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CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, PH.D., 1978

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GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION IN PARIS IN THE 1930's

by

PATRICIA E. KAPLAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1978

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The most rewarding and enlightening aspect of my research was the series of personal interviews with artists and critics who were active in Paris during the thirties. Among many who generously gave their time and shared memories with me, I warmly thank Michel Seuphor, Jean Hélión, Jean Gorin and César Domela. Messieurs Seuphor and Gorin also permitted me to read unpublished personal correspondence. Paule Vézelay, Marcelle Cahn and Dora Vallier spoke to me with candor and insight and Harry Holtzman spent hours recounting the details of his time in Paris with Mondrian. I am grateful to them all.

My debt to the late Carl Holty is enormous. Close, personal experience of his vitality, enthusiasm and extraordinary recall, provided initial inspiration for this project. Dore Ashton was encouraging from the start and her intelligent guidance included a careful reading of the final manuscript. John Elderfield discussed the topic with me on several occasions. His broad understanding of the period contributed greatly to my own ideas.

My archival research was facilitated by Professor Robert Herbert at Yale who gave me permission to read Kandinsky's letters to Katherine Dreier in the Société Anonyme Archive before this material was generally available to scholars. Angelica Z. Rudenstine and Joan M. Lukach were extremely help-

ful sorting out letters in The Hilla Rebay Foundation Archive at the Guggenheim Museum. Special thanks go to Marianne Teuber who offered useful suggestions concerning the role of Gestalt theory.

It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge my professors at the City University of New York. Rose-Carol Long's friendly and knowledgeable support has been invaluable for my research and my morale. Robert Pincus-Witten read the finished manuscript with great care and I have incorporated his excellent suggestions into the final text. Above all, thanks go to Milton W. Brown, my research director, whose belief in this topic dates back to the time when I was preparing the Carl Holty retrospective exhibition under his guidance. Professor Brown is responsible for my getting a travel grant to France and he has consistently offered precise and thoughtful criticism.

A very warm thank you to my husband Stephen who gave me the space to research and write this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1930's, geometric abstract art centered in Paris reached the proportions of an international movement. Along with pioneer abstractionists Mondrian, Kandinsky, Kupka, Delaunay, Pevsner and Arp, all residents of Paris by the early thirties, artists representing many diverse styles including Purism, late Cubism, De Stijl, Constructivism, Dada and Futurism, joined in 1929 to form groups, Art Concret and Cercle et Carré. Although these groups amounted to little more than a flash of inspiration manifested in the few pages of their reviews and a single exhibition, a far reaching chain of events was set in motion. And, Paris, the traditional capital of international modernism which had played a small part in the dissemination of Constructivism throughout the 1920's, became the center for a constructive tendency in the early 1930's.

The combined energies of participants in Art Concret and Cercle et Carré resulted in the formation of a third, more durable assembly of artists committed to non-figuration, Abstraction-Création. This last group continued to exist until late 1936 and it directly inspired groups Unit One and Circle in England and the American Abstract Artists in New York. Ultimately, Abstraction-Création set a model for the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles organized in Paris after the war. The Salon, although intended to revive the inter-

nationalism of the 1930's, suffered from the fact that Paris was no longer the capital of modern art and culture.

The foundation and evolution of three abstract artists' groups in Paris, the personal intrigues and conflicts among leaders and the theoretical, stylistic and ideological issues that were raised during the decade form the substance of this study. Abstract artists broke out of isolation during the 1930's and consolidated forces which grew in numbers, if not necessarily in importance. By 1935, Abstraction-Création alone claimed 416 adherents to their cause throughout Europe. The story of abstract art during this period is told most vividly in written memoirs and letters and in personal interviews with its leading participants Jean Héliion, Michel Seuphor, Jean Gorin, Marcelle Cahn, César Domela, Paule Vézelay, Dora Vallier, Michel Hoog, Harry¹ Holtzman and the late Carl Holty among many others. It is a story told with sincerity and often touching innocence in the manifestos and pages of the reviews and cahiers² sponsored by the abstractionist groups and it is told indirectly in the periodical that best documents contemporary art of the thirties, the Cahiers d'Art. Christian Zervos and his prestigious magazine went far toward establishing a context for the two major and opposing avant-garde movements, abstraction and Surrealism. The twentieth-century achievement in art was being assimilated and evaluated during this time of increasing historical consciousness.

Paris-based geometric abstraction from the thirties is

an all but forgotten chapter in the history of art, a mere footnote in certain modernist treatments as, for example, William Rubin's "Arshile Gorky, Surrealism and the New American Painting."³ Even in France today, it is overlooked if not willfully ignored. In his recent catalogue for the exhibition, Robert Delaunay, at the Orangerie in Paris, Michel Hoog omits any mention of Delaunay's affiliation with the Abstraction-Création group as if to note this⁴ connection might undermine the artist's achievement.

John Elderfield, the English historian and critic, has written the only broad, scholarly overview to date of the abstractionist developments in Paris. His articles, "Geometric Abstract Painting and Paris in the Thirties," appeared in Artforum (May and June, 1970), and in a catalogue essay, "The Paris-New York Axis: Geometric Abstract Painting In The Thirties," for the exhibition, Geometric Abstraction: 1926-1942, at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1972. Elderfield's essays are clear, intelligent and sympathetic to the material, if necessarily brief. He surveys and highlights events in perspective but not in depth or great detail. Greater detail and documentation is provided by Merle Schipper in her recent dissertation, "Jean Hélicion: The Abstract Years, 1929-1939."⁵ Schipper focuses upon those events that concern the career of Hélicion, one of the more important and original talents to emerge during this decade and an active member in both Art Concret and Abstraction-Création groups.

This study has uncovered new material illuminating events and altering the picture of how the various abstract artists' groups were founded and by whom. Primarily, documentation takes the form of letters exchanged between artists during the groups' formative and mature phases. Jean Gorin's personal archive in Meudon, France, was made available for this investigation and recently, certain of his correspondence has been published in a new French periodical, Macula (Spring, 1977). Valuable archival material pertinent to the thirties in Paris is contained in Hélión's and other artists' letters to A.E. Gallatin in the New York Historical Society library and in Kandinsky's letters to both Hilla Rebay at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and to Katherine Dreier in the Société Anonyme Archive at Yale University. The Archives of American Art provide another rich source for papers and correspondence between Americans such as G.L.K. Morris, John Ferren, Carl Holty, Jean Xceron - all of whom lived in Paris during the thirties - and A.E. Gallatin or French artists like Hélión.⁶

Perhaps the single richest source of documents concerning abstract art of this period comes from Michel Seuphor's personal archive in Paris. Very recently, in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition of the artist's work at the Centre Pompidou, a publication titled, Seuphor, has made⁷ available a large, unannotated portion of this archive. It contains intimate revelations of jealousies, disenchantments and excommunications as well as solidarities. There is opportunity for a fresh look at abstractionist themes, at the con-

flict between Van Doesburg who insisted on exclusivity for his group Art Concret and Seuphor who believed in the need for broader, more inclusive standards for abstract art manifest in Cercle et Carré. The full story of Cercle et Carré unfolds in vivid detail in letters from Seuphor, the principal leader, to Torres-García, Vordemberge-Gildewart, Schwitters, and Prampolini among other participants. Only fragments of this material have been published before, in Seuphor's several volumes on abstract art.⁸ Seuphor has been the most consistent chronicler of geometric abstraction to the present day. However, his active participation in the art politics of the thirties gives his written accounts a strongly partisan edge. This is noted, not to discount his historical importance, rather to place his work in perspective.

The general indifference on the part of scholars and critics to the art of this period may be explained in several ways. In part, abstractionist groups have been neglected because of their eclectic character. There was a loss of faith in earlier ideologies, in the spiritual and utopian visions of the teens and the twenties. Such visions seemed less appropriate to contemporary reality, than, for example, realist and Surrealist views of the world. However, abstract artists continued to identify their art with a modern progressive outlook even as they relinquished the fervor of an earlier messianic spirit. Mondrian and several others held fast to these earlier dreams. It was the newer converts who did not. They instead detached their forms from content,

a severing that had both an unfortunate effect in terms of quality and a positive one in terms of greater freedom. The dilemma that abstract art was facing was characteristic of all art at this difficult historical moment, set within a precarious political climate when the mental frontiers of Europe were gradually closing, as T.S. Eliot has expressed it. Abstract art was programmatically rejected by right and left wing political groups; the rising Fascist regime in Germany considered it degenerate, and the Soviet Socialists claimed that abstract art was unintelligible to the people. This is an essential part of the whole picture. This art is ignored today partly because it was so completely overlooked in its own time, engaged in a desperate struggle to be seen and heard in a Paris hostile to abstraction and excited by the far more aggressive din of Surrealism.

Perhaps a final condition relevant to the lack of attention given abstract art from the thirties in France is the fact that unlike Surrealism, geometric abstraction is not generally viewed as a vital link to later painting, particularly to the New American art after World War II. If Abstract Expressionism owed much to the heritage of Surrealism, so too would the course of its development have been inconceivable without the experience of post-Cubist abstraction. The broadening vocabulary of abstract art during the course of the thirties opened painting to a new range of formal issues.

Based upon primary source material, checked and confirmed

through personal interviews, it is now possible to give coherence and order to the course of events in Paris between 1930 and 1936 when the last of the groups, Abstraction-Création, dissolved. It is possible to correct misunderstandings about how and in what order these groups were formed and to explore fully relationships among leading members. Abstract art will be set beside Surrealism and in the context of broader aesthetic and political concerns of the day. Finally, it has been an aim of this study to affirm the many vigorous and original individual contributions to the art and ideas of the thirties.

Notes to Introduction

1. Personal interviews were conducted with the following artists and scholars on the following dates:
Marcelle Cahn, Paris, July 24, 1976.
César Domela, Paris, July 11, 25, 1976; April 25, 1977.
Jean Gorin, Niort, July 15, 1976; Meudon, April 15, 1977.
Jean Hé lion, Chateauneuf-en-Tymerais, July 10, 1976;
Paris, May 3, 1977.
Michel Hoog, Paris, July 8, 1976.
Michel Seuphor, Paris, July 13, 1976; April 29, 1977.
Dora Vallier, Paris, July 28, 1976; April 29, 1977.
Paule Vézelay, London, July 5, 1976.
Harry Holtzman, Connecticut, summer and fall, 1975.
I spoke with Carl Holty on many occasions in New York during the preparation of his retrospective exhibition and catalogue. See my Carl Holty/Fifty Years, City University of New York, Graduate Center Mall, 1972.
Hereafter personal interviews will be cited by artist's name and date: "Hé lion, July, 1976."

2. Cercle et Carré, nos. 1-3 (March, April, June, 1930), rpt. ed. Cercle et Carré, ed., Michel Seuphor (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1971). All references to texts, unless otherwise noted, will be to this 1971 edition. Art Concret, Numéro d'introduction du groupe et de la revue, no. 1 (April 1930), hereafter, Art Concret. Abstraction-

Création Art Non-Figuratif, nos. 1-5, 1932-1936, rpt. ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1968), hereafter, Abstraction-Création.

3. Rubin: "I consider the Neue Sachlichkeit, the Abstraction-Création group and the various neoclassic reactions, of secondary importance as movements, to the history of painting." Article originally appeared in Art International (February, 1963); rpt. in New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970 (New York: E.P. Dutton in association with the Metropolitan Museum, 1969), p. 373, fn. 1.
4. My assumption that Hoog's omission of this material from his catalogue, Robert Delaunay, Orangerie des Tuileries (Paris, 1976) was willful, was confirmed in personal interview, July, 1976.
5. Schipper's study illuminates several aspects of the climate in Paris during the thirties for which I am indebted. (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1974).
6. A.E. Gallatin Papers, New York Historical Society. Hereafter cited as "Hélion letter to Gallatin;" The Hilla von Rebay Foundation Archive, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (all English translations by Christiane Ahl), cited as, "Kandinsky letter to Rebay;" Dreier letters in Société Anonyme Archive, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven (translations by author), cited as, "Kandinsky letter to Dreier; "

transcripts of interviews with John Ferren by Paul Cummings, June 7, 1968, Ruth Gurin Bowman, October 28, 1964 and Dorothy Seckler, June 12, 1965 are in Archives of American Art, New York, cited as, "Ferren interview with Cummings."

7. Rik Sauwen, Germain Viatte and Michel Seuphor, eds., Seuphor (Paris: Fonds Mercator, 1976). Hereafter, Seuphor.
8. Seuphor, L'Art abstrait, ses origines, ses premiers maîtres (Paris: Maeght, 1950); Abstract Painting: Fifty Years of Accomplishment, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1962); Dictionary of Abstract Painting, trans. Lionel Izod and John Montague (New York: Paris Book Center, 1957); Le Style et le Cri (Paris: Du Seuil, 1965); L'Art abstrait, 4 vols. (Paris: Maeght, 1971-1974).
9. T.S. Eliot, Notes Toward the Definition of Culture [1949] (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1967), p. 120.

THE TWENTIES

Chapter I: Paris late in the twenties

The first exhibition of international abstract art held in Paris took place in April of 1930 at the initiative of the group, Cercle et Carré. A second, smaller abstractionist group, Art Concret, produced their own review within a month. These two manifestations were succeeded in 1931 by a third more durable group of abstract artists, Abstraction-Création. The three groups emerged within a year and for a brief moment geometric abstract art flourished in Paris.

It is surprising that this occurred at all. Almost everything argued against the emergence and ultimately, the survival, of abstract art in Paris. The great modern masters, Picasso, Braque, Matisse and Miro among others spoke openly against it. Léger was more ambivalent. He produced a series of abstract "peintures murales" between 1924-6, yet Léger never supported abstract painting separate from an architectural context. "There is no abstraction," he wrote in 1935.¹ Major art dealers like Kahnweiler, shunned abstract art, regarding it as "foreign," and the prestigious Cahiers d'Art, founded in 1926 by Christian Zervos, gave limited coverage to this subject. The official press remained indifferent or hostile particularly to the international implications of geometric abstraction. For, if Paris had

become the center for a tendency broadly defined as Constructive by 1930, the roots of this tradition lie outside of France in Holland, Russia and Germany. Nevertheless, an international vanguard committed to plastic, abstract values in art grew in numbers and force during the late twenties and thirties.

The glamor of Paris, art capital of the West, attracted artists from all over. "Dans le monde de l'art, Paris c'est la France. En ce sens, La France diffère de presque tous les autres pays d'Europe, car dans tous il y a des groupes disséminés dans diverses villes. En France, Paris seul rassemble tout autour de lui."² The words are those of Michel Seuphor, a central participant in Cercle et Carré. Abstract painter, Jean Hélion, wrote the following homage to the French city in a letter to his American patron, the collector, A.E. Gallatin, in 1936:

I can understand why young American artists are so eager to get to Paris where there are 40,000 painters, 50 galleries, 10 salons and a great tolerance for new deeds, even if [there are] little buyers, and breathe the atmosphere in which a form of art has been developed....This is the real importance of Paris atmosphere! A place where so many people sacrifice, in the full meaning of the word, everything, wives, children, pleasures, comfort, security and friends to build images, some of which will never be seen.³

This Parisian atmosphere is extolled by a wide range of artists. "You were valued for what you made in Paris, not for who you were or where you came from, nor was it terribly difficult for a woman in those days," said English abstractionist, Paule Vézelay.⁴ The situation was open and although

none enjoyed great success, a valiant underground met and exchanged ideas.

The emigration to Paris during the twenties, particularly to the area around Montparnasse, produced a small but energetic cultural force dedicated to abstract "causes" as they are often called. Many foreign abstractionists established residence in Paris or spent long periods of time living there during the 1920's. Mondrian settled in 1919, Van Doesburg in 1923, the year Russian Constructivists Pevsner and Ivan Puni - to become Pougny - arrived. Vantongerloo came to live in Paris in 1927 and in 1924 the Uruguyan, Torres-García, took up residence for eight years. Willi Baumeister made several visits to Paris, the first in 1924 to meet Léger and again in 1927. Otto Freundlich came to live in Paris in 1924. Two English abstract artists, both women, Paule Vézelay and Marlowe Moss, came in 1926 and 1927 and another future member of Cercle et Carré,⁵ Marcelle Cahn, settled in Paris in 1925. This is an incomplete list; however, it does suggest a tendency that continues into the 1930's when Gabo and Kandinsky joined this international vanguard respectively in 1932 and 1933.

The prestige of the school of Paris was unchallenged in art and literature during the 1920's. "Intellectually, the climate of ideas could hardly have been richer, and remained so till the end of the decade," said the architectural⁶ historian, Reyner Banham. Futurism remained an active force until mid-decade; the freedoms of Dada were experienced

and incorporated in the more organized program of liberation formulated by the Surrealists. And, Cubism gained wide recognition, stimulating currents like Purism and abstract art. It was only later in the 1930's that economic, social and political conditions deteriorated causing cultural historian, H. Stuart Hughes to designate the years beginning 1930 "Years of Desperation" for France.⁷ According to Hughes, the wound of the first war produced a delayed action effect that postponed France's social and political examination of conscience until the 1930's. By 1930, the economic depression created conditions of astonishing poverty. "There is nothing to seize here," a bailiff said to Hé^lion upon entering his studio.⁸ Political unrest was to further undermine French culture in general and abstract art in particular.

This contrast in the intellectual and social environment from the twenties to the thirties establishes a background against which the struggle for abstract art takes place. The surge of activity that occurred between 1929 and 1931 and the apparent lack of sustaining momentum parallels the changing quality of life during those times.

If the twenties in Paris represented a decade of confidence and peak intellectual ferment, so, too, were these conservative years. Artists such as Picasso withdrew from rigorous formal pursuits in favor of more classical and realist styles. Cubism itself was crystallized into rigid, architectural forms, exemplified by the art of Juan Gris. Among pioneer abstractionists Robert Delaunay, Frank Kupka,

Jacques Villon and Auguste Herbin moved from relatively abstract styles into periods of figuration during the mid-twenties. Significantly, all returned to an art of complete abstraction about 1930, in response, perhaps, to the consolidation and expansion of abstract artists' groups.

Purism was an immediate post-war reaction. The Purists appropriated many of Cubism's formal inventions while attempting to cleanse and purify the style of its indeterminacy, simultaneity, and complexity. Although the Purists shunned abstract art, in many of their alleged goals and values they shared essential ideological concerns. The reduction of Cubism to laws, the extolling of geometry and science and, above all, the celebration of order has much in common with the content of 1930's abstract art. In 1920, Amédée Ozenfant and Charles Jeanneret, later Le Corbusier, the creators of Purism, wrote:

The highest delectation of the human mind is the perception of order, and the greatest human satisfaction is the feeling of the collaboration or participation in this order.⁹

Ten years later, Torres-García was to state in Cercle et Carré:

Mettre de l'ordre serait déjà quelque chose, mais c'est trop peu. Créer un ordre, voilà ce qu'il faut. Nous mettons de l'ordre en faisant, par exemple, un paysage naturaliste. Plus ou moins tous les peintres font cela. Mais cela n'est rien du tout. Ils sont dans la nature pas autrement que lorsqu'ils sont en promenade. Celui qui crée un ordre, au contraire, établit un plan - ainsi il passe de l'individuel à l'universel. Et c'est cela qui importe.¹⁰

Interconnections between Purism and abstract art were close enough to enable Ozenfant and Le Corbusier to join with

Seuphor and Torres-García in the Cercle et Carré group. Several abstract artists began as Purists, Jean Gorin and Marcelle Cahn among them. In spite of obvious stylistic differences, deeper values - the belief in geometry and the relevance of social goals - drew these artists together.¹¹ They were united by a common distaste for realism and Surrealism as well.

It is not surprising that Purism and abstraction drew from a common body of experience in the ambiance of post-war France. Values associated with the early inventive stages of Cubism - its 'jeu d'esprit' and stress on individuality - came to be identified with flaws in the national character that somehow had led the country to war. Héliou remembers the words of an aesthete at the Sorbonne who believed by 1930, that Cubism had been a "disease of the mind."¹²

Alterations in French aesthetics after the war proved to be important nurturing ground for abstraction. The "call to order" which came as an effort to stiffen the nation's self-image in favor of more durable, stable values was adopted as a slogan by Purists and by many writers at the time.¹³ Language was cleansed along with the art. The overwhelming task of Reconstruction for the nation was echoed in the artists' insistent use of terms, construction and reconstruction. This vocabulary is as typical in Purist writings as it is in the rhetoric of abstract art. Mondrian observed a need not only for construction but for reconstruction as a necessary sequel to the destruction of naturalistic

14 painting. The double meaning is implied, if not directly expressed. Kenneth Silver who has studied the relationship between Purism and French national policy after the war, established that political intentions underlie many artists' statements.¹⁵ L'Esprit Nouveau, the major periodical associated with Purism, abounds with this language and the phrase, "L'Esprit Nouveau" itself, according to Silver, was "picked from the rich harvest of patriotic epithets."¹⁶ Silver demonstrates that Apollinaire, who created the term, meant it to convey both an aesthetic and a nationalistic spirit. That the phrase became broadly associated with avant-garde values is suggested by the fact that Paul Dermée and Seuphor used it for the title of their magazine in 1927. The single issue of Documents internationaux de l'Esprit Nouveau,¹⁷ was devoted to the support of abstract art. It had little in common with predecessor L'Esprit Nouveau which had ceased publication the year before.

Purism represented a turn against Cubism, yet, as in many similar reactions, there is implicit affirmation. Cubism's continuing vitality was asserted. The various post-Cubist manifestations indicate that this was a moment when the original achievement was being assimilated. The climate was characterized by a fusion of styles and ideas. Perhaps no single figure was more important in facilitating this fusion than the dealer, Léonce Rosenberg.

Rosenberg's energetic acceptance of Cubism and post-Cubist art kept plastic values very much alive in Paris during

the twenties. "The Cubists are much greater artists than the Impressionists," he wrote in 1934.¹⁸ Through his gallery, L'Effort Moderne, and its publication, Bulletin de L'Effort Moderne, 1924-1927, Rosenberg created an emphatically international context for French art. He embraced Purism, Dutch De Stijl, whose magazine was available in his gallery from its first appearance, and he established contacts with Russian and International Constructivism. In addition, Rosenberg supported French artists like Herbin who developed an abstract art out of Cubism as early as 1917 and other post-Cubist abstractionists, Villon and Valmier, whom he considered "genuine creators of Cubism" beside Léger, Picasso, and Gris. Rosenberg's acceptance of Piet Mondrian when that artist returned to Montparnasse in 1919 created the first opportunity¹⁹ for exposure of his work and his ideas in France.

Rosenberg was Mondrian's dealer and publisher. In 1920, he published Le Néo-Plasticism, thereby making this condensed survey of the artist's aesthetic and philosophical ideas available in French for the first time. The editor warns, however, that the French is "a little peculiar." According to Seuphor, this remark was a serious mistake and as a result,²⁰ the publication was virtually unnoticed. Mondrian dedicated his little book "aux hommes futures," to the new men yet to come, setting a tone entirely compatible with the drive for modernity shared by most artists in Rosenberg's circle. Mondrian's own desire to be part of his time and to belong as well to future times is testified in many accounts. Nelly Van

Doesburg recalls "In his life at least, Mondrian sought to be a part of the contemporary world, which in the 1920's to us all meant Paris."²¹

Léonce Rosenberg gave Mondrian his Paris debut in his 1921, 'Exposition de groupe at L'Effort Moderne. Several paintings were shown including the pristine and elegant Composition, 1921 (Fig. 1). Rectilinear forms are set in a rectangular format. It is a painting of Mondrian's mature, abstract geometric style. Squares and rectangles of primary colors are arranged within a grid of black lines on a white ground - the bands stop short of the edges to create an effect of centrality. Critical reaction to Mondrian was negative, otherwise his painting was ignored. The Purists, always insistent upon the "objet-type" were not sympathetic and could not accept his extreme reductiveness. Ozenfant attacked Mondrian's visual vocabulary calling it limited and a negative demonstration of an art restricted to the rectangle, in an article published in L'Esprit Nouveau, called "L'Angle Droit."²² To further humiliate the Dutch master, Ozenfant compares his work to Meissonier - each is seen to represent an absurd extreme in painting. Reproductions of their respective works are juxtaposed and Mondrian's painting is sideways as the signature indicates, whether intentional or not (Fig. 2).²³

Mondrian's art continued to elicit negative response during the entire course of his stay in Paris. Several years after the exhibit at Rosenberg's, Mondrian submitted paintings

to the 1925 Salon des Indépendants which were not only rejected, but returned with insults scratched into the paint, according to one of his followers, César Domela.²⁴ Ozenfant does not relent in his view of this art when he reduced the entire achievement of De Stijl to "Objets ornementaux, sans finalité ornementale," in his important book, Art, written²⁵ at the end of the twenties.

To accuse abstract art and Mondrian in particular of being mere decoration was common. The accusation better fits the work of Auguste Herbin who showed Peinture, an abstraction on cement at the same 1921 Exposition at L'Effort Moderne (Fig. 3). Herbin's geometric abstract style with its strong symmetry, originated in Cubism and in the stylization of natural forms. Reminiscent of Egyptian art in its formal, hieratic character, this novel style was intended to fulfill a decorative function in connection with a monumental, public architecture. Partly, Herbin sought to react against easel painting and partly to bring art into the public domain.²⁶ His decorative and social intentions may be deduced from statements by the artist.²⁷ These intentions were shared by Rosenberg and Severini. When Christian Zervos attacked the work of Herbin as decorative in a perjorative sense, he included the entire Rosenberg circle in his criticism. "Herbin relève de la discipline que j'appellerais volontiers l'école de la Galerie Léonce Rosenberg. On y sent les mêmes défauts que gâtent l'oeuvre de tous les peintres de cette même galerie. Je ne sais pour quelle raison M. Léonce

Rosenberg s'obstine à donner à ses artistes des directives picturales, qui diminuent leurs propres ressources."²⁸

The notion of a Rosenberg "school" or circle in the sense of rules and a teacher-student relationship to the artists is a bit extreme, but Léonce Rosenberg was indeed a strong and emphatically opinionated personality. "He saw far, more like an artist than a merchant," said one of his younger admirers, and a member of the galerie, Marcelle Cahn.²⁹ Cahn was born in Strasbourg and lived in Paris between 1925 and 1930. She produced her first abstract painting in 1925 and came very close to the style of Leger (Figs. 4, 5). An unpublished correspondence with the dealer during this period reveals Rosenberg in the role of mentor. He speaks with candor of his deep commitments and priorities - his desire to revive reason and inaugurate a new "classical" age for Cubism. "Vous m'avez demandé ce matin si je puisais que vous êtes une artiste," he wrote to Cahn, "pour être artiste, il faut à mon humble avis, être libre, idéaliste et sensuel."³⁰ Rosenberg recognizes the importance of his gallery during this period. Questions of taste and judgment were frequently raised about the dealer, not only by critics like Zervos, but by the artists. Héliou expressed doubts about his values, "his ideas are too mixed up. He has no backbone and falls for too many things."³¹ Héliou, however, was not among them. The dealer did show interest in this painter's work in the early 1930's, but never included Héliou in the gallery group.

In 1923, Rosenberg invited Van Doesburg to organize an exhibition of De Stijl architectural projects at L'Effort Moderne. The emphasis on architecture had been strengthened as De Stijl's center of gravity transferred to Paris from Germany that year, signalled by Van Doesburg's move. Rosenberg proposed that both Van Doesburg and Van Esteren submit plans for a house for himself and also a private house and art gallery. Van Doesburg and Van Esteren collaborated on the private house and studio house and Van Esteren alone designed Rosenberg's house. Models for all three projects were created by Gerrit Reitveld (Fig. 6).³²

The exhibition took place from October to November, 1923, and featured the three models with attendant plans and axonometric projections. The axonometric drawing for the private house by Van Doesburg (Fig. 7) represented a direct introduction of the 45 degree diagonal, that was made part of Van Doesburg's Neoplastic vocabulary in 1924 and defended with a theory called "Elementarism." The diagonal line became the focus of his dissention with Mondrian.³³

During the course of the exhibition at Rosenberg's, the manifesto, "Toward a Collective Construction," signed by Van Doesburg, Van Esteren and Rietveld was distributed. In the spring of 1925, the three De Stijl models were part of a larger exhibition at the Paris école speciale d'architecture.³⁴ The ideas expressed through the architecture and in the related manifesto exemplified the growth of an international movement toward a "collective" style embracing painting, archi-

itecture and sculpture.

A new and harmonious alliance between painter and architect was felt immediately within the Rosenberg circle, especially by Léger. L'Esprit Nouveau published a dialogue on the exhibition between Léger and a certain Monsieur X, recognizable as Le Corbusier.³⁵ Under the heading "Deductions consecutive troublantes," the two engage in discourse on the use of color and space. Monsieur X argues that color on the exterior is a form of camouflage destroying architecture whereas color in the interior has great potential and is an idea which he says had its source in Léger, underlining a typical French chauvinism. "C'est là Léger, que votre peinture a fait école," he states. Léger responds enthusiastically. "Voilà le problem qui me passionnerait. Ah, architecture ainsi une banque, par des plans de couleurs!" M. X asks Léger if he is convinced that unbroken planes of color are enough and if he now rejects the decorative approach. "Parfaitement," Léger replies and insists that the walls must be complete wholes, "Il faut que les murs soient des entiers que entrent comme des unités dans l'équation."

Léger had a special place within the Rosenberg circle. His ideas were not always compatible with the intentions of the group; for example, his belief in the dissonant power of pictorial contrasts was opposed to Rosenberg's insistence upon a stable, classical art. However, Rosenberg was loyal, indeed, very committed to Léger's work. He published it regularly in his Bulletin and stated on several occasions that

Léger was his most important artist. "Léger est le premier de constructeurs modernes, mais comme homme de transition, il ne fait que récréer la réalité connue. Les constructeurs de l'avenir créeront de toute pièces. Il faudra attendre toute une nouvelle génération. Pour l'instant, Léger est l'artists le plus important à mes yeux."³⁶

Léger was also venerated by the young avant-garde in Paris, particularly among those artists inclined toward abstract values in art. He stood for an art independent of all sentimental, descriptive content and he extolled what he termed "geometric forces" in his important talk and essay, "L'Esthétique de la Machine," written in June of 1923.³⁷ Héliou recalls that Léger was highly valued by all including Van Doesburg and Mondrian. "Léger, whom Van Doesburg respected and Mondrian admired had views on every subject."³⁸ César Domela, too, remembers that Mondrian and Léger were on good terms. "Mondrian who came from Cubism had admiration for Léger," he said.³⁹ Léger was responsive to abstract art and to the rebellious attitudes of several young painters including Héliou who tells of a dinner conversation with the French master at the home of one of Léger's students, the Swedish abstractionist, Otto Carlsund.

I was sitting next to Léger and I was very pleased to be sitting next to the great painter, unfortunately everything he told me I thought to the contrary. I could not help thinking so. I said, "no, it is not that, it is the opposite." I was very sorry, but I admired him too much not to say the full truth. I thought that would wreck me and that I'd never see him again. When we were through with dinner, he patted

me on the back and said, "that's it boy, never believe anything anybody else says." We exchanged addresses. Two or three days later, I found that he had visited my studio when I was out, I returned the call and we became very good friends. I saw him all during my abstract period.⁴⁰

Léger's sympathies also extended to the older generation. When Kandinsky came to live in Paris in 1933, he found Léger among the most candid artists, those who, he said, didn't "strike poses." To his friend, the historian Will Grohmann, he wrote: "It was very pleasant at Léger's yesterday. I was very much impressed by him, he is definitely a man with sound roots, from which his art, original and vigorous, grows organically."⁴¹ Léger's pursuit of formal values was highly significant for abstractionist developments during the 1930's although by 1930, Léger had turned away from abstraction in his own work. Equally important was his energetic support for international modernism. Léger had been familiar with Russian developments firsthand through his student, Alexandre Exter and his wife, Nadia Grabovsky. The German painter, Baumeister, visited him several times during the twenties bringing knowledge of developments in that country. To further expand his awareness of international developments, Léger left France on several occasions. In 1924, Friedrich Kiesler invited him to the theater exhibition in Vienna⁴² where he gave a lecture and showed several set designs next to the work of Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy and abstract films by Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling.

Léger was outspoken in his tolerance and respect for

non-French achievements. For example, he protested a decision of the Salon des Indépendants to hang works alphabetically and by nationalities by writing a letter to the newspaper, L'Intransigeant in November 1923. "As to the foreigners," he wrote, "their contribution is excellent for French art."⁴³ Such sentiment was all too rare. The period has been characterized by Seuphor as a time "when the mere sight of an abstract work easily aroused the anger of journalists. When to further compound the matter, the artist was a foreigner, the term "métèque" (dago, wop)⁴⁴ flowed automatically from the pens of these gentlemen." John Ferren, an American abstract painter and resident of Paris during the thirties, agrees with Seuphor in his view of rampant chauvinism. All non-French painters, according to Ferren, were "short changed in the Paris market - Kandinsky was considered German School and you never saw German Expressionism."⁴⁵ Kandinsky's own letters written from Paris to Hilla Rebay and Katherine Dreier, collectors in New York, corroborate his perception. "I have no art dealer in Paris, it would be hard to find money here," he wrote to Rebay in 1936.⁴⁶

In 1924, Léger opened a small school with Ozenfant at 86 rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. Many of his students were young foreign artists, several future participants in the abstract artists groups of the thirties. Léger didn't actually encourage abstraction, rather his broad-minded views and supportive attitude fostered freedom of choice.

Marcelle Cahn remembers her experience at the school:

c'est par Léonce Rosenberg que j'ai connu Léger, et je suis allée dans son académie. Tout en continuant à faire du nu à la Grande Chaumière, je travaillais à l'Académie moderne en même temps que Florence Henri, Carlsund, Francisca Clausen qui est venue d'Allemagne un peu plus tard, Christian Berg, un sculpteur qu'Ozenfant aimait beaucoup, Grabovski et sa femme Nadia Grabovsky qui est devenue Nadia Léger. Léger n'était pas autoritaire, mais tout le monde travaillait dans son ordre d'idées. Quelques-uns d'entre nous - dont moi - ont fait des essais de peinture abstraite. Mais Léger était contre... Léger essayait toujours de nous ramener vers la nature.⁴⁷

Whether in spite of this or because of other attitudes, many among Léger's students turned to abstract art. Cahn became a member of Cercle et Carré, Carlsund was a founder of Art Concret as was another Léger student, Léon Tutundjian, an Armenian. Marlowe Moss who studied at the academy developed a form of Neoplasticism close to Mondrian and participated in both Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création.

The tone of internationalism set by Léger's academy was not unique. This same tendency evident in the Rosenberg circle was expressed in the contents of the Bulletin. In addition, Ozenfant and Le Corbusier had been turning the magazine, L'Esprit Nouveau, toward international affairs by publishing articles on Russian and German art. The first article in French on the developments in Russia appeared in 1923, written by Puni who came to live in Paris that same year. There followed a series of acknowledgments of developments at the German Bauhaus.⁴⁸

Léger's own art began to reflect important changes during the course of the decade, many directly related to his exper-

ience of international developments. De Stijl in particular had a strong impact on his work. The stark clarity of Mondrian's paintings encouraged Léger to move toward more classical means of composing. Black bands, white spaces and vivid planes of primary color became the setting for several paintings including Le Mécanicien of 1920 (Fig. 8). Flat, Mondrian-like settings form the background for other landscape and still-life compositions executed by Léger during the early twenties (Fig. 9).⁴⁹ In 1924, the artist began a series of pure abstractions, called "peintures murales" and conceived in terms of controlled figure-ground reversals (Fig. 10). The "murals" with their geometric planes of color arranged parallel to the picture plane appear like the backgrounds from his still life paintings of the preceding years. The paintings differ from Mondrian both in color range of browns, grays, ochres and greens and in their lack of black bounding lines. They were, of course, easel paintings meant to be hung on the wall and not really "murals" at all. The spatial-temporal concerns of Van Doesburg had little to do with these far more intimate conceptions. Nevertheless, Léger had come to believe that painting in architecture should be in harmony with the structure and he did consider these "murals" to be architectural elements containing mass-production associations. It was such convictions that led Léger to contribute to the architectural exhibitions of Robert Mallet-Stevens and Le Corbusier at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs (Figs. 11, 12).

Léger's collaboration with Le Corbusier in the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau was a natural extension of their close relationship during the preceding years. It brought Léger's involvement with Purism to a climax.⁵⁰ Their joint effort came close to realizing the ideal Purist environment, standardized in design and engineering. The exhibit set both Purism and Léger's art into a distinctly international context. The abstract painting included in Robert Mallet-Stevens' hall for the ideal French embassy was in perfect alliance with its architectural setting. More than the contribution of Le Balustre, an object painting, to the L'Esprit Nouveau display, this Peinture Murale reflects the new collective spirit.

The 1925 Exposition proved to be a major source of foreign influence on young Paris architects and artists. Foreign contributions revealed to Paris some of the most structurally and aesthetically advanced ideas in art and architecture. Melnikov's Russian pavilion with its interior designed by Rodchenko made an enormous impact as did the Austrian pavilion designed by Josef Hoffmann and containing Fredrich Kiesler's space structure called Cité dans l'Espace.⁵¹ This suspended construction of wooden rails and flat planes occupying a rectangular spatial grid took up a huge portion of the pavilion. The Russian and Austrian exhibits stood together with the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau for the new in spirit and design.

The De Stijl group itself was not represented at the

Exposition, with the exception of Kiesler who had joined the group in 1923. The Dutch government had chosen to be represented instead by the more conservative Wendingen group. 52
The exclusion of De Stijl had the positive effect of increasing incentive to organize another exhibition in Paris which the group did almost immediately. De Stijl made a strong and important showing in a landmark exhibit held later that same year, L'Art d'Aujourd'hui.

More than an exhibition, L'Art d'Aujourd'hui was an event that stands out amid the otherwise conservative or Surrealist-dominated manifestations of the times. Polish artist, Victor Poznansky, was responsible for this first attempt to organize the growing numbers of foreign modernists in an exhibition beside established artists active in Paris like Mondrian, Kupka, Gleizes and Léger. More than half of the 250 works assembled by 87 artists representing 24 countries were abstract or very nearly so. The largest group presentation was from De Stijl, including Van Doesburg, Mondrian, Huszar, Vantongerloo, Domela and Vordemberge-Gildewart, the latter taking this opportunity for a visit to Paris from Hannover. Vordemberge-Gildewart, like Domela, was a late comer to De Stijl having joined in 1924 at Van Doesburg's invitation. Domela was the youngest member of the group and he joined a year later when he first arrived in Paris from his native Amsterdam following a stay of several years in Switzerland. Van Doesburg exhibited the diagonal, Counter-Composition of 1925, officially launching his Ele-

mentarist style.

Other abstract works included Léger's Peinture Murale and a large mural composition by Baumeister. Paintings by Cahn, Victor Servranckz, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Michail Larionov, Moholy-Nagy, Ben Nicholson, Otto Carlsund, Albert Gleizes, Juan Gris were shown as were Surrealists Max Ernst, André Masson and Joan Miro. Cahn's account of this important show is revealing:

C'était une exposition fondamentale, la première exposition fondamentale, la première exposition internationale des tendances actuelles de l'époque. On peut dire qu'à l'exception de Braque, tous les maîtres et sous-maîtres des recherches de l'époque étaient représentés... Toutes ces formes d'avant-garde cohabitaient bien. A l'entrée, il y avait une salle où étaient Arp et les Surréalistes, puis une grande salle au centre de laquelle il y avait Léger. Dans cette salle il y avait deux peintures de moi: la composition abstraite de 1925 et "L'Evier"..... Dans la même salle étaient réunis les Constructivistes: Vordemberge-Gildewart et Klee. Dans une ou deux plus petites salles on avait mis Picasso et les cubistes...⁵³

A catalogue accompanied the exhibit, the brief unsigned text providing an exceptionally sincere and intelligent document in defense of an art "plastique, non-imitatif."⁵⁴ It stands quite alone in the period. The author opens with the question, "pourquoi cette exposition?" His response - to indicate and emphasize the non-imitative character of today's art. Since 1911, the argument reads, lyricism or freedom of forms in art has been released from confines of realism. The new art is no longer "un relai entre la nature et le spectateur," the author states, instead, "il agit directement sur lui par la vertu des formes et des couleurs sur notre sensibilité." Parallels are drawn to music. The attitude required of the

spectator is then examined in a plea for openmindedness and willingness to suspend judgment. One must look first "avec les yeux," and then "on jugera après," the author suggests. Arguments put forth in this essay have roots that go back to the Symbolists' theory of correspondences.

New art is believed to have its source in Cubism and possess strong affinities with Poussin. This identification with the great master of French classicism points up a pervasive classical spirit in the twenties. Poussin, central to this revival, is frequently the subject of articles in L'Esprit Nouveau along with Fouquet, Ingres and Seurat. These artists are believed to illustrate constant laws of pictorial order, appropriate to "le rappel à l'ordre" of Purism.⁵⁵

Despite its powerful impact on the avant-garde, L'Art d'Aujourd'hui was largely ignored by the public. Still, it was mildly praised by the art press. Zervos reviewed the exhibition in the first issue of Cahiers d'Art in 1926. "Contrary to affirmations of orthodox criticism, I refuse to believe that the manifestation of the group, L'Art d'Aujourd'hui was useless." The opening is clearly defensive. Neoplasticism is singled out for negative derision:

Il y a dans les oeuvres des néoplasticiens, avec le mépris de l'anecdote et du sentimentalisme, un dédain total des images qui naissent de la passion sensuelle de la vie. Van Doesburg, Domela, Mondrian suppriment dans leurs oeuvres toute signification naturelle et humaine. Les drames du coeur sont remplacées chez eux par les inquiétudes de l'intelligence. Leur oeuvre échappe toujours à toutes nos formules pictorales et à notre attachement à l'apparence extérieure des choses.⁵⁶

A common assumption among more enlightened critics was that

Neoplasticism, in Zervos' phrase, was "le cubisme poussé à ses conséquences extrêmes." Despite his admiration for the De Stijl achievement, Léger, too, made known his reservations about the extreme reductivism of their painting. Although defending this art against labels 'decorative' and 'geometric', he believed it was "la limite de l'expression plastique."⁵⁷

Waldemar George had restrained praise for L'Art d' Aujourd'hui in L'Amour de l'Art, 1926. Irritated by what he considered the naiveté of the catalogue essay, he argued with the concept "art plastique non-imitatif" which he believed to be ambiguous. Yet, he acknowledges that the exhibition "présente un intérêt certain, elle marque l'homogénéité d'un courant artistique qui procède du cubisme." He renders homage to Poznanski for organizing an event which comes along as "une pierre lancée à toute volée dans la mare stagnante de la peinture..."⁵⁸ The exhibition received its most positive review in a small magazine, an "organe constructif de littérature de l'art moderne," called Vouloir. Published in Lille by the painter Del Marle, Vouloir not only expressed sympathy with the show, but included the essay from the catalogue in its February, 1926, issue. Contrary to the exception taken by Zervos and others in Paris to Neoplastic art, Vouloir singled out members of De Stijl for special praise: "Mais voici les Hollandais Mondrian, Doesburg, Domela, Huszar. Ici nous nous trouvons en présence d'une force compacte, undéniable..."⁵⁹

L'Art d'Aujourd'hui set an important precedent for Cercle et Carré. Many of the same artists participated and the number of abstract paintings was to markedly increase. An important intention behind the exhibition was the desire to circumvent conservative Salon policy. This policy was attacked by young artists repeatedly. "Ce Salon ne sert plus rien, ni le public, ni les artistes, il faut le fumer," Hélión wrote in 1927 in a small journal, L'Acte.⁶⁰ Hélión was instrumental in staging a more dramatic form of protest in 1928. Following the Salon d'Automne's refusal to accept two of his paintings that year, he and four other "rejected" artists organized an exhibition at the Galerie Marck titled les 5 refusées. Less auspicious, perhaps, than the earlier L'Art d'Aujourd'hui, the group announced a similar cause - to free art from repressive and conservative juries and officials. The five artists were Torres-García, Pierre Daura, Engel Rozier, later known as Englepak, and Alfred Aberdam, representing five different nationalities, Uruguay, Spain, Poland and Belgium; only Hélión was French. They were, in this respect, a miniature of the internationalism typical of thirties abstract artists' groups. A manifesto was passed out at the door to the gallery which read:

"Nous sommes 5 peintres: 4 autour d'un maître, Torres-García." Thus, establishing the central role assigned to the older artist, then fifty-five years of age, the brief document continues:

Nous ne demandons pas pour lui le tintamère des réclames, mais des expositions de premier plan; it est nécessaire pour la clarté du grande mouvement moderne qu'il figure

auprès de Braque, Derain, Matisse, Picasso. C'est une lourde responsabilité pour le jury du Salon d'Automne 1928 d'avoir écarté un peintre de cette valeur...⁶¹

The protest exemplified the spirit of youth and rebellion. It provoked the radical Journal du Peuple to reiterate the problem of conservatism among jurors and to reprint les 5 refusées manifesto.⁶² Hélión admits that the venture was his idea:

We found a dealer, what a dealer! No professional dealer would accept such an idea. We made a little stir and lots of people came. We had a lovely idea to hire an "homme sandwich," a man who strolled with posters glued to his front and back, to promenade in front of the Salon d'Automne with an advertisement that Torres-García had drawn.⁶³

Abstraction was not the issue here. Torres-García's work came closest, according to Hélión who remembers that his painting was "drawn with the sort of promise of abstraction and yet no loss of contact with the world." It was a scene of city streets like Composition of 1928 (Fig. 13). Within a year, both Torres-García and Hélión turned to abstract art and each became an activist for a group. The two had a close working relationship in adjacent studios on rue Marcel Sembat in Montmartre for several months in 1927. Torres-García introduced Hélión to modern art, particularly to Cubism, and despite the 35 year difference in their ages, they had vigorous exchanges about painting. Each painter was seeking to resolve the object and image into a schematic sign, to leave representation and move into an abstract style.

