

17

International Abstraction Between the Wars

Previous chapters have already extensively explored much of the art produced in Europe following World War I, from the de Stijl movement in the Netherlands and Constructivism in Russia (see chapter 11) to the New Objectivity in Germany (see chapter 13) and International Style architecture in Europe and America (see chapter 16). In France, the traumatic upheavals of war produced two powerful but seemingly opposing results—the angst-laden inventions of Surrealism (see chapter 15) and the enduring tradition of classically inspired figurative art (see chapter 14). Paris at this time was also home to the more meditative and formally more radical art of several leading abstract artists, such as the Constructivist sculptor Anton Pevsner and the de Stijl painter Piet Mondrian. Compared to the enduring appeal of classicism and the sensationalism of the Surrealists, abstract art received only limited recognition—Mondrian, for instance, could survive only by painting and selling flower pictures.

After World War I, as the map of Europe was redrawn by the 1919 treaty of Versailles, there was tremendous movement of people across national borders. This resulted in fertile artistic meeting grounds in cities such as Berlin and Paris, which culminated in artistic collaborations such as the Bauhaus in Weimar. Abstraction of an uncompromising sort—especially geometric abstraction—led a migratory, even refugee, existence between the two world wars. After 1921, as official Soviet policy in the arts shunned avant-garde experiments in favor of a more conservative, propagandistic idiom, the mystical Kandinsky and many of the utopian-minded Constructivists fled to the West. In 1930 and 1931 the first-ever groups of artists devoted exclusively to abstract art in all its manifestations were formed in Paris: Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création; most of their members were not French. When the original ideals of Russian Constructivism, along with those of Dutch de Stijl, finally found a home, it was at the Bauhaus, which, despite its universalist aspirations and subsequent international influence, was a provincial German outpost (see chapter 16). When, after the Bauhaus closed under Nazi suppres-

sion in 1933, Kandinsky moved to Paris, and Naum Gabo took Constructivism to London in 1936, utopianism seemed once again to have proved futile. In the face of the Great Depression in the United States, the Moscow show trials set up by Stalin to eliminate potential opponents, the Spanish Civil War, and the rise of Nazism, many abstract artists abandoned their earlier visions of art in the service of revolution. During the twenties and thirties, meanwhile, the pioneer abstractionists—Gabo, Pevsner, Kandinsky, Mondrian, and the intermittently abstract Klee—grown tough on adversity and indifference, worked quietly but productively apart from the vociferous antics of Breton's Surrealist crowd in Paris.

“The Core from which Everything Emanates”: International Constructivism and the Bauhaus

Moholy-Nagy

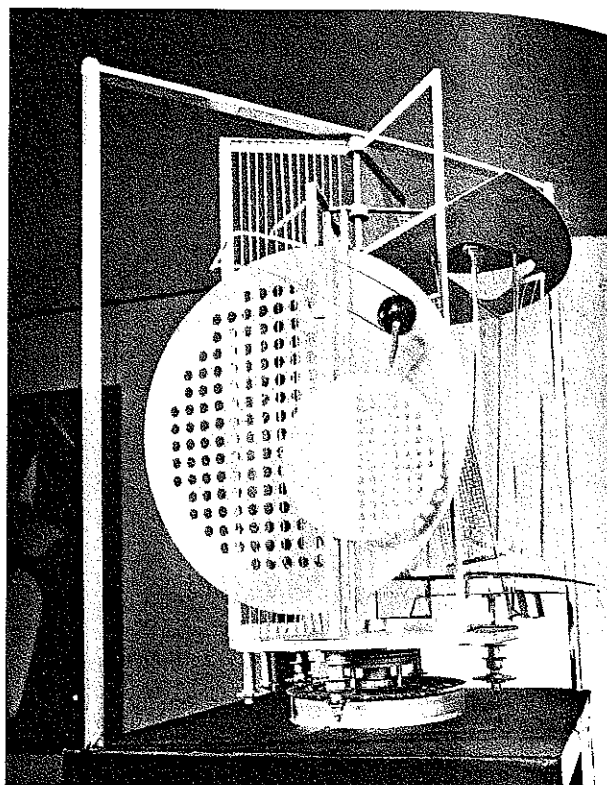
László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) was an important educator and advocate for abstract art, Constructivism, functional design, architecture, and, especially, experimental photography. A Hungarian trained in law, Moholy-Nagy was wounded on the Russian front during World War I, when Austria-Hungary fought—and was ultimately defeated—as part of the Central Powers. During his long convalescence, Moholy-Nagy became interested in painting. In the tumultuous years following the war, the political Left gained momentum in Hungary, resulting in a short-lived revolutionary government until 1919. By the end of that year, with the restoration of a counter-revolutionary regime intolerant of intellectual dissent, Moholy-Nagy left Budapest, first for Vienna, then for Berlin. He soon became a significant force in the remarkably diverse artistic environment of postwar Berlin, which during the twenties was an international crossroads for members of the avant-garde. In Berlin, Moholy-Nagy met the de Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg, as well as the Dadaist Kurt Schwitters and other artists associated with Der Sturm

Gallery. His encounter with the work of avant-garde Russian artists, including Malevich (see fig. 11.19) and El Lissitzky (see figs. 11.20, 11.21, 11.22), triggered an immediate response in his own work, as did his discovery of Naum Gabo's *Realistic Manifesto*, which had been published in a Hungarian communist journal (see chapter 11).

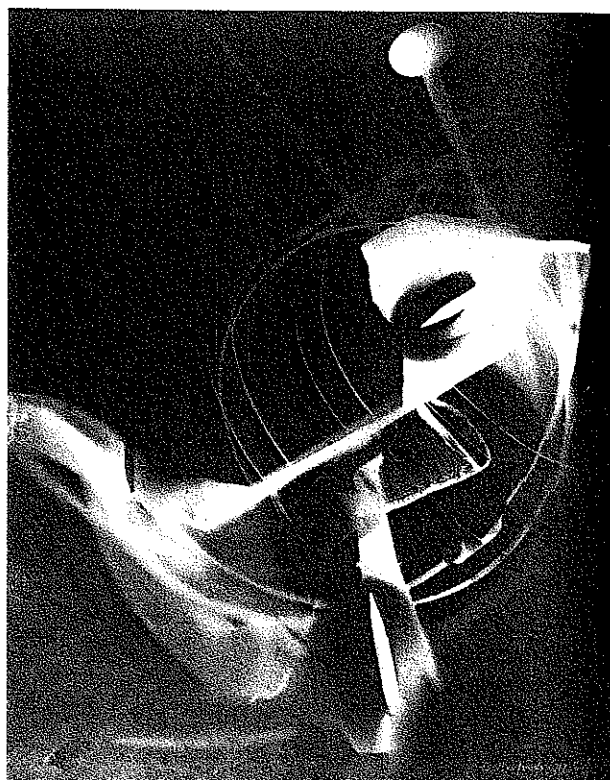
Moholy-Nagy met Bauhaus director Walter Gropius in 1922 at *Der Sturm*. He made such an impression that Gropius invited him to become a professor in the Weimar Bauhaus, where he taught the important foundation course with Josef Albers. A student, the photographer Paul Citroën (see fig. 17.4), described Moholy-Nagy's arrival: "Like a vigorous, eager dog, Moholy burst into the Bauhaus circle, ferreting out with unflinching scent the still unsolved, still tradition-bound problems in order to attack them." In sharp contrast to the intuitive, mystical teaching methods of his predecessor Johannes Itten, Moholy-Nagy, a committed exponent of the Constructivist alliance of art and technology, stressed objectivity and scientific investigation in the classroom. Until 1928 he was a principal theoretician in applying the Bauhaus concept of art to industry and architecture. Following Gropius's resignation that year, and the ensuing emphasis at the Bauhaus on practical training and industrial production over art and experimentation, Moholy-Nagy left the school. He eventually resided in Amsterdam and London, painting, writing, and making art in all media. In 1937 he was appointed director of the New Bauhaus in Chicago (now a part of the Illinois Institute of Technology). His two principal books, *The New Vision* and *Vision in Motion*, are major documents of the Bauhaus method. His stylistic autobiography, *Abstract of an Artist* (added to the English edition of *The New Vision*), is one of the clearest statements of the modern artist's search for a place in technology and industry.

By 1921 Moholy-Nagy's interests had begun to focus on elements that dominated his creative expression for the rest of his life—light, space, and motion. He explored transparent and malleable materials, the possibilities of abstract photography, and the cinema. Beginning in 1922, Moholy-Nagy pioneered the creation of light-and-motion machines built from reflecting metals and transparent plastics. The first of these kinetic, motor-driven constructions, which he named "light-space modulators," was finally built in 1930 (fig. 17.1). When the machines were set in motion, their reflective surfaces cast light on surrounding forms. During the twenties, Moholy-Nagy was one of the chief progenitors of mechanized kinetic sculpture, but a number of his contemporaries, including Gabo, Tatlin (see fig. 11.25), Rodchenko (see fig. 11.26), and, somewhat later, Alexander Calder (see fig. 17.29), were also exploring movement in sculpture. Moholy-Nagy's legacy can be found in the work of later artists who have exploited light as a medium, including Robert Irwin (see fig. 22.37) and Dan Flavin (see fig. 22.36).

Moholy-Nagy made abstract paintings, clearly influenced by El Lissitzky and Malevich, produced three-

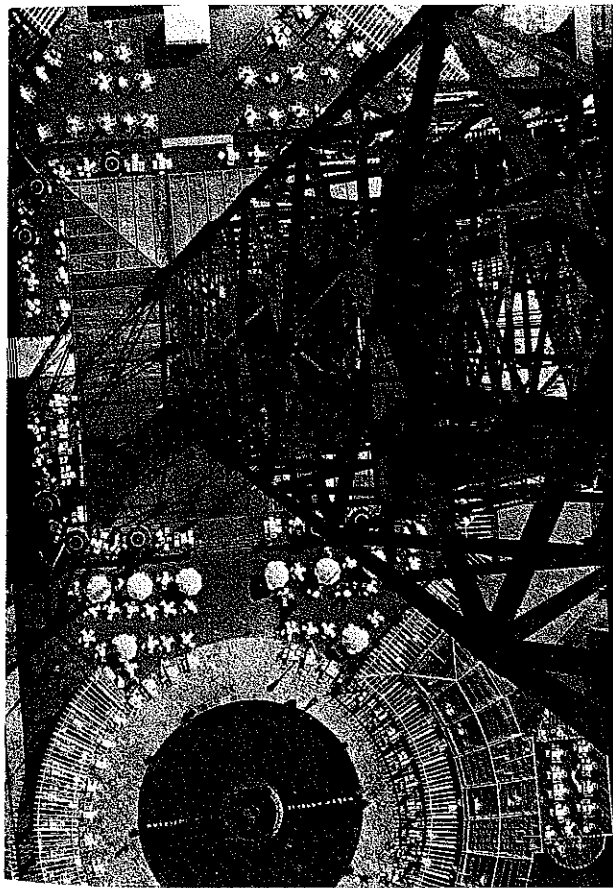


17.1 László Moholy-Nagy, *Light-Space Modulator*, 1922–30. Kinetic sculpture of steel, plastic, wood, and other materials with electric motor, 59½ × 27½ × 27½" (151.1 × 69.9 × 69.9 cm). Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



17.2 László Moholy-Nagy, *Untitled*, c. 1940. Photogram, silver bromide print, 20 × 16" (50 × 40 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago.

dimensional constructions, and worked in graphic design. Always alert to ways of exploring the potential of light for plastic expression, Moholy-Nagy also became an adventurous photographer. Apparently unaware of Man Ray's technically identical Rayograms, Moholy-Nagy developed his own cameraless images in 1922, just a few months after Ray. Both artists' discoveries attest to the highly experimental nature of photography in the twenties. Moholy-Nagy and his wife Lucia, who collaborated with him until 1929, called their works "photograms" (fig. 17.2). However, unlike Man Ray, with his interest in the surreality of images discovered by automatic means, Moholy-Nagy remained true to his Constructivist aesthetic and used the objects placed on light-sensitive paper as "light modulators"—materials for exercises in light. As in the example illustrated, the overlapping, dematerialized shapes of the photogram form abstract compositions that are set in motion purely by the manipulation of light. Moholy-Nagy regarded the camera as an instrument for extending vision and discovering forms otherwise unavailable to the naked eye. In the "new vision" of the world presented in his 1925 Bauhaus book *Malerei Fotografie Film (Painting Photography Film)*, the artist included not only his own photographic works but also scientific, news, and aerial



17.3 László Moholy-Nagy, *Untitled* (looking down from the Radio Tower, Berlin), c. 1928. Gelatin-silver print, 14¼ × 10" (36.2 × 25.6 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago, Julien Levy Collection.

photographs, all of them presented as works of art. In addition to the abstract photograms, he made photomontages and practiced straight photography. Like Rodchenko (see fig. 11.28), he was partial to sharply angled, vertiginous views that bring to mind the dynamic compositions of Constructivist painting. About his 1928 aerial view taken from Berlin's radio tower (fig. 17.3), itself a symbol of new technology, Moholy-Nagy wrote: "The receding and advancing values of the black and white, grays and textures, are here reminiscent of the photogram." To him, the camera was a graphic tool equal to any as a means of rendering reality and disclosing its underlying purity of form. And so he wrote in a frequently quoted statement: "the illiterate of the future will be ignorant of camera and pen alike."

Like the Dada artists, the Constructivists found photomontage a fertile process. Although they often produced effects similar to those of the Dadaists, the Constructivists' purposes in juxtaposing images—altogether various in context, subject, scale, proportion, and tonal value—were quite different. They usually related to propagandistic or formal problems, rather than to a search for dissonance, mystery, or subversion (see figs. 13.27, 13.28).

Citroën

Bauhaus photographer Paul Citroën (1896–1983) composed his famous 1923 photomontage *Metropolis* (fig. 17.4) by cutting and pasting. Within the large thirty-



17.4 Paul Citroën, *Metropolis*, 1923. Collage, printed matter, and postcards, 30 × 23" (76.2 × 58.4 cm). Printroom of the University of Leiden, the Netherlands.

by-forty-inch (76 × 101 cm) format, Citroën crushed together such a towering mass of urban imagery that Moholy-Nagy called it “a gigantic sea of masonry,” stabilized, however, by Constructivism’s controlling principle of abstract design.

Gabo

Following his departure from Russia in 1922, where the abstract art he had helped to evolve (see fig. 255) proved incompatible with the utilitarian policies of the Soviet regime, Naum Gabo (1890–1977) lived in Germany until 1932, perfecting his Constructivist sculpture and contributing significantly, though indirectly, to Moholy-Nagy’s ideas on light, space, and movement at the Bauhaus. Though not a member of the Bauhaus faculty, Gabo lectured there in 1928, published an important article in *Bauhaus* magazine, and was in contact with several Bauhaus artists. In 1922 eight of his sculptures were included in a huge exhibition of Russian art that traveled to Berlin and Amsterdam, helping to bring his work and that of other Russian abstract artists to an international audience. Like Moholy-Nagy, Gabo was a major practitioner of Constructivism in many media. At the same time, both artists demonstrated how the formal aspects of Constructivism were assimilated in the West without its political associations with the early, idealistic phase of communist revolution. As we saw in chapter 11, while Gabo sympathized with the initial aims of the revolution in Russia, he did not harness his art to specific ideas of collectivism and utilitarianism. Nevertheless, he shared Moholy-Nagy’s utopian belief in the transformative powers of art. He encouraged modern artists to look to technology and the machine for forms and materials to express appropriately the aims of the new social order.

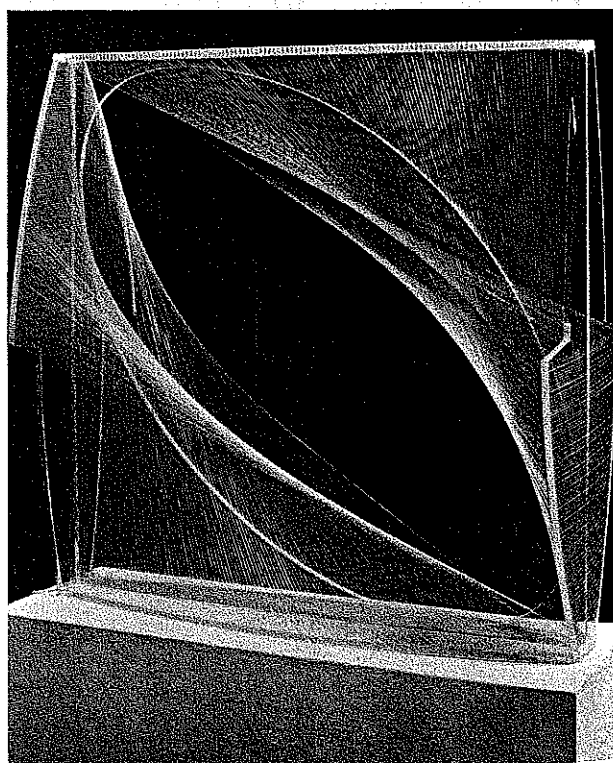
In Germany, Gabo continued the research he had begun in Russia. He explored the possibilities of new artistic media, particularly glass and recently developed plastic materials such as celluloid, to exploit a sense of planar transparency in his sculpture. For Diaghilev’s 1927 ballet *La Chatte*, Gabo and his brother Antoine Pevsner (see below) designed a set filled with large, geometric sculptures in a transparent material that shone, in the words of one observer, with “quicksilver radiance.” In 1931, Gabo took part in the international competition for the Palace of Soviets, a never-realized building that was to be a proud symbol in Moscow of the new Soviet Union. Several architects from the West also took part, including Le Corbusier and Gropius. Gabo, who had been searching for a form of architectural expression through his constructed sculpture, proposed a daring, winged structure of reinforced concrete.

In 1932, after Nazi stormtroopers came to his studio, Gabo left Germany for Paris, where he was active in the Abstraction-Création group, organized partly as an antidote to the influence of Surrealism. His next move was to England, where between 1936 and 1946 he was active in the circle of abstract artists centering on Herbert Read,

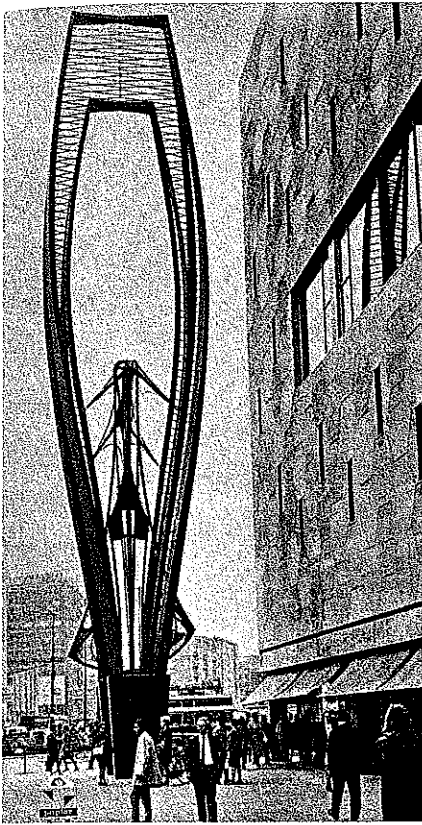
Ben Nicholson (see fig. 17.32), Barbara Hepworth (see fig. 17.36), and Henry Moore (see fig. 17.34). Thereafter Gabo lived in the United States until his death in 1977.

