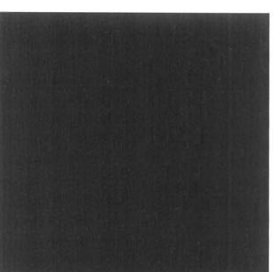


Cercle et Carré

and the International Spirit of Abstract Art



Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia
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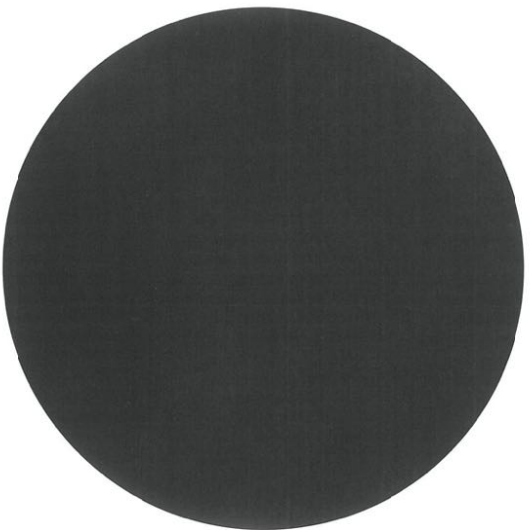
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**Inscribing
a Circle**

Lynn Boland

1. Wassily Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (New York: Da Capo, 1982), 740.
 2. Kazimir Malevich, "Suprematism," in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 341–42; first published in Malevich, *The World as Non-Objectivity* (Bauhaus, 1927). Malevich is referring to his *Black Square* (1915), discussed later in this essay.
 Although Malevich gives the date of this painting as 1913 in this text, back-dating was not uncommon among early abstractionists; *Black Square* was painted and exhibited in 1915.

"If I have, e.g., in recent years so frequently and so enthusiastically made use of the circle, the reason (or the cause) is not the 'geometrical' form of the circle, or its geometrical characteristics, but rather my own extreme sensitivity to the inner force of the circle in all its countless variations."

—Wassily Kandinsky, 1929¹

"When, in the year 1913, in my desperate attempt to free art from the ballast of objectivity, I took refuge in the square form and exhibited a picture which consisted of nothing more than a black square on a white field. . . . This was no empty square which I had exhibited but rather the feeling of non-objectivity. . . ."

The square = feeling

"The white field = the void beyond this feeling,"

—Kazimir Malevich, 1927²

The abstractionist group Cercle et Carré (Circle and Square) inherited the idea summarized in the two quotations above that worlds of meaning might be contained in such basic geometry as a circle or a square.

Founded in 1929 by Belgian artist and critic Michel Seuphor, together with Uruguayan-Catalan artist Joaquín Torres-García and Catalan-American artist Pierre Daura, the group took aim at what its members considered the self-indulgent and illusionistic nature of Surrealism. Members including Hans Arp, Le Corbusier, Alexander Exter, Wassily Kandinsky, Fernand Léger, Piet Mondrian, Kurt Schwitters, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp sought to develop further theories of abstract art first advocated in the circles of Russian Constructivism and Dutch De Stijl, which had roots in the early abstractionists of artists including Kandinsky and Malevich. In addition to publishing a periodical to broadcast its theories and feature its works, Cercle et Carré staged an international exhibition of abstract art in Paris at Galerie 23, Rue la Boétie, from April 18 to May 1, 1930. Although it did not last long, the group in many ways summed up the prevailing theories and styles of the history of modern European abstract art up until that point and set the stage for what would follow.³ According to Seuphor, not a single work sold at the 1930 show, nor were any inquiries made about prices, and the Parisian press virtually ignored it.⁴ Scholars now recognize the exhibition as a landmark event in the history of modernism in general and abstraction in particular. It included 127 works by 46 members of the group—paintings, drawings, sculptures, theatrical designs, masks, and architectural plans that have since found their way into the collections of major museums throughout the world.⁵

While battling the growing dominance of Surrealism, the group also had to explain its own style and meaning. Abstract art remains challenging, even now, when it is generally accepted as a valid form of expression. The Cercle et Carré group benefited from a public somewhat exposed to total abstraction and would have faced a slightly more sympathetic audience than the earliest pioneers of abstraction, working in 1912–13, but there was still much to explain to viewers and critics. The group shared a common cause, but its range of styles and theories would ensure constant debate among its members. The name and logo suggested the group's strongest allegiance was to total geometric abstraction, but many of the styles exhibited in 1930 are best described as "abstracted" rather than "abstract," remaining representational to varying degrees.