If the target for both L'Art d'Aujourd'hui and les 5 refusées was official Salon policy, the seventh and last of

the great Parisian Salons to appear before the second World War was founded in 1927 with the explicit intention to circumvent this policy. The Salon of the Association of Surindépendants had as its motto - "independence and discipline" and as its goal - ability of all artists to present their works freely to the public. There was no jury of admissions. Pictures were hung by artistic affinity rather than on the principle of nationality or personality. Open to new tendencies and foreign art, the Salon des Surindépendants was the best, if not the only, place for abstract artists to exhibit throughout the thirties. It was the Salon where "youth is queen, a field of experiment, a laboratory. All vital tendencies face each other here," wrote Waldemar George in Formes, 1930.⁶⁴ Zervos, too, praised the Salon for its ideals and aspirations in 1929:

Le seul salon où l'on puisse encore voir un peu de peinture. Le seul salon aussi où l'on distingue quelques nouvelles personnalités. Le seul salon enfin où des tendances parallèles à celles de l'Ecole de Paris peuvent se manifester. Nous sommes en effet très heureux que M. Mendès France qui néglige souvent un effort pictural digne des meilleurs éloges pour aider la jeune peinture, ait fait une place aux tendances néoplasticienne et abstraite.⁶⁵

Zervos suggests that a modest catalogue would be indispensable to assist the public in distinguishing the youth of France and other nations. John Ferren also remembers wishing that a catalogue had accompanied the exhibitions which he called the most important in Paris at the time:

I think they are more important than the Abstraction-Création group which really got to publish things more than anything else...it was the only one where abstract

artists who were underdogs had a chance. The Salon d'Automne was the other big Salon which was more or less dominated by Matisse and had turned into a sub-Matisse thing. The Surindépendants were not juried, you were invited and you could show what you wanted to. You had so much space on which you could put 15 little pictures or several big pictures. The quality was irregular. It was where all of the people of our persuasion more or less gathered.⁶⁶

Ferren was among several Americans who showed in this salon; Man Ray, John Graham and Jean Xceron, a Greek by birth, who also had lived in New York after 1904, all exhibited there. Most of the abstract artists who were to be major participants in the abstractionist groups of the 1930's in Paris showed at one time or another at the Surindépendants.⁶⁷ As one critic advised, the best way to appreciate the new Surindépendants was to go there after visiting the Salon d'Automne in the Grand Palais.⁶⁸

Summarizing the 1930 Salon in Cahiers d'Art, Zervos claimed "le Salon des Surindépendants est le seul qui, actuellement nous montre ce qu'il y a presque de meilleur dans la jeune génération où chacun, suivant ses facultés et ses goûts, exerce ses jeunes instincts en pleine liberté et avec une sincérité émouvante."⁶⁹

As the new Salon and other important exhibits gave support to the growth and expansion of an international abstract movement centered in Paris, a proliferation of both foreign and French periodicals devoted to the avant-garde championed abstract causes. Michel Seuphor characterizes this development:

Il y aurait un livre passionnant à écrire sur les

revues d'art d'avant-garde qui ont paru en Europe de 1920-1930. Et ce serait une belle leçon de foi et de courage. La foi en une cause qui n'avait pas encore de public, le courage de certains artistes où écrivains isolés dans un milieu hostile et qui luttèrent désespérément contre l'ennemi le plus redoutable: l'indifférence.⁷⁰

In 1936, Hélión reminisced, "I owe money to printers in several quarters of Paris for avant-garde reviews fiercely loaded with youth, will and hope and soon vanished."⁷¹ One such effort was the review L'Acte founded by Hélión. It included articles by Torres-García. The four page journal format, published in three numbers, beginning in 1927 was filled with enthusiasm. "Vivre pour oeuvre. Vaincre si c'est possible. Être vaincu jamais. Placer haut l'idea." It included poetry by Hélión, an article on Charlie Chaplin, speculations on art, and criticism of the Salon d'Automne.⁷²

Avant-garde publications were often able to focus the needs of special groups, thus becoming meeting places and fertile ground for the development of ideas and expectations. Vouloir was such a periodical. Founded in 1924 by the painter del Marle, formerly a Futurist and later influenced by Neoplasticism, Vouloir became a broad group effort in support of "pure" and abstract art. It sponsored exhibitions, lectures and other related activities. In this, the group had much in common with Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création.⁷³ It was a vehicle for information about abstract art. Through Vouloir, the young Breton architect and painter, Jean Gorin, first learned of Mondrian. He obtained his address and also that of Vantongerloo through the magazine and began a lengthy

and illuminating correspondence. From his point of view, the review was extremely welcome. "Pour moi en particulier, j'étais solitaire dans la campagne bretonne, en pleine brousse! mais j'avais l'avantage de correspondre avec Mondrian et Vantongerloo, j'avais obtenu leur addresses par la revue ⁷⁴ "Vouloir."

Gorin made frequent trips to Paris where he combed bookshops for avant-garde periodicals. A voracious reader, his efforts to absorb, reconcile and synthesize new and often conflicting ideas began with an interest in the writings of Albert Gleizes. Gorin then moved through a Purist phase and approached Neoplasticism by incorporating Purist formal elements such as the curved silhouette of a vase into a pattern of overlapping rectangles (Figs. 14, 15). "En 1926, de passage à Paris je me procure dans une librairie d'avant-garde, divers documents, dont Vouloir revue m'ayant frappé par son accent combatif et sain." Gorin was fascinated by an important article by Mondrian which developed the Neoplastic theory. "Ce fut cette fois la révélation décisive, j'étais donc bien dans le vrai, tous mes efforts pour atteindre l'abstrait n'avaient donc pas été vains...un art collectif existait, Le Néoplasticisme, dont les lois de base, les éléments d'expression, absolument universels formaient enfin un art impersonnel, mathématique et scientifique."⁷⁵ These ideas were important for the next decade when Gorin participated actively in abstract groups. Gorin showed his first Neoplastic paintings in 1927 in Lille with the Vouloir group

beside the art of Oud, Huszar, Del Marle and Domela.

Domela, too, scanned the pages of Vouloir for articles by Mondrian and Van Doesburg and for reproductions. Unlike Gorin, he did not grow up in isolation, but in Amsterdam and then Ascona, Switzerland. Domela became a member of De Stijl in 1925 a year after his arrival in Paris where he met Mondrian and Van Doesburg and renounced figuration entirely. He accepted Neoplasticism under the influence of Mondrian's writings, some of which he discovered in Vouloir.⁷⁶

The name "Vouloir" itself, "to will, or wish" exemplifies the positive affirmation and energy that artists were expressing at the time. "Nous voulons vivre!" they decoared in the opening manifesto which exudes this spirit (Fig. 16):

Notre groupe organisera des expositions des conférences.
Il luttera contre les puissances mortelles de réaction
et coordonnant les efforts des jeunes qui cherchent
et qui "veulent" il aidera au triomphe des idées moderne
en art."⁷⁷

In 1925, an entire issue was consecrated to "l'Art Pur" of Frank Kupka. Major avant-garde developments outside of France were covered, notably, activities at the Bauhaus, and Bauhaus publications were reviewed. In fact, Vouloir was a unique effort in France during the twenties to bolster the cause of "Constructive" and "pure" art.

The magazine was distributed in Paris at avant-garde bookstores including the important Librarie Esthétique. L'Esthétique located in Montparnasse on Boulevard St. Germain received reviews from all over the world and was a favorite

hangout among young artists. These were places "where you could find shelter, read and bring your work," said Hélión.⁷⁸

The bilingual periodical, l'Art Contemporain, appeared in Paris between 1929 and 1930, reflecting the exceptionally rich cultural exchanges between French and Polish artists at this period.⁷⁹ The magazine, published by the Polish poet, Jan Brzekowski, in collaboration with Madame Grabovski, the future wife of Léger, featured poetry, theory and gave great attention to art subjects. Tristan Tzara produced a poem for the first issue which included a reproduction of the Mondrian-Seuphor Tableau-poème (Fig. 33) of 1928. Seuphor was actively involved with Brzekowski and with the Polish Constructivist painter, Henryk Stazewski, both of whom joined Cercle et Carré.⁸⁰ Stazewski's work is reproduced in l'Art Contemporain (Fig. 17). He spent his most fruitful years, 1929 to 1934, largely in Paris where he took part in Seuphor's group and also in the larger Abstraction-Création organization as did Wladyslaw Strzeminski and his wife, the sculptor, Katarzyna Kobro.

Because of the friendship with Seuphor, Torres-García and Mondrian, Stazewski and Brzekowski were able to negotiate the forming of a large collection of international modern art, largely abstraction, for the Polish museum in Lodz (Fig. 18). At the initiative of the "a.r.," revolutionary artists group, works by Arp, Léger, Hélión, Calder, Schwitters, Vantongerloo, Van Doesburg, Gleizes, Herbin, Gorin and Picasso among others came to Poland between 1930-1932. In Seuphor's words, "one

would wish that there could often be in the contacts between the creative groups of different countries, such effective liasons as were between Paris and Warsaw in 1930 and 1931. ⁸¹

Liasons among like-minded artists in Paris during the twenties resulted in many spirited activities. These were mainly focused in Montparnasse. Montparnasse became the stronghold for the valiant group of artists committed to abstraction and it nurtured their growth through soirées, meetings and informal cafe life.

Paris was the hub of all this activity, the center in Paris itself being Montparnasse. It was a lively time, when on the same day, in front of the Dome cafe you could meet Marinetti on a lightning visit to the capital, Gabo fresh from Berlin, Cendrars just back from America, Delaunay out for a spree, Arp trying to find somebody, Tzara and Ehrenburg sitting there with inscrutable faces. You could risk a few words with Hans Richter or argue with Van Doesburg or Kiesler or listen to the international speechifiers making themselves drunk with their own eloquence, or you could even manage to be bored by it all.⁸²

Seuphor's assessment of the climate is borne out in artists' memoirs. When Héliou returned to Paris in 1928 from a stay at Pau in the Pyrenees, where he had realized his first abstractions, he moved from Montmartre to Montparnasse, leaving..."les voies impétueuses d'une peinture d'instinct que peut symboliser Montmartre pour les strictes disciplines des artistes qui alors à Montparnasse cherchaient à observer avec rigueur les lois premières de la plastique..." ⁸³
Héliou recalls the spirit that encouraged him to move.

La première chose que j'ai fait a été de quitter alors Montmartre, pour venir à Montparnasse où pouvait vivre l'abstraction. À Montmartre, on faisait un art passionné, pas de l'abstraction.⁸⁴

Informal meetings in artists' studios at the end of the day or at cafes at night were among the highlights recounted by many. Young and almost exclusively expatriate artists gathered in the studio of Torres-García - Mondrian, Arp, Hélión, Van Doesburg, Seuphor, Daura, Xceron, Graham, Vantongerloo, Charcoune, Czaky - as reported by David Smith in a memoir of Gonzales.⁸⁵ Robert and Sonia Delaunay later welcomed artists to scheduled meetings in their studio. Sonia reminisces in a letter to Hilla Rebay written late in the thirties,

Il y a un nombre de gens de tout âge qui viennent vers cet art [abstraction] et en attendant d'avoir un endroit où ils pourraient venir pour se documenter et s'instruire, ils viennent chez nous une fois par semaine où Robert, Albert Gleizes et Rambosson leur donnent des indications pour leur travail, l'un au point de vue métier, l'autre au point de vue métaphysique et le troisième esthétique en général.⁸⁶

Earlier in the decade, Robert Delaunay held more formal meetings at the Closerie de Lilas in connection with the Abstraction-Création group.

Sundays at Pevsners' were special and hospitable occasions for artists Arp, Mondrian, Domela, Gorin and Duchamp among others.⁸⁷ Pevsner had been living in Paris since 1923 and he was beloved to a small coterie of artists, but ignored by the public at large. Hélión remarked upon meeting him in 1930, "On seeing him, I realized for the first time that a man of a certain age having accomplished a lot and produced important work could be almost unknown in the country where he lived."⁸⁸ This situation changed very little in the next ten years and at the end of the thirties when Christian Zervos wrote his

important Histoire de l'art contemporaine, he confused a 1923 Gabo with a 1928 Pevsner.⁸⁹

Though the official art world did not give much credence to these artists, the climate was favorable for spirited gatherings, in this, very like the underground atmosphere in New York during the thirties where artists De Kooning, Gorky and other young Abstract Expressionists had vigorous discussions. "It was a wonderful period in Paris, the cafe life was terrific.. everybody worked very hard and at five o'clock, you went to the cafe," John Ferren remembers. "Things were very loose and open in Paris at that time. People visited each other in the studios. You met in the cafes and people would drop up and and see your work."⁹⁰ Vézelay has noted that Paris, unlike London, was open and tolerant of men and women. There was an air of expectation for abstract art and its possibilities.

Notes to Chapter I.

1. "The New Realism," Art Front (1935), trans. Harold Rosenberg, rpt. in Functions of Painting, The Documents of 20th Century Art, ed. Edward Fry (New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 110.
2. Seuphor, L'Art abstrait, II (1972), p. 53.
3. Héliion letter to Gallatin, October 17, 1936. Between 1932-1942, Héliion wrote 42 letters to Gallatin in English.
4. Vézelay, b. 1893, England, settled in Paris in 1926 and stayed until 1939. Interview, July, 1976.
5. Cahn, b. 1895, Strasbourg, first visit to Paris in 1920; Moss, b. 1890, Richmond, England, came to Paris in 1927. For biographical material on Moss, see Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris, Women Artists 1550-1950, Los Angeles County Museum (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1977), pp. 314-315.
6. Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 214.
7. Hughes, The Obstructed Path, French Social Thought in the Years of Desperation, 1930-1960 (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1969), p. 2.
8. Héliion, "Art Concret 1930: 4 Painters and a Magazine,"

- Art and Literature, trans. J. Ventadour, no. 11 (Winter, 1967), p. 136. An extremely sensitive memoir of the period. Hereafter, "Art Concret 1930."
9. Ozenfant and Jeanneret, "Le Purisme," L'Esprit Nouveau, no. 4 (1920), 369-386; trans. and rpt. Robert Herbert, Modern Artists on Art (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 73.
 10. "Vouloir Construire," Cercle et Carré, no. 1 (March, 1930), 46.
 11. Purism and De Stijl have compelling philosophical ideals in common regarding the double status of geometry and social goals. See Banham, pp. 208-210.
 12. Hélon visited Victor Basch, Professor of Aesthetics at the Sorbonne, with Carlsund. He said: "We come in the name of cubism...because we have read your texts on aesthetics in L'Esprit Nouveau." That man of great worth, who was to be assassinated ten years later, raised his glasses on his forehead and throwing himself back in his chair, pronounced slowly: 'I am convinced that cubism is the result of a disease of the mind that fell upon artists around 1908.'" "Art Concret 1930," p. 135.
 13. For discussion of this phrase, sources and meaning, see Christopher Green, Léger and the Avant-Garde (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), p. 217ff.

14. Mondrian speaks of reconstruction in "Natural Reality and Abstract Painting," an essay in dialogue form, quoted in Seuphor, Piet Mondrian: Life and Work (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1956), p. 317.
15. Kenneth E. Silver, "Purism: Straightening Up After the Great War," Artforum, XV (March, 1977), 56-63.
16. Ibid., p. 58.
17. See below, p. 97, for a discussion of this magazine.
18. Rosenberg letter to A.E. Gallatin, August 20, 1934.
19. For excellent and authoritative discussion of the art and ideas within the Rosenberg circle see Green, pp. 209-211.
20. Seuphor claims that the pamphlet, Le néo-plasticisme, was printed at Mondrian's own expense, Piet Mondrian, p. 156.
21. "Some Memories of Mondrian," Piet Mondrian: Centennial Exhibition, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, 1971), 70.
22. Ozenfant, "L'Angle Droit," L'Esprit Nouveau, no. 18, n.d.
23. This observation was made by Laura Miner, "Abstract Art in Paris, 1918-1928," (M.A. thesis, Courtauld Institute, London, 1971).
24. Domela in conversation with Miner, ibid.

25. Ozenfant, Art (Paris: Budry, 1928), p. 124.
26. For discussion of Herbin's evolution to an abstract style see Miner, also, Green, p. 292.
27. See Green, p. 293.
28. Zervos, "Salon des Surindépendants," Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 4 (1930), 221.
29. Cahn, July, 1976.
30. Rosenberg letter to Cahn (undated), Marcelle Cahn Papers, Denise René Gallery, Paris. According to Cahn, the letters were written during the late twenties when the artist travelled between Paris and Strasbourg.
31. Héliou letter to Gallatin, September 13, 1932.
32. Controversy has surrounded these projects regarding which artist designed which house. See Joost Baljeu, Theo Van Doesburg (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 62-3; Hans Jaffé, De Stijl, 1917-1931 (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1956), p. 23.
33. For discussion of Van Doesburg's "Elementarism" see Banham, "De Stijl: The International Phase," in Theory; also see the special issue of The Structurist, no. 9 (1969), dedicated to Van Doesburg and the oblique.
34. The models were reproduced in the de Stijl issue of

L'Architecture Vivante (1926), a magazine dedicated to progressive architecture, started in 1925 by A. Morancé and Jean Badovici.

35. "Le Salon d'Automne," L'Esprit Nouveau, no. 19. Further discussion of this dialogue in Green, p. 296; Baljeu, p. 63. A debate ensued in the next issues of L'Esprit Nouveau and Bulletin de L'Effort Moderne about the consequences and implications of integrating architecture, sculpture and painting. Van Doesburg argued that the separation of these arts from life is bound to disappear and Le Corbusier insisted that complexity and excessive richness must be disciplined under the shield of pure form.
36. Rosenberg letter to Cahn, Galerie Denise René, Paris.
37. See Green, pp. 240, 244, 272.
38. Héliou, "Art Concret 1930," p. 134.
39. Domela, April, 1977.
40. Héliou, May, 1977. Otto Carlsund, b. 1897, made his first abstraction in 1927.
41. Will Grohmann, Wassily Kandinsky (New York: Harry N. Abrams, n.d.), p. 222.
42. Léger showed his designs of a backdrop for Ricciotto Canudo's Skating Rink, and Darius Milhaud's La Création

du Monde, for Ballet Suedois. See Green, p. 290,
for discussion of these projects.

43. Quoted in Green, p. 295.
44. Seuphor, "Pour faire le point," introduction to Cercle et Carré (1971 edition), pp. 7-28, trans. Maurice G. Elton, rpt. "To Set the Compass," in exhibition catalogue, Geometric Abstraction: 1926-1942, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts (Dallas, Texas), Oct.-Nov., 1972, n. pag.
45. Ferren interview with Seckler.
46. Kandinsky letter to Rebay, November 27, 1936.
47. Marcelle Cahn, "Biographie," in exhibition catalogue, Marcelle Cahn, Centre National d'Art Contemporain (Paris, 1972), p. 56.
48. For discussion of relations between the Bauhaus and Paris, see below, p. 59ff.
49. Léger's stylistic changes are outlined in Green, p. 212ff. Elderfield suggests that exposure to international currents may have had a negative influence on Léger, "Epic Cubism and the Manufactured Object," Artforum, X (April, 1972), 54-63.
50. Léger's collaboration in Pavillon is discussed in Green, chap. 10; see also Rosalind Krauss, "Léger, Le Corbusier and Purism," Artforum, X (April, 1972), 51-53.

51. Further discussion of these projects in Banham, p. 216.
52. Mondrian's unwillingness to protest this decision infuriated Van Doesburg who reviewed the 1925 Paris Exposition in De Stijl, XII (1924/25), 156-9. See Baljeu, p. 71.
53. Cahn, "Biographie," p. 57.
54. Catalogue essay, "L'Art d'Aujourd'hui," Paris, 1925. Complete text rpt. in Seuphor, L'Art abstrait, III (1973), 51.
55. The re-opening of the French rooms in the Louvre renewed enthusiasm for French classical painters.
56. "Les expositions," Cahiers d'Art, I, no. 1 (1926), 16.
57. Léger, response to questionnaire on abstract art, Cahiers d'Art, VI, no. 3 (1931), 151.
58. George, "Chronique," L'Amour de l'Art, VII, no. 1 (1926), 33.
59. A.F. Del Marle, "L'Art d'Aujourd'hui," Vouloir, no. 18 (1926), n. pag.
60. The journal was founded in November, 1927, by Héliou with Jean Réande, Luc Lafnet and Jamblan. Three issues are extant at the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris. See below, p. 38.
61. Les 5 refusées manifesto, see Schipper, appendix; also,

- Hélion Cent Tableau, 1928-1970, exhibition catalogue, Centre National d'Art Contemporain (Paris, 1970), p. 68. This catalogue contains entries from Hélion's diaries, "Notes de travail." Hereafter, Hélion, CNAC.
62. Valère, "Les Refusées," review of exhibition, Journal du Peuple, November 18, 1928, cited in Schipper, p. 27.
63. Hélion, May, 1977.
64. George, "Art in Paris," Formes, no. 1 (1930), 33.
65. Zervos, "Les expositions," Cahiers d'Art, IV, no. 7 (1929), 419. It was Mendès-France who organized this Salon.
66. Ferren interview with Bowman.
67. Otto Carlsund, Paule Vézelay, Auguste Herbin, Léon Tutundjian, Piet Mondrian, Theo Van Doesburg, Vordemberge-Gildewart, César Domela, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, among others showed there.
68. B.J. Kospoth, "Reviews," Chicago Tribune, November 5, 1933, in Jean Xceron Papers, Archives of American Art, New York.
69. Zervos, "Les expositions," Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 4 (1930), 222.
70. Seuphor, L'Art abstrait, II (1972), p. 44.

71. Héliou letter to Gallatin, October 17, 1936.
72. See above, note 60.
73. According to Domela (April, 1977), Del Marle got money from his family which was in the beer business to support Vouloir. The magazine is available at the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris. It lasted until 1927.
74. Gorin letter to author, April 12, 1976.
75. Jean Gorin, July, 1976.
76. R.V. Gindertael, "Interview with César Domela," Cimaise, no. 99 (December, 1970), 42.
77. "Le Manifeste de Vouloir," no. 1 (January, 1924).
78. Héliou, May, 1977. Other artists acknowledged the importance of bookshops as exhibition spaces and hangouts.
79. Listed in Ryszard Stanislawski, Constructivism In Poland 1931-1936, exhibition catalogue, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller (Otterloo, 1973), p. 47.
80. The Franco-Polish printing shop, Ognisko, printed both L'Art Contemporain and Cercle et Carré. Seuphor said: "In 1931 the dusty office of his [Ognisko's] somewhat archaic establishment was to become for several months a veritable Franco-Polish meeting place," in "To Set the Compass."

81. Ibid.
82. Seuphor, Dictionary of Abstract Painting, p. 51.
83. Said by critic Pierre Bruguère, Jean Héliou (Paris: S.P.E.I., 1970), p. 19.
84. Quoted in Daniel Abadie, Héliou ou la force des choses (Brussels: La Connaissance, 1975), p. 21. The book includes several interviews plus reprinting of Héliou's critical writings.
85. Smith, "Julio Gonzales," Art News (February, 1956), 35. This source is cited by Schipper, p. 13.
86. Sonia Delaunay letter to Rebay, November 27, 1938.
87. Gorin believed these meetings to be very important for young abstract artists (July, 1976) and Domela considered them vital social events. He still maintains close friendship with Mme. Pevsner (April, 1977).
88. Héliou, "Art Concret 1930," p. 128.
89. Zervos, Histoire de l'art contemporain (Paris: Éditions "Cahiers d'Art," 1938).
90. Ferren interview with Paul Cummings.

Chapter II: Growth of a Constructivist tendency in Paris

"There are 30,000 painters in Paris," wrote Ozenfant¹ at the end of the twenties. Abstract artists numbered a tiny percentage of this figure. Purism had been the inspiration of only two men; abstract groups were the making of thirty to fifty. Momentum gathered, however, during the next years resulting in an amazing radiation out from the small network of artists committed to "Constructive" values. Shortly, Paris was to become the center for a tendency broadly defined as "Constructivist" during the early thirties, after playing almost no role in the dissemination of Constructivist developments in the twenties. The term Constructivism itself has bred confusion. It is often set apart in quotation marks to signal this ambiguity, deriving from the distinction between exclusive and inclusive meanings.²

According to John Elderfield, the idea of a Constructivist art may be anachronistic. "By the time Constructivism as such was defined in 1920," he argues, "it had abandoned its pretensions of being an art form and the general tenor of its theorists' writings takes the form of warnings against making art objects as such."³ The original meaning of Constructivism is, of course, to be identified with Russian abstract art, although at its inception it stood for opposing tendencies - the idealistic approach of Gabo and Pevsner and

the anti-idealistic, anti-art approach of Lissitzky. By the mid-twenties, Russian Constructivism had entered an international phase, far less identified with the politics of early Soviet ideology. There was a growing feeling that the art proper to a mechanical age should be Constructivist. Constructive values in art came to signify broadly defined attitudes removed from the original social and moral imperatives. By the time the idea reached Paris it was even more diluted, often it meant simply the opposite of expressionism or romanticism. This is reflected in the many contradictory references to Constructivism in the rhetoric of abstract artists during the thirties.

Among abstract artists active in Paris, Van Doesburg most coherently expressed the Constructivist ethos. He was a major participant in the cross-fertilization of abstract credos during the twenties. By inaugurating an international phase for De Stijl between 1920-22, Van Doesburg came into direct contact with the apostle of Russian Constructivism, Lissitzky.⁴ Lissitzky became a member of De Stijl as did former Dadaist, Hans Richter. This trio effectively organized and gave definition to the Düsseldorf Congress of 1922. It was this congress that established a vital axis of avant-garde artists to propagate Constructivism on a European scale. The congress outlined many of the artistic and social ideas current at that time and kept various abstractionists in communication with one another. Their manifesto established a broad working definition of the term, Constructivism. Set

against "the tyranny of the individual" and against what Van Doesburg called "an impulsivist direction," Constructivism sought to establish a new order and a rationalistic, de-personalized approach for the new man. Van Doesburg's own theory of Elementarism owes much to Constructivism.

The phase of extension and exploration in Van Doesburg's career reaches a climax in 1922 at Düsseldorf. It was also the year that Van Doesburg confronted the Weimar Bauhaus. There he conducted a vigorous campaign on behalf of De Stijl and Neoplasticism and against what he considered to be a medieval and crafts-like attitude and a pervasive mysticism. In a letter written from Weimar in January, 1921, he stated optimistically:

At Weimar, I have turned everything radically upside down. This is supposed to be the most famous academy with the most modern teachers! Every evening, I have talked to the students and spread the vermin of the new spirit. Within a short time, De Stijl will re-appear in a more radical way. I have tremendous energy and know that our views will achieve victory over anyone and anything.⁵

Van Doesburg's experience at Weimar turned out to be a grave disappointment. Conflicting accounts as to the nature of his visit, whether at the invitation of Gropius and in hopes of becoming a master, or on his own initiative, point up that finally, Van Doesburg was refused a teaching post and left in anger. As it turned out, Van Doesburg took away an expanded and clarified sense of the school and its Constructivist approach, an approach that emerges clearly in his last group effort, the Paris-based Art Concret of 1930.

And, despite personal feelings of disappointment, Van Doesburg had been the first of the abstractionists to alter the Bauhaus outlook. Following his stay, the monk-like Johannes Itten was dismissed and Moholy-Nagy appointed. Students Josef Albers, Marcel Breuer and Herbert Bayer joined the staff and a more utilitarian and functional methodology resulted. Walter Gropius has repeatedly denied that there ever was a Bauhaus style, however, "an overwhelming bias in favor of geometricizing abstraction became pervasive after 1923." There resulted a more uniform and recognizable Bauhaus "look," epitomized by the younger men, Albers, Max Bill and Moholy-Nagy. All three were to become members of Abstraction-Création where these stylistic qualities were characteristic.

The transformation that occurred at the Bauhaus involved a shifting of priorities from metaphysics to epistemology. Robert Welsh has observed, "Certainly it is the epistemological or perceptual, rather than the earlier metaphysical conception of abstract art which has dominated critical analysis since the 1920's. For this fact we have largely the Bauhaus to thank and particularly its character as an educational institution." The Bauhaus appropriation of abstract art as the style of modern technology is profoundly important. This idea became assimilated in Parisian abstract circles via routes of cultural exchange with the German Bauhaus.

Non-French abstraction, namely, Dutch De Stijl and Russian and Polish Constructivism had direct representation

in Paris prior to 1930, yet the strongest bastion of the Constructivist approach during the 1920's, the German Bauhaus, had none. The Bauhaus was little known and even less admired in France.⁸ Germany had been omitted from the 1925 Exposition des Arts Décoratifs. The experience of World War I provides an obvious and immediate explanation for this rejection. Yet, in a deeper sense, the ideological rigor and discipline associated with Bauhaus teaching was alien to French sensibility and tastes. One cannot imagine, for example, Matisse leading a Bauhaus workshop. The philosophy and theory that had attended hard-edged geometric abstraction from the start was unacceptable to the French.

It was possible to see examples of Bauhaus work in Paris, through exhibitions and in reproductions illustrating the occasional magazine articles on the subject of the German school. Moholy-Nagy (Fig. 19) was represented at the 1925 L'Art d'Aujourd'hui exhibition by six works and Paul Klee showed four paintings. Artists like Vordemberge-Gildewart, although not formally associated with the Bauhaus, visited there and reflected its prevailing style (Fig. 20). Related tendencies were sometimes the closest Parisian artists might come to viewing the products of the German institution, as in the Soviet Pavilion seen at the 1925 Exposition designed by Melnikov, or Kiesler's Cité dans l'Espace, which brought Constructivist design to Paris.

Germany was finally invited to contribute to the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in 1930 by which time political and

aesthetic tempers had changed. The German Werkbund was entrusted with the show by the foreign ministry and it was their decision to hand full responsibility for its organization to Walter Gropius. As commissioner, Gropius chose Breuer, Herbert Bayer and Moholy-Nagy to assist him in demonstrating "a new way of life." The selection of products from German industry revealed many aspects of work under way at the Bauhaus. There was no concession to French taste, as the event is described by Giedion who cites several reviews in his study of Walter Gropius first published in 1932. French response was positive. In Figaro, the following appeared on May 16, 1930:

Est-ce là vraiment un Salon d'artistes décorateurs au sens habituel? Non, c'est plutôt une nouvelle conception de lignes, surfaces, contenance pour une vie abstraite, disciplinée sans restrictions ni souci d'atténuer la vie même.

Reviewer Léandre Vaillat also wrote words of praise in Temps:

Aujourd'hui, Berlin a remplacé Munich; les tentatives audacieuses qui partaient de Munich avant la guerre reviennent maintenant de Berlin...Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que pour nous, la section allemande n'est pas seulement un Salon, parmi tant d'autres, mais qu'elle reflète fidèlement le visage de la jeune Allemagne.⁹

German diplomats who had worried about the radical character of this exhibition and its possible ill effects upon the French, were truly astonished by the success and proceeded to invite the organizers to a reception at the embassy which Giedion vividly describes in his 1932 book:

W. Gropius présenta à l'Ambassadeur une liste des artistes français que le diplomate ratifia en soupirant. Le jour de la réception, se tenait au pied de l'escalier

d'honneur, un huissier en livrée rouge, qui frappait le sol de son bâton à chaque fois qu'il annonçait: "M. Perret, M. Mondrian (en habit et cravate empruntés), M. Le Corbusier, M. et Mme. Delaunay, M. et Mme. Arp, M. Vantongerloo, M. Léger!" tous personnages peu accoutumés à fréquenter ces salons. Et ce fut une fols réjouissance.¹⁰

This reception culminates a decade of near silence in the press on the subject of the German achievements. What acknowledgement did occur came after 1924. An early mention of the Bauhaus in the French press appeared in the 19th issue of L'Esprit Nouveau under the heading "Pedagogie," a notice and favorable review of a Bauhaus album of 1922. In number 27, there was an article by Gropius, "Développement de l'esprit architectural moderne en Allemagne" which underlined shared concerns with French Purists whose vigorous rationalistic theories touched common chords. Gropius's rejection of ornament, his attitudes on proportion struck familiar notes:

Sous le règne de l'art décoratif, l'art de bâtir était tombé dans un esthétisme faible et sentimental, conceptions décoratives désuètes qui ne pensaient trouver leur but que dans des applications routinières de motifs, d'ornaments, de moulurations, recouvrant le corps même de l'oeuvre.¹¹

Photographs of buildings by Gropius and Mies Van der Rohe accompany this text. In 1927, Cahiers d'Art published Gropius' new architecture at Dessau. Three years later, the magazine presented a comprehensive and historical view of the Bauhaus school, written by Will Grohmann.¹² Vouloir in Lille repeatedly recognized and admired the German school as did the editors of the 1927, Documents internationaux de l'Esprit

Nouveau.

Magazines and other publications issued by the Bauhaus were circulated in Paris. The library of Robert and Sonia Delaunay, for example, contained many Bauhaus publications.¹⁴ Jean Gorin told of avidly reading "Les Journaux mensuels du Bauhaus" which are prominent in his personal archive at Meudon.

The series of Bauhausbücher, one of the most remarkable and unique publishing ventures between 1925-30, was responsible for the spread of Bauhaus ideas. Edited by Moholy-Nagy and Gropius, the series had the double objective of explaining the Bauhaus to the world and making available other related texts believed to support and extend Bauhaus views. In this second category, Mondrian, Van Doesburg, Malevich and Gleizes were included. Any feuds between Van Doesburg and the school did not interfere with the publication of his ideas. A major feature of this series, according to Welsh, "is that one can read most of these texts as making common cause for a form of abstraction in art which is belied in the diversity of styles and background of the artist-authors."¹⁵ The fact that Gleizes' Du Cubisme was a Bauhaus book underlines the extent to which various points of departure were acceptable within a common orientation. This sense of common cause pervades thirties abstraction in Paris.

Most of the texts published in the Bauhaus series stress the self-sufficiency of abstract formal means above earlier, more abstruse philosophies, partly in the interests of clarity

and partly in response to the changing tone of the period. Thus, liberated from ideological underpinnings, it is not surprising that a younger generation in Germany and also in France came to see abstract art largely in perceptual terms, as an autonomous style.

Travels between Paris and the German Bauhaus accounted for another means of cross-fertilization. Gleizes was one of the few French artists to have full command of the German language, as well as English. Cosmopolitan and sophisticated, he lectured and wrote extensively throughout the twenties and had special importance as purveyor of international ideas. This was also the case for Jean Arp. His knowledge of German, background experience and intellectual curiosity made him an essential liaison between Russian, German and French avant-gardes, as well as between abstract and Surrealist camps.

Ozenfant also lectured at the Bauhaus in 1930 as recorded in his journal of that year, "I am just back from the Bauhaus where I was lecturing. I went to see Kandinsky and Klee."¹⁶ Domela went from Paris to Berlin in 1927 for a six-year stay. He made frequent trips to the Bauhaus during this period and was much impressed by the diverse use of materials, glass, plastics and brass which he began to incorporate into his constructed reliefs in 1928, although claiming "I constructed my works, but never was a Constructivist."¹⁷ During the late twenties, Domela knew Moholy-Nagy well and also spent time in Hannover with Kurt Schwitters and Vordemberge-Gildewart. This knowledge and experience Domela brought back to Paris when

he returned in 1933, a member of Abstraction-Création.

In 1931, Héliion set out to learn more of "Constructivist" developments beyond the French border. "As a young Frenchman, I hardly knew of the Bauhaus," he remembers. Héliion did not go to that institution, but instead to Soviet Russia via Berlin where he stopped to see Gabo.

I knew Gabo, I had met him in Berlin on my way to Russia. He was somebody out of Russia knowing lots of things we didn't know at all in Paris. In Russia it was extremely hard to see anything about art. All that seemed to have disappeared. You could not meet the people, I asked for Lissitzky, nobody knew where he was, nor Malevich. I was able to meet Tatlin, but he spoke no language I knew...I felt something had really happened in Russia and I wanted to feel it. I could not really find it. I found Rodchenko very much alive and bubbling over, it was very inspiring. I stayed three months and went back to Paris via Sweden where I stayed with Otto Carl-sund, a good friend and a poet.¹⁸

Significantly, Héliion had been completely unaware of the repressive attitudes toward modern and abstract art in Russia after 1922. Carl-sund was a co-collaborator on Art Concret and had organized an exhibition of the group and other painters in Stockholm in 1931, called Kubism, Post-Kubism, Purism, 19
Konstruktivism, Neo-Plasticism, ¹¹ in which Héliion took part.

Travels also took place from the Bauhaus to Paris. Bauhaus student Henryk Neugeboren, who latter assumed the name Henri Nouveau, came to Paris late in 1929, prior to a ²⁰ one-man show the following year (Fig. 21). He was closely associated with Héliion during the period when Art Concret was created although he never signed his name to their manifesto. Among Bauhaus masters, Gropius and Moholy-Nagy repeatedly visited France during the 1920's and 1930's and Moholy is

reported to have attended several Abstraction-Création committee meetings. Finally, Wassily Kandinsky became the only Bauhaus master to settle in the French capital after the Bauhaus closed in 1933. There he spent the last eleven productive years of his life.

As the only Bauhaus master to reside permanently in Paris, it is perhaps ironic that Paris changed Kandinsky more than he appears to have altered the course of abstract art in that city. Kandinsky's arrival in the fall of 1933 coincided with the modification of his Constructive, geometric Bauhaus manner in favor of a more expressive style. Biomorphic and zoomorphic shapes appear from 1934, creating on canvas a universe teeming with organic life. There are strong similarities to the contemporary work of Arp and Miro, the former a friend from Munich days and the latter a warmly admired new acquaintance. "Miro I like very much, he is a little volcano who throws out paintings constantly, physically a small volcano but his strength is very great," he wrote to American collector, Katherine Dreier.²¹

Kandinsky's impact on the Paris art world came in two stages. The first one preceded his actual arrival and was based upon two important exhibitions, participation in the Cercle et Carré group, reviews of his work and the artist's own writings in the French language. A Parisian public gained access to Kandinsky's art and thought for the first time since his last appearance in the 1912 Salon des Indépendents. Not until the artist's move to France did a real

understanding of his work develop and the second phase of Kandinsky's influence followed. Describing the stages of his own awareness of this master, Hé lion remarked:

Kandinsky, I met with Van Doesburg at a show of his near St. Germain-des-Prés in 1930. He was intelligent, courteous, reserved, but I did not immediately understand the painter he was. Not until his arrival in Paris a few years later did I get to know and admire him. But already then I had sensed in Kandinsky a freedom within a discipline that must have helped me to develop my painting from a minimum sign to a complex one.²²

Hé lion is not alone in searching for a freedom within discipline. In this, Kandinsky was an inspiration. For many others, however, Kandinsky's work fit no acceptable category. Abstract artists attracted to Neoplasticism found him too lyrical and expressionistic, "a nature painter."²³ Never having embraced Cubism, Kandinsky's space was completely different from the assertive flat surface of Mondrian. On the other hand, his art was linked to Surrealism by several critics. E. Tériade said in L'Intransigeant, "This painter of Russian origin is a most outstanding personality. With Paul Klee he should be considered a leader of so-called pictorial Surrealism."²⁴ Tériade further developed this position in the Cahiers d'Art.²⁵ The suggested relationship to Surrealism was based upon Kandinsky's expression of states of the soul, his interest in children's art and the art of primitive people. Among the Surrealists, Kandinsky was far less welcome. They counted him with the detested abstractionists.

Kandinsky recognized his plight and as always he wrote

extensively in hopes of enlightening public and critics. During his Paris years and those immediately preceding, he wrote more than a dozen articles in periodicals, catalogues and portfolios, returning again to the problem of abstract art and its cultural justification. The first French article by Kandinsky to appear in the Cahiers d'Art was a response to a questionnaire conceived by Zervos on the meaning of abstract art. Written from Dessau, the essay, "Réflexions sur l'art abstrait," 1931, includes some of the artist's most eloquent statements. Objecting to the notion that a painting is called "geometric," he asks why "a picture in which vegetable forms are present is not called botanical?" Using poetic analogy, he elicits the effect of abstract shapes and forms, "The impact of the acute angle of a triangle on a circle produces an effect no less powerful than the finger of God touching the finger of Adam in Michelangelo. And if the fingers are not just anatomical or physiological but something more, so also a triangle or a circle is something more than geometry."²⁶

Zervos held Kandinsky in high esteem. He published a number of subsequent essays by him, solicited articles about Kandinsky, and favorably reviewed the artist's first one man show in Paris.²⁷ The exhibition at the Galerie Zak in January 1929 included 66 watercolors and graphics made between 1925-28. Zervos opens with an admission of his own ignorance of Kandinsky's work, first hand, prior to a trip to Dessau in the winter of 1927. He senses a strong analogy to music in this

art and admires its color qualities. In conclusion, Zervos refers the reader to a forthcoming article on Kandinsky by Will Grohmann. Grohmann's essay appeared within the year, the first historical survey and celebration of this artist's achievement to appear in a French publication.²⁸ Kandinsky had eagerly awaited the publication of Grohmann's article and he wrote to the author in appreciation:

Today finally the 7th volume of Cahiers d'Art arrived. I was naturally curious to see how your article and the pictures would show up in a French journal. The impression is very positive. To be able to read your article in French is totally staisfying. I would like in these few lines to thank you for your essay, which my wife read twice with great satisfaction. To paint pictures is not hard, to be understood is difficult. This must be correctly interpreted - it is not praise that pleases the artist but to hit the nail on the head and you have done it.²⁹

The reproductions illustrating Grohmann's text are mainly of works that date before the war. Works from the twenties, the artist's "cold period," in his own phrase,³⁰ were more apt to produce French resistance, Grohmann believed. Kandinsky, however, repeatedly emphasized his separation from "Constructivist" abstraction. In the 1931 essay for Cahiers d'Art he said, "artists who call themselves pure Constructivists have made various attempts to build on a purely materialistic foundation. In order to serve modern 'rationality' in a suitable way, they have tried to eliminate 'feeling' (intuition) as outworn."³¹ Kandinsky re-enunciates his own belief in the primacy of this latter quality.

At the time of his second Parisian exhibition, Kandinsky and his wife made a short trip to Paris. His work was being

shown simultaneously at the Galerie de France and with the group Cercle et Carré at Galerie 23, rue la Boétie in 1930. Several group photographs show him beside members of this group in the gallery (Fig. 22). Zervos openly pleads for public understanding of the master in his review of this second show at Galerie de France. "Kandinsky est un peintre et qu'il suffirait de voir ses peintures pour s'en convaincre. Généralement on portait sur son oeuvre des jugements arbitraire du fait que depuis le Salon des Indépendants de 1912, Kandinsky n'avait plus occupé la curiosité du public parisien." He applauds his vision, calling it, "la plus intime en même temps que la plus générale de l'artiste." He speaks of his excellent ordering of tones and in conclusion, he again offers an apology for the general misunderstanding that has surrounded Kandinsky's work: "Cela suffit pour classer Kandinsky parmi les bons peintres d'aujourd'hui en dépit des objections de tous ceux postulent un idéal pictural digne de leur insuffisance et approprié à leurs instincts (Fig. 23)."³²

The welcome extended by sophisticated critics was not supported by official press and public. "À Paris, l'art scientifique de Kandinsky était jugé contraire à l'essence même de la peinture,"³³ stated Georges Marlier. This idea that the art of Kandinsky was "scientific," separated him from French taste and sensibility. Marlier makes reference to Kandinsky's inquiry into the fundamental elements of painting. By way of explaining this notion he states that Kandinsky explores the point, the line and the plane, "selon un esprit

rigoreusement scientifique." The acknowledgment of the artist's second major theoretical tract, Point and Line to Plane, published as the ninth Bauhaus book in 1926, is important since the work was virtually unknown in France.³⁴ A brief outline of the book with accompanying diagrams and drawings, titled "Analyse des éléments premiers de la peinture" appeared in the Cahiers de Belgique in May, 1928, in connection with Kandinsky's first exhibition in Brussels at the Galerie l'Époque in March of that year. At the time, Kandinsky wrote to Grohmann commending the French for their willingness to respond to his work without heavy explanatory theory. "The French," he said, "are more interested in the quality equals work equation [Qualité=Leistung] than in theoretical principles which is a most rare experience in Germany."³⁵

In his introduction to this French translation of the essay, Kandinsky apologizes for theory and concludes that a balance between intuition and reflection is necessary.

Point and Line to Plane is written in the analytic terms of a scientific textbook in which Kandinsky investigates graphic elements, point and line, first in isolation and then examines their reciprocal effects in composition.³⁶ Like Paul Klee's Pedagogical Sketchbook written during the same period, Point and Line conforms to the rationalistic spirit prevalent at the Bauhaus. The spirit became reality when the Bauhaus curriculum was expanded to include courses in the sciences by the late twenties under Director Hannes Meyer. Bauhaus student, Hannes Beckmann described this period vividly

in his memoir:

Painting and other artistic activities were in danger of becoming isolated and the Bauhaus seemed to develop into a school of architecture and industrial design only. It was at this time that the student council requested that lectures about Gestalt psychology should be given. The request was granted and von Durkheim came from Leipzig to give a series of lectures on the subject. Up until this time design problems were more or less solved on the feeling level. It looked as if the artist asked the scientists for reassurance that they were on the right track. The Gestalt psychologists had after all for years investigated how we perceive and interpret form and color in the mind. They explained the reason why some configurations make for good reading - for a good Gestalt, where the whole makes more than the sum of its parts - whereas other configurations will make for bad reading, for a bad Gestalt.³⁷

It is perfectly natural that artists, especially abstract artists at the Bauhaus, would have been attracted to the newest perceptual psychology. The pioneering studies in Germany during the early twenties by Max Wertheimer, Köhler, and Kurt Koffka are replete with diagrams on vision. Art pervades their writings which repudiate piecemeal handling of perceptual data. Their essential claim that vision is a dynamic process of organization and that the perceptual scene is not an aggregate of unrelated elements because underlying processes are already functionally interrelated when that scene emerges, these are ideas that artists have always understood. Now it became scientifically provable. Historian of abstract art, Dora Vallier has observed, "Since the whole adventure of abstract art takes place far away from what can be stated logically, it seems to me that the key to its message must be looked for in the Gestalt - that untranslatable German term for a form conceived as some-

how including both the form-aspect and its experience."³⁸

Many of the basic Gestalt concepts are compatible with Kandinsky's ideas, particularly as expressed in Point and Line. E.D. Ettlenger has suggested that the shift in emphasis that distinguishes Kandinsky's text from his previous writing reflects the influence of Gestalttheorie. He goes so far as to say, "The whole of Point and Line to Plane once we take out the many digressions is nothing but an examination of the principles of pattern making."³⁹ There are indeed striking points in common not only between Kandinsky's text and Gestalt writings but also between his many illustrative diagrams and Gestalt experiments. Others have recognized this as well, but to suggest that the whole change in tone that characterizes this essay is due to Gestalt principles is carrying the point to an extreme as it ignores the many theoretical factors in the climate of the Bauhaus that might account for this transformation in Kandinsky's thought.

Furthermore, there is no solid evidence that Kandinsky had read the Gestalt texts at the time he wrote Point and Line which was ready for publication in the fall of 1925 and, in fact, was in the planning for many years. Few Gestalt essays had been published by the mid-twenties, although the ideas were certainly being discussed. Gestalt itself was an outgrowth of perceptual theories of Theodore Lipps and the nineteenth-century work on vision of Helmholtz and Ernst Mach.⁴⁰

By the time Kandinsky had direct contact with Gestalt in the late twenties, he could easily assimilate its findings

with his earlier education. Gestalt related perfectly to ideas and interests that Kandinsky had himself been exploring for years. When specific Gestalt figures enter his paintings as Sixten Ringbom has pointed out, it may be that Kandinsky and Köhler, whose experiment is the case in point, both drew from the same earlier sources. The painting, Yellow Center, of 1934, is based upon a contrast of two shapes, a zig-zag edge and a fluid, curvilinear line are juxtaposed much the same way as in Wolfgang Köhler's diagram. Ringbom compares Köhler's shapes to Kandinsky drawings from Point and Line (Figs. 24, 25).⁴¹

The new Gestalt Psychology fit comfortably into the Bauhaus atmosphere where perceptual and scientific concerns were replacing the earlier spiritual and metaphysical quest. This is not to deny a remarkable consistency in Kandinsky's values in art throughout his lifetime, rather it is meant to emphasize the general tendency to stress the epistemological and optical aspects of art typical of the Bauhaus environment. It was a tendency that traveled from Germany to France along the same routes as the Constructivist ethos.