Gabo’s principal innovation of the forties was a construction in which webs of taut nylon string were attached to interlocking sheets of Perspex, a clear plastic first marketed in 1935 (fig. 17.5). Over many years, Gabo made several versions of *Linear Construction in Space, No. 1* on different scales. In these he attained a transparent delicacy and weightlessness unprecedented in sculpture. Like a drawing in space, the nylon filaments reflect light and gracefully articulate the void as positive form, transforming the space, according to Gabo, into a “malleable material element.” Though probably not a direct influence on Gabo, Henry Moore had created abstract sculptures incorporating tautly stretched string as of 1937, and Barbara Hepworth followed with her own examples a few years later (see fig. 17.36).

After emigrating to the United States in 1946, Gabo was able to realize his ambition to create large-scale public sculpture. His major architectural-sculptural commission was his 1956–57 monument for the new Bijenkorf department store in Rotterdam (fig. 17.6), designed by the Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer. The store was part of a massive postwar campaign to rebuild the city, which had been devastated by German bombs in 1940. Gabo’s solution for the busy urban site was a soaring, open structure consisting of curving steel shafts that frame an inner



17.5 Naum Gabo, *Linear Construction in Space, No. 1 (Variation)*, conceived 1942–43 (possibly executed 1948). Plastic and nylon thread, 24½ × 24½" (62.2 × 62.2 cm). The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.



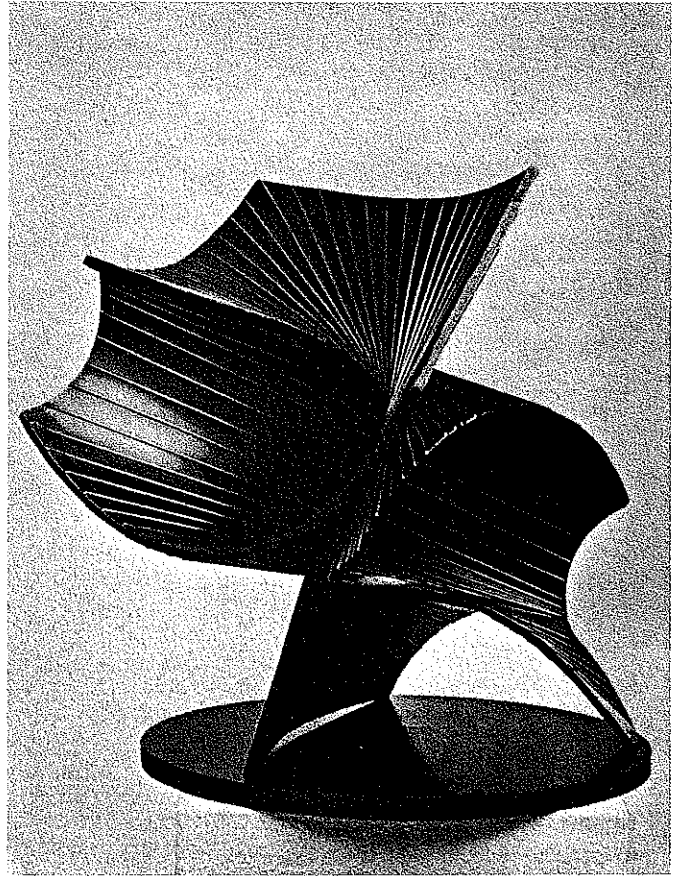
17.6 Naum Gabo, *Construction for the Bijenkorf department store, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 1956–57*. Pre-stressed concrete, steel ribs, stainless steel, bronze wire, and marble, height 85' (25.9 m).

abstract construction made of bronze wire and steel. Gabo likened the sculpture, with its tremendous weight anchored in the ground, to the form of a tree.

Pevsner

Unlike his younger brother Gabo, **Antoine Pevsner** (1886–1962) never taught at the Bauhaus, although he did, like Gabo, work within the Constructivist tradition. Pevsner left Russia in 1923 and settled permanently in Paris, where he exhibited with his brother in 1924. At this time he began to work seriously in abstract constructed sculpture. Commissioned by the Société Anonyme in 1926 (see chapter 13), his *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* is an open plastic construction with obvious connections to Gabo's *Constructed Head No. 1* of 1915. By the end of the twenties, however, Pevsner had nearly abandoned construction in transparent plastics in favor of abstract sculpture in bronze or copper. In 1932 he joined the Abstraction-Création group in Paris and, like Gabo, contributed to their journal.

In his 1938–39 *Projection into Space* (fig. 17.7), Pevsner realized his idea of “developable surface” or sculpture realized from a single, continuously curving plane. *Projection into Space* is polished bronze, not cast but hammered out to machine precision. Despite the geometric precision of his work, Pevsner denied any mathematical basis in its



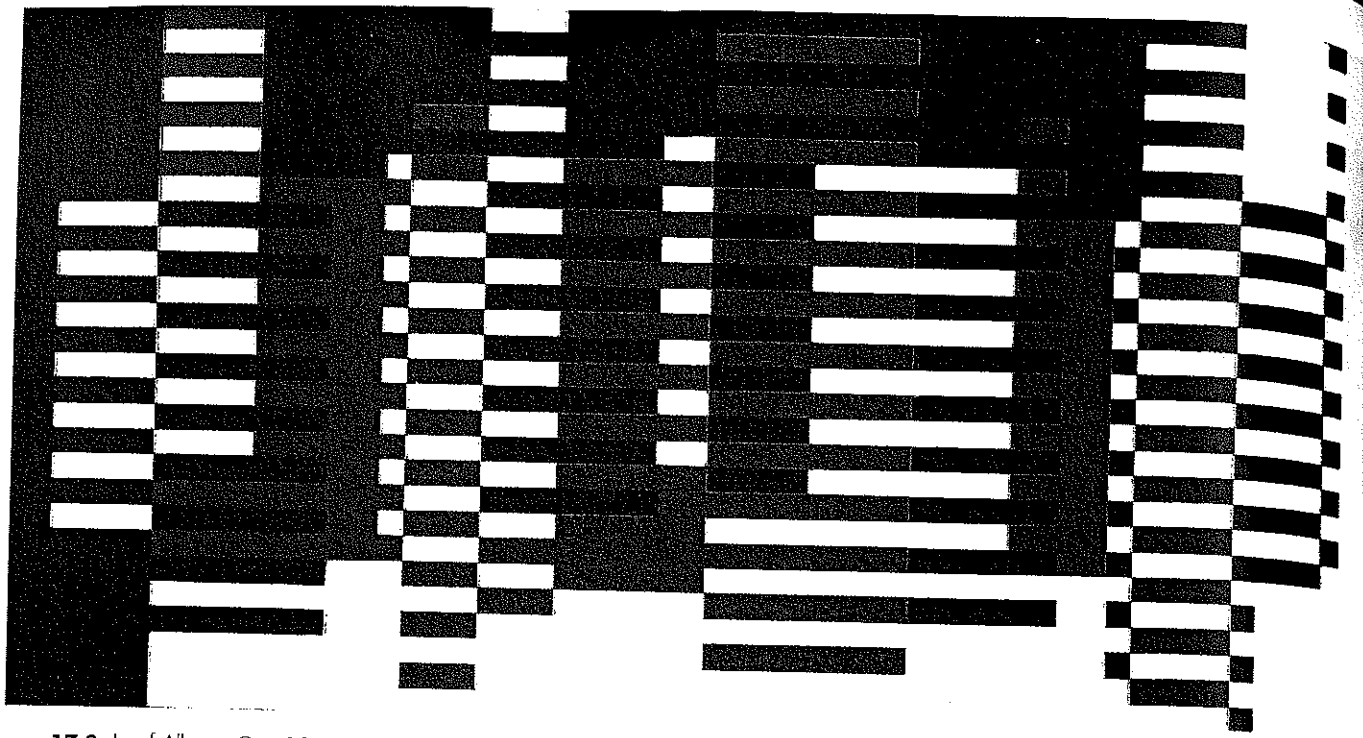
17.7 Antoine Pevsner, *Projection into Space, 1938–39*. Bronze and oxidized copper, 21½ × 15¾ × 19½" (54.6 × 40 × 50.2 cm). Private collection, Switzerland.

organization. The structure of *Projection into Space* invites viewing from multiple vantage points, carrying the eye of the spectator around the perimeter, while the dynamic, spiraling planes give the illusion of movement in a static design. This quality was explored in such Futurist sculptures as Boccioni's *Development of a Bottle in Space* (see fig. 11.9), but the elimination of all representation in Pevsner's work heightens the sense of dynamism.

Pevsner carried out several large architectural commissions. The *Dynamic Projection in the 30th Degree* at the University of Caracas, Venezuela, enlarged from a smaller bronze version, is more than eight feet (2.43 m) high. This sculpture centers around a sweeping diagonal form that thrusts out from the center at a thirty-degree angle from the compressed waist of the vertical, hourglass construction. In this form, Pevsner combines solidity of shape with the freedom of a vast pennant seemingly held rigid by the force of a tornado wind.

Albers

After Johannes Itten left the Bauhaus in 1923, the foundation course was given by Moholy-Nagy and German artist **Josef Albers** (1888–1976), each teaching in accordance with his own ideas. After studying widely in Germany, Albers entered the Bauhaus as a student and, in 1923, was

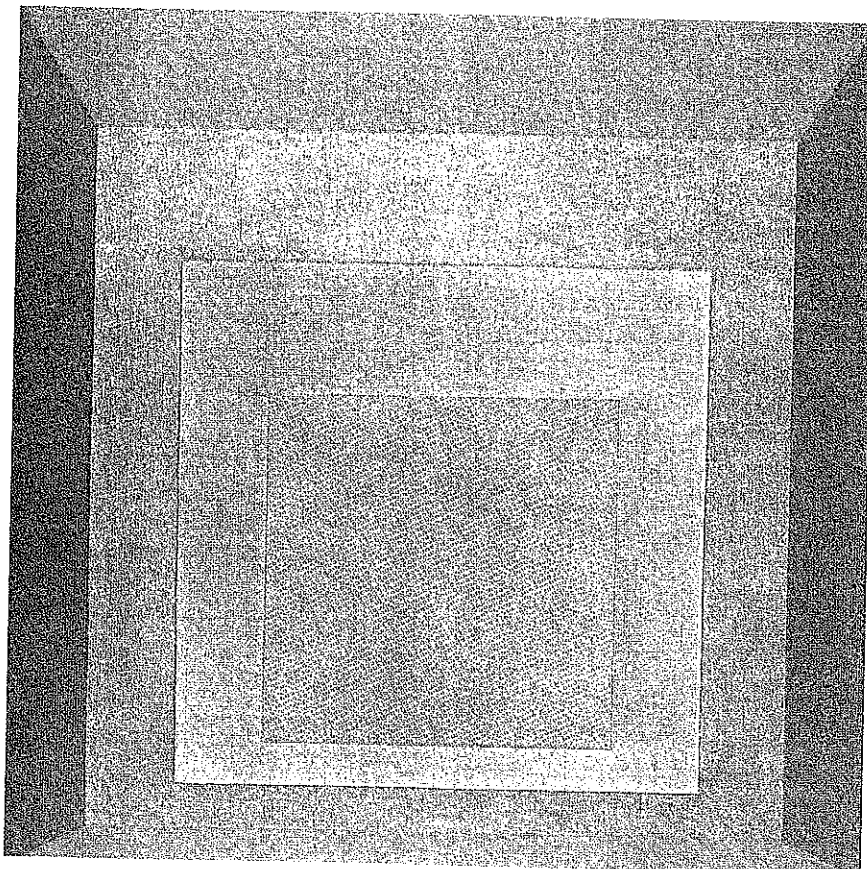


17.8 Josef Albers, *City*, 1928. Sandblasted colored glass, 11 × 21 1/2" (27.9 × 54.9 cm). Kunsthau, Zürich.

appointed to the faculty. While at the Bauhaus he met and married Anni Fleischmann, a gifted textile artist. In addition to his work in the foundation course, Albers taught furniture design and headed the glass workshop. He remained on the Bauhaus faculty until its closure in 1933, when he emigrated to the United States. Thanks to the efforts of the American architect Philip Johnson, then a curator at The

Museum of Modern Art in New York, Albers was offered a position at Black Mountain College, an experimental school in North Carolina. From the time of his arrival in 1933 he became a major influence in the training of American artists, architects, and designers. After leaving Black Mountain College in 1949, Albers continued to exert his influence on art students at Yale, where he taught from 1950 to 1960.

17.9 Josef Albers, *Homage to the Square: Apparition*, 1959. Oil on board, 47 1/2 × 47 1/2" (120.7 × 120.7 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Albers's early apprenticeship in a stained-glass workshop contributed to his lifelong interest in problems of light and color within geometric formats. In his glass paintings of the twenties one can observe the transition from organic, free-form compositions of glass fragments to grid patterns, as in *City* (fig. 17.8), in which the relations of each color strip to all the others are meticulously calculated. To create these compositions, Albers invented a painstaking technique of sandblasting and painting thin layers of opaque glass, which he then baked in a kiln to achieve a hard, radiant surface. The title of this work highlights its resemblance to an International Style skyline. In fact, Albers adapted this composition in 1963 for a fifty-four-foot-wide (16.4 m) mural, which he called *Manhattan*, that was commissioned for New York's Pan Am Building. The precise geometry and industrial methods of Albers's work had special relevance for the sixties, when impersonal, hard-edge Minimalism and Op art (see figs. 22.28, 22.41) were gaining momentum over the painterly emotionality of Abstract Expressionism.

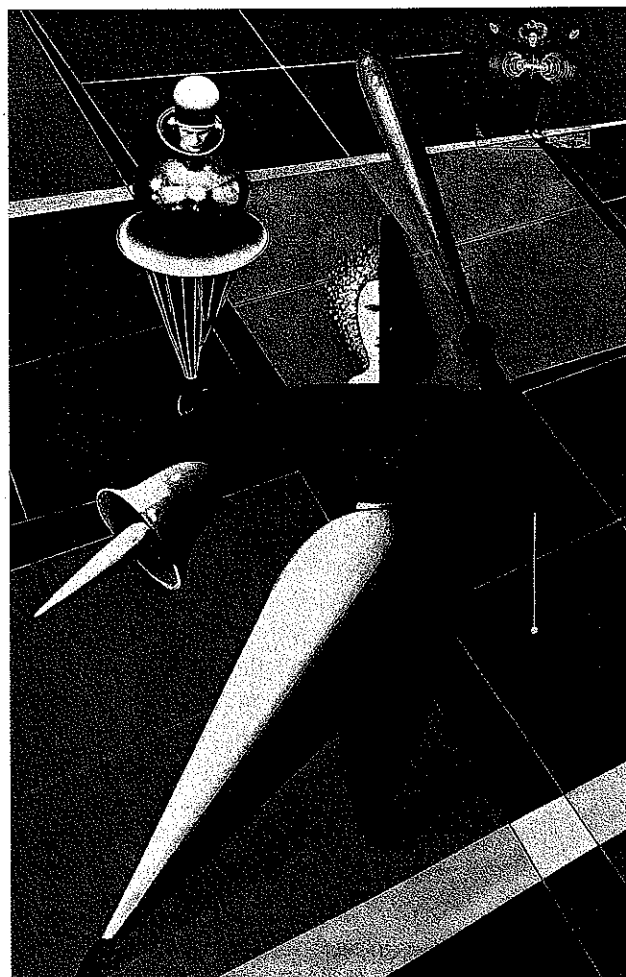
Throughout the forties, Albers developed his increasingly reductive vocabulary with remarkable assiduity, exploring issues of perception, illusionism, and the often ambiguous interaction of abstract pictorial elements. Beginning in 1950 he settled on the formula that he entitled *Homage to the Square*, where he relentlessly explored the relationships of color squares confined within squares. For the next twenty-five years, in a seemingly endless number of harmonious color combinations, Albers employed the strict formula of *Homage to the Square* in paintings and prints of many sizes. Within this format, the full, innermost square is, in the words of one observer, "like a seed; the heart of the matter, the core from which everything emanates." As *Apparition*, a 1959 *Homage to the Square* subtitle suggests (fig. 17.9), Albers's goal was to expose the "discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect." The interior square is not centered, but rather positioned near the bottom of the canvas. According to a predetermined asymmetry, the size of the color bands at the bottom is doubled on each side of the square and tripled at the top. By restricting himself to this format, Albers sought to demonstrate the subtle perceptual ambiguities that occur when bands of pure color are juxtaposed. Colors may advance or recede according to their own intrinsic hue and in response to their neighbor, or they may even appear to mix optically with adjacent colors. And by the painted miter effect, seen here on the outermost corners, the artist creates a sense of illusionistic depth on a flat surface.

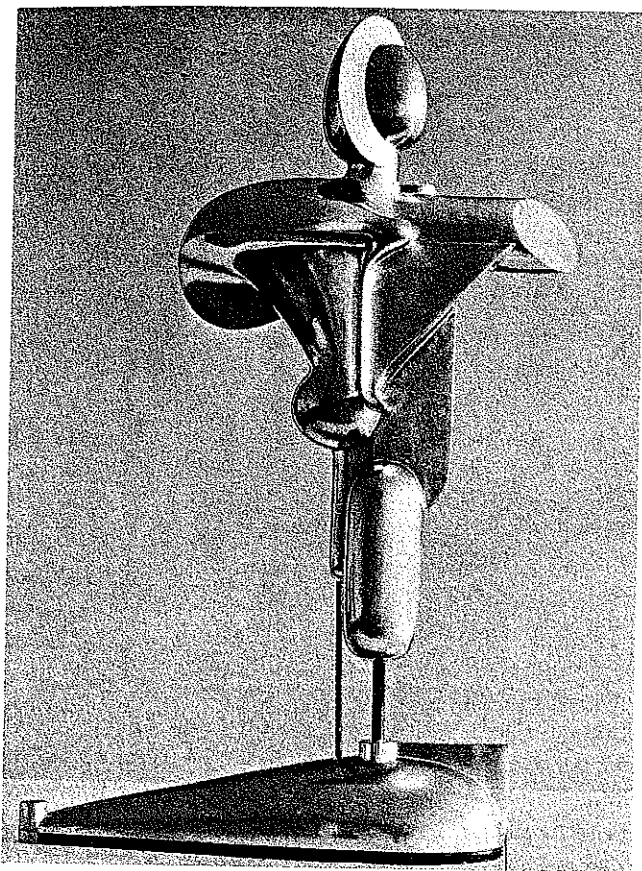
17.10 Oskar Schlemmer, *Study for The Triadic Ballet*, c. 1921–23. Gouache, brush and ink, incised enamel, and pasted photographs on paper, 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (57.5 × 37.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Schlemmer

German artist Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943) taught design, sculpture, and mural painting at the Bauhaus from 1920 to 1929. During his years at the Bauhaus, Schlemmer's real passion was theater. In 1923 he was appointed director of theater activities at the school. He then moved with the Bauhaus from Weimar to its new Dessau location in 1925 and set up the experimental Theater Workshop. Schlemmer's art—whether painting, sculpture, or the costumes he designed for his theatrical productions—was centered on the human body. While he applied the forms of the machine to the figure, he emphasized the need to strike a balance between humanist interests and the growing veneration at the Bauhaus for technology and the machine.