3. The history of Cercle et Carré is well documented in Marie-Alain Poiré's *Peinture et avant-garde au sein des années 30* (Lausanne: Age d'Homme, 1984), which deserves an English translation, and in Seuphor's own *Cercle et Carré* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1971), excerpts of which are translated in the catalogue for Rachel Adler Gallery's exhibition *Cercle et Carré: Thoughts for the 1930s* (New York, 1990) along with a new text by Seuphor, "The Equity of History." I intend to offer a perspective on the group afforded by the Pierre Daura Archive at the Georgia Museum of Art and its letters and diaries. As correspondence between Seuphor and Torres-García attests, Daura was

intimately involved in the formation of the group, yet he was among its lesser-known artists. Moreover, his diaries suggest that his commitment to abstraction was never as resolute as most of his compatriots, making him a particularly telling lens, free, if not free, from the dogma often accompanying abstract art theory. Other valuable contributions to the literature on Cercle et Carré include Pedro da Cruz, "Torres García and Cercle et Carré: The Creation of Constructive Universalism, Paris 1927–1932" (PhD diss., University of Lund, 1994); the catalogue for the exhibition *1930: Art Abstract / Arte Concreto* (Valencia: IVAM Centre Julio González, 1990), with scholarship by Gladys Fajó and Pyzand Branaswaki examining Cercle et Carré within its artistic context; *Geometric Abstraction: 1926–1942*, exh. cat. (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1972); and *De Stijl: Cercle et Carré: Developments of Constructivism in Europe after 1917*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1974), with texts by Seuphor and Alberto Sartoris. The group's journals are reproduced in *Cercle et Carré* (Paris: Jean-Michel Ponce, 1977). On Daura's role in Cercle et Carré, see also Teresa Marín, *Pierre Daura (1896–1976)* (Barcelona: Ambit Serveis Editorials S.A., 1999), 37–43. On Torres-García, see Joaquín Torres-García, *Historia de mi vida* (Barcelona: Edicions Píndar, 1990); Mari Carmen Barreneche, Joaquín Torres-García: *Constructing Abstraction with Wood*, exh. cat. (Houston: Menil Collection, 2009); Mari Carmen Ramirez, *El Taller Torres-García: The School of the*

South and its legacy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); Daniel Robbins, *Joachim Torres-García, 1874–1949* (Providence: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1970); and, on his legacy, Gabriel Pérez-Barreto, *The Geometry of Hope: Latin American Abstract Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*, exh. cat. (Austin: Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, 2007).

On Seuphor, see Rik Suwen, *German Vaire, and Michel Seuphor, Seuphor* (Paris: Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, 1977). See also Caroline Barrat's biographies of Cercle et Carré members at the end of this volume.

4. Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 21. See also Seuphor, "The Equity of History" n.p.

5. Although forty-seven artists—including Seuphor for his textual collaboration with Mondrian—are listed in the checklist printed in the second issue of the group's journal, Enrico Prampolini did not exhibit his three works because of shipping problems, as Seuphor explains in the next issue, translated in this volume by Laura Valeri (p. 120). See also Prati, 82.

6. In the checklist for the exhibition of 1930, the four French participants were outnumbered by artists of Russian and German descent, seven and six, respectively, matched in numbers by artists from Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Italy, and joined by three Polish and three Belgian artists, plus single artists representing another eleven countries, although many of them were living in Paris. On Stella, see Barbara Haskell, *Joseph Stella*, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994); Irma B. Jaffe, *Joseph Stella* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989); John I. H. Baur and Irma B. Jaffe, *Joseph Stella* (New York: Praeger, 1971); Ruth L. Bohan, "Joseph Stella and the 'Conjunction of WORLDS'" in Jennifer Cross et al., *The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America*, exh. cat. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery and Yale University Press, 2006), 17–31, and the catalogue as a whole as many members of the Société Anonyme also participated in Cercle et Carré.

7. Maurice Denis, "Definitions of Neotraditionalism," originally published in *Art et critique* (Paris) August 23 and 30, 1890, repr. in Chipp, 94.