Kandinsky's ideas were available in the French language, including the abbreviated portion of Point and Line. In this outline, Kandinsky stressed the notion that composition is nothing other than the rapport of tensions pent up in the elements themselves, forces that are internal to these elements. The language, including words "forces" and "fields" and "continuity" or phrases such as the "whole being greater

than the sum of the parts," enters the discourse in Paris during the thirties. Héliou, in a representative example, concludes an essay for a catalogue in 1935 by discussing the idea of totality versus fragmentation and speaks of the "field of possibilities" for forms.⁴² Earlier, Le Corbusier explicitly stated, regarding his architectural concepts, that "the whole possesses a greater value than five or ten parts."⁴³ The Polish theory of Unism which made its way into Paris through the artists Stazewski and Kobro, and the magazine, L'Art Contemporain, is based upon a self-contained unity for art which incorporates the notion of a strong visual gestalt. Gabo, who spent periods of time in Paris, and whose ideas were known in a limited circle through his brother Pevsner, then a French citizen, demonstrates in several essays an awareness of Gestalt ideas. For example, in the essay published in Circle, 1937, he states:

It [the Constructive idea] has revealed an universal law that the elements of a visual art such as lines, colors, shapes, possess their own forces of expression independent of any association with the external aspects of the world; that their life and their action are self-conditioned psychological phenomena rooted in human nature; that those elements are not chosen by convention for any utilitarian or other reason as words and figures are, they are not merely abstract signs, but they are immediately and organically bound up with human emotions.⁴⁴

Like Kandinsky, Gabo recognizes the internal "forces" that give vitality to formal elements. His suggestion that the way we perceive is rooted in human nature, that patterns of forms have structural correspondence with vision became a central and controversial Gestalt idea.

Gestalt writings were immediately available in France.

A reading of French psychological journals from the twenties and thirties quickly substantiates this claim. Artists not only could read Gestalt in French in these journals, but they also contributed articles on various aesthetic problems. Active rapport is evident in both the art and psychological magazines. Psychologists like Dr. Allendy wrote for L'Esprit Nouveau and artists Ozenfant and Le Corbusier were included in the Journal de Psychologie in 1926.⁴⁵

The infiltration of Gestalt ideas within the intellectual climate of Paris in the thirties was subtle and gradual. There was no single source for this, nor an obvious or profound impact on the art and discourse. What can be observed is a growing preoccupation with figure-ground reversals, visual ambiguity, optical effects in painting, and in art talk. Concepts about optics and sensory perception are introduced with greater frequency. These concepts fully emerge only after World War II. Gestalt and related perceptual experiments belong rather to a broader set of ideas. Detachment from the ideological rigor that had earlier informed abstract art opened the way for the new scientific bases to occupy a greater space and allowed for the possibility that an abstract vision might be more real and fundamental to human nature than any other.

Notes to Chapter II.

1. Ozenfant, Art (1928); trans. John Rodker as Foundations of Modern Art, new American ed. (New York: Dover, 1952), p. 103. Hélicon said there were 40,000 painters in Paris in a letter to Gallatin, Oct. 17, 1936; Seuphor says 36,000 in an essay for Abstraction-Création, no. 1 (1932), p. 11.
2. Authoritative discussion of the term in Bahn, introduction to The Tradition of Constructivism, The Documents of 20th Century Art (New York: Viking, 1974).
3. Elderfield, "On Constructivism," Artforum, XIV (May, 1971), 63.
4. De Stijl's international phase is clearly defined in Banham, chap. 14.
5. Quoted in Baljeu, p. 43. For Van Doesburg's own account of events at Weimar see De Stijl, jubilee issue, 1927.
6. Robert Welsh, "Abstraction and the Bauhaus," Artforum, XIII (March, 1970), 47.
7. Ibid., p. 49.
8. Analysis of this relationship between the Bauhaus and Paris in Michel Hoog, "Le Bauhaus et la France, 1919-1933," Cimaise, nos. 16-17 (January 1969-December 1970), 50-55.

9. S. Giedion, Walter Gropius (Paris: A. Morancé, 1932; rpt. Paris, 1951), quoted in Hoog, p. 51.
10. Ibid.
11. L'Esprit Nouveau, no. 27, n.d.
12. Grohmann, "Dernières oeuvres de Walter Gropius," Cahiers d'Art, II, no. 3 (1927), 118-120; S. Giedion, "Walter Gropius et l'architecture en Allemagne," ibid., V, no. 2 (1930), 95-103; Will Grohmann, "École d'art moderne," ibid., V, no. 5 (1930), 273-274.
13. See below, p. 97.
14. Hoog, "Bauhaus et France," p. 52.
15. Welsh, "Abstraction and Bauhaus," p. 49.
16. Ozenfant, Journey Through Life, trans., Helen Beauclerk and Violet MacDonald (New York: Macmillan, 1939), entry May 12, 1930.
17. Domela, April, 1977.
18. Hélon, July, 1976.
19. The exhibition held at a restaurant in Stockholm was a failure, some of the paintings disappeared and Carlslund did not return to Paris again, nor did he paint for 15 years, according to Hélon (July, 1976).

20. For biography of Nouveau see 50 Years, Bauhaus, exhibition catalogue, Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago, 1969), p. 354.
21. Kandinsky to Dreier, December 19, 1935. Originally, "Miro, der sehr sympatisch ist. Er ist ein kleiner Vulkan, aus dem standig grosse Bilder herausgeschleudert werden. Körperlich ist er ein kleiner Vulkan, da er selbst klein ist, aber als Kraft is er ein grosser."
22. Hélicon, "Art Concret 1930," p. 140.
23. This opinion, held by Holtzman, Domela and Gorin, was communicated in personal interviews.
24. Quoted in the Blue Four catalogue (Hollywood, California, 1930), cited by Kenneth Lindsay, "An Examination of the Fundamental Theories of Wassily Kandinsky" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1951), p. 14, note 31.
25. Tériade, "Documentaire sur la jeune peinture," Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 2 (1930), 69. See below, pp. 227 ff. for discussion of this critic's ideas.
26. In Cahiers d'Art, VI, nos. 7-8 (1931), trans., "Reflections on Abstract Art," in exhibition catalogue, Paintings by Kandinsky from The Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection, Tate Gallery (London, 1958), n. pag.
27. Zervos, "Les expositions," Cahiers d'Art, III, no. 10 (1928), 451.

28. Grohmann, "Kandinsky," Cahiers d'Art, IV, no. 7 (1929), 322.
29. Kandinsky, letter to Grohmann, November 22, 1929, in Künstler schreiben an Will Grohmann, ed. Karl Gutbrod (Cologne: Dumont Schauberg, 1968), p. 55, trans. author.
30. Kandinsky wrote, "À partir du début de 1914, je sentais le désir de la 'tranquillité un peu froide,'" in "Toile vide," Cahiers d'Art, X, nos. 5-6 (1935), 117.
31. Kandinsky, "Reflections," Tate catalogue.
32. Zervos, "Les expositions," Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 2 (1930), 104.
33. Marlier, "La revanche de Kandinsky," Sélection, chronique de la vie artistique (Brussels), no. 14 (1933), 17.
34. The book was published in France in a limited edition of 60, as Point Ligne Surface, translated from the German by Christine Boumeester (Paris: éditions de Beaune, 1963).
35. Kandinsky letter to Grohmann, February 25, 1929, in Künstler schreiben, p. 54.
36. For detailed analysis of this tract, see Lindsay, p. 24ff.
37. Eckhard Neumann, ed., Bauhaus and Bauhaus People (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970), p. 199. Karl Dunker, a student of Wolfgang Köhler, founder of Gestalttheorie,

was also invited to give lectures. Josef Albers and Kandinsky sat in on these courses according to scholar Marianne Teuber who has corresponded with von Durkheim. The content of these Bauhaus courses is preserved, in part, in notes taken by American Bauhaus student Howard Dearstyne (Bauhaus Archive, Busch Reisinger Museum, Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts). For information on this material including knowledge of the Dearstyle notes in the Bauhaus archive, I am indebted to Teuber who has worked to establish relations between Klee, Kandinsky and Albers and the teachings of Gestalt Theory. See Teuber, "New Aspects of Paul Klee," Paul Klee, The Bauhaus Years, exhibition catalogue, Des Moines Art Center (Iowa, 1973).

38. Vallier, Abstract Art, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: The Orion Press, Grossman Publishers, 1970), p. 302.
39. Ettlinger, Kandinsky's "At Rest", Charlton lectures on art (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 16. Ettlinger's views are not widely accepted. The notion of "closure" is paramount in linking Kandinsky's work to Gestalt. Kurt Koffka wrote on this concept: "if a line forms a closed or almost closed figure, we see no longer merely a line on a homogeneous background, but a surface figure bounded by the line." Lindsay cites this quote (p. 106), and compares it to several statements made by Kandinsky.
40. Teuber has suggested (Klee, Bauhaus Years, p. 9), that

Helmoltz' famous lecture "Origin of the Geometric Axioms" (1870), describing how a moving point produces a line, a moving line a plane and a moving plane, volume, may have been the source for the title of Kandinsky's book.

41. Ringbom, The Sounding Cosmos, A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Painting (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1970), pp. 189-191.
42. Héliou, Thèse, Antithèse, Synthèse, exhibition catalogue, Kunstmuseum (Lucerne, February, March, 1935), p. 9.
"L'artiste doit penser dans l'ordre des formes et des couleurs, dans le champ même de leurs possibilités..."
43. Le Corbusier, "...l'on saura qu'un entier vaut mieux que 5 ou 10 parties." "L'exposition de l'école spéciale d'architecture," L'Esprit Nouveau, no. 23, n.d.
44. Gabo, "The Constructive Idea in Art," Circle, eds. N. Gabo, B. Nicholson, J.L. Martin (London: Faber and Faber, 1937; rpt. ed., New York: Praeger, 1971).
45. Ozenfant, "Sur les écoles cubistes et post-cubistes," Journal de Psychologie, no. 23 (1926); the same issue included an article by Henri Focillon, "Esthétique des visionnaires." This Journal published Koffka's "Théorie de la Forme," a seminal essay defining Gestalt, in 1924. French Gestaltist, Paul Guillaume, wrote frequently for this magazine. An important conference at the Collège

de France in November, 1929, brought together leading Gestalt psychologists from Germany. Talks were presented, translated into French, and published in the Journal.

CERCLE ET CARRÉ AND ART CONCRET

Chapter III: Cercle et Carré and the Role of Michel Seuphor

Halfway between the two wars, 1930 was a pivotal year. The Bauhaus was revealed to the Parisian public in a big exhibition of decorative arts at the Grand Palais and Kandinsky had a first Paris show of paintings. Cézanne was featured at the Galerie Pigalle and other modern masters were similarly honored. It was during this year or immediately after that artists Robert Delaunay, Jacques Villon and Auguste Herbin returned to abstract paintings after figurative phases in their careers. 1930 was also a year of grave economic depression. Yet, as Hélicon recalls, "The depression did not concern the penniless adventurers that we were...During that one year [1930], something stood still in the general excitement. We experienced that blank moment together. It did not last."¹

In that moment, Paris-based abstract artists took responsibility for creating their own propaganda and groups Cercle et Carré and Art Concret were organized. It was a time for abstract artists to break out of isolation and consolidate energies. Ideals and meals were shared in an atmosphere of sympathy and warmth. A genuine spirit of love and enthusiasm characterized actions and as Hélicon recalls, there was a willingness to make things happen. What happened was not always the result of reasoned analysis. Chance meetings were occasioned

by poverty, a common need to live cheaply, for example. Luck played a vital role. The sudden discovery of an empty and suitable space to hold an exhibition altered the course of history.

Competition was inevitable. Many different nationalities and backgrounds were represented among abstract artists. Yet, vigorous quarrels did not negate a common ground of being. "Narrow minds are used in politics, not in art," said Hé lion. "Art is an opening of the mind. We all met through our openings and we fought on our narrowings and that was very healthy."²

Within a month, two groups of abstract artists were formed. Each announced their intentions in a review. Cercle et Carré appeared in March of 1930; a month later the more single-minded and dogmatic Art Concret was born. "À Cercle et Carré on était assez éclectique et je trouve que ce n'était pas mal," noted member Marcelle Cahn.³ "À Art Concret ils étaient, dans un sens, plus théoriciens."

The principle animateurs, Michel Seuphor and Theo Van Doesburg, held their respective positions for short periods of time. Seuphor became ill while preparing a fourth issue of Cercle et Carré in October. He left Paris and did not return until May of 1931 by which time his group had dissolved and Van Doesburg was dead. The single issue of Art Concret appeared in April 1930. With the death of Van Doesburg and Seuphor's disappearance from the scene, others picked up the pieces. The result of their efforts was the stronger and more durable Abstraction-Création, founded in 1931 on the

belief that each of the earlier groups had failed for want of something the other had. Compromise was integral to Abstraction-Création. If Art Concret was too small and too strict in posture, Cercle et Carré was thought too broad and inclusive in its premises. The Art Concret manifesto was absolutist and unyielding, closely aligned in this respect with Constructivist movements from the 1920's. As such, it reflects a final effort to preserve this past tradition. Cercle et Carré set a tone for the future.

Nous vivons à l'entrée d'une époque nouvelle; le vieux se supprime soi-même par l'imitation. Je suis heureux d'apprendre que "Cercle et Carré" est parvenu à grouper un certain nombre d'hommes qui, malgré leur apparente diversité, s'efforcent simultanément vers une conscience d'esprit et des intentions de notre époque et d'exprimer son style.⁴

The "époque nouvelle" announced by Domela in Cercle et Carré meant dissolving barriers between abstract styles and ideologies. How else might one group include members of De Stijl, Domela, Vantongerloo, Vilmos Huszar, Vordemberge-Gildewart and Mondrian with Polish Constructivists Stazewski and Brzekowski and Russian Constructivist Pevsner, beside Italian Futurists Prampolini, Russolo and Purists Ozenfant and Jeanneret in addition to established Parisian artists Léger and Arp as well as the German modernist Baumeister, the Uruguayan Torres-García and ex-Dadaist Kurt Schwitters. Pragmatism was the working methodology for this group - to support exhibitions, to publish a review and create a forum for discourse. The group ultimately established a broad common denominator for the cause of abstract art.

"Une période de stabilisation" is an appropriately characteristic phrase used to describe the moment by Polish poet Jan Brzekowski. "Après un vingtaine d'années de recherches pour établir l'art nouveau, nous voilà dans une période de stabilisation, de standardization d'après les vraies valeurs artistiques."⁵ The simple power of pure geometry drew many together. The circle, the square and the right angle remained signs of the faith that had animated previous generations of abstractionists even though it was a faith less ardent than before. To some, geometric shapes carried grand implications and potent symbolism; for others, they were signs of a rational order, obedient to what is most modern in the world. For Van Doesburg, the square represented "the basic scheme of the new consciousness of the time as the cross was during the middle ages."⁶ Whether a direct reference to the square of the Russian Malevich to whom Van Doesburg was much indebted in his Elementarist theory, Van Doesburg was after an art of essences with all the anonymity that the sign implies.

Seuphor's group, despite Van Doesburg's refusal to participate, acknowledged this prophetic sign in its name and graphic symgol (Fig. 26). "Cercle et Carré" was chosen by Seuphor to reinforce the spirit of unity that he was seeking. It was to be "L'emblème le plus simple de la totalité des choses. Le monde rationnel et le monde sensorial, la terre et le ciel de l'ancien symbolisme chinois, la géométrie rectiligne et la géométrie curviligne, le homme et la femme, Mondrian et Arp."⁷ The concept was intended to embrace diversity.

Mondrian sanctioned the title despite his alleged distaste for the circle. Kandinsky, of course, was for it. His preoccupation with the circle during the late 1920's was intense, and his response to Seuphor's invitation to join the group tells how he was affected: "It was a joy for me to see so well executed in black and white, my beloved forms the circle and the square." He refers to the symbol which appeared on the stationery. Then, he adds a warning to Seuphor: "I trust I shall not disappoint you in giving my opinion on the subject of structure which, in my view, is of course a very important question, which I however do not consider as an end in the matter of art but simply as a means toward the end." ⁸ Kandinsky's warning is a carryover from the past. Younger participants inclined toward more optical and formalist attitudes, valuing the shapes as ends in themselves.

Issues raised by Cercle et Carré and Art Concret establish major themes for abstract art in the decade of the thirties. Not surprisingly, these themes relate closely to the ideals and enthusiasms of the respective leaders, Van Doesburg and Seuphor. Van Doesburg is a major figure in art history by 1930, his ideas and accomplishments were known and recorded. By comparison, Michel Seuphor was little known although, as it turns out, no newcomer to activist group enterprises. The two had come together on several earlier projects and discovered themselves unable or unwilling to collaborate successfully. The problems were the same as those that divided them into groups, Cercle et Carré and Art Concret - the expansive

open-mindedness of Seuphor was incompatible with more restrictive rules created by Van Doesburg. Because it was inclusiveness rather than exclusivity that came to dominate Parisian abstract art and art groupings in the thirties, Seuphor's role proved to be the more highly catalytic. Michel Seuphor is, therefore, the proper starting point for our story.

Seuphor's present reputation is based largely upon his several major volumes that chronicle abstract art.⁹ Invariably, his background as poet, painter, critic and entrepreneur has been neglected. His early encounters with members of the international vanguard during his youth in Belgium, Berlin, and Italy, demonstrated enormous organizing and literary talents long before these abilities emerged on the Paris art scene. Although he produced several large gouaches in 1929 (Figs. 27, 28), closely emulating Mondrian, he did not consider himself an artist during this period. These gouaches which hung on his walls when visitors Mondrian and Vantongerloo came regularly to his apartment, failed to elicit even the slightest response, he reports. Unnerved by the silence, Seuphor abandoned painting for the next decade and gave his energies to organizing the avant-garde. "I thought I was too close to Mondrian, that's a problem with Neoplasticism," he said.¹⁰

Seuphor was the most articulate literary personality to emerge on the side of abstraction during the thirties in Paris. As Marcelle Cahn expressed it, "Pour avoir fait ce qu'il a fait,

pour avoir su reconnaître ce qu'il a reconnu, il m'apparaissait comme un artiste. Une oeuvre plastique n'est pas toujours nécessaire pour situer quelqu'un." ¹¹ Seuphor has continued to support abstract art, particularly in its hard-edged and geometric manifestations, with all the fervor that was demanded during that decade of struggle. The very fervor creates a prejudice that irritates critics and artists. However, during the late twenties and thirties, Seuphor's energetic prose was unique and vital. Abstract art had few literary adherents, unlike the far more powerful and pervasive Surrealists, and those few interested critics lacked a solid forum. Seuphor's importance was attributable to his reputation and confidence as a man of letters and to his efforts to promote the international avant-garde. By the time he settled in Paris in 1925 at the age of 24, Seuphor had established solid contacts within the Parisian art world and throughout Europe through travel and letter-writing campaigns. He sought support for his first publishing venture, Het Overzicht, between 1921-1925, and also on behalf of several international artists' congresses, organized with Belgian Dada artist Josepf Peeters, ¹² and the Kring Moderne Kunst, 1920-1922, of Belgium.

Born Fernand Berckelaers in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1901, the young activist assumed the name Michel Seuphor at the age of 18 while participating in a satiric review aimed against his school professors. "Seuphor" was chosen as an anagram for "Orpheus" and it became the name he used as poet and writer; Berckelaers was signed to his activities as director

of Het Overzicht. The bi-monthly review first appeared in June, 1921, consecrated "aux arts, aux lettres et à l'humanité." The purpose and orientation of the magazine as stated in the introductory manifesto enunciates concepts that continuously re-emerge in Seuphor's later undertakings:

Nous vivons à une époque de désordre spirituel et matériel...nous nous opposons à toutes les tendances capricieuse des fanfarons et ad options pour principe un petit mot tout simple mais riche de contenus: travailler. Persuadés que l'ordre est la premier condition d'une action efficace, nous allons raisonner et essayer de construire quelque chose malgré la penurie des moyens que notre époque peut mettre à notre disposition.¹³

The will to "order" is the main task for abstractionists in the decade ahead and the effort to "construct" is its constant companion. The notion that this order will somehow right the spiritual disorder of the epoch is reiterated by Seuphor and others. It is closely related to the messianic thought of Mondrian and is repeatedly expressed in artists' writings during the thirties.

Within a year, the direction of Het Overzicht had shifted to accord a larger place to the plastic arts and particularly to international developments. Peeters was invited to collaborate. His previous experience organizing international congresses of artists brought fresh opportunity to penetrate the broader art community. Decisive to the shift in Het Overzicht's policy was the presence in Antwerp during October of 1921 of Theo Van Doesburg. Van Doesburg came to deliver an illustrated slide lecture about De Stijl. For Seuphor it was a first encounter with the movement and the man and also

with the art of Mondrian. As a young man of twenty it was a startling revelation, "I knew from that day, that a tremendous revolution had occurred in the world of the plastic arts."¹⁴ Eighteen months later, personal contact with Mondrian further altered his career.

So compelling were these new ideas to the young Seuphor that he appealed to Van Doesburg to collaborate on his magazine. Van Doesburg agreed in principle, yet made several demands about money. He wrote from Leyden in June, 1922, signing his letter I.K. Bonset, generally reserved for his "Dada" literary activities.

C'est avec plaisir que je collaborerais à votre journal, mais comme je reçois de très nombreuses demandes du même genre, il ne me serait pas indifférent de savoir si votre journal paie des honoraires et, dans l'affirmative, combien par colonne. J'aimerais aussi savoir si vous voulez que je vous envoie mes propres oeuvres ou bien des essais sur la poésie.¹⁵

The collaboration never took place. Nonetheless, Het Overzicht began to stimulate broad interest. From Berlin one A.C. Willink offered to display the magazine in a gallery across the street from the offices of Der Sturm, believing that their leader, Herwarth Walden "est très disposée à faire un peu de propagande ici pour votre revue." Het Overzicht was to a certain extent modeled after Der Sturm in its layout, and also related in appearance to Le Noi, an avant-garde Italian periodical directed by Prampolini. A post card to Seuphor from an Italian correspondent, Vasari, documents the exchange¹⁶ that took place between Le Noi and Het Overzicht.

Close contacts were also established in Spain where a

certain Spanish writer, Guillermo de Torre, wrote on September 20, 1923: "J'accept très ravi être votre correspondant à l'Espagne. Je vous tiendra au courant de ce qui ce passe ici." Frank Kupka wrote from Puteaux, France, "Je trouve le no. de H.O. [Het Overzicht] que vous avez bien voulu m'envoyer. Je vous en remercie de tout coeur." ¹⁷ By 1923, the magazine had achieved international status. Each number now had an original cover designed by Peeters, Servranckx, Moholy-Nagy, Robert Delaunay and J.P. Oud among others (Fig. 29). As the contents shifted more emphatically toward the defense of modern and particularly abstract art, articles, poems and reproductions were contributed by major artists, Prampolini, Marinetti, Russolo, Schwitters, Soupault, Gris, Picasso, Moholy-Nagy, Oud, Berlage, Huszar, Peeters, Joostens. The poet and writer, Paul Dermée, original editor of L'Esprit Nouveau before Purists Ozenfant and Jeanneret took over, ¹⁸ regularly contributed a feature, "Les Arts à Paris."

The last issue of Het Overzicht was published in February, 1925, the same year that Seuphor permanently left Antwerp and abandoned his given name forever. Although he had plans to settle in Paris, it was only months before he was off to Rome, seeking to persuade Italian Futurists to participate in a large international congress consecrated to all the European avant-garde movements to be held in Brussels and Antwerp.

Il s'agissait de mettre sur pied avec Marinetti et Prampolini, un congrès universel de l'art moderne qui devait se tenir à Bruxelles, à Anvers et se terminer en Europe Centrale....Après deux ou trois réunions au domicile de Marinetti, Piazza Adriana, je vis bien que

le projet échouait et que j'avais fait le voyage pour rien.¹⁹

Seuphor's activities on behalf of the avant-garde were intense during these years. In many ways they may be likened to those of Van Doesburg. Van Doesburg was interested in promoting his own De Stijl movement and his personal theory of Elementarism, whereas Seuphor was open-minded in his role as entrepreneur, defending and supporting all that fell under his conception of a Constructivist art. Like Van Doesburg, Seuphor had absorbed much that was Dada in spirit. This is reflected in his attitude and his creative writing. To Seuphor, Dada meant freedom - "Dada n'a rien détruit du tout, il a seulement libéré," he remarked.²⁰

Seuphor wrote a Dada-inspired, "Pièce de théâtre, anti-théâtre," entitled "L'éphémère est éternel," in 1926 after having failed in his original purposes for the visit to Rome. Experiences with both Prampolini and Balla added to the flavor of this experimental work. Seuphor explains:

En vérité, il s'agissait moins d'anti-théâtre que d'élargissement de la conception classique du théâtre. Il s'agissait d'esprit d'invention, de la conquête d'une certaine candeur, de communion directe avec la salle... Mais en même temps une certaine continuité historique n'était pas absente non plus. Alfred Jarry, le dadaïsme et le théâtre de la surprise de Marinetti et Cangiullo...²¹

The play was to have been produced in Lyons in November, 1926, but the company went bankrupt. It was performed for the first time in France at the Centre Pompidou in April, 1977, 51 years after its conception.²²

"L'éphémère est éternel" has special added significance since it represents a rare collaborative effort between playwright

and artist. In an entirely uncharacteristic gesture, Mondrian designed three different stage sets to be raised in succession to situate each act (Figs. 30-32). The play is without anecdote or naturalistic character and the abstract clean forms of the sets facilitate its otherworldly and fantastic character. Humor pervades. Close friendship between the two men partially explains why an artist so consistently adverse to diluting the purity of his art with the "literary" in any form chose to participate in a theatrical production. The collaboration came about by accident according to Seuphor. When he returned from Rome to Paris, Seuphor remembers showing the play to Mondrian:

Ma surprise fût grande, quelques jours plus tard de voir dans l'atelier de la rue du Départ, bien en vue sur le guéridon rouge où elle demeura plusieurs années, la maquette aujourd'hui célèbre avec les trois décors amovibles, pour les trois actes. Mondrian était généralement réfractaire à la littérature. Il estimait que l'idée néo-plastique était difficilement applicable à la poésie, mais c'était mes écrits, disait-il, qui s'en approchaient le plus. C'est dans cette profonde sympathie qu'il me témoigna dès notre première rencontre, dans cette confiance entière dont je disposais de sa part, qu'il faut chercher la cause de sa décision, après une simple lecture du texte, de réaliser la maquette et les projets de décors.²³

Mondrian's model rested on a red bureau in his studio on rue du Départ. Many who passed through his doors saw and admired it. Seuphor cites an interesting commentary that appeared in the Dutch newspaper, De Telegraaf, in September, 1926, which gives some insight to Mondrian's reasoning about the venture:

Mondrian's model is very attractive. In the rectangular box, which represents the theater, there are three

different sets which can be raised, one after another, and which situate the three acts of the play. And when I say situate, I do not mean on earth but in eternity. Here are three beautiful, abstract compositions which mark the limits of a very narrow stage. Once again we see Mondrian's repugnance for space, which according to him, is much too naturalistic. Does he not place himself by this at the opposite pole from a theatrical art based on the three dimensions?²⁴

The article includes an interview with the artist who was asked, "and the actors?" To which Mondrian replied, "That doesn't concern me. They'll be dressed like modern men, American style. They might just as well not appear. If it were up to me, I would place the actors behind the scenery in such a way that they could not be seen while making their lines heard." Actors are indeed seen, although some narration takes place from behind the curtains. The interviewer asked Mondrian why he would not give actors Neoplastic costumes, to which the artist responded, "In any case they would have to be men in motion, the Neoplastic idea requires immobility."²⁵

A few years later Mondrian again collaborated with Seuphor in creating a "picture-poem," called Tableau-poème, 1928 (Fig. 33). Seuphor had mentioned the possibility of such a project to Mondrian, sending him a text. "Three days later I went to rue du Départ and the picture-poem was ready! Mondrian had painted the whole text of the poem, copying the type-written characters very exactly and ordering the three parts of the text most harmoniously into a Neoplastic composition,"²⁶ Seuphor recalls.

The decor for the play, "L'éphémère est éternel," was reproduced in the single issue of Documents internationaux de

l'Esprit Nouveau in 1927. The periodical directed by Seuphor and Paul Dermée represented Seuphor's next major effort on behalf of the avant-garde. Seuphor and Dermée had first attempted to start a magazine in Paris dedicated to contemporary art developments in April of 1925. It was to have been called Code and Van Doesburg was co-director of this projected venture. A circular sent to potential members announced the intention to include artists from all over Europe and to establish a Constructive character. Seuphor wrote about the project to his friend Paul Joostens, "J'ai vue Dermée et Celine Arnauld: on trace les plans pour une nouvelle revue internationale, cet après-midi je vais voir Van Doesburg à ce ²⁷ sujet."

Van Doesburg's attitude toward this endeavor is articulated with clarity in a letter to Seuphor. He vigorously objects to the impurity of their position with all the fervor he had earlier revealed at the Düsseldorf Congress. His letter provides a rare and candid sample of Van Doesburg's argument on the issue of how groups should be directed and oriented.

Mon cher Berckelaers, Voici quelque temps, j'étais chez vous avec Kiesler pour discuter de la circulaire sur CODE. A vrai dire, elle ne m'a plu qu'à moitié. Premièrement, je trouve cette circulaire trop incomplète quant à sa teneur, et deuxièmement, elle donne trop l'impression que Code est appelé à devenir une sorte d'almanach fourre-tout. Cette impression est due surtout à la phrase: "Code ne sera l'organe officiel d'aucune école, mais l'interprète fidèle de toutes." Nous nous mettrions ainsi sur le même pied que les revues "auf brieten Basis," qui publient les pires bêtises. Il faut bien s'en garder. J'estime que les frontières que nous traçons doivent être

définies avec rigueur. La circulaire doit indiquer clairement ce que nous tenons comme limite des tendances nouvelles. Et puis, je trouve un peu bourgeois cet "interprète fidèle." Bien que nous devions éviter de nous mêler à des différents personnels, nous pourrions être amenés à faire campagne contre certaines tendances. Mais on doit pouvoir décrire divers courants nouveaux tout en restant radical. En ce qui concerne la liste des collaborateurs, j'ai encore quelques autres noms: F. Kiesler, C. van Eesteren, Marinetti, Mies van der Rohe, Lissitzky, Mart Stam, etc. À mon avis, il nous faut avoir seulement des esprits originaux, et nous pouvons nous passer des seconds rôles. À quoi bon un Prampolini si l'on a Marinetti, un Moholy si l'on a Lissitzky?²⁸

Van Doesburg's contempt for "une sorte d'almanach" comes up again in the case of Abstraction-Création which takes that form. Because Van Doesburg was among those who conceived this third Parisian group, it is obvious that he relaxed his stance. The possibility that a larger gathering might have advantages would never have occurred to the man who said in 1925, if we have Lissitzky, why do we need Moholy-Nagy? Code remained an unrealized project. However, Dermée did not give up hope of reviving the spirit of L'Esprit Nouveau, which ceased publication in 1926. Les Documents internationaux de l'Esprit Nouveau was the fulfillment of these intentions. Despite efforts and hopes, financial difficulties prohibited their publishing a second number. Nonetheless, it stands as a remarkable document of a Paris-based review devoted largely to abstractionist developments and truly international in scope. "Il n'y a qu'un seul esprit nouveau valent: un seul esprit nouveau mondial - decentralisation," read the opening page.²⁹

Dermée and Seuphor also organized a series of eleven

literary soirées in Montparnasse at the Galerie Sacre du Printemps associated with publishing their magazine. These soirées met with a great success, in part because free food and drinks were served. On the eleventh evening, Kurt Schwitters was scheduled to recite his "Sonate in Urlauten." He wrote a letter from Strasbourg on April 2, 1927, discussing the forthcoming event. "Vous voulez organiser pour moi une soirée au Sacre du Printemps, et je vous prie de faire ça environs le 10 ou 12 ou 14 Avril. L'entrée doit être payant. Je n'apporte pas avec moi des plaques de gramophone."³⁰ These soirées captured the spirit of Montparnasse late in the twenties. As might be expected such events had their detractors. Following the eleventh evening, gallery manager, Jean Slivinsky, demanded angrily that the events be terminated:

L'indignation du public après votre dernière manifestation chez moi a provoqué enfin de justes insultes: l'on a utilisé la façade de ma boutique pour peindre pendant la nuit les jugements tels que: "Merde pour l'Esprit Nouveau! Tas d'idiots." Après la déprimante expérience de vos onze soirées chez moi, j'ai perdu la foi dans vos efforts. Excusez donc si vous trouvez samedi les protest du "Sacre" fermées.

Less gracious was the reply from Dermée and Seuphor:

Votre lettre nous signifiant que vous nous interdisez le Sacre du Printemps, pour nos manifestations d'esprit nouveau est venue déranger nos projets...Vous nous causez donc un dommage sérieux en nous expulsant de chez vous...Nous sommes trop heureux, au contraire, que vous avez jeté le masque et qu'il apparaisse enfin clairement que vous n'etiez avec nous ni de coeur, ni d'esprit. Votre lettre est d'un pauvre homme qui a peur de tout, meme de son ombre.³¹

The soirées came to an abrupt conclusion.

Against this background of steady pressure, action and reaction, Seuphor began to organize his group, Cercle et Carré.

I am letting you know that here in Paris an important group of intellectuals, artists and scholars of all fields and all nations has formed, that it is a group bound to the principle of a "strangen STRUKTUR" and it has commissioned me to put out a periodical. The first number is to appear soon and I am transmitting to you the wish of all members of our group in asking for your help and support in making our far reaching and heavy task a reality.³²

Michel Seuphor's invitation to join Cercle et Carré was written to H.N. Werkman in Germany on January 13, 1930. It is a model of the type he sent to artists throughout Europe. They were asked to stand beside the enlisted - Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Stazewski, Léger, Ozenfant, Le Corbusier, Torres-García, Brancusi and Léonce Rosenberg - on the basis of structure.

The specific idea for such a group of artists originated, not with Seuphor, but with the older Uruguayan painter, Torres-García. The two met in Paris in March, 1929, at the first one man show of Vordemberge-Gildewart, a German member of De Stijl. The exhibition took place in a shop owned by Jacques Povolovsky where art supplies and books were sold (Fig. 34). Like L'Esthétique, Povolovsky's was a central hangout for abstractionists, a place where the documents of modern art were displayed. A room upstairs was reserved for exhibitions. Such arrangements were commonplace because the usual gallery spaces were unavailable for this kind of art in Paris. Seuphor had organized Vordemberge's exhibition and he wrote a short catalogue. "Quant au catalogue," wrote the artist from Hannover in August, 1929, "je voudrais bien une introduction et une reproduction."³³

The story of Cercle et Carré had its specific starting point in the encounter between Seuphor and Torres-García chez Povolovsky. The event is recorded by Torres-García in his Historia de ma Vida:

One day by pure chance, Torres, accompanied by Manolita, was at an exhibition, namely that of a German Neo-Plasticist, Vordemberge. As he wishes to congratulate the artist and to meet him, the latter introduced him in turn to one of his friends who, after a few minutes, aroused great interest which proved to be mutual. He was quite young, of keen alert intelligence, but also calm and possessing great spiritual vibration. A young man, contemporary, an organizer, and gifted with a marvelous imagination enabling him to adapt to the most diverse situations. His name was Seuphor.³⁴

Torres-García had been friendly with Van Doesburg since the two met at the "5 refusées" exhibit, November, 1928. At that time, Torres-García had not met Mondrian. This willful omission, according to Seuphor, was immediately rectified once Seuphor took Torres-García to the master's studio in April, 1929, for what proved to be a decisive encounter. Torres-García has acknowledged being overwhelmed. His art began to change in the direction of greater abstraction; his language of signs was now oriented around horizontal and vertical axes (Figs. 35, 36).³⁵ Few, indeed, who were privileged to enter what Jean Gorin has called "Mondrian's inoubliable atelier" were unmoved (Fig. 37). Seuphor's own memory of the studio is vivid:

A skillful use of curtains formed a corridor which led him [the visitor] toward the studio; this he entered after climbing five or six steps in the dark. Then everything changes. The room was quite large, very bright with a very high ceiling. Mondrian had divided it irregularly, utilizing for this purpose a large black-

painted cupboard, which was partially hidden by an easel long out of service; the latter was covered with big gray and white pasteboards...etc. such was the studio where Mondrian lived for thirteen years and where he received so many visitors.³⁶

Although Torres-García had originally discussed founding a group and magazine dedicated to Constructivist values with Van Doesburg, he resented the insistence upon limiting such a group to a few pure "Elementarist" artists. Torres-García had spoken on behalf of several Latin painters in addition to his good friends Jean Xceron and Pierre Daura. Van Doesburg rejected all these suggestions. Besides, Torres-García's firsthand experience of Mondrian encouraged him to sever attachments to Van Doesburg. No doubt, there was also pressure from Seuphor who was by now tired of the Dutch activist. "He was the sort of man who changed his mind every few minutes, one never knew where he stood from day to day," Seuphor reports of Van Doesburg.³⁷

Rapport between Seuphor and Torres-García ignited mutual enthusiasms. Soon, a series of informal gatherings took place in Seuphor's new apartment opposite the Vanves Church, rue Kleber. Every Sunday, Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Russolo, Arp and Sophie Taeuber, Pevsner, Freundlich and occasionally Xceron, Alexandra Exter and others gathered to dine and discuss possibilities for forming a group in Paris based on Torres' suggested ideas - "structure and abstraction." By October, meetings took place every fortnight at the Café Voltaire, Place de l'Odeón, consisting of 25 to 30 artists.³⁸ Marcelle Cahn recalls:

En 1929, j'ai reçu une invitation de Michel Seuphor qui je ne connaissais pas personnellement à participer à "Cercle et Carré" et j'y ai donné suite. Nous avons d'abord fait au Café Voltaire des réunions plus amicales que théoriques. Il faut dire que Seuphor a fait à l'époque, alors qu'il n'était qu'un tout jeune homme, un travail fondamental.³⁹

Seuphor began a vast letter writing campaign for which his earlier experiences had well prepared him. Among foreign artists contacted, only Gabo refused to join. He attacked the eclecticism of the group and also announced his unwillingness to belong to any organization that also included Kandinsky. Seuphor records eighty members early in 1930, half of whom lived abroad.

Le group prenait d'ailleurs chaque jour plus d'importance par l'adhésion de personnalités habitant loin de Paris, tels Moholy-Nagy, Baumeister, Huszar, Vordemberge-Gildewart, Schwitters, Kandinsky, Werkman, Prampolini... De la province française nous venait l'adhésion de Jean Gorin, alors hôtelier en Bretagne et Marcelle Cahn, qui habitait Strasbourg. À Paris même Le Corbusier, Ozenfant et Léger nous soutenaient avec enthousiasme.⁴⁰

The Purist contingent is important. Their strong support reinforces affinities between these movements. In fact, Ozenfant was one of the most enthusiastic members. Torres-García wrote to Seuphor: "J'ai reçu une lettre très enthousiaste d'Ozenfant et 100 fr. pour 5 abonnements à la revue qui sont expédiés."⁴¹

The new group soon conducted reunions in larger quarters, the first floor Brasserie Lipp on Boulevard St. Germain, where it was decided to publish a review. Members were asked to subscribe by paying a fee of 10-15 francs. Seuphor was unanimously elected Editor in Chief, a natural choice in view of

his skills both as writer and with the French language. Language barriers prevented many participants from expressing themselves freely. Torres-García, for example, depended on Seuphor to assist him with his prose. The terms of the membership were outlined in Seuphor's initial invitation to join. Contributions were solicited.

Our first concern is for you to put in one or more sentences that is, in short and simple form without digressions (of a social or philosophical standpoint) the artistic tendency that you represent and that is your life goal to formulate.⁴²

The responses were to form the basis of the review. It consisted of artists' comments ranging from short sentences to lengthy articles plus editorial commentary by Seuphor. The format included selected reproductions, many seen for the first time in Paris like photographs by Moholy-Nagy, collages by Schwitters, the interior of Mondrian's studio and portions of the decoration for the Aubette in Strasbourg designed by Jean Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Van Doesburg in 1928. Occasionally, individuals signed their essays with a close-up photograph focused on one eye.⁴³

The solution to the problem of finding a name for the group was solved early on and only after hours of fiery debate. Seuphor's proposal for "Cercle et Carré" as "l'emblème le plus simple de la totalité des choses," attracted most members. The matter was resolved by the graphic symbol itself. Seuphor reports that once the artists saw the visual force inherent in those clean, clear forms designed by painter Pierre Daura, acceptance was unanimous. The question of purpose was less

easily decided. Generally speaking, the notion "structure" proved to be a common meeting ground, however, methods for achieving this end, whether through exclusively abstract and geometric or semi-figurative forms were argued at length. Torres-García was "contre la géométrie, contre l'abstraction," according to Seuphor, although not unsympathetic to it.⁴⁴

His views changed during the months preceding publication of the review. As secretary of the group and manager of finances from his home in Montmartre, rue Marcel Sembat, Torres-García corresponded almost daily with Seuphor, often on matters of business. The fact that both men lived in Paris, at opposite ends of the city, did not deter him from such frequent letter writing. Torres-García was plagued by suspicions of financial irregularities. He also wished to discuss his views of structure and abstraction which he did in sketchy, confusing prose and faulty French. He was of extremely nervous temperament as he admits in a letter written after a group meeting. He apologizes for his behavior to Seuphor, "J'étais dans un état de nervosité excessive." He goes on to say,

Je vois deux noms pour les clichés: Vantongerloo et Pevsner, deux abstraits. C'est bien pour vous, mais il faut penser à l'ensemble du groupe et à l'impression que nous devons faire au public etc. que ne doit être seulement d'art abstrait. Est que vous publierez quelque chose avec une certaine figuration? Par exemple, Arp ou Van Rees?⁴⁵

Torres-García's reservations about a solely "abstract" group were mollified as preparations for the first issue got underway. He developed greater respect for Seuphor, affirmed in a letter dated Jan. 31, 1930:

Je veux confirmer ce que j'ai dit hier devant toute l'assemblée: je suis en parfait accord avec tout le contenu de l'article que vous avez lu hier et je suis heureux de pouvoir constater que dans les grandes lignes et même dans nombre de détails nos idées se mariaient parfaitement. Je n'en ai jamais douté, mais je suis heureux pendant que l'unité de principe de notre groupe a été enfin créée de fait.

Torres-García concludes this assertion of solidarity, stating,

Enfin, j'avais moi-même aussi préparé un mot d'ordre à faire voter "confirmant l'importance primordiale d'une structure et que celle-ci soit abstraite ou non, mais qui s'oriente clairement déjà vers cette abstraction, c'est-à-dire qu'elle soit imbue d'une volonté très nette de simplification.⁴⁶

This idea is at the base of Torres-García's essay, "Vouloir Construite" in Cercle et Carré. Structure in the large sense, means:

Recherche d'équilibre, d'unité, rapports équivalents entre formes, plans, couleurs, entre les éléments simples qui composent l'oeuvre d'art. Équilibre, simplicité, précision rythmiques voulus, non pas instinctifs, effet de la conscience et du jugement, non pas de l'abandon sensuel.⁴⁷

A work of art must contain, whether in active or latent form, this intention or will to order and to structure:

Sans cette volonté précise... tous les faits et gestes de notre groupe seraient boiteux et son existence des plus éphémères.

Torres-García, like Seuphor, believed that order must govern the reigning disorder of the times:

Si nous avons pensé devoir nous réunir c'est parce que partout ailleurs règnent la désorientation et le désordre. C'est pour trouver une base, c'est pour avoir des certitudes. Et notre raison nous a montré que cette base c'est la construction.⁴⁸

To merely put things in order, he argues, is the task of any landscape painter, whereas "créer un ordre" is to pass from

the individual to the universal. This is a central concept for the group. It has its source both in Mondrian and Constructivist writings of the 1920's.

Torres-García came to take an even stricter view of structure as a direct result of his encounters with Vantongerloo. Vantongerloo was the most ardent spokesman for an extreme position relating art to science and mathematics. He instigated vigorous discussions on this subject during the period and arguments extended into the early hours of the morning in cafes of Montparnasse. The enthusiasm for an art related to science was contagious enough to effect a Latin artist of opposing temperament, Torres-García. In February, 1930, Torres-García wrote of this to Seuphor:

La dernière conversation que j'ai eu avec Vantongerloo a mis en évidence beaucoup de choses qu'il faut que vous n'ignorez. Nous avons examiné à fond que peut-être votre plasticisme en toute sa pureté. J'avait arrivé à d'heureuses définitions, très simples. Et j'avait décidé absolument décidé à me tenir dans le cadre, si restreint qu'il soit, d'un art abstrait, avec aucun figuration ni même la plus simple figure géométrique, restant seulement avec le plan vertical et horizontal comme les uniques éléments nécessaires pour dire tout ce qui doit dire la plastique.⁴⁹

That Vantongerloo's ideas captured the imagination of an artist inclined toward more lyrical and symbolic qualities in his art is indication of the force of the geometric abstract tide sweeping Paris in 1930. Torres-García eliminates or radically reduces his own symbolism and his paintings from this date are among his most austere.