For his best-known performance, *The Triadic Ballet*, Schlemmer encased the dancers in colored, geometric shapes made from wood, metal, and cardboard. Designed to limit the range of the dancers' movements, the costumes transformed the performers into abstracted, kinetic sculptures. Indeed, for exhibition purposes, Schlemmer mounted his "spatial-plastic" costumes as sculptures. As can be seen in his collage *Study for The Triadic Ballet* (fig. 17.10), Schlemmer envisioned the stage as an abstract, gridded space through which the performers





17.11 Oskar Schlemmer, *Abstract Figure*, 1923. Bronze (cast 1962 from original plaster), 42½ × 26¾" (107 × 67 cm). Collection Frau Tut Schlemmer, Stuttgart.

moved according to mathematically precise choreography. The deep perspective space depicted here is similar to that of Schlemmer's paintings from this period. *The Triadic Ballet* was first performed in 1922 in the artist's native Stuttgart and was subsequently presented in several European cities.

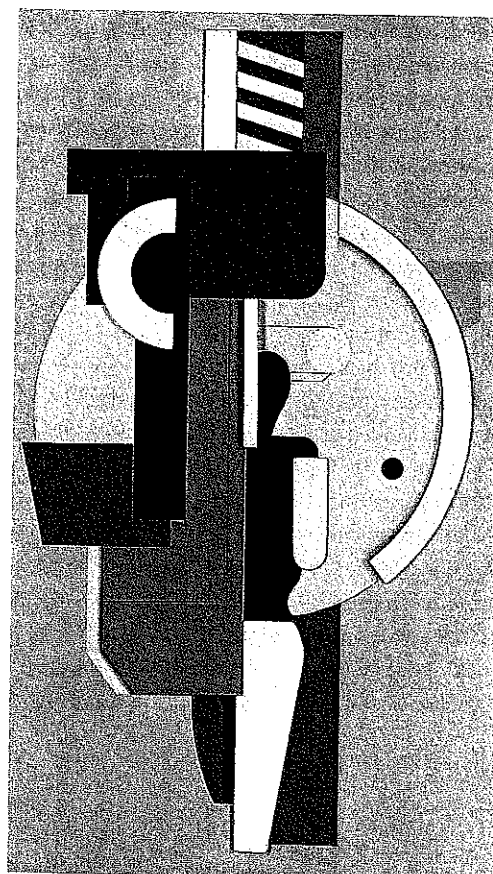
Most of Schlemmer's sculptures were polychromed relief constructions, but in 1923 he made two freestanding sculptures, one of which was the original plaster for *Abstract Figure* (fig. 17.11). For this large, imposing torso, Schlemmer sought the same clarity of form and geometric precision that he brought to his theatrical designs. With its gleaming surfaces and streamlined forms, the sculpture shines like the chassis of a new automobile.

Gropius's replacement as director, Hannes Meyer, increasingly politicized the curriculum at the Bauhaus and stressed practical, industrial training over artistic production. This trend eventually led to Schlemmer's resignation. Not long after Schlemmer left the Bauhaus in 1929, the Nazis destroyed the murals and wall reliefs he had executed for the workshop building at Weimar. Despite repeated Nazi assaults on his reputation for creating "degenerate" and "Bolshevist" art, Schlemmer remained in Germany until his death in 1943.

Baumeister

Like Schlemmer, Willi Baumeister (1889–1955) was a pupil of Adolf Hoelzel at the Stuttgart Academy. He collaborated with both artists on a mural project in 1914 and frequently exhibited with Schlemmer in Germany. Throughout the interwar years, he was in contact with an international group of artists ranging from Le Corbusier and Léger to Malevich and Moholy-Nagy. He exhibited in Paris in the twenties, and became a member of *Cercle et Carré* and *Abstraction-Création* during 1930 and 1931. Although he never served on the Bauhaus faculty, he associated with several artists at the school and contributed to its magazine.

Baumeister's mature work was affected by Cubism and Purism as well as by Schlemmer's machine-based figurative style. Following World War I, during which he served in the German army, Baumeister made a series of shallow relief constructions called *Mauerbilder* (wall pictures). In one example from 1923 (fig. 17.12), geometric forms surround a highly schematized figure. While some of these forms are painted directly on the wooden support, others are sections of wood that have been applied to the surface. A decade earlier, Archipenko, whose work was no doubt known to Baumeister, was experimenting with similar techniques in Paris (see fig. 10.30). With its futurist vision, Baumeister's composition is also reminiscent of



17.12 Willi Baumeister, *Wall Picture with Circle II*, 1923. Oil and wood on wood panel, 46½ × 27¾" (118 × 69 cm). Hamburger Kunsthalle.

Léger's great painting *The City* (see fig. 10.42). By the early thirties, organic shapes appeared among the artist's machine forms, evidence of his interest in the Surrealism of Joan Miró and the paintings of Paul Klee. In such works as *Stone Garden I*, Baumeister added a textural element by building up his surfaces sculpturally with sand and plaster. During the Nazi regime, when he was branded a "degenerate artist," Baumeister painted in secret, advancing his own ideas toward freer abstraction—ideograms with elusive suggestions of figures. These signs came from the artist's imagination, but were based on his studies of the art of ancient civilizations, such as Mesopotamia.

Klee

Introduced earlier in the context of *Der Blaue Reiter* (see chapter 8), Paul Klee (1879–1940) served in the German army in World War I immediately after the breakup of the group in 1914. In 1920 Gropius invited him to join the staff of the Bauhaus at Weimar, and he remained affiliated with the school from 1921 to 1931, an enormously productive period for Klee. Becoming a teacher prompted the artist to examine the tenets of his own painting. It also strengthened his resolve to discover and elaborate rational systems for the creation of pictorial form. He recorded his theories in his copious notes and in publications of great significance for modern art, including his 1925 Bauhaus book, *Pedagogical Sketchbook*.

Klee's art, as differentiated from that of Mondrian or even of Kandinsky in his later phase, was always rooted in nature and was seldom completely abstract. Klee's abstract works mainly date from his Bauhaus years, when he was especially close to Kandinsky and to the traditions of Russian Suprematism and Constructivism and Dutch *de Stijl*. He drew upon his great storehouse of naturalistic observations as his raw material, but his paintings were never based on immediately observed nature except in his early works and sketchbook notations. Yet even his abstract paintings have a pulsating energy that appears organic rather than geometric, seemingly evolved through a natural process of dynamic growth and transformation.

In both his teaching and his art, Klee wanted to bring about a harmonious convergence of the architectonic and the poetic. With their heightened emphasis on geometric structure and abstract form, Klee's paintings and drawings (he saw no need to distinguish between the two) from the Bauhaus years reveal formal influences from his Constructivist colleagues. Yet Klee was above all an individualist. However much he absorbed from the Bauhaus Constructivists, his poetic and intuitive inventions provided a counterweight to the more scientific and objective efforts at the school.

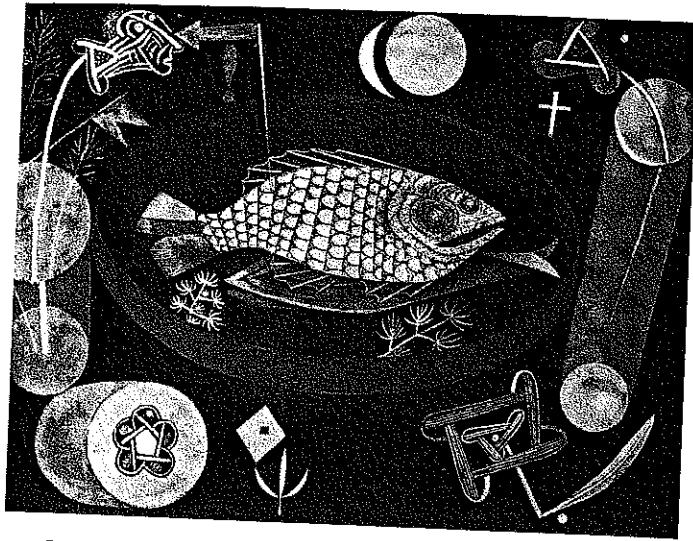
Like Mondrian and Kandinsky, Klee was concerned in his teachings and his painting with the geometric elements of the work of art—the point, the line, the plane, the solid. To him, however, these elements had a primary basis in nature and growth. It was the process of change from one

to the other that fascinated him. To Klee, a painting continually grew and changed in time as well as in space. In the same way, color was neither a simple means of establishing harmonious relationships, nor a method of creating space in the picture. Color was energy. It was emotion that established the mood of the painting within which the line established the action.

Klee saw the creative act as a magical experience in which the artist was enabled in moments of illumination to combine an inner vision with an outer experience of the world, to create an image that was parallel to and capable of illuminating the essence of nature. Although it grew out of the traditions of Romanticism and specifically of Symbolism (see chapter 3), Klee's art represented a new departure. He believed that his inner truth, his inner vision, was revealed not only in the subject, the color, and the shapes as defined entities, but even more in the very process of creation. To start the creative process, Klee, a consummate draftsman, would begin to draw like a child; he said children, like the insane and "primitive" peoples, had the "power to see." He let the pencil or brush lead him until the image began to emerge. As it did, of course, his conscious experience and skills came back into play in order to carry the first intuitive image to a satisfactory conclusion. At this point, some other association, recollection, or fantasy would result in the poetic and often amusing titles that then became part of the total work. Because he placed such value on inner vision and the intuitive process of drawing, Klee's methods and theories had affinities with the automatist techniques of the Surrealists, who claimed him as a pioneer and included his work in their first exhibition in Paris in 1925. When two leading Surrealists, Masson and Miró, discovered Klee's art in 1922, they regarded the experience as one of great importance for their own work.

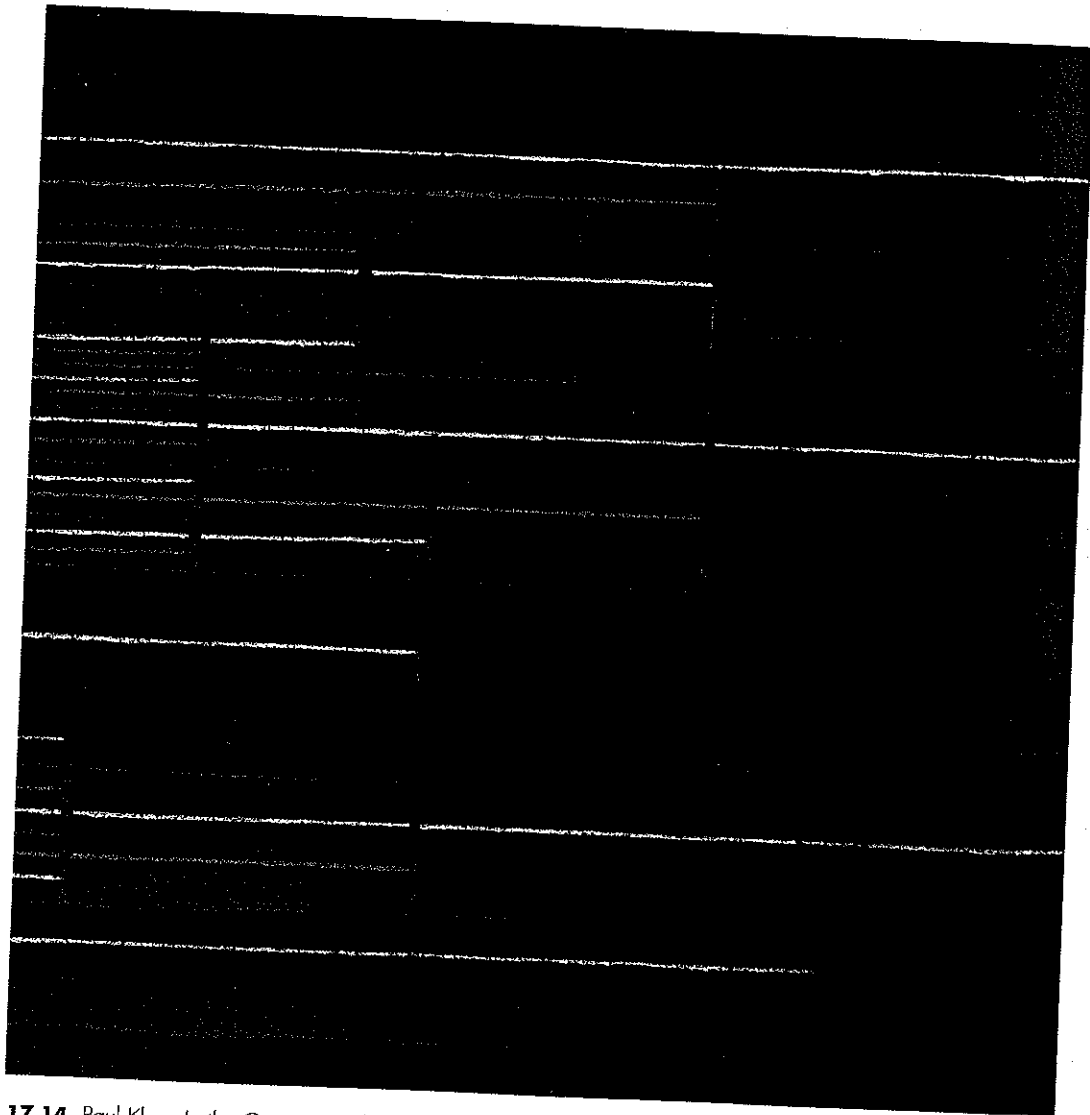
Klee discovered much of his iconography through teaching. As he used arrows to indicate lines of force for his students, these arrows began to creep into his work, where they are both formal elements and mysterious vectors of emotion. Color charts, perspective renderings, graphs, rapidly drawn heads, plant forms, linear patterns, checkerboards—elements of all descriptions became part of that reservoir of subconscious visual experience, which the artist then would transform into magical imagery. Usually working on a small scale in a deliberately naive rendition, Klee scattered or floated these elements in an ambiguous space composed of delicate and subtle harmonies of color and light that add mystery and strangeness to the concept. *Dance, Monster, to My Soft Song!* shows a mad-eyed, purple-nosed head on an infinitesimal body floating above a tiny pianist, a childlike drawing integrated with the most sophisticated gradations of yellow ocher and umber.

During the twenties, Klee produced a series of black pictures in which he used the oil medium, sometimes combined with watercolor. Some of these were dark underwater scenes where fish swam through the depths of the

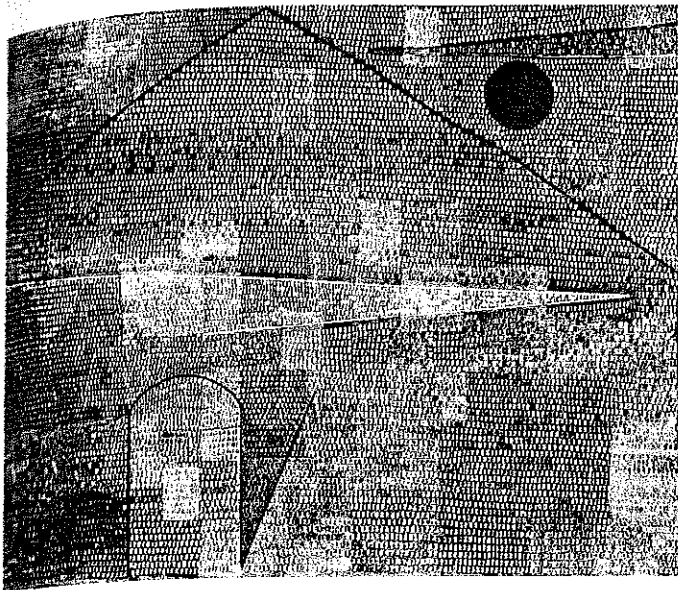


17.13 Paul Klee, *Around the Fish*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (46.7 × 63.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

ocean surrounded by exotic plants, abstract shapes, and sometimes strange little human figures. These works, including *Around the Fish* (fig. 17.13), are Surrealist in tone, embodying an arrangement of irrelevant objects, some mathematical, some organic. Here the precisely delineated fish on the oval purple platter is surrounded by objects: some machine forms, some organic, some emblematic. A schematic head on the upper left grows on a long stem from a container that might be a machine and is startled to be met head-on by a red arrow attached to the fish by a thin line. A full and a crescent moon, a red dot, a green cross, and an exclamation point are scattered throughout the black sky—or ocean depth—in which all these disparate signs and objects float. This mysterious, nocturnal still life typifies Klee's personal language of hieroglyphs and his use of natural forms merely as a point of departure into a fantastic realm. "The object grows beyond its appearance through our knowledge of its inner being," he wrote, "through the knowledge that the thing is more than its outward aspect suggests."



