi, Locarno

Denture of an Old Heroine

The final sculpture belonging to the group of work at hand bears the title *Denture of an Old Heroine* of 1964 (fig. 15). For all intents and purposes, it is the logical culmination of the series, because it combines characteristics of the *Forest Wheels* and the *Chessmen*: the negative space of the former and the dynamic contours of the latter. However, there is some evidence that the sculpture with the date of 1964 in the catalogue raisonné began germinating three years before, in full accordance with Arp's process of discovering form. He described it in an interview with the art critic Maria Netter as follows:

Now I begin to work on the nucleus of a form. Depending on the circumstances, I coarsen them, eliminate some, and create new ones. It can last days, months—even years before I let it rest.³⁹

The bronze sculpture *Swelling Wave* (1960) is unmistakably related to the one of petit granite. An even clearer parallel exists between a drawing signed

and dated by Arp “Noël 1961,” with a dedication to his friends Bianca and Remo Rossi: it clearly corresponds to *Denture of an Old Heroine* (fig. 16).⁴⁰

A Game

Created during Arp’s late period, this group of disc-shaped sculptures of petit granite clearly demonstrates how the “*genius loci*” of his new residence of Locarno-Solduno led to innovations in his sculptural oeuvre. The way the artist played with these forms at Ronco dei Fiori is noteworthy as well. Arp’s game began with the millstone—or The Mill Game, which like chess is a strategy board game. By placing these reliefs in space, Arp created an outdoor board game in nature.

Chess is a game with rules, but strategy and chance also play a role. Arp’s chess pieces are like the knight that may move two squares forward, and from there one square in any direction. Perhaps it is not so fallacious to use the knight’s move or the “jump” of this horse-shaped piece as a metaphor for Arp’s working process.

1 The seven sculptures in the series, which is entitled *Waldräder* in German, are indexed in the catalogue raisonné by Eduard Trier as follows: *Waldrad I* (1961), No. 259; *Waldrad II* (1961), No. 264; *Waldrad III* (1961), No. 266; *Waldrad IV* (1961), No. 267; *Waldrad V* (1962), No. 286; *Waldrad VI* (1964), No. 322; *Waldrad VII* (1964), No. 328. However, it mistakenly lists the material as granite. *Chessman for Forest Giants I and II* (*Schachfiguren für Waldriesen I und II*) and *Denture of an Old Heroine* (*Gebiss einer alten Heldin*) are indexed as numbers 282, 283 and 326. These are likewise erroneously identified as granite. Hans Arp: *Skulpturen 1957–1966* (Introduction by Eduard Trier. Bibliography by Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach. Sculpture Catalogue by François Arp), Stuttgart 1968.

2 Petit granite is also called Belgium black limestone, a sedimentary rock Arp rarely used in his practice.

3 Related works of duralumin, such as *Oriflamme Wheel* (1962, Trier 277), are not addressed here. While they play with negative space, they do not exhibit the contrast between the smooth surface and raw stone.

4 Hans Arp *Scultore*, 1964, Interview with Hans Arp, RTSI, 16mm, b/w, 0:14:15.

5 Entry in Marguerite Hagenbach’s agenda, 1959, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.

- 6 Letter from Hans Arp to Annie Müller-Widmann, September 25, 1959, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 7 “Der Hausbau, der zu einem Hansbau angewachsen ist, schreitet recht vorwärts.” Letter from Hans Arp to Annie Müller-Widmann, September 25, 1959, Archive, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno. Translator’s note: In the German, Arp makes a pun on the word Hausbau, or house construction, transforming it into Hansbau, suggesting that the house reflected him.
- 8 For more on Rossi, see: Remo Rossi: Antologica (1909–1982) (ed. by Riccardo Carazzetti), Locarno 2012.
- 9 Letter from Hans Arp to Remo Rossi, May 9, 1952, Archive Fondazione Remo Rossi, Locarno.
- 10 Letter from Marguerite Hagenbach to Remo Rossi, March 7, 1957, Archive Fondazione Remo Rossi, Locarno.
- 11 The expense accounts from September 8, 1962 apply to works and material from the period between June 10, 1961 through September 1962, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 12 The pencil drawing, *Studio di forma*, is attributed to Arp in publications by the art museum in Luzzana. For example, refer to Fernando Noris and Carlo Pinessi (eds.): La donazione Meli. Museo d’Arte Contemporanea di Luzzana, exhibition catalogue, Museo d’Arte Contemporanea di Luzzana, Luzzana 2007, p. 148, p. 200.
- 13 I would like to thank Rainer Hüben, who was Curator at the Fondazione Marguerite Arp through Juni 2016, for the information and the stimulating discussions.
- 14 Hans Arp: Das Rad (1963), in: id.: Gesammelte Gedichte. Band III Gedichte 1957–1966 (ed. by Aimée Bleikasten), Zürich 1984, p. 194 f.
- 15 Schramm makes this suggestion based on an undocumented reference in a biographical text by Greta Ströh. See: Greta Ströh: Biographie, in: Arp 1886–1966, exhibition catalogue, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart 1986, p. 297; Uwe Schramm: Der Raumbegriff bei Hans Arp. Interpretation und Vermittlung, Münster/Hamburg 1995 (Interpretation und Vermittlung, Vol. II), p. 364.
- 16 As established by Rudolf Suter in: id.: Hans Arp. Das Lob der Unvernunft. Eine Biographie, Zürich 2016, p. 293.
- 17 Caecilie Seler-Sachs: L’architecture et la sculpture chez les Aztèques, in: Cahiers d’Art, 10/1929, pp. 457–464.
- 18 Brochure Yucatan, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 19 The postcard and other documents from the trip may be found in the Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 20 Hans Arp: Gloire de mouche, 1949, in: id.: Jours effeuillés. Poèmes, essais, souvenirs 1920–1965 (Préface by Marcel Jean), Paris 1966, p. 342. Suter 2016, p. 293.
- 21 George L. K. Morris: The World of Abstract Art, New York 1957, pp. 149–154, p. 149.

- 22 Ströh 1986, p. 297.
- 23 Over the years, the weather has made the originally smooth surfaces of the *Forest Wheels* that were intended for outdoors more porous, revealing the small fossils in the sedimentary rock.
- 24 Celesia explained that he was trying to emphasize the characteristics of each side by means of a specific photographic technique. Conversation between the author and Alberto Celesia, November 16, 2017.
- 25 Realschule und Progymnasium Bachmatten in Reinach BL: Architekt Hans Peter Baur, in: *Das Werk*, 7/1968, pp. 433–437. On the current state, refer to: Rudolf Suter: Hans Arp: Das potenzierte Wirken des Zufallsprinzips. Eine heute teils zerstörte Pauseplatzgestaltung in Reinach, in: *Basler Magazin*, No. 8, February 26, 2000, p. 15.
- 26 Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber, in: id.: *Unsern täglichen Traum...*, Zürich 1955, pp. 9–19, p. 12.
- 27 Carola Giedion-Welcker: *Die Welt der Formen und Phantome bei Hans Arp*, in: *Quadrant*, 11/1961, pp. 19–46, p. 23.
- 28 The relief cited here is indexed in the catalogue raisonné by Bernd Rau as No. 71. Additional reliefs with “ties” are indexed under the following numbers: 120, 144, 146, 148, 160. Bernd Rau (ed.): *Hans Arp. Die Reliefs. Oeuvre-Katalog*, Stuttgart 1981.
- 29 In the catalogue of an exhibition at Musée Rath in Geneva in 1964, the title *Figure d'échec pour géants I* appears for the first time with the Roman numeral I to distinguish it from *Chessman for Forest Giants II*. See: Jean Arp, Sonia Delaunay, Serge Poliakoff, exhibition catalogue, Musée Rath, Geneva 1964.
- 30 The two sketches are part of the collection of the Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno (Inv.-No. 520 and 557).
- 31 Sketchbook No. 11, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 32 Letter from Marguerite Arp to François Arp, April 4, 1961. Copy held at the Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 33 These templates were found after the dispersion of Arp's studio at Remo Rossi's studio complex and were inventoried as “remnants from the studio of Hans Arp” in the Fondazione Remo Rossi; I have been able to identify them as 1:1 templates for two elements of the *Chessman for Forest Giants*. According to Lorenzo Salvadori, a sculptor and assistant to Hans Richter, who still works in the studio complex, such templates were normally destroyed after use because the works in stone were meant to be unique. Telephone conversation between the author and Lorenzo Salvadori, November 13, 2017.
- 34 Invoice from Battista Cerutti to Hans Arp, March 18, 1961 for “3 modelli in lamiera” for 25 franks. Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 35 “Voici: D'abord je dessine un peu, il m'arrive seulement de jeter quelques idées de formes sur le papier. Puis, ces formes, je les découpe dans des cartons, les assemble, le découpage et l'assemblage se poursuivant jusqu'à ce que j'aie mis au point une maquette qui me paraisse satisfaisante.” Roger Bordier: *L'art et la manière: une enquête sur la technique. Arp, les reliefs et le plâtre*, in: *Art d'aujourd'hui*, 4–5/1954, pp. 44–45, p. 44.

36 “En effet, c’est le même principe de silhouettes découpées avec une épaisseur constante. Mais, à présent, je l’applique à l’espace.” Denis Chevalier: Aspects de la sculpture moderne: Entretien avec Jean Arp, in: Pour l’art, 84/1962, p. 32.

37 For example, the aforementioned invoice of September 8, 1962 itemizes changes carried out by Meli.

38 Carola Giedion-Welcker: Die Welt der Formen und Phantome bei Hans Arp, in: Quadrum 11/1961, pp. 19–46, p. 30. In 1963 the sculpture was reproduced in: W.R.: Hans Arp, in: Du 270/1963 (August), p. 11.

39 “Nun, mit dieser Keimform fange ich an zu arbeiten. Je nach den Bedingungen vergrößere ich diese Form, unterdrücke jene, setze neue Formen an. Das kann Tage, Wochen lang gehen—ja manchmal Jahre, wenn ich die Arbeit wieder ruhen lasse.” Maria Netter: Arp, der glückliche Finder: Der 8. Beitrag unserer Umfrage “Wie sie arbeiten” in: Die Weltwoche, 23/1106, January 21, 1955, p. 15.

40 The bronze sculpture *Swelling Wave* is indexed in Trier’s catalogue as No. 208. The drawing is held at the Fondazione Remo Rossi, Locarno, and is included in its inventory with the portfolio *Vers le blanc infini* (1960), which was likely part of a Christmas present. One of the eight etchings in the portfolio shows a form that then relates back to the sculpture *Swelling Wave*.

People are like Flies

Hans Arp, Camille Bryen, and Abhumanism

Isabelle Ewig

Context: Hans Arp, Dada, and Art Informel

In December 1947, Jean Arp participated in the exhibition *l'imaginaire* at the Galerie Luxembourg. Organized by Georges Mathieu in collaboration with Camille Bryen, it aimed to bring together “the most vibrant” art and to demonstrate “how and why this nascent painting is nothing like what is still being presented as contemporary [art].”¹ Among the participating artists were Jean-Michel Atlan, Hans Hartung, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Raoul Ubac, and Wols. Camille Bryen suggested including Arp. “I consent,” wrote Mathieu, “although the merits of his work are not new.” He agreed because, “through his Dada past and his current pursuits, Arp shows an interest for pure creation [...]. His work [...] places him beyond geometrizing academicism and Surrealist conventionalism.”² Indeed, geometric abstraction and Surrealism were the two artistic currents that Mathieu and adherents to Art Informel disdained the most, but for different reasons: the first was criticized and mocked, and the second largely ignored.

The exhibition *White and Black* of 1948 marked the growing distance between proponents of Art Informel and geometric abstraction. It included the black and white drawings of Hans Arp, Camille Bryen, Jean Fautrier, Jacques Germain, Hans Hartung, Georges Mathieu, Francis Picabia, Michel Tapié, Raoul Ubac, and Wols. Michel Tapié published his famous text denouncing the success of the Section d'Or and its adherents, whom he discredited as “*professeurs-imposteurs*” (fraudulent teachers) in the exhibition brochure. In response to this art that had become too academic, he heralded a new era of organic, incoherent, and formless painting: “Let’s open up the classrooms and the clinics! Long live bedlam and germs! Incoherence and formlessness, at last let loose, are gaining ground and bursting forth on every canvas [...].”³

By contrast, Surrealism was quietly ignored. Christian Schlatter perceived it as “an avoidance strategy”: “The aversion does not stem from recognition

that its processes are outmoded but, on the contrary, the risk of being criticized for prolonging the processes of Surrealism.”⁴ The author cited automatic writing, free association, and André Breton’s admonishment to “*Lachez-tout!*” (Drop everything!) as examples. Schlatter elaborated: “the aversion to Surrealism” stood in opposition to the “nostalgic backward-looking view of Dadaism as a remarkable period of freedom.”⁵ It is important to note that for the adherents of Art Informel, Dada not only meant gaining freedom. As Michel Tapié put it, it was also a “*grande coupure*” (radical break), from everything that had come before, or *tabula rasa*, so to speak. In Camille Bryen’s words, Dada was “*une aventure de l’être*” (adventure of being) that was not solely concerned with questions of form. Rather, the artist cultivated it in all aspects of his or her life. Both Tapié and Bryen equated Dada with a mystical experience, referencing *Nada per todo*, or “nothing for the whole,” which is associated with St. John of the Cross and the Zen of Suzuki. Hans Arp’s library indicates that these references were important to him as well, as *Trois poèmes majeurs de Saint Jean de la Croix* and Suzuki’s *Die große Befreiung. Einführung in den Zen-Buddhismus* (both published in 1947) were among the titles in his personal library.⁶

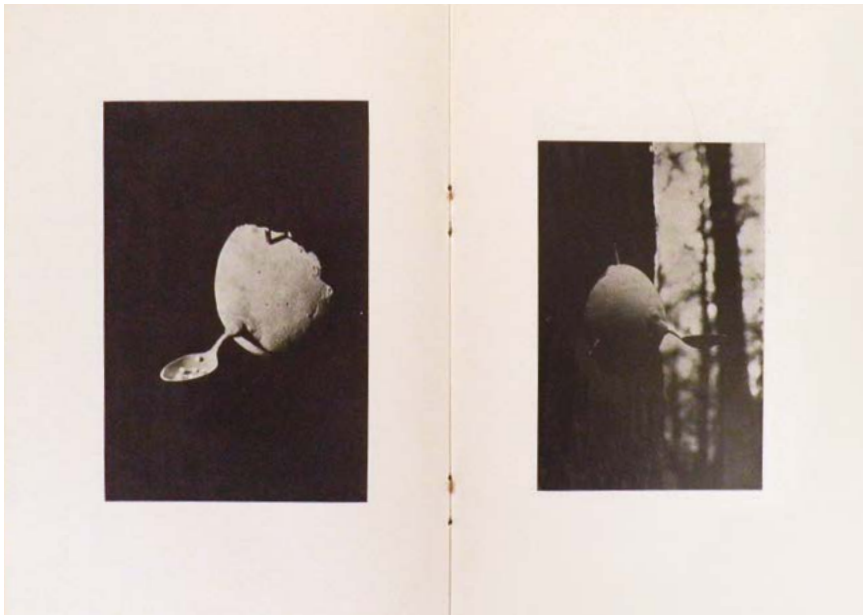


Fig. 1 Camille Bryen: *Le Sein de la forêt* (Breast of the Forest), in: *L'Aventure des objets* (The Object's Adventure), Paris: José Corti 1937

Camille Bryen and Hans Arp

Camille Bryen was born in Nantes in 1907. In 1927, he left his hometown for Paris. His poetry collection *Experiences*, the automatic drawings from 1934–1938, and the objects he created in the mid-1930s all betray Surrealism's influence. However, he was not an adherent to the movement, as he abhorred its “systematic side” (*le côté systématique*) and the collective discipline imposed by Breton. He elaborated in a conversation with Daniel



Fig. 2 Ernst Scheidegger: Hans Arp's Sculpture Snake Movement I, Giedion-Welcker 109, Marble, 22.2 × 37.5 × 30.5 cm, in the Garden at Meudon, c. 1960



Fig. 3 Opening of the exhibition Camille Bryen at Galerie des Deux Iles, Paris, 1949 (From left to right: Louisette Bryen, Camille Bryen, Hans Arp and Roberta Gonzales), Musée des beaux-arts de Nantes, Archives Camille Bryen

Abadie: “A visit that I made to André Breton completely rattled me. I again had the impression of joining an organization: simply the fact that it was a group was already unpleasant to me.”⁷ By contrast, Bryen was interested in Dada’s emphasis on freedom. From the early 1930s he began meeting its founders, including Tristan Tzara in 1930, Hans Arp in 1935, and Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia in 1937. On June 18, 1935, Bryen met Arp for the first time after the opening of an exhibition featuring drawings and works by Swedish artist Eric Olson at the Paris gallery *Gravitations*:

After that [the exhibition opening], Olson gave a small dinner party. I saw a man there with a fedora, a rather long nose, and blue eyes. He was quite... lively to my mind that evening because he was speaking and had a wonderful talent for imitations. The man was Jean Arp. I really liked him, and the feeling was mutual. He invited me to Meudon, where I became acquainted with Sophie Taeuber. Afterward, I saw him fairly often and it was clearly very important to me, for, fundamentally, Dada and everything associated with Dada have always fascinated me.⁸



Fig. 4 Hans Arp: Torn Portrait of Camille Bryen, in: Camille Bryen, Temps troué, Paris: Le Soleil noir, 1951

His first collaborative work, which grew out of his objects, also stems from this period. In a lecture delivered at the Sorbonne in 1937, Bryen elaborated upon the “set of psychoanalytic symbols” (*fonds de symboles psychanalytiques*) and their “multiple meanings” (*significations multiples*). As an example, he cited a bust made from plaster and a spoon, the meaning of which remained obscure to him, until he had had an “extremely precise hypnagogic vision”:

I saw a breast affixed to a tree in a landscape. I then fell asleep while thinking of a very specific place: Meudon Forest. That night I had a very full account of the whole story, but upon awakening remembered only the essential element attached to a tree. That breast became *Breast of the forest* [*Le Sein de la forêt*] and I hung it on a tree in Meudon Forest.⁹

This site-specific installation (*fig. 1*) is known from a photograph by Raoul Michelet, which was Raoul Ubac’s pseudonym, and from Arp’s own recollections. Arp and Bryen amused themselves by placing sculptures in the forest (*fig. 2*), that had become as “concrete” as leaves, stones, or, in the case of Bryen’s object, nests. Arp later remembered: “In the old days, my friend, the poet Bryen, and I used to go for walks in the forest and we would place some of our works here and there, in the grass, in the trees. He would hang breasts made of stone in the branches. I would imagine people finding them and asking, ‘Is this the work of birds?’”¹⁰

Dada versus Abhumanism

After he had set his works out in nature, Bryen abandoned the surrealist object and turned to painting. In his own words, he embarked upon “the path from Anti-painting to Painting” (*le chemin de l’Anti-peinture à la Peinture*), which could be interpreted as a break from Dada. However, this return to painting would not have been possible without the freedom Dada had given him. Bryen’s change in direction did not compromise his relationship with Arp. To the contrary, the artists exhibited together at Marie-Suzanne Feigel’s Galerie d’art moderne in Basel. Photographs from the opening of a Bryen exhibition at the Galerie des Deux Iles in 1949 reveal the deep

friendship between the two artists (*fig. 3*). Finally, there is a portrait photograph of Bryen that Arp ripped in two (*fig. 4*), of which Bryen said: “Yes, he did a portrait of me, made of a torn-up photo, which brought me luck. After Arp ripped me to shreds, I’ve never torn myself to pieces again.”¹¹

Above and beyond these somewhat anecdotal connections, Arp and Bryen shared a similar view of society in the wake of World War II. Bryen criticized the historical development of the West and rejected humanism, which he believed had led to bloodshed and malediction. In the 1948 fable “Les Chenilles processionnaires,” he described a stampede of caterpillars and the children who amuse themselves by trampling them dead. The game ends badly when the children grow up to rule the world. The artist perceived a continuity from the Renaissance, with its politics of expansion, colonization, and evangelization that decimated indigenous peoples, to the horror of Hiroshima and Auschwitz. He summed up this notion provocatively: “Christopher Columbus resulted in Hiroshima.”¹²

Four years later, in 1952, Bryen and Jacques Audiberti published *L’Ouvre-Boîte. Colloque Abhumaniste* (*The Can Opener: Abhumanist Colloquium*). In it, they expressed their uncompromising view of a world entirely without a future: “Every city is Hiroshima.”¹³ The inevitable was knocking at the door: “the apocalypse cannot *not* take place.”¹⁴ Consequently, Bryen ferociously attacked science and progress, which he blamed for these catastrophes. He also addressed the increasing control they exerted over people:

The aberration of our civilization undoubtedly lies in humanizing the planet and submitting everything to thought-training. This is the new science of cybernetics, which tells us that machines are being directed to think further, faster, and harder than people; that our geniuses of today will be ridiculously stunted compared with the electronic brains of tomorrow. The sacrosanct processes of human thinking appear to be reproducible phenomena, emptied of all conscious substance, performed by robots, and sealing up the conquerors of the world in an airtight can.¹⁵

Without a doubt, Bryen’s outlook recalls that of the Dadas during the First World War: the same refutation of humanism, which brought about the fall of western civilization through its rationalism, complacency, and vanity. Arp himself asserted that there was a parallel between artists’ reactions to



Fig. 5 Camille Bryen, *Composition*, n.d., Oil on plywood, 35 x 27 cm, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

World War I and II: “We were all resolutely hostile to war-making and concerned ourselves with art more than anything else, but Hugo Ball was really outraged: he booed the Kaiser and felt affected by the slaughter of peoples just as we feel affected today by the ‘progress’ of our nuclear age and the hypocrisy of politics.”¹⁶ Furthermore, the shock of the wars ultimately led Arp to reject the company of reasonable people. In 1946, he set forth his assessment of the Second World War, arguing that humanism had produced the greatest barbarism:

Man has succumbed to the frenzy of intelligence. Of unsound mind, immersed in scientific culture, he is trying to dominate the world [...]. His inhumanity has led him into a sordid labyrinth from which he can find no exit. Machines and money are his idols, and he worships them fervently. His enthusiasm for progress knows no bounds: he measures—calculates—weighs—shoots—crushes—murders—crisscrosses the skies—burns—lies—brags—drops bombs—and thus rises above animals. Using his infernal intelligence, he surpasses all living things in diabolical invention.¹⁷



Fig. 6 Hans Arp, *Trompe l'Œil Collage*, 1947, Collage and colored paste on cardstock, 29.5 × 18.3 cm, Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Gift of Marguerite Arp Hagenbach, 1968

To Arp's great distress, nothing had changed after the War. The world remained dreadfully chaotic, threatened by scientific progress and the mechanization of life, as exemplified by robots. In this, he shared Bryen's apprehensions. Arp later expressed his despair to Jean Clay: "The beloved machine [...] will soon wipe out the universe and infinity [...]. Man wants to be entertained and does not suspect that the robot currently guiding him will lead him into the void [...]." ¹⁸ He added his thoughts on the Soviet lunar probes, which were carried out from 1959–60: "I think it is appalling to fire [a spacecraft] at a celestial body." ¹⁹

Arp's friends were familiar with his views. For example, in 1958 the Swiss sculptor Heinz Gisiger explained why he wrote an article entitled "Arp ou la lutte contre les robots" (Arp, or the Fight against Robots): "I don't know

if I'm on the right track, but Arp's works often seem to be especially anti-robot, which is very important in today's world."²⁰ And in 1964, Carola Giedion-Welker asserted: "Arp is the great anti-robot god."²¹

Arp's views remained current, given the changes taking place in the world: since the day western civilization placed mankind at the center of the universe, it was headed for its demise. To that end, the artist never ceased to convey through his poetry and art: "man is not the measure of all things."²² Similarly, Bryen wrote in 1950 that: "Mankind as the measure of the universe has failed [...]."²³ Arp's views also align Bryen and Jacques Audiberti's concept of abhumanism, as set forth by the latter in 1955: "What is abhumanism? It is human beings choosing to forget that they are the center of the universe."²⁴ The choice of the prefix *ab-* indicates the distancing from humanism and dissociation from mankind. For example, "[une] pensée sans l'homme" (humanless thought) is the title of a chapter in a book of 1951 by Camille Bryen called *Temps troué* (*Pierced Time*), which Arp illustrated with drawings, woodcuts, and *papiers déchirés*.



Fig. 7 Hans Arp: Symmetrical Form with Flakes of Chance, 1955, Rau 506, 78 x 48 cm, Painted wood, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

“Aller là où il n’irait pas humainement”

To realize abhumanism, Camille Bryen suggested “making one’s own life the instrument of one’s liberation.”²⁵ His aim was to achieve self-realization through physical and psychological transcendence, in order to penetrate non-human realms. Similarly, in *L’Ouvre-Boîte, Colloque abhumaniste*, he wrote: “Abhumanism manifests itself in forcing poets to go where they would not humanly go and making them break with self-sufficient inspirations and humanizing aesthetics.”²⁶

“*Aller là où il n’irait pas humainement*,” or “to go where [one] would not humanly go.” In other words, one must approach the base materialism of Georges Bataille, or the organic experience of the body, down to its most intimate substances: “We do not attach enough importance to what comes out of us: sweat, blood, sperm [...].”²⁷ This physiological liberation is the precondition for the liberation of the psyche, the creative force that activates poetry and painting: “[...] we must step outside ourselves if we want to experience the return of the soul.”²⁸ As the poem “Hépérile” demonstrates, abhumanist language opens up the possibility for new poetic material as well. Bryan claimed that he wrote it “with unknown words,” with which he “scream[ed] organically without referring to vocabulary.”²⁹ Abhumanist language is organic, it “bursts, rots, teems. Disintegrates, warms, swirls,” just as in Dadaist language.³⁰ Arp made similar statements on the poem he wrote with Walter Serner and Tristan Tzara in 1919, “Die Hyperbel vom Krokodilcoiffeur und dem Spazierstock” (The Hyperbole of the Crocodile Suitcase and the Walking Stick): “Automatic poetry comes straight from the poet’s bowels or other organs [...]. The poet crows, curses, sighs, stutters, yodels as it suits him. His poems are like nature: they laugh, rhyme, and stink like nature.”³¹

“*Aller là où il n’irait pas humainement*” also means drawing nearer to mysticism. In a text of 1946 entitled “Arp et le langage,” Camille Bryen reflected upon Arp’s poetry collection *Le Siège de l’air. Poèmes 1915-1945*, which had just been published by Alain Gheerbrant. For him, the words in Arp’s poetry “circulate in the cosmos and in our blood.”³² The poems convey this astonishing synthesis of the organic and the cosmic, which also merges with the inorganic and the vegetable:

“les étoiles sont vêtues de seins”
“the stars are dressed in breasts”³³

*“les excréments sentent le lait des concubines et la morve de lune
[...] les muscles des étoiles se déchirent entre eux”*
“the excrements smell of concubine-milk and moon-snot
[...] the muscles of the stars rip in two”³⁴

“les pierres sont des entrailles [...]”
les pierres sont tourmentées comme la chair”
“stones are bowels [...] stones are tormented as flesh”³⁵

“les feuilles des ailes saignent [...]”
des têtes de mort / qui luisent comme des soleil”
“the leaves of the wings are bleeding [...]”
death’s heads / glowing like suns”³⁶

“des gouttes de sang froid / tombent sur la chair chaude”
“drops of cold blood / drip on the hot flesh”³⁷

For Camille Bryen, Arp’s poems were the expression of a “poetic Taoism”:
“Is Tao not a form of organic metaphysics, whereby the human being who
has been oiled with wisdom lives in harmony with the suns and the nights?”³⁸

“Participating in the Work of the Universe”

In the realm of the visual arts, the goal was similar. Bryen’s painting is abstract yet organic (*fig. 5*). Its starting point is the human being, whom Bryen dissolves, dismembers, and destroys. Its stains, splatters, and hatchings suggest the moral and physical shattering of humankind, the ripping open of the body and soul. In order to create a work, “one has to step outside oneself.”³⁹ That is, to become one with the universe, it is necessary to leave behind that which is human. Bryen therefore turned to the images, forms, signs, and spots found in “the scar on a knee” or in “rare species of trees,” “in roots, stones, rocks, marks, skin, ripped posters, threadbare fabrics, unmade beds, mold.”⁴⁰ His conviction was that: “Nature creates forms that enter into

communication with us, that even start playing man. Most likely to remind us that we can, that we must, make use of stones, birds, and clouds.”⁴¹

Arp created his work in the same manner, and this is what Bryen drew from it. His homage to the older artist entitled “Arpoétique” clearly demonstrates that Dada and Arp provided the model for abhumanism. It emphasizes the attainment of freedom, and the need for people to step outside of themselves in order to achieve a direct connection with the universe. In this way, mankind would finally be put in its place, no higher or lower than a stone, a plant, or any other object:

Dada was learning about freedom. Free, but to do what? Free to love. It meant jumping out of oneself onto the neck of real life, which flourishes and disappears [...]. What was important was stepping outside oneself, participating in the work of the universe.