After the appearance of the third number of Cercle et Carré, Torres-García became disillusioned both with the group

and with Seuphor. He admits his disappointments to Jean Gorin:

Dans une longue causerie que nous avons eu, je vous ai expliqué une certaine divergence qui existait entre M. Seuphor et moi, non seulement au point de vue du group, Cercle et Carré, mais aussi au point de vue artistique et même moral ou spirituel [sic], comme vous voudrez. Cette divergence c'est déterminé à l'apparition du n.1 de la Revue et c'est accentué dans les suivants. De même dans la façon d'agir de M. Seuphor. Et aussi de quelques autres du groupe, qui contredisent entièrement (à mon sens) la raison d'être du groupe.⁵⁰

How and in what specific ways Seuphor and others contradict the "raison d'être" of the group, he does not explain. In October he communicated greater dissatisfaction and confusion in a lengthy letter to Gorin written as a stream of uninterrupted thoughts about the group and Seuphor. The language is all the more confusing because of errors in his French:

Il faut dire la vérité: non. Mais je vous dit une chose, mon cher Gorin: ceux qui croient avoir la certitude ils ont seulement la limitation. Je dit cela en parlant d'art en général et comme chemin à suivre. Qui le sait ce chemin? Dehors, dans le matériel, dans le réel matériel objectif, on peut avoir une certitude. C'est tout. On peut poser et mesurer: la science. Classer et comparer: ordonner, etc. On peut arriver à ce qui est exacte: Mondrian - Et après? Rien de plus, c'est finie - Art standard. Impersonnel -Dedans - dans la conscience il y a une autre certitude - non mesurable, donc l'appareil qui doit enregistrer c'est l'homme. Cherchons l'équilibre, va plus loin cette mesure - elle est plus complexe? Ici on ne trouve des limites. Le problème n'est jamais résolu - on ne peut pas standardiser - la diversité se montre - la construction est autre. Sait-on ce qu'on fait?... Je ne vais contre la règle....Maintenant, traitez, mon cher, de trier de tout cela quelque chose, et vous me direz si vaut la peine. Il y a beaucoup à faire. Maintenant vous comprenez pourquoi je ne peux plus suivre à M. Seuphor et à Cercle et Carré mais il y a bien d'autres choses.⁵¹

Torres-García's hesitation to admit philosophically absolute standards and rules of measurement and the issue of

Mondrian's seeming impersonality, reflect fundamental inconsistencies and uncertainties within the group itself. The very nature of Cercle et Carré was to include various disciplines and styles, offering opportunity for multiple points of view. At base, the program was vague. Anti-Surrealism had provided one stimulus to organize, but it was insufficient in itself to maintain the group. Seuphor observed, "Il fallait trouver quelque chose de positif. Alors les discussions allèrent bon train autour des notions de néo-plasticisme, élémentarisme, constructivisme, abstraction, géométrie, écriture direct...Chacun donnait son avis personnel et Torres-García nous éclaboussait par ses démonstrations, nous déroutait par ses volte-face."⁵²

Seuphor attempted to formulate a group manifesto in his editorial essay for the first issue, "Pour la défense d'une architecture." Divided into thirty-nine separate segments, the essay is long and discursive. "Architecture" serves as symbol for structure, order, precision, clarity, solidity - in short, for basic group ideals. Originally, it appears that Torres-García had intended to write the introductory essay. On January 30, he wrote to Seuphor:

Voulez-vous donc m'envoyer l'essentiel de votre article pour que je puisse m'occuper tout de suite à le mettre au net pour la parution. Je raccourcirai de beaucoup mon article, "Pour la défense d'une Architecture" qui est très générale mais dont une partie cependant deviet [sic] inutile à côté de votre article. Je ferai de sorte que les deux choses se complètent et se soutiennent mutuellement.⁵³

Seuphor had asked Torres-García to write an appropriate essay

as a companion to a piece of his own, but Torres-García had had great difficulty and was unable to come up with a form for such an essay, said Seuphor. "Finally, he asked me to compose something and to use as a source, the mass of notes he had been sending me, helter skelter, for months. I did what I could and so it is with the material from Torres-García's correspondence that I wrote the article entitled, "Vouloir construire."⁵⁴ This is the second contribution to the first issue. The editorial-manifesto was written by Seuphor alone.

Seuphor's piece resounds with optimism, befitting its purpose to set a tone for the group. Alternately heroic, pseudo-philosophic, poetic and didactic, it defines and defends its stand by contrast with others. References to Futurism are numerous. The concluding sentence, for example, conjurs the closing lines of Marinetti's First Futurist Manifesto of 1909. Seuphor writes:

There are some who are announcing the new day, who can see the dawn rise before the others. Have they not, these people been awake the whole night questioning the stars?⁵⁵

In comparable language, Marinetti states:

We stand upon the summit of the world and once more we cast our challenge to the stars.⁵⁶

Seuphor is quick to point to differences between his ideas and the Futurists' machine worship. "In place of the romanticism of speed," he asserted, "we put the slow pace of human awareness." A more contemptuous reference occurs later:

A fairly swift development of mechanics and great progress

in the realm of science, turned the heads of some avant-garde figures of the beginning of the century. When last heard from, they decreed that the machine would occupy the same rank as the divinities of the past and they announced that man would soon make short shrift of nature. A mistake, due to excess of enthusiasm!⁵⁷

In his stress on equilibrium, rapports and a deep harmony, Seuphor reminds us of Mondrian. "Natural beauty takes us kindly by the hand and leads us into the bosom of matter, while the attraction of the true incites us to thought and elevates us to abstraction," he writes. Art arrives at beauty not by direct concern with nature, rather by emulating its laws, by observing its secret harmony. In the same issue of Cercle et Carré, Mondrian wrote:

Ne pas s'occuper de la forme et de la couleur - en tant que forme, c'est, en art, la nouvelle plastique. Ne pas être trop dominé par le physique-naturel, c'est la nouvelle mentalité. Compter exclusivement avec les rapports en les créant et en cherchant leur équilibre en art et dans la vie, c'est le beau travail d'aujourd'hui: c'est préparer l'avenir.

Seuphor, like Mondrian, speaks of masculine and feminine principles - the one strong willed and vertical and the other, feminine, natural and horizontal. One must belong to one's own epoch, Seuphor insists and then there will ensue a slow, sure process of evolution toward purity. Mondrian has stated much the same thought countless times, "Tout dépend de l'époque où nous vivons."

Seuphor defines the concept, architecture, in the following way:

Well-governed sensibility, when it assumes an active part in us, becomes a form of right thinking or "pure reason," or again, if you wish, of our moral equilibrium. By uniting it in the work with its structural principles,

we achieve what I shall call here an architecture.⁵⁹

Further, he adds:

An architecture that, by the technical and physical methods peculiar to the age, expresses in a clear language the immanent and immutable truth and reflects in its particular organization the magnificent order of the universe.

In summarizing, Seuphor lists aspects of style closely associated with the concept, architecture - "straight lines, clarity, repose, simplicity of elements, confidence in the real, actual knowledge of reality, awareness of human possibilities and limitations." With optimism, Seuphor announced, "Architecture constructs with confidence, it establishes certainties."⁶⁰

Mondrian had used architecture as a metaphor for abstraction just as Kandinsky had earlier used music. The architectural metaphor gained currency among Constructivists during the twenties and was carried into abstract artists' thinking in the thirties. Seuphor's choice of architecture as symbol is a strong affirmation of its supremacy. The third and last issue of the magazine, Cercle et Carré, is focused on architecture and includes essays on cinema and theater. There are articles by Le Corbusier, Jean Gorin and Walter Gropius as well as an extract from a major new book on modern architecture, Eine Stunde Architektur, by the German Dr. Adolf Behne. The idea of architecture as well as architecture itself became an important theme for Cercle et Carré and many statements allude to Seuphor's initial definition. Ozenfant quotes from his own book, Art, saying: "Sur deux mots: Architecture ou Structure? Tous les

Arts obéissent à l'esprit d'Architecture et non limitativement architecture. L'esprit de Structure est celui de tous les Arts y compris celui de l'Architecture."⁶¹ He expands on the virtues of both architecture and structure. Prampolini, too, agrees that architecture is aligned with basic group ideals:

Architecture: mot magique qui dévoile la physionomie des temps et exalte le caractère des peuples. Mot qui acquiert aujourd'hui une valeur plus universelle, car il vibre puissamment dans l'atmosphère évolutive des arts...⁶²

In his introductory essay, Seuphor acknowledges the important task of what he calls "enunciating certainties," a task that he believes belongs in the realm of science:

Whether it be in art, philosophy, pure mathematics or literature, (the task) remains unalterably a science. A science that is not simply cold juxtaposition and classification but also structure and co-penetration of forces around the basic principle.⁶³

The emancipation of man will take place through science and the emancipation of art will occur through man, he contends. The link between science and art implies the progress of humanity.

The most radical position on the relation of art to science was taken by Vantongerloo who believed that art was a science, subject to mathematical verification. "His views were far more extreme than Van Doesburg's whom they most closely approximate," said Seuphor.⁶⁴ Vantongerloo was always the focus of disputes on this controversial subject. The problem centered on explaining the function of human creativity. Seuphor, like Mondrian, believed in the power of intuition.

For Vantongerloo and Van Doesburg this word had a special and more limited meaning. Intuition is best related to the "unknown" in Vantongerloo's opinion. It is that creative faculty whose role in art is conditioned or controlled by mathematics. "People have often tried to annihilate me with the word 'intuition,'" Vantongerloo complained, "accusing me of wishing to create a purely 'mathematical art'. These two words are devoid of sense....to say that anyone creates by pure intuition is as absurd as saying that I wish to create a purely mathematical art. Mathematics is only the means."⁶⁵

Vantongerloo's writings and mathematical equations resist simplification. It is certain that he never subscribed to the naive idea that creative art might be based solely on math. "To reduce art to math is nonsense, instead we must say: to arrive at an artistic expression by geometric forms."⁶⁶ Abstract art, like mathematics, might be verifiable according to ratios and equations. The responsibility for creating the equation in the first place lay with the artist. At this time, Vantongerloo worked on paintings, sculpture and studies based on sophisticated calculations. The treatment of space and volume was directly dependent upon geometrical analysis. His titles betray this involvement. Composition derived from the Equation $Y=ax^2 + bx + 18$ with Green, Orange and Violet, is one such example of this approach. The painting is dated 1930. Similarly, the 1937 Composition $\frac{13478}{15}$ blatantly insists

upon this mathematical relationship (Figs. 38, 39). The works themselves often bear out the mathematical formulae. ⁶⁷ Otherwise, they seem to be derived from the Neoplasticism of Mondrian.

Vantongerloo's ideas evolved during the mid-twenties in a series of "Reflections" written from his home in Menton, France, where he had settled in 1920. His preoccupation with mathematics is especially marked during this period, although Vantongerloo had focused on spatial relationships in his "Spherical Constructions" dated 1917. His understanding of geometry at that time did not satisfy him. He describes his personal experience and growth in an essay for the second issue of Cercle et Carre, "Plastique d'art ($S=L2$ $V=L3$)."

The formula is explained in a letter to Gorin as, "peinture $S = [L2]$ et la sculpture $V = [L3]$." Presumably, "S" stands for "surface" and "V" for volume."

Quelqu'un me signalait un jour un article dans un journal qui coïncidait avec mes idées. Il faut dire que, par mon éducation atavique, reçue à l'Académie des Beaux-Arts, je n'osais pas penser que mes recherches étaient d'ordre artistique. Je n'osais pas les montrer ne me doutant pas qu'elles avaient autant de raison d'être que n'importe quelle tendance artistique reconnue. Je me suis mis en rapport avec l'auteur de l'article et fus très content de savoir qu'il y avait encore d'autres fous que moi sur la terre. Ensuite il me fut demandé de collaborer au périodique "De Style" qui occasionna un échange de réflexions artistiques très intéressantes. Mais la question restait toujours problématique. C'est en 1920, lors d'une recherche sur la couleur, que je me suis dit qu'il est sûrement indispensable de connaître convenablement la géométrie si on veut manifester ses sentiments artistiques par des formes géométriques, et je me mis à reprendre toute l'étude des mathématiques, ce qui veut dire quatre années de travail....Le tableau sur lequel nous voulons manifester une sensation esthétique, n'est-il déjà pas une forme géométrique, limite de l'harmonie

que nous voulons établir sur une surface déterminée?68

It is not sufficient to know mathematics in order to create art, Vantongerloo repeatedly states. "Il faut savoir dégager d'elles une solution, sans quoi, elles ne seraient qu'une étude stérile et sans valeur," he asserts, referring to both math and "la plastique-artistique." The "plastique-artistique" is distinguished at the start of the essay from those tendencies that he calls "simili-artistique"- merely simulating nature or science instead of recreating it. What distinguished the thinking of Vantongerloo from others interested in mathematical relations were his firm convictions that a work of art should have mathematical verification.

Mondrian provided a direct challenge to Vantongerloo's rules. The great master of Neoplasticism, acknowledged by Vantongerloo to be "un artiste très doué - le père du mouvement moderne"⁶⁹ - continuously denied any mathematical bases for art. This did not discourage Vantongerloo from dissecting Mondrian's paintings for underlying formulae. In a complicated study, published in Vouloir, Vantongerloo examined Mondrian's lozenge-shaped, Tableau 24 by inscribing it within a variety of overlapping and intersecting circles (Figs. 40, 41). He derived ratios and mathematical equations from this painting, proving what he considered to be fundamental truths about laws governing unity and order in art. These truths could be applied regardless of the artist's own intentions, Vantongerloo believed. He was aware that Mondrian did not mean for formulae to enter his work, at least not consciously.

Mondrian was the exception, exempt by his very genius from the need to apply mathematics to verify his art. "Tout cela, Mondrian l'a fait par son sens esthétique. C'est pour cela qu'il a tant de mérite. C'est que son sens est pur et non soumis au caprice et à la fantaisie," he wrote.⁷⁰

Mondrian's response to all of this was amusement. Seuphor remembers him saying, "Oui, ce que Georges fait est très, très intéressant sûrement, sur mes tableaux, mes dessins - toutes les chiffres, c'est très intéressant, mais, ça m'est égal!"⁷¹ The subject of Mondrian and mathematics has aroused certain controversy. Seuphor insists that he was never interested in formulae and equations and Héliou, too, recalls the master's friendly amusement at the very idea that math might enter his art. On the other hand, Domela has related that in his opinion, Mondrian did use calculations such as the golden section, which was commonplace for artists to do. Laura Miner contends that Mondrian constructed golden section ratios which she attempts to prove with calculations.⁷² Miner also points out how popular certain mathematical books were during the 1920's in Paris. Certainly, the subject was in the air.

By elevating abstract art to the level of mathematical analogy, its possibilities seemed unlimited. Some younger artists used this language without grasp of the concepts involved. Others gravitated to what seemed a sure and confident approach through numbers. The young Jean Gorin was immediately drawn to Vantongerloo's theories and determined

to understand them fully. A faithful follower of Neoplasticism, Gorin wished to reconcile conflicting concepts of Vantongerloo, Mondrian and Van Doesburg which he learned about in Vouloir. "Personally," he remarked in 1969, "I have adhered to and satisfactorily experimented with the technique of Elementarism since 1936 without abandoning Neoplasticism, for I have an inner need of both rhythmic systems of expressing myself. I have reserved the right to use one or the other technique according to aesthetic inspiration of my being."⁷³

Gorin's first Neoplastic compositions of 1926 resemble Mondrian. He was profoundly impressed by a visit to the master's studio in 1927 and began immediately to draw architectural plans inspired by the notion of Neoplasticism extended into space. Gorin devised a technique of hollowing out "lignes en creux" in wood, in this way creating reliefs (Figs. 42, 43, 44).⁷⁴ After reading essays by Mondrian and Vantongerloo, Gorin initiated a correspondence with both men. He was troubled by the possible limits of Mondrian's style and he asked how he might introduce a more personal interpretation. Mondrian replied with encouraging words:

Je suis heureux [sic] d'apprendre que tu as réussi de faire du Néoplasticism selon ta conception personnelle. Comme je te l'ai déjà écrit, moi je ne tiens pas beaucoup à la personnalité, mais par différents faits et par ce que l'on dit, j'ai appris que pour ce temps-ci une certaine personnalité même est nécessaire.⁷⁵

Mondrian's words were not always matched by his behavior and the issue of his "impersonality" was raised by many others including Torres-García during the next years.

From Vantongerloo, Gorin sought to clarify differences between his ideas and those of Mondrian. Vantongerloo insists that a basic solidarity existed between Mondrian and himself. "Le fond des deux thèses est l'unité exprimé par le moyen propre à deux individus différents." He then adds, "Ce qu'a fait Mondrian pour la peinture, moi, je l'ai fait pour la sculpture, c.a.d. j'ai introduit la verticale et l'horizontale en sculpture. J'ai nommé le Néo-Plasticisme."⁷⁶ Gorin asked questions about Vantongerloo's complex theory of color. Vantongerloo responded:

Vous savez que nos sens, étant limités, ne perçoivent au delà et en deçà de leurs limite. C'est ainsi que nous réduisons une ligne (infini) à un segment de ligne (fini). Ce même raisonnement nous permet de prendre certaines couleurs d'une gamme et la combiner avec une gamme suivante mais d'une longueur de la moitié. c.a.d. si la somme des couleurs de la première gamme étale 6, la seconde aura 3 comme valeur.⁷⁷

Vordemberge-Gildewart was also interested in mathematical relations in his art, evident in a letter to Seuphor discussing his forthcoming exhibition at Povolovsky's shop. He calls his own Composition n. 26 "a good example of mathematics in art."⁷⁸ Héliou is another young painter for whom the relation between painting and geometric formulae was important. His debt is to Van Doesburg rather than Vantongerloo. The two Dutch artists had very similar concepts, although neither was willing to acknowledge this. Vantongerloo said, "Quant à Van Doesburg, soit dit en passant, il use les mêmes mots pour dire des choses toutes différentes ce qui a l'absurde comme résultat."⁷⁹ To illustrate the absurdity of these ideas, Van-

tongerloo refers Gorin to Van Doesburg's article "Vers un Art Élémentaire," in Vouloir. In truth, Van Doesburg agreed with many of Vantongerloo's ideas. He, too, attacked intuition. "Paintings cannot be realized through a juggling trick or by sleepwalking. It was this type of decadence which forced us to arrive at that formidable guide: intuition," he wrote⁸⁰ in 1930.

Neither Vantongerloo nor Van Doesburg easily tolerated other points of view. The two were rivals. Vigorous quarreling was rampant during this period. Personal disputes and petty actions moved men as certainly as lofty ideals and philosophic discourse. The juxtaposition of the trivial and the profound adds a particularly poignant note to the events of 1929-1931. As if to punctuate the controversy surrounding issues of art and mathematics and Vantongerloo's often abstruse theories, Seuphor remembers with good humor, that at the end of his life, Vantongerloo confessed that all his calculations had⁸¹ been false. Perhaps it all looked meaningless with hindsight, however, the passions which mathematics aroused during the decade of the thirties cannot be minimized.

Benevolent and tolerant, Seuphor reigned over the disputes. He saw his task as a mediating one, accepting many opinions and creating a climate where conflicts might freely be debated. He expressed this sentiment in his opening manifesto:

The time is no longer right for small gatherings of devotees and closed artistic groups. The age we are living through favors broad, productive (and generous) ideas; not stagnant ones, but ones that are capable of development and diversion into new areas...

He continues:

A few of us have grouped ourselves around this basis which remains unshakeable, of structure, not to propagate this idea by revolutionary vociferation, but simply to study its principle, to consolidate it within us, to bring it to a fine point and finally to display it in full view for the benefit of all. ⁸²

Contrary to all expectations, the first issue of Cercle et Carré, which appeared in March 15, 1930, in an edition of 1200, was sold out in the bookstores of Montparnasse. Congratulations were forthcoming from members of the artistic community including Delaunay who could "not praise us enough for our initiative," said Seuphor. ⁸³ Delaunay was to return to abstraction within the year, most likely affected by what he believed was a growing trend. This becomes clearer when studying Delaunay's part in the successor group, Abstraction-Création.

On March 24, Ozenfant sent the following letter to the leaders of Cercle et Carré:

Gentlemen: I heartily congratulate you on your new review, your articles are witness to a truly high level of thought. I am extremely pleased to see that you are standing up against the "trifles": it is not too soon. Since I know of the difficulties experienced by new periodicals allow me to send in five subscriptions which will permit me to circulate among my friends your most interesting publication. ⁸⁴

From Germany, the architect Dr. Adolf Behne wrote, "I found it so fresh and lively," and Vantongerloo began his enthusiastic letter, "Je suis heureux. Je suis heureux" and concluded, "JE TE FÉLICITE." ⁸⁵ From H.N. Werkman the following comments were recorded, "Le premier numero de Cercle et Carré fait excellente impression en tant que déclaration de principes. Modeste ⁸⁶ par son volume, mais remarquable par sa signification."

Understandably, Cercle et Carré members were jubilant. They had established in Paris a base for geometric abstract art. Three days after the second issue of Cercle et Carré appeared in the book stalls, the group held a major exhibition. The exhibit was a landmark for abstract art and none like it was to be staged again in Paris until much later in the decade. Despite the greater size and duration of the Abstraction-Création group, they never organized a comparable show.

The exhibit opened April 18 at the Galerie 23, rue La Boétie and it ran until the first of May. It had been decided at an early meeting that four members were to investigate the matter of exhibition space. On February 12, 1930, a contract was signed by Russolo, Vantongerloo, Torres-García and Seuphor, reserving four rooms in the basement of Galerie 23.⁸⁷ The terms of this contract included a cost of "quatre mille francs" and the Galerie demanded a commission of 33% on all sales. No sale was made. To the artists, Seuphor had sent urgent letters requesting contributions for the show. He wrote to Werkman in March, "I'm concerned with an urgent matter - the April exhibition of the group, Cercle et Carré, an international exhibit of painting, sculpture, architecture and theater in a large gallery. You are invited to take part."⁸⁸ He then outlined the cost for rental, publication of the brief catalogue which is printed in the second issue and mailing and freight charges for the works of art. Kandinsky was invited to say a few words at the opening, however, his prior commitment

at the Bauhaus prevented him from arriving for the opening.

From Dessau he wrote:

J'ai l'intention de venir avec ma femme avant les Pâques à Paris, mais le jour de notre arrivée n'est pas encore définitivement fixé. Je ne crois pas pouvoir arriver avant le 19 soir, le 18 est peu probable. C'est pour ça que je vous remercie beaucoup de votre intention de me donner une occasion de dire quelques mots au vernissage et je regrette de ne pouvoir pas le faire. L'autre obstacle - peut être même plus sérieux - est ma pauvre langue française me posant des limites bien étroites.⁸⁹

Kandinsky had a double purpose in making the trip to Paris at this time since he was simultaneously showing his works at the Galerie de France.

As it turned out, Torres-García delivered the lecture. Great merriment is described and recorded in photographs of the event (Fig. 45). The opening was a high social occasion, especially important in providing opportunity to gather - many arrived from other nations or from the provinces. Vor-demberge-Gildewart came from Hannover, Kandinsky a day later from Dessau and Gorin came to Paris from his native Brittany. Picasso was a frequent visitor to the gallery. His studio was situated in the same building and he is reported to have spent long periods of time studying individual works while never saying a word.⁹⁰

One hundred and thirty works by fifty artists were displayed. Unlike the earlier L'Art d'Aujourd'hui exhibit to which it may be compared in international character and avant-garde flavor, the exhibition took a far more adamant stand for abstract art (Figs. 46, 47, 48). Although several paintings

came under the category semi-abstract, such as Purist works by Ozenfant, Baumeister and Marcelle Cahn, its core consisted of various forms of abstraction by Mondrian, Kandinsky, Arp, Schwitters, Stazewski, Vantongerloo, Vordemberge-Gildewart, Pevsner, Huszar, Sophie Taeuber, Gorin and Léger who exhibited two "Peintures murales," dated 1925. The majority of works were paintings. Sculpture by Arp, Pevsner, and a merz construction by Schwitters were also included. Theatrical designs by Alexandre Exter and Vera Idelson were shown along with architectural models by Gorin, Le Corbusier and Alberto Sartoris. Vantongerloo exhibited a series of models for city airports, reproduced in the third issue of Cercle et Carré (Fig. 49) which includes a short description of the project. Aviation was an exciting subject for many among the group and it is significant that the fourth issue of Cercle et Carré was to have been devoted exclusively to the subject.

There was not clear unity of style or ideology among participants in the Cercle et Carré exhibition. Almost every type of abstraction was seen with the exception of the painterly. Torres-García came closer to a lyrical and painterly technique than most others with the exception of Arp and Foltyn (Fig. 50). Flat, rectilinear and planar compositions by De Stijl members formed the most distinctive nucleus. Mondrian, Huszar, Gorin and Vantongerloo were the major representatives of this mode. Various Constructivist tendencies were displayed - the Polish Stazewski presented work whose flat interlocking shapes appear like a reductive form of Purism (Fig. 17); the more dynamic

Russian Constructivist look, exemplified by diagonal planes in space, was evident in the paintings of Vordemberge-Gildewart (Fig. 20). Pevsner showed Constructivist sculpture. Artists Olsen, Foltyn (Fig. 49) and Otto van Rees might be considered within the loose category of late Synthetic Cubism; others reflected the influence, if not the direct expression, of Purism.- Ozenfant, Baumeister and Cahn. A more generalized geometric style made up of flat rectangular planes neither related to De Stijl nor Russian Constructivism, rather demonstrating a Bauhaus manner, characterized the work of Bucheister, Daura and to a degree, Léger. Léger's panels were larger both in size and scale than other works exhibited. Otherwise the paintings shown were uniformly small. Kandinsky is represented by works from his Bauhaus period including Deux côtés rouges of 1928 (Fig. 51).⁹¹ Three paintings by Kandinsky were included, according to Seuphor, although only two are listed in the catalogue. The catalogue is incorrect in several instances due to the haste with which it was prepared. Several works arrived too late to be included, while others never came at all.

The excitement aroused by the success of issue number one and by the exhibition was followed by disappointment. Lack of public interest and the silence of the press infuriated everyone, particularly Seuphor who has never forgotten or forgiven the press for its behavior. "Le presse fût franchement déprimante. Ironique ou cruelle," he recounts. Seuphor attacked several negative critics in his editorial for Issue Number 3.

Il est intéressant de noter que notre effort n'a trouvé aucun défenseur sur la place de Paris. Malgré un très beau succès parmi le public (la vente au numéro de notre revue dépasse tous les espoirs que nous nous en sommes formés) la presse parisienne, toujours encore à ses frivolités, à son snobisme et à ses jeux d'esprit, est unanime à nous condamner ou à ne pas nous prendre au sérieux.

He is specific in his examples: J.L. Touttain of La Paris, wrote:

Piètre nouveauté, et ne serait-ce pas le cas de parodier une fois de plus le mot fameux de Paul Alexis, en s'écriant: "Cubisme pas mort?" Aucune composition ne se rachète, même par un certain caractère drôlatique; c'est dommage.

Paul Fierens is sarcastically accused of reviewing and attacking the exhibition without having seen it which he reveals by discussing a work by Prampolini mentioned in the catalogue but never included in the show.

Il est vrai que ce beillant Monsieur Fierens, surtout depuis qu'il est professeur à Liège, ne doit plus visiter les expositions dont il parle dans son journal: il a tout vu, il sait tout.

Maurice Raynal in L'Intransigeant is quoted as having said,

Il semble que la "néoplastique" soit surtout le revenant d'une tentative que l'on croyait morte depuis longtemps. Il faut croire qu'à Paris l'on a la mort bien dure.⁹²

The great defendant of Cubism, Seuphor argues, here ignores its next phase. The foreign press showed greater sympathy. finally, Seuphor asks M. Zervos to explain his silence.

Christian Zervos did in fact mention the Cercle et Carré exhibit in his Cahiers d'Art, unnoticed by Seuphor. The reference is brief and indirectly derogatory. Zervos notes that an exhibition took place at Galerie 23, consisting of "Néo-plasticiens, ex-Dadaïstes, ex-Futuristes etc."⁹³ Instead of recognizing what was

special or unique to this group manifestation, Zervos calls attention to the earlier affiliations of the members.

Not everything was grim. On the last day of the exhibition, April 30, Seuphor delivered a talk, "La Poétique nouvelle" and as accompaniment, Russolo performed varied rhythms and noises with zeal on the russolophone (Fig. 52). Seuphor's recitation was located in a spacious area of the gallery, facing "the most beautiful wall of the exhibition," according to Seuphor, where works by Pevsner, Sophie Taeuber and the two abstract panels by Léger were hanging (Fig. 53). Between Seuphor and the wall, a brilliant and celebrated crowd gathered including Tzara, Arp, Cendrars, Cocteau, Marinetti, Sophie Taeuber, the Delaunays, Mondrian, Dermée and Pevsner.

Belle soirée finale....Russolo à trois pas de moi, tirait de son instrument (une sorte d'armoire avec des intestins) les sons les plus inattendus, les plus menaçants, et baissait à peine pour me permettre de réciter, à travers le masque porte-voix que Cueto avait construit pour la circonstance et que je portais sur un bâton comme une hallebarde,...⁹⁴

Seuphor's lecture on poetry was published in the last issue of the magazine. The substance of it was an effort to relate the form of poetry - its use of primary elements of language and rhythm stripped of ornament - to the forms of the new painting, sculpture and architecture. He interrupted the lecture, reciting at intervals, word sounds strung together. Seuphor begs for more tolerance on the part of the public and critics suggesting that they first "receive" the finished work intelligently and then assimilate its sensibility. His pleas recall the similar expectations and hopes expressed by the

author of L'Art d'Aujourd'hui catalogue essay five years before. Seuphor ends his talk with hope for a better future, a future which he believes is closer than one would think. Everything around us announces it, he affirms:

Car l'évolution est une loi de croissance. Le monde, l'humanité et l'homme lui obéissent. Et la mort elle-même n'est qu'une mort partielle en face de cette marche constante et sûre de la vie vers la perfection, vers l'équilibre, vers l'unité.⁹⁵

These are to be Seuphor's last words in print on behalf of Cercle et Carré since the proposed Issue no. 4 never appeared. It is fitting that they should so closely echo Mondrian.

In a subtle and real sense, Mondrian was the spiritual center of Cercle et Carré. Although he maintained a low profile within the group, at meetings especially, and despite his expressed reservations about participating in this kind of organization, he was their leading light. "I think Mondrian was, perhaps, the most important. He brought something which was quite new," Marcelle Cahn remarked.⁹⁶ It was one of Seuphor's great contributions to recognize the dimensions of Mondrian's genius. The Dutch artist found refuge among this small coterie of avant-garde artists in Paris and for them he was an inspiration. His ideas and those of other De Stijl members dominate the pages of the review. Mondrian wrote the lead essay for the second issue, "L'art réaliste et l'art superréaliste," a fresh statement of basic themes - how the New Plasticism realizes a universal rhythm and harmony which in turn will move mankind. He uses for the first time, the term "superréaliste" as a way of extending the meaning of

"réaliste," a basic concept of Neoplastic art. One cannot fail to note the similarity between that term and "Surréaliste," possibly intended to draw attention to their opposing theories while underlining Mondrian's purer ideals.

Mondrian's messianic thinking informs many essays throughout Cercle et Carré. Seuphor absorbed many of his concepts into the prose of his manifesto. Vantongerloo, by stressing differences, reveals strong dependence on Mondrian. Domela, Gorin, and even Léger whose words in the first issue are devoted to praise for "le rationalisme plastique" which he says "vient du Nord," echo his ideas. Mondrian's opinion was heavily counted in all discussions. For example, arguments concerning the realation of science to art, often took his indifference as a point of departure. Despite his reported discretion in all quarrels and debates, his strong and silent presence created a core for Cercle et Carré and somehow generated faith for a future.

Notes to Chapter III.

1. Héliou, "Art Concret 1930," p. 135.
2. Héliou, May, 1977.
3. Cahn, "Bibliographie," p. 60.
4. Domela, Cercle et Carre, no. 1 (March, 1930), 49.
5. Ibid., p. 50.
6. Van Doesburg, Neue Schweizer Rundschau (1929), 628, quoted in Elderfield, "Paris-New York Axis (Dallas, 1972).
7. Seuphor, Style et Cri, p. 113.
8. Kandinsky letter quoted in Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."
9. See above, "Introduction," note 8.
10. Seuphor, April, 1977. The 1929 gouaches are illustrated in Seuphor, pp. 157-160.
11. Cahn, July, 1976.
12. Texts and illustrations from Het Overzicht in Seuphor, pp. 19-31.
13. Dutch text in Seuphor, p. 19 (trans. Michel Seuphor, p. 367). Dutch material is translated in the back of the same volume by Seuphor into French and will be quoted in

French. German letters translated by author.

14. Seuphor, April, 1977.
15. Doesburg letter, October 6, 1922, Seuphor, p. 28 (trans. p. 371).
16. Willink letter, May 16, 1923, Seuphor, p. 35 (trans p. 379); Vasari letter, September 10, 1923, p. 33.
17. De Torre, Seuphor, p. 32; Kupka letter, September 10, 1923, p. 33.
18. Dermée wrote, "Voici aussi un article de preface à ma collaboration régulière, 'Les Arts à Paris,'" April 11, 1923, in Seuphor, p. 31.
19. Seuphor statement in Programme for "L'éphémère est éternel," performed at Centre Pompidou, Paris (April, 1977).
20. Seuphor, Style et Cri, p. 95.
21. Seuphor, in Programme.
22. Text of play, rpt. Seuphor, pp. 53-60. Paris performance viewed by author, April 20, 1977 and discussed with Seuphor, April 29.
23. Seuphor, April, 1977.
24. Quoted in Seuphor, Mondrian, p. 194.

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Seuphor letter, April 14, 1925 in Seuphor, p. 119.
28. Van Doesburg letter, June 6, 1925 in Seuphor, p. 42
(trans. p. 375).
29. The contents of Les Documents include: reproductions and articles about or by Arnould, Arp, Baumeister, Breuer, Gropius, Joostens, Moholy-Nagy, Mondrian, Prampolini, Schwitters, Seuphor, Tzara and Vordemberge-Gildewart.
30. Schwitters letter, April 2, 1927, Seuphor, p. 69.
31. Slivinsky letter, June 9, 1927, Seuphor, p. 69; Seuphor-Dermée response, June 10, 1927, ibid.
32. Seuphor letter, January 13, 1930, in Seuphor, p. 101
(translated from the German by author).
33. Vordemberge letter, January 8, 1929, in Seuphor, p. 79.
34. Quoted in Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."
35. See Daniel Robbins, Joaquín Torres-García, exhibition catalogue, Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art (Providence, 1970).
36. Seuphor, Mondrian, p. 158.
37. Seuphor, April, 1977.

38. Detailed account of these events in Seuphor, Style et Cri, chap. 6; also, Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."
39. Cahn, July, 1976.
40. Seuphor, Style et Cri, p. 114.
41. Torres-García letter in Seuphor, p. 90.
42. From letter quoted above, p. 99.
43. See Cercle et Carré, collection complète (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1977) for illustrations.
44. See Seuphor, Style et Cri, p. 113; also see Robbins, Torres-Carcía, p. 14.
45. Torres-García letter states "jeudi 13, après la réunion du groupe," in Seuphor, p. 91.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Torres-García, opening lines to essay, "Vouloir Construire," Cercle et Carré, no. 1 (March, 1930), 45.
49. Seuphor, p. 92.
50. Torres-García letter, July 14, 1930, in "Lettres à Jean Gorin," Macula, no. 2 (Paris, 1977), 126.
51. Torres-García letter to Gorin, October 14, 1930, ibid.

52. Seuphor, Style et Cri, p. 112.
53. Seuphor, p. 91.
54. Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."
55. Seuphor, "Pour la défense d'une architecture," Cercle et Carré, no. 1 (March, 1930), 31-44; rpt. and trans. Stephen Bann in The Tradition of Constructivism, pp. 179-191. Hereafter page references for "Défense" will be to Bahn translation.
56. "Initial Manifesto of Futurism," (1909), rpt. in Joshua C. Taylor, Futurism, Museum of Modern Art (New York, 1961), p. 124.
57. Seuphor in Bann, p. 182.
58. Cercle et Carré, no. 1 (March, 1930), 51.
59. Seuphor in Bahn, p. 186.
60. Ibid., p. 189.
61. Cercle et Carré, no. 1 (March, 1930), 54.
62. Ibid.
63. Seuphor in Bahn, p. 187.
64. Seuphor, April, 1977.
65. Vantongerloo, "Reflection III," Vantongerloo: Paintings, Sculptures, Reflections (New York: Wittenborn, 1948) p. 22.

66. Ibid., p. 9.
67. The accuracy of Vantongerloo's formula for Composition derived from the Equation $y = -ax^2 + bx + 18$ (1930), was confirmed by mathematician, Marguerite Frank of Princeton, N.J., according to Angelica Rudenstine, The Guggenheim Museum Collection: Paintings 1880-1945, II (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1976), pp. 664-666.
68. Vantongerloo letter to Gorin explaining formula, "Lettres à Jean Gorin," p. 123. "Plastique d'Art," Cercle et Carré, no. 2 (April, 1930), 94-95.
69. Vantongerloo letter to Gorin, March 17, 1927 "Lettres à Jean Gorin," p. 121.
70. Vantongerloo, "L'Art Plastique (L^2) = (S) Néo-Plasticisme," Vouloir, no. 22 (1926).
71. Seuphor, April, 1977.
72. Miner, "Abstraction," appendix A.
73. Gorin, "Expression of the Oblique in Pure Plastic Art," Structurist, no. 9 (1969), 46.
74. Gorin, CNAC, pls. 26-30.
75. Mondrian letter dated "20/33" to Gorin, in Gorin, CNAC, p. 15.

76. Vantongerloo, undated letter to Gorin, "Lettres à Jean Gorin," p. 123.
77. Vantongerloo letter, April 3, 1927, ibid., p. 122.
78. Vordemberge letter to Seuphor, January 1, 1930, Seuphor, p. 88.
79. Vantongerloo to Gorin, March 17, 1927 in Gorin, CNAC, p. 18.
80. Van Doesburg, "From Intuition Towards Certitude" (1930), quoted in Baljeu, Van Doesburg, pp. 185-186.
81. Seuphor, July, 1976.
82. Seuphor in Bahn, p. 188, 190.
83. Seuphor, "To Set the Compass;" see also, Seuphor, "Robert Delaunay," L'Art Abstrait, I (1971), p. 28.
84. Quoted in Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."
85. Quoted in Seuphor, "Editorial," Cercle et Carré, no. 2, April, 1930 (1977 edition).
86. Werkman letter to Seuphor, March 3, 1930, Seuphor, p. 101 (trans. p. 376).
87. Contract for exhibition in Seuphor papers, Paris.
88. Seuphor letter to Werkman, March 21, 1930, Seuphor, p. 101 (trans., author).

89. Kandinsky letter to Seuphor, April 5, 1930, Seuphor, p. 89.
90. Seuphor and Gorin report that Picasso visited the gallery.
91. Grohmann, cc. 294.
92. Seuphor, "Editorial," Cercle et Carré, no. 3, June, 1930 (1977 edition).
93. Zervos, "Les expositions," Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 3 (1930), 161.
94. Seuphor, Style et Cri, p. 118. German Cueto was a sculptor and a member of Cercle et Carré.
95. Seuphor, "Poétique nouvelle," Cercle et Carré, no. 3 (June, 1930), 110.
96. Cahn, July, 1976.

Chapter IV: Art Concret and Van Doesburg in Paris

Van Doesburg was invited to join Cercle et Carré in January, 1930.¹ The concept for a group united in opposition to Surrealism and joined around the idea of structure had, in fact, originated in conversations between Van Doesburg and Torres-García. Van Doesburg's ultimate refusal to associate himself with this endeavor had an ideological basis, but it was also the result of personal animosities. Rapport with Van Doesburg was "très, très mauvais," according to Seuphor. As a result, Van Doesburg formed his own group, Art Concret, committed to "an architectural spirit and constructive values," with a handful of devoted young proteges.

Van Doesburg knew all the artists of Paris but was on bad terms with most of them. His volatile temper had caused a severing of relations with almost all former De Stijl colleagues by 1929. Undoubtedly, the most tragic separation for Van Doesburg was that which divided him from Mondrian. The two artists had been briefly reunited in Paris in 1923, the year Van Doesburg arrived. By the end of the next year, however, they were in active conflict. The focus of their dissention was the oblique, the 45° diagonal line that Van Doesburg introduced into his painting in 1924, and defended with a theory called Elementarism (Fib. 54).² Elementarism was a new idea that directly challenged Mondrian's utopian

dreams of a perfect stable harmony with more dynamic and pragmatic views.

In 1925, Mondrian officially left the De Stijl group as a result of Van Doesburg's new theory. "After your high-handed improvement of Neoplasticism, any collaboration is quite impossible for me," he wrote to his colleague in 1927.³ Mondrian did take up the challenge of Van Doesburg's diagonal by turning his square canvases on an angle starting in 1925 (Fig. 39); however, he still wished to show the fundamental correctness of the horizontal vertical opposition.⁴ Van Doesburg never stopped wishing to bridge the rift in his friendship with Mondrian. He still believed a reconciliation was possible in May of 1929 when he made the following notation in his diary: "The renewed friendship with Mondrian provides both of us with the pleasant experience of mutual support. In spite of differences a more profound friendship has now become possible."⁵ If this profound friendship had been renewed as Van Doesburg suggests, it only lasted a few weeks. The two artists had lost their former intimacy as testified by most observers. "We liked them both very much and were sorry they couldn't be together," Hélión remembers.⁶ Tensions were exacerbated by Mondrian's close rapport with Seuphor. Van Doesburg's motives for forming the group, Art Concret, may have had something to do with this, as Seuphor claims. However, it appears that the idea for Art Concret originated at approximately the same time that Cercle et Carré was getting underway in spite of the fact that their magazine

came out a month after Cercle et Carré appeared at the book stores. Numerous letters mention Van Doesburg's invitation to join his group at the same time Cercle et Carré was soliciting membership. For example, Van Doesburg asked Mondrian to join him; the latter replied with the following words:

Though I do, of course, agree with the principles you have mentioned, I am returning the paper unsigned as I do not want to belong to a group. A group of people with one aim is not as yet a single-minded group and as this does not exist, a consistent group remains impossible. And, a larger group only makes sense for joint exhibitions and for spreading ideas. I will therefore not participate in the other group either, but I have promised my collaboration in this respect. If you definitely want to form a group, you can always invite myself and others who are proved to be suitable. Only on such a basis will I collaborate with the other group as well.⁷

Mondrian was hesitant about his allegiances to Van Doesburg and also about participation in the "larger group" Cercle et Carré. The issue of Mondrian joining Art Concret was discussed at several gatherings. "We all admired him and if he wanted to come along he was welcome," Héliou reports.⁸ Presumably, Van Doesburg had sent Mondrian a copy of his group manifesto. Héliou remembers that it was customary to do so and those who agreed in principle were invited to join. Mondrian's refusal to sign his name to their venture suggests that he was aware of the virtues associated with Cercle et Carré - such as a place to exhibit and an opportunity to express ideas in print. In this choice, he supported the wave of the future. Yet, he had certain real reservations about that group as well and on more than one occasion, he

expressed his doubts to Seuphor:

Enfin je voudrais te rappeler que je ne fais pas partie d'un group, quelconque si l'on me le demande je donne des articles et j'expose des tableaux et cela partout; je n'ai pas vu encore Van Doesburg mais s'il me demande la même chose, je me compte libre de le faire.⁹

For Mondrian, there was no question of exclusive allegiances. In principle he considered becoming a member of both groups as implied in the letter to Seuphor and by his suggestion to Van Doesburg that he invite him again.

Vordemberge-Gildewart turned down an offer from Van Doesburg on January 24, 1930. He mentioned this in a letter to Seuphor: "just a short while ago, I received from Van Doesburg an invitation to belong to his new group, which did not appeal to me."¹⁰ In this same letter, he accepted Seuphor's invitation, thus establishing that the two groups were organizing and gathering adherents at the same period in time.

Jealousy, which Seuphor insists was Van Doesburg's major motive in forming Art Concret, appears not to have been the primary consideration. Van Doesburg did unleash a torrent of angry and jealous feelings when the first issue of Cercle et Carré appeared in March. He wrote to Seuphor, vigorously attacking the opening essay, "Pour la défense d'une architecture" which he mocked and branded "Surrealist." This essay gives "our worst enemies" fuel in their battle against abstraction, he argued.

Cette introduction, plein de fautes orthographiques, manque de clarté, d'attitude et d'esprit. Ce ne sont que des mots dans l'air...inspiré du même esprit snob

que son auteur condamne.- Je vous déclare que ce périodique est vraiment honteux, non seulement pour les collaborateurs, mais surtout pour l'idée d'un art nouveau. Votre groupe a donné aux ennemis de l'art "abstrait" (peintres, critiques-art dont vous aussi est le dupe!) une belle documentation contre "L'art abstrait".....11

Besides betraying the cause of abstract art, Van Doesburg accused the review of providing a platform for its enemies.

A quoi bon de célébrer encore une fois, soit par écrit, soit par portrait en format, timbre-poste NOS PIRES ENNEMIS? Est-ce que vous ignorez que ce traître, non seulement du "purisme," mais de l'art pur en générale, qui expose à ce moment un air hottentot, ci contraire à l'esprit universel, a publié récemment un article contre nous, contre le néo-plasticisme, le constructivisme et contre tous qui est du pur!

The "traître" would be either Ozenfant who always said of Mondrian, "il dépasse les bordres" or Le Corbusier. Both Purists had spoken out against Neoplasticism in the pages of L'Esprit Nouveau.

The extracts from Van Doesburg's angry letter were printed by Seuphor himself in the second issue of the magazine, April, 1930. Naturally, Seuphor hoped to show Van Doesburg in the worst possible light as a jealous man unable to hide his revenging anger. Seuphor adds several comments to the citations from the letter.

Malgré la cécité qu'on s'impose parfois pour les besoins de la cause, on s'aperçoit tôt ou tard, mon cher, que les seules armes que vous mamez sont le mensonge et le truquage. Je regrette donc que devant votre procédé deloyal et de bas caractère je ne puis vous opposer cette estime malgré-tout qu'on aime devoir à ses ennemis. Je trouve cependant que le spectacle de votre haine est assez beau pour applaudir et pour l'encourager.

It was this spectacle of Van Doesburg's jealousy that caused Mondrian finally to end all communication with his former collaborator. Seuphor remembers taking Van Doesburg's letter

to show Mondrian. "Before me, in my presence," Seuphor relates, "Mondrian said when he saw the angry letter, 'he is very bad, now I shall no longer see him' and he sat down and took a pen and wrote, 'Cher Does, I beg you to no longer come to see me after this moment.' That was in March of 1930." ¹²
Van Doesburg's explosive activities reached a climax at the opening of the Cercle et Carré exhibition, on April 18, 1930. He engaged Vantongerloo in a quarrel which led to physical violence. According to Seuphor, and others present, Vantongerloo almost killed Van Doesburg in rage. "He tried to throw him down a stairway into the basement. Van Doesburg grabbed the stair rail just in time," Seuphor explains.

Fights and grievances were far more disturbing to older artists than to Van Doesburg's young followers in Art Concret. "We did not take such things seriously," said Héliou, then age 26. "All of that has become stiff with age and history, while at the moment the energies were very much alive." ¹³ Preparation for Art Concret was less elaborate than for Cercle et Carré. It was simply a matter of a few friends getting together. "A magazine like that is between several people like love is between two," Héliou mused. "People close to each other are ready to live together forever and that lasts about two weeks or two months, it is not through reason but sympathy. You must realize these sorts of bonds united the people involved." Raising funds presented a great part of the problem. Carlsund was making a small amount of money dealing in ancient art and he paid for Art Concret's publication, according to

Hélión. "Tutundjian and I were penniless and Van Doesburg did not have money or did not show it," he added.