17.14 Paul Klee, *In the Current Six Thresholds*, 1929. Oil and tempera on canvas, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (43.5 × 43.5 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



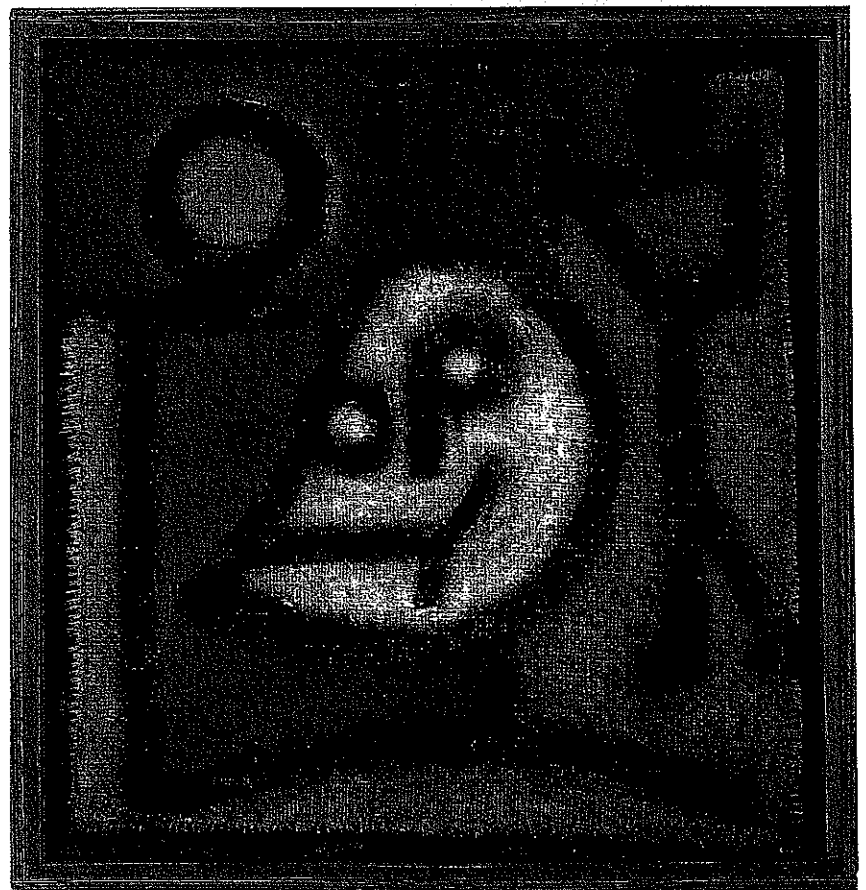
17.15 Paul Klee, *Ad Parnassum*, 1932. Oil and casein on canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 49 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (100 × 126 cm). Kunstmuseum Bern, Society of Friends of Kustmuseum Bern.

Made during Klee's Bauhaus years, *In the Current Six Thresholds* (fig. 17.14) is an arrangement of vertical and horizontal rectangles, in which gradations of deep color are contained within precisely ruled lines. Yet the total effect is organic rather than geometric, dynamic rather than static, with the bands continuing to divide as they move leftward. This and several similar abstract compositions of brilliantly colored strata were inspired by Klee's trip to Egypt in 1928–29 and are a response to the vast expanse and intense light of the desert landscape. Most of Klee's paintings were in combinations of ink and watercolor, media appropriate to the delicate quality of fluidity that he sought; but this particular work combines oil and tempera, media he used to obtain effects of particular richness and density.

Desiring more time for his art and frustrated by the demands of teaching and the growing politicization within the Dessau Bauhaus, Klee left the school in 1931 and took a less demanding position at the Dusseldorf Academy. During the early thirties, he applied his own variety of Neo-Impressionism in several compositions, culminating in a monumental painting from 1932, *Ad Parnassum* (fig. 17.15). Klee covered the canvas with patterns of thick, brightly colored daubs of paint. These are marshaled

into distinctive forms by way of a few strong lines that conjure up a pyramid beneath a powerful sun. Like Kandinsky, Klee believed that pictorial composition was analogous to music and that sound can "form a synthesis with the world of appearances." Both he and his wife were musicians, and he applied the principals of musical composition, with all its discipline and mathematical precision, to his paintings and to his teaching. The title of this majestic work derives from a famous eighteenth-century treatise on musical counterpoint called, in Latin, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (*Stairway to Parnassus*), Parnassus being a mountain sacred to the Greek god Apollo and the Muses. Klee orchestrated color and line in his painting according to his own system of pictorial polyphony, creating a luminous, harmonious vision aimed at elevating the viewer into a higher, Parnassian realm.

In 1933, the year Hitler assumed power in Germany, Klee was dismissed from his position at the Dusseldorf Academy and returned to his native Bern in Switzerland. Figures, faces (sometimes only great peering eyes), fantastic landscapes, and architectural structures (sometimes menacing) continued to appear in his art during the thirties. Perhaps the principal characteristic of Klee's late works was his use of bold and free black linear patterns against a colored field. One of his last works, *Death and Fire* (fig. 17.16), 1940, is executed with brutal simplicity, thinly painted on an irregular section of rough burlap. The rudimentary drawing, like the scrawl of a child, delineates



17.16 Paul Klee, *Death and Fire*, 1940. Oil drawing in black paste on burlap, surrounded by colored paste ground, mounted on burlap, 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (46 × 43.8 cm). Kunstmuseum Bern.

a harrowing, spectral image, expressive perhaps of the burdens of artistic isolation, debilitating illness, and the imminent threats of war and totalitarianism. Unlike so many other members of the European avant-garde, Klee, who died within months of the war's outbreak, did not emigrate to the United States. However, his work became known to American audiences and especially to American artists through several exhibitions held throughout the thirties and forties.

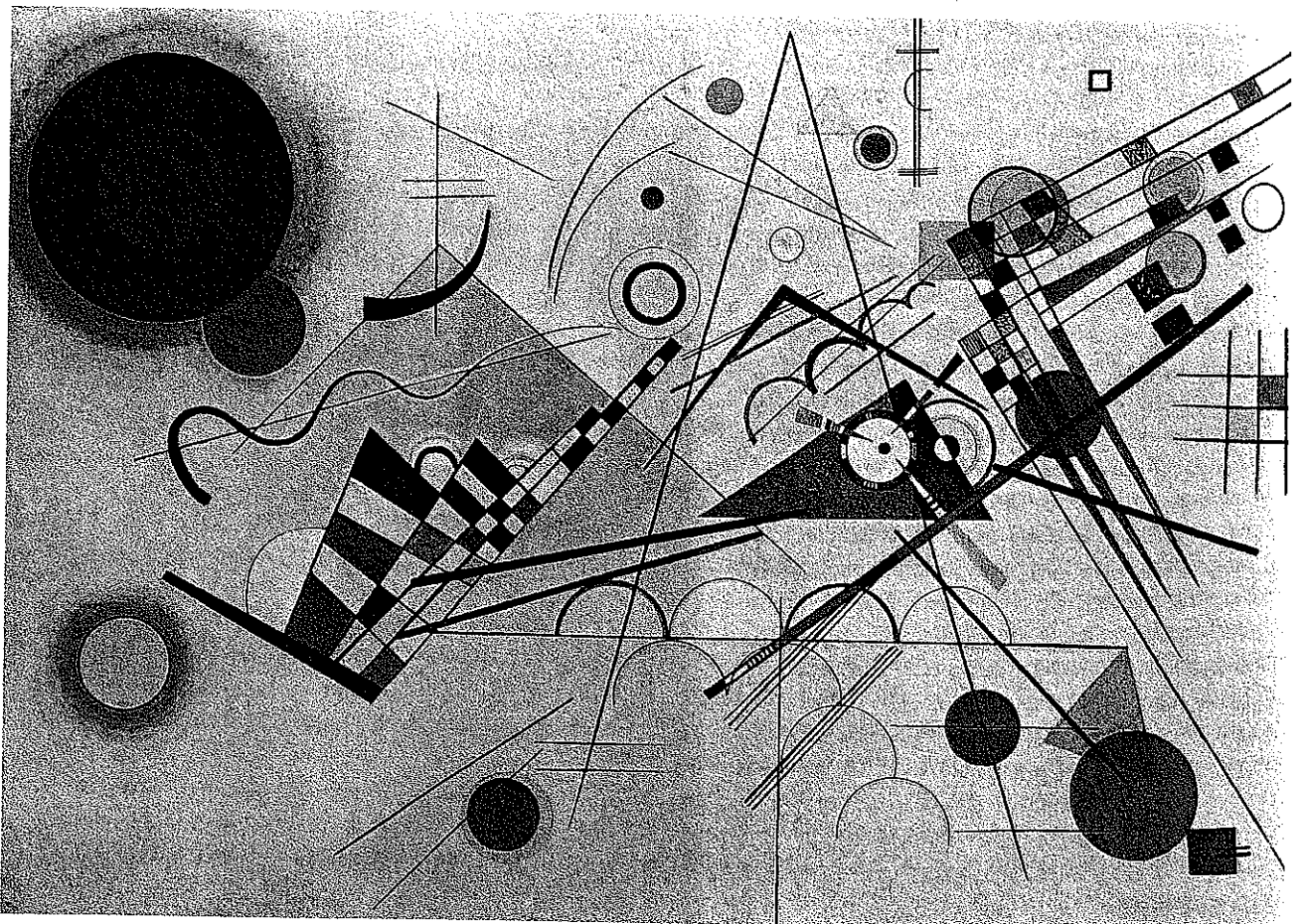
Kandinsky

Vasily Kandinsky (1866–1944) renewed his friendship with Klee when he returned to Germany from Russia in 1921, and in 1922 he joined the Weimar Bauhaus. One of the school's most distinguished faculty members, he taught a course called Theory of Form and headed the workshop of mural painting (regarded as superior to traditional easel painting at the school). Kandinsky's style underwent significant changes during his tenure at the Bauhaus. While he still adhered to the mystical Theosophical beliefs expressed in his seminal book from 1911, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, he had come to value form over color as a vehicle for expression, and his paintings evolved toward a more objective formal vocabulary. Even before coming to the Bauhaus, under the influence of Russian Suprematism

and Constructivism, Kandinsky's painting had turned gradually from free expressionism to a form of geometric abstraction. This evolution is evident in *White Line, No. 232* (see fig. 11.23), a painting Kandinsky made in 1920 while still in Russia, which, despite expressive brushwork, contains clearly defined geometric and organic forms.

By 1923, in *Composition VIII* (fig. 17.17), hard-edged shapes had taken over. As discussed in chapter 8, Kandinsky regarded the works that he named *Compositions* as the fullest expression of his art. Ten years had elapsed between *Composition VII*, 1913 (see fig. 8.18) and *Composition VIII*, and a comparison of the two paintings elucidates the changes that had taken place during this period. The deeply saturated colors and tumultuous collision of painterly forms in the 1913 picture are here replaced by clearly delineated shapes—circles, semicircles, open triangles, and straight lines—that float on a delicately modulated background of blue and creamy beige. The emotional climate of the later painting is far less heated than that of its predecessor, and its rationally ordered structure suggests that harmony has superseded the apocalyptic upheavals that inhabit the artist's prewar paintings.

Kandinsky fervently believed that abstract forms were invested with great significance and expressive power, and the spiritual basis of his abstract forms set him apart from

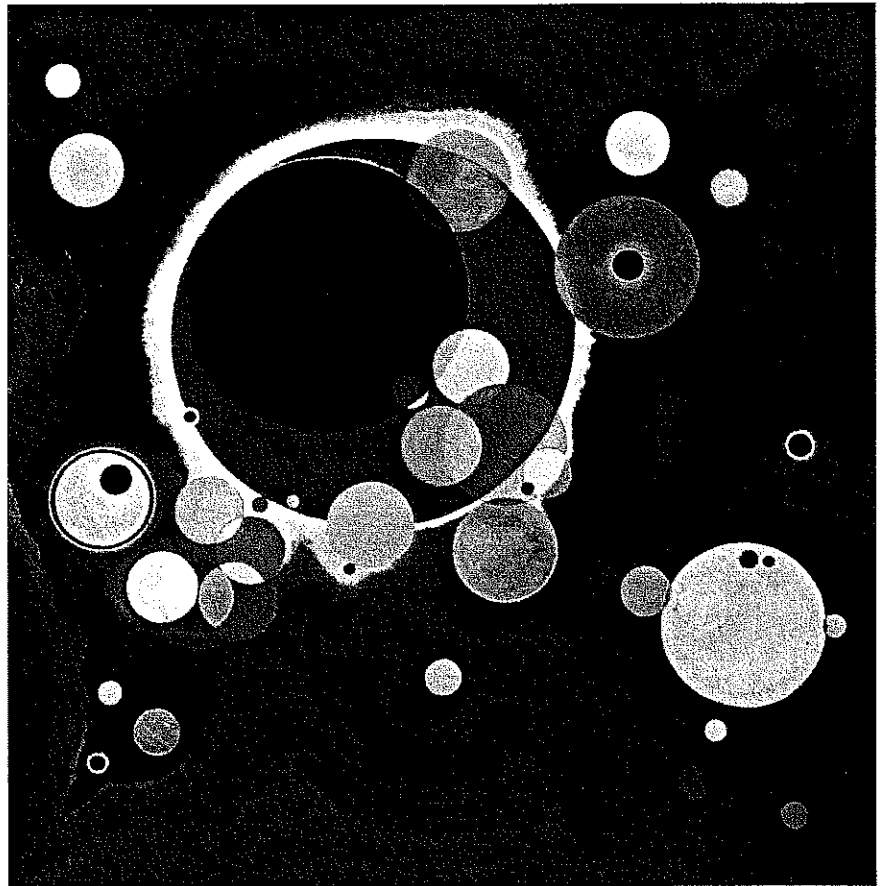


17.17 Vasily Kandinsky, *Composition VIII*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 55½ × 79½" (140 × 201 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

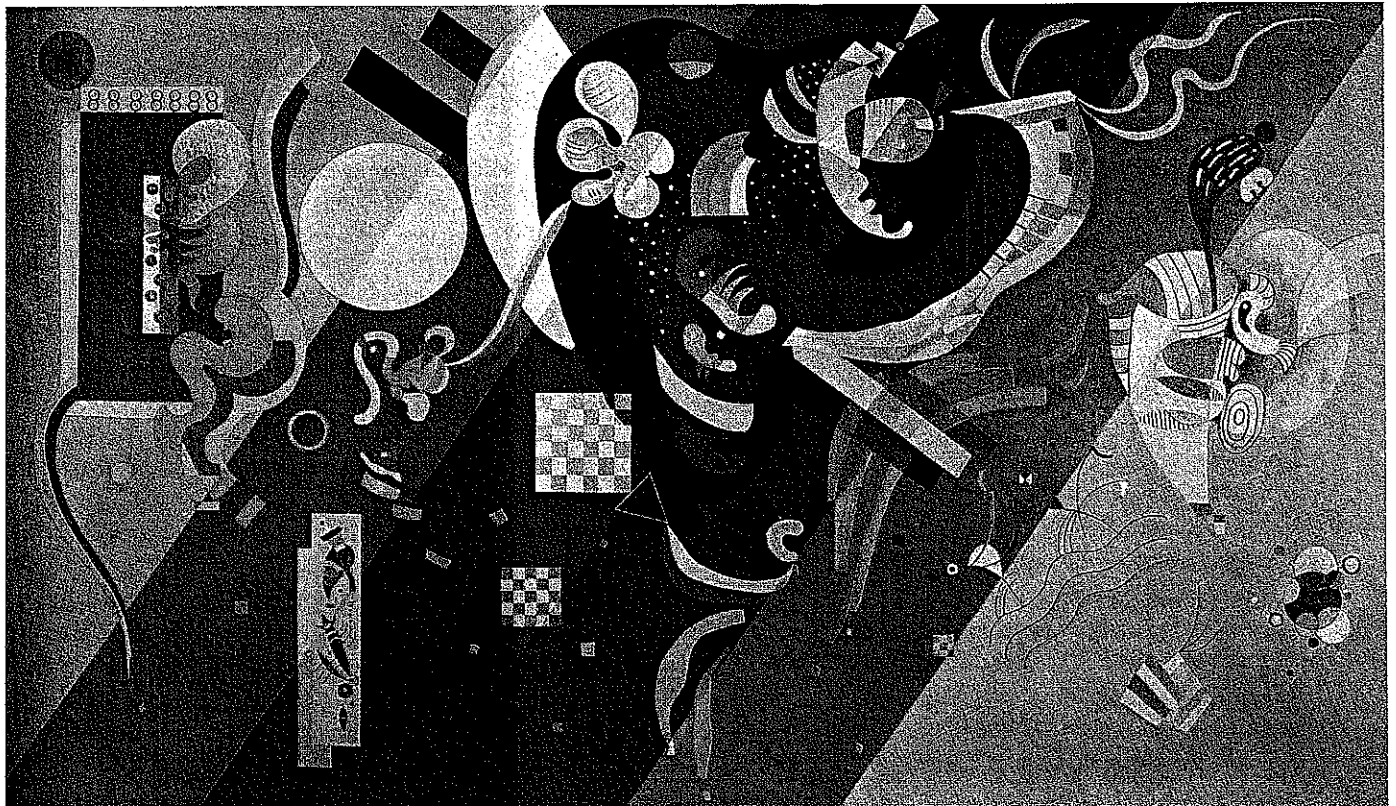
17.18 Vasily Kandinsky, *Several Circles*, No. 323, 1926. Oil on canvas, 55½ × 55½" (140 × 140 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Bauhaus teachers like Moholy-Nagy. "The contact of the acute angle of a triangle with a circle," he wrote, "is no less powerful in its effect than that of the finger of God with the finger of Adam in Michelangelo's [*Creation of Man*] painting." The circle, in particular, was filled with "inner potentialities" for the artist, and it took on a prominent role in his work of the twenties. In *Several Circles*, No. 323 (fig. 17.18), the transparent color circles float serenely across one another above an indeterminate, gray-black ground, like planets orbiting through space. It is hardly surprising that the artist revered the circle as a "link with the cosmic" and as a form that "points most clearly to the fourth dimension."

In 1926 Kandinsky published, as a Bauhaus book, *Point and Line to Plane*, his textbook for a course in composition. As compared with Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* of the previous year, Kandinsky's book attempts a more absolute definition of the elements of a work of art and their relations to one another and to the whole. Here the artist affirmed the spiritual basis



17.19 Vasily Kandinsky, *Composition IX*, No. 626, 1936. Oil on canvas, 3'8½" × 6'4¼" (1.13 × 1.9 m). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.



of his art, and his correspondence of the time reveals a combination of the pragmatic and the mystical.

Kandinsky continued his association with the Bauhaus until the school was closed in 1933. At the end of that year he moved permanently to Paris, where he was soon involved in the Abstraction-Création group, and became friendly with Miró, Arp, and Pevsner. This new environment heightened Kandinsky's awareness of the Surrealist activities of the twenties, and one senses certain qualities akin to abstract Surrealism in the many works created after his move to France.

In general Kandinsky moved toward freer, more biomorphic shapes and colors in the final years of his life. The lyrical, coloristic aspect of his painting began to resurface in Paris and to merge with the architectonic approach of his Bauhaus paintings. The edges of forms remained sharp, but their shapes seem to have emerged from a microscopic world. Such imagery probably stems from the artist's interest in biology and embryonic life forms as symbols of life and regeneration. In *Composition IX, No. 626, 1936* (fig. 17.19), one of his two final *Compositions*, Kandinsky geometrically structured the canvas by painting identical triangles at either end and, in between, a parallelogram subdivided into four smaller identical parallelograms. On this rigidly defined ground he scattered a free assortment of little dancing shapes: circles, checkerboard squares, long, narrow rectangles, and amoebalike figures. Kandinsky made his forms translucent—we can read ground colors beneath overlapping shapes—and his palette is a vivid array of candy-colored pastels. This device of playing small, free forms against a large geometric pattern intrigued the artist during these years. The contrast of freedom and control in Kandinsky's late work came from his lifelong concentration on the relations between intuitive expression and calculated abstract form.