Thanks to Arp, stones, mustaches, and navels began to dream in

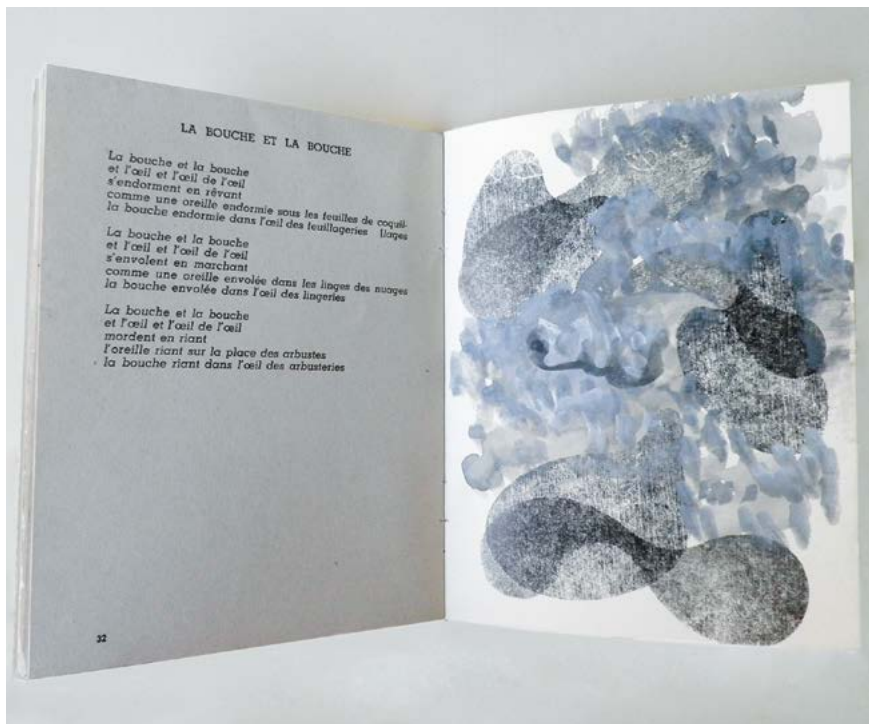


Fig. 8 Hans Arp, *Périgraphie* for Camille Bryen, *Temps trouée*, 1951, Deluxe edition, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

man's head, or to make him dream of them; thanks to Arp, new contacts exist between stones and plants, between this and that, between outside and inside, who say good morning and good evening to each other with a tip of their little hats made of air and bone.⁴²

Reading Bryen in this way recalls Arp's reliefs that blur and intermingle nature, humans, and objects, or in which these elements take on the characteristics of one another. Arp's sculptures that exhibit a new synthesis between human, animal, botanical, mineral, and cosmic forms also come to mind. Indeed, these works convey the idea that man is not the measure of all things. Arp, as Bryen writes: "[...] does not seek to conquer, but to be, and being is what we naturally are."⁴³

From Torn Paper to Spots

Given the intellectual and spiritual accord between Arp and Bryen, the question whether Art Informel, which is also known as Tachisme (Arp favored the latter term), influenced Arp's work. His foreword to a catalogue accompanying an exhibition of his collages at the Galerie Berggruen in 1955 provides some initial clues. Arp declared that the process of *papier déchiré* that he had developed in 1930 had spread widely: "Paper-tearers are now legion and spots were the next logical step from those paper collages."⁴⁴ Although Arp presents himself as the forerunner to a contemporary art movement, he also reevaluates earlier works and processes according to its tenets. His *papiers déchirés* have much in common with Art Informel, including the reference to the "informe" or formlessness as conceived by Georges Bataille, the spontaneous gesture, the role of chance, self-expression (or the expression of the *Riss*, or a rip or a tear that opened at the deaths of his mother and of his wife Sophie Taeuber-Arp), and the fact that these torn pieces of paper appear like stains upon the work's surface. Herta Wescher eloquently described the latter effect (*fig. 6*): "A light green [...] bursts forth in a strange way, creating a fantastical landscape around photo fragments of a wood relief."⁴⁵

Arp conducted his experiments in Tachisme in cardboard and wood reliefs that bore the titles of *Consequence of Torn Paper*, *In the Wake of Torn Paper*, and *In Remembrance of Torn Papers*. He arranged the relief elements as if they were *papiers déchirés*, while he painted both the ground as well as the



Fig. 9 Hans Arp: People are like Flies, 1963, Arntz 241, Color woodcut with watercolor on paper, 32 × 23.5 cm, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth

frame in a tachiste manner, covering the entire ensemble in thick, grey strokes.

In the mid 1950s, Arp employed the same process for reliefs that resemble schematized and symmetrical human forms (*fig. 7*). Its title, *Symmetrical Form with Flakes of Chance* reinforces the intervening role of chance. In an interview with Camille Bryen in 1955, Arp elaborated: “Yes, the blots on the reliefs are like torn-up pieces of paper positioned according to the laws of chance.”⁴⁶ The younger artist then set forth this idea in a text written for an Arp exhibition at the gallery Edouard Loeb in 1955: “Flakes of randomness fall onto these symmetrical shapes [...].”⁴⁷

Arp never practiced tachiste painting itself. Rather, he used it as a counterpoint to his *papiers déchirés*, reliefs, etchings, books, and even some of his furniture. To describe how he had reworked the woodcut he contributed to the deluxe edition of *Temps troué*, Arp used the expression “*Périgraphie continuée de la main même de Arp*” (continued perigraphy by Arp’s own hand), whereby the prefix “peri-” suggests all around, or round and round (*fig. 8*). Tachisme is always integrated into something that already exists, most often by introducing a strong contrast between clearly defined forms and indeterminate marks, and sometimes by means of color contrast. This is the case with *Album 63* (1963) and the exquisite etching that depicts two forms typical of Arp’s oeuvre—one black and one grey—that seem to be swallowing one another (*fig. 9*). The entire composition is daubed with yellow paint. Its title, *People are like Flies*, is like a play on Arp and Bryen’s shared belief that humankind was no longer at the center of the universe, but had surrendered itself to the same level as all other beings.

1 “[...] réunir tout ce que j’estime constituer ce qu’il y a de plus vivant, rassembler les œuvres dans une exposition et les présenter en les situant historiquement, c’est-à-dire en relevant comment et pourquoi cette peinture qui naît n’a rien à voir avec ce qui continue d’être montré comme contemporain.” Georges Mathieu: *De la Révolte à la Renaissance. Au-delà du tachisme*, Paris 1973, p. 47.

2 “J’y consens, bien qu’il ne s’agisse pas là d’une valeur nouvelle; par son passé dada et par ses recherches présentes, Arp témoigne d’un intérêt pour la création pure [...]. Son œuvre [...] le situe bien en dehors des académismes géométrisant ou surréalisant.” *Ibid.*, p. 48.

3 “Ouvrons les classes et les cliniques, vivent la Foire et les microbes, l’Incohérent et l’Informe enfin lâchés gagnent et explosent sur tous les tableaux.” Michel Tapié: *Invitation to the exhibition White and Black*, Galerie des Deux Iles, Paris 1948.

- 4 Christian Schlatter, Ästhetische Rhapsodie über die informelle Kunst: Stenographie, Seismographie und Moderne, in: Susanne Anna (ed.), Die Informellen. Von Pollock bis Schumacher, Ostfildern 1998, p. 38.
- 5 Ibid., p. 37.
- 6 Pierre Darmangeat (ed.): Trois poèmes majeurs de Saint Jean de la Croix, Paris 1947; Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki: Die große Befreiung. Einführung in den Zen-Buddhismus, Konstanz 1947.
- 7 “Une visite que j’ai faite à André Breton m’a tout à fait entamé. J’avais de nouveau l’impression de rentrer dans une organisation: rien que le fait que ce soit un groupe était déjà désagréable pour moi.” Camille Bryen: Entretiens avec Daniel Abadie, 1971–72 in: Emilie Guillard (ed.): Camille Bryen. Désécritures, Dijon 2007, p. 537.
- 8 “[...] À la suite de cela [du vernissage], Olson a donné un petit dîner. Là j’ai vu un homme avec un chapeau mou, un nez assez long et les yeux bleus. Je l’ai trouvé un peu...mouvementé, dans mon esprit, à ce moment-là, car il parlait et il avait des dons de mime fantastiques. C’était Jean Arp. J’ai eu pour lui beaucoup de sympathie — il me l’a rendu d’ailleurs et il m’a invité à aller à Meudon où j’ai fait la connaissance de Sophie Taeuber. Par la suite, je l’ai vu assez souvent et c’était évidemment très important pour moi, puisque, au fond, c’était Dada et tout ce qui a touché à Dada m’a toujours fasciné.” Ibid., p. 540.
- 9 “une vision hypnagogique extrêmement précise”; “Je voyais ce sein accroché à un arbre dans un paysage. Je m’endormis en pensant à un endroit très précis: le bois de Meudon. J’eus d’ailleurs, cette nuit-là, une explication très complète de toute cette histoire, mais je ne me souvins, au réveil, que de la nécessaire suspension à un arbre. Ce sein devint donc le *Sein de la forêt* et je le suspendis à un arbre au bois de Meudon.” Camille Bryen: L’aventure des objets, Lecture delivered on at the Sorbonne on May 3, 1937 and published by José Corti the same year, with photographs by Raoul Ubac, in: Guillard 2007, p. 287 f.
- 10 “Avec mon ami le poète Bryen, autrefois, nous nous promenions dans la forêt et déposions certaines de nos œuvres, ça et là, dans l’herbe, sur les arbres. Il accrochait aux branches des seins de pierre. J’imaginai les gens qui les trouveraient. ‘Est-ce là,’ diraient-ils, ‘le travail d’un oiseau?’” Jean Clay: Jean Arp (1960), in: Visages de l’art moderne, Lausanne 1969, p. 38 f.
- 11 “Oui, il a fait mon portrait, avec une photographie déchirée, qui m’a porté bonheur. Depuis que j’ai été déchiré par Arp, je ne me déchire plus jamais.” Camille Bryen: Entretiens avec Michel Butor, 5.–9. April 1976, in: Emilie Guillard 2007, p. 562.
- 12 “Christophe Colomb aboutit à Hiroshima.” Camille Bryen: Les chenilles processionnaires, in: Tour de feu 26/1948 (April), in: Guillard 2007, p. 318.
- 13 “Toute cité s’appelle Hiroshima.” Jacques Audiberti and Camille Bryen: L’Ouvre-Boîte. Colloque abhumaniste (The Can Opener: Abhumanist Colloquium), Paris 1952, p. 200.
- 14 “l’apocalypse ne peut pas ne pas voir lieu.” Ibid., p. 74.
- 15 “L’aberration de notre civilisation est sans doute d’humaniser la planète, de soumettre tout à un dressage de la pensée... C’est la science nouvelle de la cybernétique qui nous apprend que les machines sont appelées à penser plus loin, plus vite et plus

fort que nos hommes. Que nos athlètes de l'intelligence seront demain de ridicules avortés à côté des cerveaux électroniques... Les méthodes sacro-saintes de pensée humaine apparaissent comme des phénomènes reproductibles vidés de toute substance sensible exécutés par des robots et enfermant les conquérants de la planète dans une boîte de conserve étanche." Camille Bryen: Conférence à la galerie Pierre (1950) in: Guillard 2007, p. 335 f.

16 "Nous étions tous résolument hostiles au métier de guerrier et ce fut l'art qui nous préoccupait avant tout, mais Hugo Ball était un vrai révolté, conspuait le 'Kaiser' et souffrait de la boucherie des peuples comme aujourd'hui nous souffrons du 'progrès' de notre ère nucléaire et de l'hypocrisie politique." Jean Arp and Marcel Janco: undated typescript, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

17 "L'homme a succombé à la frénésie de l'intelligence. Ce dément, imprégné de culture scientifique, tente de dominer le monde [...]. Son inhumanité l'a conduit dans un labyrinthe sordide auquel il ne trouve aucune issue. La machine et l'argent sont ses idoles qu'il adore avec ferveur. Sa joie du progrès ne connaît pas de bornes, il mesure—calcule—pèse—fait feu—pulvérise—assassine—sillonnes les airs—brûle—ment—fanfaronne—lâche ses bombes—et c'est ainsi qu'il s'élève au-dessus des bêtes. Par son intelligence infernale, il surpasse en invention diabolique tout ce qui vit." Jean Arp: Oasis de pureté... (1946), Foreword: Vordemberge-Gildewart. Époque néerlandaise, Amsterdam 1949, in: Jours effeuillés. Poèmes, essais, souvenirs 1920–1965 (Préface de Marcel Jean), Paris 1966, p. 215.

18 "La machine tant adorée qui bientôt dévorera l'univers et l'infini... L'homme veut être distrait et ne suspecte pas le robot qui le conduit maintenant—le conduit au néant..." Jean Clay in: Visages de l'art moderne, Lausanne 1969, p. 25.

19 "Je trouve ça infect de tirer sur un astre." Jean Clay in: Visages de l'art moderne, Lausanne 1969, p. 25.

20 "Ich weiss nicht ob ich mich verrenne, aber mir will oft scheinen als sei Arps Kunst ganz speziell antirobot, was ja heutzutage sehr wichtig ist." Letter from Gisiger to Marguerite Hagenbach, Epalinges, April 13, 1958, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

21 "Hier lege ich Ihnen einen Brief von Kepec bei den Sie mir gelegentlich retournieren koennen. Ich faende es sehr begreussenswert wenn Arp an der Humanisierung Americas etwas beitragen koennte. Sonst stehen, die Lippolds und Co ueberall herum um uns noch weiter zu robotisieren. Arp ist doch der grosse Gott Anti-Robott." Letter from Carola Giedion-Welcker to Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach, Berlin, April 28, 1964, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

22 "Il [l'homme] ne devait plus être la mesure de toute chose, ni tout rapporter à sa mesure [...]" Hans Arp: De plus en plus je m'éloignais de l'esthétique, in: On My Way. Poetry and Essays, 1912–1947 (ed. by Robert Motherwell), New York 1948 (Documents of Modern Art, Vol. 6), quoted after: Arp 1966, p. 311.

23 "L'homme a fait faillite comme mesure de l'univers [...]," Bryen: Conférence à la galerie Pierre, 1950, in: Guillard 2007, p. 334.

24 "Qu'est-ce que l'abhumanisme? C'est l'homme acceptant de perdre de vue qu'il est le centre de l'univers." Jacques Audiberti: L'Abhumanisme, Paris 1955, p. 35.

- 25 “faire de sa vie même l’outil de sa libération,” Camille Bryen, *L’aventure des objets*, Guillard 2007, p. 285.
- 26 “L’abhumanisme se manifeste en forçant le poète à aller là où il n’irait pas humainement, en lui faisant rompre avec la suffisance des inspirations et des esthétiques huminantes.” Jacques Audiberti et Camille Bryen: *L’Ouvre-Boîte*, in: Guillard 2007, p. 72–73.
- 27 “On n’attache pas assez d’importance à ce qui sort de soi. La sueur, le sang, le sperme [...],” Camille Bryen: *Le bain de l’homme*, in: *La Tour de Feu* 27/1948, in: Guillard 2007, p. 319.
- 28 “[...] on doit sortir de soi si l’on veut connaître le retour de l’âme.” Ibid.
- 29 “en mots inconnus”; “cri[ant] organiquement sans référence au vocabulaire,” Camille Bryen, “Avertissement au dé-lecteur,” Flyer announcing the book by Camille Bryen, Raymond Hains, and Jacques Villeglé: *Hépérile éclaté*, Paris 1953, in: Guillard 2007, p. 352.
- 30 “éclate, pourrit, fourmille. Désintègre, réchauffe, tourbillonne,” Jacques Audiberti et Camille Bryen, *L’Ouvre-Boîte*, in: Guillard 2007, p. 68.
- 31 “Die automatische Dichtung entspringt unmittelbar den Gedärmen oder anderen Organen des Dichters... Der Dichter kräht, flucht, seufzt, stottert, jodelt, wie es ihm passt. Seine Gedichte gleichen der Natur: sie lachen, reimen, stinken wie die Natur.” Jean Arp, *Dadaland*, in: id. 1948, cited after: *Unsern täglichen Traum ... Erinnerungen, Dichtungen und Betrachtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954* (1955), Zürich 1995, p. 54.
- 32 “circulent dans le cosmos et dans notre sang,” Camille Bryen: *Arp et le langage*, in: *Fontaine* 60/1947 (May), quoted after: Guillard 2007, p. 309.
- 33 “Ruche de verre” in: Arp 1966, p. 267; English translation of “Hive of Dreams” in: Arp 1969, pp. 203–204, p. 204.
- 34 Arp, “Chair de rêve” (1915) in: id.: 1966, pp. 221–224, p. 221; English translation of “Dream Flesh” from: Jean Arp: *Arp on Arp: Poems, Essays, Memories* (ed. by Marcel Jean, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel), New York 1969 (*The Documents of Modern Art*, ed. by Robert Motherwell), pp. 168–171, p. 168.
- 35 “Les pierres domestiques” in: Arp 1966, p. 241; English translation of “Domestic Stones” from Arp 1969, pp. 183–184, p. 183.
- 36 “Taches dans le vide” in: Arp 1966, p. 251; English translation of “Splotches in Space” from Arp 1969, p. 189–193, p. 189.
- 37 “Les pigeons” in: Arp 1966, p. 263; English translation of “The Quadrangular Pigeons” from Arp 1969, pp. 198–201, p. 201.
- 38 “Tao n’est-il pas une métaphysique organique, où l’homme huilé de sagesse vit en accord avec les soleils et les nuits?” Bryen: *Arp et le langage*, in: Guillard 2007, p. 310.
- 39 Bryen: *Conférence à la galerie Pierre*, 1950, in: Guillard 2007, p. 334.
- 40 Ibid., p. 337.

41 “La nature crée des formes qui entrent en communication avec nous, qui même se mettent à jouer de l’homme. Sans doute pour nous rappeler que nous pouvons, que nous devons jouer de la pierre, de l’oiseau, ou du nuage,” Ibid.

42 “Dada était l’apprentissage de la liberté. Libre, pourquoi? Libre d’aimer. C’est-à-dire de se jeter en dehors de soi au cou de la vie vraie qui champignonne et disparaît [...]. C’est sortir de soi qui importe, participer à l’œuvre de l’univers. C’est grâce à Arp que les pierres, les moustaches, les nombrils commencent à rêver dans la tête de l’homme, ou à le faire rêver d’eux, que des contacts neufs existent entre les pierres et les plantes, entre ceci et cela et le dehors et le dedans qui se disent bonjour et bonsoir en se saluant de leur petit chapeau d’air et d’os.” Camille Bryen, *Arpoétique* (II), n.d., in Guillard 2007, p. 429.

43 “[...] ne veut pas conquérir, mais être, et qu’être on l’est naturellement,” Ibid.

44 “Les déchireurs de papier sont désormais devenus légion et la suite de ces papiers furent les taches.” Jean Arp: Arp, *Collages*, exhibition catalogue, Galerie Berggruen, Paris, 1955, in: Arp: 1966, p. 421.

45 “Un vert clair, cependant, éclate d’une façon insolite, formant un paysage fantastique autour des fragments photographiques d’un relief en bois.” H. W., [Herta Wescher]: Arp. Galerie Berggruen, in: *Cimaise*, Vol. 3, 4/1956 (March), p. 25.

46 “Oui, les taches sur les reliefs sont comme les papiers déchirés, placées selon les lois du hasard.” Jean Arp: *Colloque de Meudon entre Arp et Bryen* (1955), in: *XX^e siècle*, January 1956, in: Arp 1966, p. 432.

47 “Sur ses formes symétriques neigent les flocons du hasard [...],” Camille Bryen and Hans Arp: *Invitation to the Arp exhibition*, Galerie Edouard Loeb, Paris (1955), in: Guillard 2007, p. 356.

"Cher Maître"

Lygia Clark and Hans Arp's Concept of Concrete Art¹

Heloisa Espada

The trajectory of the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark (1920–1988) has been recognized as a long and lucid process. It began in the late 1940s in the field of abstraction and moved towards a series of therapeutic propositions in the 1970s. Some of the outstanding narratives about her work, conceived by the Brazilian critics Mário Pedrosa and Ferreira Gullar, and the British critic Guy Brett, as well as her own writings, describe a linear process that evolved from the picture plane to space, from geometry to organic forms, from stillness to movement, from a passive gaze to the active participation of the spectator, from rationality to the unconscious, and from the milieu of art to that of "real" life. The Brazilian artist Tunga thought that the evolution of her work was so coherent that it could be traced backwards from the final experiments to the early ones and still be understood fully.²

Lygia Clark initiated her studies in art in late 1940s, in Rio de Janeiro, with the Brazilian painter and landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx. From 1950 to 1952, she lived in Paris, where she studied with Fernand Léger, Arpad Szènes, and the Polish artist Isaac Dobrinsky. In 1954, Clark became a founding member of the group Frente, the first collective of abstract artists in Rio de Janeiro, along with Hélio Oiticica, Abraham Palatinik, Ivan Serpa, and others. They were gathered around the critic Mário Pedrosa who at that time was deeply involved in developing an aesthetic theory based on the concept of gestalt. Moreover, he was one of the most active advocates for abstraction in the country.

In 1954, Lygia Clark arrived at one of her most important inventions, or "discoveries," as she preferred to say. She had come to understand and describe the concept of "organic line" as the void between the two flat surfaces of juxtaposed planes, which form a kind of line that is actually a very thin empty space. From the concept of "organic line," Clark incorporated space into her compositions and designed her own process of breaking the frame, which means, in this case, the incorporation of the frame into the

composition. Next, she developed the series of paintings called *Planos de superficies moduladas* (*Planes in Modulated Surface*). Clearly inspired by Josef Albers, it consisted of segments of planes that she fit together and juxtaposed. In addition to working with the idea of virtual space and movement, the artist rendered these shapes in three dimensions. That is, she no longer painted forms, but rather mounted shapes. The next step was to fold the plane into three-dimensional space. Accordingly, the new series was called *Casulo* (*Cocoon*), one of her first direct references to the natural world and, at the same time, to an inner and subjective reality. Lygia Clark explained that the *Casulos* (*Cocoons*) had fallen from the wall, transforming into the *Bichos* (*Animals*), her best-known series of sculptures, which are made from geometric surfaces that are connected by flexible spines. These works are conceived in such a way that they invite the viewer to endlessly modify their foldable geometric shapes.

Made in 1963 with simple paper and scissors, *Caminhando* (*Walking*) was the decisive step towards the participation of observer and the inclusion



Fig. 1 Lygia Clark: *Caminhando* (*Walking*), 1963, paper, glue, and scissors, dimensions variable



Fig. 2 Lygia Clark: Obra mole (Soft work), 1964, synthetic rubber, dimensions variable, diameter 50 cm

of a temporal element in Clark's work. Starting with the Möbius strip, she invites the viewer to cut down this infinite loop until it becomes so thin that it is not possible to cut anymore (*fig. 1*). In addition to marking a total break from the concept of inside versus outside, the work exists only as a performance by the audience. *Caminhando* (*Walking*) also introduced the question of chance into Clark's process, and aligned her work more closely with mutable and organic forms. After *Caminhando* (*Walking*), Clark developed the series of flexible sculptures *O dentro é o fora* (*The inside is the outside*), works of continuous structures made of stainless steel that were likewise based on the Möbius strip. What followed was the series *Trepantes* (*Climbers*), flexible bodies suspended from the ceiling or on wooden trunks, which further emphasized their resemblance to living things.

In 1964, Clark began producing the same kind of objects in rubber, thereby commencing a series of soft works that were even more unstable and dynamic (*fig. 2*). Mário Pedrosa, who had been following Clark's career since the early 1950s, thought that with the soft works the artist had achieved "a perfect expression of her thoughts torn between art and non-art, between

creation and non-existence.”³ The critic also recalled that when he saw the “soft works” for the first time, he joked that it would finally be possible to kick a sculpture.⁴

These works represented a deepening of Lygia Clark’s concept of the work of art that drew closer to Dada poetry. This posture was practically unheard of in Brazilian art which, up until then, had rarely taken an iconoclastic stance. After the soft works, Clark distanced herself more and more from geometry and from the traditional categories of art. Eventually, she sought an indistinct fusion between art and life through experimental actions in which the object no longer played the central role.

From 1966, the artist developed her artistic practice through increased experimentation with sensory practices, leading to her *Objetos sensoriais* (*Sensorial Objects*). These objects—often made of modest and everyday materials such as air, plastic, and seashells—were meant to be touched and manipulated by the spectator, exploring the body, and ultimately the relationship between bodies. Subsequently, Clark developed a series of therapeutic propositions that engaged with subjectivity itself. Known as the “Structuring of the Self,” this therapeutic work with individuals employed what she called *Objetos relacionais* (*Relational Objects*), which she placed on the body of her so-called patients.

Following this panoramic introduction to Lygia Clark’s works, I wish to call attention to a lesser-known episode in the trajectory of her career: her contact with Hans Arp during the first half of 1964, when the Brazilian artist spent a few months in Paris on a fellowship from the Brazilian government. The meeting is documented in a note that Clark wrote to Arp, probably in the second half of 1964, after she had already returned to Rio de Janeiro:

Dear Master,

I am sending you the catalogue from my exhibition in Rio, with an excellent article by Mario Pedrosa. I am also sending you a sculpture (“a little beast”), which you liked a lot. I remember with great joy having made your acquaintance and your appreciation for my work, which was very important to me.

With great admiration, and greetings to your wife,

Lygia Clark.

P.S. My friend M. Cardim will call you when the sculpture arrives in Paris so he can bring it to you.⁵

The note was written on a page of the catalogue that accompanied her exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro the previous year, in 1963 (fig. 3).

Lygia Clark also mentioned her encounter with Arp in a letter she sent to her friend Hélio Oiticica from Paris during the first half of 1964:

We had been with Arp, who is a terrific character. He loved the *Animals* and wanted to buy one. He recommended me himself to Balli, the gallery of modern art, and told them that the *Animals* were the most beautiful abstracted things that he had ever seen.⁶

Abstract art began to be practiced widely in Brazil only after the end of the World War II. At that time, four outstanding Brazilian institutions were founded: the Museum of Art of São Paulo (Masp), inaugurated in 1947, the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo (MAM/SP), and the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro (MAM/RJ), both of which were established in 1949, and the Biennial of the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, which began in 1951. The four were deeply engaged in presenting European modern art in the country and in educating Brazilian audiences in the appreciation of modern art. In addition, by supporting a full agenda of courses and lectures on modern art, they informed artists about modernism.

Although Hans Arp did not participate in the São Paulo Biennial until 1965, his work *Formes Expressives*, 1932 (fig. 4), was included in the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo's inaugural exhibition, which was organized by the French critic Leon Degand in 1949. In 1947, the Italian businessman and patron of MAM/SP Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho acquired the work from the Italian painter Alberto Magnelli. The latter had been acting as Matarazzo's primary adviser when he acquired his collection of European modern art in late 1940s and during the 1950s. Alberto Magnelli was introduced to the businessman by his brother, Aldo Magnelli, who lived in São Paulo and was Matarazzo's close friend.