Artists were drawn together by chance. "Tutundjian and I met because we ate fried potatoes, it was the cheapest way of eating in Paris and there were a few well-known potato dealers," Hélión recounts.¹⁴

León-Arthur Tutundjian, born 1905, was an Armenian. His art consisted at the time of compass-drawn circles joined to straight-edged forms and lines. He also created reliefs in this general mode (Figs. 55, 56). He was extremely talented, according to Hélión, and was recognized by many important artists for this. "In 1929 at the Galerie May, rue Bonaparte, a show of his pictures composed of thin lines and spheres made a violent impression on the small world of people tormented by a new form of art. His work was like nothing one had seen here before. I can testify to the admiration he¹⁵ aroused than among artists who have since become famous."

At Tutundjian's exhibition, Hélión re-encountered Van Doesburg, whom he had met briefly a year before at Les 5 refusées. Soon after, he visited the Dutchman in his studio and the two became good friends. At the time, Hélión was very close to Torres-García. Yet, he remembers, "our ideas were much too strong for Torres-García, he was somebody that came from Cubism and liked to be within reach of that spirit while we had a feeling for the absolute, of going beyond - it was very adverse to Torres-García."¹⁶ It was at this moment in the late months of 1929 that Hélión recalls having discussed

the possibility of forming a group with people inclined in the same direction and subscribing to a common discipline.

Otto Carlsund, born 1879, was another member of Art Concret. This older Swedish painter had been a pupil of Léger and became acquainted with Héliion in the cafe world of Montparnasse (Fig. 57). "I can never pass by the Select at Montparnasse without seeing Carlsund more clearly than those who are drinking there now," said Héliion.¹⁷ Shortly after the first issue appeared, Carlsund left Paris for Sweden where he organized a show of Constructivist Art in 1930. Héliion relates that the debts Carlsund incurred from this enterprise made it impossible for him to ever return to Paris again. The little group of Art Concret never exhibited together as they so ardently wished apart from this single exhibition in Stockholm.

In addition to Van Doesburg, Héliion, Tutundjian and Carlsund, a fifth name appeared on the Art Concret manifesto, that of Marcel Wantz. Wantz was present only briefly and then he gave up art for politics, after having been initiated into a Neoplastic style by Van Doesburg. Other artists participated in frequent discussions with the group. Henri Nouveau was invited to join but considered the group too strict. A former Bauhaus student, he contributed to the Constructivist spirit of this adventure. Héliion also fondly remembers an English painter, Joe Hanson, student of Ozenfant and Léger, who made abstract paintings as early as 1928.

Thus assembled, the artists voiced their cause of purity,

unrelenting discipline and fierce concentration. "We are painters who think and measure," wrote Van Doesburg. "Most painters work like pastry-cooks and milliners. In contrast we use mathematical data and science, that is to say, intellectual means."¹⁸ Straightforward and positive in tone, the group declared itself in writing. Their single issue, Art Concret, numéro d'introduction du groupe et de la revue, is an esthetic document rather than an assortment of positions like Cercle et Carré. They were for an art based upon science and technology, a universal art, an art of absolute clarity, an art "fully conceived and spiritually formed before it is produced." Their manifesto is terse and functional. No apologies or concessions to taste or to a broad audience. Is a woman, a tree or a cow a concrete element in a painting, they ask? No, indeed, "Only planes, lines, colors and surfaces are concrete - no more or no less than that."

Five men signed the manifesto - Otto Carlsund, Léon Tutundjian, Marcel Wantz, Jean Hé lion and Theo Van Doesburg. They shared enthusiasm, an awareness of the moment and even a certain violence - "an inevitable violence to rid oneself of all the junk of an art that had fallen apart under sensual stresses and which seemed to us to clutter up the world,"¹⁹ said Hé lion. What else had they in common? "Our need for the absolute was tremendous. We wanted our art to be founded on the spirit, to exist free from sentimental exaltation, free from references and from ornamental seductions. We had no other program in common," Hé lion recalls.

Far more than the contemporary Cercle et Carré, Art Concret was aligned with the esthetic of Constructivism and the Bauhaus. For Van Doesburg, Art Concret was a continuation and distillation of theories he had been advocating during the twenties. This manifestation was to represent an increasing purification of art and even greater accord with the new epoch, an epoch of science and technology. The first title Van Doesburg had in mind for the group was "Nouveau Plan," bearing the same initials as Neoplasticism and underlining his belief that it was to be a continuation. It was his intention to elevate Neoplasticism to a new scientific, arithmetical level. The concept "concrete" had force and an absolutist sound. The word had been used previously, but only in passing. Mondrian, for example, spoke of an "équilibre concret." Van Doesburg believed that not only were fundamental elements of art "concrete," but the spirit could also be "concretized." "The concretization of the creative mind," was his new goal. ²⁰ Such ideas are amplified in the essay following the basic statement of the group's six point program, called "Commentary on the basis of concrete painting."

In his writings for Art Concret, Van Doesburg devotes his attention entirely to painting. This new focus suggests profound awareness of the times - Paris in 1930. He is now prepared to abandon the idea that architecture is the primary art form, although, like Seuphor, he refers to its guiding spirit. Van Doesburg had shifted his emphasis to painting in

the late twenties, apropos the decoration for the Aubette cafe and cinema in Strasbourg. The project carried out with Arp and his wife, Sophie Taeuber, between 1927 and 1928, was, perhaps, Van Doesburg's most important experience with pictorial art. He organized the mural space of the cinema-dance hall, a large room in which he covered three walls and the entire ceiling with a composition of diagonally arranged rectangles (Figs. 58-61). Unfortunately, the interior decoration is known only in photographs because the original was destroyed. An entire issue of De Stijl was devoted to this project in 1928 with many illustrations. The Aubette was also reproduced in the third issue of Cercle et Carré, otherwise it was little known in France.

Art Concret had departed from orthodox Constructivism by separating its goals and intentions from architecture, however, in other respects, their manifesto exhorts the theories of the Polish Constructivists. For example, the third point in their opening "Basis of Concrete Painting," reads:

The painting should be constructed completely with pure plastic elements, that is to say, with planes and colors. A pictorial element has no other meaning than what it represents, consequently the painting possesses no other meaning than what it is by itself.²¹

The "formalist" tone of this statement comes very close to the Polish theory of Unism as expressed in the writings of Strzeminski, a member of the "a.r." ("revolutionary artists") group and later a participant in Abstraction-Création. In 1928, Strzeminski stated:

A picture is a rectangular world, flat, self-sufficient

within its limits, isolated from everything that is going on beyond its frame.²²

The links between Art Concret and the Polish theory were established by friendship between the French and Polish artists, particularly between Hélicion and the painter Stazewski who was then living in Paris. Stazewski was a disciple of Unism and he joined the members of the Art Concret group in many informal discussions.

Among the numerous rules and regulations put forth by the group was the requirement that technique must be entirely mechanical and precise. "If one cannot draw a circle by hand, one may use a compass. All instruments which were created by the intellect due to a need for perfection are recommended."²³ Artistic handwriting is rejected in favor of the compass; handwritten script is deemed less legible than what is typewritten. The beautiful is equated with what is mechanical and lucid.

The very essence of art, according to Art Concret, is "to embody a universal language." This is to be achieved through thought and thought alone. The composition is conceived and formed in the mind and only after is it realized as a visual object. Such a work of art will "serve as the basis for a new culture." Their concept of the universal comes very close to the idea of the "international." This is true in abstract artists' writings in general. Sometimes the terms appear interchangeable. By seeking a universal language they were also expanding to an international scope. Certainly,

internationalism characterizes the spirit of all three Paris-based groups of the thirties. Héliion, for example, was the only French member of Art Concret, just as he had earlier been the only Frenchman among the "5 refusées."

To their universal and international aspirations, they joined the ideal of the brotherhood of man. It was believed that pure, clear and, in Van Doesburg's thinking, "symbolically white" painting, would lead toward the solution of social ills.²⁴ Their slogan, "a collective art for a collectivist society," echoes the sentiment of their Constructivist and De Stijl predecessors. As a political activist, Marcel Wantz felt obliged to give up painting entirely. Héliion, too, was engaged in political activity as a member of Paul Vaillant-Couturiers' Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists in 1930.²⁵ He believed that the classless society of Soviet Russia offered the best solution to social problems.

Au début, je pensais que l'URSS allait résoudre tout cela, puis on a vu la guerre réapparaître, alors qu'en 1930 nous ne pensions qu'à dire que c'était fini pour toujours. On était à égale distance entre deux guerres, à cette espèce de moment où la marée est immobile. On sentait l'éternité.²⁶

Héliion was official editor of the review, although he and Van Doesburg wrote and discussed most of the articles together. Héliion's journalistic gifts were already evident from his participation in L'Acte and "les 5 refusées" of 1928. He also wrote for a Pau monthly, Pyénées.²⁷ Héliion's individual contribution to Art Concret was an article, "Les problèmes de l'art concret: art et mathématiques." I remember

Van Doesburg saying when I produced that paper on mathematics, 'I'll sign that anyway,' and that is the way we signed each other's declarations," he recalls.²⁸ Like Van Doesburg who believed the "square" to reflect the new consciousness of the age, Hélión affirmed that powers inherent in geometry and mathematics would replace divine mysteries of the past. His thesis is that mathematics and painting have essential relations; geometry is the means to demonstrate art's universality.

Pour que le tableau soit universel, il faut que les relations réciproques de ses éléments soient déterminées par des constructions géométriques exactes, c'est dire qu'il existe entre les éléments des relations numériques déduites d'un module originel.²⁹

Mathematical relationships and proportions are measured in forms and also through colors. Hélión's preoccupation with color and math is reminiscent of Vantongerloo.

Hélión is careful to distinguish between true mathematical analogy in art and the use of geometry to organize composition. Geometry must not be a mere tool, he insists. If art is to be truly universal, geometry must be essential. In one instant he suggests an art based upon the theory of relativity, a theory that greatly interested Van Doesburg. Exactly how these ideas were to be incorporated, he never quite explains. In his own art at this time, Hélión used geometry to reduce the element of chance. "I drew the dimensions of the various elements contained in the painting from diversely contrasted geometrical and arithmetical progressions."³⁰ His paintings,

called "Orthogonale" between 1929 and 1932, were dominated by right-angled planes painted in primary colors plus gray, black and white (Figs. 62, 63). This style resulted from confrontation with Neoplasticism. Notions of repetition and arithmetic progression of elements ordered the size, shape and color of line and plane, constructed on the basis of a grid.

Tutundjian was also absorbed with mathematical treatises and other scientific tracts during this period. His compass-drawn circles remind one of Art Concret's dictum on the use of precise and measurable instruments.

In most cases, the very striving for a relationship between art and mathematics was more important than clear results achieved. Even Vantongerloo, who systematized mathematical formulae and ratios in his art to the greatest degree, was uncertain as to the ultimate value of these exercises. At stake was the desire to align art with deeper purpose and universal consciousness, to bring art into accord with a machine age. Recently, Héliou has remarked, "We all sought the reasons beyond the appearance. We knew it existed in mathematics but none of us did find a real connection. It existed in the work, in Van Doesburg's and my work, but the connection with mathematics is limited really, sort of ideal, it just shows that you can inscribe a work in a mathematical curve."³¹ The discipline of one study informed the spirit of the other discipline. It was part of the conviction that the artists joined under the concept "concrete" were creating some-

thing new. Math gave confidence and support at a critical moment.

The Art Concret manifestation went thoroughly unnoticed. Their uncompromising attitude led to solitude. "We thundered and proclaimed the advent of clarity. We wrote letters. We called on people and no one paid us much attention. We were insulted," Hé lion recounts.³² In a single article on the subject, published by former Symbolist critic, Camille Mauclair in a French daily, L'Ami du Peuple, there appeared the remark, "we recognize there [in Art Concret] the spirit of Lucifer, he who always negates."³³ The impression of negation is heightened by a list that appeared on the final page of their 15 page review. Pejorative qualities signifying all that their art was not were strung together under the heading "quelques mots ne concernant pas la peinture." These included, "sensibilité, sensualité, émotion, poésie, abstraction, imagination, sorcellerie, mystère, fantaisie, charme, rêve, subconscient, génie, talent, habileté, qualité, suggestion, nuance, héroïsme..." In short, all qualities normally associated with art. The list of un-art qualities was their most radical gesture. No doubt, it was intended, as Mayakovsky had earlier expressed it, like a "slap at public taste."³⁴ They challenged taste, they challenged art and also art criticism.

Art Concret had ingested the spirit of Dada. "Van Doesburg and my abstraction came from Dada, whereas Mondrian came from Cubism and was a classical painter," said Hé lion.³⁵ Van Doesburg, of course, had been writing for Dada publications

under the name I.K. Bonset. Even André Breton admired their courage. "When I met André Breton sometime later, I was surprised to find him so comprehensive. He saw that our effort with Art Concret amidst the disorder and smugness of the times, stood as a surrealist act," Héli³⁶on recalls.

As the only Frenchman within their little group, Héli³⁷on was named manager, the one to whom all correspondence was addressed. He received all the bills and, as it turned out, was prosecuted for those unpaid as a result of a second issue that never came out. "I owe money to printers in several quarters of Paris for avant-garde reviews fiercely loaded with youth, will and hope and soon vanished," Héli³⁷on wrote to Gallatin. The first issue of Art Concret was printed in an edition of 2000. Twenty copies were sold, in marked contrast to the 1200 copies of Cercle et Carré that immediately sold out.

When it became apparent that a second number of the magazine would be impossible to publish, Van Doesburg organized a meeting in his studio. In addition to Art Concret members, Héli³⁸on and Tutundjian, Arp, Herbin, Gleizes, Valmier, Delaunay, Giacometti and Kupka were invited. This meeting, held in February, 1931, led to the formation of the group, Abstraction-Création. Contrary to most accounts which place Vantongerloo and Herbin as founders of this group, Héli³⁸on insists that the initiative came from Van Doesburg, with assistance from other Art Concret members. Not accidentally, perhaps, the initials of the two groups are the same. Van Doesburg's meeting is

documented in a revealing letter that he wrote to Frank Kupka inviting him to attend:

As it is absolutely impossible to arrange interesting exhibitions or publications by limiting the participants too strictly, we are obliged to unite ourselves on a larger basis. The best artists of Paris and abroad should participate, even when their tendency is not ours.³⁹

These are indeed strange words from a man who had written to Seuphor a few years before about his contempt for large groups with mixed tendencies. That Van Doesburg had moved to alter his seemingly inflexible position and to himself promote a group "united on a larger basis," powerfully demonstrates the plight of abstract art and its shifting emphases.

One month after this formative meeting took place in February, Van Doesburg died in Davos, Switzerland at the age of forty-seven. Abstraction-Création appeared under new management with an expanded list of participants to voice the cause of abstract art for the next five years in Paris.

Notes to Chapter IV.

1. See Seuphor, "Editorial," Cercle et Carré, no. 2 , April, 1930 (1977 edition).
2. See above, Chap. I, note 34.
3. Quoted in Jaffé, "The Diagonal Principle in the Works of Van Doesburg and Mondrian," Structurist, no. 9 (1969), 20. The letter was a response to Van Doesburg's request that Mondrian collaborate on the 1927 jubilee issue of De Stijl.
4. Mondrian stated: "In his late work, Van Doesburg tried to eliminate static expression by a diagonal arrangement of the lines of his composition. But this accent destroys the feeling of physical equilibrium that is needed to the enjoyment of a work of art. If a square painting is hung diagonally, however, this effect is not produced," quoted in Jaffé, Mondrian, p. 140.
5. Quoted in Baljeu, Van Doesburg, p. 97.
6. Hélión, May, 1977.
7. Undated letter in De Stijl, exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam, 1951), p. 72, quoted in Jaffé, De Stijl (1957), p. 30.
8. Hélión, May, 1977.
9. Mondrian undated letter to Seuphor, Seuphor, p. 88.

10. Vordemberge letter to Seuphor, January 24, 1930,
Seuphor, p. 88.
11. Quoted in Seuphor, "Editorial," Cercle et Carré, no. 2,
April, 1930 (1977 edition).
12. Seuphor, April, 1977.
13. Hélión, May, 1977.
14. Ibid.
15. Hélión, "Art Concret 1930," p. 134.
16. Hélión, May, 1977.
17. Hélión, "Art Concret 1930," p. 128.
18. Van Doesburg, "Commentaires sur la base de la peinture
concrète," Art Concret (Paris, 1930), 2-4, trans.
Baljeu, Van Doesburg, p. 184.
19. Hélión, "Art Concret 1930," p. 133.
20. Baljeu (p. 100) suggests that the term "concrete" has
sources in Schoenmaekers. Later, the term gained
currency and was used by Kandinsky, "Concrete Art,"
XX^e Siècle, I (Paris, 1938), 9-16; Arp, "Abstract
Art: Concrete Art," introduction to Art of This Century
(New York, 1942); Mondrian, "A New Realism," American
Abstract Artists Yearbook (New York, 1946).

21. Quoted in Baljeu, p. 181.
22. Quoted in Constructivism in Poland, p. 106.
23. Quoted in Baljeu, p. 182.
24. Van Doesburg calls white "the spiritual color of our times, the clearness which directs all actions," in "Vers la peinture blanche," Art Concret, pp. 11-12.
25. See Schipper, p. 35, note 28.
26. Abadie, Héliion, p. 21.
27. Pyrenées: Revue officielle de l'automobile club Basco-Bearnais, Pau (January, March, 1930), cited in Schipper, p. 33.
28. Héliion, May, 1977.
29. Héliion, "Les problèmes de l'art concret. - art et mathématiques," Art Concret (Paris, 1930), 8.
30. Héliion, July, 1976. For detailed discussion of Héliion's "Orthogonal" phase, see Schipper, pp. 38-46.
31. Héliion, May, 1977.
32. Héliion, "Art Concret 1930," p. 135.
33. Quoted in "Art Concret 1930," p. 135.
34. "A Slap at Public Taste," is the title of one of the manifestos of Russian Futurism written by Vladimir Maya-

kovsky and David Burliuk, delivered by Mayakovsky, March, 1913.

35. Hé lion, May, 1977.
36. Hé lion, "Art Concret 1930," p. 137.
37. Hé lion letter to Gallatin, October 17, 1936.
38. Hé lion, "Art Concret 1930," p. 138.
39. Van Doesburg letter, February 9, 1931, quoted in Bal-
jeu, Van Doesburg, p. 103. Schipper first called my
attention to this letter.

ABSTRACTION IN PARIS IN THE THIRTIES

Chapter V: Growth of a Movement, Abstraction-Création

"Abstraction," "Création," "Art non-figuratif" - these were terms chosen to define the new group.

Abstraction, because certain artists have arrived at the concept of non-figuration by the progressive abstraction of the forms of nature...

Creation because other artists have attained non-figuration directly by a conception of a purely geometric order or by the exclusive use of elements commonly called abstract such as circles, planes, bars, lines, etc....

Non-figuration, that is to say, cultivation of pure plasticism, the exclusion of all explanatory, anecdotal, literary, naturalistic elements...

We do not judge, we do not compare, we do not separate the works constructed according to their abstract evolution nor according to their direct creation. We endeavor to present a document of non-figurative art.¹

This document of non-figurative art appeared as a series of annual cahiers between 1932 and 1936 to represent abstract artists throughout Europe. Immediately, the editors announced independence from all other groups and commercial enterprises. They saw themselves as central to a vastly expanded intellectual movement. While claiming only fifty members in 1935, Abstraction-Création listed a greater number of alleged adherents to the cause of abstract art. Persons supposedly interested in abstraction, living in Paris and abroad are cited as statistics. "We can consider that 17 countries outside France are inter-

ested in abstract art and that Paris is the center of the movement," the "Memorandum" read.² A statistical breakdown of 416 persons reveals that Switzerland leads the list with 68 adherents, while America is said to have 33. Chile, Luxembourg, Hungary and Japan are each listed as having one interested party. How these facts were discovered is not explained. Information is printed both in French and English testifying to a growing number of English speaking converts.

The annual cahier published by the group featured reproductions of paintings, sculpture and photography beside statements by the artists. Others in related professions, critics, art dealers, historians and psychologists were also asked to contribute. "Chaque artiste a été invité à exprimer dans un article les raisons qu'il juge motiver essentiellement son attitude," the opening editorial explained.³ A committee of artists - Arp, Gleizes, Héliou, Herbin, Kupka, Tutundjian, Valmier and Vantongerloo - prepared this statement. Part of the function of the committee was to select "un directeur responsable chargé de composer chaque cahier sous le contrôle du comité." The position of editor rotated as did membership on the committee of approximately eight members, recalls Héliou, who was chosen to head the first issue. "Everyone had a page to express themselves in a fully abstract medium, fully non-representational. If they agreed with those conditions,⁴ then they could have that page. And they had to pay for it." Contributing artists had to be "définitivement non-figurateurs." Restrictions occasionally imposed ludicrous obstacles. Van-

tongerloo rejected a work submitted by Georges Valmier after hours of scrutiny, saying, "No, we can't use it, I see a fish!"⁵

The initial membership list for Abstraction-Création was drawn from Cercle et Carré. According to Seuphor, Vantongerloo, who was "nostalgic for noisy meetings," obtained through the intermediary of a roommate in Seuphor's apartment in Vanves, the addresses of members from Cercle et Carré plus accounts of the treasury. This occurred after Seuphor had left Paris due to ill health in June, 1930. "Equipped with these valuable tools, Vantongerloo lost no time in getting down to work. He had assured himself of Auguste Herbin's and the sculptur Béothy's support," reports Seuphor.⁶ Subsequently, artists were invited to join by those already in the group. Otto Freundlich, for example, invited Marcelle Cahn by mail:

On prépare le deuxième numéro d'une publication de "Abstraction-Création" et parceque chaque membre de ce groupe a le droit de proposer des artistes dont les oeuvres seraient à reproduire je vous prie, si cela vous intéresse de bien vouloir envoyer, si vite que possible, quelque photos a l'adresse de A. Herbin 26, Bd. Massine, Paris 13.⁷

Cahn never sent the photographs and recently, she remarked, "Je n'ai pas vraiment réalisé la portée de la chose."⁸

Membership in Abstraction-Création ranged from established abstractionists like Freundlich, Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Kandinsky, Moholy-Nagy, Kupka, Gabo, Pevsner and Arp to younger De Stijl artists Domela and Vordemberge-Gildewart and included emerging Paris abstractionists Gorin and Hélicon.

Important representatives from Poland, Strzeminski, Kobro and Stazewski and from England, sculptors Nicholson and Hepworth also joined. Others came from Switzerland and America. Lissitzky, Malevich and Tatlin were asked to participate but were unable to do so, according to the editorial statement in the first issue.

Seuphor's account of the events leading to the foundation of Abstraction-Création place Vantongerloo and Herbin at the forefront. Typically, accounts vary and there are competitive claims. Héliou insists that Van Doesburg initiated this group by proposing a meeting with former members of Art Concret plus Kupka, Arp, Gleizes, Valmier and Giacometti. The claim is supported by Van Doesburg's letter to Frank Kupka, written in February, 1931, making known his intention to start a new group. Héliou describes the events:

The idea really took place in Van Doesburg's studio in Meudon. He had thought about it before in discussions with Carlsund and myself in a bistro. We decided that people could unite on the basis of a certain vision of the world outside of representation but with a certain strictness to it, a certain density. Cercle et Carré was not very strict, Art Concret was too strict. Abstraction-Création was a compromise and the cooperative basis was very healthy. It worked.⁹

The founding date for the group Abstraction-Création is announced in the first three issues of their magazine as "le 15 février, 1931," corresponding to the date of Van Doesburg's meeting. However, by the time the fourth issue came out in 1935, and Vantongerloo had assumed a more prominent role within the group, the founding date is set back a month to January 15. This may represent Vantongerloo's effort to relate the founda-

tion of Abstraction-Création to his own organizing activities. A month before Van Doesburg called his meeting, Vantongerloo was involved in the creation of a group. In January, 1931, he wrote of it to Gorin. The group, referred to by initials "A.C." is said to be having financial difficulties. Vantongerloo argues that the committee must bear responsibility for soliciting money from those participating in the magazine. Each artist, he insists, must pay for his own page. Lack of sufficient funds caused temporary suspension of the publication, and Vantongerloo relates, "entretemps nous avons décidé de publier un almanach."¹⁰ An almanac is in fact a good description of the form of the cahiers published by Abstraction-Création. Finally, Vantongerloo urges Gorin to send photos of his work to Herbin along with "un article traitant sur la base de votre conception de l'art." He asks for 200 francs and hopes to see Gorin at an event set for January 13. One may reasonably assume that "A. C." stands for Abstraction-Création rather than, for example, Art Concret because of other corroborating details such as Herbin's address as headquarters and the proposed format for the periodical.

Van Doesburg and Vantongerloo did not get along. It is unlikely that they would have participated in a group together at that time in spite of shared convictions about art. Only after the death of Van Doesburg in March of 1931 did Vantongerloo begin to play a prominent role in the new endeavor, according to Héliou who emerged as a leader in the early years. One can only speculate as to what probable effect Van Doesburg might

have had on the stability of this venture had he lived. Hélión and Gorin agree that the group might not have survived his leadership. "It would have exploded in hostility," insists Hélión.¹¹ As it was, Hélión recalls that great difficulties plagued meetings and efforts to arrive at agreeable solutions exhausted him. On the other hand, Van Doesburg's presence might have assured higher standards of quality. Casual bases for judgment were to constitute a major weakness for Abstraction-Création. Once artists met the minimal requirements they were admitted to the group. Some participants were abstract artists for a matter of months. Hélión complained about these conditions to his American patron, A.E. Gallatin, saying "I object to the fact that too many second or third rate painters have been admitted. Arp and I are fighting to clear it up if this is possible. I doubt it though."¹²

After the first few years, Vantongerloo took full control of the administration. To Gorin he wrote:

Il y a des changements notamment, que le siège social d'Abs. Créa. est maintenant transféré à mon adresse et que je m'occupe de toute l'administration. Ce ne sont pas là les seuls changements. Vous vous en doutez, mais ils constituent une amélioration pour Abst. Créa...¹³

Problems with the administration troubled others. "Rules, rules, rules," Hélión bemoaned, "it became increasingly bureaucratic."¹⁴

Important artists began to withdraw from the group. Hélión and Arp who had expressed dissatisfaction earlier, left after the third issue and Mondrian, Domela, Kupka, Delaunay, Gabo

and Pevsner were no longer listed as members. An increasing number of unknowns replaced them, many never heard of again: Fischli, Garcin, Jellet, Jelinek, Kranter, Reth, Hone, Leroy, Martyn, Okamoto, Schlaepfer, Villeri.¹⁵ Albert Gleizes, Jean Gorin and the Polish artists remained faithful and several emerging artists joined at a late date including Josef Albers (Fig. 64) and Max Bill, neither of whom actually lived in Paris. The tenor changed in predominantly negative ways. Héliou described the situation, "Arp, myself and several others such as Mondrian, Gonzales, Kandinsky, Fernandez, etc. have abandoned the group Abstraction-Création, where between Herbin and Valmier quite a train of abstract Sunday painters triumph."¹⁶

Next to Vantongerloo, Auguste Herbin was the principal animateur. The headquarters for the group was located in his home, 26 Boulevard Masséna and Herbin directed the second cahier. He had not participated in either of the earlier abstract artists' manifestations although he was no newcomer to modern art nor to abstraction. As early as 1917, Herbin created a simplified geometric abstraction originating in Cubism, by stripping form to basic shapes arranged in flat symmetrical patterns (Fig. 65). Sometimes his compositions resembled Egyptian art in their insistent frontality and symmetry. Herbin's taste for folk arts of many kinds led him to favor decorative effects, and his early abstract paintings and sculpture were intended to fulfill a decorative function in relation to monumental architecture. By 1918, Herbin pro-

claimed the downfall of easel painting and the advent of a geometrical and architectural painting integrated into the city. His faith in "un véritable art populaire," is reminiscent of Léger with whom he was associated as fellow artist in Léonce Rosenberg's Gallery. At the 1921 Exposition de groupe at L'Effort Moderne, Herbin showed an abstract Peinture on cement which was a synthesis of natural forms, a tree being his initial motif (Fig. 3) Herbin painted curvilinear abstractions, lyrical in character with sinuous interlocking rhythmic patterns, during the period of his involvement with Abstraction-Création (Fig. 66). He was always interested in discovering the "significance" behind abstract art and, ultimately, he conceived a theory of correspondences between form, color and sound as a spiral of metaphors, rooted in Kandinsky. His ideas became the subject of a book published in 1949, Art non-figuratif, non-objectif. The best known and most successful phase in the artist's career dates from this time in the forties until his death in 1960. His paintings then were composed of bright, flat geometric color designs that realized his intentions to establish harmony and correspondence between the basic elements of form, color and rhythm (Fig. 67).

Herbin's major contribution to Abstraction-Création was intense activism on behalf of the group. "He was a little Napoleon with enormous energy," Domela remembers.¹⁷ It was Herbin who found a lawyer for the group and had a statute drawn up. "We wanted to exist under the law," Hélicon recounts, "in order to have a clear definition of the cooperative basis under

which it would operate."¹⁸ Hélión believed that Herbin was an unsubtle man, "un vrai bon peintre, avec lequel on était bien injuste, mais il avait un esprit étroit et était sûr d'avoir la vérité définitive."¹⁹ In truth, Herbin lacked the cultural interests and imagination of men like Arp and Gleizes who had far more sophistication about the international vanguard. And, Hélión, despite his youth, was more cultured and fertile in interests.

Herbin presided at formal group meetings and was eventually elected President in 1934 which office he continued to hold for the duration of Abstraction-Création. The position of Vice President, and also Secretary and Treasurer,²⁰ rotated, although Vantongerloo was often second in command. It was due directly to Herbin's efforts that the group exhibited together for several months, beginning December, 1933. "We couldn't get an exhibition anywhere, then Herbin found an enormous empty garage locked up. It was out beyond the center. He insisted on a big space. It was a complete washout," recalls English abstract painter Paule Vézelay. "I don't think as a group we had any other exhibitions," she adds.²¹ The exhibition described by Vézelay was held on Avenue Wagram. The fourth cahier carried a mention of the event:

Le Comité d'"Abstraction-Création," après avoir examiné l'intérêt réel de la salle d'exposition, 44 avenue de Wagram, a profité d'une occasion pour s'en débarrasser sans préjudice matériel. Le Comité se propose de continuer les manifestations "exposition" dans un autre quartier en envisageant des charges moindres.²²

Works by Nicholson, Béothy, Bill, Calder, Erni, Freundlich,

Gleizes Gorin, Hepworth, Herbin, Moholy-Nagy, Moss, Prampolini, Séligmann, Valmier, Van Doesburg, Vantongerloo and Vézelay were exhibited at 44 avenue Wagram. It was to have been a rotating show, changing every three months. The ideas never worked out as planned, however, and after a short period the exhibition closed and a new location was never determined. Oddly, Abstraction-Création was never able to mount an exhibition comparable in scale and importance to that of Cercle et Carré.

Some of the more important artists associated with Abstraction-Création chose not to exhibit with the group. Kandinsky had aversions to large diverse group shows as did Mondrian.²³ Soon after the group exhibit of Abstraction-Création, Domela proposed to Mondrian another, smaller group show "chez Abstraction-Création," to honor the memory of Van Doesburg. To Domela's great irritation, Mondrian not only refused, but suggested that there was something irregular about the request which he labeled "d'affair." To Gorin, Mondrian wrote describing this event in January.

Il y a quelque temps Domela m'a rendu une visite. Il était sympathique et comme autre fois avant son séjour en Allemagne. Mais peu après il m'annonça une visite avec sa femme et Petro Doesburg. Je croyais une visite amicale mais qui se montra plutôt "d'affaire," parce qu'il me proposait d'exposer avec lui, toi et Doesburg chez Abstraction-Création. J'ai refusé pour des raisons différentes: d'abord je ne suis pas prêt, ensuite je trouve l'endroit inconvenable, enfin j'ai tâché lui faire comprendre ce que je t'ai écrit ci-dessus, mais vaguement parce qu'en ce moment cela n'était pas encore si clair qu'à présent. Je lui ai dit également que je trouve que lui n'a que des oeuvres anciennes et que toi aussi étais encore en recherche, de sorte que je ne voyais pas qu'une exposition - pour, comme il m'a dit, montrer le N.P. [Néoplasticism] - n'est pas aussi pressée. Il m'a dit que sans moi il le ferait quand même, et je

n'ai rien contre cela seulement je n'en vois pas l'utilité: au contraire cela pourrait nuire au N.P... si l'oeuvre n'est pas encore plus ou moins complète.²⁴

The long and elaborate discussion of the matter, suggests that Mondrian was uncomfortable about his own stand although he continued to be rigid about his requirements for exhibiting throughout the decade.

There were a number of artists who chose not to serve on the committee of Abstraction-Création but took an active role within the organization of the group. Robert Delaunay is an example. Delaunay was present at all meetings during the formative phase of the group and into the first few years. "He was a regular at the meetings at Café Voltaire as long as I was there," said Hé lion. "He added his liveliness." Domela,²⁵ too, recalls, "Delaunay was an important member and a leader." Because Delaunay's art from the twenties was predominantly figurative, he had not been invited to join Cercle et Carré. However, after the first issue appeared at the newsstands, Seuphor vividly remembers receiving Delaunay's heartiest congratulations in Montparnasse. Delaunay's return to an abstract style around 1930-31 may have been the result of the direction expressed by Cercle et Carré. Seuphor believes that this was the case. The artist was also influenced by the writings of Gleizes whom Delaunay considered one of the most important writer-theorists on modern art. This he communicated to A.E. Gallatin when he recommended Gleizes to write for the catalogue of Gallatin's collection, the Gallery of Living Art. "Après réflexions - je vous ai nommé Gleizes. Gleizes

est un technicien - et c'est naturel qu'il puisse dire des
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choses utiles sur l'art."

Seuphor returned to Paris in May, 1931, and he recalls that Delaunay said to him, "Everyone asks that Cercle et Carré be continued." According to Seuphor, Delaunay wished to recreate group meetings and he initiated reunions on Saturdays in a cafe on Quai Voltaire. Later, these meetings took place at the Closerie de Lilas. "One day in 1931, Delaunay said to me at the Closerie des Lilas, 'Gleizes told me that the true solution to abstract painting is color and Delaunay is the first to have found that,'" Seuphor states. Gleizes gave many lectures both in France and England during the early thirties where he discussed the evolution of modern art. In Seuphor's opinion, Delaunay's abstract canvases did not begin again until 1932 or 1933, in spite of some earlier dates, by which time the artists had become "au courant de la découverte de Gleizes." "Il est certain que, inspiré par les idées de Gleizes sur ses tableaux de 1912-13, Delaunay
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a refait des rythmes circulaire en 1932."

An abstract painting by Delaunay is reproduced in the first number of Abstraction-Création, and beside it the date, 1931 (Fig. 68). The spherical form on the right side of the painting is almost identical to another work signed and dated 1931, Rythme, Joie de Vivre, reproduced in the catalogue, Robert Delaunay, 1976 (Fig. 69). Michel Hoog, director of that exhibition, like Seuphor assigns great importance to Gleizes as an influence upon Delaunay's return to an abstract

conception. Hoog believes that this occurred in 1930 although there is no abstract work dated with certainty from that year. Unlike Seuphor, Hoog totally denies the relevance of the abstract movement in Paris. At no point in his catalogue does he acknowledge Delaunay's participation in Abstraction-Création, implicitly suggesting that such association would damage the artist's image. Delaunay was part of the heroic Cubist generation and Hoog believes that his reputation is by association with those artists and that time in history. The group, Abstraction-Création, on the other hand, is neither considered heroic nor even wholly acceptable. It occupies a small dim place in French art history. Nevertheless, and despite Hoog's denial, the evidence is clear that Delaunay was a committed participant in this group and a firm believer in the cause of abstraction during the thirties. In statements prepared for Abstraction-Création, he reiterates old themes on the purity and dynamism of abstraction. Pure painting must not adhere to formulae, nor schools, nor is the mere fact of non-figuration a guarantee of quality in art, he insists, "une peinture dite sans objet peut-être aussi²⁸ morte qu'une peinture représentant une 'nature morte.'"

Both Robert and Sonia Delaunay were frequently hosts to younger painters, especially Americans in Paris whom they encouraged to join the group. Among the American participants were Alexander Calder, John Ferren and Carl Holty, the latter a member as a direct result of Delaunay's invitation. A.E. Gallatin frequently visited Paris in search of paintings for

his collection and Delaunay was among the first French artists whom he encountered in his travels. It was Delaunay who introduced the American patron to Hélión in 1932. Hélión then became indispensable to the elderly Gallatin: "Gallatin was a 'bavard' you know, but he also used Hélión as a kind of Cicerone, I mean as a tour guide of France," Holty remembers,²⁹ Hélión closely advised Gallatin in the selection of modern art for his collection which became increasingly dedicated to abstraction and particularly to those trends reflected in Abstraction-Création - late Cubism, De Stijl, and Bauhaus-type abstract art. Gallatin never officially joined the group, however, like John Ferren, he was a kind of unofficial participant, friendly with many members. Ferren remembers paying dues and having been what he termed "an inactive member" for awhile.³⁰

Like the Delaunays, Hélión welcomed Americans and other foreign artists to his atelier. Torres-García was the first to tell him about the United States and New York in particular when he arrived in Paris from that city in 1924. The following year Torres-García's friend, Jean Xceron, arrived from New York and remained in Paris for a decade becoming quite friendly with Hélión. Harry Holtzman, who came to Paris to seek out Mondrian, was eager to meet Hélión as well. By 1931, Calder had joined Hélión's circle and also the group Abstraction-Création. In a recent letter to Holty's widow, Elizabeth, Hélión clarified the order in which the Americans joined Abstraction-Création:

No one was ever elected. We invited each other. The first American to join was William Einstein for the first number. He brought us Calder who brought Katherine Dreier, same issue. It's only later that we heard, maybe through Delaunay, of Carl Holty who thus joined us only for the second issue. Out of his own choice he did not participate in the third issue nor later. I left myself after the third in which another American, Gorky, was invited through me.³¹

Holty chose to withdraw, believing that he did not belong with this company of artists. He expressed his views in an unpublished memoir, where he explains how he disliked what he felt to be rigid and exclusive about their collective conception of abstract painting. "What these people, Gleizes, Van Doesburg and others wanted at the least was an oversimplification of the problem involving art and nature, moreover it was arbitrary."³² It is possible that Holty confused Art Concret with Abstraction-Création since Van Doesburg was only briefly involved with the latter manifestation. Holty's own paintings, reproduced in the 1933 cahier, are free curvilinear abstractions that reveal a painterly sensibility that is not usually met in the other adherents (Fig. 70). His compositions integrate floating shapes within stable planes into the shallow box-like space of synthetic Cubism. Holty felt that his sensibility was too lyrical for the group which, ironically, was moving in that direction anyway.

Calder, too, represented a lyrical strain within Abstraction-Création. Two elegant wire sculptures are reproduced in the 1932 issue (Fig. 71). A mobile is published in the third cahier. Calder describes his introduction to this group in his autobiography: "The St. Louis Einstein had just somehow joined the group of artists called 'Abstraction-

Création,' which included Arp, Mondrian, Delaunay, Pevsner, and Hélión among about 30 in all. The invitation to join was extended to me after an investigation by several members. They came to the studio at Villa Brune and saw what I was doing. So, I became a member too." ³³ William Einstein, here referred to as "saint," presumably in a pun, lived on the ground floor of Calder's building. His paintings are included in the first issue and appear to be influenced by De Stijl (Fig. 72). Einstein, like Calder, was friendly with Hélión and had, in fact, accompanied him in his travels to Berlin and the Soviet Union.

Abstraction-Création absorbed a great variety of styles from the start and divisions between one type of abstract art and another grew fuzzier as time went on. Strict rectilinear compositions associated with De Stijl and Constructivism co-existed with more lyrical approaches influenced by Delaunay, by post-Cubist painters Herbin, Gleizes, Villon and Valmier and by the Biomorphism of Arp. Many artists conceived their own mixture of these styles. The very concept "Abstraction-Création" was intended to embrace this diversity. Hélión relates:

Ce n'est qu'au moment où nous avons créé le rassemblement d'Abstraction-Création que je suis entré en contact avec à peu près tous les peintres abstraits du monde. Sur le nombre il y avait des gens qui faisaient des choses très différentes. Il y avait déjà Freundlich qui faisait une abstraction tout à fait irrégulière que certains allaient cultiver vingt ans plus tard et d'autres qui étaient des puritains, des gens très stricts, très sérieux. Toutes sortes de tendances se faisaient jour. La richesse d'Abstraction-Création était assez typique puisqu'elle allait jusqu'aux bords du surréalisme avec

Séligmann, du cubisme avec Gleizes et Valmier...³⁴

The "abstractionists," defined generally as those arriving at abstract art from nature, included artists closest to the center of original Cubism like Villon, Delaunay and Gleizes, the latter having already attracted a group of painters interested in his theory of "rotation-translation." These artists, involved with decorative aspects of Cubism, include two Irish members of the group, Eve Hone and Mainie Jellett (Figs. 73, 74). Herbin was also an "abstractionist." Valmier, too, worked in a decorative style creating forms in space linked by sweeping curvilinear lines (Fig. 75). Lesser known artists, Jelinet, Foltyn and Reth (Fig. 76) also belong to this loose category. In their work, colored planes and arcs are orchestrated by curvilinear contours and floating linear patterns. A certain preoccupation with line distinguishes many paintings from this period. Vézelay (Fig. 77), Villon, Valmier and Herbin (Fig. 78) all structure compositions around linear configurations. Line may have served to release these artists from the strictures of late Synthetic Cubism, yet their compositions show its characteristic shallow space and organization.

"Creationists" were those artists who attained non-figuration directly from geometric conceptions without the apparent introduction of natural or lyrical association. Divided between De Stijl-related painters Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Gorin and Hélicon from 1930 to 1931, Marlowe Moss, Domela and Vordemberge-Gildewart and those closely aligned with Constructiv-

ism, Gabo, Pevsner, Moholy-Nagy, and the Polish artists Strzeminski, Stazewski and Kobro, these painters had in common the rejection of natural and lyrical associations in their art. Another faction among them worked in a Bauhaus style including Bauhaus artists Albers and Bill and others influenced by the work of the school, Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Ben Nicholson. A type of painting that blended the two tendencies became more prevalent as time went on. The result was an abstract illusionism, close in appearance to abstract Surrealism. Arp was a model for this type of abstraction, also seen in the art of Séligmann, Vézelay, Melotti, Martyn, Okamoto, Fischli and Hélicion after 1933 (Figs. 79-82). Kandinsky's Paris period is best understood in the context of this third category.

Kandinsky's paintings from the 1930's shift from geometric to organic in feeling and elements within seem to expand outward. The sense of expansion is created by forms that appear to float toward outer edges of the canvas. This quality is echoed in contemporary paintings by Vantongerloo whose interest in expanding tensions in space dates back to his early sculpture and mathematical experiments. When Vantongerloo introduces taut curves into his pictures after 1936, a kind of centrifugal force is created as a result of the careful combination of curves and horizontal and vertical accents. Tension between elements appears to set them in motion. A painting such as Courbes of 1937 (Fig. 83) bears a compelling relationship to the far more complex Dominant

Curve of 1936 by Kandinsky (Fig. 84). Vantongerloo's painting³⁵ reads like a skeleton model of the other work.

Domela introduced curves into his work in 1932 and the reliefs especially exude a dynamic quality as a result. The artist first experimented with the relief form in 1929 as a means of projecting Neoplasticism into space (Figs. 85, 86). Gorin, too, adapted reliefs for this purpose. Subsequently, Domela used the relief to drastically transform Neoplasticism. A group which he calls, "tableau-objets," reveals fluid curves and free forms replacing earlier angularity (Figs. 87, 88). The contrast between sharply unfolding movements, sweeping loops, arabesques and the texture of various materials, paint, wood, brass, copper and plastics is utterly unlike relationships dictated by Neoplastic formulae. Domela had visited Kandinsky at the Bauhaus in 1928. In part, this experience inspired him to incorporate mixed materials. Domela had been seeking to reach beyond what he felt to be confining boundaries of the Neoplastic style and new materials furnished this opportunity. The relief format itself was adapted by many artists as the decade continued. Delaunay, Gorin and later Ben Nicholson expanded their visions through it (Figs. 89, 90). In one respect, the increased popularity of the relief indicates an opening up of reductive systems, part of a trend toward more expressive means of composing. On the other hand, expanded vocabularies meant watering down earlier discipline and for many, art was enfeebled as a result. Ultimately, Domela's reliefs suffer from arbitrary material splendor

at the expense of order and coherence.

Although Héliion was to remain committed to abstract art as "the most authentic and most progressive of the time,"³⁶ he, too, introduced curves into his work in the 1932, Tensions Circulaires (Fig. 91). Like many of his contemporaries, Héliion aimed to expand and fill out the picture space. By mid 1932, he had completely relinquished the absolutism and austerity associated with the Art Concret experience to follow a path that would lead to more elaborate compositional structure and finally to figurative art. "L'orthodoxie, c'était pour moi un moment de passion tout-à-fait contraire à ma nature. Je ne peux supporter aucune orthodoxie, le contraire m'attire tout de suite infiniment plus."³⁷ Héliion augmented and enriched his vocabulary moving into a phase called "Equilibrium." "It seems to me that my pictures which, from 1930 until 1932 were like dry seeds, now begin to puff out, to breathe, to live."³⁸ The "Equilibrium" compositions are made up of slightly curved and shaded planes sustained in delicate balance (Fig. 92). The method of dégradé, the smooth gradation of tones and hues, creates an effect of convexity and concavity (Fig. 93). This aspect of Héliion's abstract style is reminiscent of Léger.

Both Héliion and Tutundjian had come to consider Neoplasticism and Constructivism as too narrow. Héliion's experience when encountering a Buddha figure at the Freer Gallery during a visit to Washington, D.C. in 1932 is revealing. "On peut passer une vie devant ça," he wrote to Gorin.

Ne me crois pas découragé du tout, mais notre tort, il me semble aujourd'hui est d'être infiniment pauvres. Notre monnaie est honnête, pure, indiscutable. Mais nous n'avons que des sous. Je ne parle pas de déguiser nos rapports en bonshommes....je dis qu'il faut atteindre la profondeur de ces gens là; je ne sais pas le moyen;..³⁹

Abstract artists in Paris had reached a kind of impasse, according to Héliion. "Nous nous sommes placés dans une situation ou nous n'avons que très peu de possibilités, nous ne disposons que de complexes très limités." Héliion was seeking a means of expressing a relationship with the world, "a way of speaking in every direction. Abstract art is completely visual in front of you but it has no antennae in the back. Man in the world has many antennae and must have them otherwise life is flat and limited, that is what I meant about the Buddha," Héliion has recently explained.⁴⁰ Regarding Mondrian for whom Héliion had great respect, he said in the same letter to Gorin: "J'admire les choses de Mondrian; mais, en toute bonne foi, ça ne résiste pas à un bouddha Kmer. Un Mondrian est sûrement une porte ouverte sur l'inconnu. Mais un bouddha est un espace ouvert de tous côtés."