A Determined Minority: Abstract Artists in Paris

During the twenties in France, abstract painting and sculpture were largely imported products, struggling for survival against the influences of the classical revival or "call to order" that swept the country between the wars; older modernists who worked in figurative modes (namely Matisse, Picasso, and the Cubist school painters); and the sensation created by the Surrealists. Of the Cubists, Robert Delaunay, one of the pioneers of abstraction (see fig. 10.43), turned to Cubist figuration, returning to abstract painting and sculpture only after 1930. Léger, too, painted a number of abstract architectural murals during the twenties, although he continued to be wary of pure abstraction (see chapter 10). The place of abstraction in France differed considerably from its centrality in German avant-garde production. Partly due to the Bauhaus, partly due to French artists' tenacious hold on their own classical traditions, Dutch de Stijl and Russian Constructivism and

Suprematism exerted far less influence in France than in Germany. When the de Stijl artists held an exhibition in 1923 at the gallery of Léonce Rosenberg, it aroused little general interest, although it had an immediate impact on Léger's work. Mondrian, then living in Paris, found no French buyers for his abstract work.

Groups and Journals

In 1925, the same year as the first Surrealist exhibition, a large exhibition of contemporary art was organized in Paris by a Polish painter, Victor-Yanaga Poznanski, at the hall of the Antique Dealers Syndicate. Among those included were Arp, Baumeister, Brancusi, the pioneer American abstractionist Patrick Henry Bruce, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Van Doesburg, Goncharova, Gris, Klee, Larionov, Léger, Miró, Moholy-Nagy, Mondrian, Ben Nicholson, Ozenfant, and Jacques Villon. The stated purpose of the exhibition was "not to show examples of every tendency in contemporary painting, but to take stock, as completely as circumstances permit, of what is going on in non-imitative plastic art, the possibility of which was first conceived of by the Cubist movement." Although there were obvious omissions, such as the Czech Kupka, one of the first abstract painters in Paris (see fig. 10.46), this was a surprisingly comprehensive showing of international abstract tendencies. In the face of the rising tides of representation and Surrealism, however, it did not attract wide attention. In addition, Albert Gleizes, a primary force behind the show, had hoped to demonstrate that Cubism was not only the great progenitor of the various forms of abstraction but was still a vital force in avant-garde art; instead, the late Cubists were overshadowed by the foreign innovators.

The next major development in the history of abstraction in Paris came in 1930, when Theo van Doesburg and the French artist Jean Hélion founded the group Art Concret, devoted to hard-edged abstraction, and the artist-critic Michel Seuphor and the Uruguayan painter Joaquín Torres-García founded a rival group and periodical entitled *Cercle et Carré* (Circle and Square). There were few French participants in the first exhibition of *Cercle et Carré*, held in April 1930 on the ground floor of the building in which Picasso lived. They included Arp (in favor with both Surrealists and many abstractionists), Baumeister, Jean Gorin (a new French disciple of Mondrian), Kandinsky, Le Corbusier, Léger, Mondrian, Ozenfant, Pevsner, Schwitters, the American Futurist Joseph Stella, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and Torres-García. Also shown, according to Seuphor, but not in the catalogue, were Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter, and Raoul Hausmann.

The periodical and the exhibition, although short-lived, had a considerable impact. Their impetus and their mailing lists were taken over by Vantongerloo and Auguste Herbin, upon the formation in 1931 of a comparable group, Abstraction-Création, with a periodical in 1932 of the same name. Abstraction-Création, both in its exhibitions

and its publications, was a force for abstract art until 1936, standing against the repressive regimes in Germany and Russia, which were inhospitable toward the innovations of the avant-garde. The group embraced a broad spectrum of abstract styles but lacked the shared utopian outlook that had unified members within the earliest groups devoted to abstraction. In the thirties, the rise of Nazism in Germany brought more practitioners of abstraction to Paris, where they joined artists from Russia, Holland, and other countries. By the mid-thirties, despite the general coolness of the French to geometric abstraction, Abstraction-Création sometimes had as many as four hundred members—from Suprematism, Constructivism, de Stijl, and their many offshoots.

Herbin

Auguste Herbin (1882–1960) had pursued a long, slow path toward abstraction through Fauvism and Cubism until 1920. During the early twenties he returned, like so many others, to representation, but by the end of that decade his work had again become abstract, remaining so until his death. Stimulated in part by the examples of Kupka (see fig. 10.46) and Delaunay (see fig. 10.44), and supported by his involvement with Abstraction-Création, Herbin devoted himself to an abstract syntax of curved lines and circular movements. Throughout the thirties he painted brightly colored arabesques in a flat, hard-edge style (fig. 17.20).

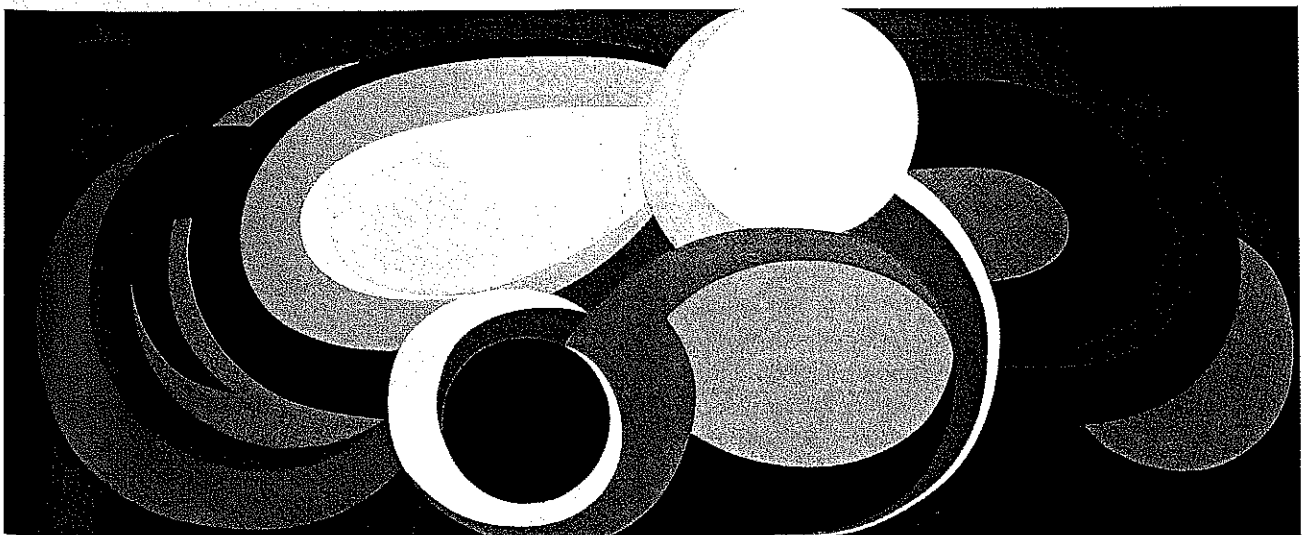
Mondrian

Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), whose evolution to pure abstraction through Cubism was discussed in chapter 11, lived in Paris between 1919 and 1938 and was by far the city's most influential figure in abstract painting. Although he did not take the initiative in the organization of Cercle et Carré or Abstraction-Création, his presence and participation were of the greatest significance for the growth and spread of abstraction. As already noted, he had resigned

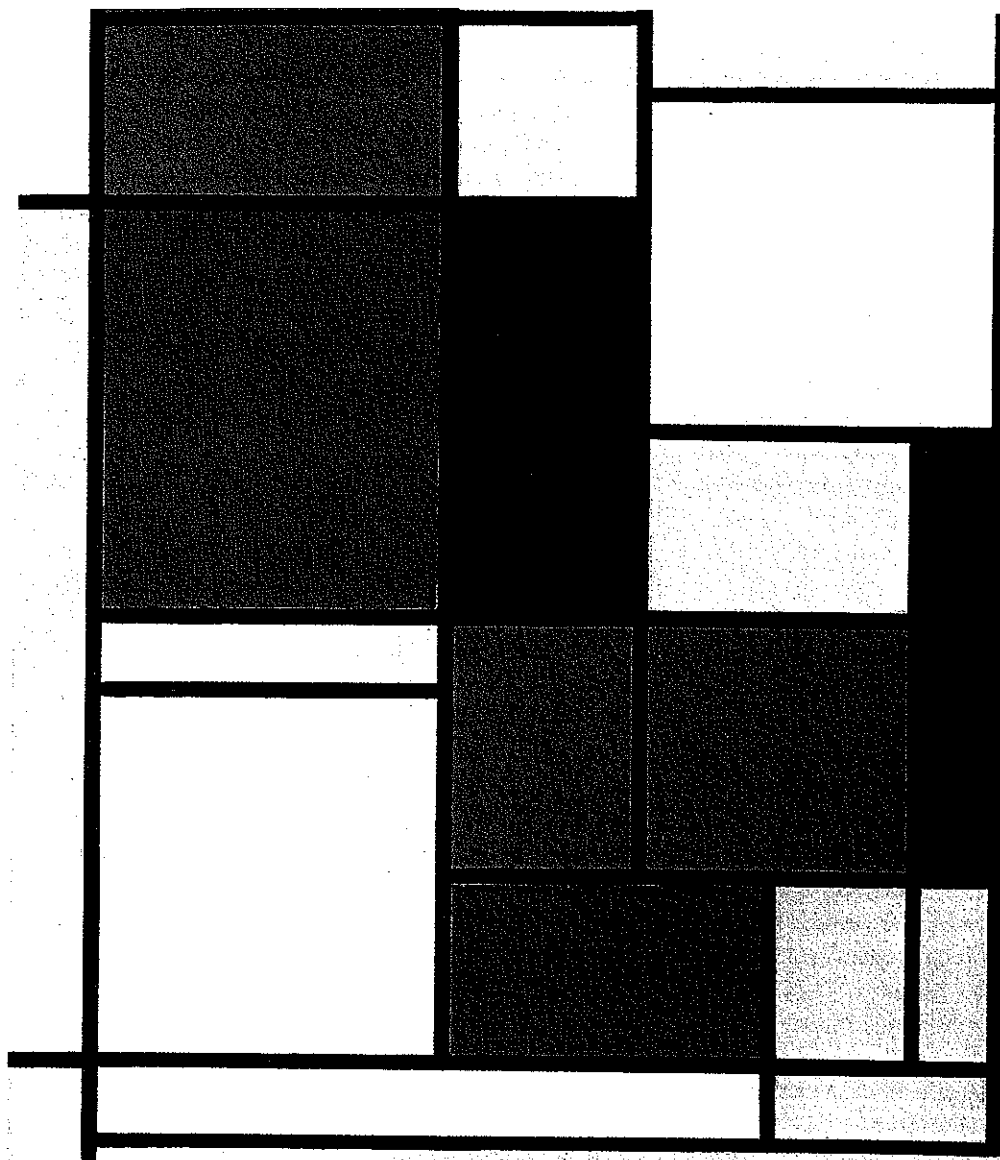
from de Stijl in 1925 after disagreements with Van Doesburg about the nature of de Stijl architecture (though the artists reconciled in 1929). While Mondrian envisioned, like his de Stijl colleagues, the integration of all the arts, he fervently believed, unlike some, in the superiority of painting. A prolific writer and theoretician, Mondrian fully formulated his ideas during the twenties and, in the last decade of his life, during which he moved from Paris to New York (where he died in 1944), he produced some of the greatest work of his career.

In evaluating the course of geometric abstraction from its beginnings, in about 1911, to the present time, an understanding of Mondrian's role is of paramount importance. He was the principal figure in the founding of geometric abstraction during World War I, for the ideas of de Stijl and their logical development were primarily his achievement. Mondrian's influence extended not only to abstract painting and sculpture but also to the forms of the International Style in architecture. Through the teachings of the Bauhaus in Germany and its offshoots in the United States, his theories were spread throughout the Western world. During the twenties and thirties in Paris it was probably the presence and inspiration of Mondrian more than any other single person that enabled abstraction to survive and gradually to gain strength—in the face of the revolution of Surrealism and the counterrevolution of representation, as well as economic depression, threats of dictatorship, and war.

In 1920, with his first full-fledged painting based on the principles of Neo-Plasticism (meaning roughly “new image” or “new form”), Mondrian had found his solution to a long unsolved problem—how to express universals through a dynamic and asymmetrical equilibrium of vertical and horizontal structure, with primary hues of color disposed in rectangular areas. These elements gave visual expression to Mondrian's beliefs about the dynamic opposition and balance between the dual forces of matter



17.20 Auguste Herbin, *Composition*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 18½ × 43½" (47 × 109.9 cm). Private collection.



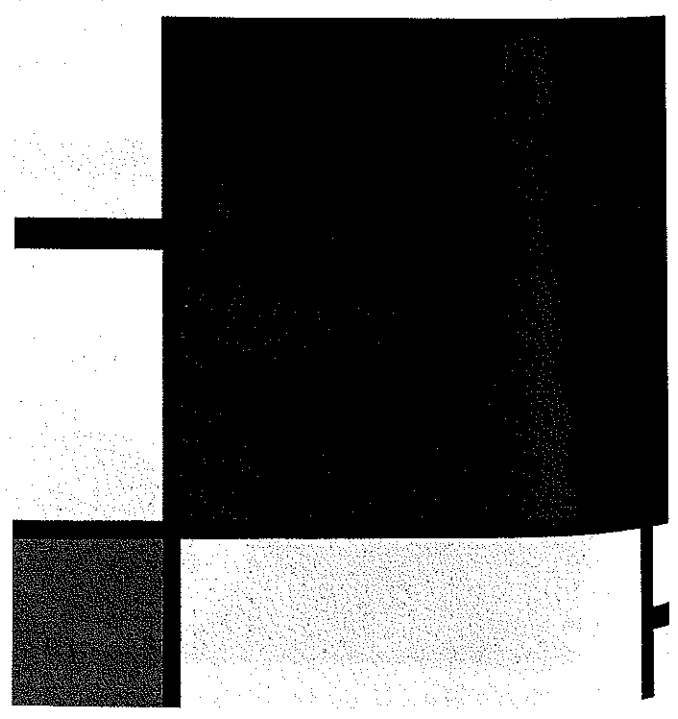
17.21 Piet Mondrian, *Tableau II*, 1921–25. Oil on canvas, 29½ × 25½" (74.9 × 65.1 cm). Private collection.

17.22 Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 20½ × 20½" (51.1 × 51.1 cm). Collection The Fukuoka City Bank Ltd., Japan.

and spirit, theories that grew out of his exposure to Theosophy and the dialectical theories of the early nineteenth-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. It was only through the pure "plastic" expression of what Mondrian called the "inward" that humans could approach "the divine, the universal."

In his painting, Mondrian was disturbed by the fact that, up to this point, in most of his severely geometric paintings—including the floating color-plane compositions and the so-called grid or checkerboard paintings—the shapes of red, blue, or yellow seemed to function visually as foreground forms against a white and gray background (see fig. 11.34) and thus to interfere with total unity. The solution, he found, lay in making the forms independent of color, with heavy lines (which he never thought of as lines in the sense of edges) moving through the rectangles of color. By this device he was able to gain a mastery over color and space that he would not exhaust for the next twenty years.

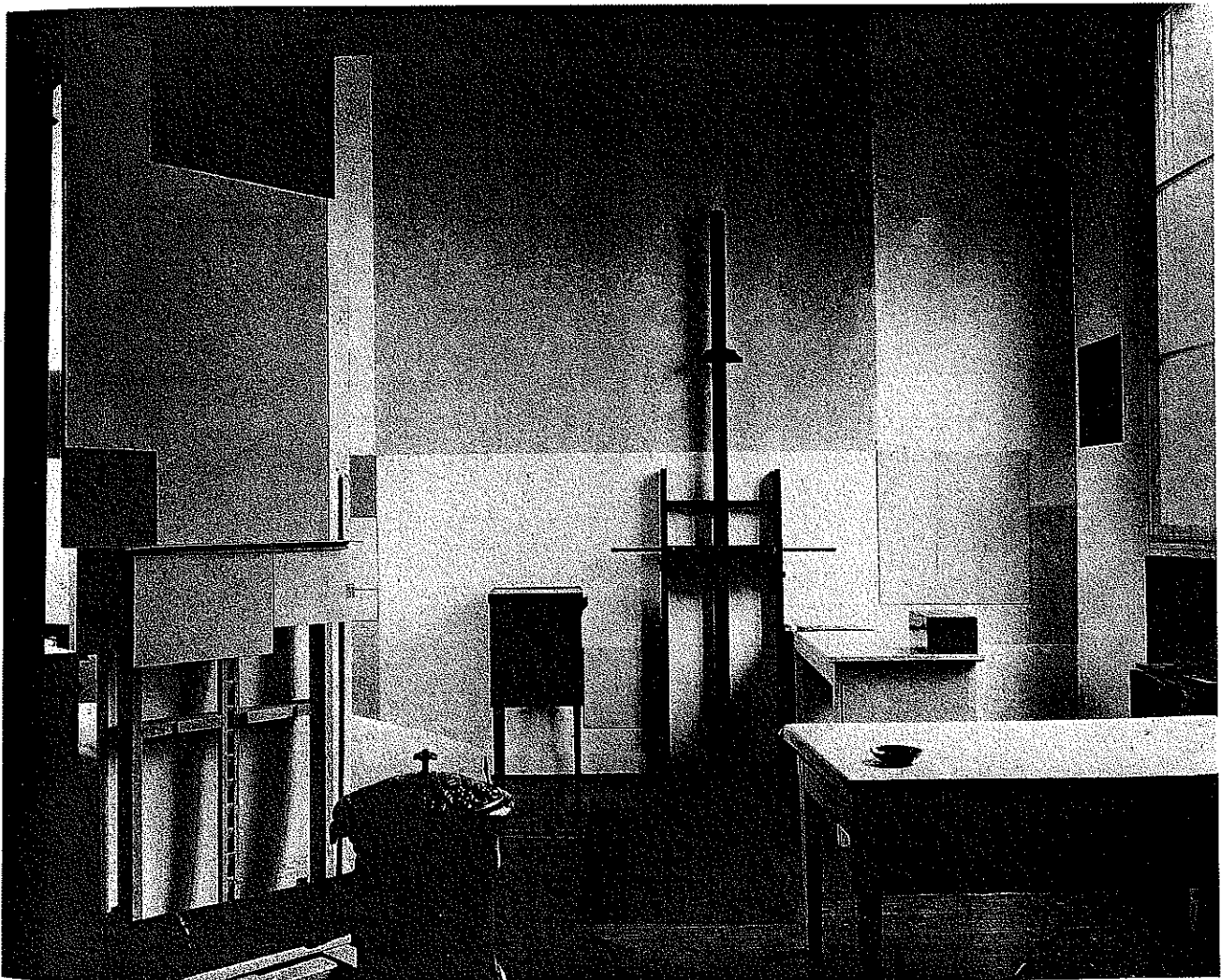
A mature example of Neo-Plasticism is seen in the 1921–25 *Tableau II* (fig. 17.21). Here is the familiar palette of red, blue, yellow, black, and two shades of gray.