Lygia Clark had encountered Hans Arp's work before their meeting in 1964. One of her first art teachers was Roberto Burle Marx, a man educated in Berlin, whose landscape architecture has clear formal correlations to Arp's organic forms. Having also lived in Paris from 1950 to 1952, she may have heard about Arp from Mário Pedrosa, who had visited the French-German artist in Meudon in 1958. The visit is described in the text "As pedras de

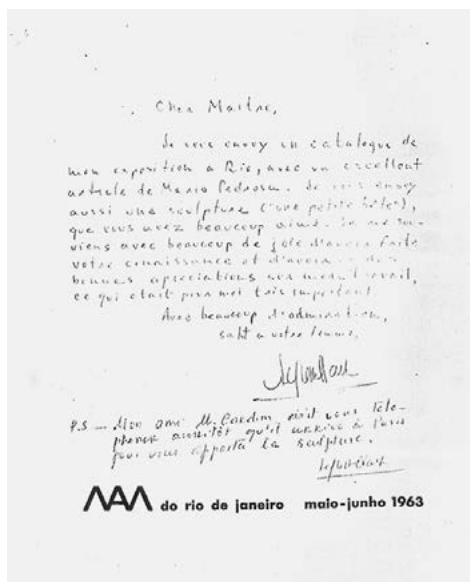


Fig. 3 Note from Lygia Clark to Hans Arp, 1964, written on a page of the catalogue for her exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro, which was held in 1963, Xerox copy, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth

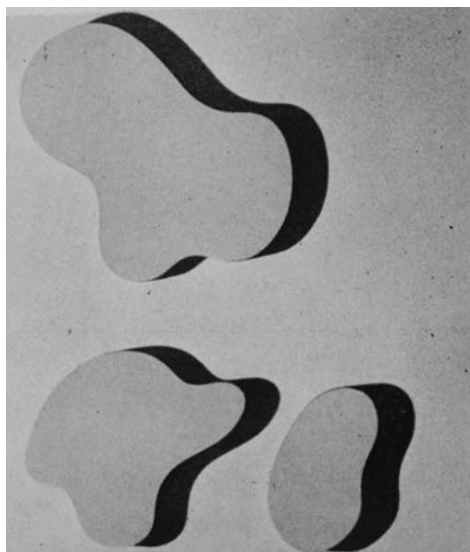


Fig. 4 Hans Arp: Formes Expressives (detail), 1932, Rau 256 b, Painted wood, 84.9 × 70 × 3 cm, São Paulo, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo

Arp” (The Stones of Arp), which was published in the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, on May 27, 1958. In this text, Pedrosa calls attention to how Arp’s *Concretions* displayed in the gardens of his estate in Meudon seemed to be a part of nature⁷.

The wish to integrate the artwork with nature is one of the commonalities between Lygia Clark and Hans Arp. Although Clark’s work and development are typically understood through her connections with Albers, Malevich, Mondrian, and Tatlin, I believe that she did not address Arp as “Cher Maître” by chance, especially in 1964, when her interest in organic shapes was materialized in her “soft works.”

Although there are important differences between the works of Clark and Arp, many of her concerns relate to Arp’s early works. These include the dissolution of the frame and its assimilation within the composition, the creation of forms that are also concrete in their materiality, and the removal of the base of the sculpture. However, in my opinion, one of the most interesting parallels between the two artists are the ways that both refer to nature without imitating it, and the ways both are comfortable using metaphors from nature in the titles of their works.

Like Hans Arp, the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark worked with uniform surfaces that were anonymous and neutral in character. Despite having participated in Concrete and Neo-Concrete collectives, Clark’s work took on personal and unpredictable paths, and assumed an independent posture. When she wrote to Arp in 1964, she was working with industrial materials to create objects with undefined and mutant bodies that were molded by circumstances and by the actions of other bodies. As such, these works were far removed from the rationality and objectivity characteristic of much of so-called Concrete art. The ambiguous fate of industrial materials in Clark’s work aligns her with Arp’s negative vision of the modern world, a point of view which played a part in his conception of Concrete art. In his words: “modern times with their science and technology have made man a megalomaniac. The atrocious confusion of our epoch is the consequence of this overestimation of reason.”⁸ From 1964, as we could see, Clark moved further and further from the idea of a single objective view of art and of its relation to the world.

The relationship between Lygia Clark and Hans Arp expands our understanding of the sources of Concrete art in Brazil beyond its well-known connections to Switzerland. Her short note illuminates the diversity of the

sources of Neo-Concrete art. Furthermore, it suggests that Clark's singular path may have stemmed from a conception of Concrete art that was unusual in Brazil in the 1950s, as it deviated far from the search for objectivity and far from an optimistic view of modernity.

1 This research was developed in the context of my post-doctoral research about the first beginnings of Concrete art in Brazil, at the Museum of Contemporary Art of University of São Paulo, with the financial support of the Brazilian Government Agency CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior).

2 Guy Brett: Lygia Clark: seis células, in: Lygia Clark, exhibition catalogue, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona 1997, p. 33.

3 Mário Pedrosa: A obra de Lygia Clark, in: O Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, December 28, 1963, cited after: Otília Arantes (ed.): Acadêmicos e modernos: Textos escolhidos III, São Paulo, 2004, p. 351.

4 Mário Pedrosa cit. in: Guy Brett: Lygia Clark: seis células, in: Lygia Clark, p. 21.

5 “Cher Maître, Je vous envoy un catalogue de mon exposition a Rio, avec un excellent article de Mario Pedrosa. Je vous envoy aussi une sculpture (“une petit bête”), que vous avez beaucoup aimé. Je me souviens avec beaucoup de joie d’avoir foite votre connaissance et d’avoir eu des bonnes apreciations sur mon travail, ce qui etait pour moi très important. Avec beaucoup d’admiration, salut a votre femme, Lygia Clark. p.s.—Mon ami M. Cardim doit vous telephoner aussitôt qu’il arrive à Paris pour vous apporter la sculpture.” Note from Lygia Clark to Hans Arp, n.d., xerox copy, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth. Clark’s gift to Arp [le petit bête] has not been located. It is neither held in the collection of the Stiftung Arp e.V. in Berlin, nor is it is part of the collection of the Arp Museum in Rolandseck.

6 Letter from Lygia Clark to Hélio Oiticica, in: id.: Cartas 1964–1974, Rio de Janeiro 1998, p. 35. Translated from the Portuguese by the author.

7 See: Mário Pedrosa: As pedras de Arp, in: Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 27 May 1958, cited after Otília Arantes, ed: Modernidade cá e lá: Textos escolhidos IV, São Paulo, EDUSP, 2000, pp. 239–241.

8 Hans Arp: Concrete Art, in: Arp. On My Way, Poetry and Essays 1912-1947 (ed. by Robert Motherwell), New York 1948 (Documents of Modern Art. Vol. 6), p. 72.

Organic Form, Hapticity, and Space as a Primary Being

The Polish Neo-Avant-Garde and Hans Arp

Marta Smolińska

In the 1920s and 1930s representatives of the Polish avant-garde living in Paris came into contact with Hans Arp. However, the Polish neo-avant-garde was also fascinated by his work.¹ To date, art historians have not addressed this subject in full. While we cannot refer here to a uniform current grounded in biomorphic abstraction, as was the case with the Polish artists who were active in Paris in the late 1920s through the 1930s,² there were certainly members of the neo-avant-garde for whom organic forms play the key role. Nonetheless, the aspects of Hans Arp's works that continue to inspire generations of artists are present in sculptures like *To Be Exposed/Lost in the Woods* (1932), which have an organic and biomorphic character as well as a related haptic, tactile nature (*fig. 1*).

I argue that hapticity does not eliminate the operation of eyesight in the works of Hans Arp and the Polish neo-avant-garde, but instead sets in motion a collaboration between eyesight and touch.³ Furthermore, I would point out the emphasis on process in these works of art, which comes close to the idea of *natura naturans*, as defined by Baruch de Spinoza in the seventeenth century.⁴ For Spinoza, *natura naturans* refers to the self-causing activity of nature: “[B]y *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, that is... God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause.”⁵ My inquiry thus focuses on the following in the art of Arp and the Polish neo-avant-garde: the potential of chance, the intention to create *like nature*, outside of the conventions prevalent in the realm of art, the multiple layers of biomorphic shapes, and the definition of space in terms of immutable being, primarily with respect to the objects operating within it.

Polish artists including Maria Jarema, Maria Pinińska-Berseś, Maria Papa Rostkowska (the only artist under discussion who knew Arp personally), Alina Szapocznikow, Jan Berdyszak, Jerzy Gurawski, Andrzej Pawłowski, Adam Procki, and Bolesław Utkin addressed these themes in different ways. Their works therefore comprise an (un-)conscious dialogue with the artist whom the Polish poet Jan Brzękowski considered the inventor of a-geometric sculpture.⁶

The term a-geometry aids in the understanding of Arp's work and that of the Polish artists who admired him. It suggests that the organic and the biomorphic are simultaneously abstract and related to nature, although not to its external appearance but rather to its processes.⁷ Based on his observations of nature, Arp sought a mode of perception that would be free from associations with objects and focused instead on processes and the cosmic order.⁸ The term a-geometry itself emphasises a contrast between the geometric and organic forms that is also similar to Arp's understanding of Concrete art. Arp deemed art that was made in emulation of these processes "concrete":



Fig. 1 Hans Arp: *To Be Exposed/Lost in the Woods*, 1932, Giedion-Welcker 010, Plaster, 9.5 × 22 × 17 cm, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth



Fig. 2 Andrzej Pawłowski: White Skeleton, 1971, Plaster, canvas, lacquer, 80 × 90 cm, Collection of the artist's family

We do not want to copy nature, we do not want to reproduce, we want to produce. We want to produce like a plant that produces a fruit and not to reproduce, we want to produce directly and not through interpretation. As there is not the slightest trace of abstraction in this art, we call it: concrete art. The works of concrete art should not be signed by their creators. These paintings, these sculptures, these objects should remain anonymous in the great studio of nature like clouds, mountains, seas, animals, men. Yes, men should return to nature, artists should work in community like the artists of the middle ages.⁹

Thus, from 1934 he titled each of his organic sculptures *Concrétion Humaine* to reinforce their relationship to the dynamic processes of densification and expansion of matter found in nature.¹⁰ In the introduction to the first English volume of Arp's texts in 1948, Robert Motherwell recognized Arp's intention in the following description: "his process is slow and even as nature's, carving that has the effect of water run over human stones."¹¹ Furthermore, Arp stressed that when sculpting in plaster he worked deliberately but then

succumbed to automatism and was led by the work; the only thing he did was move his hands.¹² Indeed, photographs showing Arp in his studio make us aware of the extent to which the visual characteristics of his sculpture were subject to haptic processes.¹³

Arp scholars have not yet fully examined the haptic quality of his works, which is so compelling to me because it inspired so many Polish artists. However, Arp himself was intrigued by the role touch could play in his practice. He believed that the Renaissance emphasis on intellect over the senses was detrimental, and described himself in his poems as born in nature and having five senses, including of course, touch.¹⁴ In “Das Tagesgerippe” he wrote: “with closed eyes, I feel my way through luminosity,” while photographs from his studio show him encouraging his visitors to touch his works.¹⁵ Stimulation of the sense of touch, underappreciated in the sight-centred culture of Western Europe, is organically tied to biomorphic shapes. Gaston Bachelard, who reflected on the phenomenology of rounded forms from a psychoanalytic perspective, argued that everything oval and round arrests the touch and demands to be caressed.¹⁶

Arp’s fascination with biomorphic form and chance, which were for him inseparable from the nature’s processes (*natura naturans*), was shared by



Fig. 3 Andrzej Pawłowski: Odd-numbered Mannequin, 1964, Cast, 36.5 × 80 × 54 cm, The National Museum in Kraków

Andrzej Pawłowski (1925–1986), a member of the Second Krakow Group. Arp's pioneering use of chance in the years 1916–18 allowed him to transform the role of the artist, who no longer expresses him- or herself in the work of art, but rather creates a situation whose potential the artist recognizes and develops further.¹⁷ The essence of the work of art that is created without deliberation allows a shift from the artist's agency to an uncontrolled process. Pawłowski, who promoted the idea of natural form, wrote about the forms resulting from these uncontrolled processes in 1966: "Forms created in such a process remain perfect, even if they are stripped of life, or preclude the possibility of further perfection (skeleton, shell)."¹⁸ The artist thereby calls for an attempt to reach a genuine, true, and perfect shape under "artificial" conditions, setting in motion circumstances in which the surface of a painting or the shape of a sculpture comes into being through a process that resembles nature's own workings. This process differs from nature in that the artist must determine the preliminary conditions and initiate it, but the work should then come into being by means of a self-regulating system that also embraces the potential of chance. In this way, artists could break free from the habit of composing their own subjectivity, effectively rejecting intentionality and instead yielding to chance.



Fig. 4 Alina Szapocznikow: Game of Round Pebbles (Jeu de Galets), 1967, Bronze, 6 × 58 × 34 cm, Grazyna Kulczyk Collection

Pawłowski applied this method in two series: *Mannequins* (1964) and *Skeletons* (1971). Both involved the pouring of dry plaster with an admixture of sawdust into sack-like canvas forms that the artist sewed specifically for this purpose, as in *Odd-numbered Mannequin* of 1964 (fig. 2). He then stitched together the sacks and threw them into water. After they had become fully saturated with water and the plaster had hardened, they were removed from the water. The following stage of the creative process was the removal of the fabrics. Then Pawłowski would modify the surface of the work, with special emphasis on retaining and highlighting the “natural” character it had obtained in the water. Treated in this manner, plaster assumed organic, rounded shapes which hardened into objects that the artist ultimately covered with patina. The results are sculptures with exceptionally coarse textures.¹⁹ They bear the imprints of the fabric’s structure in some places, only to be perfectly smooth and polished elsewhere. This contrast between surface textures, superimposed on the organic and biomorphic nature of the form, makes them haptic to an exceptional degree.²⁰

A different tension is inscribed in *The Birth of a Mannequin* (1964), an object that simultaneously appears immobile while pulsating with intense life, thereby evoking the process of emerging, forming, or coming into the world. By embracing Arp’s method of making concrete or a-geometric art, Pawłowski succeeds, with splendid accuracy, in conveying the phenomenon of birth, with its organicity, balancing on the verge of (non-)formedness and the “happening” of biological provenance. Specifically, his use of controlled coincidence and his reliance on the “intuition” of plaster, which takes on its final form while hardening, allowed him to orchestrate this compelling association between his artistic process and the dynamic of birth.

As Pawłowski wrote of *White Skeleton* (fig. 3), “the stigma of the process, of the manner in which it was made, makes it genuine and authentic.”²¹ Its features—very similar to the features of the works in the *Mannequin* series—are attained thanks to the yielding “instinct” of hardening plaster or salt. It follows, then, that the work of art begins to resemble the natural world, hardening like the eponymous skeleton and ossifying into an intriguing object. With its varied haptic surfaces, *White Skeleton* seduces and allures not only the sense of vision but also that of touch. Its textures oscillate between the roughness of the canvas in which it was molded and the smooth, glistening, and paint-saturated protuberances. The shapes of certain elements resemble bones, which correlate with the series’ title, but may also bring

about associations with the soft undulations of the sea floor or the rippled surface of water in the wind. However, regardless of the specific associations, the work evokes natural forms, thereby becoming “palpable,” intensely present, organic and perfect, as if it were a creation of nature.²²

The smooth and rounded surfaces in Arp and in Pawłowski’s work, achieved through their innovative use of plaster, demand attention and likewise trigger the desire to experience them through touch. Arp scholar Margherita Andreotti pointedly observed that plaster helped Arp become a pioneer of biomorphic sculpture, because it could be formed into a perfectly oval or round shape.²³ However, Arp was not interested in the ideal circle and sphere, but rather in the oval. He first indicated the potential of this form in a text of 1947, although he implied that he had invented it for himself as early as 1916.²⁴ Subsequently he added:

I become more and more removed from aesthetics. I wanted to find another order, another value for man in nature. He was no longer to be the measure of all things, no longer to reduce everything to his own measure. I wanted to create new appearances, extract new forms from man. This tendency took shape in 1917 in my “objects.”²⁵

Arp thought ovals were examples of another such order, removed from aesthetics, because they were the simplest forms shared by all natural elements and were moreover symbolic of eternal and organic transformation.²⁶ Round stones embodied the oval shape for Arp; he would passionately gather, collect, and arrange them directly on lake shores into what he called “constellations,” as he did in Ascona in 1938.²⁷ He wanted his sculptures to be as concrete and sensual as round pebbles, and he believed that these actions freed him from the need to sketch biomorphic shapes prior to making his sculptures.²⁸

The Polish artist Alina Szapocznikow (1926–1973) shared Arp’s fascination with the oval. In 1967 she created *Game of Round Pebbles*, a bronze object composed of an indented surface with seventeen polished “pebbles,” each of which matched one of the indentations (*fig. 4*). The work was meant to be touched; viewers could pick up the round stones, warm them in their hands and finally place them in their corresponding indentations, thereby incessantly reconstructing and deconstructing the constellation envisaged by

the artist. To be sure, Szapocznikow stressed that she was indebted to nature and that her entire approach to art was biological.²⁹

Szapocznikow's *Game of Round Pebbles* has much in common with Arp's works from the early 1930s, such as the sculpture *To Be Exposed in the Woods* and *Head with Annoying Objects* (1930–32). The small elements of both works were not initially fixed; they were supposed to be touched, assembled, and re-assembled at will. Only later, to protect them against damage, were their elements permanently affixed to the bases.³⁰ As in Szapocznikow's *Game of Round Pebbles*, the small haptic forms rested in a kind of bowl, a plinth of sorts, and invited viewers to interact with them. The scale of the "round pebbles" in both artists' works were adjusted to the human hand. To that end, Stefanie Poley stresses that Arp's early plaster sculptures were meant to be touched. Of Surrealist and Dadaist origin, they were meant to de(con-)struct the idea that works of art cannot be touched and that the only proper form of perception was contemplation.³¹ The common denominators between *To Be Exposed in the Woods* and Szapocznikow's *Game of Round Pebbles* are their interactivity and their activation of the sense of touch.³²

This question of hapticity is also closely linked to the organic form resembling round pebbles in works such as *Figure* of 1956 by Maria Jarema (1908–1958). Jarema's small brass sculpture, which is distinct within the artist's entire oeuvre, resembles three round pebbles of varying sizes that are set at different heights. The work features a round base just like those favored by Arp, who believed that it would embolden viewers to encircle the sculpture and view it from all sides.³³ This predilection might be tied to the artist's intention to question the traditional division into front, back, and side views, i.e. with the demand to liberate the sculpture from the tyranny of the front and rear, bottom and top, from a specific orientation in space. Jarema's *Figure* meets these demands and can be looked at from every possible angle.

Hapticity in Arp's work and that of Polish artists is not only a matter of actual tactile contact between the viewer and the work, but also a comprehensive cooperation between the sense of touch and that of sight. Presenting sculptures such as *To Be Exposed in the Woods* and *Head with Annoying Objects* in museums allows us to touch them with our eyes. Maurice Merleau-Ponty treats vision as a kind of touch: "seeing is touching with the sense of sight..."³⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan substantiates this idea by arguing that that most tactile impressions reach us indirectly, through the eyes.³⁵ Further, in *The*



Fig. 5 Maria Pinińska-Bereś: Greedy Dreams, 1985, Plywood, cloth, sponge, 145 x 77 x 10 cm, Grazyna Kulczyk Collection

Visible and the Invisible, Merleau-Ponty argues that the touch of the eyes is a kind of sensory touch, and that the conventional division between the senses is too coarse.³⁶ In his view, the visible morphs into the tangible, the tangible into the visible, and consequently “the view of the visible is no more or less than the ‘haptic qualities.’”³⁷

The haptic is manifest in this way in *Greedy Dreams* (1985) by Maria Pinińska-Bereś (1931–1999) (fig. 5). The organic, layered form made of foam covered in fabric and painted in various hues of pink also has an erotic aura. It is corporeal, built with wavy lines that seem to be in constant motion, and it is haptic. This is important to the present argument, because Arp stressed that an ambiguous and poetic title of a work was of paramount importance to him, so much so that it was on a par with the work itself.³⁸ The artist wrote that he was playing with words the way a child plays with building blocks. To his mind, they are fresh and mysterious and incite people to touch and bend them like sculptures.³⁹ Pinińska-Bereś' work bears a poetic title: the artist not only plays with biomorphic shapes, but also with the words that depict them, stressing the greed and insatiability of the haptic and erotic imagination.⁴⁰ Izabela Kowalczyk comments: "The corporeality of her art follows from the yielding, rounded shapes which fill it, and from the use of pink, which appeared in her art already in 1958 and functions virtually as a trademark. [...] Its symbolic is [...] associated with the body, the boudoir, sex. By virtue of their softness, the curved shapes and the pink colour, Pinińska-Bereś' artwork is suffused with a layer of sexuality."⁴¹

Organic and haptic qualities akin to those in Arp's work can also be seen in the sculpture of Adam Procki (1909–1990). Jarosław Pajek has asserted that Procki showed the greatest affinity to Constantin Brâncuși's art, and that he did not create purely abstract forms but rather transformed nature in his attempt to arrive at a purely synthetic form. However, I would argue that Procki, who was familiar with Arp's oeuvre, had many affinities with the Alsatian artist.⁴² As early as the 1960s, Ignacy Witz wrote about the sense of the organic in Procki's work in a catalogue for the artist's solo exhibition in Warsaw. He implied further that the author of *Synthesis* (1970) creates shapes "neither directly nor indirectly, neither descriptively nor in the form of commentary."⁴³ In this way, his process is similar to Arp's. Procki himself wrote: "Form itself refers to the fullness of life; it pulsates with life itself."⁴⁴ His concept of organic and biomorphic form comes close to the idea of *natura naturans*. In an interview, the artist explained how his sculptures came into being:

They were born of the observation of nature, of regarding its blooming, bursting with juices, of the maturation of what is alive. The [...] round, bursting, biological, sensual sculptures do not imitate



Fig. 6 Maria Papa Rostkowska: Small Angel (Piccolo Angelo), 1990, Light pink Portuguese marble, plinth: pink Portuguese marble, 32 cm high, Private Collection

natural forms and transmit only what is the most essential, i.e. the very process of life, becoming, development, and death.⁴⁵

Such a perception of sculptural form is characteristic of organic abstraction and is similar to Arp's description of Concrete art. Moreover, the haptic quality and the round and oval shapes found in the organic portion of Procki's oeuvre also align it closely with that of Arp.

Maria Papa Rostkowska (1923–2008), who met the master artist through her husband Giuseppe Papa, engaged consciously with Arp's work (*figs. 6–8*).⁴⁶ Giuseppe Papa was an Italian writer and theoretician who wrote under the pen name of San Lazzaro. As editor of *XXe Siècle* magazine, which had been published in Paris since 1938, he made friends with leading avant-garde theorists, including Arp. In 1960, during a collective show titled *Formes et reliefs* at the XXe Siècle Gallery in Paris, Maria Papa Rostkowska exhibited her work alongside that of Arp. Six years later, Arp successfully recommended her for the

prestigious award granted by the William and Noma Copley Foundation.⁴⁷

On the occasion of a survey exhibition of Rostkowska's work in Milan in 2012, critic Flaminio Gualdoni dubbed Maria Papa Rostkowska Arp's spiritual sister. For him, Rostkowska echoed Arp's sentiment that: "We do not want to imitate; we want to create. We want to create like a plant creates a fruit, without multiplying it. We want to produce directly, rather than indirectly."⁴⁸ The Italian critic argued further that Papa Rostkowska's organic, haptic and biological shapes in marble were born like organisms and characterised by fresh biomorphic form.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the artist vividly remembered Arp's art, which made an indelible imprint in her own work. Joëlle Rostkowski wrote:

Maria Papa Rostkowska's sculptures emanate the power of the sensual. They seem to be inviting touch and caress [...]. Marble appears to be coming to life in her hands and to breathe [...]. Even her abstractions remain organic, as if unearthed, taken out of the forms of plants and landscape.⁵⁰



Fig. 7 Maria Papa Rostkowska: *Untitled*, c. 1990, Pink Portuguese marble, plinth: black Spanish Marquina marble, 15 cm high, Private Collection



Fig. 8 Maria Papa Rostkowska: Pink Dawn (Aube Rose), 1995, Pink Portuguese marble, plinth: Black Spanish Marquina marble, 33 cm high, Private Collection

Much earlier, in 1972, her husband San Lazzaro had written about them as an “experience of the sensual touch.”⁵¹ Agata Araszkiewicz, an expert on Papa Rostkowska, adds: “The touch is a forgotten sense of patriarchal culture focusing on extolling what is ‘visible.’ The artist’s intuitive desire relates to equating the primacy of eyesight with the belittled experience of tangibility.”⁵² The hapticity of Arp’s sculptures also equalizes eyesight with the experience of tangibility.

Despite the large number of similarities between the artists, however, their attitudes towards manual work set them apart: it was important to Papa Rostkowska to make her work herself, whereas in 1962, Arp asserted that he opposed the notion that he had to carve his marble sculptures himself to retain authorship.⁵³ Both, however, preferred round bases and sometimes used pink stone, likely using the color to add life and carnality to their sculptures and to enhance their tactile features.⁵⁴

Arp’s understanding of space and his use of organic forms to define space also inspired Polish artists. From Arp’s dualist standpoint, the world is

permanently variable and continually in flux; biomorphic forms were to be the ultimate reflection of its essence. He therefore introduced rounded openings that he called “apertures” into his reliefs in 1924. Having used them in his sculptures in the round since 1932, Arp believed they represented being, seen as eternal and infinite, and free from the conditioning of the empirical world.⁵⁵ Integrating negative space into the work allowed Arp express both realms—the eternal and the empirical ones—in a *single* work. According to Arp scholar Rudolf Suter, Arp does not represent being since it cannot be represented and depicted. However, empty forms evoke that which is unrepresentable and invisible.⁵⁶ Thus, Arp’s empty forms are related not so much to natural forms or the visible and transient world, but to transcendence.

In his poem “Strassburgkonfiguration” (Strasbourg Configuration) Arp wrote:

nature is a nub, you know. nature is a black hole, you know. art is
a black hole, you know. in every hole there is a cloud. I make a hole
in a hole and in this hole two holes and in each of these two holes
four holes and in each of these four holes five holes.⁵⁷

Here, Arp seems obsessed with the idea of multiplying apertures to suggest infinity. Alternately, Arp scholar Uwe Schramm stresses the formal consequences of using apertures, which are revealed in the absence of illusionist space, in the clear-cut boundaries of the work, and in the overlapping between the space of the work and that of the viewer.⁵⁸

A similar understanding of empty space may be found in statements made by Jan Berdyszak, for whom it was the primordial being.⁵⁹ Hence the material aspects of his works expose the presence of space as a being as opposed to announcing their own tangible presence, which is exemplified by an object from *The Rest of the Rest* series from 2013 (*fig. 9*). In addition to suggesting transcendence, Berdyszak’s approach resulted in the obliteration of the work’s boundaries, in the overlap with the surrounding environment, and a more intense interaction with the recipient.

Maria Jarema also uses open, biomorphic forms in *Dance* of 1955. The subject matter of this small complex work with a rounded base is, however, the dancing movement of bodies—space “flows into” overlapping smooth outlines of apertures dances with the entire figure. Jarema plays with Arp’s forms in a slightly subversive manner, ignoring his idea of immutable and



Fig. 9 Jan Berdyszak: *The Rest of the Rest*, 2013, Board, plexiglass, acrylic, 180 × 87 cm, Private Collection

infinite space. In turn, the works *Composition* (1957), *Penetrations I* (1957), and *Penetrations VII* (1958) address another theme common to Arp's work, namely a pursuit of the layered work built of superimposed biomorphic shapes. Forms overlap and make up optically movable and fluid, nearly viable, "amoeba-like" visual environments. Moreover, *Penetrations VII* resembles scattered strips of coloured papers, bringing to mind the collages Arp and his wife Sophie Tauber-Arp made during the period of 1916–18. According to Arp, "'Chance' in the art of our time is nothing accidental but rather a gift of the Muses."⁶⁰ Those who follow the law of chance create pure life.⁶¹ Moreover, the Polish artist's fascination with the accidental can be found in her creative approach to monotype: "Chance, an inseparable element of monotype, was tied by her with a deliberate construction of forms painted with gouache or watercolour."⁶²

Pinińska-Bereś and Berdyszak also employ Arp's characteristic multiple layers. Both *Greedy Dreams* and *The Rest of the Rest* multiply and superimpose elements of organic outlines, transcending surface flatness and approaching three dimensions. Bolesław Utkin uses a similar strategy in *In the Sun-White* (1949–50) and *A Bach Fugue* (1968). The Łódź-based artist, who was closely linked with the circle of Władysław Strzemiński and Stefan Wegner, pursues organic rhythms, creating white reliefs whose monochromatic aspect, like in many wooden and aluminium reliefs by Arp, is conducive to a concentration on biomorphic forms. I would call the 1959 series of

heliographs by Marek Piasecki a “visualisation” of Arp’s reliefs: the biologic, perforated forms appear to hover in the fluid environment, observed as if under a microscope lens like specimens still teeming with life.