Mondrian, too, reflected the general tendency to expand compositional ideas around 1933. By 1930, his art had attained a high point of purity and sobriety, sometimes color was avoided completely. Compositional formats from that year are among his most spare and austere (Fig. 94). In 1932 he used the double line for the first time as a way of enriching and complicating the paintings (Fig. 95).⁴¹ This device was also used by Marlowe Moss (Fig. 96). By 1933 the use of

double lines plus more complex rhythms resulted in somewhat ambiguous effects in Mondrian's paintings. The post-1933 works are more dynamic, culminating in a group of three distinct paintings dated 1935 and 1936 which are twice as high as they are wide (Fig. 99). These "ladder" pictures dramatically extend the upward motion beyond the physical limits of the plane. Uninterrupted verticals in Composition with Blue and White, 1936, seem to shoot off the picture surface, an almost "mannerist" device. Mondrian had once remarked in a sketchbook from the mid-twenties that his concept of the tragic equals "suffering because of the domination of the one over the other," in this case the vertical over the horizontal.⁴² The "ladder" paintings provide a sense of the historical moment, expressing something of the broader crisis that affected Parisian abstract art by the mid-thirties.

The Polish contingent remained true to their original "utilitarian" intentions. Strzeminski's flat, reductive paintings known as "Architecturals," dated 1926-1930 (Fig. 98), and made up of simple interlocking silhouettes, were replaced by a group of works called "Unistic" paintings that were even more radically simplified (Figs. 99, 100). Related to his theory of "Unism" the paintings were about the elimination of all temporal, symbolic and emotional qualities. Color and shape are reduced to bare whispers while textures rise on the pastel surfaces in tightly woven patterns. Paint is applied in short, choppy or curved strokes or in thread-like

skeins that sprawl out in all-over uniformity. Strzeminski and his wife, the sculptor Kobro, were born and educated as cosmopolitan Russians. However, they took a stand against dynamism and the tradition of Malevich and Lissitzky. Both artists joined Abstraction-Création during which period Kobro produced painted steel "Space Constructions" (Fig. 101) made up of a few flat or curved rectangular planes joined at right angles along their edges. The planes appear to glide rhythmically, folding and doubling back or stretching into elastic archways.

Abstraction-Création continued to exist as a group into 1937, although serious financial difficulties crippled its activities and eventually led to the end of the publications. Finally, the group was discontinued entirely. Vantongerloo describes the problems to Gorin in January, 1937, telling of his decision to resign from the group after serving as Vice President for six years. He is listed as holding this position only after 1935, thus he seemingly exaggerates his importance. He writes: "Il est donc juste qu'à partir du 15 février, un autre member occupe ma place. Je n'accepterai pas d'être réélu. Je ne serai donc plus actif dans Abs.Créa. et devra à partir de ce jour là faire face à mes obligations de membre." Vantongerloo came to see a general deterioration in the quality of the art presented by younger adherents. "Je n'accuse pas la société d'être garnie d'arrivistes mais je ne dois pas par dessus le marcher, accepter un fait à consideration qui me sont contraires." He affirms his con-

tinuing sympathy for the organization although acknowledging
"ma mission est terminée."⁴³

Loss of support from established and highly reputed members of the abstract art community precipitated both the aesthetic and financial crisis. Calder recalls, "At the end they were hard up for funds and it was suggested they invite some successful artists to have their picture painted alongside our own - they'd pay a bit more than we to carry the publication along. Somebody suggested inviting Picasso and Delaunay became furious."⁴⁴ An example from Picasso's Surrealistic bather series was included in the 1935 issue (Fig. 102). No text accompanied the reproduction. The last cahier of the group Abstraction-Création appeared in 1936, the date of its demise undoubtedly related to the growth of Facism and world economic and social stress. It was significantly smaller than previous issues and contained fewer statements in relation to a large number of insignificant works seen in reproduction. Essays by Gleizes, Gorin and Vantongerloo were more substantive, although repetitious.

Abstraction-Création was finished as a viable group; its purpose, to draw attention to abstract art, had been served. If the group itself had been unable to mount a large scale exhibition of importance, more galleries were showing abstract work and large salons included more examples, particularly the Salon des Surindépendants where an increasing number of Abstraction-Création members showed their work. Galerie Pierre Loeb became a friendly hangout for abstract artists. "Real

activity centered around Galerie Pierre," Ferren relates, "it was the best leftish gallery in that sense in Paris at that time. I showed there in 1935, 1936 and 1937."⁴⁵ Domela also showed his work at Galerie Pierre in 1934 (Fig. 103) and 1938 and Héliion had his first one-man show there in 1933. In the spring of 1933, Héliion organized an important exhibition at the gallery featuring his own art beside the work of Arp, Calder, Pevsner, Séligmann and Miro, all members of Abstraction-Création with the exception of Miro. The show occasioned a small book of essays celebrating the work of each artist,⁴⁶ written by the critic Anatole Jakovsky.

As an assembly of like-minded artists, Abstraction-Création had been influential in assisting individual members to find galleries or otherwise get their art shown. "Due to the efforts of friends in Abstraction-Création, I arranged for a show in the Galerie Percier and Léger wrote the preface,"⁴⁷ said Calder. In 1935, a milestone exhibition, titled "Thèse, Antithèse, Synthèse," was organized by the Swiss painter Hans Erni for the Kunstmuseum in Lucerne.⁴⁸ It included a strong representation of abstract work by many artists who had been or were currently Abstraction-Création members, including Arp, Calder, Fernandez, Gonzales, Héliion, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Nicholson, Paalen, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp. In addition to abstraction, works by Parisian masters Braque, Derain, Gris, Ernst, Léger, Miro, Ozenfant and Picasso were exhibited providing an impressive comparative context for the abstract examples. The accompanying catalogue included

essays by Héliou, Léger, Kandinsky, Giedion, American art historian James Johnson Sweeney and Jakovsky. The catalogue offered an elaborate and expansive bibliography covering art and related disciplines such as science, mathematics and aesthetics. This important assembly of masters and the rich impressive catalogue affirmed abstraction's growing stature.

Two years later, the 1937 Exposition Universelle, "Origines et développement de l'art international indépendant," was held in the Jeu de Paume. The show began with Cézanne and ended with examples of abstract art. Kandinsky reported on the event to Dreier: "After many tries and fights there is finally an exhibit of modern art in the Jeu de Paume. This has been tried for the first time in Paris in a state museum at that."⁴⁹ Mondrian refused to participate which came as no surprise. "Quant à l'expo. de '37," he wrote to Gorin, "moi, je n'y participerai pas et je crois les amis non plus."⁵⁰ His attitude seemed almost disloyal and annoyed many artists; Vantongerloo was foremost among them.

Willingness on the part of the broader art community to accept abstract art carried into England and America where a series of exhibitions and periodicals reflected the influence of Abstraction-Création. Héliou's activities were especially important in furthering the spread of this art and ideology. It was on his suggestion that Myfanwy Piper started the magazine, Axis, in England and Héliou's presence in America from 1936 to 1940 was crucial for the formation of the American Abstract Artists. The English group, Unit I, 1933-1935, was influenced

by Abstraction-Création, although it contained both abstract and Surrealist members. The year 1937 saw the publication of the extremely important abstract artists' periodical, Circle, under the editorship of Gabo who had moved to London from Paris the year before, and Nicholson, both former Abstraction-Création members. Circle included lengthy and major essays by Mondrian, Gabo, Le Corbusier and Nicholson plus a section on sculpture and one on architecture. The English architect Leslie Martin was also an editor. The periodical was conceived, as was Abstraction-Création, in opposition to Surrealism. They also intended to cover esthetic and social issues raised by the new abstract art in England.

The year Abstraction-Création folded, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Arp and Domela along with Americans George L.K. Morris and A.E. Gallatin started a new journal, Plastique. Conceived with a Paris-New York axis in mind, the magazine appeared with English, French and occasional German articles. It began by confirming the sources of geometric abstract art. Soon, however, a Surrealistic tone emerged with contributions from Duchamp, Eluard, Ernst, Hausmann and Schwitters. The magazine began in the fall of 1937 and lasted two years.⁵¹ If abstract art was beginning to demonstrate strength, the climate was no longer fertile for the growth of ideas in Europe. Politics began to dominate the mind and heart.

Notes to Chapter V.

1. Abstraction-Création Art Non-Figuratif, no. 1, 1932 (rpt. ed., New York: Arno Press, 1968), p. 1. Hereafter all texts cited will refer to this edition. Translation by author.
2. Ibid., no. 4 (1935), 2.
3. Ibid., no. 1 (1932), 1.
4. Hélión, July, 1976.
5. Recounted by Hélión in Schipper, p. 63.
6. Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."
7. Unpublished fragment from Freundlich letter to Cahn, in Cahn papers, Denise René Gallery.
8. Cahn, "Biographie," p. 60.
9. Hélión, May, 1977. Van Doesburg letter discussed above, Chapter IV, p. 153.
10. Vantongerloo letter to Gorin, January 2, 1931, "Lettres à Jean Gorin," p. 123.
11. Hélión, May, 1977; Gorin, April, 1977.
12. Hélión letter to Gallatin, March 23, 1934.
13. Vantongerloo letter to Gorin, October 9, 1934, "Lettres

- à Jean Gorin," p. 124.
14. Héliion, July, 1976.
 15. Hans Fischli, b. 1909 in Zurich, painter, sculptor, architect, student at Bauhaus 1929-30; Jenny-Laure Garcin, b. 1896 in Paris, painted from nature and then in Cubist style; Mainie Jellet, b. in Ireland, studied in Paris with André l'Hote and Gleizes; Jeri Jelinek, b. 1904 in Czechoslovakia; Alfred Reth, b. 1884 in Budapest, settled in Paris 1905, exhibited with Cubists from 1908; Evie Hone, b. in Dublin, studied in Paris with André l'Hote and Gleizes; Ferenc Martyn, b. 1899 in Budapest, settled in Paris 1925; Jaro Okamoto, b. 1911 in Tokyo, settled in Paris 1929, worked in Neoplastic style and later Surrealism. Information obtained from personal interviews with Héliion, Gorin, Domela, Vallier; also see, E. Bénézit, Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs, new ed. (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1976).
 16. Héliion letter to G.L.K. Morris, August 23, 1934, G.L.K. Morris Papers, Archives of American Art, New York.
 17. Domela, July, 1976.
 18. Héliion, May, 1977.
 19. Abadie, Héliion, p. 16.
 20. Officers listed in Abstraction-Création, nos. 3, 4, 5.

21. Vézelay, July, 1976.
22. Abstraction-Création, no. 4 (1935), 1.
23. Kandinsky said that comparison with other abstract artists could not but be disadvantageous to his work, in a letter, November 21, 1925, to Grohmann, quoted in Vasily Kandinsky 1866-1944: Retrospective Exhibition, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, 1962), p. 1.
24. Mondrian letter to Gorin [1934], Gorin papers, Meudon, France. Domela discussed this incident, interview, April, 1977.
25. Héliou, July, 1976; Domela, July, 1976.
26. Delaunay [1932] letter to Gallatin.
27. Seuphor letter to author, September 9, 1976.
28. Abstraction-Création, no. 1 (1932), 7.
29. Holty, summer, 1972. Gallatin's collection is known as the "Museum(or Gallery)of Living Art." It was hung at New York University, 1927-1943, and is currently installed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
30. Ferren interview with Bowman.
31. Héliou letter to Elizabeth Holty, May 28, 1974.
32. Holty, unpublished Journal entry, June 24, 1963.

33. Calder, An Autobiography with Pictures (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 114.
34. Abadie, Hélión, p. 21.
35. John Elderfield makes this comparison in "Geometric Abstract Painting and Paris in the Thirties," Artforum, VIII (June, 1970), 70.
36. Hélión, "From Reduction to Growth," Axis, no. 2 (February, 1935), 23.
37. Abadie, Hélión, p. 21.
38. Hélión, unpublished excerpt from diary, March 24, 1933, quoted in Schipper, p. 71.
39. Hélión letter to Gorin, February 2, 1932, Gorin papers, Meudon, France.
40. Hélión, May, 1977.
41. Controversy over who first used double lines in Neoplastic painting is discussed in Miner, "Abstraction." Seuphor says that Mondrian was first in Composition of 1922 which has double horizontal lines. Mondrian addresses this issue and the work of Marlowe Moss in a letter, "20/30," to Gorin, Gorin, CNAC, p. 15.
42. Quoted in Jaffé, Mondrian, p. 151.
43. Vantongerloo letter to Gorin, January 27, 1937, "Lettres

- `
à Jean Gorin," p. 125.
44. Calder, Autobiography, p. 130.
45. Ferren interview with Bowman.
46. Jakovsky, Arp, Calder, Héliion, Miro, Pevsner, Séligmann: Six Essais (Paris: Povolozky, 1933), reviewed in Cahiers d'Art, IX, nos. 9-10 (1934), 272.
47. Calder, Autobiography, p. 117.
48. Thèse, Antithèse, Synthèse, Kunstmuseum, Lucerne (Feb.-March, 1935).
49. Kandinsky letter to Dreier August 8, 1937. Originally, "Nach langen Bemühungen und allerhand Kämpfen ist endlich die Ausstellung der ganz modernen Kunst im Musee de Jeu de Paume eröffnet worden. Sie heisst 'Origines et Developpement de L'Art Independant,' was zum ersten mal in Paris veranstaltet würde, und noch dazu in einem staatlichen Museum."
50. Mondrian letter to Gorin, November 18, 1936, "Lettres `à Jean Gorin," p. 132.
51. Héliion attempted to start another magazine, Plastic, in 1933 with Gallatin and G. Morris. Héliion discussed this project fully in letter to G.L.K. Morris, August 23, 1934, G.L.K. Morris Papers, Archives of American Art, New York.

Chapter VI: Art, Politics and Surrealism.

The principle of political freedom was a major theme for the group, Abstraction-Création. Their committee made a clear statement in support of this principle which they saw as the significant common factor linking art to politics. The editorial statement for the second issue of the magazine read as follows:

Le Cahier "Abstraction-Création" n. 2 paraît au moment ou sous toutes les formes, sur tous les plans, dans quelques pays davanatage qu'ailleurs, mais partout, la pensée libre est féroce^{ment} combattue...Nul ne peut à l'avance déterminer ce que sera l'art prochain. Toute tentative de limiter les efforts artistiques selon des considérations de races, d'idéologies ou de nationalités est odieuse. Nous plaçons ce cahier n. 2 sous le signe d'une opposition totale à toute oppression, de quelque ordre qu'elle soit.¹

This was written in 1933 when advanced art was being suppressed by the growth of Facism in Germany. The totalitarian opposition to this art renewed the artists' fervor for a universal art although the art itself showed few signs of renewal. A preoccupation with universal and collective values dominated artists' writings. Partly, the universal ideal represented a way to associate artistic expression with social and political goals. Freundlich said this in Abstraction-Création in 1933. He insisted that the proper character for art is social and universal, "L'importance est que ces forces sociales et universelles liberées, se soient réalisées en une nouvelle matière."² So powerful, in fact, was Freundlich's commitment to a better world through art that he was able to maintain his

faith in the face of physical imprisonment. Like many German intellectuals living in France who were anti-Fascist at the outbreak of the war, Freundlich was interned. From the camp de rassemblement in Villebaron he wrote to Gorin in 1939 with amazing optimism: "C'est vraiment une grande chose cette atmosphère spirituelle qui unit les artistes. C'était le charme de notre collaboration il y a 30 ans avec Picasso, Braque, Derain, Herbin, Apollinaire, Max Jacob et nous voulons espérer que nous pourrions continuer cette longue tradition et laisser à la postérité une base solide." ³ Freundlich acknowledges the "lumière de l'esprit" that is the glory of France. That he was able to do this at such a time is an expression of tremendous personal courage and faith in art and humanity.

Like Freundlich, Gorin was deeply convinced that art could have social impact as expressed in his essay, "Vers une Art Social et Collectif Universel." ⁴ He elaborates upon how man evolves with the times, the machine age, moving beyond a state of individualism toward the collective. This man "ne trouvera un état social adéquat à sa propre libération que dans une société parvenue à la phase supérieure d'un véritable socialisme scientifique et universel." For Gorin, as for others, architecture pointed the way toward expressing man's new social and collective consciousness. He states, "Ainsi, l'architecture contiendra en une seule unité monumentale tous les arts plastiques.... Cette unité sera réalisée par une collaboration intime entre ingénieurs, urbanistes, architectes et plasticiens, chacun dans son

domaine travaillant anonymement à la création du grand-oeuvre." Sharing Le Corbusier's concept of the home as a "machine for living," Gorin believed in structures that accept the beauty and potency of the industrial machine and both extend and humanize it. Architecture is equated with abstraction and both hold a special kind of democratic social content identified with modern technology and its power to change the minds of men.

Eve Hone presses the idea beyond democracy, believing that only "La société communiste," can express the proper ideology for the collective consciousness of man. Abstract art, she argues, is the correct form to serve this society. Her position is indeed naive at this time, reflecting her unawareness of the implications of Soviet repression of abstract art.

Mondrian remained essentially apolitical, although he does reveal his disgust with Fascism in his letters. Such views, however, remained separate from his aesthetics. "On tent vers la régression comme partout. Mais en tout cas l'art et l'humanite avanceront," he wrote to Gorin. In the fall of 1933 he said, "Comme tu le comprends, he suis avec tout d'accord, seulement je te demande si c'est bien de lier le N.P. [Néoplasticism] ainsi au communisme, parce que les gens ne le connaissent que tel qu'il se manifeste aujourd'hui. Et encore, je ne crois pas que pour la civilisation occidentale, la France en tête, le communisme est la voie." Whatever his political protestations, Mondrian

held to his Utopian vision, basically optimistic, that plastic art must advance ahead of human progress and express a clear vision of reality.

Héliou attempted to unite radical politics with radical art following the model of Soviet Russia. Like Hone, he clung to visions of early Bolshevik idealism and was unaware of the transformation of attitudes toward modern art in Russia until his visit to the Soviet Union in 1931.

Elle [Abstraction] me semblait être l'expression d'une espèce de degré d'évolution de l'humanité, à la condition que les problèmes matériels de celle-ci soient résolus par le socialisme.⁸

The historical moment was unpropitious. Despite the position of Paris as center of the art world and despite a conviction shared by many that abstract art was the most authentic and progressive of the time, grim realities began to shatter hopes. Héliou remembers, "des 1932-33, on sentait se précipiter les malheurs, il y en avait partout les échos et je ne voyais pas comment on pourrait rester assis devant son chevalet, comme sur un cul paisible, à chercher la beauté lorsque le malheur réapparaissait."⁹ Energy that had sustained him through intense poverty began to dissipate in the face of political events. In 1934, Héliou confessed to Gallatin:

I am convinced that art has nothing to do with politics and the struggle for life (the details of them, because it receives waves and tensions from all movements) but as man, the painter has [sic]. How could he defend a system under which he is more or less starving? This does not prevent his keeping faithful, in harmony with the individual people who understand his effort and help it seriously. This is the material side of the question. On the other hand, the general structure of

society carries with it waves that the painter receives. The general atmosphere of war, domination of a certain part of society and exploitation of the rest of it, causes a general feeling of injustice, drama, bitterness, obscurity, dirtiness that affects him...but the question is too vast to be thus discussed and I prefer to keep my energy for lines and colors.¹⁰

The next year Hélicion began planning to leave France and settle in America. He said, "You see on the streets big signs advising you to protect yourself against war gas, to be a soldier one extra year, etc., and the atmosphere is rotten. I never felt such an amount of stupidity before."¹¹ Sophie Taeuber-Arp expressed similar thoughts in 1935 to Gallatin. "If things go on here as they did this last year, America and perhaps Switzerland will soon be the last refuges for modern art. Politics and the economical crisis submerge by and by every cultural interest."¹²

Few could remain oblivious to the political climate. In 1936 Hitler militarized the Rhineland. L'Oeuvre, the daily house organ for the Radical Socialist party, included an article entitled, "Führer - A Document." According to Janet Flanner, it was still general opinion in Paris in 1936 that Hitler was an abnormal freak. Interestingly, the only complete translation of Mein Kampf was made into the French language.¹³ Kandinsky wrote to the Baroness Hilla Rebay in New York, "You are right. The so-called 'political clouds' are becoming darker and darker in Europe. Insanity spreads wonderfully." Yet, Kandinsky insisted, "Paris remains the most favorable. Almost all movements and important matters in art came here and to this day come from here. Paris will

long remain an influential and decisive center," he believed as late as 1937.¹⁴

For Kandinsky, the worsening political climate in Paris was not a new circumstance. Perhaps because of his lifelong experience with changing regimes and political controversy, he insisted that the artist had no business mingling in political affairs. "There is a certain fashion among artists to get excited about politics and to put their nose into this when they don't know anything about it," he wrote to Dreier in June, 1935. "I think this fashion will last until the nose smells what is happening - so much the worse for them. It is a too complex scene. Whoever does not listen will suffer. When I am asked why I keep myself away from political questions so stubbornly, I answer from the moment when the politicians take over the art and make good art themselves, I will immediately go to politics, but I think I am a better painter than politician."¹⁵

Although statements in Abstraction-Création reveal growing consciousness of threats to world peace, the terms of this consciousness are generally vague, linked to dreams and ideals. Abstractionists thought about the future as part of a grand Utopian scheme and saw contemporary events as having little direct bearing upon their hopes for a better tomorrow. Therefore, in spite of the ethical and moralizing quality of their theoretical writings, abstract artists lacked a political and moral basis. It was precisely this basis that gave credibility and power to their greatest contemporary

rivals, the Surrealists.

The Surrealists' political efforts and above all their utter willingness to engage were totally different from the abstractionists' detachment. John Ferren remembers this political aspect clearly:

The Surrealists were very involved in politics which again I didn't particularly like. You know that the manifesto of the Surrealists was in the service of the revolution. They figured the revolution was political as well as artistic. In that sense you see Breton had a kind of pat little religion to sell. I mean they figured out everything all the way down the line. Everything was included, it was a package deal. I think that is probably why it appealed to a great number of people - it gave a political and in a sense a moral basis.¹⁶

If common beliefs and common goals drew abstract artists together, they were also united by a common enemy. Surrealism posed perhaps the most aggressive challenge to the plastic and theoretical values cherished by abstract artists. "Surrealism? What a name! There is power in a word that you feel before even knowing what it means,"¹⁷ Héliou has said. The overwhelming majority of artists attached to abstractionist groups in Paris during the thirties, hated, feared or at the very least, were in awe of the far more powerful and persuasive Surrealists. From their point of view, "Paris stank of morbid dream-worlds and exquisite corpses," and the Surrealists were responsible.¹⁸ In their undeclared war, the Surrealists were not only better equipped but had enthusiasm for battle that abstractionists lacked. As Kandinsky observed in 1937, "Our contemporary enemies today are the Surrealists who are ingenious in matters of propaganda and they are probably well

equipped for the book market. I can already visualize the shop windows."¹⁹ Earlier, to Katherine Dreier, Kandinsky had enumerated reasons why Surrealism would appeal to contemporary tastes:

1. They are new, therefore modern.
2. They are literary, you can therefore talk about the works a lot without any kind of feeling.
3. They tickle the sexes yet are at the same time philosophical.
4. They are in harmony with the excesses of modern morale and with the terrible deeds in connection with that.
5. They express an outward freedom without knowing something of the inner freedom - the same thing as happens in modern life in general.

And, he concludes by asking, "What is our poor abstract art compared to that?"²⁰

One wonders indeed. The Surrealists were everywhere staging events, spreading propaganda and exhibiting. Intellectually daring and assertive, they commanded attention. "The dailies reported their minutest activities," Seuphor²¹ recalls. "The thirties were their scene...that doesn't mean they all made it that big, but they were the 'in' thing,"²² Ferren stated. The entire period between the wars in Europe might aptly be called "the Age of Surrealism" as Roger Shattuck suggests, saying "there is some basis for picking Surrealism as the epitome of the artistic schools. It lasted longer than the others, attracted (and repelled) a great variety of talent, pounded its drums loud and long and spread its roots into philosophy, science and social action."²³ As a movement, Surrealism was formidable competition for abstract art. The impact of this competition was not entirely negative however.

Abstractionists drew energy from it. Fear and anger provoked by this common enemy was a strong a binding force as shared ideals and values. Their groups, seen in this perspective, were a form of self defense.

"Opposing is as much a real action as is affinity. I mean, in other words, our fight against Surrealism was a real fight in the sense that we wouldn't have fought as such without it. The opposition clarified a number of things,"²⁴ according to Ferren. The program of "anti-Sur" as Seuphor characterized it was admittedly vague as a base for Cercle et Carré, yet it was the motivating factor for this manifestation. An arch anti-Surrealist himself, Seuphor has acknowledged the role that this movement played in stimulating action on the part of the abstractionists, and he thanks them ironically in an essay written for the 1932 cahier of Abstraction-Création.

En conclusion, il nous faut donc apprécier le surréalisme pour le service qu'il rend sans le vouloir à la pensée nouvelle. Il nous faut aimer sincèrement nos ennemis et veiller à ce qu'il ne nous en manque jamais, car la vie serait bien pauvre sans la lutte constante de l'être dans son effort vers le bien le mal est nécessaire au bien comme la nuit est nécessaire au jour et la souffrance à la joie.²⁵

For certain abstract artists like Vézelay, there was nothing new about Surrealism. "In England we were born with it in the cradle, with Alice in Wonderland, Blake's poems and Shakespeare's plays. Someone painting a rumpsteak on a piano didn't excite me in the slightest bit. I thought it ugly and rather vulgar."²⁶ The genuine and new art according

to abstractionists must issue forth from new thought and from discoveries of the modern age. It must be part of a drive toward precision and certitude. Surrealism was backward looking in its return to illusionism and anecdote and it was reactionary in its posture. "We were against Surrealism, on the principle that its ideas may be all right but its painting was retrograde," said Ferren, echoing the most popular line of attack.²⁷

Surrealism was seen as contrary to all major modernist advances. The abstract artist believed himself to be the incarnation of the modern and progressive spirit. He had a messianic vision of his mission - to liberate painting from literary content, to purify, simplify and, above all, to objectify reality in order to achieve universality. To the contrary, André Breton, highest authority among Surrealists, warns that at all costs one must beware of "the urge to objectify." Breton posits a new and heightened reality or "Surreality" nourished by the subjective. In his essay, "The Crisis of the Object," occasioned by the exposition surréaliste d'objets held in Paris, May, 1936, Breton welcomes new thought and imagination.²⁸ Both abstractionists and Surrealists were indeed seeking new reality but they grasped its possibilities and form in radically different ways. "What is reality? What is the primordial metaphysical function of the Real?" asks Breton quoting Gaston Bachelard in his essay. The answer - "the belief that an entity is more than its known immediate quantity, or, to put it in plainer terms, it is the conviction

that more is to be found in the reality concealed within it than in the immediate data." According to Breton, this statement more than justifies the Surrealists' aim to bring about "a total revolution in the concept of the object."²⁹

It is useful to juxtapose Mondrian's view of "intrinsic reality." Mondrian titled his last essay "A New Realism."³⁰ Here he elucidates his concept of reality and how it may be achieved in art. In direct opposition to Breton who extols the subjective, Mondrian proclaims the power of objectivity. "Our subjective impression has to be conquered," he argues. "To establish a true image of form and space, an objective vision is necessary."³¹ Plastic means will lead to this vision because "the New Realism shows greater consciousness of the plastic exigencies in art. Being more objective, it endeavors to be a clearer expression of intrinsic reality," states Mondrian. For Breton, plastic qualities are the very least important. "It must, indeed, be realized that both technical and imaginative objects appeal to their makers by anything but their plastic qualities," he wrote. "To break with the thinking of the past millennium," meant, for Breton, a cessation of the "analytic, reductive," and a resulting ability to become "infinitely inductive and extensible."³² We will not be led by reason, according to Breton, but by our experience. Mondrian, too, connects art to life, but not through the pursuit of experience. "The expression of pure vitality which reality reveals through the manifestation of dynamic movement is the real content of art," he insists.

"The expression of life in the surrounding reality makes us feel living and from this feeling art arises. But a work of art is only 'art' insofar as it establishes life in its unchangeable aspect as pure vitality." Pure vitality is after all an abstraction. Mondrian's ideal is to have art develop away from the realm of "fantasy and accident" essential to Surrealism and move toward "the solution of technical problems." Only then, he believes, will art express universal reality.

It is no wonder abstract artists like Mondrian, committed to reason, order, structure, objectivity, precision and a collective vision, were horrified by Breton and the Surrealists' courtship with the irrational and the bizarre, subjectivity, chance and the dream. "We were possessed by a will to sub-³³version," said Breton. Surrealists were, in fact, delighted with anti-social behavior - crime, drug-addiction, suicide and insanity. Ferren vividly remembers his own experience of this: "You speak of acts of violence. I can remember walking down the street with Eluard on one side and a poet on the other. The poet on the left passed a priest and he spit on the priest. I said, 'why did you do that?' and he said ³⁴'it is a Surrealist act,'"

The value system obeyed by abstract artists was not only different from Surrealism but wholly incompatible with it. And, just as abstractionists despised Surrealists, so too the Surrealists were vigorously set against abstract art. They considered it decorative, inconsequential and meaningless. Bre-

ton called it "Abstractivisme" and said it was removed from physical perception and mental representation.³⁵ Even worse, from the Surrealists' point of view, was abstract idealism which was proclaimed utterly ill-suited to solving crucial problems of mankind. In turn, the Surrealists made tenacious efforts to associate their own intellectual, artistic and moral preoccupations with politics. Specifically, they linked their anarchic stance with the goals of International Communism. Between the years 1927-1933, the Surrealists set forth their views in highly articulate polemical writing. Their actual political activities, however, apart from attendance at strike meetings and demonstrations on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti, took the form of pamphleteering in the pages of La Révolution Surréaliste and its successor Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution as well as in numerous tracts and books. Their goals have been succinctly defined by Robert Short:

The reconciliation of a generalized spirit of revolt with revolutionary action; the reconciliation of the idea of a 'spiritual revolution' and its accompanying insistence on ethical 'purity' with the practical necessities of political effectiveness; the reconciliation of an independent revolutionary art with the demands for propaganda and didacticism made by the communist party.³⁶

Breton's efforts to make Surrealism an effective revolutionary force while maintaining its independence as an art form caused serious controversy and several defections mark its history. Finally, by 1935, the break with Stalinist Communism was complete. This rupture followed a cold reception for Surrealism at the International Congress for the Defense

of Culture held in Paris at which time the Surrealists signed the official manifesto severing relations with the USSR.³⁷

This did not mean that the Surrealists ceased to participate in politics in the later thirties. They were in fact prominent anti-Fascists, anti-Hitler, anti-Mussolini, even as it became clear that they could no longer identify their spiritual revolution with Stalinist Communism.

The Surrealists put to advantage their earlier apprenticeship among Dadaists in the art of provocation and scandal. Despite the claim of many abstract artists that they were the true heirs to Dada, they lacked the spirit of revolt, the contrariness. The Surrealists wanted a mass audience and they played to it; abstract artists were bound by elitism. This is a major distinction between the groups, which is not to deny the rebellious and brave gestures of the abstractionists. Art Concret stood firmly against the academic tradition. Their nihilism was not without irony and in this they owed much to Dada. It is important to emphasize the distinction made by abstract artists between Dada and Surrealism. They were viewed entirely separately, the former, liberating and exciting, and the latter, reactionary and offensive.

The historical link between the two movements has been magnified by relationships that do exist in the visual arts through which they have become well known. If Surrealism embraced aspects of Dada, it also introduced tendencies foreign to its spirit. From the abstract artists' point of view, one of the most offensive new aspects was the authority of a

38
single leader, Breton. In addition, the internationalism of Dada gave way "à un Parisienisme spécifiquement littéraire," Seuphor said. Seuphor and also Van Doesburg saw Dada as spiritual kin to Constructivism rather than as parent to successor movement Surrealism. Hans Richter has suggested that Constructivism was the "counterpart" to the "law of chance which Dada discovered."³⁹ Many abstractionists accepted this suggestion, that Dada was an unspoken premise of Constructivism, part of the destruction of the old which in turn opened a path to reconstruction and the new. It illuminates the fruitful juxtaposition of the two strains in the late twenties and early thirties and helps to explain the fact that ex-Dadaists Schwitters and Arp collaborated eagerly in abstractionist groups. Schwitters came to Paris on several occasions as, for example, when he participated in the eleventh "Soirée de l'Esprit Nouveau," in 1927 with Seuphor. He collaborated in groups Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création.

Jean Arp was a more central figure than Schwitters and one whose art and personality mediated between all three movements, Dada, Surrealism and abstraction. Arp came to signify a bridge over these gaps, a freedom from the confines of singlemindedness. Arp was at once abstract and Surreal, poet and sculptor, German and French. An artist both subtle and so complex that he was able to understand a common bond of thought in the freedoms advocated by Surrealists and the values of abstract art. Thus, he exhibited with both groups

from the late twenties throughout the thirties. "He had a bent for incessant contradictions," Héliou recalls.⁴⁰ Arp's development as an artist was not hampered by these seemingly opposing affiliations. There was no discernible shift in his style, for example, when Dada dissolved around 1922, nor any major changes when he first actively participated in Surrealism in 1925. His search for a perfect formal realization of a poetic vision was compatible with the purity so admired by abstractionists, most of whom at heart believed him to be with them. However, Arp did participate in Surrealist activities. His work is reproduced and discussed by Breton in La Révolution Surréaliste. Although Seuphor believes that Arp's involvement with Abstraction-Création reflects a disenchantment with Breton's authority, Arp never officially severed relations with Breton or Surrealism. He ceased, however, being active in the movement after 1929. "Surrealism supported me, but did not change me," Arp said, as "it perhaps emphasized the poetic, associational side of my work."⁴¹

Arp was probably the most sophisticated participant in the abstract artists' intellectual community. For this, he was greatly respected. His views were broader and his experience far more extensive than most other adherents to abstract artists' groups. Arp's friendship with Kandinsky dated as far back as 1910 and he had developed long-term relationships with Dadaists such as Schwitters and Tzara, not to mention the Bauhaus artists because of his own activities and those of his wife Sophie Taeuber. He was warm, gen-

erous and enthusiastic. Vézelay was befriended by the Arps when she came to live in Paris. She identified strongly with his type of abstraction, reflected in her own work and she believed in the purity of his vision. Arp's willingness to embrace seemingly contradictory aesthetic attitudes set an example for younger members of the abstract groups encouraging artists to take a more tolerant view of Surrealism. Marcelle Cahn, for example, notes the double effect of Arp's role:

Arp m'a beaucoup intéressée. C'était pour moi quelque chose d'étrange, de très surréalisant, pas du tout le Arp de plus tard. Ce qui dominait, à mon avis, chez Arp, c'est la poésie. Elle prédomine même dans ses oeuvres constructivistes. La poésie prend le pas sur la construction et sur l'expression surréaliste. Il y a une totalité dans son oeuvre.⁴²

Seuphor had originally envisioned Arp and Mondrian as representing two equally acceptable poles of abstract art when he chose the name "Cercle et Carré." Later, Seuphor incorporated figures akin to Arp's biomorphic images into his own paintings. If Arp and Mondrian may be seen as representative of extremes within thirties' abstraction, it may be said that a discernible tendency to move from one to the other had already taken place by the middle of the decade. In the interests of enlarging and integrating the scope of pictorial possibilities, there was a shift away from the linear scaffoldings of Mondrian to Arp's free floating organic shapes (Figs. 104, 105). Biomorphs did not, however, mean Surrealistic intentions. They became part of the language of abstract art. As the formal vocabulary was expanded, loosened and complicated, the curvilinear and the linear were

mixed so that organic elements could be introduced amid a welter of shapes and forms according to purely optical standards.

Former De Stijl artists Domela and Vantongerloo introduced the forbidden curve into their paintings and reliefs; others moved to relax established geometric currents, or away from geometry altogether. Tutundjian was dissatisfied with the limitations of pure abstraction and he eventually joined the ranks of Surrealism. Several others defected as well including Okamoto (Fig. 80), Martyn, Vulliamy (Fig. 106). Certainly Kandinsky's example is a case in point. He is, after all, a key figure whose Paris paintings may be read like a barometer of these changing times. His work shows influence from both Arp and Miro. Héliou, too, incorporated organic shapes as part of the transition to a freer and more personal style. He relaxes the rigid rectangles of his "Orthogonals" into more yielding planes typical of the next phase known as "Équilibres," characterized by curving linear bars adroitly blended with hard edges. Sensuous color fills the canvases. This phase, between 1932-1935, includes several of Héliou's best known paintings, Ile de France, of 1935, and the elegant Composition, of 1934 (Fig. 107). In his subtle shading of forms, Héliou reminds us of Léger, but the influence of Arp and Miro is equally marked. By 1936, Héliou began to mass shapes and forms into frontally disposed images of figure-like beings and accordingly the title "Figure" predominates (Figs. 108, 109). Deepened space filled with the presence of these

"personnages" gives an impression that is more than slightly Surrealistic. Hélon developed this relationship in a letter to Meyer Schapiro written January, 1937:

Painting, as I conceive it now, however provisory - I am provisory myself - has beautiful possibilities, that of uniting obviously terms that would be distant in nature, to travel through relations, seeking for peaks, to massage the muscles of the world in permanent formation. Here I am very near the Surrealists, the showy attitude being dropped, to identify thinking and seeing, in an image that may not be immediate in nature but real between man and nature, a contact midway, maybe.⁴³

Hélon was never "anti-Sur" as they called it, in the same sense as Seuphor. He consistently argued against what he considered "too easy attacks on Surrealism."⁴⁴ His wish to achieve a visual statement to parallel the fullness of life began to create a conflict with pure and austere abstraction. In 1933 he wrote that the artist's task should be "to enlarge the elements, to multiply them as cells multiply" in order to lead to "the complexity of particular beings."⁴⁵ The notion of growth underlined his approach from the moment he broke away from the precepts of Art Concret. In this notion and particularly the wish to multiply elements, expand reality and make contact with humanity, Hélon had much in common with the goals of the Surrealists. Even as a newcomer to the Paris art scene when he was most attached to Van Doesburg, his attitude toward Surrealism was ambivalent. "We were conscious of its violence, of the freedom it contained, of its pride at having broken with the norm. The stature of the first Surrealists I caught sight of before knowing them - Breton,

Ernst, Arp, Duchamp was obvious even in their appearance. They had genuine distinction even in the eyes of a rebel such as I." ⁴⁶ The vitality, creativity and intelligence of the Surrealists attracted others. Marcelle Cahn said, "Les surréalistes, de toute façon, m'intéressaient énormément... C'était la grande période des surréalistes. Pour moi, Breton c'est un grand homme." ⁴⁷ Hélión, however, found Surrealist art "a rather too attractive way of baffling; things not in their proper place, etc." ⁴⁸ He moved instead toward a kind of realism. The short essay that Hélión wrote for the first issue of Abstraction-Création is built around metaphors and paradoxes not unlike a Surrealist text. In his writings he is clearly affected by the tone of this movement. Indeed, Hélión recalls that Breton praised him for some of his written pieces and invited him on several occasions to join the movement. For a young rebellious Frenchman this must have been a tempting offer.

The characteristic of youth, in particular, separates the Surrealists from the abstractionists. Breton, Aragon, Eluard, Tzara and some fifty other poets and artists were all under thirty when they produced their manifestos. Among major figures in the abstract movement, only Hélión and Seuphor were young during the formative years. Most of the leaders within the groups including Torres-García, Van Doesburg, Vantongerloo, Herbin, Mondrian, Kandinsky and Arp were considerably older. Their ideas were associated with those of an earlier generation. It might be argued that they did not

adapt these concepts to the changing quality of life in the thirties. This contrast between the relative youth of the Surrealists and the older abstract artists and their concepts is a quiet, even unspoken, but important sub-theme reflected in the spirit of the art and ideas.

Notes to Chapter VI.

1. Abstraction-Création, no. 2 (1933), 1.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Freundlich letter to Gorin, July 5, 1939, "Lettres à Jean Gorin," p. 135.
4. Abstraction-Création, no. 4 (1935), 11.
5. Ibid., p. 14.
6. Mondrian letter to Gorin, April 1, 1933, "Lettres à Jean Gorin," p. 129.
7. Mondrian letter, October 6, 1933, ibid., p. 130.
8. Abadie, Héliion, p. 21.
9. Ibid.
10. Héliion letter to Gallatin, November 21, 1934. The awkwardness of the English is characteristic of the early letters. Later, Héliion became more fluent.
11. Ibid.
12. Letter to Gallatin, December 2, 1935.
13. Janet Flanner, An American in Paris: Profile of An Interlude between Two Wars (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p. 376.

14. Kandinsky letter to Rebay, November 27, 1936. Originally, "Sie haben recht, die sog. 'politischen wolken' werden in Europa immer dunkler. Der Wahnsinn verbreitet sich grossartig." On February 14, 1937, he wrote, "Was den Ort an langt, so bleibt 'heute' Paris der günstigste: fast alle 'Bewegungen' und in der Kunst wichtigen Dinge kamen und kommen noch heute von hier und Paris bleibt noch lange ein einflussreiches und massgebendes zentrum."
15. Kandinsky letter to Dreier, June 12, 1935. Originally, "Es ist auch hier gewissermassen Mode bie Künstlern geworden, sich über Politik aufzuregen und die nichtsverstehende Nase hineinzustecken. Ich glaube, diese Mode wird so lange dauern, bis diese Nase 'auf die Nase' bekommt. Tant pis für sie. Es ist aber ein zu kompliziertes Thema. Statt 'tant pis' könnte man auch Wer nicht hören will, muss fühlen sagen. Wenn ich gefragt werde, warum ich mich von politischen Fragen hartnäckig fern halte, antworte ich: vom Augenblick, wenn die Politiker die Kunst übernehmen d.h. selbst gute Kunst machen, Übergehe ich sofort zur Politik. Ich glaube aber, dass ich einen besseren Maler als Politiker abgebe."
16. Ferren interview with Cummings.
17. Héliion, "Art Concret 1930," p. 137..
18. Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."

19. Letter to Rebay, November 27, 1936. Originally, "Unser 'aktuellen Feinde' sind heute die Surrealisten, die in Propagandasachen genial sind und werden wohl für den Buchermarkt gut ausgerüstet sein. Ich kann mir schon die Schaufenster im Geiste vorstellen!"
20. Letter to Dreier, January 27, 1935. Originally, "1. Sind sie neu, also 'modern,' 2. Sind sie literarische, also kann über diese Werke unendlich viel ohne jedes Gefühl geredet werden. 3. Viel ohne freudistisch, kitzeln also den Sexus und sind gleichzeitig 'philosophisch.' 4. Harmonisieren sich gut mit den Auswüchsen der modernen 'Moral' und mit den damit verbundenen grausamen Taten. 5. Pflegen sie die äussere 'Freiheit' ohne etwas von der inneren zu wissen - ganz genau wie überall im 'modernen' Leben. Usw. Usw. Was ist unsere arme 'abstrakte' Kunst dagegen?"
21. Seuphor, "To Set the Compass."
22. Ferren interview with Cummings.
23. Shattuck, Introduction to Maurice Nadeau, History of Surrealism, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 13.
24. Ferren. interview with Bowman.
25. "l'art nouveau et le surréalisme," Abstraction-Création, no. 1 (1932), 11.
26. Vézelay, July, 1976.

27. Ferren interview with Cummings.
28. André Breton, "Crise d'objet," Cahiers d'Art, nos. 1-2 (1936), trans. Angus Makolm, "The Crisis of the Object," in Art and Artists (July, 1966), pp. 13-15. Hereafter references to text will be to this version.
29. Breton, "Crisis," p. 14.
30. Mondrian, "A New Realism," (1943), American Abstract Artists Yearbook (New York, 1946), n. pag.
31. Ibid.
32. Breton, "Crisis," p. 12.
33. Quoted in Robert Short, "The Politics of Surrealism," Left Wing Intellectuals Between the Wars, 1919-1939, ed. Walter Laqueur and George L. Mosse (New York: Harper Torchbook, Harper and Row, 1966), p. 6.
34. Ferren interview with Cummings.
35. Breton, Le Surréalisme et la peinture (Paris, 1928), p. 7.
36. Short, "Politics," p. 3.
37. See Anna Balakian, Surrealism: The Road To The Absolute (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1959), p. 227.
38. Ibid., p. 46 ff. for discussion of philosophical differences between Dada and Surrealism.

39. Quoted in Bahn, Tradition of Constructivism, p. xxxvi.
40. Hélión, "Art Concret 1930," p. 128.
41. Quoted in William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art (New York: Abrams, n.d.), p. 256.
42. Cahn, "Biographie," p. 58.
43. Hélión letter to Meyer Schapiro, quoted in Schipper, p. 96. Schipper discusses Hélión's transition from "Équilibres" to "Figures" in great detail, p. 93 ff.
44. Hélión letter to Gallatin, July 23, 1934.
45. Hélión, "The Evolution of Abstract Art" (1933), The A.E. Gallatin Collection, The Gallery of Living Art, reprinted as The Museum of Living Art (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1954), p. 18.
46. Hélión, "Art Concret 1930," p. 137.
47. Cahn, "Biographie," p. 58.
48. Hélión, "Art Concret 1930," p. 137.