The total structure is emphatic, not simply containing the color rectangles but functioning as a counterpoint to them. Both red and gray areas are divided into larger and smaller rectangles with black lines. The black rectangles, since they are transpositions of lines to planes, act as further unifying elements between line and color. The edges of the painting are left open. Along the top and in the lower left corner, the verticals do not quite go to the edge, with the consequence that the grays at these points surround the end of the lines. Only in the lower right does the black come to the edge, and this is actually a black area through which the line moves slightly to the left of the edge. In all other parts a color, principally gray, but red and yellow at the upper left, forms the outer boundary. The result that Mondrian sought—an absolute but dynamic balance of vertical and horizontal structure, using primary hues and black and white—is thus achieved. Everything in the painting holds its place. By some purely visual phenomenon, caused by the structure and the subtle disposition of color areas, the grays are as assertive as the reds or yellows; they advance as well as recede. The painting is not in any sense of the word flat. Everything is held firmly in place, but under great tension.

The open composition with emphasis on large white or light-gray areas predominated in Mondrian's production during the twenties and, in fact, for the rest of his life. He usually worked on several pictures at once and often developed a single idea by working in series, devoting as many as eight paintings to variations on a single theme. He made several variations within a square format in the late twenties, including *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (fig. 17.22), in which a large color square of red, upper right, is joined point to point with a small square of comparably intense blue by intersecting black lines. Surrounding them, equally defined by heavy black lines, are rectangles of off-white. In the lower right corner is one small rectangle of yellow. The white areas, combined with the subordinate blue and yellow, effectively control and balance the great red square. Although Mondrian did not ascribe symbolic meaning to colors in the way that, for example, Kandinsky did, he told a collector that his paintings with a predominant red were "more real" than paintings with little or no color, which he considered "more spiritual."

Mondrian's studio in Paris (fig. 17.23) was a Spartan living space but a remarkable artistic environment that was

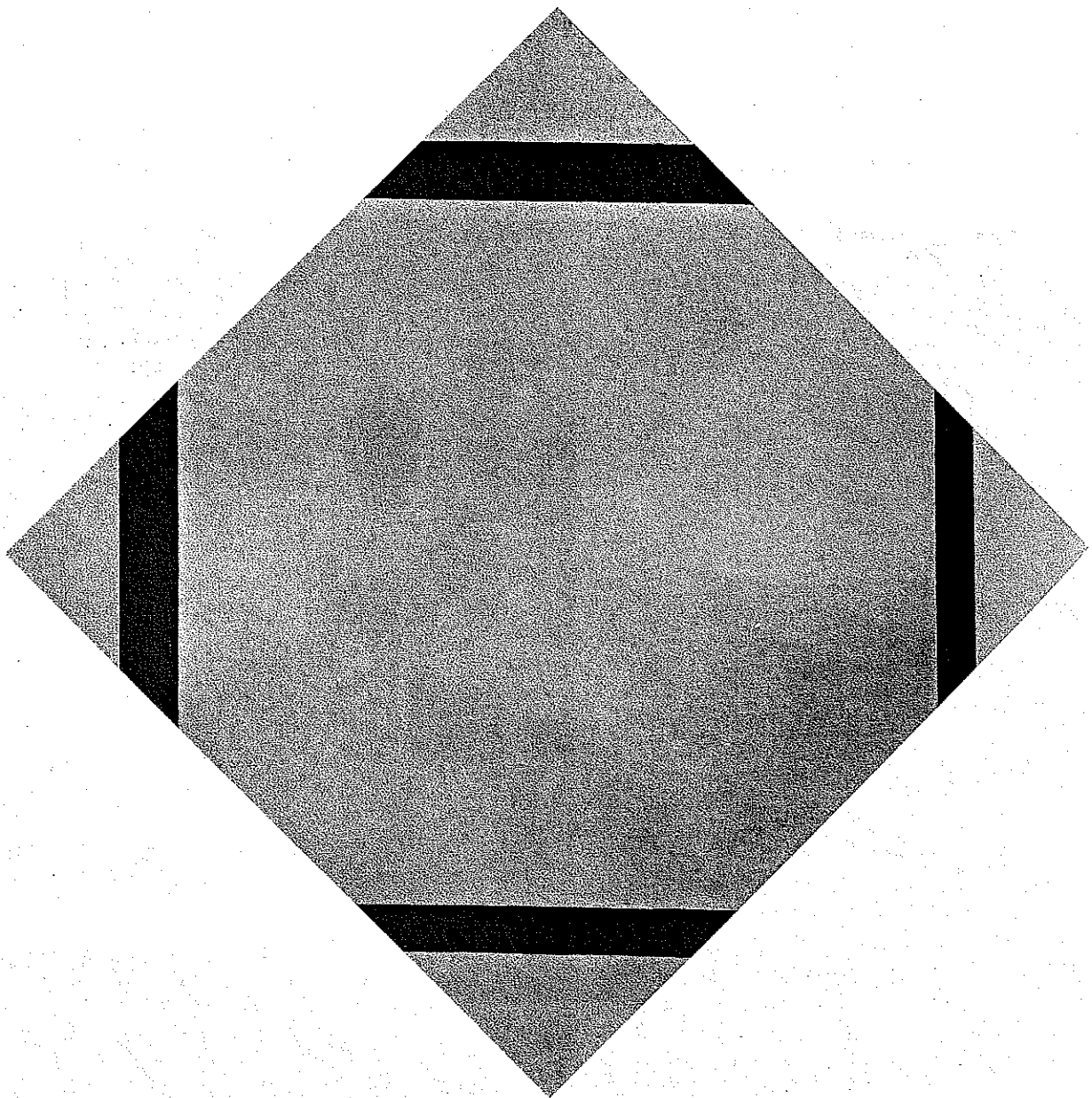


17.23 Piet Mondrian's studio at rue du Départ, Paris. 1926.

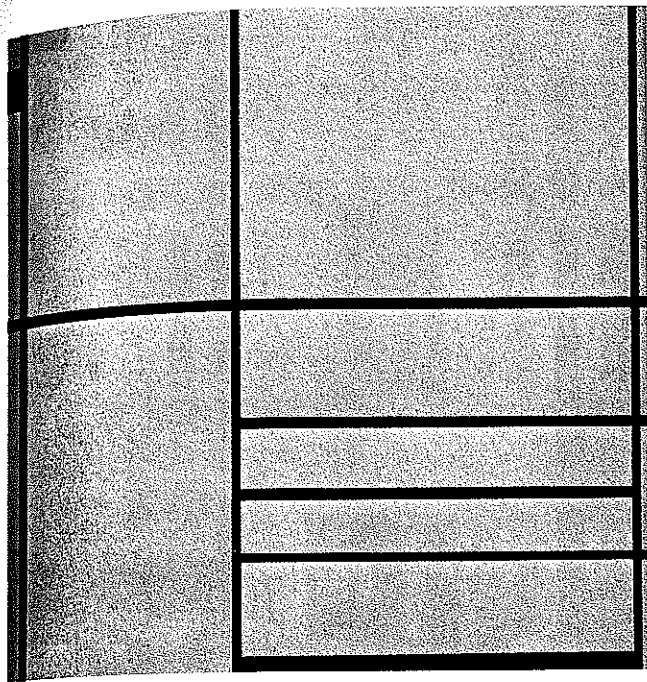
famous throughout the European artworld. For his ideal Neo-Plastic environment, the artist created geometric compositions on the studio walls with arrangements of colored squares. The easel seen at the left in this photograph was more for viewing than working (Mondrian preferred to paint on a horizontal surface). In 1930 Mondrian was visited by Hilla Rebay, an artist and zealous supporter of abstract art who was to help found the Museum of Non-Objective Painting in New York, eventually to become the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. "He lives like a monk," she observed, "everything is white and empty, but for red, blue and yellow painted squares that are spread all over the room of his white studio and bedroom. He also has a small record player with Negro music."

Second only to painting was the artist's abiding passion for American jazz.

Composition with Yellow Lines (fig. 17.24) is among Mondrian's most beautiful so-called lozenge or diamond paintings. In this format, first used by Mondrian in 1918, the square painting is turned on edge but the horizontal and vertical axes are maintained internally. The shape inspired some of Mondrian's most austere designs, in which his desire to transgress the frame, to express a sense of incompleteness, was given tangible expression. *Composition with Yellow Lines* represents an ultimate simplification in its design of four yellow lines, delicately adjusted in width and cutting across the angles of the diamond. Mondrian's fascination with the incomplete within



17.24 Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Yellow Lines*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 31½ × 31½" (80 × 80 cm). Gemeente Museum, the Hague, the Netherlands.



17.25 Piet Mondrian, *Composition in White, Black, and Red*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 40¼ × 41" (102.2 × 104.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

the complete, the tension of lines cut off by the edge of the canvas that seek to continue on to an invisible point of juncture outside the canvas, is nowhere better expressed than here. The viewer's desire to rejoin and complete the lines, to recover the square, is inescapable. The fascination of this magnificently serene painting also lies in another direction—the abandonment of black. Mondrian would fully develop this aspect in his very last works (see fig. 17.26). It is important to note that he also designed his own frames out of narrow strips of wood that he painted white or gray and set back from the canvas. He wished to emphasize the flat, nonillusionistic nature of his canvases, "to bring the painting forward from the frame ... to a more real existence."

In 1932 Mondrian introduced a dramatic new element in one of his Neo-Plastic compositions when he divided a black horizontal into two thin lines. With this "double line" he set out to replace all vestiges of static form with a "dynamic equilibrium." This innovation brought a new, vibrant opticality to the work, with Mondrian multiplying the number of lines until, by the late thirties, the paintings contained irregular grids of black lines with only one or a few planes of color. A midway point in this development is *Composition in White, Black, and Red*, 1936 (fig. 17.25), a structure of vertical and horizontal black lines on a white ground, with a small black rectangle in the upper left corner and a long red strip at the bottom. The lines, however, represent intricate proportions, both in the rectangles they define and in their own thickness and distribution. In the right lower corner, horizontal lines, varied subtly in width, create a grid in which the white spaces seem to expand and contract in a visual ambiguity.

American Connections: Mondrian and Calder

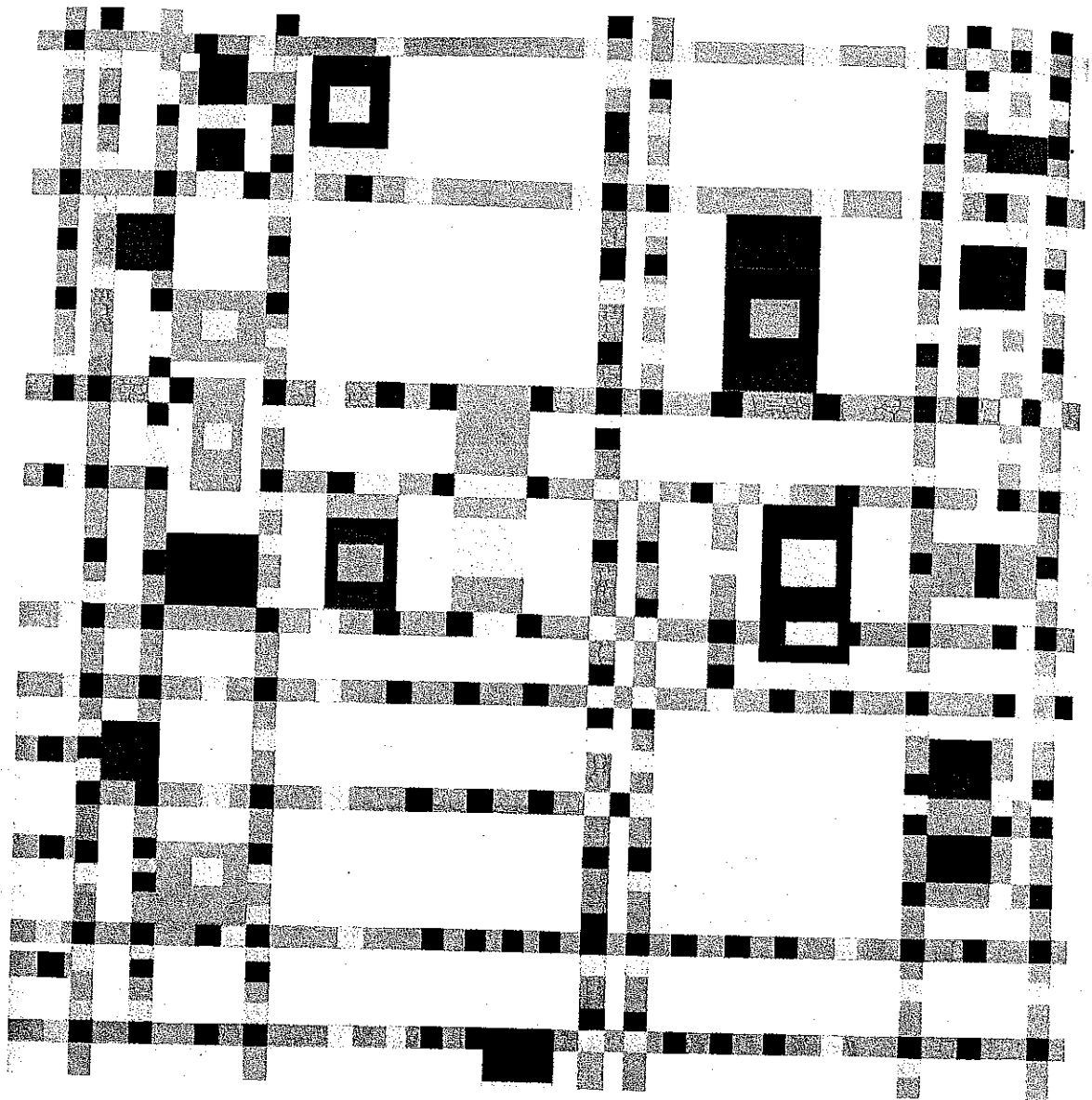
Mondrian in New York

In 1938, with the war approaching, Mondrian left Paris for London, joining his friends Gabo, Ben Nicholson, and Barbara Hepworth. After two years he moved to New York, where he spent the final four years of his life. Manhattan became the last great love of his life, perhaps because of the Neo-Plastic effect created by skyscrapers rising from the narrow canyons of the streets and the rigid grid of its plan. As early as 1917 Mondrian had said, "The truly modern artist sees the metropolis as abstract life given form: it is closer to him than nature and it will more easily stir aesthetic emotions in him." A major new stimulus to the artist was that of lights at night, when the skyscrapers were transformed into a brilliant pattern of light and shadow, blinking and changing. Mondrian also loved the tempo, the dynamism, of the city—the traffic, the dance halls, the jazz bands, the excitement of movement and change. He felt driven to translate these rhythms into his late paintings, where the earlier grid of black lines is replaced by a complex weave of colored lines.

The impact of the city and music is most evident in *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, painted in 1942–43 (fig. 17.26). Here the artist returned to the square canvas but departed radically from the formula that had occupied him for more than twenty years. There is still the rectangular grid, but the black, linear structure balanced against color areas is gone. In fact, the process is reversed: the grid itself is the color, with the lines consisting of little blocks of red, yellow, blue, and gray. The ground is a single plane of off-white, and against it vibrate the varicolored lines as well as larger color rectangles.

In New York, Mondrian devised a method of composing with commercially available colored tapes that he could easily shift around the canvas until he was satisfied enough to commit paint to canvas. This kind of experimental and intuitive approach had always governed Mondrian's working process. Although his art was guided by certain firmly held principles, it was far from formulaic. His paintings are filled with subtle textural effects and give evidence of repeated revisions as the artist painted layer upon layer, widening or narrowing his lines and experimenting with alternative colors. Even his whites are rarely the same hue. Although most art suffers in reproduction, the physical presence of Mondrian's paintings is especially difficult to capture, even in the best photographs.

Mondrian was a legendary figure in the United States, inspiring not only the geometric abstractionists, who had been carrying on a minority battle against Social Realism and Regionalism, but also a number of younger artists who were to create a major revolution in American art. Almost without exception, the emerging Abstract Expressionists of the early forties had great respect for Mondrian, even though their painting took directions that would seem diametrically opposed to everything he believed in.



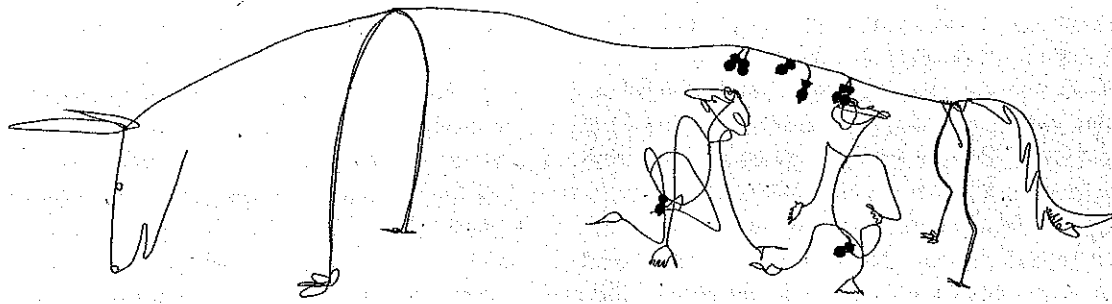
17.26 Piet Mondrian, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, 1942–43. Oil on canvas, 50 × 50" (127 × 127 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Calder

It was a formative encounter with Mondrian's art in 1930 that prompted American **Alexander Calder** (1898–1976) to become an abstract artist. Born in Philadelphia, Calder was the son and grandson of sculptors. After studying engineering, training that would have direct consequences for his art, he was gradually drawn into the field of art, studying painting at New York's Art Students League and working as an illustrator. Calder's early paintings of circus or sports scenes reflect the styles of his teachers, such as John Sloan (see fig. 18.2). By the time of his first visit to Paris in 1926, Calder had begun to make sculptures in wire and wood. In the French capital he eventually attracted the attention of avant-garde artists and writers (especially the Surrealists) with his *Circus*, a full-fledged, activated environment made up of tiny animals and performers that Calder assembled from wire and found materials and then set into motion. At the same time he made wooden

sculptures and portraits and caricatures constructed from wire. The wire sculptures are early demonstrations of Calder's marvelous technical ingenuity and playful humor. They could be quite large, such as the ten-foot (3 m) *Romulus and Remus* of 1928 (fig. 17.27). Here Calder bent and twisted wire into a composition of such economy that the entire "torso" of the she-wolf is one continuous stretch of wire. The whole is like a three-dimensional line drawing (Calder made drawings related to the wire sculpture at the same time).