The biomorphic layers of Arp’s works also inspired Jerzy Gurawski, who in 1961 designed the set for Adam Mickiewicz’s *Forefathers’ Eve*.⁶³ His drawing for the set, made in ink on paper, depicts a rectangular plan of space made up of organic forms and indentations. The form is multi-layered at the shorter sides and is lower in the centre, limited to a single layer. The wooden model made after the sketch, in the collection of the Centre of Polish Stage Sets at the Muzeum Śląskia in Katowice, resembles Arp’s reliefs. The visual dynamics of wavy lines translated into the stage movement of the actors and their interaction with the audience.

As the founder of a-geometry, Hans Arp continues to initiate multifaceted dialogues with the Polish neo-avant-garde. The current generation of artists in Poland is also fascinated by his work, but this would be a topic for a conference on “Arp after 2000.”

1 See: Marta Smolińska, Maike Steinkamp (eds.): A-Geometry. Hans Arp and Poland, exhibition catalogue, The National Museum in Poznań, Poznań 2017.

2 See: Maike Steinkamp: The A-Geometric World of Hans Arp, in: *ibid.*, pp. 15–73; Paulina Kurc-Maj: As Direct as Nature. Hans Arp, Polish Avant-Garde and Nature-Centrism, in: *ibid.*, pp. 75–137.

3 Brian O’Shaughnessy: The Sense of Touch, in: *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 67, 1/1989 (March), pp. 37–58.

4 As Rudolf Suter has observed, the idea of *natura naturans* and mysticism were Arp’s alternatives to the academic ideal of art. Rudolf Suter: Hans Arp. Weltbild und Kunstauffassung im Spätwerk, Bern 2007, p. 281.

5 Baruch Spinoza: *Ethics*, Part I, (1677), trans. Edwin Curley, London 1996, prop. 29.

6 Jan Brzękowski: Kilometraż 3, in: *Sztuka Współczesna* 3/1930, pp. 91–93, p. 92.

7 Isabel Wünsche: Lebendige Formen und bewegte Linien. Organische Abstraktionen in der Kunst der klassischen Moderne, in: Ulrike Lehman (ed.): *Abstract Art Now. Floating Form*, Bielefeld 2006, pp. 10–22, p. 18; Isabel Wünsche and Oliver Botar (eds.): *Biocentrism and Modernism*, London 2011.

8 Stefanie Buhles: Hans Arps Interpretation der Natur, in: Ingeborg Besch, Robert Floetemeyer and Stephan Michaeli (eds.): *Von Altdorfer bis Serra*, exhibition catalogue,

St. Ingbert 1993, p. 177 f, p. 183. The English poet and art critic Geoffrey Grigson (1905–1985) was the first to use the term “biomorphic” in reference to art in 1935. He borrowed it from the natural sciences in order to differentiate it from geometric abstraction. In turn, Rudolf Belling (1886–1972) had used the term “organic” in 1921 in the title of his text *Organische Formen (Schreitender Mann)*. He used the term to stress the effect of motion and life. See: Astrid von Asten: In der großen Werkstatt der Natur. Biomorphe Formen im Werk von Hans Arp/In the Great Studio of Nature, in: *Biomorph! Hans Arp im Dialog mit aktuellen Künstlerpositionen*, exhibition catalogue (ed. by Oliver Kornhoff), Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck, Cologne 2011, pp. 11–23, p. 13. See also: Jürgen Fitschen (ed.): *Die organische Form 1930–1960. Bildhauerkunst–Hans Arp, Henry Moore und die Erneuerung der modernen Plastik nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, exhibition catalogue, Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen 2003.

9 Hans Arp: Concrete art, in: id.: *On my Way. Poetry and Essays 1912–1947* (ed. by Robert Motherwell), New York 1948 (*The Documents of Modern Art*), p. 70.

10 Suter 2007, p. 284 f. Suter implies that in the 1950s Arp more precisely defined his notion of “Concrétion” in his texts, having read pre-Socratic philosophers (e.g. Heraclitus and Empedocles). See also: Edward Juler: *Grown But Not Made: British Modernist Sculpture and the New Biology*, Manchester 2015.

11 Robert Motherwell: Introduction, in: Arp 1948, p. 6.

12 Volkmar Mühleis: *Kunst im Sehverlust*, Munich 2005, p. 94.

13 Arie Hartog: Prozesse und Produktion. Beobachtungen zu den Skulpturen von Hans Arp 1929–2012, in: id.: *Hans Arp. Skulpturen—eine Bestandsaufnahme/ Sculptures—A Critical Survey*, Ostfildern 2012, pp. 14–41, p. 21.

14 Hans Arp: *Konkrete Kunst*, in: id.: *Unsern täglichen Traum Erinnerungen, Dichtungen und Betrachtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954*, Zürich 1955, p. 80; Hans Arp: *Strassburgkonfiguration (1931)* in: Arp 1986, pp. 60–61.

15 “mit geschlossenen augen taste ich mich durch den glanz.” Ibid., p. 57. These photographs are in the collection of the Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

16 Gaston Bachelard: *Die Phänomenologie des Runden*, in: id.: *Poetik des Raumes* (transl. from French by Kurt Leonhard), Frankfurt am Main 2007, pp. 229–236.

17 Gottfried Boehm: *Die Härte der großen Dinge. Arp und Schwitters in ihren früheren Jahren*, in: *Schwitters—Arp* (ed. by Hartwig Fischer, Sandra Gianfreda), exhibition catalogue, Kunstmuseum Basel, Ostfildern 2004, pp. 11–20, p. 17.

18 Andrzej Pawłowski: *Forma naturalnie ukształtowana (1966)*, quoted after: Andrzej Pawłowski 1925–1986, exhibition catalogue (ed. by Jan Trzupek, Maciej Pawłowski), Katowice 2002, p. 98.

19 The coarse areas most likely result from air bubbles, or were created in those parts of the sack that remained above the water’s surface. In these sites the plaster did not set, but rather remained dry, thereby leaving a trace of its looseness.

20 From Greek *háptein*—to catch, fasten, bind. The word contains a suggestion of physical contact with the object. The association of hapticity with corporeality, organicity and biomorphy is discussed, among others, by Paweł Leszkowicz: *Sala rzeźby cielesnej* in: id.: *Kolekcja sztuki Grażyny Kulczyk*, exhibition catalogue,

Kulczyk Foundation, Poznań 2007, pp. 68–86 and Mühleis 2005, pp. 91–112. Erwin Panofsky used the notion of corporeality as a synonym for the term hapticity, which had been introduced into the history of art by Alois Riegl, following German sculptor and theoretician Adolf von Hildebrand. Aneta Rostkowska: *Haptyczne dzieło sztuki*, in: Michał Ostrowicki (ed.): *Materia sztuki*, Kraków 2010, pp. 302 f.

21 Pawłowski 2002, p. 98.

22 I would venture to say that Pawłowski would share Arp's intention to exhibit sculptures in nature. The title of the work *To Be Exposed in the Woods* of 1932 originates in the game its author played together with his friend, the poet Camille Bryen. See: Margherita Andreotti: *The Early Sculpture of Jean Arp*, London 1989, p. 206. While strolling in the forest, they installed their works directly on the grass and on trees. They imagined those who might come across them, asking whether this was the work of a bird. *Odd Mannequin* and *White Skeleton*, too, have the potential to be integrated into nature. See also Isabelle Ewig's essay in this volume.

23 Ibid., p. 147.

24 Suter 2007, p. 283–284. See also Harriet Watts: Hans Arp: *Worte auf Papier*, in: Hans Arp: *ich bin in der natur geboren. Ausgewählte Gedichte* (ed. by Hans Bolliger, Guido Magnaguagno, and Harriet Watts) Zürich/Hamburg 1986, p. 119.

25 Hans Arp: I become more and more removed from aesthetics, in: Arp 1948, p. 47.

26 Suter 2007, p. 282.

27 Arp wrote about it in 1951. See also Andreotti 1989, p. 198 ff. Andreotti wrote that in Ascona in 1938 Arp collected so many stones that they were too heavy for the trunk of his car and carrying them in suitcases strained his back.

28 Andreotti 1989, p. 198.

29 Alina Szapocznikow: *Rzeźby oddychają dopiero w przestrzeni*, in: Alina Szapocznikow 1926–1973, exhibition catalogue, Galeria Zachęta, Warsaw 1998, p. 156.

30 Fitschen 2003, p. 38. See also Poley 1978, p. 37 f. and p. 48.

31 Poley 1978, p. 37. See also Andreotti 1986, p. 195.

32 The Polish artist, however, polishes the “pebbles” to high gloss, which Arp would never have done, because he was convinced that shiny surfaces would violate the clarity of the line. See: Andreotti 1986, p. 154.

33 Andreotti 1989, p. 217 f.

34 Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *Splot—chiazma*, in: id.: *Widzialne i niewidzialne* (trans. by Małgorzata Kowalska), Warsaw 1996, p. 139.

35 Yi-Fu Tuan: *The Pleasure of Touch*, in: Constance Classen (ed.): *The Book of Touch*, Oxford/New York 2005, p. 76.

36 Merleau-Ponty 1996, p. 138.

- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Watts 1986, p. 111 f.
- 39 Hans Arp: *Réalités*, Paris 1961, p. 180, cited after Watts 1986, p. 112.
- 40 The notion of haptic imagination cited after: Jacqueline E. Jung: *The Tactile and the Visionary: Notes on the Place of Sculpture in the Medieval Religious Imagination*, in: Colum Hourihane (ed.): *Looking Beyond. Vision, Dreams and Insights in Medieval Art and History*, Princeton 2010, p. 224.
- 41 Izabela Kowalczyk: *The Space Embodied*, in: Anna Borowiec, Magdalena Piłakowska (ed.), *Maria Pinińska-Bereś. Imaginarium of Corporeality*, exhibition catalogue, Sopot 2012, pp. 20–60, p. 23.
- 42 Jarosław Pajek: *Adam Procki. Rzeźba/Sculpture*, exhibition catalogue, Orońsko 2012.
- 43 Ignacy Witz: *Adam Procki—Rzeźba*, Warsaw 1969.
- 44 Adam Procki in conversation with Adam Kornatowski, Warsaw 1988, video documentation, collection of the Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, quoted after Pajek 2012, n.p.
- 45 Adam Procki: *Z cyklu—Portrety*, in: *Zwierciadło* 30/1969, quoted after Pajek 2012, n.p.
- 46 Agata Araszkiewicz: *Kobieta z marmuru*, in: Maria Papa Rostkowska. *Kobieta z marmuru* (book concept by Agnieszka Tarasiuk), exhibition catalogue, Warsaw 2014, p. 61 f.
- 47 Ibid., p. 69.
- 48 Flaminio Gualdoni, text accompanying Maria Papa Rostkowska's solo show *La materia nell'anima* at the Galleria Stefano Cortina in Milan in 2012. Quoted after *ibid.* 2014, p. 109.
- 49 Ibid., p. 108.
- 50 Joëlle Rostkowski: *Maria Papa Rostkowska—zdobywczyni*, in: Warsaw 2014, p. 113 f.
- 51 Giuseppe di San Lazzaro: *Chroniques du jour—Maria Papa: fleurs de marbre*, in: *XXe Siècle. Vers un nouvel humanisme?*, LIX/1972, quoted after: Araszkiewicz 2014, p. 71.
- 52 Araszkiewicz 2014, p. 72.
- 53 See: Denys Chevalier: *Entretien avec Jean Arp*, in: *Pour l'art*, 84/1964 (May–June), p. 31.
- 54 Maria Papa Rostkowska worked in pink marble, while Arp in 1933 made a sculpture in pink limestone. Andreotti observes that Arp chose the material also because it made the impression of something animate. Andreotti 1986, p. 227 and p. 241.
- 55 Andreotti 1986, p. 209 and Suter 1997, p. 407.

56 Suter, p. 410.

57 “weisst du die natur ist ein knopf. weist du die natur ist ein schwarzes loch. weist du die kunst ist ein schwarzes loch. in jedem loch ist eine wolke. modelliere mir ein loch in einem loch und in diesem loch zwei löcher und in jedem dieser zwei löcher vier löcher und in jedem dieser vier löcher fünf löcher.” Strassburgkonfiguration, in: Arp 1986, p. 60 f.

58 Uwe Schramm: Der Raumbegriff bei Hans Arp. Interpretation und Vermittlung, Münster/Hamburg 1995, p. 253.

59 Jan Berdyszak: Sketchbook 32, entry of June 29, 1966.

60 Hans Arp, a statement made in DU, October 1960, cited after: Jane Hancock and Stefanie Poley (eds.): Arp 1886–1966, exhibition catalogue, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis and Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart 1986, p. 8f., p. 8.

61 Götz-Lothar Darsow: Mystik und Moderne—Zufall und Improvisation, in: Basel 2004, pp. 93–101, p. 94.

62 Barbara Ilkosz: Maria Jarema 1908–1958, exhibition catalogue, Fundacja Instytut Promocji Sztuki, Warsaw 1998, p. 54.

63 Directed by Jerzy Grotowski at the 13 Rows Theatre in Opole. The artist confirmed that he was inspired by Arp in an interview with the author in Poznań on October 10, 2016.

Arp's Mysticism

Rudolf Suter

This essay analyzes Hans Arp's interpretations of mysticism after 1945 and compares the ways he evokes mysticism in his literary work and in his visual art. In addition, it addresses Arp's engagement with antiquity, which at first glance seems to be a different theme entirely. However, for Arp mysticism and the antique overlapped with one another.

"Mystical" is a vague term that encompasses a wide range of possible meanings. It is often used to refer to something inexplicable, mysterious, and dark, and that is also somehow tied to religion. In addition to the idea of the mystical, which does apply to Arp's work and therefore resurfaces in the present essay, the similar term "mysticism" has a concrete definition. "Mysticism" stems from the Greek adjective *mystikos*, which means "pertaining to the mysterious" or "associated with secret rituals."¹ In theology, mysticism encompasses the *Unio mystica*, or the unity between inner experience and the absolute.² Moreover, in a book that will be discussed presently, Rudolf Steiner offered a definition that reflects his view of Christianity as a folk religion: "mysticism is the direct feeling and sensation of the divine in one's own soul."³

Arp's personal library, which is divided between his former residences in Clamart and Locarno, houses a range of religious literature and includes a few works by and about mystics.⁴ Whereas the artist read the writings of German mystics during the Dada period, after 1945 he also turned to mystics from France, Spain, and the United States, such as Bernhard von Clairvaux, St. Francis of Assisi, Hildegard von Bingen, St. John of the Cross, Thomas Merton, and St. Teresa of Ávila. An important source for Arp's knowledge of the mystics and saints is the book *Grosse Heilige (Great Saints)* by his

contemporary, the Reformed theologian Walter Nigg.⁵ However, most of the secondary literature in his library was written by members of religious orders, such as the Dominicans, Trappists, and Discalced Carmelites. This genre is not academic, and therefore does not attempt to be objective. Rather, it was written by believers for believers like Arp. The artist painted the covers of most of these books, which suggests he valued them highly (*fig. 1*).

After Sophie Tauber's death in January 1943, Arp experienced strong religious feelings, which are evident in his writings.⁶ Nevertheless, his piety is hardly acknowledged in the Arp literature. Although I do not share Arp's religious views, they must be analyzed in order to advance scholarship on the artist. The artist's faith must have led to a conflict with the principle of chance, which was foundational to much of his art. Indeed, the religious texts in his library take a strong stance on this notion. Thomas Aquinas' admonition sums up what many of the authors whom Arp read expressed: "Whoever claims that everything happens by chance does not believe that there is a God."⁷ The seventeenth-century mystic Angelus Silesius shared this view. In *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* (*The Cherubic Wanderer*), which Arp knew from an undated volume that was published in 1950 at the earliest, he wrote of a spiritual alchemy in which chance or accident is abolished: "Then Lead becometh Gold, then Accident is ended, When I with God, through God, in God, am wholly blended."⁸ Furthermore: "All Accident must go, all false appearances: Put off thy specious hues—be pure as Essence is."⁹

Many mystics claimed that they did not seek out their experiences, among them the *Unio mystica*. Instead, they received or were given them. Arp referred to this idea in an essay published in 1960 entitled "Die Musen und der Zufall" (The Muses and Chance): "The chances that the Muses bestow upon the artists are like the revelations of the saints [...]."¹⁰ To my mind, Arp did an about-face by defining chance as a secondary principle and comparing it to mystical visions. In this way, he established religious legitimacy for both his artistic project as well as for his life and distanced himself from pure chance, which knows no maker. As such, chance is a secondary principle created by a higher power. A quote from a book by the Dominican Antonin-Dalmace Sertillanges illuminates this point. To his mind, life is not determined by chance: "*La vie n'est évidemment pas un phénomène de hasard.*" Instead, Sertillanges argues that everything happens according to a rational plan. Behind every chance there is an order, that of the cosmos: "*Avant tout hasard, il faut du déterminé, [...] il y a le Cosmos.*"¹¹

The Mystical and Mysticism in Arp's Texts

Apart from this redefinition of chance, how did Arp's readings of the literature of mysticism shape his own writings? The influence of individual mystics remains speculative, as Arp rarely named them. Perhaps his paradoxical assertions and the oxymorons he occasionally used were inspired by the mystics, who used them to convey that which is indescribable. The logical contradiction appears in Arp's Dada poetry, as in "der vogel selbdritt" (the bird thrice with itself): "*lautlos und gut hörbar*" (silent and clearly audible).¹² Meister Eckhart described union with God in similar words: "I heard without sound, I saw without light [...]"¹³ St. John of the Cross likewise praised the spiritual union with God as "*la música callada*" (silent music) in his poem "Cántico espiritual" (Spiritual Canticle).¹⁴

Arp used contradictions in a manner that cannot be traced to any mystic, as in "die eckige nacht" (the angular night) from the *Die Wolkenpumpe* (*The Cloud Pump*), a volume of his poetry published in 1920.¹⁵ In later writings, there are "*cigars de neige*" (snow cigars)¹⁶ and "*feu géométrique*" (geometric fire).¹⁷ However Arp, the radical anti-rationalist, employed such phrases to carry out logic ad absurdum and not to describe a mystical experience, as did Meister Eckhart or John of the Cross.

In the foreword to an exhibition catalogue for the Galerie Tanner in Zürich in 1915, Arp referred to mysticism.¹⁸ Apart from that, mystical texts take on greater significance in his work in the two decades following the death of Sophie Taeuber in 1943 and after the Second World War respectively. The poem "Singendes Blau" (Singing Blue), written between 1946 and 1948, is among these.¹⁹ It exudes a paradisiacal atmosphere, as at the beginning:

*Duftendes Licht/sanft wie ein sprießender Garten/quillt durch mich./Es sprüht./Es duftet./Ich schreite/leicht und schnell/über lichte ländergroße Blumenblätter.//Die Erde und der Himmel/durchdringen sich./Das Blau blüht/verblüht/blüht wieder auf./Duftendes tönendes Licht/durchleuchtet mich./Ich ruhe/vom Licht gewiegt/in der duftenden tönenden/farbig funkelnden Quelle.*²⁰

Fragrant light/soft as a budding garden/surges through me./It cascades./It is redolent./I stride/softly and quickly/across bright

flower petals the size of nations.//The heavens and the earth/per-
meate one another./The blue blooms/withers/blooms once more./
Fragrant sonorous light/illuminates me./I repose/cradled by light/
in the fragrant sonorous/spring shimmering with color.

The motif of being at peace in the “*farbig funkelnden Quelle*” (spring shimmering with color) hovers between Romanticism and mysticism. Further, this phrase suggests a union with an entity that the poet refers to as a spring or a source (*Quelle*). The poem then describes a heavenly world: “*Bebende Lichtkronen/sinken um mich nieder/steigen um mich empor./Sie klingen/wenn sie mich berühren*” (Tremulous treetops/descend upon me/ascend around me./They resound/when they touch me). The concept of unity then unfurls anew: “*Ich ruhe überschwänglich/heiter und licht/in der unendlichen Quelle*” (I repose in rapture/buoyant and light/in the eternal spring).²¹



Fig. 1 Two book covers painted by Hans Arp, 1950s, Gouache and oil on packing paper; left: Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki: Die große Befreiung. Einführung in den Zen-Buddhismus; right: Walter Nigg: Vom Geheimnis der Mönche, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno



Fig. 2 Hans Arp: Mediterranean Sculpture I (also called Orphic Dream), 1941, Giedion-Welcker 065, Marble, 1/1, 38 x 25 x 16.5 cm

This source or spring is referred to as “eternal,” but its precise nature is not defined further. It could refer to the cosmos, to God, or both, in which case the *Unio mystica* once more comes to the fore. Five stanzas later, the poem culminates with the theme of the end of time:

*Zarte Ewigkeiten/schlagen Wurzeln in mir./Endlich endlich/darf
ich die Zeit vertun/Weilchen um Weilchen/Unendlichkeiten lang/
Saumseligkeiten von duftendem Klingen/zwischen überschwengli-
chen [sic]/inneren Sternen/in der unendlich lichten Quelle”*

Tender eternities/take root in me./Finally finally/I may while away
time/a little while upon a little while/eternities long/the laggard-
ness of fragrant sounds/among ebullient internal stars/in the eter-
nally bright spring²²

The final verse of the poem, which directly follows these lines, takes an unexpected turn: “*Zwischen Höhe und Tiefe/Duft und Bläue/plätschern die gleichen Quellen/an denen ich als Kind träumte*” (Between altitudes and depths/fragrance and blueness/burble along the same springs/that I dreamed of as a child).²³

Like many of the late poems, the meanings of “Singendes Blau” are multifaceted. It oscillates between mysticism, Romanticism, and recorded dreams, meandering among *Unio mystica*, the end of time, and childhood memories. Moreover, it plays with the synesthetic. In contrast to the mystics’ contradictory enunciations, Arp conveys that which is indescribable by means of synesthesia: “Singendes Blau” (Singing blue), “*duftendes Licht*” (fragrant light), and “*duftendes tönendes Licht*” (fragrant sonorous light). He speaks of “*duftendem Klingen*” (fragrant sounds) and “*duftenden tönenden/farbig funkelnden Quelle*” (the fragrant sonorous/spring shimmering with color).

In some of the lines cited above, the poet writes that he is forever conjoined with the eternally bright spring. This bespeaks Arp’s concept of the end of time in his late writings: the *apokatastasis* is when all souls become angels and return to God.²⁴ Arp the wordsmith created an expression from his own name—the *Arpeiron*—which appears three times in his writings.²⁵ The word is a hybrid of “Arp” and “*Apeiron*,” and suggests the merging of the artist and the eternal, a condition that can only be achieved through death. The pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Anaximander introduced the term

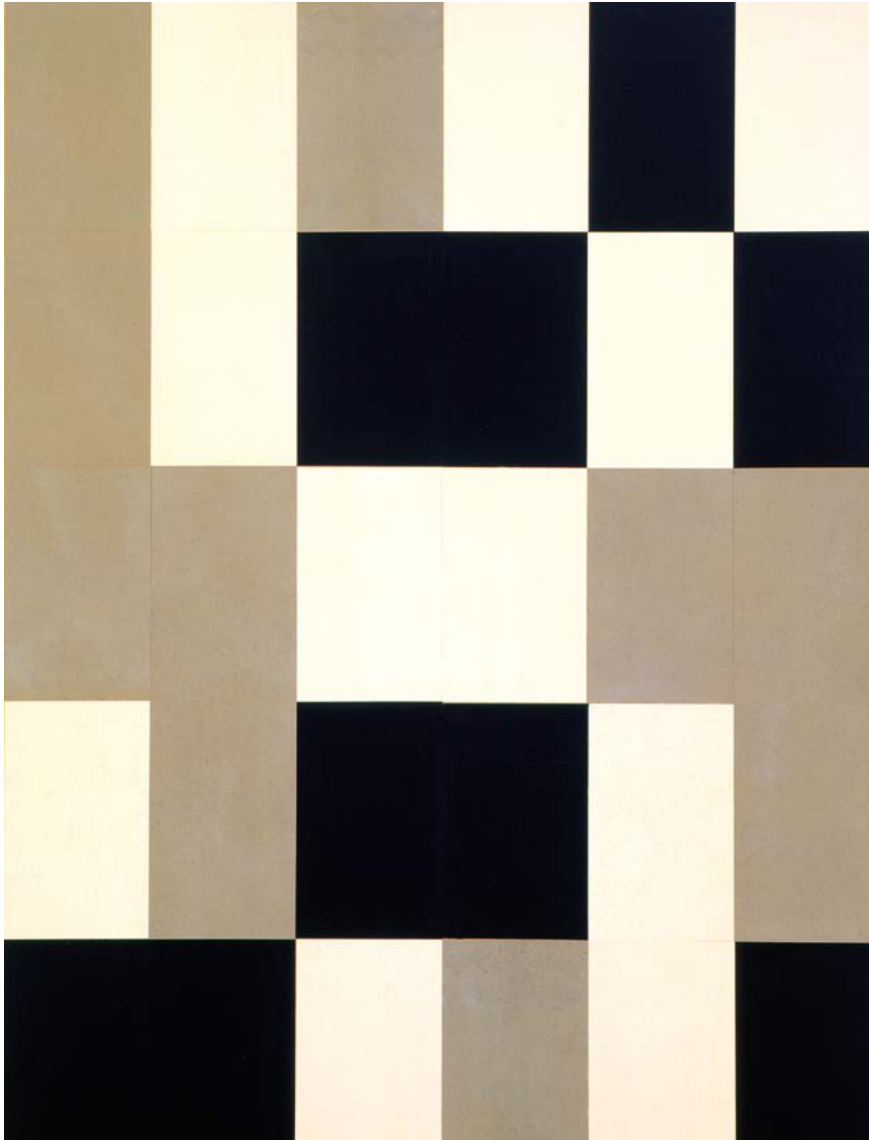


Fig. 3 Hans Arp: Geometric Collage, 1918, Collage of colored paper on cardboard, 81 × 61 cm, Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth

“*Apeiron*.” Arp encountered his thought in Wilhelm Capelle’s German translation of the fragments of the Pre-Socratics.²⁶ Anaximander conceived of the Apeiron as a primal element (*arché*). Capelle translates “*Apeiron*” as “*das Unendliche*” (the eternal or the infinite), which he elides with the concept of

the origin or the primal source. Whether or not this translation is valid, Arp did not question it. Capelle's text conveys the idea that the *Apeiron* or the source is the beginning and the end of all things, and that everything that springs from the source—that is, all beings—return to it. As the return to the beginning, it embodies an essential characteristic of the end of time as Arp conceived it. In this, it corresponds closely with Arp's understanding of the primal source or origin (*Urgrund*), which plays a role in his *Weltanschauung* and in his art theory.²⁷

Arp's Understanding of History

The Pre-Socratics lead me to the theme of Arp's engagement with antiquity. He interpreted the history of humankind as one of descent from its origins and of decline.²⁸ His late poetry is rife with attacks on unbelievers, who in his view were the rationalists, technocrats, and materialists ruling the world. It was his conviction that early humans—which he understood as people before classical Greece—were not yet ruined by rational thought and that their art was not yet corrupted by the drive to imitate nature. Arp believed in a kind of golden age, during which people were religious, had an appreciation for the mystical, and made art in the service of God and not worldly riches and fame. In his view of history, humans distanced themselves further and further from this felicitous state. For Arp, the true fall from grace was marked by the ascendancy of rational thought, for which he blamed almost all the ills of this world. His own times—the mid-twentieth-century—were dominated by rationalist and technocratic thought and ruled by both “*Übermaschinen und Überrobotern*” (super machines and super robots) as well as “*atheistische[n] Vereinsmeier[n]*” (atheistic followers).²⁹

Arp faulted classical art for its emphasis on the emulation of nature. He went so far as to accuse Michelangelo of trying to portray God and breaking the Second Commandment.³⁰ Furthermore, he implied that classical Greece and the Renaissance were the progeny of rational thought. Accordingly, he idealized non-classical art forms. In the foreword to an exhibition catalogue for the Galerie Tanner, he referred to the works of the “ancient peoples” of Africa, the Americas, and Asia, as well as the Gothic.³¹ Further, he wrote in a French text of 1954 that he preferred the ceramics of Crete and Mycenae, Cycladic figures, and the vases of the Geometric period to the so-called

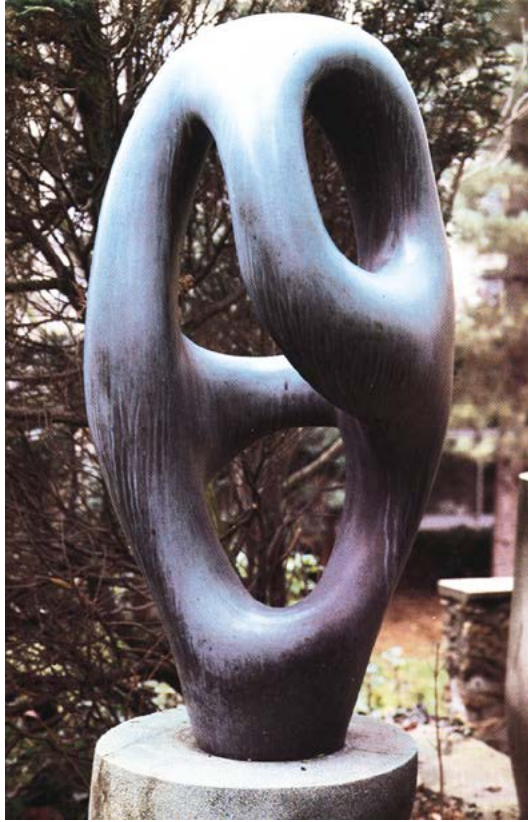


Fig. 4 Hans Arp: Ptolemy I, 1953, Giedion-Welcker 128, Bronze, 0/3 (1960), 103 × 53 × 43 cm, Fondation Arp, Clamart

Charioteer of Delphi, a work of the early classical period.³² Along these lines, Arp also favored early thought. From 1947, the Pre-Socratics appear in his writings.³³ He cited them more than writers of any other period, deeming them the “*premiers penseurs et contemplateurs de la nature*” (the first thinkers and observers of nature).³⁴ Pre-Socratic philosophy hovers between mythical and logical thought.³⁵ Nevertheless, Arp emphasized the mythical and disavowed its logical side. Further, he tried to establish the Pre-Socratics as the forerunners to Dada.