Chapter VII: Art Criticism of the Thirties

The Surrealists included the most important writers and poets living in France. Men like Aragon, Breton, Eluard, René Char, Michel Leiris, René Crevel, Robert Desnos, Antonin Artaud and Tristan Tzara, among many others, exerted a far greater influence upon the intellectual climate of the period between the wars than any other single group. Where, one might ask, were the writers for abstract art? The vast majority of essays and comments supportive of abstraction were written by the artists themselves. Particularly, the most reductive forms of abstract art, De Stijl and Constructivism, resisted critical analysis and appreciation. Even Domela has said of his colleague Mondrian, "What can one say about his squares and black lines?"¹

The failure to inspire criticism must surely be counted as a major disaster for the cause. "You know as well as we do how much and how 'important' is the material written of late about Cubism, Expressionism and finally also Surrealism," wrote Kandinsky in 1936, "On the other hand, non-figurative art is not mentioned or openly attacked."² This art, thus, does not even merit attack. To fill the gap, many artists wrote articles themselves. During his Paris years, Kandinsky contributed more than a dozen articles for periodicals and prefaces to catalogues and portfolios. Vantongerloo had com-

plained about this problem to Gorin and in his opinion the only hope for correcting the situation and shedding proper light on abstract art would come through efforts of the artists themselves. "Je collabore un peu à différentes revues d'art mais je n'en connais pas une qui soit de nature à pouvoir, d'une manière absolue, vous éclairer sur la vraie valeur de l'art plastique." "I write as little as I can, trying to devote all my time to painting," Héliou told Gallatin in 1936. However, he adds, "but it is necessary to produce some clear writing every now and then to prevent people from being spoiled forever by the obscure and fantasmagoric mixtures of words they are regularly provided with by magazines."⁴

Sometimes the stimulus of the questionnaire inspired artists and critics to speak about abstraction, that is, when questions and issues were intelligently defined. In an effort to stimulate interest both for readers and participating artists, Abstraction-Création's committee posed a series of questions in their second cahier. Neither sophisticated nor especially provocative - possibly due to their lack of experience with issues of criticism - the questions brought answers ranging from sincere but uninspired to blatantly sarcastic. Firstly, artists were asked why they no longer paint nudes and whether trees influence their work. Several questions were directed to the possible relations between art and the machine age. Is a locomotive a work of art? Or, does a machine-like appearance in a painting add to or detract from artistic quality?⁵

Delaunay responded politely that it would be impossible to answer so many questions in a few lines, adding that a picture is worth a thousand theoretical explanations. Constructivist sculptor Kobra answered each question in the negative. Neither nudes, nor trees, nor locomotives, nor imitation of any machines or objects has influenced her work, she insists. Ex-Futurist Prampolini quite naturally addressed himself to the issue of art and machines, referring to earlier statements made in his 1923 "Manifeste de l'art Mécanique." Reiterating support for a machine aesthetic, Prampolini cautions that art must emulate the spirit rather than the look of machines, "par esthétique de la machine nous entendons la splendeur géométrique et numérique fait de synthèse, d'ordre."⁶ Freundlich underlined the basic notion that all figuration leads to essentially the same dilemma - an art based upon the principle of individualism instead of, as would be proper, social and universal aspirations.

The question about the influence of trees inspired some thoughtful responses. In the philosophical tradition the tree is often an emblem of nature and natural processes. Artists Herbin and Hélon used the tree as metaphor for the development of the work of art. "Un arbre qui a ses racines vivantes, développe tronc et branches, qui produisent des feuilles, des fleurs, et des fruits," said Herbin. "Il existe des oeuvres, dites géniales, qui sont des fruits comparables à ceux-là et qui ont mûri de la même singulière façon." Hélon opens his remarks, "Comparer les tableaux aux arbres?"

Il est grand temps de le faire." And, he adds, "L'arbre est le type même de toute oeuvre." On the other hand, Strzeminski rejects the natural analogy completely. "Les arbres m'ont révélé ce que n'est pas une oeuvre d'art," he says pointing to symmetry and forces of nature which he believes are alien to art. The only relation trees might have to Moholy-Nagy's art would be as a form of shelter while in the process of making the work. I don't paint nudes, Moholy-Nagy said, "parce que je peux mieux les photographier," and as for locomotives, he said, "une locomotive est aussi bien ou aussi peu une oeuvre d'art qu'un canif!" Gleizes similarly mocked the naiveté of the questions.

Similar issues were more aggressively confronted in the Cahiers d'Art in response to a form of questionnaire prepared by the editors in 1931. More a statement than a query, the editors challenged abstract art on several basic levels and specifically addressed themselves to leaders within their ranks - Mondrian, Kandinsky, Arp, Van Doesburg (whose sudden death prevented him from responding), along with several known to sympathize with abstraction like Léger, Baumeister and Professor Alexander Doerner, the director of the modern museum in Hannover, were invited to contribute. The questionnaire began by listing a series of common assumptions regarding the nature and difficulties of abstract art to which the participating artists were expected to respond in defense.

Wishing not to depart from the rule of impartiality to which they have always held, the editors of Cahiers d'Art

have asked the leaders of the abstract art movement to present to its readers a defense of this art....

Firstly, one notes that a "defense" was deemed necessary.

On the other hand, it is significant that an abstract "movement" was believed to exist at all in Paris. The following list of accusations is extremely revealing about the state of this art, which they said has been "accused:"

1. of being excessively cerebral and consequently, in contradiction to the very nature of true art which is essentially sensual and emotive in character.
2. of having replaced emotion by an exercise, more or less adroit and subtle, but always objective, of pure tones and geometrical designs.
3. of having restricted the possibilities of painting and sculpture to the point of reducing the work of art to a simple play of colors and purely ornamental forms, suitable at best to posters and advertising catalogues.
4. of having thus involved art in an impasse and of having suppressed all its possibilities of evolution and of development.⁸

Art's true nature, according to the editors of this prestigious art magazine, is "sensual and emotive." Emotion is at the essence of creativity. Geometry, a reductive color scheme and objectivity are believed antithetical to true creation. Abstraction, seen as either excessively cerebral or entirely ornamental, is completely misunderstood. The thrust of the attack, it appears, was aimed at the most radical manifestation of abstract art. Neoplastic painting was most likely what they had in mind when framing the objections. Therefore, the greatest burden fell upon Mondrian to respond. He, above all, stood for an art beyond the acceptable limits, what Ozenfant had earlier described as "il dépasse les bornes."⁹

Mondrian's essay, "On Abstract Art," was written with

appropriate tact, patient explanation and glowing optimism. Art's purpose to enlighten mankind is set forth.¹⁰ "What a beautiful task lies in prospect," he says, reiterating a theme earlier presented in the introduction to his first French essay, Le néo-plasticisme, dedicated "aux hommes futures." These are qualities that typify Mondrian's writings during the thirties. Neoplastic art, he begins, is neither decorative nor geometric even if it has that appearance. Instead, he argues, it arose from Cubism and is the true fulfillment of values inaugurated by both the Cubists and the Purists - the complete detachment from literal figuration. These are precisely the values supported and praised by the Cahiers d'Art, he points out. Neither Cubism nor Purism was willing to carry this "detachment" to "the point of reality." Cubism, perfect in itself, could not perfect itself further after reaching its apogee. Two solutions were available; a return to nature or a move toward abstraction and Neoplasticism. Once again, he identifies the Neoplastic with the "Super-realistic," a contrast to both realistic and Surrealistic art. In response to the notion that reductive abstraction is cerebral or cold, he cites Kandinsky who observed that cold can become hot depending upon the eyes of the observer. Kandinsky made this observation in an essay "Toile vide,"¹¹ written in the French language.

In his response to the questionnaire, Kandinsky admits that only some among non-figurative paintings are really vital and this vitality depends as always on the painting's

spiritual life. Again he emphasizes intuition over reason. Kandinsky suggests that the label "abstract" is misleading and dangerous, just as the term Cubism was once used in derision. Point by point he refutes the attack on abstract art and regarding the issue of geometry, he makes his eloquent analogy between the effect of an acute angle and a circle and the fingers of Adam and God in Michelangelo's creation scene from the Sistine Ceiling.¹²

Léger devoted most of his essay on abstract art to pleading the cause of Neoplasticism. In his opinion, the style is largely misunderstood, because it is little known. He praises the Northerners for contributing a rational New Plasticism, although admitting his own reluctance to go to such radical extremes. He personally remained at the "frontière." Pure abstraction, Léger suggests, is a dangerous game yet it is one that must be played by some.¹³

Baumeister frames his own answer by taking exception to the issues as presented. "I don't practise geometry," he insists, "rather, I use certain means according to optical necessity and not according to a cold or calculating system." He admits using rules and a compass and asks, ironically, whether it would be more "sensual" to paint with his thumb? Baumeister stresses his relationship to the machine age through the purity and precision of his work.¹⁴

Repeatedly, artists defend abstraction's purity and reference to advanced technology, to science and mathematics. The preoccupation with universal and collective values is

recurrent in these essays. These were the values appropriate to an art form believed to have potential social force. Professor Doerner takes the opportunity to elaborate on the evolution of modern art, its abandonment of subject matter, the fixed point of view and the inclusion of time as a fourth dimension. He concludes with words of affirmation about abstract art which he was collecting and showing in his museum in Hannover:

Si donc l'on envisage non pas, les aspects extérieurs de l'art abstrait, mais ce qui en est l'essentiel, on peut affirmer avec une certitude objective que la peinture abstraite n'est pas une mode, mais un phénomène historiquement nécessaire d'une très grande portée. Sans doute le goût personnel peut-il bien ne pas y trouver son compte, mais la raison ne saurait faire autrement que d'en reconnaître la valeur.¹⁵

It is significant that Doerner wrote from Germany where a more enlightened point of view on abstract art had been prevalent during the twenties, the heyday of Constructivism. In Paris abstract artists were in search of articulate support.

Michel Seuphor's importance on the Parisian scene was undoubtedly magnified because of his literary experience and total fluency in the French language. Most of the foreign participants in the abstract movement spoke and wrote in French with difficulty. Therefore, Seuphor and also Hélión, who was a gifted writer, stood out as literate, well versed on the subject of artists' motivation and intention. Unfortunately, neither Seuphor nor Hélión was granted importance or status within the broader art community.

Anatole Jakovsky was one of the few recognized critics

to embrace abstract art, particularly its more lyrical exponents. In 1933, he wrote a short monograph on Herbin, emphasizing his development into abstraction. That same year he published a small book of "Six Essais," defining the individual careers of Arp, Calder, Hélión, Miro, Pevsner and Séligmann. The writing is poetic and evocative, built around formal analysis and not involved with theoretical or literary content. Of the "Six," Arp, Calder, Miro and Séligmann were associated with Surrealism at some point, yet this is not the aspect that Jakovsky stresses. Instead he is captivated by forms and composition which he describes in detail. "Il commence à se préoccuper de la perméabilité lumineuse et de la résistance reciproque des couleurs," he wrote of Hélión's painting in 1933. "Ce n'est pas un rêve," he says of Séligmann, "C'est une construction. Claire, Calculée, Concret," underlining abstract, formal values and denying the importance of the Surreal.¹⁶

Jakovsky collaborated on several issues of Abstraction-Création and in 1935 he organized the publication of a major print album, 23 Graveurs, including a large number of artists associated with the group, Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Calder, Hélión, Nicholson, Séligmann, Vulliamy, Kandinsky, Erni, Hernandez and Magnelli, with several masters who had earlier been active in Cercle et Carré, Léger, Ozenfant, Torres-García, and including Picasso, Zadkine, Lipchitz, Miro, Ernst and Giacometti.¹⁷ Despite important differences in styles that distinguish the 23 artists represented in the album, there is

a unity to their work. This is partly a function of their comparable scale, and similarities of the media, mostly etchings in black and white, but more importantly, it also results from the historical context which aligned their conceptions.

Jakovsky contributed his view on modern art in an essay written for the Thèse Antithèse, Synthèse catalogue.¹⁸ He saw twentieth-century art evolving from Cézanne and Van Gogh along two streams, the one resulting in formal movements, Purism and Neoplasticism, and the other in the literary, Surrealism. Finally, we are left with the choice between "le carré immémorial de Mondrian et le protoplasme du désir - Miro." He draws no conclusions or value judgments from this distinction. There is room for both. The place for a new Cézanne, he admits, is vacant and partly attributable to the general decline in civilization. Here he presents a theme that becomes recurrent in the late thirties - the recognition of a staleness and inertia in the arts. In spite of this, Jakovsky concludes on a note of optimism, "C'est l'ère et l'heure de la nouvelle jeunesse qui s'annonce."¹⁹

Hélión wrote about Jakovsky to Gallatin in 1934 and enclosed a copy of the critic's essay on his own work, saying,

I hope you will like it. I do. Jakovsky's style is never very clear nor regular. He accumulates suggestions, glances, potential works and makes a mass that he works in a rather lyric way, but I think that he is the only one here that has a genuine feeling for painting writing. He handles it with enthusiasm and it seems that all his knowledge of nature comes through paintings. He has progressed a lot recently.²⁰

As Hé lion promoted Jakovsky to his patron, Gallatin, so Kandinsky urged Hilla Rebay and Solomon Guggenheim to finance a major book on modern art by E. M. Tériade, whose reputation was initially established as editor of the modern section of Cahiers d'Art from 1926 when Christian Zervos founded that magazine until 1932 when Tériade left to start Minotaure. Kandinsky wrote several letters on this matter:

Yesterday I talked to the theoretical giant of modern art E.M. Teriade...How often I have asked myself previously, who could write a good and lasting book on this art with enough energy, authority and love for our art. I already thought of Tériade previously but did not know for sure how much he believes in this art. I also thought that it should not be a monotonous or one-sided book, but something very vivacious and with the necessary quiet enthusiasms.²¹

Kandinsky enumerates Tériade's virtues. "He has connections with printers in Paris, experience as editor of Minotaure," and later, he states enthusiastically, that Tériade writes "very vividly, cleverly and thrillingly...He is talented and greatly capable of enthusiasm. He is also a great exception among the "art histerics" (as we say in German) because he does not only think art but mainly and in the first place 'feels' it. That is why he is capable of enthusiasm." In a subsequent letter, Kandinsky remarks, "Tériade is one of the very best French historians of art and he forms a kind of exception here in that he likes and understands abstract art (otherwise it is generally turned down here)."²² Tériade showed serious interest in Kandinsky and had earlier placed him beside Klee among the forerunners of Surrealism. However, his general position on abstract art was more equivocal than

the one Kandinsky described.

A Greek, like Zervos, Tériade made a serious effort to deal with modern artists complete with biography, reproductions and critical analysis. He began to do this on a more intensive level when he and Maurice Raynal were given the responsibility for the art page of L'Intransigeant, from March, 1928 until June, 1932. "Les deux compères, qui se nomment par antiphrase "Les deux Aveugles" dans leurs éditoriaux communs, ont liberté totale à l'intérieur de l'espace imparti, qu'ils ne manquent d'occuper au mieux."²³ In late 1932, Tériade with the young Albert Skira started the prestigious Minotaure. Tériade edited the first nine issues of the magazine which, although Surrealist in orientation, contained a diversified group of contributors, since Tériade was committed to openmindedness.

Je ne prétends pas définir ici les phases les plus récentes de la sculpture et de la peinture contemporaine. Je cherche au contraire, selon la règle facile de nos bons metteurs en page à sertir avec la grisaille de quelques lignes de texte la présentation de ces images - documents qui, du moins je l'espère, parlent suffisamment pour se faire comprendre par elles-mêmes, et possèdent surtout, dans leur alternance, le mérite nouveau de la signification.²⁴

Tériade defended Surrealist painting but true art, in his opinion, is that "sans recours extérieur, n'a d'autre substance que sa matérialité." If he was never a great admirer of Surrealism, neither did he commit himself to abstract art. Ultimately, he was most at home with the lavish publication Verve, which he founded in 1937 with Skira. Originally intended to come out three times a year, it appeared erratically, always with magnificent color repro-

ductions and with contents that ranged from Fouquet and medieval French manuscripts to illustrations of Ovid by Picasso. Matisse was really the star of Verve and Tériade's favorite artist. Verve concerned itself also with social history. There was no coverage of Surrealism. Important contributions from French literary figures enlivened the magazine: Gide, Valéry, Bachelard, Claudel, among other. And, from other countries, Lorca, Joyce, Dos Passos, Hemingway and Rilke contributed.

Earlier, as editor of Cahiers d'Art, Tériade formulated a view of the development of modern art in a series of articles, "Documentaire sur la jeune peinture."²⁵ Cubism he saw in a state of crisis by 1930 and he enumerated certain of the consequences. Among these, he discussed Neoplasticism and Constructivism. He understood these developments to be extremist and dispensible. Next, he turns his attention to Surrealism which he catagorizes as the "inevitable literary reaction." "Le Dadaisme provoqué par la suite cette grande réaction littéraire du Surréalisme qui vint au bon moment²⁶ comme un antidote provisoire mais utile." Tériade disliked the more contrived and illusionistic aspects of Surrealism. Even Miro is sometimes seen as a docile follower of Freud. Klee and Kandinsky are singled out as more genuine in their grasp of spontaneous, psychic impulses and a child-like vision. These artists respond to inner imperatives and along with Arp²⁷ they are viewed as true precursors of a Surrealist spirit. Tériade culminates his evaluation on the state of modern art

with an essay, "Une nouvelle heure de peintres," where he reveals hopes for the future. If Surrealism was an inevitable reaction, and abstract art an extreme consequence of Cubism, who were to be the genuine artists of tomorrow? Here Tériade calls for a "new fauvism," and enumerates this style, "nouvelle violence, pureté intégrale des moyens, formes essentielles."²⁸ To fulfill this prophecy, Tériade proposes a group of young artists - A. Beaudin, G.H. Roux, N. Ghika, F. Borès and F. Cossio. If Tériade's ideas about the evolution of contemporary art seem logical, intelligent and discerning, his credibility certainly suffers when one studies his recommendations in the light of history. The group, dubbed "mini-Matisse" by John Ferren, was also supported by Zervos in the pages of Cahiers d'Art (Figs. 110, 111, 112, 113). These artists were followed and encouraged throughout the thirties. Hé lion's career was also regarded with sympathy greater than that given to other abstract artists. Hé lion was frequently asked to contribute articles covering major exhibitions in Paris. As he moved farther from strict abstraction in his own work, Hé lion became an ideal example from Zervos' point of view of the impossibility of an extremist position and when Hé lion approached figuration in the late thirties, he was even more acceptable to the tastes of the magazine.

Basically, Cahiers d'Art stood behind Cubism and its various applications. Major Cubist painters, Braque, Léger and Gris, were treated through the various phases of their

careers. Occasionally, articles focused on Mondrian and De Stijl. In general, the magazine was responsive to the most avant-garde developments in architecture and De Stijl was praised from this point of view. Abstraction-Création is never mentioned, not even negatively. Hélicon suggests that this omission was due to Zervos' mistrust of large group endeavors and of cooperative ventures. Individual talent was his focus and Picasso was the center of his attention. "For Zervos there was only one painter who was the genius of this century and that was Picasso," said art critic and historian Dora Vallier who worked closely with Zervos from late in the fifties until the publisher's death in September, 1970. "Picasso was against abstract art, so Zervos was against abstract art. Basically, he was indifferent to it during the 1930's. Later, after the war, he had to take it into consideration." ²⁹ Although Zervos didn't really embrace Surrealism either, he and his magazine openly acknowledged the importance of the Surrealist movement in Paris. By the mid-thirties it was impossible not to do so if one wanted to be "au courant." In keeping with the times, Zervos devoted an entire number of Cahiers d'Art to Surrealism in 1935 and major participants included Breton, Georges Hugnet and Dali. Surrealist paintings and objects were reproduced. "There is a show here now, International Surrealism. The exhibit is like a nightmare but this shakes people awake spiritually and that is always good," wrote Kandinsky to Dreier in ³⁰ 1938.

From its foundation in 1926 and throughout the decade of the 1930's, Cahiers d'Art played a prominent role in the contemporary art world. This "revue de l'avant-garde artistique dans tous les pays" was the most important magazine on subjects of contemporary and modern art. It covered painting, sculpture, music, the latest developments in architecture including regular features on new building projects in Russia, Germany, Holland and America. A section on ancient and primitive art was included in most issues and occasionally an entire number was devoted to archaeological finds or ancient culture. A broad range of exhibitions in different capitals were reviewed beside the latest books. In sheer breadth and quality, it had no equal among the numerous art magazines published in Paris during the thirties. Dedicated to revealing the true glory of modern art, Cahiers d'Art maintained a tradition of avant-garde periodicals that began in the late nineteenth century. It was an archive and clearing house for international modern art. The periodical wielded tremendous influence in Europe and America, attracting top scholars and critics from all nations as contributors. For example, it was the only French magazine to advertise each month in America beginning in January of 1928.³¹

The main objective of Cahiers d'Art was to chronicle the modern movement in several ways: with an ongoing series of articles devoted to individual artists' careers; by tracing themes such as the change in the role of the "object" in modern art; and with analyses of stylistic issues. Analytic

in tone, texts were accompanied by an elaborate number of high quality black and white reproductions. These reproductions gave the magazine its extraordinary richness and made it a valuable opportunity for young artists, particularly in America, to witness the movements of modern art. For many foreigners, Cahiers d'Art represented their sole exposure to masterpieces of the twentieth century. It is one of the most important documents of the times. Only Formes came close in broadness of coverage, although it was more conservative in scope and less challenging in the quality of its criticism. Other major magazines, such as Minotaure, were more exclusive, focussing on particular movements, and they lasted only a few years. Cahiers d'Art spans the decade and indeed, continued until 1960, Volume 35.

The circle that formed around 14 rue du Dragon where the magazine was published became a cultural center in Paris. Janet Flanner recounts often seeing the Cahiers d'Art editorial group drinking together at one of the cafes on St. Germain, the Flore or Les Deux Magots, with Picasso, Eluard and Mme. Apollinaire usually present.³² Zervos and his wife Yvonne began to organize exhibitions in a front room in 1934 and this became known as the Galerie des Cahiers d'Art which showed work by many of those artists covered in the luxurious pages of the periodical. "It was not a normal gallery, none of the real activities of a gallery but something like an 'amateur' gallery with very important exhibitions," said Vallier.³³ In March of 1934, Hélicion wrote of the new gallery to Gallatin:

Zervos told me he would start with the young painters such as I in the Cahiers d'Art pretty soon. He has transformed his office, rue du Dragon, into a two floor gallery, very good looking indeed. The first show opened last week devoted to modern architecture. The following will be for the new Miros. The third one might be for the young abstract painting.³⁴

Zervos became a major art book publisher. He produced a series of monographs on such masters as Braque, Dufy, Kandinsky, Klee, Léger and his most extraordinary undertaking, the publication of the complete works of Picasso. His first volume on Picasso appeared in 1932.³⁵ Albert Skira entered the art publishing field shortly thereafter.

That Cahiers d'Art maintained a high level of quality despite economic depression and the war is attributable directly to the energies and dedication of Zervos himself. Many wondered how he financed this expensive venture, so expensive in fact that many artists could not afford to buy it. John Ferren speculated on this matter of financing:

Nobody knows how he did it. The Greeks are a great people and he was a real Greek. I would say he must have been supported by the big dealers. I know that he dealt in pictures a great deal. Why could not his money have come from a Picasso given there and a Braque given here which in those days were selling for good money. I imagine it was more or less something like that. He never lived in an affluent style at all. He had a simple apartment on the left bank. But his love was his magazine.³⁶

Dora Vallier contradicts this supposition believing that the money from sales of donated art was not great. It was not possible, she insists, even with Picasso to get big prices. Vallier recounts a story she heard from Zervos about how he supported the magazine with insurance money from a

personal injury.

Regardless of exactly how it was financed, the supremacy of Cahiers d'Art was widely acknowledged. Vézelay remembers it with respect and admiration. "Zervos was excellent, broad-minded and the Cahiers were beautifully done, really good. It was much the best."³⁸ Whether or not they could afford to buy it, artists in Paris and abroad, especially in America, were eager to see each number as it came out. Kandinsky, like Héliou, refers frequently to articles in his correspondence. Ferren recalls:

It was half scholarly. He [Zervos] would have one issue on primitive art or Greek or Romanesque art with new people writing articles and he had many of the top critical people writing. No art magazine we have, had this authority. It didn't review all the shows. It made no pretense of that. It was just general art and it was beautifully produced. It was a luxury item even then.³⁹

The steady preoccupation with ancient and primitive cultures is a distinguishing feature of the magazine and may be likened to the early twentieth-century periodical that might have served as its model, according to Dora Vallier, Der Blaue Reiter. "The same interest in ancient relations to the modern, in music, in being highly selective in everything," Vallier⁴⁰ observed.

In 1935, Cahiers d'Art was in its tenth year and on this occasion Zervos decided to determine if modern art was as alive and vital as ever by expressing his views and inviting major artists and critics to respond.⁴¹ The form of this "enquête"⁴ differed from the 1931 questionnaire on abstract art. Zervos

wrote a lengthy editorial concerned with the state of contemporary art. Opinions and issues raised in his essay form the basis of the responses from artists Braque, Mondrian, Chagall, Magnelli, Héliion, Kandinsky, Léger and critics René Huyghe, Herbert Read and Anatole Jakovsky, among others. "The next number of Cahiers d'Art should contain "une enquête" upon the eternally discussed subject of art with answers by practically all artists," Héliion wrote to Gallatin in February, 1935.⁴² Kandinsky also refers to the issue in correspondence with Dreier, "In answer to a questionnaire from Zervos, I have tried to expand on this mixup [about modern art], have you read it? It is no. 1-4, 1935." He adds, "It is really lucky that this precious art magazine is still in existence in spite of the constant financial difficulties that Zervos has had after 10 years."⁴³

The purpose of the inquiry was to determine directions that art might take in the future. Is this the moment for the ivory tower, or should the artist plunge into his time, Zervos asks pointedly, reflecting his concern about art's social conscience and responsibility to humanity, at a moment when Fascism was threatening freedom of expression in the arts and in all aspects of life. Does the artist work in the interests of collectivity? Or, has he neglected universality and collectivity in favor of narrow groupings and false masks of modernism? Has art forgotten the ordinary world, he wonders? What of social conflicts and art's responsibility to lead the multitude toward a more profound comprehension of life? Carried

along by the tide of late nineteenth-century esthetic evolution, art is occupied with plastic matters. "Never was an artist so profoundly involved in his means, affectivity and intellect," said Zervos. Is it not time to enlarge the scope of art, to integrate the forms into a more humanistic context including sentiment, anxiety, drama, emotion and conflict. Zervos would soon address himself to human values with greater urgency as the Third Reich loomed large in the background. In 1937 he wrote, "Réflexions sur la tentative d'esthétique dirigée du III^e Reich," asking pointedly how art was to survive in a totalitarian society. The basic error, he suggests, of the national socialist party has its origin "dans le fait que la conscience d'une part autoritaire ne saurait s'accorder des vastes intelligences créatrices."⁴⁴

In addition to matters of social and political conscience, the 1935 "enquête" explored the issue of the young artist in relation to his elders and to the past. Older artists, Zervos acknowledged, continue to produce important work, but where is the youth of tomorrow? Huyghe and Jakovsky both attempt to answer or at least to discuss these questions in their responses. They, too, lament the way young artists seem to turn desperately to the past, attempting to revive it. Why not extend it instead, Zervos suggests. Why not take up issues presented by the previous generation, Cubism above all, and use them as a jumping board to future discovery? To illustrate confusion between new forms and false modernism, Zervos cites a British art collector who took down his Cézannes

believing them to be insufficiently modern and replaced them with mediocre contemporary art. The example suggests that confusion in Paris creates misunderstanding abroad. Clarity is necessary and a fresh eye to avoid formulae at one extreme and naturalism at the other.

The "enquête" provided artists and critics with an opportunity to take a look at the state of art at mid-decade. Most responded characteristically with positions formulated years before. Mondrian and Kandinsky, for example, reasserted familiar themes. Héliou stressed clarity of conception and conviction as essential qualities leading toward an art with social dimension. An artist, he argues, is also a man in the world and if he resolves his ideas and can express them in his chosen medium, then his work will take on material and social reality. Ozenfant had come to believe that art's main function was social and political: "La pureté plastique est un moyen nécessaire. Elle n'est pas le but, le but de l'art activité éminemment sociale est de servir les hommes."⁴⁵ How art is to communicate this function, however, is not made clear. A pervasive uneasiness regarding this matter of social purpose can be detected in many responses, particularly in those by artists committed to pure plastic means. The Surrealists had de-emphasized formal values as part of their new orientation to the world. Abstractionists were forced to redefine or stretch their concept of reality to include social and political values. Faced with these difficulties, some abstract artists like Héliou moved toward more human

content. Others like Carlsund and Wantz gave up painting entirely.

Three years after his "enquête," Zervos gathered material on modern masters and styles and published a broad historical survey of modern art, Histoire de l'art contemporain in 1938. Much of the material had appeared previously in the pages of Cahiers d'Art. Zervos announced his intention to examine all tendencies with equal interest. Cézanne is established as his point of departure because Cézanne more than anyone else leads us to what Zervos considers the greatest modern achievement, Cubism. Cubism changed all the rules. What happened afterwards followed from its lead. Zervos defines the evolution of modern art in two main streams, echoing the ideas posited by Jakovsky in his catalogue essay for Thèse, Antithèse, Synthèse. "Il y eut deux stades dans la manifestation de l'art contemporain: d'une part abandon au lyricisme, même à l'élan intérieure (fauvisme); d'autre part une force d'extrême résorption, au profit d'une plus grande concentration, un besoin non plus d'immédiate expression, mais de purification (cubisme)."⁴⁶ There is little reason to doubt which development Zervos prefers.

Zervos' Histoire followed by three years a similar book by art historian, curator at the Louvre, René Huyghe, which includes a lengthy preface by scholar Henri Focillon. Focillon's brilliant treatise, Vie des Formes (1934), analyzing morphological transformations in the history of art had been published recently in Paris. Focillon posited an autonomous

internal life and logic of forms that could be read as strong affirmation of plastic values, although not directly concerned with contemporary or abstract art. Focillon, however, acknowledges twentieth-century art in positive terms in his introduction to Huyghe's book. He sees its evolution after thirty years as rich and diverse, "si divers et de donner aux joies de l'esprit le tour et le ton des passions."⁴⁷ Focillon does not attempt to judge the present. He observes it in its complexity and variety and urges others to do the same.

The initial struggle for a modern art was over and historical consciousness deepened. Ferren observed, "Picasso, Léger and Brancusi were already historical figures in the 1930's."⁴⁸ Cubism, Purism, Dada and even contemporary abstraction and Surrealism were being discussed as part of art history. Logically, there was great interest in the "roots" of modern art. As the history of twentieth-century art was crystallizing, the modern art book evolved toward its present form. Zervos and also Skira were largely responsible for this development during the thirties. Jean Cassou paid particular homage to Zervos and his publications as they contributed to a transformation in the status of modern art.

L'art moderne, antérieurement décrié, était entre dans l'histoire...Les Cahiers d'Art avec leur magnifique présentation, l'excellence de leurs reproductions, la rigueur allegre et résolue de leurs sommaires, constituaient le plus parfait témoignage de cet irréversible changement.⁴⁹

The irreversible change refers to a transition from early days

of battle to a more stable plateau. Zervos himself suggested in 1935 that it was time to take stock and avoid reaching for the stars. The spirit of synthesis, consolidation and "stabilization" that Jan Brzekowski had foreseen at the beginning of the decade, prevailed.

Notes to Chapter VII.

1. Domela, April, 1977.
2. Letter to Rebay, November 10, 1936. Originally, "Sie wissen ebenso gut wie wir, wie unendlich viel und 'wichtig' über den Kubismus, Expressionismus und in der letzten Zeit über Surrealismus geschrieben wird...Dagegn wird 'l'art non-figuratif' verschwiegen, oder direkt bekampft."
3. Vantongerloo letter to Gorin, March 17, 1927, Gorin, CNAC, p. 19.
4. Hé lion letter to Gallatin, January 2, 1936.
5. Abstraction-Création, no. 2 (1933), 1.
6. Ibid., p. 36.
7. Ibid., Herbin, p. 22; Hé lion, p. 20; Strzeminski, p. 40; Moholy-Nagy, p. 30.
8. Cahiers d'Art, VI, no. 1 (1931), 41. Translated by author.
9. Ozenfant, "L'Angle Droit."
10. Mondrian, "De L'art abstrait," Cahiers d'Art, VI, no. 1 (1931), trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin James and reprinted in The League Quarterly, XIX (Spring, 1947), 6-8.
11. Kandinsky, "Toile vide," Cahiers d'Art, X, nos. 5-6 (1935), 117.

12. Kandinsky, "Réflexions sur l'art abstrait," Cahiers d'Art, VI, nos. 7-8 (1931), trans. in catalogue, Paintings by Kandinsky from The Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection, Tate Gallery (London, 1958), n. pag.
13. Léger, "De l'art abstrait," Cahiers d'Art, VI, no. 3 (1931), 151.
14. Baumeister, "De l'art abstrait," Cahiers d'Art, VI, no. 4 (1931), 215-216.
15. Doerner, "Considérations sur la signification de l'art abstrait," Cahiers d'Art, VI, no. 7-8 (1931), 357.
16. Jakovsky, Six Essais, pp. 20, 43.
17. 23 Graveurs, ed. A. Jakovsky (Paris: G. Orobitz, 1935). Album exists in an edition of 50; no. 9 is at the New York Public Library and no. 43 is at Museum of Modern Art, New York. Giacometti, who had participated in Van Doesburg's early meeting, did not join Abstraction-Création.
18. Jakovsky, Thèse, pp. 10-14.
19. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
20. Helion letter to Gallatin, August 29, 1934.
21. Kandinsky letter to Rebay, November 10, 1936. Originally, "Gestern sprach ich den theoretischen 'Kraftmenschen' der neuen Kunst, Teriade...Wie oft habe ich mich schon früher gefragt, wer konnte eigentlich mit genügender Energie,

Autorität und ausreichender Liebe zu unserer Kunst ein tatsächlich gutes und 'bleibendes' werk über diese Kunst schreiben. Ich dachte auch schon früher an T., wusste aber nicht vollkommen genau, wie weit er für diese Kunst innerlich ist. Ich dachte immer, es soll kein langweiliges und noch weniger 'parteiisches' Buch werden, sondern etwas sehr Lebendiges und mit nötigem ruhigem Entusiasmus."

22. Kandinsky letter to Rebay, November 27, 1936. Originally, "Weil Tériade sehr lebendig, klug und mitreissend schreibt. Er ist sehr talentiert und sehr begeisterungsfähig. Er ist auch eine seltene Ausnahme unter den 'Kunsthistorikern' (wie man deutsch sagt), weil er die Kunst nicht nur 'denkt,' sondern in allererster Linie 'fühlt,' erlabt. Darum ist er ja auch begeisterungs fähig."
23. Jean Leymarie, Hommage à Tériade, exhibition catalogue, Grand Palais (Paris, 1973), p. vii.
24. Quoted in Hommage, p. viii.
25. Tériade, "Documentaire sur la jeune peinture," Cahiers d'Art, V, nos. 1,2,4 (1930).
26. Tériade, "Une nouvelle heure de peintres," Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 4 (1930), 169.
27. Tériade, "La Réaction littéraire," Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 2 (1930), 70-71.
28. Ibid., no. 4, p. 170.

29. Vallier, July, 1976.
30. Kandinsky letter to Dreier, February 18, 1938. Originally, "Jetzt lauft hier eine Schaaustellung, die 'International Surrealismus' heisst. Die Ausstellung erinnert an einen Alparuck. So wird aber die Menschheit letzten-endes auch geistig aufgeruttelt, was immer gut ist." The "Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme," organized by Breton, Eluard and Duchamp, was installed at the Galerie Beaux-Arts, January and February, 1938.
31. Cahiers d'Art was available at Wittenborn and Weyhe book-stores in New York and at the New York Public Library. Abstraction-Création was also available at the New York Public Library during the thirties. Meg Perlman explored New York outlets for French periodicals in a seminar report, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, New York, November, 1975.
32. Flanner, American in Paris, chap. 5.
33. Vallier, July, 1976.
34. Hé lion letter to Gallatin, March 23, 1934.
35. Zervos' Picasso series currently includes 35 vols.
36. Ferren interview with Cummings.
37. Vallier said, "Zervos was a poor man at the beginning, Cahiers was published by Albert Morancé. After that it

was a complete failure. Zervos was walking in Paris and a taxi hit him and hurt him and the insurance money paid for the magazine. Then it was a success, not a very big success, but enough to get from one number to the other." (July, 1976).

38. Vézelay, July, 1976.
39. Ferren interview with Cummings.
40. Vallier, July, 1976.
41. Zervos, "enquête," Cahiers d'Art, X, no. 1 (1935), 6-9.
42. Hélon letter to Gallatin, February 2, 1935.
43. Kandinsky letter to Dreier, June 6, 1935. Originally, "In meiner Antwort auf den Fragebogen von M. Zervos habe ich versucht; diesem Durcheinander ein 'Garaus' zu machen. Haben Sie diese no. gelesen? Es ist no. 1-4, 1935...Es ist wirklich ein Glück, dass diese wertvolle Kunstzeitschrift weiter existiert - trotz aller ständiger Geldschwierigkeiten, die Zervos noch immer hat nach 10 Jahren des Bestehens."
44. Zervos, "Réflexions sur la tentative d'esthétique dirigée du III^e Reich," Cahiers d'Art, XII (1937), 51.
45. Ozenfant, Cahiers d'Art, X, no. 1 (1935), 36; Kandinsky stressed the fact that the spiritual crisis is due to materialism, pp. 53-54.

46. Zervos, Histoire de l'art contemporain (Paris: Éditions "Cahiers d'Art," 1938), p. 19.
47. Focillon, "L'Historien et son temps," introduction, Histoire de l'art contemporain: la peinture, ed. René Huyghe (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1935).
48. Ferren interview with Bowman.
49. Cassou, Hommage à Christian et Yvonne Zervos, exhibition catalogue, Grand Palais (Paris, 1970), p. 1.

CONCLUSION

T.S. Eliot edited the quarterly review, Criterion, during the period between the wars, 1922 to 1939. An astute observer of the troubled times, Eliot described the cultural dilemma that forced him to cease publication of his international magazine in Notes Toward the Definition of Culture:

In the end, I failed to meet my aims. And, I attribute this failure chiefly to the gradual closing of the mental frontier of Europe. A kind of cultural autarchy followed inevitably upon political and economic autarchy. This did not merely interrupt communications; I believe that it had a numbing effect upon creative activity within every country.¹

The "numbing effect" that Fascism was having on the creative and intellectual life corresponded to a moment when young artists tended to be overshadowed by the first generation of modernists. The impetus that had driven Matisse or Picasso was slowing down. New energy was inhibited by the increasingly repressive political and psychological climate. Hence, the art of the thirties was shot through with self-doubt. This is felt in the loss of congruency of particular forms with particular theory. It explains why much of the abstract artists' rhetoric rings hollow. The art, of course, is an index of this disjunction.

Still, not everyone's work suffered. Hélicion's transition from strict geometric abstraction to a freer, organic and personal idiom around 1933 resulted in one of the more original

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bodies of work produced in this troubled decade. Hélión's experience during the thirties exemplifies the situation facing younger abstractionists. His painting shows the influence of both De Stijl and Constructivism filtered through the sensibility of an artist committed to the tradition of modern French art. That Hélión so quickly withdrew from extreme reductive abstraction is a reflection of several conflicts. Purist forms of geometric abstract art had no roots in France where such modes were considered alien. Besides, the instability of the times made it more difficult to justify abstraction. Hélión, himself intensely political, moved to satisfy a larger and ultimately more humanistic need, arriving first at a figurative style of painting in 1938-39; finally, at an art of realism (Figs. 114, 115). To some critics - Seuphor is most vociferous among them - Hélión betrayed the cause of abstraction and capitulated. Seuphor gives scant mention to Hélión in his many surveys of abstract art, despite the artist's importance during the thirties. For Zervos, Hélión's example demonstrates the case against extreme reductivism which he believed was contrary to art's highest purposes.

The careers of the major abstractionists, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Arp and Delaunay, have been little examined during the thirties. It has been possible here to discuss their art and ideas in terms of their relationships to various abstract artists' groups. Marked changes in style and attitude resulted. Delaunay, for example, returned to a purely abstract art, un-

doubtedly influenced by the momentum that Cercle et Carré had gathered. His energies were spent on behalf of the Abstraction-Création group - his enthusiastic support was responsible for attracting artists such as Holty to the organization.

Mondrian was a more central and inspiring presence. His thought clearly provided a model for Cercle et Carré, yet, it might be suggested that he, in turn, was influenced by that group and by Seuphor's activism. Mondrian produced some of his greatest paintings during this decade. These include the attenuated "ladder" pictures that seem so appropriate to the period. "It is impossible to know to what extent the unusual compositional pattern of these 'tragic' paintings is bound up with the situation of the years 1935-6² and with their menace and inherent tragedy," Jaffé has noted.

Kandinsky took an opposite course when he arrived in Paris and his art after 1933 is bouyant and brilliantly colorful. Yet, there is a curious imbalance in certain canvases that results from the manner in which shapes and forms appear to catapult off the picture plane, released forward toward the spectator. Both Kandinsky and Mondrian continued along well established courses in their mature careers. Nevertheless, each was specifically affected by the Parisian cultural welter. Kandinsky's art from the thirties is best understood in this context. His shift from a painting dominated by right angles and geometric figures to more organic shapes reminiscent of Arp powerfully underlines the waning

force of Constructivism and Mondrian-dominated art. No shift in ideology necessarily explains these stylistic changes - an important point to stress. Biomorphc forms did not always signify Surrealistic intention. This interweaving of geometric and curvilinear elements becomes clearly perceptible in Paris after 1933. Several years later it is adopted widely by members of the American Abstract Artists in New York - artists by and large wholly removed from the theoretical arguments that led to this synthesis in the first place. Americans living in the French capital during the thirties, including Holty, Ferren, Xceron and Calder, had never been attached to spiritual or ideological goals. Thus, they easily absorbed the "look" of contemporary abstract art without anguishing about its symbolic content.

The influence of Parisian abstraction upon Americans was not limited only to members of the AAA. Arshile Gorky, one of the many links connecting Paris-based abstraction of the thirties to American Abstract Expressionism, joined Abstraction-Création in 1934 (Fig. 116). Although the Abstract Expressionists obviously were less dependent upon geometric forms of abstraction than upon contemporary Surrealism, they were nonetheless deeply affected by the loosening formal language of abstract art. Cubism, De Stijl, Constructivism and the abstract biomorphc language of Arp and Miro came to be viewed as so many modernist ideas to draw upon. Ideology, pushed into the background, allowed for a more relaxed combination of forms.

The relationship between abstraction and Surrealism was more subtle and complex during this decade than has generally been assumed. That Arp was able to straddle two fences, never abandoning the Surrealists even as he joined abstract groups, emphasizes this fact. The importance of Surrealism as a motivating force behind abstract artists' reexamination of their goals comes as a surprise. So, too, has the distinction between the programmatic approach of the Surrealists and the liberating freedoms advocated by Dada been magnified in terms of its effect on the abstractionists. The successful collaboration of former Dadaists in the activities of abstract artists' groups points this out.

The role of Gestalt theory, part of a rationalistic spirit that gained ascendance during the course of the thirties, has been newly considered. This scientific and rational approach had origins in Bauhaus aesthetics and philosophy; however, it becomes apparent that the Paris groups transformed these concepts into far more pragmatic working principles. Mathematics, too, came to serve this same end - furthering the abstract artists' lofty ideals of a clear, pure, impersonal and universal art.

Analysis of critics Zervos, Tériade, Jakovsky and Seuphor broadens perspective on the position that abstract art held within the art community as a whole. The career of Michel Seuphor, in particular, has been given fuller dimension through an examination of his importance as critic and entrepreneur. Indeed, by setting in motion the initial group, Cercle et Carré,

he became the catalyst of many subsequent events. The relationship between his group and Art Concret may be understood not as a succession of jealous gestures as some have indicated, but as alternative choices that reflect different points of view. That Van Doesburg eventually came to support a broader base for abstract art is a powerful acknowledgment of the changing times and of Seuphor's impact upon them.

Finally, abstract art has been considered within the precarious social, economic and political climate, against the rising threat of Fascism and what Eliot describes as its deadening effect upon European culture. In this period of grave aesthetic uncertainty, not to mention concern for sheer survival, artists were only able to indicate general trends, to sow seeds. It remained for the post-war generation in France and America to explore the range of intellectual and formal implications that had been raised by abstract art during the course of the thirties in Paris, and to reap their harvest.

Notes to Conclusion.

1. T.S. Eliot, Notes, p. 120.
2. Jaffé, Mondrian, p. 150.

APPENDIX: Unpublished Sources

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- New Haven: Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Société Anonyme Archive: Kandinsky letters to Katherine Dreier.
- New York: Archives of American Art. Carl Holty Papers; George L.K. Morris Papers; Jean Xceron Papers; John Ferren Papers; transcripts of interviews with John Ferren by Ruth Gurin Bowman (October 28, 1964), Dorothy Seckler (June 12, 1965), Paul Cummings (June 7, 1968).
- New York: Elizabeth Holty, personal archive: Carl Holty's journals, memoirs and personal correspondence.
- New York: The New York Historical Society. A.E. Gallatin Papers: letters from Arp, Taeuber-Arp, Calder, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Domela, Hélión and Léonce Rosenberg to Gallatin.
- New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. The Hilla von Rebay Foundation Archive: letters from Albers, Arp, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Domela, Gabo, Gleizes, Herbin, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Pevsner, Vantongerloo,

Vordemberge-Gildewart and Xceron to Hilla Rebay.

Paris: Galerie Denise René: Marcelle Cahn Papers. Letters
from Léonce Rosenberg.

Paris: Michel Seuphor, personal archive: documents,
letters, photographs.

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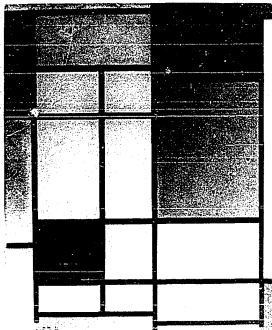


Fig. 1. Piet Mondrian.
Composition. 1921. Oil.

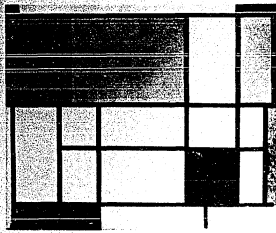
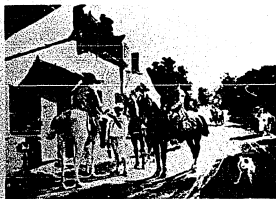


Fig. 2. Mondrian
Composition (1921) beside
a Meissonier landscape from
L'Esprit Nouveau, no. 18.

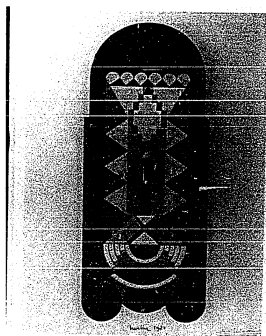


Fig. 3. Auguste Herbin. Peinture. 1920.
Gouache.

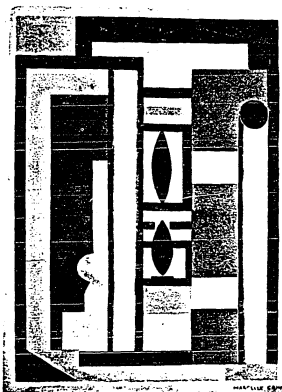


Fig. 4. Marcelle Cahn. Composition abstraite. 1925. Oil.

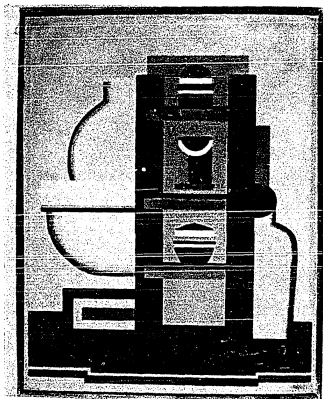


Fig. 5. Marcelle Cahn. Composition. 1926. Oil.