In 1930, during a subsequent sojourn in Paris, Calder visited Mondrian's rigorously composed studio (see fig. 17.23), which deeply impressed him. "This one visit gave me a shock that started things," he said. "Though I had heard the word 'modern' before, I did not consciously know or feel the term 'abstract.' So now, at thirty-two, I wanted to paint and work in the abstract." He began to experiment with abstract painting and, more significantly,



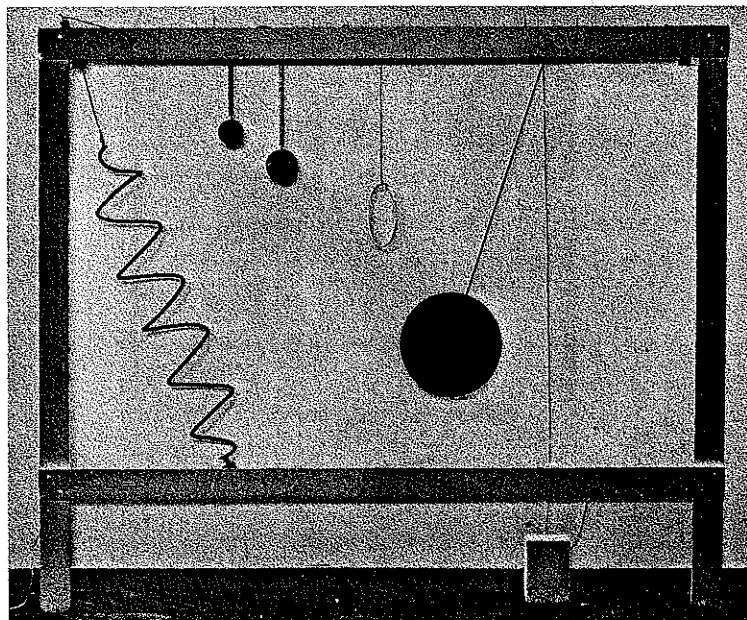
17.27 Alexander Calder, *Romulus and Remus*, 1928. Wire and wood, 30½ × 124½ × 26" (77.5 × 316.2 × 66 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

abstract wire constructions that illustrated an immediate mastery of constructed space sculpture. These early abstract sculptures, which were exhibited in a 1931 solo exhibition in Paris, consisted of predominantly austere, geometric forms like open spheres; but they also contained a suggestion of subject—constellations and universes.

In 1931, at Arp's suggestion, Calder joined Abstraction-Création and began to introduce motion into his constructions. At first he induced movement by hand cranks or small motors, but eventually the sculptures were driven merely by currents of air and Calder's carefully calibrated systems of weights and balances. There were precedents of kineticism in sculpture, as we have seen, in the work of Gabo, Rodchenko, and Moholy-Nagy, but no artist developed the concept as fully or ingeniously as Calder. His first group of hand and motor "mobiles" was exhibited in 1932 at the Galerie Vignon, where they were so christened by Marcel Duchamp. When Arp heard the name "mobile," he asked, "What were those things you did last year—stables?" Thus was also born the word that technically might apply to any sculpture that does not move but that has become specifically associated with Calder's works (see chapter 22).

Calder's characteristic works of the thirties and forties are wind-generated mobiles, either standing or hanging, made of plates of metal or other materials suspended on strings or wires, in a state of delicate balance. The earliest mobiles were relatively simple structures in which a variety of objects, cut-out metal or balls and other forms in wood, moved slowly in the breeze. A far greater variety of motion was possible than in the mechanically driven mobiles. For one thing, the element of chance played an important role. Motion varied from slow, stately rotation to a rapid staccato beat. In the more complex examples, shapes rotated, soared, changed tempo, and, in certain instances, emitted alarming sounds. In *Object with Red Disks* (*Calderberry Bush*), a standing mobile from 1932 (the second title, by which the work is best known, was not Calder's), Calder counterbalanced five flat red disks with wooden balls and perched the whole on a wire pyramidal base. When set in motion by the wind or a viewer's hand, this abstract construction moves through space in preplanned yet not entirely predictable ways.

Among Calder's motorized mobiles were also reliefs, with the moving parts on a plane of wooden boards or within a rectangular frame. One of the earliest on a large scale is *The White Frame* of 1934 (fig. 17.28). In this, a few

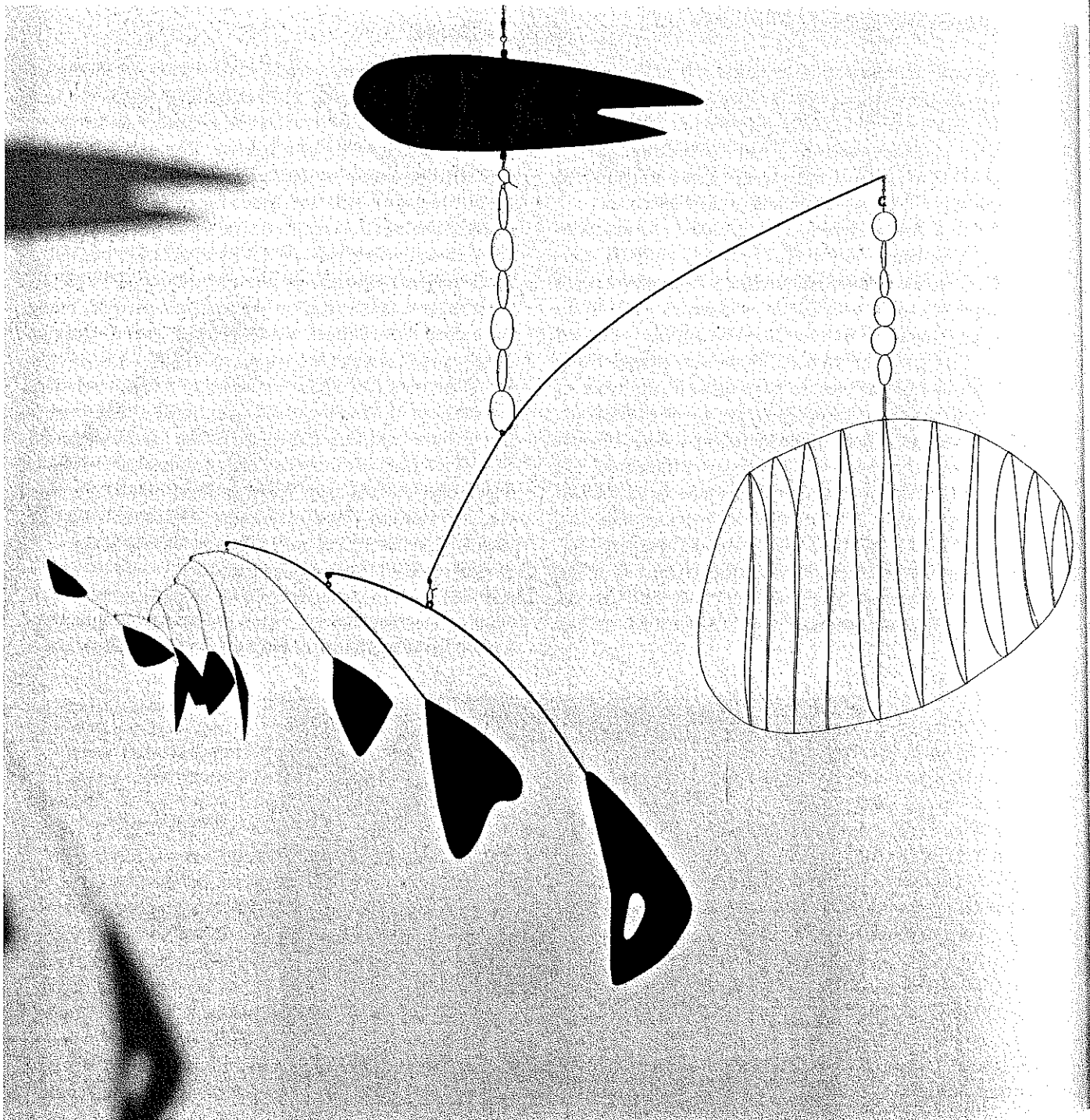


17.28 Alexander Calder, *The White Frame*, 1934. Painted wood, sheet metal, wire, 7½ × 9' (2.3 × 2.7 m). Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

elements are set against a plain, flat background: a large, suspended disk at the right, a spiral wire at the left, and between them, suspended on wires, a white ring and two small balls, one red and one black. Put into motion, the large disk swings back and forth as a pendulum, the spiral rotates, and the balls drop unexpectedly and bounce from their wire springs. Whereas *The White Frame* (with the exception of the spiral) still reflects Mondrian, geometric abstraction, and Constructivism, Calder also used free, biomorphic forms reflecting the work of his friends Miró and

Arp. From this point onward, Calder's production moved easily between geometric or Neo-Plastic forms and those associated with organic Surrealism.

By the end of the thirties, Calder's mobiles had become extremely sophisticated and could be made to loop and swirl up and down, as well as around or back and forth. One of the largest hanging mobiles of the thirties is *Lobster Trap and Fish Tail* (fig. 17.29), a work that was commissioned for The Museum of Modern Art. Although the work is quite abstract, the subject association of the Surrealist-



17.29 Alexander Calder, *Lobster Trap and Fish Tail*, 1939. Hanging mobile: painted steel wire and sheet aluminum, approximately 8'6" high × 9'6" diameter (2.6 × 2.9 m). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

inspired, biomorphic forms is irresistible. The torpedo-shaped element at top could be a lobster cautiously approaching the trap, represented by a delicate wire cage balancing at one end of a bent rod. Dangling from the other end is a cluster of fan-shaped metal plates suggestive of a school of fish. The delicacy of the elements somewhat disguises the actual size, some nine and a half feet (2.9 m) in diameter. After World War II, Calder would pursue an international career, expanding the abstract art he had already formulated in the thirties to an architectural scale of unprecedented grandeur (see chapter 22).

Responses to International Abstraction: Artists in Britain

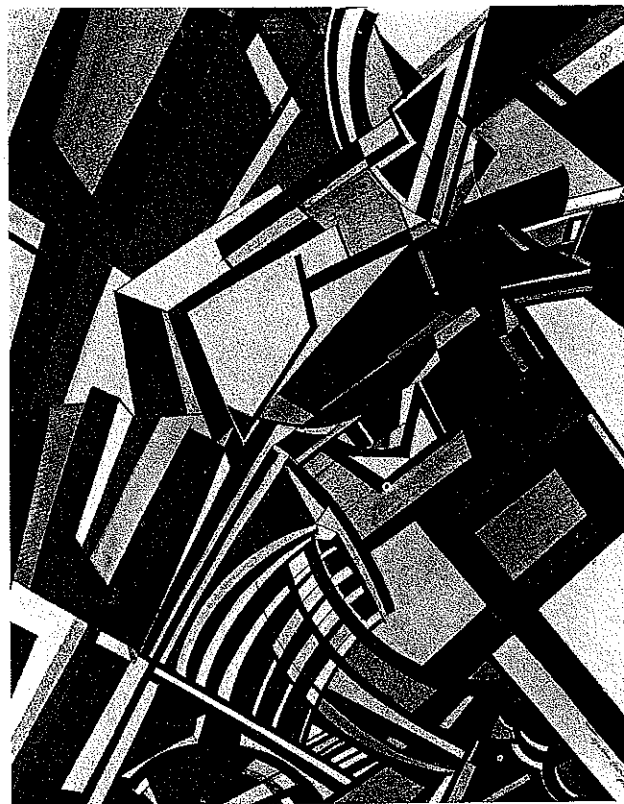
Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism

The most radical element in English art to emerge before World War I was the group who called themselves Vorticists (from “vortex”), founded in 1914 and led by the talented painter, writer, and polemicist Percy Wyndham Lewis (1886–1957). In the catalogue of the only exhibition of Vorticism, at the Doré Galleries in 1915, Lewis described the movement with all the zealous rhetoric typical of the early twentieth-century avant-garde:

By vorticism we mean (a) Activity as opposed to the tasteless Passivity of Picasso; (b) Significance as opposed to the dull and anecdotal character to which the Naturalist is condemned; (c) Essential Movement and Activity (such as the energy of a mind) as opposed to the imitative cinematography, the fuss and hysterics of the Futurists.

Of particular significance for Vorticism was the association of the American poet Ezra Pound, then living in England. He gave the movement its name and with Lewis founded the periodical *Blast*, subtitled *Review of the Great English Vortex*. For the Vorticists, abstraction was the optimal artistic language for forging a link between art and life. As Lewis stated in *Blast*, they believed that artists must “enrich abstraction until it is almost plain life.” Lewis was a literary man by character, and much of his contribution lay in the field of criticism rather than creation. He was influenced by Cubism from a very early date and, despite his polemics against it, by Futurism. In one of his few surviving pre-World War I paintings (fig. 17.30), Lewis composed a dynamic arrangement of rectilinear forms that arch through the composition as though propelled by an invisible energy force. This adaptation of a Cubist syntax to metallic, machinelike forms has much in common with Léger’s paintings around this date. Lewis was primarily attempting, by every means in his power, to attack and break down the academic complacency that surrounded him in England. In the vortex he was searching for an art of “activity, significance, and essential movement, and a modernism that should be clean, hard, and plastic.”

Vorticism was a short-lived phenomenon, and it produced few artists of real originality. Nevertheless, it was of

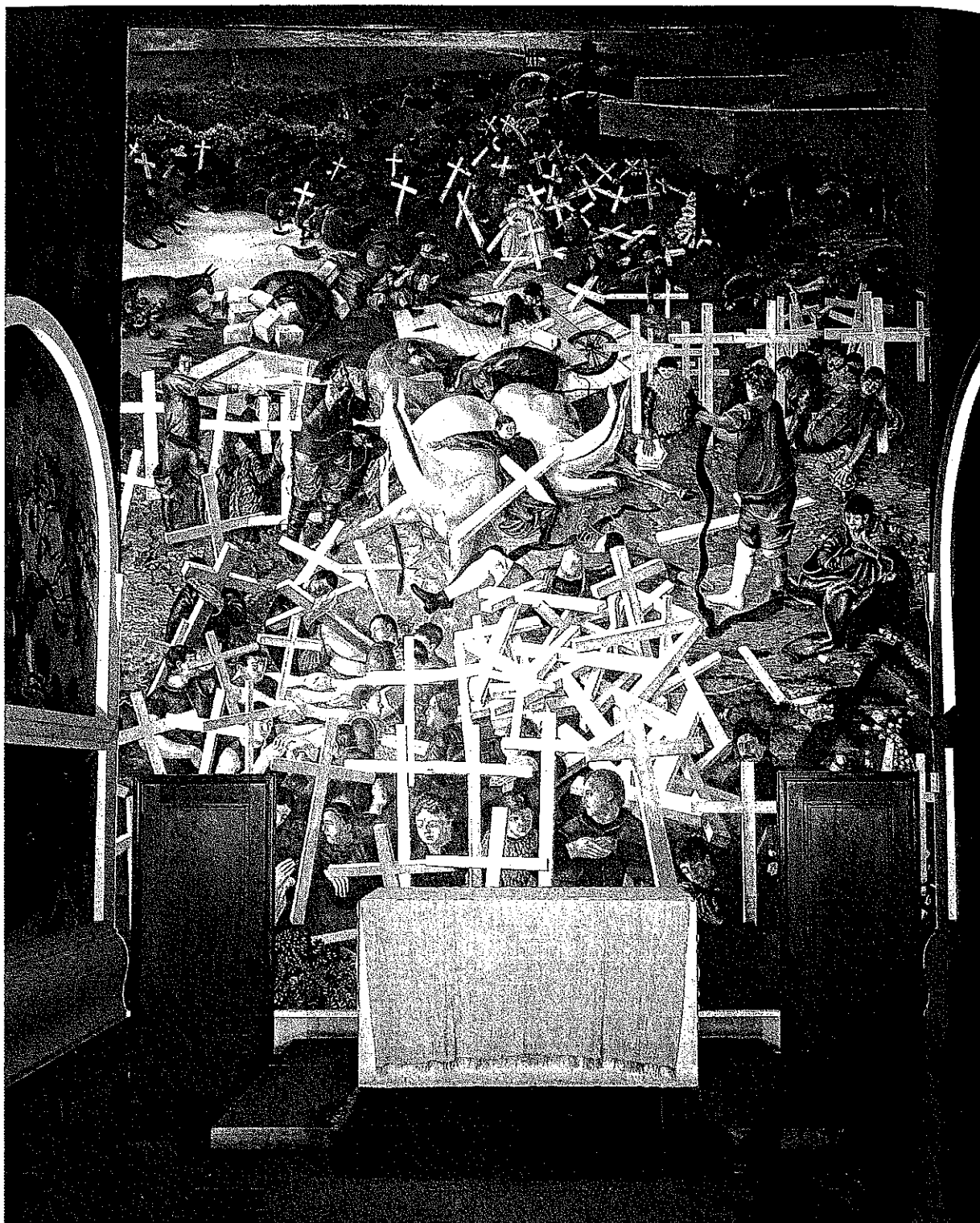


17.30 Percy Wyndham Lewis, *Composition*, 1913. Watercolor drawing on paper, 13½ × 10¼ (34.3 × 26.7 cm). Tate Gallery, London.

great importance in marking England’s involvement in the new experimental art of Europe. As with other artists associated with the movement, few of Lewis’s early, Vorticist paintings survive. After the war he abandoned abstraction in favor of a stylized figurative art. He made portraits of Edith Sitwell, Ezra Pound, and other literary figures, giving them, through a suggestion of Cubist structure, an appearance of modernism.

Spencer

The two English painters of greatest stature between the wars, Stanley Spencer and Ben Nicholson, represent extremes of contrast. **Stanley Spencer** (1891–1959) seemed to turn his back completely on everything in avant-garde twentieth-century painting. At the opposite pole from all forms of international abstraction, his was a figurative art that took inspiration, like the Pre-Raphaelites he admired, from fifteenth-century Italian painters. In his earlier paintings with Christian themes, he developed an eccentric, personal style in his drawing reminiscent of early Italian or Flemish paintings, which enhanced his visionary effects. In the twenties, Spencer received a large mural commission for the Sandham Memorial Chapel in Burghclere, Hampshire. From 1927 to 1932 he labored over a cycle of paintings based on his war experiences, culminating in the huge central panel, *The Resurrection of the Soldiers* (fig. 17.31). This vast panorama depicts dead soldiers



17.31 Stanley Spencer, *The Resurrection of the Soldiers*, 1928–29. Oil on canvas, glued to the wall, 21' × 17'6" (6.4 × 5.3 m). Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere, England.

struggling from their graves amidst a forest of overturned crosses. Although Spencer maintained his religious convictions throughout his life, in his later works he also turned to obscure themes with erotic overtones, sometimes comparable to paintings by Balthus (see fig. 20.15). Even these usually have religious implications in the sense of a modern morality play.