At the same time, the artist likely adhered to a theory set forth by Rudolf Steiner in *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache und die Mysterien des Altertums* (*Christianity as a Mystical Fact, and the Mysteries of Antiquity*), in which the Pre-Socratics were the precursors to Christianity.³⁶ The book’s

overarching theme is the continuity from the mysticism of antiquity to Christianity. Steiner's thesis was "that earlier mysticism was the precursor to Christianity, just as the seed its earth."³⁷ For Steiner, the Pre-Socratics, Plato, and Egyptian and Greek mythology, were merely "the preparations" for Christianity.³⁸ Their subject content was inherent to mysticism, which Steiner conceived as the "'secret' religion of the chosen ones."³⁹ Even if Arp adhered to this theory—and there is no direct proof that he did—it is doubtful that the artist, who idealized the origins, would have agreed with Steiner's notion that it had attained greater heights in Christianity.



Fig. 5 Hans Arp: Ptolemy III, 1961, Trier 265, Bronze, 1/3 (1963), 201 × 113 × 76.5 cm, Kunstmuseum Basel



Fig. 6 Hans Arp: Idol, 1962, Rau 724, Painted wood, 56 x 38 cm,
Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

Parallels in Visual Art

To conclude this analysis, I address how Arp's mysticism shaped his art. I emphasize that the following remarks are not meant as authoritative, because most works of modern art are too complex to be exhausted by a single interpretation. Furthermore, my aim is not to explain the direct influence of mystical writings on the artist's work, but rather to elucidate parallels. To that end, I confine my analysis to a few specific examples.

Arp is renowned for his biomorphic sculpture, which evokes growth or metamorphosis. However, from the early 1940s, he created additional works, the forms of which do not seem to extend outwards so as much as they fold in on themselves. One such example is *Mediterranean Sculpture I*, also called *Orphic Dream*, of 1941 (fig. 2), which likewise exhibits a parallel to mysticism. Mystics concur that in the *Unio mystica* or the inner vision as experienced by the Christian mystic, philosopher, and theologian Jacob Böhme, the soul takes precedence and desires peace. Arp's later readings emphasize outer and inner peace as the foundation for religious contemplation and communion with God. Further, Walter Nigg noted that according to St. John of the Cross, "it is impossible to make inner strides without shrouding oneself in silence."⁴⁰ Arp likewise called for stillness and inner contemplation for artistic practice, but largely focused his thoughts on the Dada period, as is so often the case. He characterized his Dada collages as an "art of silence" that "turn[s] away from the exterior world of silence, towards inner being" (fig. 3).⁴¹

Works in the sculpture series *Ptolemy* likewise embody this inward gesture.⁴² *Ptolemy I* (1953), is characterized by an expansive impulse that is sharply curtailed (fig. 4). The centralized interior forms of *Ptolemy III* of 1961 recall a skull, and therefore serves as a *memento mori* (fig. 5). With its interrupted bilateral symmetry, in which the lower part as seen from the left is slightly out of alignment, it evokes the stance of archaic Greek Kouri. This oscillation between the figure, the skull, and emptiness implies an ascendance to another realm. Arp's term "*Arpeiron*," which stems from Anaximander's concept of the primal element, is the linguistic consummation of that which *Ptolemy III* achieves: the union of the self with the eternal.

In the 1950s, Arp began a series of anthropomorphic works that exhibit precise bilateral symmetry.⁴³ For example, the relief *Idol* of 1962 alludes to both mysticism as well as to prehistoric art (fig. 6). Its symmetry, reduction of form, and flatness hark back to the formal qualities of archaic works, including Cycladic idols. Its tapering pedestal recalls Greek piriform amphorae or stone-age figures. The negative space suggests a nose and eyes, which take on a sense of the distant, enigmatic, and ritualistic due to their stark symmetry. By means of its stylization, *Idol* exemplifies a sense of timelessness. The rigorous statuesque form reinforces this detemporalization, while its allusions to cult figures render it an ambassador of the immortal.

During the final years of his life, Arp created a new category of works

known as the *Threshold Sculptures* (fig. 7). The artist conceived of the *Thresholds* as borders between the here and now and the beyond. In an interview with Denys Chevalier in 1962, he clarified the meaning of this body of work: “[...] it may be man’s passage on this earth, between life and death.”⁴⁴ Here, Arp describes the experience of the threshold as the transcendence of ordinary perception to a higher plane, for instance a conversation with God or the perception of the angels. In this, it bears resemblance to his mystical literature. Elsewhere in the interview, he uses the French word “*seuil*” for “threshold.”⁴⁵

In 1961, Arp commenced yet another series, the *Forest Wheels* (fig. 8). Although the *Forest Wheels* are oval and not circular, the wheel abounds as a symbol of cosmic order.⁴⁶ However, Hildegard von Bingen’s visions of the wheel have direct bearing on the present subject. For her, they were full of symbolic meaning: “The wheel’s rotation without beginning and end is



Fig. 7 Hans Arp: Object on the Threshold, 1965, Trier 332, Bronze (1/1), 202.5 × 130.5 × 19.5 cm (Cement base: 120 × 160 × 75 cm), Strasbourg, Esplanade, Avenue du Général-de-Gaulle



Fig. 8 Hans Arp: Forest Wheel II, 1961, Trier 264, Petit granite, 103 × 100 × 18 cm, Reinach bei Basel, Schulhaus Bachmatten

an emblem of the eternal and the temporal.”⁴⁷ On the one hand, the wheel that moves forward exemplifies space and time. On the other, its never-ending movement symbolizes the infinite and the eternal. Because it knows no beginning and no end, it is therefore without origin and is everlasting. Thus, it embodies the opposition between temporality and eternity. I conclude with these lines from Hildegard von Bingen, not because I think they provide the most plausible interpretation, but rather because they suggest the form of the *Forest Wheels* is a paradox, which is a form of expression inherent to mysticism.

- 1 P. Heidrich: *Mystik, mystisch*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 6, ed. by Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, Basel 1984, pp. 268–273, p. 268.
- 2 Peter Gerlitz: *Mystik I*, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. 23, ed. by Gerhard Müller, in collaboration with Horst Robert Balz, Richard P. C. Hanson, et. al., Berlin 1994, pp. 533–547, p. 539.
- 3 Rudolf Steiner: *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache und die Mysterien des Altertums*, 6th ed., Stuttgart 1949, p. 156, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 4 Rudolf Suter: *Hans Arp. Weltbild und Kunstauffassung im Spätwerk*, Bern 2007, pp. 33–49.
- 5 Walter Nigg: *Grosse Heilige*, Zürich 1946, Archive Fondation Arp, Clamart. Published in English as *Great Saints* (trans. by William Stirling), Hinsdale, Illinois 1948.
- 6 Rudolf Suter: *Hans Arp. Das Lob der Unvernunft*, Zürich 2016, pp. 222–227.
- 7 “Wer aber meint, dass alles aus Zufall geschehe, der glaubt nicht, dass es einen Gott gibt.” Thomas von Aquin: *Ich glaube an Gott. Eine Erklärung des Glaubensbekenntnisses und der Schriften über das Vaterunser und den Englischen Gruss*, Olten 1958, p. 14, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 8 “Dann wird das Blei zu Gold, dann fällt der Zufall hin,/Wann ich mit Gott durch Gott in Gott verwandelt bin.” Angelus Silesius: *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, ed. by Will-Erich Peuckert, Bremen n.d. (1950–1970), I,102, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno. English translation from Angelus Silesius: *Selections from The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. by J. E. Crawford Fitch, London 1932.
- 9 “Der Zufall muss hinweg und aller falsche Schein.” *Ibid.*, I, 274. English translation from Fitch 1932.
- 10 “Die Zufälle, die dem Künstler durch die Musen zufallen, sind den Erleuchtungen ähnlich, die den Heiligen zuteil werden [...]” Hans Arp: *Die Musen und der Zufall*, in: *DU*, 236/1960 (October), pp. 14–17, p. 16.
- 11 Antonin-Dalmace Sertillanges: *Athées, mes frères*, Paris 1941, pp. 30–33, Archive Fondation Arp, Clamart.
- 12 Hans Arp: *der vogel selbdritt*, in: *id.: Gesammelte Gedichte: Gedichte 1903–1939*, Vol. 1, ed. by Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach and Peter Schifferli, Zürich/Wiesbaden 1963, pp. 24–43, p. 42.
- 13 Meister Eckeharts *Schriften und Predigten*, Vol. I, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. from the Middle High German by Hermann Büttner, Jena 1912, p. 187.
- 14 Max Milner: *Poésie et vie mystique chez Saint Jean de la Croix* (Préface by Jean Baruzi), Paris 1951, p. 150, Verse 14, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 15 Hans Arp: *Die Wolkenpumpe*, in: *Arp* 1963, pp. 54–77, p. 74.
- 16 Jean Arp: *A fleur des fleur*, in: *id.: Jours effeuillés. Poèmes, essais, souvenirs 1920–1965* (Préface de Marcel Jean), Paris 1966, p. 150 f., p. 150.
- 17 Jean Arp: *Rire de coquille*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 191–194, p. 194.

- 18 Hans Arp: Untitled [exhibition catalogue foreword], in: Otto van Rees, Paris—Hans Arp—A. C. van Rees-Dutilh, Paris. Moderne Wandteppiche, Stickereien, Malereien, Zeichnungen, exhibition catalogue, Zürich Galerie Tanner 1915, n.p., p. 2 f.
- 19 Hans Arp: Singendes Blau, in: id.: Gesammelte Gedichte: Gedichte 1939–1957, Vol. 2, (ed. by Peter Schifferli), Zürich/Wiesbaden 1974, pp. 65–69.
- 20 Ibid., p. 65.
- 21 Ibid., p. 66.
- 22 Ibid., p. 68.
- 23 Ibid., p. 69.
- 24 See: Suter 2016, p. 225 f.
- 25 Jean Arp: Situation de la peinture en 1954, in: Arp 1966, p. 405 f., p. 405; Hans Arp: Firgel-Gedichte, in: id.: Gesammelte Gedichte: Gedichte 1957–1966, Vol. 3 (ed. by Aimée Bleikasten), Zürich/Wiesbaden 1984, p. 238 ff., p. 240; Hans Arp: Unveröffentlichte Gedichte, in: Text & Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur, 92/1986 (October): Hans/Jean Arp, pp. 3–7, p. 6.
- 26 Die Vorsokratiker. Die Fragmente und Quellenberichte, (trans. and with a foreword by Wilhelm Capelle), Leipzig/Stuttgart 1968, p. 81 f., No. 21 / DK 12 A 9 and B 1. See also: Suter 2007, pp. 223–226.
- 27 See: Suter 2007, pp. 257–262.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 149–152.
- 29 Hans Arp: Sinnende Flammen, in: Arp 1984, pp. 135–170, p. 135.
- 30 Jean Arp: Petits poèmes à l'intention de Viani, in: Arp 1966, pp. 459–462, p. 461; Werkstattfabeln, in: Hans Arp: Unsern täglichen Traum... Erinnerungen, Dichtungen und Betrachtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954. Zürich 1955 (Reprint 1995), pp. 96–107, p. 104.
- 31 Arp 1915, n.p., p. 2 f.
- 32 Jean Arp: Situation de la peinture en 1954, in: Arp 1966, p. 405 f., p. 405.
- 33 See: Suter 2007, p. 195–235.
- 34 Jean Arp: Aisément à travers le tunnel de la matière, in: Arp 1966, p. 276 ff., p. 277.
- 35 See: Emil Angehrn: Die Überwindung des Chaos. Zur Philosophie des Mythos, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 420.
- 36 See: Steiner 1949, Archiv, Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 37 “dass Christentum die vorherige Mystik voraussetzt, wie der Pflanzenkeim seinen Boden.” See: ibid., p. 8.
- 38 See: ibid., p. 125.

- 39 “‘geheime’ Religion der Auserwählten.” See: *ibid.*, p. 16.
- 40 Walter Nigg: *Vom Geheimnis der Mönche*, Zürich 1953, p. 352, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 41 “Kunst der Stille [...] von der Außenwelt der Stille, dem inneren Sein.” Hans Arp: *Miszellen*, in: *Arp 1955* (1995), pp. 73–78, p. 74.
- 42 For a thorough analysis of the Ptolemy sculptures, see: Suter 2007, pp. 422–437.
- 43 See: *ibid.*, pp. 439–452.
- 44 “[...] cela peut être le passage de l’homme sur cette terre, entre la vie et la mort.” Denys Chevalier: Jean Arp, in: *Aujourd’hui Art et Architecture*, 36/1982 (April), pp. 4–7, p. 7.
- 45 See: Dom Jean de Monléon, O. S. B.: *Traité sur l’oraison*, Paris 1950, p. 61, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno; Thomas Merton: *Semences de contemplation* (trans. by R. N. Raimbault), Paris 1954, p. 163; Matthäus Ziegler: *Engel und Dämon im Lichte der Bibel mit Einschluss des ausserkanonischen Schrifttums*, Zürich 1957, p. 9 f, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.
- 46 See: Suter 2007, p. 442 f.
- 47 “Denn das Rad mit seinem Kreislauf ohne Anfang und Ende ist ein Sinnbild für das Ewige wie für das Zeitliche.” Hildegard von Bingen: *Gott ist am Werk*, in: *id.: De operatione Die* (trans. and ed. by Heinrich Schipperges), Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau 1958, p. 24, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.

Arp's "Moods" from Dada to Experimental Poetry

The Late Poetry in Dialogue with the New Avant-Gardes

Agathe Mareuge

"In the unlikely event that I were forced to choose between sculptural work and written poetry, if I had to give up either sculpture or poems, I would choose to write poems."¹ Arp never had to decide between art and poetry, but for him everything was poetry. In a conversation with Camille Bryen in 1956, he said that his collages were "poems made with visual means."² Poetry and art become one in Arp's work, not so much in terms of common themes and motifs, which establish correspondences across his work in the two media. Rather, the similarities in his creative process unify the two, because Arp often employed the same techniques and processes as a sculptor that he did as a poet.

In 1903, at the age of sixteen, Arp published his first poem. It was written in the Alsatian dialect, but in the following years he wrote poetry in German. His Dada years in Zürich, which began around 1915/16, mark a very productive and certainly his most well-known period of writing poetry. How did Arp come to poetry, or in his own words, how did he come to discover language and the word? Later, he described this discovery, and the ways one can play with language:

When I was sixteen [...] the endless copying of stuffed birds and wilted flowers at the school of applied arts in Strasbourg soured me not only on drawing, but on visual art as a whole. I therefore sought refuge in poetry. My adoration of the German Romantics remains with me today. Back then I also discovered Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and Maeterlinck's *Serres chaudes* in a French book store, and soon I was surrounded by mountains of books.³

When I was fifteen or sixteen years old, I lived in the Vosges, and was supposed to be studying for my exams by myself. Instead,

I read and I wrote poems. When I was seventeen, I compiled a book of my poems.⁴

Even back then I was fascinated by words. I would fill page upon page with unconventional word combinations and created unusual verbs out of nouns. I reconfigured famous verses and incessantly declaimed them with devotion and uplifted heart, on and on, as if it would never come to an end: stars star some stars, because stars star, forests forest some forests, because forests forest, snaps snap some snaps, so snaps snap to snap. My abuse of these components was often punishing, and I felt like the sorcerer's apprentice in Goethe's poem.⁵

In 1916, at the beginning of the Dada period, Arp began publishing in German in magazines, smaller publications, and poetry collections. From the 1920s, when he began spending more and more time in France, Arp began writing in French as well. Until his death, he wrote poetry in both languages. As he was slightly less comfortable in French, he experimented more freely with the sounds of the language, or—as Arp put it—the “plastic volumes” of its words.⁶ Surprisingly, he hardly ever translated his own work, but he almost always wrote a new poem whenever he changed languages.

Writing new poems and adapting them to novel contexts is very much in line with Arp's poetic process: his poetry arises from a vast array of variants and variations, because whenever he published a poem in an anthology or exhibition catalogue, he almost always rewrote it. Aimée Bleikasten has thoroughly analyzed this phenomenon and documented it comprehensively in her bibliography of Arp's writings.⁷ Sometimes Arp only changed the title or a line of the poem, but other times he rewrote entire verses, or published a wholly new poem under the same title without indication, because he liked to play with the reader and with the literary scholars who would analyze his work in the future. He was not concerned with producing documentation or even a theory of his work. Instead, he was interested in toying with the very idea of documentation in a creative way.

After World War II, Arp began to reassess his oeuvre by publishing it anew in anthologies and collections of poetry, and accompanied by reflective texts. This phenomenon is not unique to Arp. Rather, it was common amongst the former Dadas, most of whom lived into the 1960s and 1970s, and in the case

of Marcel Janco into the 1980s, and remained artistically active. However, even when their work from the Dada period had not been lost or destroyed, it is often not easily accessible: when the National Socialists defamed their art as “degenerate,” many of them fled into exile and could not take their work with them. Moreover, their texts were often published in small editions. Thus, like other Dada artists and poets, in the 1950s and 1960s, Arp paradoxically became the historiographer of his own work. The first major anthology of his poetry in French was published in 1946 as *Le Siège de l'air* (*The Siege of Air*). His first anthology of poetry in German entitled *Wortträume und Schwarze Sterne* (*Dreams of Words and Black Stars*) was published in 1953. Its foreword, or “guidepost” (*Wegweiser*) as he called it, is Arp's *ars poetica*.⁸

In German-speaking countries, Arp's poetry is fairly well known, because that is where Dada was received (and because Arp's poetry is most strongly associated with Dada). By contrast, after the Second World War, Surrealism remained dominant in France. Although Arp was friends with the surrealists and had worked with them, he never signed their manifestos and was only loosely associated with the movement. His French poetry is not as well-known because he was not a full member of the group. Thus, it is not studied as much in France as it is in Germany—even though André Breton wrote in two unpublished letters to Arp in 1947 that: “I know of nothing more beautiful than *Le Siège de l'Air*” and his poetry “joins the ranks of [...] Novalis, Rimbaud.”⁹ By contrast, in the United States, the reception of Arp's poetry in the 1950s and 1960s was primarily shaped by the reception of his art, and in this context, both Dada and Surrealism were significant. The anthology *The Dada Painters and Poets*, edited by Robert Motherwell and published in 1951, also played a significant role, because it included not only essays and manifestos, but also many poems. Motherwell must also be credited for Arp's *On My Way*, which appeared in the renowned series the *Documents of Modern Art* and included selections from all the genres in which Arp worked (poetry, prose, essays) alongside numerous illustrations of his visual art.

Artists and poets of the younger generation who read Arp in the 1950s and 1960s came to appreciate him as a “*figure tutélaire*” (guardian figure). Interestingly, they were not only concerned with his poetry of the 1920s and 1930s, but also read his poetic work of the 1950s and 1960s, which at first glance is more difficult to classify. The sheer variety within Arp's poetic oeuvre therefore led to its multifaceted reception. In the mid-twentieth

century, categories like “dadaist” or “surrealist” were rarely applied to contemporary poetry, if at all, as they were no longer seen as relevant. Arp’s late work (defined here as the poems he wrote during the last twenty years of his life) was often seen as the mere continuation of his Dada poetry, or, conversely, as the abandonment of irrationality, playfulness, and the experimental in favor of *Gedankenlyrik*, a poetry imbued with thoughts and with a strong spirituality and religiosity. In my opinion, Arp’s late poetry is characterized by “unresolved contradiction,” as Edward Said argued of late work more generally.¹⁰ I argue that Arp juxtaposes and contrasts opposing tendencies. On the one hand, part of his production is characterized by a strong sense of narrative. Fairy tales, fables, and stories survive and persist, and take on meaning in the process (whereby the irrational, the illogical, and the absurd certainly make their appearances). On the other, there is a reductive tendency: Arp experiments further with poetic form and sounds and to a certain extent moves in the direction of concrete poetry. Some poems are an astonishing synthesis of the two.

In terms of chronology, directly following Sophie Taeuber’s death, Arp stopped writing almost completely. When he returned to his desk, he began writing love poems that were markedly different from his earlier work and that were also less innovative in terms of poetic style. During his late years, Arp strove to express his experiences in a creative poetry that was nevertheless concerned with language. In other words, he did not leave the external world and his personal experiences out of his poetry, but rather incorporated or inserted them into a poetry that was characterized by linguistic play. This remains true for the poems he wrote in the last two or three years before his death that address religion more explicitly: the play with language remains at the fore.

Two examples demonstrate the fruitfulness of Arp’s relationships with the new avant-garde in both French- and German-speaking countries from the immediate post-war period to well into the 1960s. I have not selected them from the most well-known poetry collections and artists’ books that Arp published in the 1950s and 1960s (such as *Le Voilier dans la forêt*, *Vers le Blanc infini*, *Soleil recerclé*, *Auch das ist nur eine Wolke*, *Behaarte Herzen* [*Behaarte Herzen: Könige vor der Sintflut*], and *Mondsand*). Instead, the works at hand stem from literary and art journals or smaller publications that offered a forum for artists and poets from different generations—and sometimes from different countries and cultures—to enter into dialogue

with one another. Whenever Arp was asked to contribute, he agreed. There are therefore numerous publications from two decades that document Arp's collaboration with journals in Switzerland, Alsace, Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and elsewhere. Among them are student magazines like *Diskus* in Frankfurt, for which Arp wrote new poems and sent as yet unpublished texts, as well as established art journals and publications by the galleries that exhibited his work. Two literary journals that published Arp's poems regularly are of particular significance for the German-speaking world. First, *Hortulus* was a little-known but lovely magazine for contemporary poetry that was edited by Hans-Rudolf Hilty in St. Gallen. Hilty also edited an homage of poetic writings about the artist called *Hans Arp und die Worte des Dichters* (*Hans Arp and the Words of the Poet*), and that was published by Tschudy, which was also in St. Gallen.¹¹ Second, the far more well-known journal *Akzente*, which remains among the most important literary publications in Germany. It was founded in 1954 by Walter Höllerer at the publishing house Hanser, with the intent of filling a gap in the post-war landscape of literary publications. From his point of view, most journals were starkly political and were not primarily committed to modern and avant-garde poetry. By the 1960s, Walter Höllerer was hailed as the "*Literaturpapst*" (Literary Pope) in Germany; today he is recognized as the founder of the modern literary press.¹² In this way, Arp defined his position in the literary world: for decades, he participated in diverse initiatives, and by 1957 he had become a member of the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung (German Academy for Language and Literature).

Let us begin, however, with the first example, which is from Arp's time in Paris after World War II. As noted above, Surrealism dominated the literary scene in Paris during those years. Arp participated as well, and his work appeared in various exhibitions and publications. In 1945, Isidore Isou came from Romania to Paris (just as his countryman Tristan Tzara had done so many years before), and shortly thereafter founded the movement known as Lettrisme (Lettrism), aimed to be the new avant-garde and, in Isou's view, had already surpassed Dada and Surrealism. As the name suggests, Lettrisme is primarily concerned with the letter (*la lettre*) and accordingly, with the "Destruction of WORDS for LETTERS."¹³ Isou's aim was nothing less than to rewrite experimental literature and to found sound poetry and phonetic poetry. Isou's bold contention and provocative attitude drew much reaction, including from the Georgian author, artist, and publisher Iliazd. Six years

Arp's junior, Iliasz who was also an extremely talented typographer, launched a project for an artist's book that compiled the graphic and poetic experiments of the many forerunners of the Lettrists in sound poetry and phonetic poetry. The anthology was published in 1949 and entitled *Poésie de mots inconnus (Poetry of Unknown Words)*. It included poetry by the former Dadas Arp, Hugo Ball, Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters, Tristan Tzara, as well as by Pierre Antonin Artaud, Albert-Birot, Velimir Chlebnikow, Alexei Krutschonich, Pablo Picasso, Boris Poplawski, and Igor Terentiev. Iliasz himself was also represented alongside the younger poets Camille Bryen and Michel Seuphor. The visual art of Braque, Chagall, Dominguez, Giacometti, Léger, Magnelli, Matisse, Miró, Taeuber-Arp, Villon, Wols, and Ribemont-Dessaignes also graced its pages.

Arp contributed two poems. He plays with the French language in "Firi" of 1924. "Maurulam Katapult i lemm i lamm..." was first published in German in Van Doesburg's journal *De Stijl* in 1927, and later adapted by Arp into "French" and "Alsatian Latin" (*latin d'Alsace*).¹⁴

FIRI

lion de nuit é pli
dépli ivri par pli
débranche si pi si pli
firi firi
i
gli
car rond ton son piri
tiu tiu en voute
ilion ti piri
lion signole ré mi
si illicide lyrie
inique isis si pli
son ton é rond enchante
invoute emplu la nuit
tiu tiu é glu
supu tiu glu
glu supu
tulu¹⁵

Fire-i

lion of night ey ply
 reply ive by ply
 unbranch sigh pi sigh ply
 fire-I fire-i
 i
 lie
 for wry thy sigh pi-wry
 tiu tiu in arch
 ide thy pi-wry
 lion ingale re mi
 sigh illicide lyrie
 in-ike isis sigh ply
 thy sigh is wry enchant
 inarch reply the night
 tiu tiu eh glu
 supu tiu glu
 glu supu
 tulu¹⁶

Even with little knowledge of French, it is clear that these poems are not concerned with conventional language, but rather with a language that plays with sound and evokes traditional verse with words like “*lyrie*” (for lyric?) and “*enchante*” (“enchant” and simultaneously “chant in”), only to challenge it.

Marguerite Arp later suggested why Arp’s older texts were republished in the 1949 volume. In 1964, in the context of a history of the subject he was planning (and also in the context of some controversies with the Lettrists, the Neo-Dadas, and some Concrete poets), Raoul Hausmann asked her which sound poems Arp had written.¹⁷ Around that time—in about 1962—Arp had come into contact with Henri Chopin, who alongside Pierre Garnier was the most important practitioner of *poésie sonore* (sound poetry) in France and who also then collaborated with Raoul Hausmann. Chopin published Letterist and phonetic poems by the earlier generation of avant-gardes in his journal *Cinquième Saison* (*Fifth Season*), which was dedicated to “phonetic poetry, verbal music” and “graphic explorations.”¹⁸ He therefore asked Arp for a contribution. Marguerite Arp replied: “The period of Letterist poetry has long since passed, as has that of ‘configurations,’ but we believe that this series of short, word-play poems might fit your bill and amuse you.”¹⁹ The following poem “*Motus motus*” (Hush, hush), which is from this series, likewise thematizes language.

