

Research Report: Summer 2018

Arp Constructed: Photography and the Reproduction of Legacy

Sabine Kriebel

The aim of this project was to study Arp's use of photography in the production of an artistic Self and legacy. In doing so, I proposed to consult Arp's correspondences, photographic negatives in the Arp archive, and the wealth of books housed in the Arp Stiftung library.

In the end, of greatest use was the library collection, which provided a number of specialist books on the intersections of photography and sculpture. Adrian Sudhalter's essay "Fatagaga: Arp, Ernst, and the Specter of Photography" in *100 Jahre Freundschaft Hans Arp/Max Ernst* clarified Arp's role in constructing seamless photomontages, which I surmised indicated something about his understanding of the transformative nature of photographs. This line of inquiry proved to be a dead end, as Sudhalter demonstrates that Arp's primary contribution to the *Fatagagas* was textual, providing the accompanying prose. It was Ernst who understood how to conjure surrealistically real images out of photographic picture fragments. Similarly, a catalogue detailing the sculptor Barbara Hepworth's relationship to photography demonstrated that Arp and Hepworth's investments in the medium with respect to sculpture were worlds apart. Hepworth's archive reveals extensive correspondence with photographers and about photography; she was delighted with the ways in which the photographic medium enhanced the sculptural one, not only for public consumption, and apparently relished the use of photomontage (another medium, to be sure) in the articulation of her sculptural work. Arp, by contrast, showed no such inclination. I scoured his postwar correspondence—the only material on file in the archive—which revealed precious little about his relationship to photography and photographers. A close look at his correspondence with Raoul Hausmann, for instance, revealed that Hausmann encouraged Arp to let him photograph Arp and his sculpture, though nothing seems to have come of this invitation. It seems that Hausmann was short of

money and was looking for productive ways to supplement his income. As with much of the postwar correspondence, the Hausmann file was primarily about personal matters and declining health. Further useful details about the Scheidegger / Arp collaboration were also not available.

Other books about photography and sculpture proved similarly helpful in framing other sculptors' relationships to photography, but they were not available in the Arp collection, so I used the Kunstbibliothek and the Staatsbibliothek collections. They might be suitable for acquisition: Sarah Hamill, *David Smith in Three Dimensions* (University of California Press, 2015) and Sarah Hamill and Megan Luke, eds., *Photography and Sculpture: The Art Object in Reproduction* (Getty Publications, 2017).

I also consulted the boxes of photographic prints, contact prints and negatives in the archive, revealing many more strategically composed photographs of Arp and his sculpture. Ultimately, however, this transformed into a project that will rely on the analysis of photographic evidence using art historical methodologies, rather than one rooted in archival corroboration. Most of the evidence for Arp's thinking about sculpture and photography is to be found in the photographs themselves. They reveal an artist who was canny about the use of photography to instantiate an artistic identity and to circulate that identity as part of public self-promotion and marketing. His mugging for the camera is less about an investment in the intersections of sculptural, bodily, and photographic means than the use of photography's reproductive capacities to mass circulation.

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