Nicholson

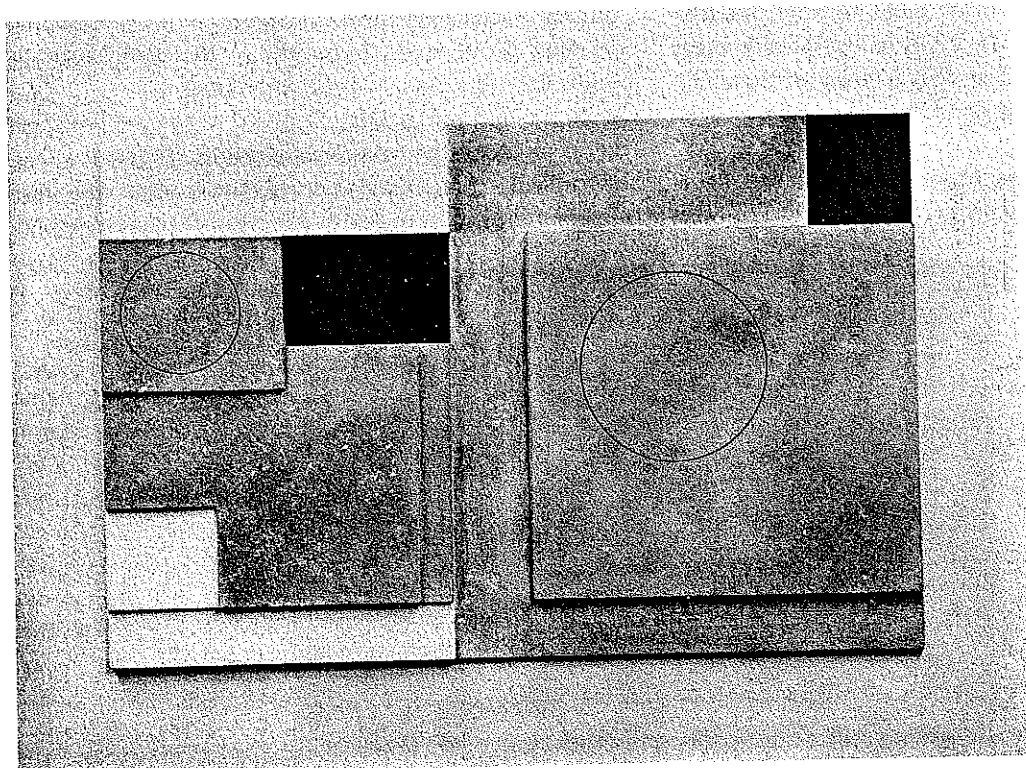
The other outstanding English painter to emerge between the wars was **Ben Nicholson** (1894–1981), who was also a distinguished sculptor. Whereas Spencer might be considered narrowly English, Nicholson was an internationally minded artist. During the twenties, he practiced variants on the late Cubist styles of Braque and Picasso and also

made his first abstract compositions. These early works reveal most of the characteristics of Nicholson's mature style. Their surfaces appear abraded, and color is subdued, matte, and delicately harmonious. He uses a limited range of gray whites to grayed ochers, with a few accents of black and muted red, and rubbed pencil passages of dark gray. All the elements of still life—table, bottle, and bowls—are frontalized and flattened, and shapes are outlined with ruler and compass in fine and precise contour.

In 1932 Nicholson began spending time in Paris, where he became acquainted with Giacometti, Braque, Picasso, Kandinsky, and Brancusi, among others. Over the next few years, Nicholson championed the cause of English art abroad and became an important artistic conduit between the continent and his native country, helping to attract foreign artists to London during the tense period leading up to the war. In 1933 he was invited to join the Parisian Abstraction-Création group and, significantly for his art, saw works by Calder and Mondrian for the first time. At the end of that year he made his first carved and painted relief, an abstract composition of irregular, free-floating circles over rectangular shapes that he carved into a shallow board. Nicholson had met Barbara Hepworth in 1931; they were married from 1938 to 1951. They shared a studio in London, and Nicholson's exposure to Hepworth's sculptor's tools and methods, as well as his recent experience carving linocuts, led him to make reliefs and, eventually, sculpture. We have seen how many modern artists, from Arp (see fig. 13.14) to Archipenko (see fig. 10.30) to Baumeister (see fig. 17.12), were interested in creating such hybrids between sculpture and painting.

A residual biomorphism, inspired partly by the work of Miró and Calder, is evident in Nicholson's early reliefs. Gradually, however, he eliminated such Surrealist overtones from his work, and the forms within his reliefs—circles, squares, and rectangles—became highly regularized in response to Mondrian's example. In the mid-thirties he avoided both color and drawn line in a series of *White Reliefs*. Here the total spatial effect is achieved through the interaction of overlapping rectangles, with an occasional circle in sunken relief. Nicholson's exclusive use of white, a color connoting purity and infinity in abstract painting, may have been occasioned by an article written by Van Doesburg and published by *Art Concret* that was devoted to the subject of white in painting.

Although they never realized anything as significant as the Bauhaus, English artists and architects throughout the thirties were exploring potential alliances between their disciplines, based on the new Constructivist aesthetic. The white, rectilinear surfaces of Nicholson's paintings, stripped of all distracting detail, were regarded as ideal décor for the pared-down spaces of the new International Style architecture. Such ideas were specifically addressed in an important book that Nicholson edited in 1937 with Gabo and the architect Leslie Martin (with collaboration from Barbara Hepworth), *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*. It was published in conjunction with a London exhibition, Constructive Art, and designed to counteract the sensation generated by a recent show of international Surrealism held in London. *Circle* was an important publication, since it introduced many of the Bauhaus ideas to Britain.



17.32 Ben Nicholson, 1939 (*Painted Relief – Version 1*). Oil and pencil on composition boards mounted on painted plywood, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 45" (83.5 × 114.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In the late thirties, Nicholson reintroduced color to his reliefs, a shift stimulated in part by the landscape at St. Ives, Cornwall, where he lived with Hepworth. The 1939 (*Painted Relief*) (fig. 17.32) is a meticulous adjustment of squares and rectangles in low but varying relief projections. The larger shapes are a uniform, muted, sand color. Played against these are a square of dull ocher, a rectangle of red-brown and, top and bottom at the left, strips of pure white. The only lines are two circles drawn in graphite, placed slightly off-center in the major squares. The edges of the relief shapes also act as a precise, rectangular linear structure.

In the same period Nicholson continued to produce paintings involving the same principles of strict rectangularity, using the primary colors with black, white, and grays, sometimes varying the values and intensities, and combining light, delicate blues with intense yellows. Despite a commitment to abstraction until the end of his life, Nicholson also habitually drew from nature, resulting in images of an Ingres-like delicacy and precision.

Moore

Unlike Nicholson or, for that matter, any of the sculptors previously discussed in this chapter, the sculptor **Henry Moore** (1898–1986) was not an artist in the Constructivist mold. He did not assemble forms from the newest industrial materials but rather carved and modeled them in the traditional media of stone and plaster. His was a humanist art, grounded in the contours of nature and the human figure, however abstract the forms sometimes appear. Although he did not begin to assume a genuinely international stature before 1945, Moore was a mature artist by the early thirties, in touch with the main lines of Surrealism and abstraction on the Continent, as well as all the new developments in sculpture, from Rodin through Brancusi to Picasso and Giacometti. By 1935 he had already made original statements and had arrived at many of the sculptural figurative concepts that he was to build on for the rest of his career.

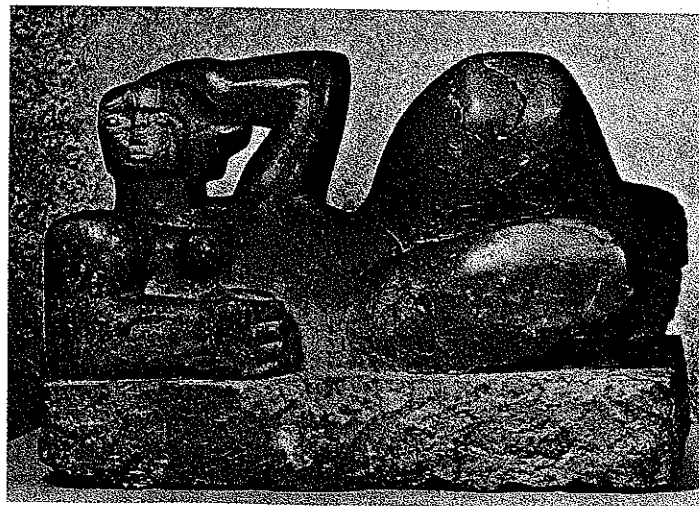
The son of a coal miner, Moore studied at the Royal College of Art in London from 1921 until 1925. The

greatest immediate influence on him were the works of art he studied in English and European museums, particularly the Classical, pre-Classical, African, and pre-Columbian art he saw in the British Museum. He was also attracted to English medieval church sculpture and to artists in the Renaissance tradition—Masaccio, Michelangelo, Rodin, Maillol—who had a particular feeling for the monumental.

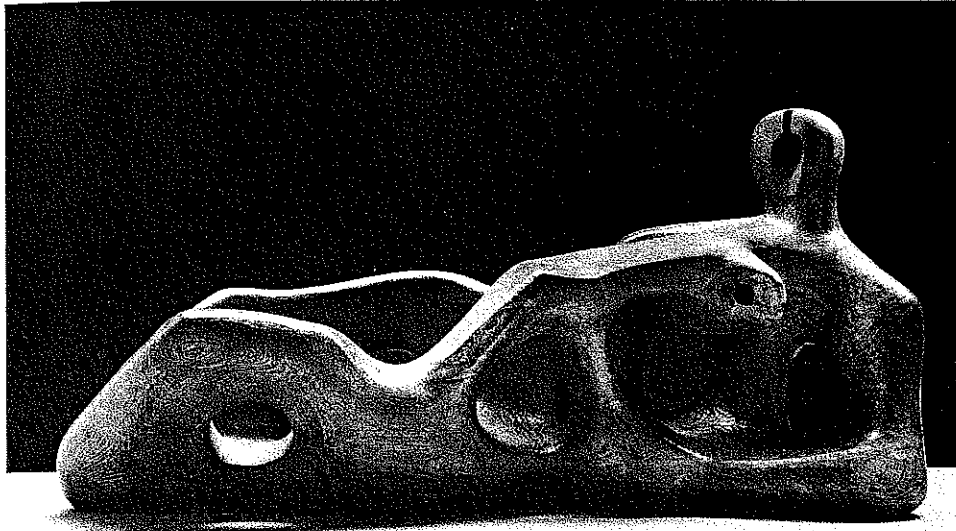
Between 1926 and 1930 the dominant influence on Moore was pre-Columbian art. The 1929 *Reclining Figure* (fig. 17.33) is one of the artist's first masterpieces in sculpture, a work that may owe its original inspiration to a chacmool (with overtones of Maillol). Chacmoos are a distinctive type of stone sculpture representing a reclining warrior holding an offering dish. They are associated with the Toltec culture of central Mexico, which flourished between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The massive blockiness of Moore's figure stems from a passionate devotion to the principle of truth to materials; that is, the idea that stone should look like stone, not flesh. In this and other reclining figures, torsos, and mother-and-child groups of the late twenties, Moore staked out basic themes that he then used throughout his life.

In the early thirties, the influence of Surrealist sculpture, notably that of Picasso, became evident. Moore began to explore other materials, particularly bronze, and his figures took on a fluidity and sense of transparent surface appropriate to what was for him a new material. Similar effects were achieved in carved wood in which he followed the wood grain meticulously, as in *Reclining Figure* from 1939 (fig. 17.34), his largest carved sculpture to date. Less angular than the 1929 figure, this sculpture consists of a series of holes that pierce the undulating solids, transforming the body into a kind of landscape filled with caves and tunnels. A characteristic of the figures of the thirties is this opening up of voids, frequently to the point where the solids function as space-enclosing frames.

In the mid-thirties Moore turned to abstract forms, and by opening up the masses and creating dispersed groups, he studied various kinds of space relationships. This began a continuing concern with a sculpture of tensions between



17.33 Henry Moore, *Reclining Figure*, 1929. Hornton stone, height 22½" (57.2 cm). Leeds City Art Galleries, England.



17.34 Henry Moore, *Reclining Figure*, 1939. Elm wood, 3'1" × 6'7" × 2'6" (0.94 × 2 × 0.76 m) The Detroit Institute of Arts.

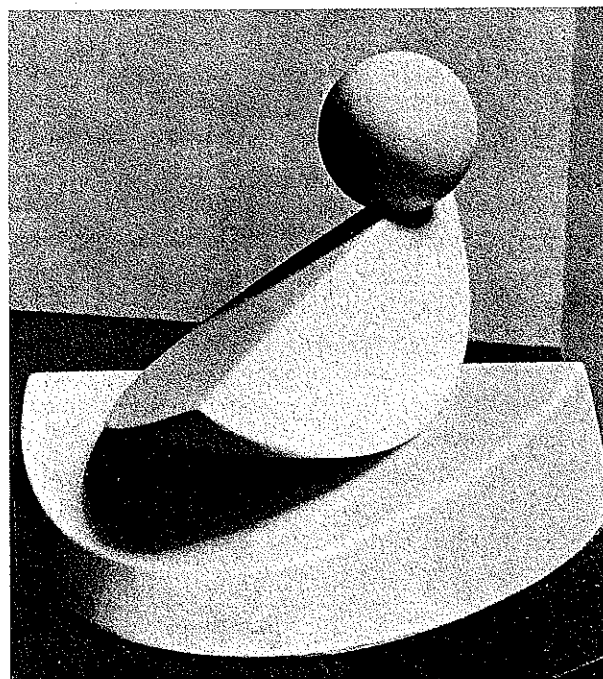
void and solid, of forms enclosed within other forms. These experiments were then translated back into the figures. The interest in spatial problems led Moore during the forties and fifties to an ever-greater use of bronze and other metals in which he could enlarge the voids of the figures. These developments in Moore's work during and after World War II are pursued in chapter 20.

Hepworth

Barbara Hepworth (1903–75), the other English sculptor of international stature before World War II, was a student at the same time as Henry Moore at Leeds School of Art. The two remained close through much of their careers, with Moore's work exerting a direct influence on her early sculpture. In 1925, while Hepworth was in Italy, she learned marble-carving techniques from an Italian master craftsman. Throughout the twenties, she made highly accomplished figurative sculptures in wood and stone that reflected her admiration of Egyptian, Cycladic, and Archaic Greek art. After meeting Nicholson in 1931 Hepworth became a leader of the abstract movement in England. She and Nicholson were active in the Unit One group, which was attempting to establish a common front for modern artists and architects in England, and in 1933 they were invited to become members of Abstraction-Création in Paris. While in Paris, Hepworth visited the studios of Arp and Brancusi, encounters with significant implications for her later work. The relationship between Hepworth and Nicholson produced a rich cross-fertilization of ideas, media, and forms in the art of each artist. They were also close to the critic Herbert Read, then emerging as the leading advocate of modern art in England. When, during the thirties, Gabo, Mondrian, Gropius, Moholy-Nagy, Breuer, and other European artists and architects moved to England, Hepworth and Nicholson were able to strengthen

old friendships and form new ones among these pioneers of modernism.

Hepworth's sculpture began to shed its semblance to the real world after 1931, when she carved *Pierced Form*. In this alabaster sculpture, the stone is penetrated in the center by a large hole to make, in the artist's words, "an abstract form and space." This crucial rupture with the notion of carved sculpture as a solid, closed form was one of Hepworth's major contributions to modern sculpture, and the discovery would inform her subsequent work as well as that of Moore. Her exposure to the work of Arp



17.35 Barbara Hepworth, *Two Segments and Sphere*, 1935–36. Marble, 10½ × 10½ × 8½" (26.7 × 26.7 × 21.6 cm). Private collection.

(who had previously made his own penetrated sculptures) prompted Hepworth to make biomorphic, multipart sculptures in the early thirties, but by 1934 she adopted a more geometric syntax and eliminated, at least for a time, the remaining vestiges of naturalism from her work.

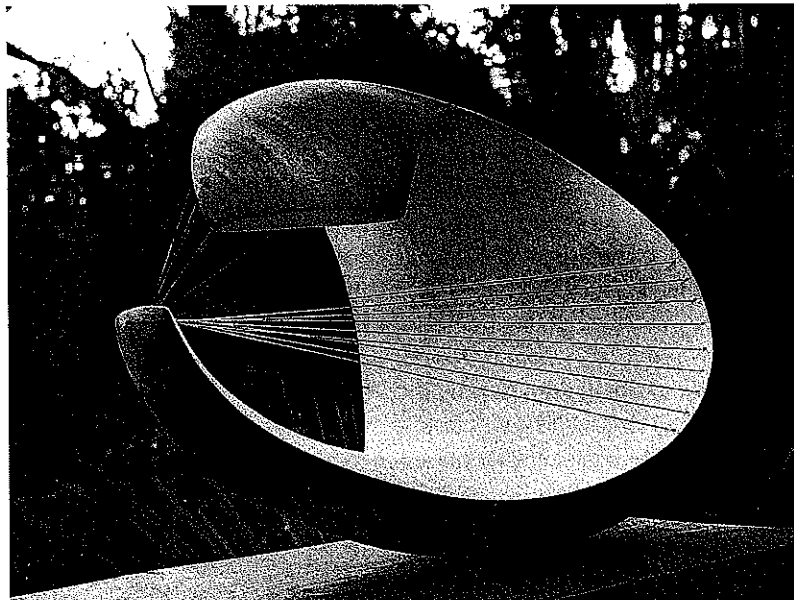
In one of her best-known works, *Two Segments and Sphere* (fig. 17.35), 1935–36, Hepworth heightens the tension between the geometric forms, with their smooth, perfected finish, through the precarious positioning of the sphere. In the late thirties Hepworth produced some of her most severely simplified sculptures, a number of them consisting of a single marble column, gently rounded or delicately indented to emphasize their organic, figurative source.

In 1939, stimulated by Moore's example, she also began to explore the use of strings stretched across voids, as in *Wave* (fig. 17.36). Hepworth's wood sculptures are marked by the same loving finish as her works in stone. The woods are beautiful and frequently exotic—mahogany,

scented guarea, Lagos ebony, or rosewood—worked to bring out their essential nature. Easier to work than stone, wood inspired her to an increasingly open type of composition, with voids penetrating the mass of the material. She also began at this time to use color, generally whites and blues in interior areas, to contrast with the natural wood of the exterior. In *Wave*, the blue interior refers to the ocean, for, like Nicholson, Hepworth was deeply affected by the Cornish landscape:

I used colour and strings in many of the carvings of this time. The colour in the concavities plunged me into the depth of water, caves, or shadows deeper than the carved concavities themselves. The strings were the tension I felt between myself and the sea, the wind or the hills.

For a period after World War II, as we shall see in chapter 20, the sense of a naturalistic subject reemerged in Hepworth's sculptures.



17.36 Barbara Hepworth, *Wave*, 1943. Plane wood with blue interior and strings, 12 × 17½ × 8¼" (30.5 × 44.5 × 21 cm). Private collection, on loan to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.