*une morue
ne trouve plus sa rue
une morue humaine bien entendu
son intérieur lui monte à la tête
à la suite elle se travestit
en temple humain
et s’adonne à la morphose
à la morgue des morphoses ratées [...]*

*un hibou chante si longtemps hi
qu’il ne lui reste plus qu’un tout petit bou
du hi²⁰*

A cod
 has lost its coddle
 a human cod of course
 its insides go to its head
 afterwards it dresses up
 as a human temple
 and devotes itself to morphosis
 at the morgue of unsuccessful morphoses [...]

An owl hoots owwww so long
 for the l of it until he hoots
 “so long” ²¹

In these poems, Arp deconstructs words into individual parts or syllables and plays with the newly created meanings: “hibou” (owl) is transformed into “hi” (a scream) and “bout” (a piece, a fragment). The “morue” (a cod-fish) becomes “mot” (word) and “rue” (street), and “mot” (word) morphs into “mort” (death) and “morphose” (morphosis). Thus, Arp toys not only with the material aspects of language, but also with its semantic dimensions. In this manner, his late poetry takes on an almost childlike tone, which in part echoes his earlier work.

The second example stems from Arp’s collaboration with the journal *Spirale. Internationale Zeitschrift für junge Kunst* (*Spiral. International Journal for Contemporary Art*) and the dialogue that arose with one of the most important Concrete poets: Eugen Gomringer. This collaboration took place in the German-speaking realm, where Concrete poetry had evolved in the 1950s and 1960s. Arp’s contributions to these publications reflect this tendency, including the texts he published in *Spirale* from 1953–1954 and the piece he published on Josef Albers in 1958 in the Stuttgart journal *Augenblick. Tendenz und Experiment* (*Moment. Tendencies and Experiments*). The latter journal was edited by the Stuttgart group of Concrete poets, including Max Bense, Elisabeth Walther, and Reinhard Döhl, who would later pen the first dissertation on Arp’s poetry). Additional publications along these lines include a poem in the 1960 anthology *Movens. Dokumente und Analysen zur Dichtung, bildenden Kunst, Architektur* (*Movens. Documents and Analyses on Poetry, Art, Architecture*), which was conceived by the Frankfurt Concrete poet Franz Mon in collaboration with Manfred de la Motte and

Walter Höllerer, a contribution to a 1963 volume of the Graz journal *Manuskripte (Manuscripts)* that appeared alongside writings by Hausmann and the Concrete poets, and finally the poem “*im autonmobilen Reich*” (in the automobile empire) in *Reale Poesie (Real Poetry)*, an edition of a journal based in Munich that also included works by Hausmann, Schwitters, and poets from the Vienna Group (an Austrian variant on Concrete poetry, the adherents of which included Gerhard Rühm, Friedrich Achleitner, Heinz Gappmayr, and others).

But back to *Spirale*, the little-known artists’ journal that was founded in Bern in 1953 by Marcel Wyss, Dieter Roth and Eugen Gomringer. Each of the nine volumes, which were published through 1964, included both literary contributions such as Concrete poetry as well as visual art (print-making and photography). It aimed to encompass everything that spanned the constructive, the concrete, and the kinetic. Arp contributed to three volumes alongside other members of the earlier generation, including Josef Albers, Barbara Hepworth, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, László Moholy-Nagy, Piet Mondrian, Henry Moore, Sophie Taeuber, Georges Vantongerloo, and others. Max Bill and the Zürich Concrete poets as well as the Swiss group Allianz were also seen as forerunners. The foreword to the first volume in April 1953 reproduced one of Arp’s texts: “Die Schönheit versank nicht immer...” (Beauty has not always vanished), which appeared the same year in a volume entitled *Trunken von Gedichten (Drunk with Poetry)*, published by Arche in Zürich. Two years later, Arp published it with the new title “Immer wandelt sich die Schönheit” (Beauty is constantly changing) in his volume *Unsern täglichen Traum... Erinnerungen, Dichtungen und Betrachtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954 (Our Daily Dream... Recollections, Poems and Observations from the Years 1914–1954)*, also with the publisher Arche. The final lines may be understood as programmatic in the context of *Spirale*:

We weave her [beauty] a dress of our purest dreams, of color, lines, circles, triangles, squares, of the inner light of spheres and cubes, of love and harmony, of which Empedocles says: “There were no two arms extending from a trunk, nor were there feet or swift knees or organs of procreation; there was a sphairos the same in all its aspects.”²²

This passage was followed by “Sophie tanzte und träumte...” (Sophie danced and dreamed...) from the “Vierblättriger Stern” (Four-Sided Star) of 1953. The final verse is relevant to the present discussion:

<i>sie tanzte und träumte</i>	she danced and dreamed
<i>ein dreieck ein viereck</i>	a triangle a square
<i>ein viereck in einem kreis</i>	a square in a circle
<i>einen kreis in einem kreis</i>	a circle in a circle
<i>einen lichten kreis</i>	a bright circle
<i>einen lauten kreis</i>	a loud circle
<i>ein stilles viereck mit vielen</i>	a quiet square with many
<i>kleinen lauten kreisen</i>	small loud circles
<i>sie träumte tag und nacht</i>	she dreamed day and night
<i>von lebenden kreisen.</i> ²³	of living circles

The attributes of Concrete poetry may be found in this passage by Arp, whom I argue is an important forerunner of this movement. Incorporating space is of great importance in Concrete poetry.²⁴ Here it is included not only as a theme, but also in terms of the placement of the words upon the page. The Concrete poets applied this principle with far greater emphasis, but in Arp’s work the same words appear in different “constellations,” a significant concept for both his visual art as well as his poetry.²⁵

In the second edition of *Spirale*, which was published in 1954, four of Arp’s poems that had been published in *Le Siècle de l’Air*, the major French-language anthology of 1946, appeared in French. However, three of them had originally been published in different volumes: “point blanc” (white point) in *Rire de coquille* (*Sea-Shell Laughter*), an homage to Sophie Taeuber (in collaboration with Vordemberge-Gildewart), “sur la pointe des pieds” (on tip toes) and “plus petit que le petit” (smaller than the smallest) in *Poèmes sans prénoms* (*Poems without First Names*) in 1941 (with three drawings by Sophie Taeuber). In addition to these three poems, “vert comme la mousse” (green as moss) was first printed in *Le Siècle de l’air*, in a section entitled “Profil, fil et espace” (“Profile, File and Space”). It would be reductive to only analyze these poems in terms of word play, which also played a part in the structure and development of lyric poetry (“*des faits d’hiver*” (winter facts) instead of “*faits divers*” (short news items); “*un point c’est tout deux points c’est plus*” (one point, that’s all; two points, that’s more). Rather, these works

are characterized by a synthesis of visual associations that stem from Surrealism and that are grounded in linguistic play, and of an abstract thematization of space that is typical of Arp:

<i>plus petit que le plus petit</i>	smaller than smallest
<i>les yeux du vide</i>	the eyes of nothingness
<i>un quidam interstellaire</i>	an interstellar individual
[...]	[...]
<i>les virgules derrière la lune</i>	the commas behind the moon
<i>les éponges du ciel</i>	the sky's sponges
[...]	[...]
<i>nuage mécanisé</i>	mechanized cloud
<i>œuf dynamite</i>	dynamite egg
<i>jamais le vide ne sera nu</i> ²⁶	never will the void be nude

To conclude, a poem Eugen Gomringer wrote for Arp's seventy-fifth birthday bears the elder artist's influence. It was published in 1986 in the book *Zerstreuung des Alphabets. Hommage an Hans Arp (Scattering of the Alphabet. Homage to Hans Arp)*, in which Gomringer also recalled his meetings with Arp in Solduno.²⁷ At the same time, it marks the development of a new kind of poetry that stems from Arp's work:

<i>rund</i>	round
<i>beginnt rund</i>	begins round
<i>ründet sich groß</i>	rounds itself bigger
<i>ründet sich auswärts</i>	rounds itself outward
<i>ründet sich einwärts</i>	rounds itself inward
<i>ründet sich aus</i>	rounds itself out
<i>wendet sich</i>	turns itself
<i>ründet sich neu</i>	rounds itself anew
<i>ründet sich auswärts</i>	rounds itself outward
<i>ründet sich einwärts</i>	rounds itself inward
<i>ründet sich voll</i>	rounds itself full
<i>vollendet sich</i>	fulfills itself
<i>rund</i> ²⁸	round

1 “Si par impossible j’étais obligé de choisir entre l’œuvre plastique et la poésie écrite, si je devais abandonner, soit la sculpture, soit les poèmes, je choiserais d’écrire des poèmes.” Conversation with Marcel Jean, quoted after Jean Arp: *Jours effeuillés. Poèmes, essais, souvenirs 1920–1965* (Préface de Marcel Jean), Paris: Gallimard 1966, p. 25.

2 “De la poésie faite avec des moyens plastiques.” Colloque de Meudon entre Arp et Bryen, in: *XXe siècle*, 6 (1956): in: Arp 1966, p. 433.

3 “Mit sechzehn Jahren [...] vergällte mir das ewige Abzeichnen ausgestopfter Vögel und welker Blumen an der Straßburger Kunstgewerbeschule nicht nur das Zeichnen, sondern die bildende Kunst überhaupt. Ich suchte nun Zuflucht bei der Dichtung. Die Verehrung der deutschen Romantiker ist mir bis heute geblieben. Damals entdeckte ich auch in einer französischen Buchhandlung die ‘Illuminations’ von Rimbaud und die ‘Serres chaudes’ von Maeterlinck und bald umgaben mich Berge von Büchern.” Hans Arp: “Betrachten” (1958), in: Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Zweiklang, (ed. by Ernst Scheidegger), Zürich: Arche 1960, p. 84.

4 “Ich lebte mit fünfzehn oder sechzehn Jahren in den Vogesen und sollte mich in der Einsamkeit auf ein Examen vorbereiten; stattdessen las und schrieb ich Gedichte. Ich hatte mit siebzehn Jahren ein Buch meiner Gedichte zusammengestellt.” Arp is referring to the poetry collection ‘Das Logbuch’, “which was supposed to be published by Seemann in Berlin. It had just been publicized in the latest Seemann catalogue when the publisher announced that it had lost the manuscript. I welcomed this tragedy, because it provided the occasion to travel to Berlin and become acquainted with the most bizarre cabaret on earth, the Wintergarten.” (“Das Logbuch,’ das bei Seemann in Berlin erscheinen sollte. Er war bereits in dem Neuen Magazin von Seemann angekündigt worden, als der Verlag das Manuskript verlor. Diese Tragödie war mir willkommen, da sie mir erlaubte, nach Berlin zu reisen und das unheimlichste Variété der Welt, den Wintergarten, kennenzulernen.”) Hans Arp: *Gesammelte Gedichte*, Vol. I, Zürich: Arche 1963, p. 14.

5 “Schon in jener Zeit bezauberte mich das Wort. Ich füllte Seiten um Seiten mit ungewöhnlichen Wortverbindungen und bildete ungebräuchliche Verben aus Substantiven. Ich gestaltete bekannte Verse um und deklamierte sie mit Hingebung und gehobenem Herzen ohne Unterlass, fort und fort, als sollte es kein Ende nehmen: Sterne sterne manchen Stern, dass zum Zwecke Sterne sterneten, walde walde manchen Wald, dass zum Zwecke Wälder waldeten, zacke zacke manchen Zack, dass zum Zwecke Zacken zackten. Der Missbrauch der Unterlage ahndete sich oft grausam, und es erging mir wie dem Zauberlehrling in Goethes Gedicht.” Hans Arp: *Wegweiser*, in: id.: *Wortträume und schwarze Sterne. Auswahl aus den Gedichten der Jahre 1911–1952*, Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag 1953, p. 5.

6 “un volume plastique.” Jean Clay: Jean Arp (1960), in: id.: *Visages de l’art moderne*, Paris: Éditions Rencontre 1969, p. 31.

7 See: Aimée Bleikasten: *Arp Bibliographie*. Vol. 1, *Dichtung/Ecrits*, London: Grant & Cutler, 1981; see also: Aimée Bleikasten, *Palimpsestes, écriture et réécritures*, in: *Arp en ses ateliers d’art et d’écriture*, exhibition catalogue (ed. by Aimée Bleikasten and Maryse Staiber): Musées de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, 2011, pp. 72–95

8 The expression comes from a letter Flora Klee-Palyi wrote to Arp on November 22, 1952, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.

9 “Je ne sais rien de plus beau que ‘Le Siège de l’Air.’” Letter from André Breton to Hans Arp, January 12, 1947, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno; “[p]rend place à côté de ceux—Novalis, Rimbaud—dont la parole nous a soulevés à vingt ans.”

Letter from André Breton to Hans Arp, April 3, 1947, Archive Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno.

10 “Each of us can supply evidence of late works which crown a lifetime of aesthetic endeavour. Rembrandt and Matisse, Bach and Wagner. But what of artistic lateness not as harmony and resolution, but as intransigence, difficulty and contradiction?” Edward Said: *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain*. New York: Pantheon Books 2006, p. 7.

11 It was published in the series *Die Quadrat-Bücher*, Vol. 32, 1963.

12 As professor at the Technical University in West-Berlin, Walter Höllerer initiated some of the most internationally engaged literary series, for which did something entirely new at a time when television was becoming popular: he held public interviews with the participating authors, creating the format of a moderated reading (*moderierte Lesung*) transforming literature into an event. Höllerer also founded the literary colloquium at Berlin-Wannsee, where writers and translators still work and interact with the public today in the context of a variety of events. Helmut Böttiger: *Elefantenrunden. Walter Höllerer und die Erfindung des Literaturbetriebs*, exhibition catalogue, Literaturhaus, Berlin, 2005.

13 “Destruction des MOTS pour les LETTRES.” Isidore Isou: *Le Manifeste de la poésie lettriste*; in: id.: *Introduction à une nouvelle poésie et à une nouvelle musique*, Paris: Gallimard 1947, p. 15.

14 Hans Arp: *Die gestiefelten Sterne*, rpt. in: id. 1963, und *L'étoile bottée*, rpt. in: id. 1966, p. 61–62. Eric Robertson has written extensively on this topic, and has for example analyzed Arp's play with and between languages using this poem as an example. See: Eric Robertson: *Arp Painter Poet Sculptor*, Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2006, p. 193 f.

15 Rpt. in: Arp 1966, p. 47.

16 English translation from: Jean Arp: *Arp on Arp. Poems, Essays, Memories* by Jean Arp (ed. by Marcel Jean, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel), New York 1972, p. 19.

17 “Quant à votre question ‘Lautgedichte,’ Arp n’en a pas écrit beaucoup, mais il se sert parfois dans ces poèmes de parties et ceci depuis le temps Dada jusqu’à nos jours. Cela mènerait trop loin de vous les énumérer. Mais il y a pourtant 3 ‘Lautgedichte’ dont ‘Maurulam katapult i lemm i lamm’ de 1924 et ‘Firi’ de 1927 reproduites dans ‘Poésie de mots inconnus’ d’Iliazd, et ‘quatre piraine’ 1949, qu’Arp a écrit pour des jeunes peintres italiens: Bozzolini et Righetti, pour leur album de 10 linogravures.” Letter from Marguerite Arp to Raoul Hausmann, November 27, 1964, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

18 “Pour la revue [...], elle se dirige vers la poésie phonétique, musique verbale, et, d’autre part, les recherches graphiques.” Letter from Henri Chopin to Hans Arp, November 18, 1962, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

19 “La période des poèmes lettristes est depuis longtemps passée et celle des ‘configurations’ également, mais nous croyons que cette série de petites poésies jouant sur le mot feront peut-être votre affaire et vous amuseront.” Letter from Marguerite Arp to Henri Chopin, August 6, 1963, Archive Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

20 Rpt. in: Arp 1966, p. 563 f.

21 English translation of "Motus Motus" with a few minor changes is from: Arp 1972, p. 455 f.

22 "Wir weben ihr [der Schönheit] ein Kleid aus unseren reinsten Träumen, aus Farben, Linien, Kreisen, Dreiecken, Vierecken, aus dem inneren Licht der Kugeln und Würfel, aus der Liebe und der Harmonie, von der Empedokles sagt: 'Da breiten sich nicht von einem Rücken zwei Arme aus, noch sind da Füße oder schnelle Kniee oder zeugende Glieder, sondern es war ein Sphairos, von allen Seiten sich selber gleich.'" Immer wandelt sich die Schönheit..., rpt. in: Hans Arp: Unsern täglichen Traum... Erinnerungen, Dichtungen und Betrachtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954, Zürich: Arche 1955, p. 90. Quotation by Empedocles translated into English by Ralph Manheim in Hans Arp: On My Way, Poetry and Essays 1912–1947 (ed. by Robert Motherwell), New York: Wittenborn Schultz, (Documents of Modern Art) 1948, p. 35.

23 Hans Arp, Sophie tanzte und träumte..., in: Spirale 1 (1953), Bern, n.p., p.3.

24 Eugen Gomringer notes that a prominent characteristic of Concrete poetry is the way space is incorporated into letters, words, and sentences as an intermediary space and a space of containment that not only divides, but also unites individual elements. Eugen Gomringer: 'konstellation' definitionen zur visuellen poesie, in: id.: konkrete poesie: deutschsprachige autoren. anthologie, Stuttgart 1972, p. 163.

25 "After the death of my mother in 1930, I wrote the poems 'Dreams of Death and Life.' In these poems, I often use the same words. The unfathomable variations in the way nature arranges flowers in a field, or the sequence of endlessly different buildings a child creates with the same blocks from a set perhaps inspired me to try to do the same with words. I wrote poems with a limited amount of words that emerge in different constellations. I also published such poems in my book Shells and Umbrellas. The limited number of words does not impoverish the poems. In fact, it conveys the endless abundance to be found in arrangement, placement, order. At that time, typographical arrangement of the poem was also of great significance to me. Every day, we put together new pieces of poetry into a new image that is true for us. We experience the essential life of these things, events, in a different combination." (Nach dem Tode meiner Mutter, im Jahre 1930, schrieb ich die Gedichte 'Träume vom Tod und vom Leben.' In diesen Gedichten verwende ich öfters die gleichen Wörter. Die unfassbare Vielfalt, mit der die Natur eine Blumenart in einem Felde anordnet, oder die Folge unendlich verschiedener Bauten, die ein Kind mit den gleichen Steinen eines Baukastens ausführt, haben mich wahrscheinlich angeregt, das gleiche mit Worten zu versuchen. Ich schrieb Gedichte mit einer beschränkten Anzahl Wörter, die in verschiedenen Konstellationen auftreten. In meinem Buch 'Muscheln und Schirme' habe ich ebenfalls einige solcher Gedichte veröffentlicht. Die Beschränkung in der Zahl der Wörter bedeutet keine Verarmung des Gedichtes, vielmehr wird durch die vereinfachte Darstellung der unendliche Reichtum in der Verteilung, Stellung, Anordnung sichtbar. Auch die typographische Anordnung des Gedichtes war in jener Zeit für mich von grosser Wichtigkeit. Wir fügen täglich Gedichtteile zusammen zu einem neuen, für uns wirklichen Bild. Das wesentliche Leben dieser Dinge, Geschehnisse, erleben wir in einer anderen Zusammenstellung.) Hans Arp: Wegweiser, in: id. 1953, p. 9 f.

26 Rpt. in: Hans Arp 1966, p. 169 f., p. 191, p. 264.

27 Gregor Laschen (ed.): Zerstreuung des Alphabets: hommage à Arp: Hans/Jean Arp zum 100. Geburtstag, Bremerhaven: Wirtschaftsverlag NW, 1986.

28 Eugen Gomringer: für hans arp, in: Florilegium für Hans Arp. Zum 16. September 1962, in: Hans Rudolf Hilty (ed.): Hans Arp und die Worte der Dichter, St. Gallen: Tschudy Verlag 1986, n.p.

Families of Mind—Families of Forms

Hans Arp, Alvar Aalto, and a Case of Artistic Influence

Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen

Around 1930 similar forms evoking natural organisms begin to populate the work of two modernist icons: the artist Hans Arp (1886–1966) and the architect Alvar Aalto (1898–1976). At times their work seems almost identical: take for example Arp's painted wood relief *Amphora* from 1931 (*fig. 1*) and the material study Aalto executed around the same time (*fig. 2*). Both feature two parallel, softly undulating contour lines descending diagonally across the rectangular frame, and parting in the middle to form a wider node. Arp's form is painted, while Aalto's is made of two thin strips of bent wood. In both men's work such amorphous forms proliferated in different media and scales throughout the 1930s and beyond. They appear in Arp's wood reliefs, sculptures, drawings, and collages throughout his career, and migrate into Aalto's designs and buildings in various scales and materials.

It is fair to assume that the two men must have known of each other's work and even might have met, as their circle of friends and geographical orbits overlapped significantly. Aalto had surely seen Arp's work when visiting his friends, the architectural historian Sigfried Giedion and his wife the art historian Carola Giedion-Welcker, in Zürich; the above-mentioned *Amphora* wood relief was part of their extensive art collection. It is also very likely that during his first visit to Zürich in August 1930, Aalto's hosts would have taken him to see the exhibition Giedion curated at the Kunstsalon Wolfsberg, *Produktion Paris 1930: Werke der Malerei und Plastik (Production Paris 1930: Works of Painting and Sculpture)*, which featured Arp's work alongside that of Mondrian.

The Hungarian artist László Moholy-Nagy was another possible connection. He and Arp had known each other through the International Avant-Garde Artists Congress since the early 1920s, while Aalto and Moholy first met in 1929 at the first Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in Frankfurt. The latter two became fast friends when Aalto stopped in Berlin



Fig. 1 Hans Arp, *Amphora (Vase)*, 1931, Rau 230, Painted wood, 139.3 × 109.2 cm, Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

in 1930 during a trip that ended in Zürich. If it hadn't been for Moholy's 1929 book *Von Material zu Architektur* (*From Material to Architecture*)—a gift given to him by the author on the same trip—Aalto might never have executed the aforementioned piece. Upon arriving back home Aalto began to conduct studies with wood that combined Arp's formal imagery with the three-part sequence of material experimentation introduced by Moholy in his book: the study of wood's inherent fibrous material structure (*Struktur*); the implementation of the external forces of bending (*Textur*); and experimentation with industrial processes—in this case of lamination (*Faktur*). The resulting series of studies conducted in collaboration with the furniture maker Otto Korhonen led to the first set of Aalto-designed bent-wood furniture in

1931, among them the now-iconic *Paimio Chair*, which was constructed from two elements made of laminated bent wood and a seat made of bent plywood to create an amalgam of gentle curves.

The early studies were framed and in some cases gifted to friends—Aalto gave one piece to the Swiss architect Alfred Roth—allowing both the form and process to continue circulating. Furthermore, Aalto did not limit the use of the curvilinear form to a single material or function, but rather allowed it to migrate to a variety thereof; in chronological order, to the wooden acoustic ceiling at the Viipuri Library (1934); the *Savoy Vase* (1936) made of glass; The Forest Exhibition Pavilion (1938, *fig. 3*) and the famous media wall at



Fig. 2 Alvar Aalto, Material study with wood, 1934, 90 × 84 × 8.5 cm, Alvar Aalto Museum

the New York World's Fair (1939), both of which were made of vertical wooden boards. Smaller elements ranging from ornamental vignettes to door handles followed, as if the curvilinear form could never stop.

What should we make of such an explicit case of artistic influence and of Aalto's subsequent impulse to repeat and circulate the same form *ad infinitum*? Existing Aalto scholarship has tended to overlook the clear formal connections to Arp's work, instead preferring to foster the myth of an individual genius working in isolation. Even those who challenged this myth in twentieth-century architecture upheld the notion that Aalto's formal language was unique and highly idiosyncratic. Two prominent architectural historians, Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, went as far as to dismiss Aalto's standing among the greats on those grounds, writing that his "historical significance [...] has perhaps been rather exaggerated," because "[t]he qualities of his works have meaning only as masterful distractions, not subject to reproductions outside the remote reality in which they have their roots."¹ By the time their widely read survey of modern architecture was published in the mid-1970s, Aalto's transnational affinities had been forgotten and his influences, if any, were seen as limited to the Finnish National Romantic architects.

I want to counter this reading by acknowledging that Aalto's sponge-like ability to absorb new ideas during his many trips to the continent was not only crucial to his professional and artistic development, but also symptomatic of the way he engaged the world in general. He was a polyglot chameleon constantly on the move, visiting friends who made up the "who's who" list of artists, architects, and critics of international modernism. Being born in a country that during his lifetime was in a constant state of political turmoil and reorientation had surely taught him a thing or two about navigating changing political, cultural, and intellectual territories. His constantly-changing travel itinerary often reflected the shifting political affinities of his country.² Indeed, nothing could be further from truth than the idea that Aalto worked alone and isolated from the rest of the world.

To be sure, Aalto kept up with international trends by every available means. In addition to crisscrossing Scandinavia and the continent in frequent intervals to meet his new fast friends and to see new buildings, he was often quick to shift both personal and artistic affinities, even zigzagging between different ideological camps. Within the span of a few short years, his ability allowed for the language of Nordic classicism give way to an international

modernism marked by white walls, flat roofs, and strip windows.

Apart from being in frequent correspondence with his extensive roster of international friends from around the globe, Aalto subscribed to dozens of international magazines, among them the art journal *Cahiers d'Arts*, which allowed him to keep up with current events and imagery. Importantly, it was known for high-quality photographic reproductions of works of art, among them those of Arp. Correspondence between Aalto and the journal's editor Christian Zervos reveals that soon after meeting him in 1933, Aalto started to hire top photographers to document his work. He realized that buildings do not travel but photographs do—but also used the medium to turn buildings that were located in remote corners of Finland into formal vignettes associated with continental abstract art.³

The curvilinear form proved particularly versatile in creating a rich set of associations and blurring any single meaning in its wake. The undulating multimedia wall at the Finnish Pavilion designed for the 1939–40 New York World's Fair demonstrates how Aalto mined this opportunity by putting the curvilinear form to work. This form was echoed across media in various export items, including Aalto's bentwood furniture. It also appears in the pioneering Finnish modernist photographer Eino Mäkinen's photographs depicting the Finnish lake landscape, in which he transforms information from various displays of industrial processes, people, nature, and design into



Fig. 3 Alvar Aalto, Forest Pavilion, Lapua, 1938, Alvar Aalto Museum

an “overall affect” or “atmosphere.”⁴ The ability to neutralize any overtly political message proved helpful when the pavilion was used in the aftermath of the Finnish-Russian Winter War (1939–40) as a platform for soliciting international good will.

Around the same time the curvilinear form in Aalto’s work came to sponsor a whole host of political meanings, including somewhat contradictory political associations, depending on the vantage point of the interlocutor and his or her audience. During the year of 1938 alone Aalto’s work was heralded as a manifestation of “transnational cultural unity” and “universal laws” in *Circle: The International Survey of Constructive Art*, and as being ingrained with “national” and “personal” sensibility in *Aalto: Architecture and Furniture*, the exhibition catalog for a retrospective that took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York the same year. As the curvilinear form had proliferated across media and gained new meanings in new contexts since its inception, it had somewhat unexpectedly become a geopolitical actor.

In order to understand this phenomenon, we need to turn to the prominent French art historian Henri Focillon (1881–1943), who had much to say about how forms gain such agency. The title of my essay is borrowed from his 1934 book *La vie des form* (*The Life of Forms in Art*), in which he considers how forms create affinities—“families of mind and families of form”—across time and space.⁵ What he calls “affinities of mind regarding forms” should give us pause as it addresses what is commonly referred to as artistic influence; Focillon does not believe that art should be original, but rather show an “affinity” with other people’s work. To his mind, joining a “family” of likeminded artists is not only natural, but the very substance from which art is made. Therefore, it is worth giving Focillon serious consideration and to concede that something more than copying was at stake if and when Aalto appropriated Arp’s forms into his own work. Importantly, if we follow Focillon’s line of thought, whether the two ever met is irrelevant. It is worth quoting him at length:

Human friendship may intervene in these relationships and further them, but the play of receptive affinities and elective affinities in the world of forms occurs in another realm than that merely of sympathy, since sympathy always runs the risk of being either propitious or adverse. These affinities are not defined and limited by any particular moment, but develop broadly throughout the course of time.

Although each individual is contemporary first of all with himself and with his generation, he is also contemporary with the spiritual group of which he is a member. [...]