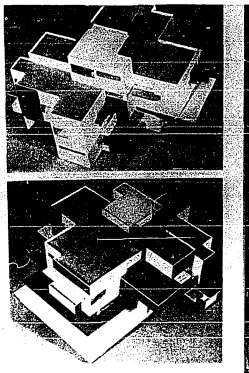


Fig. 6. Theo Van Doesburg and C. Van Esteren. Two views of model (destroyed) of private house exhibited at L'Effort Moderne, 1923, Paris.

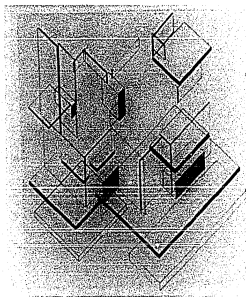


Fig. 7. Theo Van Doesburg. Axonometric drawing for private house, 1923.



Fig. 8. Fernand Léger.
Le Mécanicien. 1920. Oil.



Fig. 9. Fernand Léger.
Nature morte au chandelier.
1922. Oil.



Fig. 13. Joaquín Torres-García. Composition. 1928.

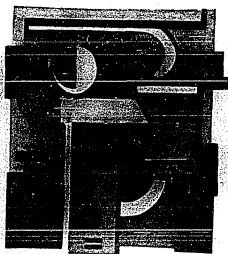


Fig. 14. Jean Gorin.
Composition no. 6. 1925.

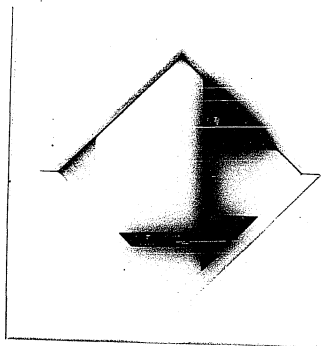


Fig. 15. Jean Gorin.
Composition néoplastique. 1926.
Oil on board.

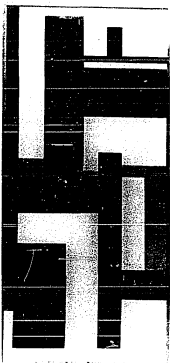


Fig. 10. Fernand Léger.
Peinture murale. 1924. Oil.



Fig. 11. Robert Mallet-Steven.
Entrance hall of the Ideal
Embassy at 1925 Exposition,
with Léger's Peinture murale.

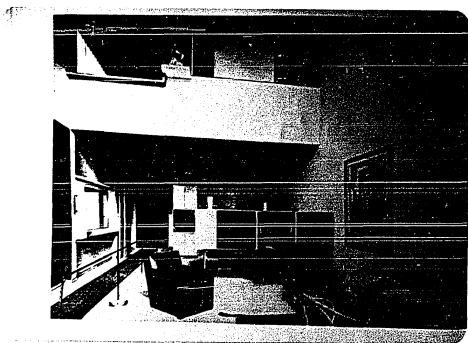


Fig. 12. Le Corbusier. Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau at
the 1925 Exposition, Paris.

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LE MANIFESTE DE "VOULOIR"

Nous voulons Vivre !
De cent mille poitrines, un cri monte, ce cri !
De cent mille poitrines jeunes, ici, là-bas, où sont des hommes, monte et se rue un cri :

Nous voulons Vivre !
Déjà chancelle et se fissure l'édifice monstrueux des dogmes et des codes, trop vieux.

Mais l'art ?
Les monuments, les vieilles pierres embarrassent nos rues et assomènt nos cités. Les salons officiels et les académies, hermétiques, fermés, sentent le mois. L'art végété dans une absolue médiocrité et qui sort des rangs s'expose à devoir bien vite regretter son audace. Rien ne lui sera épargné des railleries, des propos méprisants, des petites saletés confraternelles.

Nous voulons Vivre !
Les forces jeunes de partout ne craignent pas la lutte. Foin des académismes pompier, foin des plagiat. Nous ne voulons plus copier des maîtres dont la perfection n'est pas en harmonie avec notre temps. Les grandes époques de l'art ont laissé des chefs-d'œuvre uniquement parce que ces derniers exprimaient la vie de ces époques.

Nous voulons que notre siècle ait un art digne de lui et qui réponde aux aspirations de nos foules modernes.

L'art ne peut s'inspirer que de la Vie, il est l'essence même de la vie.

Il faudra bien qu'on le comprenne !
Aérons l'art, foulons aux pieds les préjugés et enfonçons portes et fenêtres qui se refusent à s'ouvrir.

Nous voulons Vivre !

Aujourd'hui, dans notre société civiliste disent-ils. L'art occupe une place trop secondaire pour que ses prêtres, conscients de leur mission, hésitent à s'insurger.

Constatons :
Simple moyen d'amuser un public superficiel, l'art est capable tout au plus de chatouiller l'épiderme des gens à vague teinte de culture et qui se donnent par une admiration feinte la benoîte satisfaction d'avoir du goût.

Des artistes (hélas trop nombreux et connus) se courbent devant les exigences de ce public.

Snobs et castrats ! Voici bien tes protagonistes, art moribond d'une société qui disparaît.

Et nous proclamons :
L'art ne doit plus être un simple divertissement !
L'art n'a que faire de la morale, asservissement et rétrécissement de la vie. L'art est une fonction de libération, une source de vie large, profonde et puissamment humaine.

Nous voulons Vivre !

Ce jour à Lille, nous fondons :
Vouloir. — Groupe d'action pour un art vivant.
Vouloir. — Organe constructif de littérature et d'Art moderne.

Notre groupe organisera des expositions, des conférences. Il luttera contre les puissances mortelles de réaction et condamnait les efforts des jeunes qui cherchent et qui « veulent » il aidera au triomphe des idées modernes en art.

Notre revue s'efforcera vers le même but. Nous la voulons nette et drue et vigoureuse.

Dés lors, qu'entend notre appel les jeunes et les forts. Par dessus bord les impuissants. Les timorés se condamnent eux-mêmes.

Nous voulons Vivre !

VOULOIR.

Sont des nôtres : Marius DALLIE - E. DONCE-BRISY - Lucien JACOBS - Marcel LEBARRIEN - Georges LINZE - Marcel MILLET - Paul MYRRHAN - Joseph OJESSEL - Charles ROCHAT - André SAVANIER - Théo VARLET - Jean VILLEDIEU - M. WULLIENS - etc...



Bols gravé par Lempereur-Haas

Fig. 16. "Le Manifeste de Vouloir." Vouloir, no.1, January, 1924.

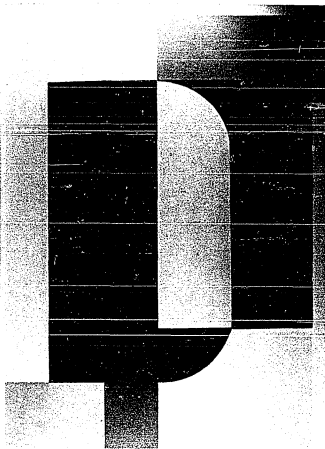


Fig. 17. Henryk Stazewski.
Composition. 1930. Oil.
In Abstraction-Création,
no. 1, 1932.



Fig. 18. The collection of the "a.r." group in the
Museum of Art in Lodz, 1932.

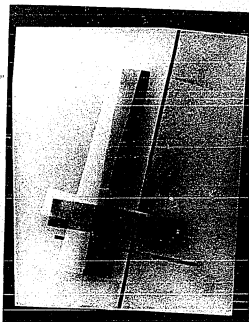


Fig. 19. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.
O.P.4. 1924. Gouache.

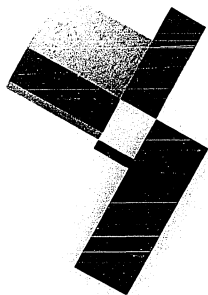


Fig. 20. Friedrich Vordemberge-
Gildewart. Untitled. 1927.
In Abstraction-Création, no. 2,
1933.

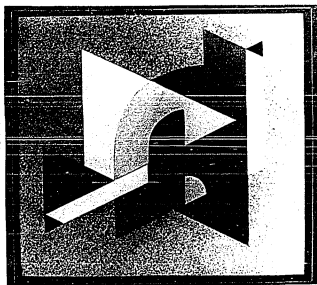


Fig. 21. Henri Nouveau. Composition. 1928.



Membres du groupe CERCLE ET CARRÉ dans la Galerie 23, en avril 1930. De gauche à droite :
Fernand Lévy, Daniel-Henri, Mme Torres-García, Torres-García, Piet Mondrian, Jean
Léon Auzan, Marcelle Calm, Sophie Taubert, Michel Seuphor, Friedrich von Kumborg,
Mme Kumborg, Hans van den Broek, Mme Kumborg, Gerson von Kumborg, Kandinsky.

Fig. 22. Members of Cercle et Carré in Galerie 23, Paris, April, 1930.

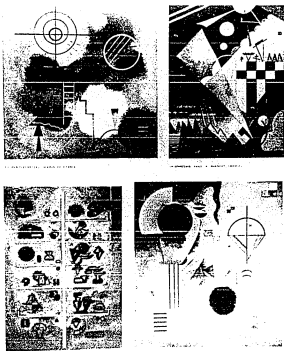


Fig. 23. Paintings by Kandinsky at the Galerie de France, Paris, 1930. From Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 2, 1930.



84. Kandinsky: "Gegensätzliche Zusammenstellung einer Gebogenen mit einer Eckigen". From *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*, fig. 62.

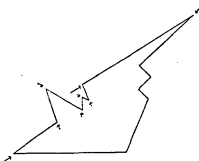


Bild 39

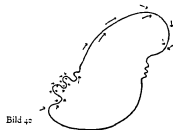


Bild 42

85-86. Kandinsky: *Angular and Curved*. From *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*, figs. 39-40.

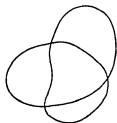


Abb. 19.

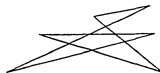


Abb. 20.

87-88. Wolfgang Köhler: *Makima and Takete*. From *Psychologische Probleme*, 1933, figs. 1^a 2^a.

Fig. 24. Illustration of Kandinsky's drawing from Point and Line beside Köhler's Gestalt figure in Sixten Ringbom, The Sounding Cosmos, p. 189.



Fig. 25. Wassily Kandinsky. Yellow Center. 1934.



Fig. 26. Cover page, Cercle et Carré, no. 1, March, 1930.

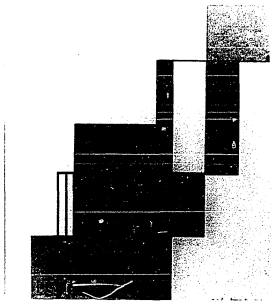


Fig. 27. Michel Seuphor. Gouache. 1929.

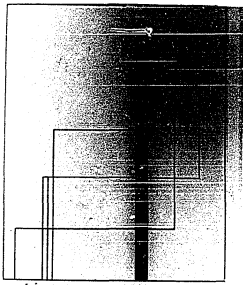


Fig. 28. Michel Seuphor. Study for Gouache. 1929.

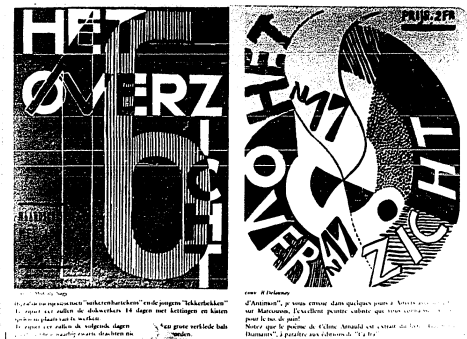
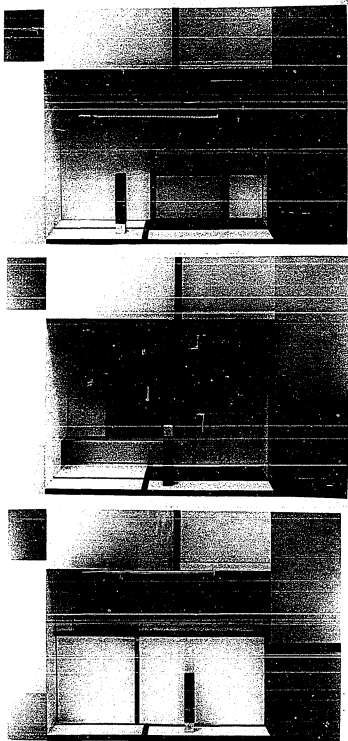


Fig. 29. Covers for *Het Overzicht* designed by Moholy-Nagy and Robert Delaunay in 1923.



Figs. 30, 31, 32. Piet Mondrian. 1963 reconstructions of three sets for Michel Seuphor's "L'éphémère est éternel." Original maquette of 1926 destroyed.

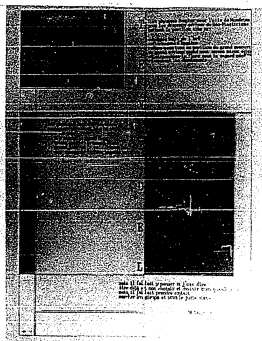


Fig. 33. Piet Mondrian and Michel Seuphor.
Tableau-poeme. 1928. Oil.

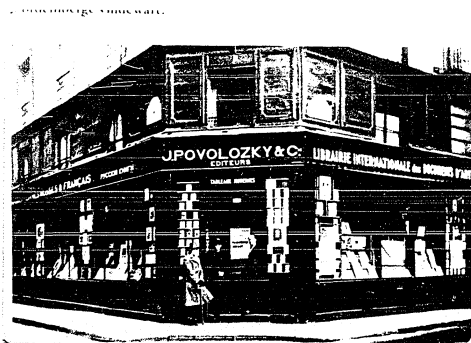


Fig. 34. Seuphor and Vordemberge-Gildewart in
front of Povolozky's shop. Paris, 1929.

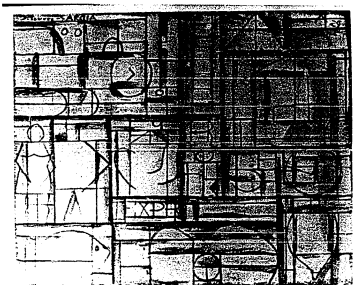


Fig. 35. Joaquín Torres-García. Composition.
1929. In Cercle et Carré, no. 2, April, 1930.

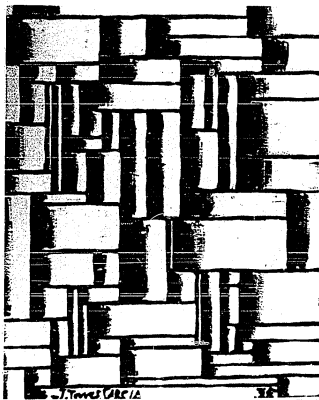


Fig. 36. Joaquín Torres-García. Estructura.
1935. Oil.

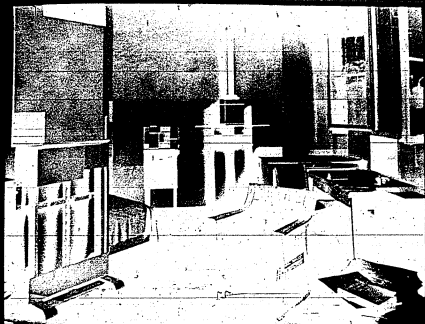


Fig. 37. Mondrian's studio, rue du Départ, Paris, 1925.

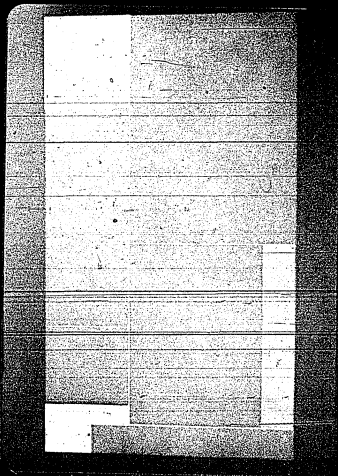


Fig. 38. Georges Vantongerloo. Composition derived from the equation $y = -ax^2 + bx + 18$ with Green, Orange, Violet. 1930. Oil.

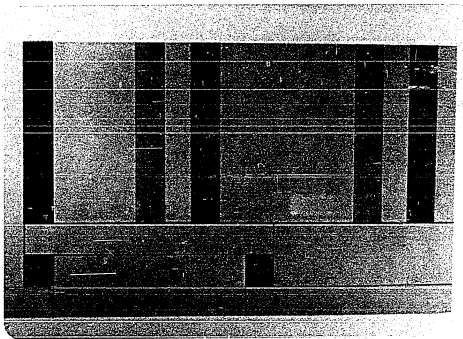


Fig. 39. Georges Vantongerloo. Composition 13478. 1937. Oil.
15

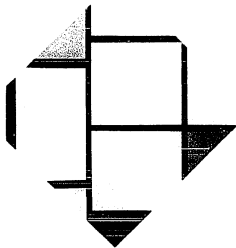


Fig. 40. Piet Mondrian. Tableau 24. Lozenge Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue. c. 1925. Oil.

- L'Art Plastique [L'] = [s] Néo-Plasticisme -

« Que nul n'entre ici s'il n'est pas géomètre » a dit le ne sais quel grec. Un sens esthétique, bien évolué et développé, ainsi qu'une science approfondie en un mot, avoir le sens esthétique pur ou une science scriptrice, créatrice, sont les conditions nécessaires et suffisantes pour comprendre l'art nouveau. L'art nouveau n'a droit à ce nom que lorsqu'il contient l'unité. L'unité contient tout et c'est à celui qui peut en dégager le plus que le mot compréhension s'adresse. Créer veut dire : mettre sous une forme, artistique ou scientifique, une des grandes vérités de l'univers. La géométrie euclidienne est un monument. Parce qu'Euclide a su mettre sous des formes, visibles par nos sens, des règles qui nous ont permis de comprendre une partie des côtés du polygone de l'univers. Vient Klunstein. Quel est son mérite, c'est qu'il a présenté et mis sous forme d'équation le principe de la relativité généralisée. Il a su dire avec une grande précision, le déplacement du périhélie de Mercure.

Lorsque Newton vit tomber à ses pieds la pomme du pommier sous lequel il était assis, quel était son mérite ? C'est d'avoir su dégager, d'un fait banal en soi, la loi de la gravitation universelle.

L'art nouveau est une forme esthétique et contient des lois universelles. Ce n'est pas une simple fantaisie d'artiste. Mots tout ce qui se dit art nouveau, n'a pas pour base les principes de l'unité. La fantaisie « artistique » est énorme.

Et si on me demande : comment peut-on reconnaître le véritable art nouveau ? Je dirai : il se dévot au cœur simple. Il en a toujours été ainsi et il n'y a pas de raison pour que cela change.

Il m'a plu de faire ce petit avant propos, avant de parler de quelques œuvres de P. Mondrian. Sa valeur d'artiste est suffisamment connue, mais combien je fus touché lorsque je vis de manière frappante que le principe de l'unité se présentait dans ses œuvres sous des nouvelles formes géométriques. J'ai fait l'analyse des œuvres dont la valeur ne laisse aucun doute.

Tableau 24 « losangique » P. Mondrian

Je trace un cercle de rayon 5 par exemple. Le carré inscrit dans ce cercle, combiné avec le carré circonscrit, crée la limite du tableau.

$r =$ le $\frac{1}{2}$ diamètre ou $\frac{1}{2}$ diagonale du carré inscrit. $r^2 + r^2 = R^2 = \frac{1}{2}$ diagonale du carré circonscrit.

Le prolongement du côté gauche en haut du carré inscrit, coupe le côté du carré circonscrit et forme l'angle du haut du tableau.

Les divisions du tableau, qui forment la composition, émanent également de la combinaison du carré inscrit et circonscrit dans le cercle.

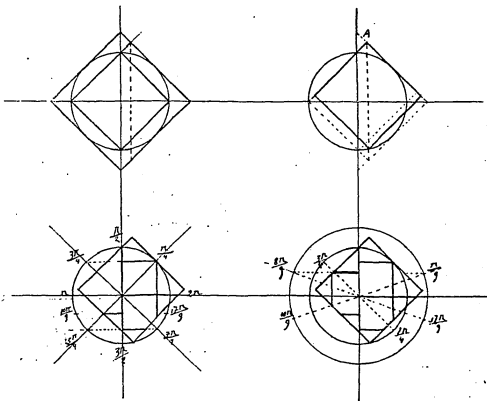


Fig. 41. Georges Vantongerloo's application of mathematical formulae to Mondrian's Tableau 24 in Vouloir, no. 22, 1926.

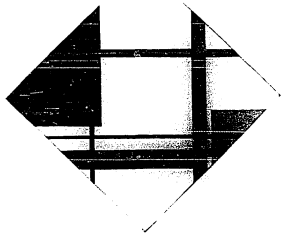


Fig. 42. Jean Gorin. Composition néoplastique. 1930. Paint on wood.



Fig. 43. Jean Gorin. Composition no. 21. 1930.

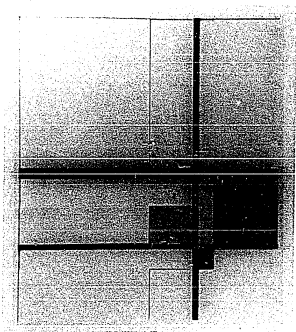


Fig. 44. Jean Gorin. Composition néoplastique no.7.
1934.



5 Photo prise dans le salon de la Galerie 23 le jour où venait de s'ouvrir l'EXPOSITION du Cercle et Carré au Salon de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. On voit à gauche, Antoine Rayson, à droite, le peintre Paul Klee, et au milieu, le sculpteur Jean Arp. Derrière eux, le poète Paul Éluard, le peintre Constantin Brancusi, Charles Boncompagni, Céline Arnaud, Louis et Nelly.

Fig. 45. Opening of Cercle et Carré exhibition at Galerie 23, April 18, 1930, Paris.

exposition Cercle et Carré
oeuvres de: Baumeister, Ingeborg Björnason, Wanda Wolska

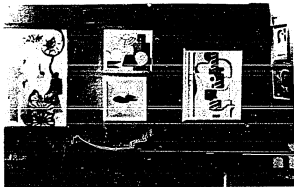


Fig. 46. Installation of Cercle et Carré exhibition, Galerie 23. Works by Baumeister, Ingeborg Björnason, Wanda Wolska.

exposition "Cercle et Carré"
oeuvres de: e.a. Olson, Torres-García, Ozenfant, mas-
ques de Cueto



Fig. 47. Installation of Cercle et Carré exhibition,
Galerie 23. Works by Olson, Torres-García, Ozenfant,
Cueto, Vordemberge-Gildewart.

exposition "Cercle et Carré"
oeuvres de: Werkman, Huszar, Mondrian, Stazewski,
Huszar, S.Taeuber-Arp, Mondrian, Sta-
zewski

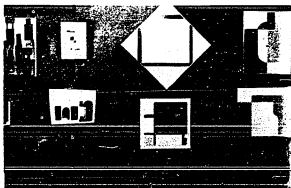


Fig. 48. Installation of Cercle et Carré exhibition,
Galerie 23. Works by Werkman, Huszar, Mondrian,
Stazewski, S. Taeuber-Arp.

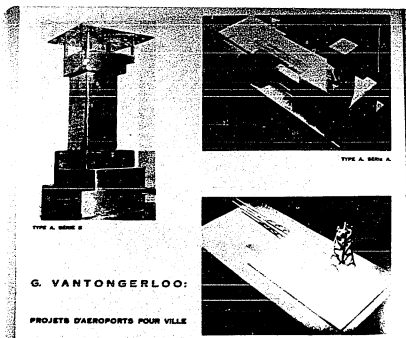


Fig. 49. Georges Vantongerloo. Projets d'aéroports pour ville. In Cercle et Carré, no. 3, June, 1930.



Fig. 50. Francois Foltyn. Untitled. 1929. In Abstraction-Création, no. 2, 1933.



Fig. 51. Wassily Kandinsky. Deux Côtés Rouges. 1928.

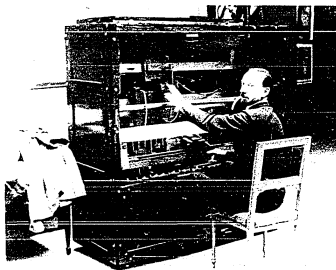
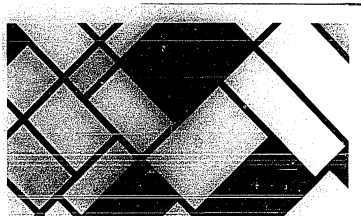


Fig. 52. Luigi Russolo playing the russolophone in Galerie 23, April, 1930.



Fig. 53. Installation of Cercle et Carré exhibition, Galerie 23. Works by Cahn, Léger, S. Taeuber-Arp, Foltyn, Van Rees.

Fig. 53. Installation of Cercle et Carré exhibition, Galerie 23. Works by Cahn, Léger, S. Taeuber-Arp, Foltyn, Van Rees.



Counter-composition XVI, 1925.
oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm. (39 x 71 in.)
Collection of Groninger Museum, The Hague

Fig. 54. Theo Van Doesburg. Counter-Composition XVI. 1925. Oil.

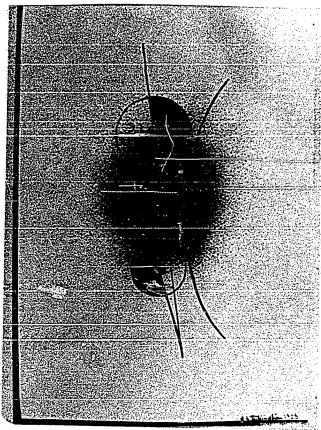


Fig. 55. Léon Tutundjian. Composition. 1928.
Ink on paper.

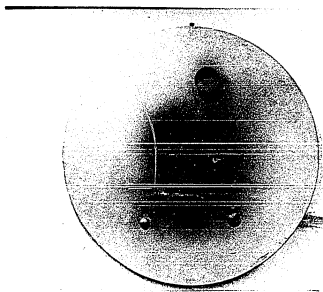


Fig. 56. Léon Tutundjian. Relief. 1929. Wood.
In Art Concret, no. 1, April, 1930.

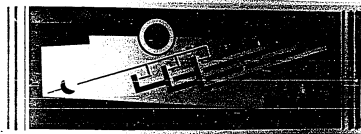


Fig. 57. Otto Carlsund. Composition pour observatoire.
1926. Oil.

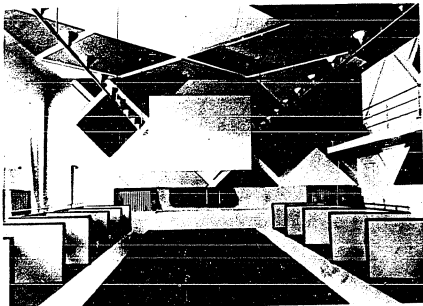


Fig. 58. Theo Van Doesburg. Salle de cinema in
Strasbourg Aubette, 1927 (destroyed).

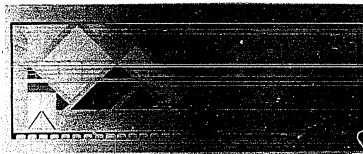


Fig. 59. Theo Van Doesburg. Design for wall of
cinema in Strasbourg Aubette. Gouache.

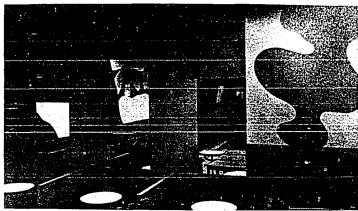


Fig. 60. Jean Arp. Decoration for café-restaurant in
Strasbourg Aubette, 1927 (destroyed).

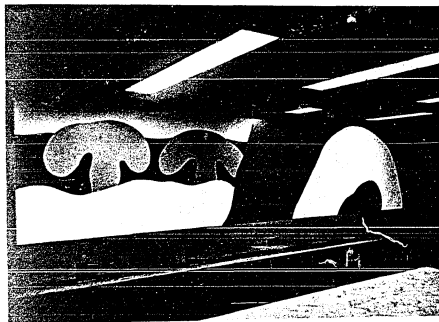


Fig. 61. Jean Arp. Main walk of basement dancehall
in Strasbourg Aubette, 1927-8 (destroyed).

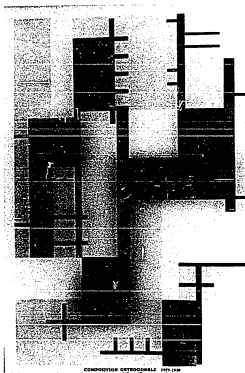


Fig. 62. Jean Hélion. Composition orthogonale.
1929-30. Oil

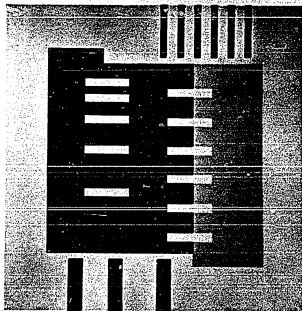


Fig. 63. Jean Hélion. Composition. 1930. Oil.

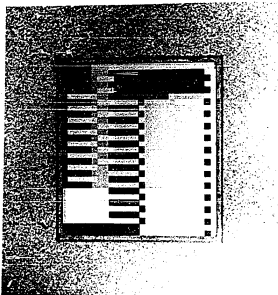


Fig. 64. Josef Albers. Walls and Screens. c. 1928.
Opaque glass, sandblasted.

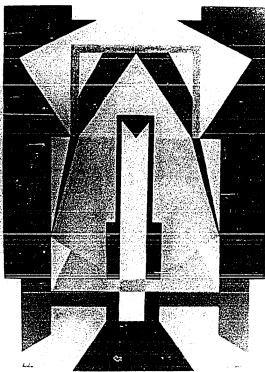


Fig. 65. Auguste Herbin. Untitled. 1920. Paint on wood.



Fig. 66. Auguste Herbin.
Spirale. 1933. Oil.

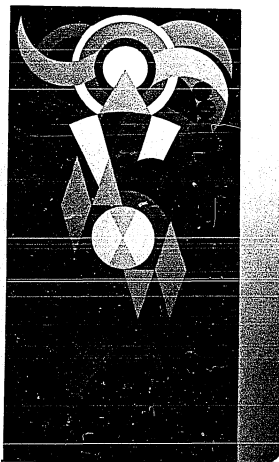


Fig. 67. Auguste Herbin.
Composition sur les noms
communs: Ange, lion,
fauvette. 1942. Oil.

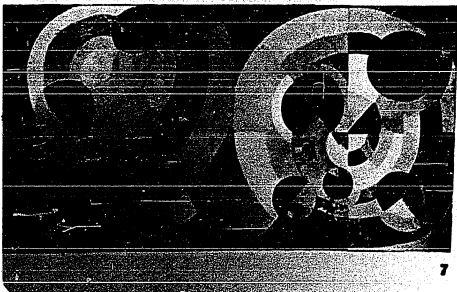


Fig. 68. Robert Delaunay. Untitled. 1931. In Abstraction-Création, no. 1, 1932.



Fig. 69. Robert Delaunay. Rythme, Joie de Vivre. c. 1931-2. Oil.

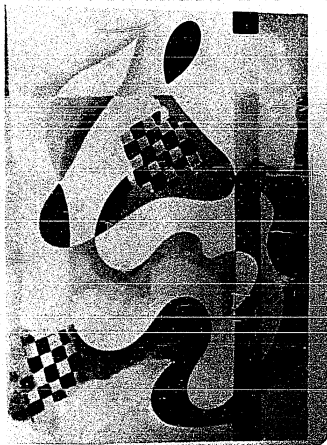


Fig. 70. Carl Holty. Untitled. In Abstraction-Creation, no. 2, 1933.



Fig. 71. Alexander Calder. Untitled. 1932. In Abstraction-Creation, no. 2, 1933.

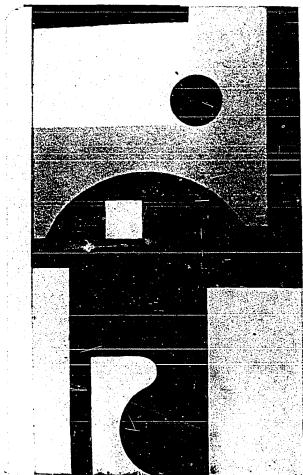


Fig. 72. William Einstein. Untitled. 1931. In Abstraction-Creation, no. 1, 1932.

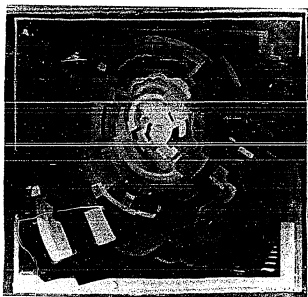


Fig. 73. Evie Hone. Untitled. 1932. In Abstraction-Creation, no. 3, 1934.



Fig. 74. Mainie Jellet. Untitled. In Abstraction-Creation, no. 4, 1935.



Fig. 75. Georges Valmier. Untitled. 1932. In Abstraction-Creation, no. 2, 1933.



Fig. 76. Alfred Reth. Composition. 1930.
Gouache. In Abstraction-Création, no. 2, 1933.

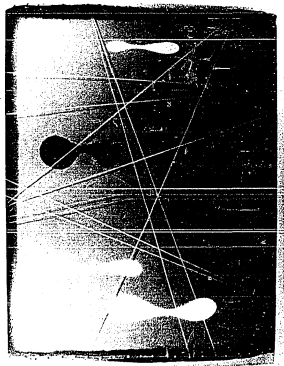
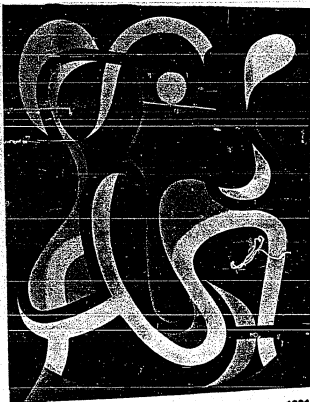


Fig. 77. Paule Vézelay. Collage and Line in Space:
Research in Three Dimensions. 1936. Collage.



herbin a . 1931 .

Fig. 78. Auguste Herbin. Untitled. 1931 In Abstraction-Création, no. 1, 1932.

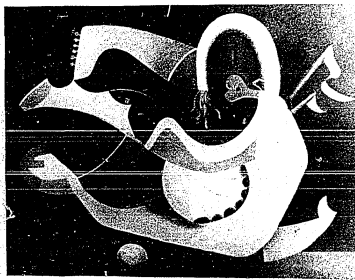


Fig. 79. Kurt Séligmann. Untitled. In Abstraction-Création, no. 2, 1933.

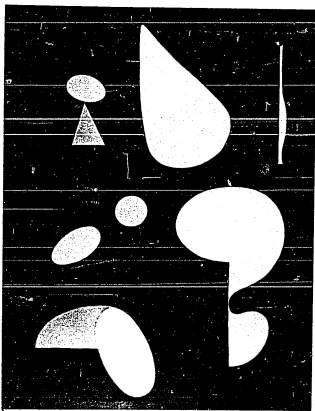


Fig. 80. Paule Vézelay. Black, White and Gray Objects. 1934. Oil.



Fig. 81. Ferenc Martyn. Untitled. In Abstraction-Creation, no. 5, 1936.



Fig. 82. Jaro Okamoto. Untitled. 1934. In Abstraction-Création, no.4, 1935.

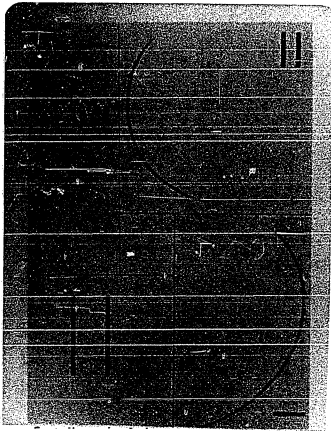


Fig. 83. Georges Vantongerloo. Courbes. 1937. Oil.



Fig. 84. Wassily Kandinsky. Dominant Curve. 1936. Oil.

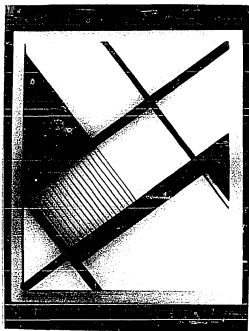


Fig. 85. César Domela. Relief. 1930. Wood, plastic, metal.
In Abstraction-Création, no. 3, 1934.

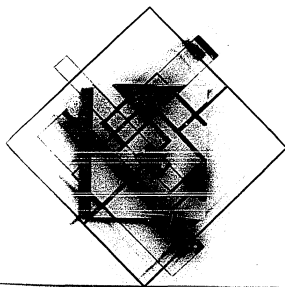


Fig. 86. César Domela. Relief. 1930. In
Abstraction-Création, no. 2, 1933.

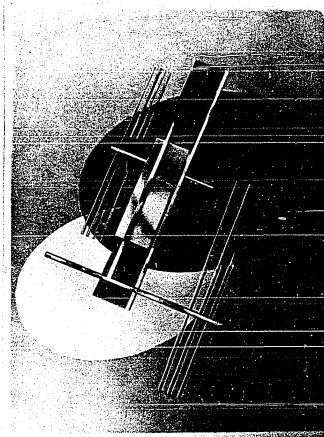


Fig. 87. César Domela. Composition. 1934. Relief, metal and plastic.

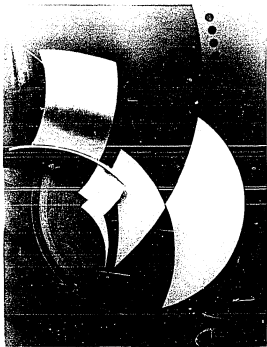


Fig. 88. César Domela. Composition. 1937. Relief.

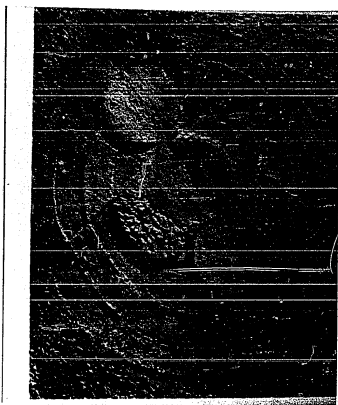


Fig. 89. Robert Delaunay. Relief Gris. c. 1934.
Plaster.

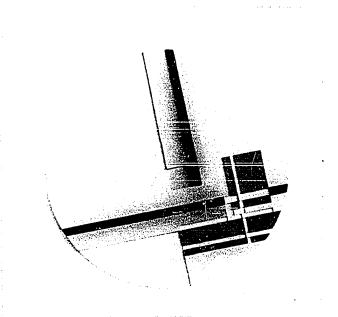


Fig. 90. Jean Gorin. Composition no. 36. 1936-7.
Oil.

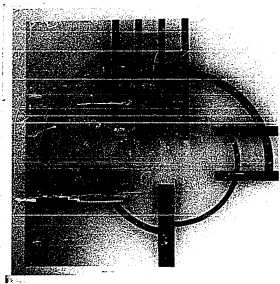


Fig. 91. Jean Hélion. Tensions circulaires. 1932. Oil.



Fig. 92. Jean Hélion. Équilibre. 1934. Oil.

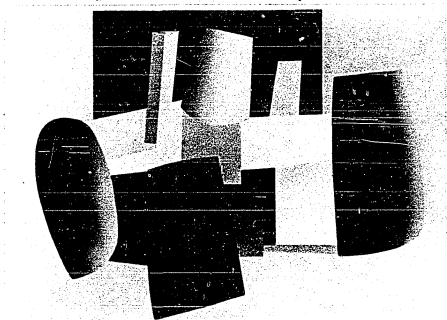


Fig. 93. Jean Hélion. Gros Volumes. 1934.

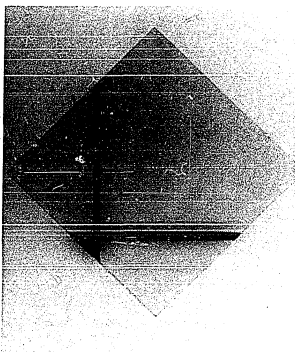


Fig. 94. Piet Mondrian. Composition with Blue. 1926.
Oil.

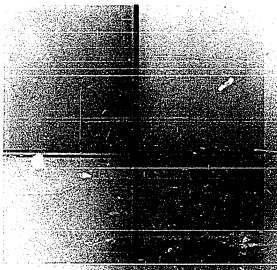


Fig. 95. Piet Mondrian. Composition B with Gray and Yellow. 1932. Oil.

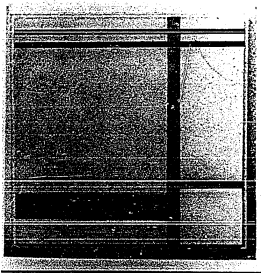


Fig. 96. Marlowe Moss. Untitled. In Abstraction-Création, no. 4, 1935.



Fig. 97. Piet Mondrian.
Composition with Red, Yellow
and Blue. 1935-42. Oil

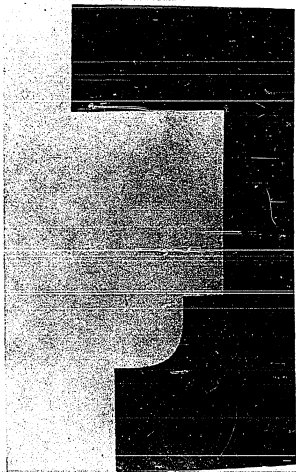


Fig. 98.
Wladyslaw Strezeminski.
Architectural
Composition. 1928. Oil.
In Abstraction-
Création, no. 1, 1932.

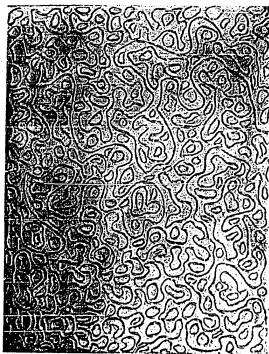


Fig. 99. Wladyslaw Strzeminski. Unistic Composition 12.
c. 1932. Oil. In Abstraction-Création, no. 4, 1935.

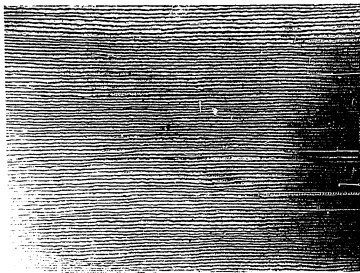


Fig. 100. Wladyslaw Strzeminski. Unistic Composition.
1933. In Abstraction-Création, no. 2, 1933.

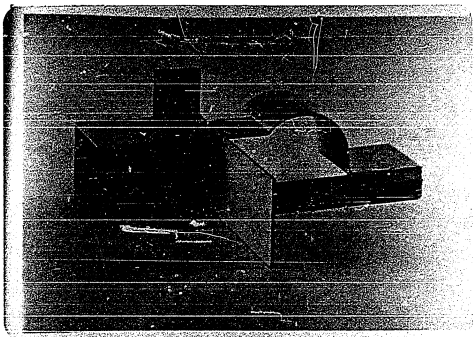


Fig. 101. Katarzyna Kobro. Space Composition 8.
1932. Painted steel. In Abstraction-Création, no. 4, 1935.

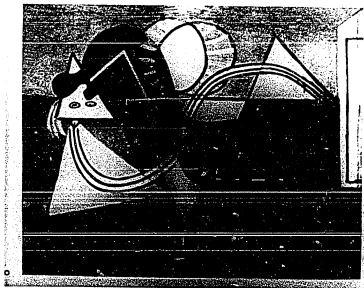


Fig. 102. Pablo Picasso. Bather. Oil. Illustrated in
Abstraction-Création, no. 4, 1935.



Fig. 103. Domela, Nelly Van Doesburg, Arp and Pevsner at Domela's opening, Galerie Pierre, 1934.

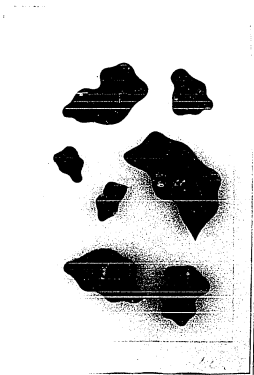


Fig. 104. Jean Arp. Constellation. 1933. Collage and crayon.

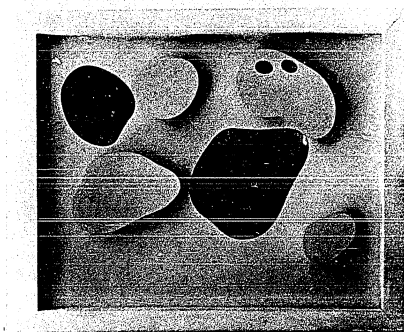


Fig. 105. Jean Arp. Configuration. 1930. Wood relief.



Fig. 106. Vuillamy. Untitled. 1933. In Abstraction-Création, no. 3, 1934.

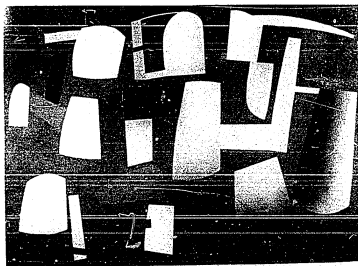


Fig. 107. Jean Hélion. Équilibre. 1934. Oil.



Fig. 108. Jean Hélion. La Bande Verte. 1936. Oil.

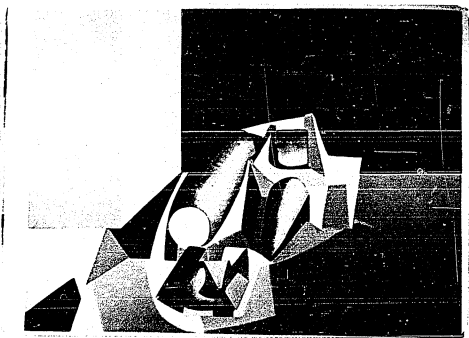


Fig. 109. Jean Hélion. Figure Tombée. 1939. Oil.



Fig. 110. A. Beaudin. Le Parc. 1930. From Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 4, 1930.



Fig. 111. G.H. Roux. Les Coquettes. From Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 4, 1930.



Fig. 112. F. Borès. Dimanche Après-midi. From Cahiers d'Art, V, no. 4, 1930.

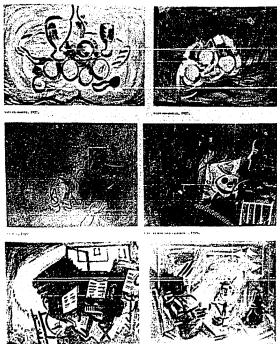


Fig. 113. F. Borès. Page of illustrations in Cahiers d'Art, IV, nos. 8-9, 1929.

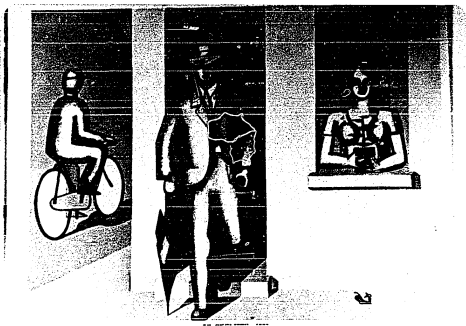


Fig. 114. Jean Hélion. Au Cycliste. 1939. Oil



Fig. 115. Jean Hélion. Heads of Émile. 1939. Oil.



Fig. 116. Arshile Gorky. Untitled. 1931-2. In Abstraction-Création, no. 3, 1934.