Here, then, is a new refinement on the doctrine of influences: not only is there never a question of mere passive influence, but we are not obliged to invoke influence at any cost to explain a kinship that already exists and that calls for no active contact.⁶

Focillon's message is clear: While he considered it natural for an artist to be drawn to the work of other artists, such affinities should never be mistaken as circumstantial, nor need they be limited to contemporaneous work. He cites visits to museums as just one example of how generations of artists discovered and are nourished by affinities with art from different periods and places. It is worth repeating that he expanded the horizon of possible sources of artistic influence as follows: "although each individual is contemporary first of all with himself and with his generation, he is also contemporary with the spiritual group of which he is a member."⁷

So what exactly does Focillon mean by a "spiritual group?" Here we must recognize that the idea that forms are alive and invested with inherent volition is derived from Henri Bergson's notion of *élan vital*, or life force. He had put it forward in his 1907 book *Creative Evolution* to counter Charles Darwin's model in which evolution was considered as an ongoing adaptation to certain conditions. This anti-empiricist form-immanent-idea allowed Focillon to read art as a product of a trans-historical and trans-cultural transmission of forms and techniques rather than as the product of a specific time and place. Considering that Focillon wrote his book during a period that favored interpreting art within national contexts, this was a radical notion.

The idea of living forms had repercussions regarding authorship as well. While Focillon does completely ignore the idea of artistic agency—his book is full of references to individual artists of the highest caliber—he does not consider forms to be solely the product or the property of any individual artist. Every form has a certain "aura," that is, it always reminds one of other forms. Therefore, because a work of art is never produced in isolation, it should be understood as part of a wider constellation of works. The task of the individual artist was to build upon these inherited formal problems and schemata.

The key point of Focillon's argument, however, has less to do with mere

adaptation and appropriation, and much more with the idea that feeling affinity for a certain type of form always involves a deep mental process. The following paragraph helps us to understand how Focillon defines the relationship between forms and mind:

Forms transfigure the aptitudes and movements of the mind more than they specialize them. Forms may receive accent from the mind, but not configuration. Forms are, as the case may be, intellect, imagination, memory, sensibility, instinct, character; they are, as the case may be, muscular vigor, thickness or thinness of the blood. But forms, as they work on these data, train and tutor them ceaselessly and uninterruptedly. They create a new man, manifold and yet unified, out of animal man.⁸

Focillon's idea that "forms create man" was informed by the work of the famed German philosopher Ernst Cassirer, who in his magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, presents the idea that a human being is a "symbolic animal" who uses symbolic systems, such as language, math, and art, to make sense of the world. He writes: "Life cannot apprehend itself by remaining absolutely within itself. It must be given form; for it is precisely by this 'otherness' of form that it gains its 'visibility,' if not its reality."⁹ For him a symbolic system like art should not be considered an expression of inner thoughts and feelings: it is "impossible [...] to draw a line between inner vision and outward formation."¹⁰ Rather, it embodies those thoughts and feelings.

Like Cassirer, Focillon builds on the foundational principle of phenomenology according to which all thinking is directed towards the world; form was a mediator in this process. He goes even further in stating that for artists, form is thought:

The idea of the artist is form. His emotional life turns likewise to form: tenderness, nostalgia, desire, anger are in him, and so are many other impulses, more fluid, more secret, oftentimes more rich, colorful and subtle than those of other man. [...] I do not say that form is the allegory or the symbol of feeling, but, rather, its innermost activity. Form activates feeling. Let us say, if you like, that art not only clothes sensibility with a form, but that art also awakens form in sensibility.¹¹

It is useful to contrast this reading of form to Wilhelm Worringer's 1908 book *Abstraction and Empathy: Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, which established a direct link between two kinds of psychological attitudes towards the world and two types of artistic language: whereas anxiety towards the world manifested itself in stark geometric forms, being at ease with the world was conveyed by softer naturalistic forms. In Focillon's view, forms are not manifestations of singular feelings, ideas, or thoughts; rather, they maintain traces of previous works and gain new meanings and associations along the way.

If we apply Focillon's theory of how forms operate we could conclude that when appropriating the bulbous, curvilinear form from Arp, Aalto did not have any particular meaning in mind. His very willingness to absorb and open himself to artistic influence could be interpreted less as an outcome of a fully formulated idea, and more as a sign of an unspoken affinity. From the onset, the curvilinear form proved useful for absorbing various forces—technological, representational, and geopolitical—into a single image. As discussed before, whether a conscious intent or not, the form proved effective in communicating ambiguous political identities, and even canceled out all political meanings all together.

This brings us to Aalto's politics, which were equally ambiguous and fluid. He had friends among the left-leaning intelligentsia as well as the wealthy industrialists both at home and abroad; the common thread was interest in transnational communication and collaboration. Here we must be reminded that our three protagonists embraced political and intellectual movements that aimed to counter the rise of nationalism, such as pacifism (Arp), Pan-Europeanism (Aalto), and universalism (Focillon). In addition, all three belonged to various groups that foregrounded art's role in international collaboration and understanding: Aalto was active in the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne until about 1933; Arp belonged to the group Abstraction Création, and Focillon to the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation; all were established around 1930 to foster international collaboration through the arts. Focillon's book captured the universalist and humanist tendencies of the era. It was a book that many read or would have at least heard about.

We must also be reminded that World War II forced all three to negotiate their complex personal and political identities and to make some personally difficult choices. Both Focillon and Arp chose to emigrate; Focillon to the



Fig. 4 Hans Arp, Constellation with Five White Forms and Two Black, Variation III, 1932, Rau 236, Painted wood relief, 60 x 75.5 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

U.S. and Arp to Switzerland. Aalto, after considering emigration to the U.S. after series of long sojourns there, returned to his home country, in part because of peer pressure. Too old to serve on active military duty, Aalto spent the war years as the head of the reconstruction office. He was sent as a one-man PR-machine of sorts to lecture in the U.S. and Switzerland to solicit goodwill and funds for the reconstruction efforts from his powerful international friends, among them Lawrence Rockefeller, a major American businessman and philanthropist, and Hélène Mandrot, a Swiss patron of the arts and a donor to internationalist causes, including the League of Nations and the CIAM. In 1942 Aalto reluctantly joined a delegation of Finnish architects on a visit to Nazi Germany after the two countries had become allies in a fight against a common enemy, the Soviet Union. He navigated these varied social and political terrains with the help of his personal charm, likeability, and a certain malleability. His ambiguous formal language helped: where others saw him as a fellow modernist, Albert Speer might have recognized him as a fellow nationalist-minded architect.

Given this geopolitical and historical framework, I am particularly fascinated by the use of liquid metaphors in the work and words of the three members of the intellectual group at hand as a means to conceptualize how art mitigates external forces. Take for example Arp's painted wood relief *Constellation with Five White Forms and Two Black*, Variation III, from 1932, where white and black figures separate from their white background like bubbles emerging randomly upon the water's surface (fig. 4). The projected figures cast shadows, making the point that forms in nature are never static, but perpetually produce more forms. Arp describes his *Concretization* series in amorphous liquid terms: "concretion signifies the natural process of condensation, hardening, coagulating, thickening, growing together. Concretion designates the solidification of a mass."¹² In his poem "Blind Existence," written during World War II and later published in the collection *The Uncertain World*, Arp writes: "I would like to blend into a space without an outline."¹³ He thereby captures beautifully the desire for oneness with the world, which Sigmund Freud called oceanic feeling, and which lies at the heart of the biomorphic abstraction. Even Arp's mentor Carola Giedion-Welcker's description of his work as "pure poetry" contains a liquid metaphor—a reservoir. She continued that it: "allows everything anecdotal and specific as well as psychological and individual to flow into one larger reservoir of unexpected and bizarre everyday human incidents."¹⁴

Similarly, when Ernesto Rogers, then the editor-in-chief of the Italian magazine *Domus*, asked Aalto to reflect on this relationship between architecture and abstract art in 1947, he too talked about his desire to cease control of the outcome by using the liquid metaphor of a fish in a river. The outcome is a thirteen-page illustrated article, "Architettura e arte concreta," which is known by the title "The Trout and the Stream" in English. In it Aalto describes his creative process as follows:

Architecture and its details are in some way all part of biology. Perhaps they are, for instance, like some big salmon or trout. They are not born fully-grown; they are not even born in the sea or water where they normally live. They are born hundreds of miles away from their home grounds, where the rivers narrow to tiny streams, in clear rivulets between the fells, in the first drops of water from the melting ice, as remote from their normal life as human emotion and instinct are from our everyday work.¹⁵

Using the curvilinear form as an example, he explains how it first appeared in his work through material studies with wood that did not have a specific functional purpose in mind, but later gained several different kinds of functional application. He characterizes this process as instinctual and “irrational,” without a clear pre-determined path: “I can mention that what appears to be nothing but playing with forms may unexpectedly, much later, lead to the emergence of an actual architectural form.”¹⁶ Here Aalto describes a kind of feedback loop between mind and matter, where, once created, forms then return to the mind of the creator and generate more forms and associations. Thus conceived, the form could not only absorb many different programmatic needs, but also remain versatile in communicating to audiences across the globe. It was at once autonomous and universal.

Focillon was perhaps most explicit in using liquid metaphors to invest art with a trans-historical and universalizing agenda. A whirling liquid substance full of immanent energy and movement might have also contributed to the central thesis of his book: art cannot be anchored to a specific period or place, but rather marks what the author calls a “flowing together of the energies of many civilizations.” Using yet another liquid metaphor Focillon writes how “a work of art is immersed in a whirlpool of time; and it belongs to eternity.”¹⁷ Sigmund Freud’s idea of “oceanic feeling,” the notion that art allows us to experience oneness with the world, comes to mind once again. Focillon also uses the oceanic metaphor “protuberance” to make sense of a key concept in his thinking, namely that of actuality, or moment, which provides a non-linear alternative to historical time. He writes:

I have pointed out that that historical time is sequential, but that it is not pure sequence. The moment is not simply any point along a line; it is rather a node, a protuberance. Nor is it the sum total of the past, but instead the meeting point of several forms of the present.¹⁸

Like waves that come into being when energy stored within an immense mass of water meets an external force, such as wind or the moon’s gravitation, he suggests that a work of art is also conceived as the product of an imminent creative energy stored in all humanity across the ages. It surfaces when advantageous external factors, such as patronage, allowed it to flourish in a given historical “present.” Focillon also writes about “fluid time [...] whose duration has a plastic quality.”¹⁹ His understanding of how that transitory

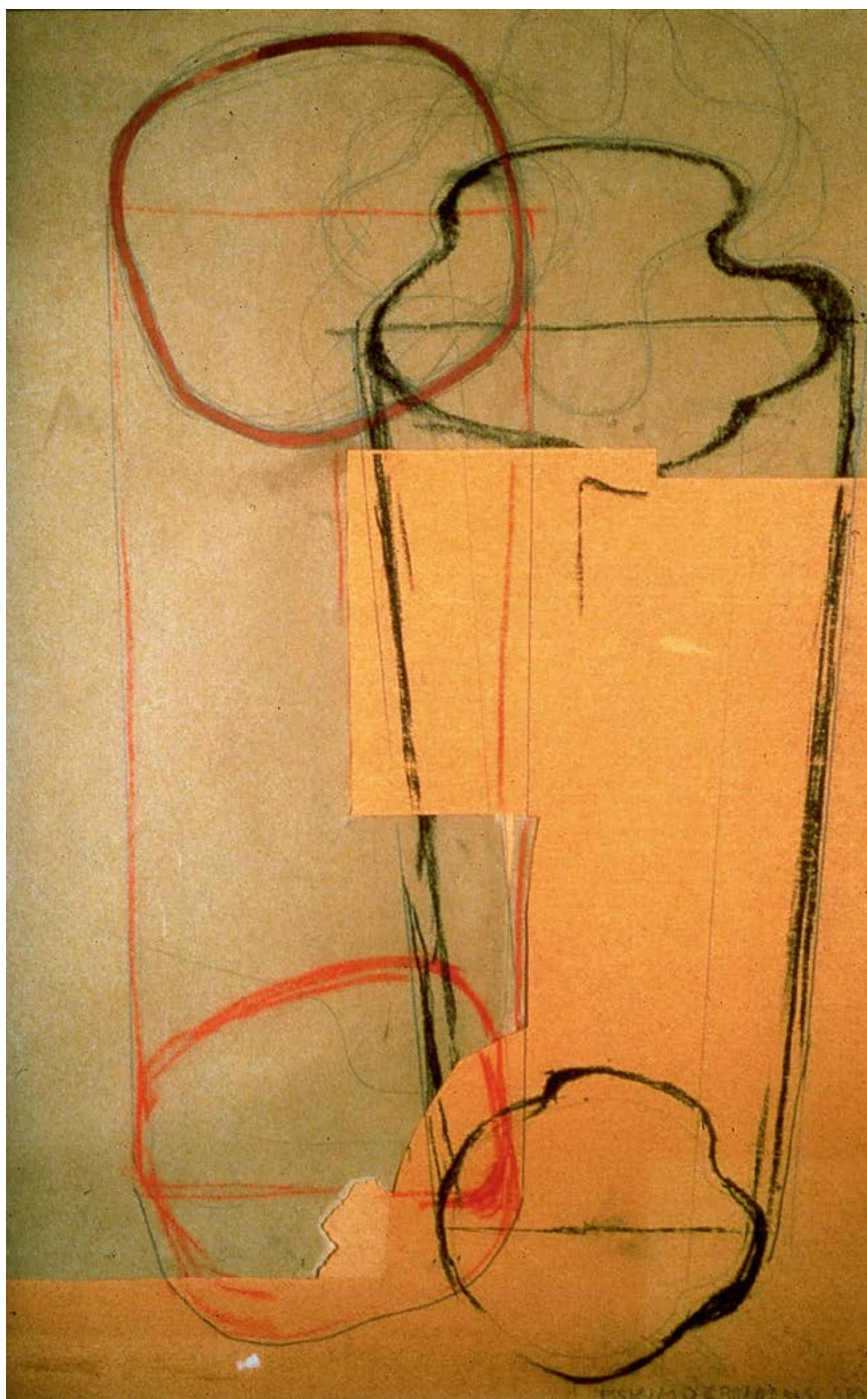


Fig. 5 Alvar Aalto, Eskimäkvinnans Skinnbyxor (The Eskimo Girl's Leather Breeches), 1936, Pencil and crayon sketch for the Karhula-Iittala glass design competition, 1936, Design Museum Helsinki

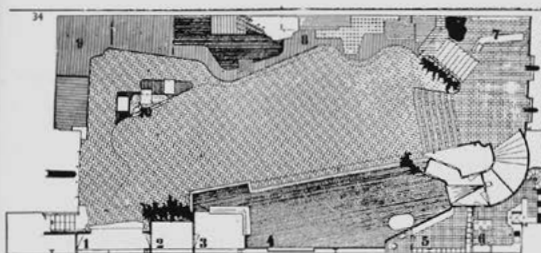
“plastic” moment is translated into art can also be traced to Baudelaire’s conception of an aesthetic modern sensibility in which: “Beauty is made up, on the one hand, of an element that is eternal and invariable ... and, on the other, of a relative, circumstantial element [...].”²⁰

Liquid metaphors may be extended to the perception of art; like waves, artistic events create ripple effects as they meet the eye of the beholder. Not only are artistic forms produced by prior works, but they are also able to evoke the existence of those earlier forms in the mind of the onlooker. Benjamin too was prone to using liquid metaphors when writing about the role of origin as a “whirlpool of the river of becoming [that which] pulls the emerging matter into its own rhythm.” Essentially this meant that a work with an “aura” was always “uncompleted, always open,” triggering remembrance as a kind of involuntary historical imagination.²¹ Thus, the concept of fluidity also applies to the experience of form. Focillon argues: “having attained form, [a sign] creates its own meaning; it seeks its own new content, and then endows that content with fresh association,” thereby suggesting that a form can act like a floating signifier.

This was surely the case as Arp and Aalto kept repurposing the same formal trope in different scales and mediums, letting each new work bear traces of previous works, while constantly producing new applications and associations. Aalto seemed particularly versatile in this regard, using the curvilinear form to sponsor different functional, semantic, and material meanings in a single object. This density of meaning is best demonstrated by the *Savoy Vase* = *The Eskimo Girl’s Leather Breeches*, a pencil and crayon sketch drawn for the Karhula-Iittala glass design competition in 1936, suggests a semantic reading: that the shape came from such practical item, which of course has nothing to do with the function of a vase (*fig. 5*). Yet some later sketches of the vase make us see the form as an outcome of pure formal play, while photographs of the final product filled with flowers suggest it was functionally motivated.

This ambiguity was not lost to Sigfried Giedion, who included an extensive chapter on Aalto’s work in the second edition of his landmark book *Space, Time and Architecture: Birth of a New Tradition* in 1949, for which he did the graphic design himself. The author juxtaposes how the curvilinear form migrates from project to project, operating in different scales, serving different functions, and echoing those of Finnish nature (*fig. 6*). The idea of a work having limitless associations reminds us, once again, of Focillon’s

356. Finnish lakes and forests, Aulenko.



357. ALVAR AALTO.
Finnish Pavilion, World's
Fair, New York, 1939.
Ground plan.



358. ALVAR AALTO.
Glass vases.

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Fig. 6 A page from Sigfried Giedion: *Space Time and Architecture. The Growth of a New Tradition*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949

idea that every work holds an archive of other works.

Similarly, the playful titles Arp gave to his works come to mind because they tease out formal resemblances between disparate objects. The relief *Torso, Navel, Head with Moustache* (1930) is one such example. In so doing both Arp and Aalto shun clear correspondence between signifier and signified, instead preferring to create open-ended floating signifiers without fixed meanings. Umberto Eco's idea of "open work," presented in the eponymous 1962 book is relevant here. In it he describes informal art in a manner that applies to both Arp and Aalto as "constitute[ing] a 'field' of possibilities, a configuration of stimuli endowed with fundamental indeterminacy, because it offers constantly variable 'readings,' and because it is ultimately structured like a constellation of elements which lend themselves to reciprocal relationships."²² The form-immanent vitalist view of art that Arp and Aalto shared was embraced by new audiences in the aftermath of World War II, when their universalist message gained new currency. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that West Germany, which was rebuilding and reinventing itself after the war, became one of Aalto's main clients. One example of a work Aalto produced



Fig. 7 Alvar Aalto, Entrance loggia, Hansa-Viertel apartment building in Berlin, 1955–56. Alvar Aalto Museum

in the newly formed West Germany is the Hansa-Viertel Apartment Complex, which was built for the Internationale Bauausstellung in 1957. It consists of two low towers designed in what at first glance looks like a rather normative international-style building with white stucco walls and an open-air loggia in the middle. On the ceiling, a black and white rendering of the curvilinear form makes yet another appearance (*fig. 7*). It is important to note that by that time the idea of “free form” had become somewhat homologous with that of the “free world.” In the politically laden Cold War political climate, the form can at least in part be read as a nod to West Germany’s newly acquired political alliance with the United States. It is equally noteworthy that the first to associate the curvilinear form with “freedom” was Elizabeth Mock, a curator of the Museum of Modern Art, an institution active in shaping public perception of the wartime events. This seemingly innocent idea laden with geopolitical subtext might have played a role in MoMA’s decision to host a retrospective of Arp’s work in 1958, which was received with great fanfare.

Considering how ubiquitous and universally beloved Arp’s and Aalto’s work has become, it is worth remembering how politically laden those now innocent-looking bulbous forms once were. The assertion that art operates as part a fluid and internationally driven, inter-textual morphological field constitutes, after all, the ultimate political act.

1 Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co: *Modern Architecture*, Vol. 2, New York 1990, p. 338.

2 See my book for more information about Aalto’s travels and Finland’s geopolitical dilemma. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen: *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics*, New Haven 2009.

3 For more information about Aalto and Zervos, see my article: *Symbolic Imageries: Alvar Aalto’s Encounters with Modern Art*, in: *Alvar Aalto: Second Nature*, exhibition catalogue (ed. by Jochen Eisenbrand), Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, 2014, pp. 116–145.

4 Alvar Aalto: *Maaailmannäyttelyt: New York’s World Fair, The Golden Gate Exhibition* (World Exhibitions: New York’s World Fair, The Golden Gate Exhibition) in: *Arkkitehti 8/1939*, p. 113. English transl. from Göran Schildt (ed.): *Alvar Aalto in His Own Words*, New York 1998, p. 121.

- 5 Henri Focillon: *The Life of Forms in Art* (1934), New York 1992, p. 133.
- 6 Ibid., p. 134.
- 7 Ibid., p. 134
- 8 Ibid., p. 130.
- 9 Ernst Cassirer: *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, in: id.: *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, Vol. 3, trans. by Ralph Manheim, New Haven 1957, p. 39.
- 10 Ibid., p. 39.
- 11 Focillon 1992, p. 123.
- 12 Hans Arp: *Looking*, in: Arp, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1958, pp. 14–15.
- 13 “Ich möchte im Umrisslosen schwimmen.” This collection of poems was written during World War II and published as *Ungewisse Welt* (1939–45). Reprinted in: Hans Arp: *Gesammelte Gedichte*, Vol. 2, Zürich 1963–84, pp. 37–38.
- 14 Carola Giedion-Welcker: Hans Arp: *Dichter und Maler*, *Das Kunstblatt* 12/1930, p. 373, reprinted in: Carola Giedion-Welcker: *Schriften*, 1926–71, Cologne 1973, p. 248.
- 15 Alvar Aalto: *Architettura e arte concreta*, in: *Domus* (1947), pp. 223–225. English translation from Schildt 1998, p. 107.
- 16 Ibid., p. 107.
- 17 Focillon 1992, p. 32.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 153–154.
- 19 Ibid., p. 139.
- 20 Charles Baudelaire: *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863) quoted by Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Twelve Lectures*, Cambridge 1992, p. 9.
- 21 Walter Benjamin: *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1925) quoted by Georges Didi-Huberman: *The Supposition of the Aura: The Now, the Then, and Modernity in*: Andrew Benjamin (ed.): *Walter Benjamin and History*, London and New York 2005, p. 4.
- 22 Umberto Eco: *L'oeuvre Ouverte*, Paris 1965, p. 117.

Movement—Space

Arp & Architecture

Dick van Gameren

The connection between Hans Arp's work and twentieth-century architecture is a rich and fascinating one. His oeuvre has an obvious spatial, three-dimensional quality that carries through to the works in two dimensions and expresses a strong sense of movement and growth. Many writers and researchers have analysed his emphasis on drawing inspiration from nature, and his nature-based works are seen as the basis of the unique and wonderful new visual language he introduced to twentieth-century art.

Likewise, nature has also provided many architects with the inspiration to develop new languages that mark a departure from established styles and formal approaches. Art Nouveau Architecture from around 1900 is an obvious example. Another example would be anthroposophic architecture, which is exemplified by Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum. More recently, Enric Miralles' Gaudian structures of flowing lines that unify building and landscape, or Santiago Calatrava's biomorphic skeletal compositions embody this approach.

This essay does not attempt to give a full overview of all the possible connections and common sources of inspiration between Arp's work and twentieth-century architecture. Instead, it follows an associative line of thought, connecting Arp's work to that of his contemporaries in architecture.

This essay only touches upon Arp's biography and direct connections to architecture, in favour of exploring parallels between his ideas on how both nature and art are formed by a process of creation, and how similar processes of creation and thinking were explored in architecture. Finally, a project from our own practice Mecanoo Architecten shows the ongoing relevance and inspiration of Arp's art for today's architecture.

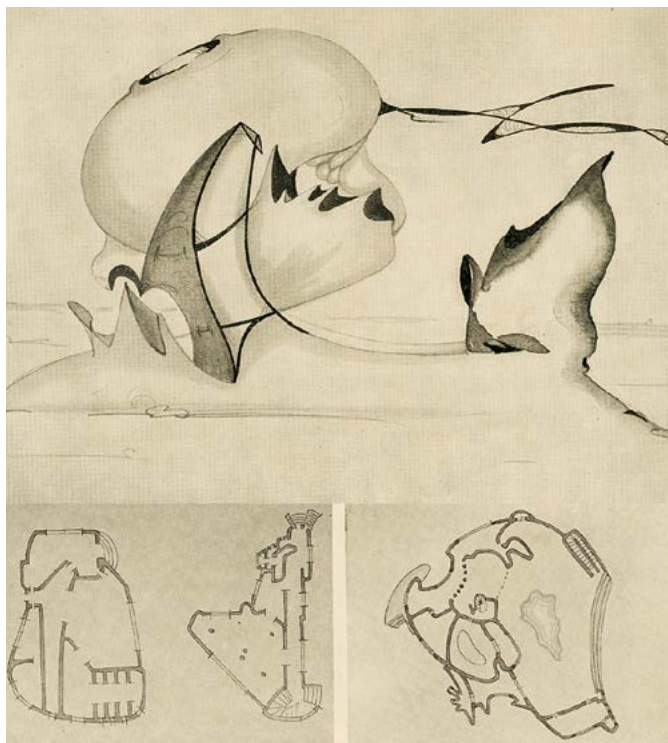


Fig. 1 Hermann Finsterlin: Drawings

Growth and Expression

In her contribution to the 1948 publication *Arp, on my way*, part of Robert Motherwell's series *The Documents of Modern Art*, Carola Giedion-Welcker introduces the notion of “structural growth” as the defining characteristic of Arp's art. The idea of structural growth immediately connects to the architectural debate between formal and informal or organic architecture. The idea to which Giedion-Welcker refers may be considered the foundation of the work of a group of German architects, many of whom were exact contemporaries of Arp, and who investigated the idea of a growing, organic structure for their building designs in order to create a truly functional architecture. These ideas are embodied in the German expressionist architecture of the first two decades of the twentieth century, and continue after the First World War in the functionalist movement of the 1920s.

The beautiful sketches by Erich Mendelsohn and the extraordinary fantasy architecture of Hermann Finsterlin come to mind first. The Dutch magazine *Wendingen*, an avant-garde journal on architecture, art, and design that was published from 1918 through 1932, was very much focused on the work of Dutch and German expressionist architects. At the same time, it dedicated issues to forms found in nature such as crystals and shells. While it devoted an issue of 1920 to Mendelsohn's work, the third issue of 1924 is fully given over to Hermann Finsterlin's drawings of organically growing fantastic shapes, which he attempted to turn into architecture by augmenting them with rather awkward plans.

This attempt to create a new, expressive architecture took hold in the work of several architects who would become protagonists of German modernism. They began by designing structures with organic or biomorphic shapes. Over time, they augmented these fantasies with a rigorous concept of the necessity of functionality and the importance of movement in unifying the idea of organic growth and functionality, which also resulted in a new spatial experience.

Hugo Häring and Hans Scharoun both played crucial roles in developing this approach to design. They rejected the rigid geometry of modernists such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe. The organic shapes were not chosen for their merits as a formal language, but rather as an expression of the task the structure must perform.

The idea that structures could and should be based on organic principles was not new. Häring, who built little, was a prolific writer. His line of thought was clearly rooted in the nineteenth-century interest in Gothic architecture, an interest that had taken hold in the eighteenth century with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's text *Von Deutscher Baukunst* (On German Architecture). In it, the famous writer described Strasbourg Cathedral (in Arp's hometown) as a primary example of "Northern" European architecture that was free of formal dogmas and implicitly functionalist. In contrast to the static classical architecture of the South, it was an architecture of growing structure. Häring clearly expressed his ideas in one of the few realised projects in his oeuvre: Gut Garkau in North Germany, designed in 1923. Most striking is the cowshed. An abstract organic shape, it is based on the functional analysis of the movement of cows in and out of the shed, and the daily processes of milking and feeding.

In contrast to Häring, Hans Scharoun realized a substantial oeuvre, which culminated in the post-war masterpieces of the Berlin Philharmonie and

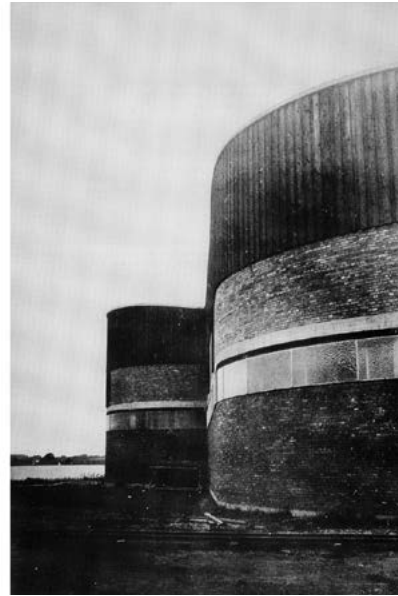
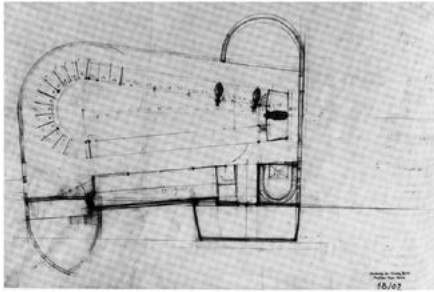


Fig. 2 Hugo Häring: Cowshed on Gut Garkau, near Lübeck, Germany, 1925

Staatsbibliothek. His early works exhibit a similar expression of organic structure and growth. His built design for a large collective residential building, which was part of the 1929 *Werkbundaussstellung* in Breslau (now Wrocław in Poland), uses long sweeping curves to articulate the building as a continuous organism. Curves and angles, which express the program of small individual units and generous collective spaces, connect inside and outside and suggest infinity and the inseparability of built and unbuilt space.

In late, unfortunately unbuilt, studies made during the Nazi period, Häring designed a number of houses that express the idea of the organic form as the result of a purely functional analysis of the uses of and movement within each individual space in the house. He called the result of this design approach the *Leistungsform*, the performance form or shape. The plans are meticulously designed to accommodate all everyday activities in a house, culminating in powerful, beautifully shaped plans. The resulting drawings of plans for the houses are not only functional architectural drawings but also convincing pieces of art that combine precise details with strong flowing shapes, in surprising correspondence with Arp's "autonomous" art.

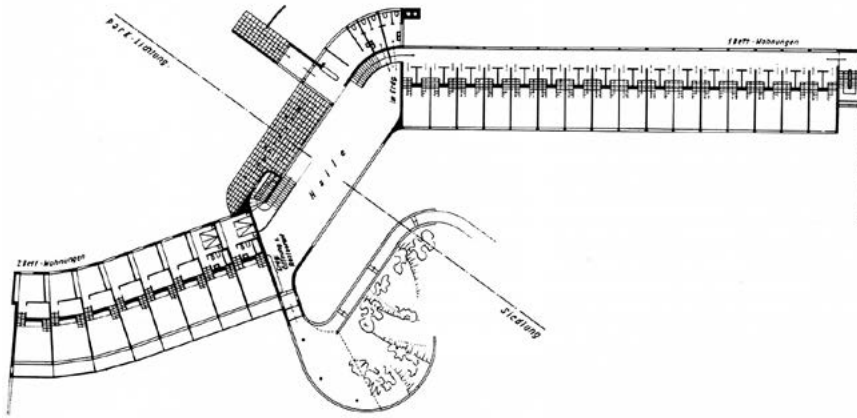


Fig. 3 Hans Scharoun: Apartment Building at the Wohnung und Werkraum Model Housing Estate in Breslau (now Wrocław), Poland, 1929

Nature and Material

The combination of movement, space, and functionality in the work of Häring and Scharoun inevitably brings to mind Sigfried Giedion's seminal work *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, which was first published in 1941. In it Giedion analyzes the background and cultural roots of modern architecture and urban planning, showing how twentieth-century modernist architecture developed new spatial concepts based on notions of dynamic movement and continuous space—concepts that were nevertheless rooted in the centuries-old trajectory of architectural innovation and development. Giedion and his wife Carola Giedion-Welcker were very closely connected to Arp. Accordingly, Giedion mentions Arp's work several times, mainly in relation to Alvar Aalto, the great Finnish master of organic architecture. Häring is not present, while Scharoun is only briefly mentioned. This omission of the earlier simultaneous development of architecture and art based the idea of organic-like, structural growth, as visible in Arp's and Härings work, and that is so much at the core of Giedion's narrative, is rather striking. In the later expanded editions of his book, Giedion also mentioned his own collaboration with Arp when he spoke about the relationship between architecture, painting, and sculpture at the 1947 Bridgewater CIAM conference.

Giedion's book lends great importance to Le Corbusier. Looking at the work of this French-speaking Swiss architect, one can point to other intriguing parallels, although Giedion did not mention them. Hans Arp's wife Sophie Taeuber-Arp designed a house for the couple in Meudon (Clamart) near Paris. It is a striking building. Compared to the work of progressive architects then active in Paris, such as Le Corbusier or Robert Mallet-Stevens, the building is not very elegant in its design, with the windows rather crudely cut out of the box-like volume. It stands out, however, in the strong expression of the material. The facade is made of rough stones, put together in a wild, "natural" pattern. This "primitive" aesthetic marks a bold contrast to the avant-garde architecture of Le Corbusier, Mallet-Stevens, and other contemporary modernists. The house was designed and built in the same years as Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, which was also near Paris. The iconic Villa Savoye is a completely abstracted composition, where all references to the actual structure and materials are concealed by a continuous, dematerializing layer of smooth and painted plasterwork.

Le Corbusier changed direction in a project of 1929, a summer house near

Toulon for Hélène De Mandrot, a well-known Swiss patron of art and architecture. Arp, Giedion, and Le Corbusier were all part of her circle of avant-gardists. Villa de Mandrot is the first building where he favors the expression of the material over the abstract plastered “skin” of the earlier houses. It is therefore a crucial turning point in his work and in modernist architecture in general. Two years later, Le Corbusier applied this concept in a more well-known work that is generally recognized as one of his master-works: the Pavillon Suisse in Paris. The Pavillon was built in 1931 as housing for Swiss students at the Cité Universitaire in Paris. Its plan is remarkable, and is very different from the plans he designed before, which were determined by a strict geometrical, almost Palladian order. Here everything suddenly falls apart into a collage, a juxtaposition of formal and organic shapes. In the drawings, the rough stone wall at the top of the ground floor is boldly expressed as an independent shape. With its beautiful curvilinear shape, the stair becomes another autonomous element. The same can be said of the pilotis, which has changed from Le Corbusier’s favourite “platonic” circular shape to a more complex form. And, to put even more emphasis on this new

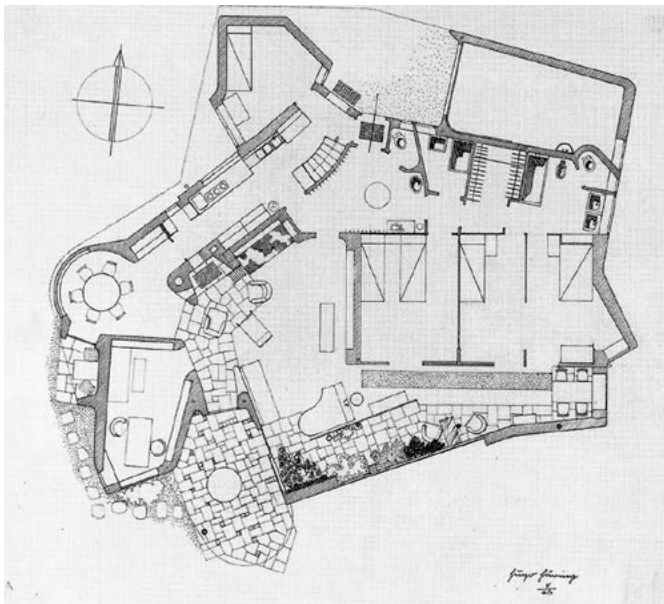


Fig. 4 Hugo Häring: Study for a House, 1946

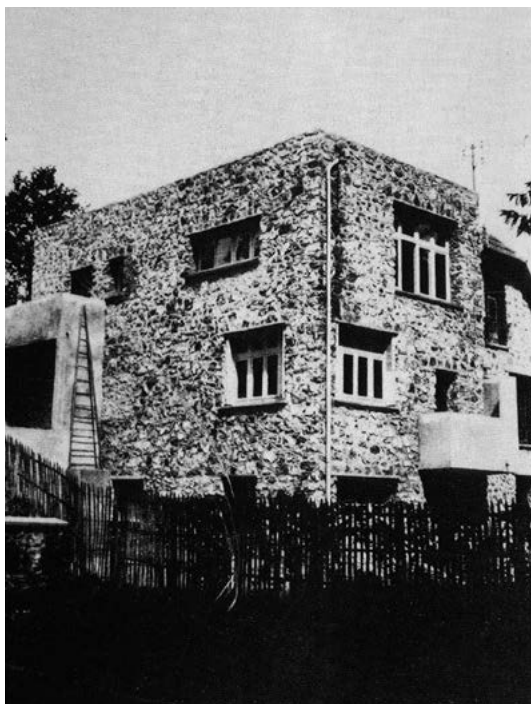


Fig. 5 Sophie Taeuber-Arp: The Arps' House in Clamart, France, 1929



Fig. 6 Le Corbusier: Villa de Mandrot, Le Pradet, near Toulon, France, 1929

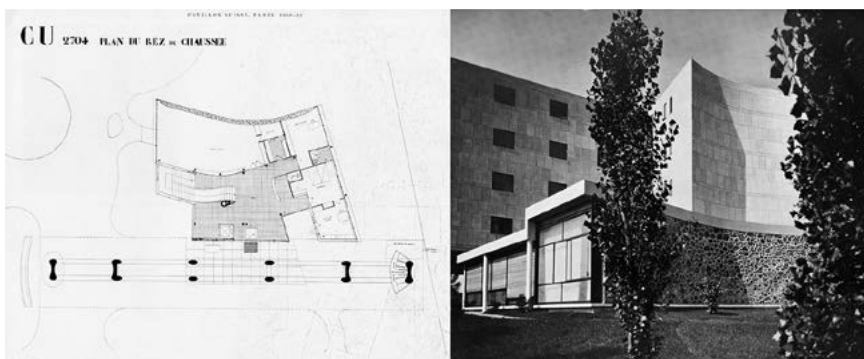


Fig. 7 Le Corbusier: Pavillon Suisse, Paris, 1930–31

orientation towards organic, natural forms, one of the interior walls of the ground floor bar is covered with abstract photographic images of nature.

The organic sculptural qualities found in the Pavillon Suisse became more and more dominant in his work, possibly finding their ultimate expression in the Chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut near Ronchamps (1950–1955). The shell-shaped roof, an amazing abstraction of nature, strongly resembles Arp's sculpture *Coquille (Shell)* (Giedion-Welcker 056) from 1938. In the chapel, all traces of Le Corbusier's cubist approach to architecture seem to have disappeared, having been replaced by a new biomorphic and material-based language. Plan, sections, and façade drawings all evoke the shapes of shells, crabs, and other elements from nature.

This approach is also carried out in the smaller details. A beautiful example is the famous water sprout or gargoyle that guides the rainwater from the roof to the earth. This element was designed by the Indian architect Arvind Talati who was one of Le Corbusier's assistants at the time. Talati, who was a brilliant draftsman, became the "biomorphic specialist" in the office and was therefore asked to draw the organic lines and shapes required by Le Corbusier for several projects. The gargoyle of Ronchamps could very well be inspired by the horns of an Indian cow.

The chapel near Ronchamps seemed to be an extreme departure from the principles of modernist architecture or functionalist architecture. Nikolaus Pevsner, the famous architectural historian and critic who was born in Germany but emigrated to England to escape the Nazi regime, coined the term

post-modern as early as the 1950s when discussing this work by Le Corbusier. At the same time, one could nevertheless argue that this sculptural biomorphism was one of the roots of modernism, and not a departure from it.

Order and Free Form

Another example of architecture as a collage of organic, biomorphic shapes is the concrete roof landscape of the first Unité d'Habitation in Marseille, also by Le Corbusier in collaboration with the architect and painter Nadir Afonso. The residential project, which was completed in 1952, was designed as a rational structure that resembled a wine-rack in which the individual dwelling units are inserted as if they were wine bottles. It is crowned by a roof with ample space for play and sports. The concrete organic shapes on the roof echo the hills in the distance, which suggests infinity and establishes a direct link between architecture and nature.

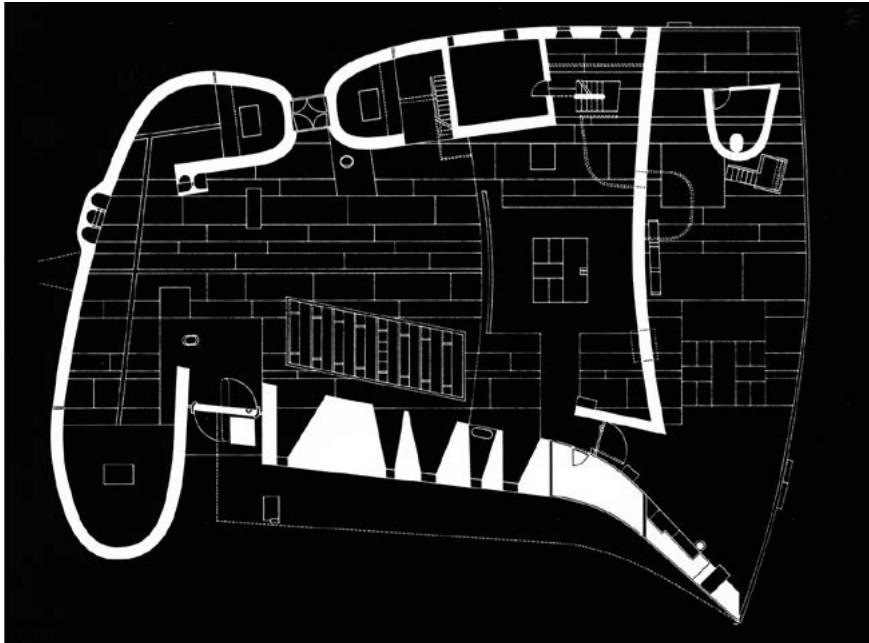


Fig. 8 Le Corbusier: Plan of Notre-Dame du Haut, Chapel in Ronchamp, France, 1955



Fig. 9 Le Corbusier: Gargoyle on the Façade of Notre-Dame du Haut, Chapel in Ronchamp, France, 1955

This combination of seemingly irrational organic shapes with a rational functionalist architecture of a geometric grid of columns and floor slabs became a common language of architecture in the 1950s and 1960s. This new lingua franca of the post-war modernists can be seen in seminal works of post-war modernism all over the world. And, very often, the shapes chosen by architects to augment these rational main structures are directly related to what were by then the widely-acknowledged works of Hans Arp.

As examples one can look to the work of Denys Lasdun in London, whose design for Hallfield School echoes a branch with leaves. For the Dutch Johnson Wax factory in the village of Mijdrecht, the Dutch architect Huig Maaskant connected a very Arpian bird- or boomerang-shaped volume that served as the office to a factory shed built on the most basic grid plan. His design for the sea-pier in Scheveningen is another illustration of this approach. However, the most obvious and well-known example of all is most likely the work of Oscar Niemeyer. The exhibition buildings and their connecting covered gallery in São Paulo's Ibirapuera Park in Brazil of 1954 demonstrate the endless formal and spatial possibilities of the combination of grids and "free" forms.

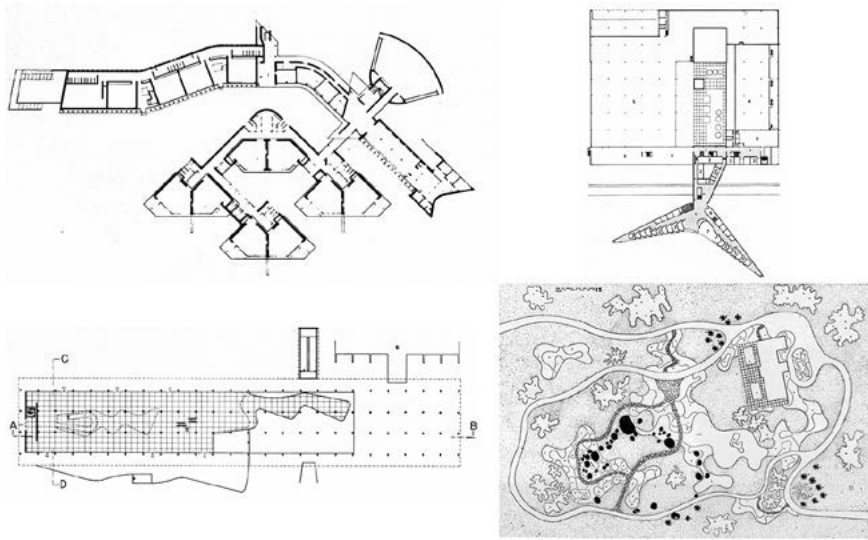


Fig. 10 Clockwise from the upper left: Denys Lasdun: Hallfield School, London, England, 1955; Huig Maaskant: Johnson Wax Office Building and Factory, Mijdrecht, Netherlands, 1962–1966; Roberto Burle Marx: Landscape Design at the Edmundo Cavanellas Residence, near Petropolis, Brazil, 1954; Oscar Niemeyer: Palace of Industry, Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo, Brazil, 1957

Niemeyer often worked together with the landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, who extended Niemeyer's curves and grids into the surrounding landscapes. His virtuosic landscape and garden designs turned Arpian shapes into wonderful interlocking and overlapping fields of plants and flowers. Here the quality of the endless space is at the fore.

Mass and Void

The strong suggestion of the continuation of space beyond the borders of the actual project is one the most striking parallels between Arp's art and modernist architecture. Another parallel exists in the ambiguous definition of space and mass. This is especially apparent in Arp's "framed" work, on paper, in wood, or in other media. Here shapes can be read either as voids, empty spaces, or as masses, as volumes in an open space. The edge of the work seems arbitrary, and one imagines the shapes to continue and grow towards an invisible end.

The relation between void, or space, and mass is of course the essence of architecture, and the idea of ambiguity in this relationship is certainly not limited to twentieth-century modernism. It can be discovered in architecture from its very beginning, drawing long lines of evolution, discovery and re-discovery, and as such is comparable with the historic trajectory set out in Giedion's *Space, Time, and Architecture*.

The example of late medieval Scottish tower castles comes to mind. These piles of stone play a marvelous game with the ideas of space and mass, of movement and rest. For instance, in Elphinstone Tower, dating from 1508, all the ancillary spaces and most of all the connecting stairs and corridors are cut out of the enormous mass of the enveloping outer walls. Here the mass becomes space. Movement takes place in the mass, and the open space contained within the mass is left untouched, as a solid made out of emptiness.

Luigi Moretti, a master of mid-twentieth-century Italian architecture, made studies of the spatial character of Italian Baroque architecture, published in the magazine *Spazio* in the early 1950s. For his analysis, he made solid models of the interior space, thereby turning the void into mass and demonstrating the power of space as defined by the actual structure.

An Arpian Architecture

The reversal or alternative reading of mass and space is the guiding aspect of the design by our architectural practice Mecanoo for a large cultural complex in Kaohsiung, the second-largest city of Taiwan. In 2006 we won a competition to build this cultural centre, which is located in a former military area that was to be transformed into a public park. The project opens in autumn 2018.

The presence of the park as the project's surrounding space and the existing trees informed the design concept. Specifically, we drew inspiration from the banyan trees, with their dense and wide crowns that provide shade and a place to catch a bit of a breeze and fresh air in Kaohsiung's hot and humid tropical climate. The section of the tree is the basis for the section of the building, creating a huge open space that is nevertheless covered and protective. The park continues through and under the building, obliterating any sense of border between open space and built space. The first schematic

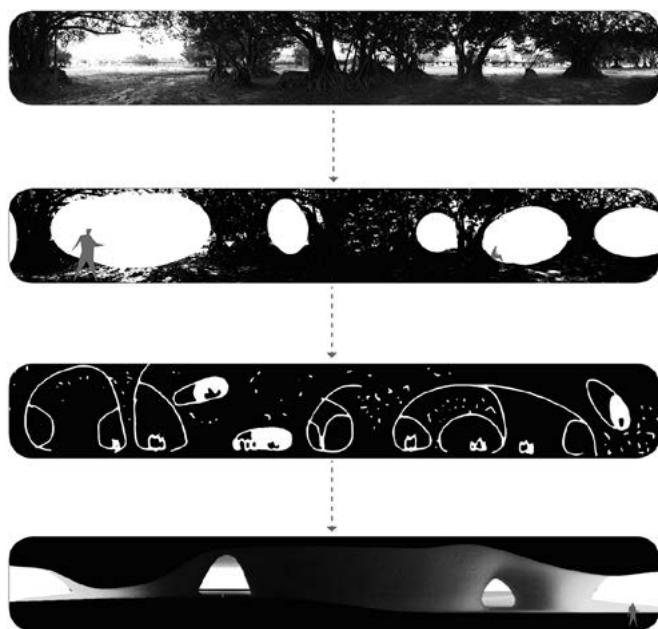


Fig. 11 Mecanoo: Concept for the Weiweiyung Centre for the Arts, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

drawings of the plans and sections show a sculptural quality, which is determined by a continuity of space. The actual construction is fitted within a simple rectangle, a “picture” frame, that does not limit the open space, but rather emphasizes its continuity.

As an abstraction of the tree trunks and the crown of leaves, the mass also harbors open space as a series of foyers, concert halls, and theaters. The large open “in-between” or threshold public space will be open day and night. Wind can flow freely through the curving spaces, and daylight comes in through large openings in the vast roof. The undulating roof itself is also accessible, as it sweeps down to the ground level to create a large open-air theatre.

A model of the project can be made easily by carving out a piece of wood, or by three-dimensional printing. However, actual real size construction was extremely complex. After studying many options, it was decided to make the structure in steel, as a giant system of trunks, branches, and twigs, which would be clad by a skin of steel as well. This proved to be the best option, as

it could be made by the local ship-building industry that was in need of work. The partly conscious, partly unconscious parallels with Arp's work serves first and foremost as proof of the strong and unique spatial quality of his art. Arp was able to abstract nature within the confines of a sculpture—or even more strikingly in a two-dimensional work—in order to create a strong sense of unlimited space and free-flowing movement, of continuity, and of structural growth. Therein lies his lasting legacy and his invaluable inspiration for architecture.



Fig. 12 Mecanoo, Wei Wuying Centre for the Arts, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, 2018

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Contributors

Heloisa Espada holds a PhD in Art History and Art Criticism from the School of Communications and Arts of University of São Paulo (2011). Her research is concentrated in the field of the Brazilian art after World War II, with special focus on geometric abstraction and photography. She is the author of *Hercules Barsotti* (Folha de São Paulo Editions, 2013); *Geraldo de Barros e a fotografia* (Instituto Moreira Salles; SESC Editions, 2014); and *Monumentalidade e sombra: o centro cívico de Brasília por Marcel Gautherot* (Annablume, 2016). She has been a curator at Instituto Moreira Salles since 2008.

Isabelle Ewig is a Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art at the Paris-Sorbonne University and Deputy Director of the Centre André Chastel, a research center for Art History that is a joint endeavor between Paris-Sorbonne University, the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and the Ministry of Culture. Her primary focus is modern art through the Second World War, and Dada is her favorite artistic movement. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on Kurt Schwitters, but her research has also touched upon Hans Arp: in 2008 she curated the exhibition *Art is Arp* at the Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art in Strasbourg.

Jan Giebel studied Art History and History at the University of Osnabrück. From 2014 to 2017, he worked as a research intern and then as a research associate at the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin, where he co-curated the exhibition *Hans Arp: The Navel of the Avant-Garde*, among others. He has been a research associate at the University of Osnabrück since summer 2017.

Agathe Mareuge is Assistant Professor in the Department of German Studies at Sorbonne University in Paris. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on Jean Hans Arp's late poetry. Her current research, supported by a postdoctoral fellowship from the Swiss National Science Foundation at the University of Zürich (Prof. Sandro Zanetti), addresses the inheritance and rediscovery of Dada in the art and literature of the 1950s and 1960s. She is President of the Association Jean Hans Arp in Strasbourg.

Simona Martinoli is an art historian who studied in Zürich and Vienna and earned a PhD from the Mendrisio Academy of Architecture. Curator of the Fondazione Marguerite Arp in Locarno and Lecturer at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio, she was Assistant to the Director of the Archive of the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at the ETH (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) in Zürich, Curator at the Museo Villa dei Cedri in Bellinzona and from 2003 to 2016 has directed the Swiss Italian Office of the Society for the History of Art in Switzerland. She is the author of numerous publications devoted to art and architecture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen is an architect, writer, and Associate Professor at Yale School of Architecture, where she teaches the subjects of design, history, and theory. Her scholarly work deals with the genesis and meaning of form in various geographic and historical contexts. She has authored and edited several books, most notably: *Achtung Architektur! Image and Phantasm in Contemporary Austrian Architecture* (MIT Press/Graham Foundation, 1996); *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* (co-edited with Donald Albrecht; Yale University Press, 2006), *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity and Geopolitics* (Yale University Press, 2009), *Kevin Roche: Architecture as an Environment* (Yale University Press, 2011), and *Exhibit A: Exhibitions that Transformed Architecture* (Phaidon Press, 2018).

Marta Smolińska is Professor and Chair of Art Theory at the University of the Arts Poznań (Poland). She earned her doctorate in 2003 in Poznań, and was a fellow of the Foundation for Polish Science from 2005–2006 and in 2009. In 2012, she was a DAAD fellow at the Humboldt University in Berlin, and she completed her post-doctoral qualification, the habilitation, in 2013. She was a fellow at the Graduate School for East and Southeast European

Studies (GS OSES) at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in 2014 and was awarded a research fellowship from the Stiftung Arp e.V. in Berlin in 2015. She is currently a DAAD fellow at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. Her research interests span non-objective painting during the second half of the twentieth century, transmediality, and hapticity. Publications include: *Julian Stańczak: Op Art and the Dynamics of Perception* (Warsaw 2014); *Otwieranie obrazu* (Toruń 2012); *Puls sztuki* (Poznań 2010); *Re-Orientierung. Kontexte der Gegenwartskunst in der Türkei und unterwegs* (co-edited with Burçu Dogramaci, Berlin 2017).

Maike Steinkamp studied Art History, German, and Italian Literature at the Universities of Bonn and Parma. She received her PhD in 2007 with a dissertation on the reception of “degenerate” art after 1945 in the GDR. She worked as Assistant Curator at the Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle Bonn and the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. From 2005 to 2012 she served as Assistant Professor at the Department of Art History, University of Hamburg and was Visiting Professor at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts in 2009. From 2012 to February 2018 she was Curator at the Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth. Currently Maike Steinkamp is a Curator at the Nationalgalerie Berlin.

Rudolf Suter studied Art History, Philosophy, History, and Archaeology in Basel and Vienna, and earned his doctorate with a dissertation on Hans Arp’s late work in 2006. In 2016 he published a biography of Hans Arp, and since 2015 he has been carrying out research for publications on the Basel artist Carl Burckhardt that are now available. He lives and works in Basel as an art historian and art critic, and is also active as a freelance museum guide at the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen and at the Museum Jean Tinguely in Basel.

Jana Teuscher studied Art History and History at the Universities of Hamburg and Cadiz, and earned her doctorate with a dissertation on the composition of seventeenth-century Roman church facades. Afterwards she interned at the Berlin State Museums. Having worked at the Warburg Haus in Hamburg and on provenance research, in 2018 she became Curator of the Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp Stiftung e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth.

Dick van Gameren is Professor of Housing Design and Chair of the Department of Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at TUDelft (Delft University of Technology) in the Netherlands. He is founding editor of the periodical DASH, which stands for Delft Architectural Studies on Housing. He is currently developing the Global Housing Study Centre, which furthers research and education on affordable housing in the Global South. He is also a practising architect and Partner at Mecanoo Architecten. In 2007 he received the Aga Khan Award for the Netherlands Embassy project in Addis Ababa, and in 2012 the Best Building of the Year Award from the Dutch Association of Architects.

Loretta Würtenberger earned her doctorate in international copyright law at the Max Planck Institute after studying Law, Philosophy, and Art History. She is the founder of the Institute for Artists' Estates and a partner at Fine Art Partners, Berlin. Loretta has been lecturing regularly at universities across Europe for over fifteen years. She is the author of the book *The Artist's Estate: a Handbook for Artists, Executors, and Heirs*, which was published by Hatje Cantz Verlag in 2016 and has been working with the estates of Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp since 2009.

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Marcin Turski

Translation from the French:
Lydia Stringer

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The second volume of the Stiftung Arp e.V. Papers is dedicated to Hans Arp's artistic production after 1945, finally giving his substantial but to date little explored late work its due. This publication documents Arp's late artistic development and demonstrates that while he continued to rethink well-known works from the Dada period, he also conducted joyful new experiments with form, materials, and techniques. Arp reached his zenith with a great many prizes and prestigious exhibitions.

In nine lucid analyses, the multi-faceted oeuvre Arp created both as a visual artist and as a poet after the Second World War is explored through the interdisciplinary lenses of art history, literary criticism, and architecture. By bringing together studies on the genesis of specific works, Arp's relationship with other artists, and his influence on the architecture of his time, this volume opens up astounding new perspectives. Seen in this new light, the richness of Arp's late work is striking.

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