Seuphor and Torres-García founded and largely led the group, but neither sought to dictate too specific a program or issue a manifesto (a common move), seeking instead a kind of coalition of artists associated with different movements and styles. The mission was broad: to support "structure and construction" in opposition to Surrealism. The terms suggested an emphasis on the composition of a work of art independent of its subject matter, whether or not that subject was recognizable, along with a notion of formal rigor, most often but not exclusively an underlying geometric organization. Cercle et Carré focused more on a general approach to art making than on a specific style or meaning, and its cofounders encouraged a democratic spirit. The desire to oppose Surrealism made a big-tent tactic all the more necessary.

The first issue of the group's eponymous journal includes twenty-four individual statements, all translated for the first time in this volume, and its democratic nature, internationalism, and, at least relative to the time, egalitarianism and gender equality are evident in all three issues. Although it was centered in Paris and half its members were French, the other half represented another twenty countries in Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, and North and South America.⁸ Ten of the forty-six artists included in the 1930 exhibition were women. Furthermore, the group, its journals, and the exhibition featured both established and emerging artists. Attendant cultural connections included diverse sources from cutting-edge science and technology to mysticism and the occult, from philosophies of transcendentalism to rationalism. A broad and diverse group focused loosely on ideas of structure and construction. Cercle et Carré served as a microcosm of the larger universe of abstraction and its history in the early twentieth century.

Abstraction in the 1910s

In retrospect, the emergence of totally abstract art in early-twentieth-century Europe seems inevitable. Late-nineteenth-century avant-garde artists focused ever more on the formal qualities of their work, abstracting their colors and forms for the sake of expression and deemphasizing the illusionistic nature of their art. As Maurice Denis declared in 1890, "A picture, before being a war horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered by colors in a certain order."⁹ These tendencies

toward construction only heightened after the turn of the century. Building on Paul Cézanne's famous dictum to "treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere and the cone," Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque brought painting to the verge of total abstraction at the height of their analytic Cubist phase, in 1911–12, when they stripped color down to monochromatic browns and grays to emphasize their subjects' underlying structure.¹⁰ Although highly abstracted at times, Picasso never worked in a totally abstract style, but other artists responding to the innovations of Cubism would quickly take the next step.

The Czech artist František Kupka, active in Paris, was the first to exhibit a totally abstract painting: *Amorpha, Fugue in Two Colors*, shown at the Salon d'Automne in Paris, which opened October 1, 1912.¹¹ Kupka was part of an informal group of artists that included Fernand Léger, Sonia and Robert Delaunay, and Marcel Duchamp, dubbed "Orphic Cubists" by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire.¹² With the geometry of Cubism as their formal starting point, these artists were deeply interested in an unseen world, both physical and spiritual, as the reference to the mythic poet and musician suggests. The mystical connotations were especially appropriate for Kupka, who was a practicing medium, although interest in the spiritual and occult was widespread at the time, especially in artistic circles.¹³ Apollinaire's appellation also recognizes the underlying relationship between abstract art and music, itself an intangible and abstract medium and one to which the title of Kupka's painting alludes.

Similar developments were taking place at the time in Germany, and the connection between abstract art and music was equally important for Kandinsky, who probably best championed a theoretical groundwork for total abstraction in its early years with his publication in 1912 of *On the Spiritual in Art*.¹⁴ With near constant references to music in the text, in his paintings, and in his notes and letters, it is clear that Kandinsky sought in music (the meaning and expression of which derive solely from formal relationships) an analogue for total abstraction in painting. Furthermore, through friendships with such musicians as Thomas von Hartmann and Arnold Schoenberg, Kandinsky was aware of parallel developments in avant-garde music theory and composition.¹⁵ In the years leading up to 1912, Schoenberg abandoned traditional musical scales and key signatures, replacing them with new systems of organization in the same way that Kandinsky and others were reinventing visual forms. Kandinsky saw further

8. Paul Cézanne to Emile Bernard, April 13, 1904, in Chipp, 18.

9. Kupka also exhibited a smaller total abstraction in the Salon, *Amorpha Warm Chromatic*. On Kupka, see Pierre Brault and Brigitte Leal, *František Kupka, 1871–1957*, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2003); Mada Madael, *František Kupka, 1871–1957, ou la naissance de l'abstraction*, exh. cat. (Gent: Snoeck-Ducau & Zoon, 1998); *František Kupka, 1871–1957, ou l'invention d'une abstraction*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1989); and Denise Pédit, *L'Œuvre de Kupka*, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions des Musées nationaux, 1966). See also, in *Inventing Abstraction, 1910–1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012); Leah Dickerman, "Inventing Abstraction," 16–17.

10. Kupka, *Amorpha*, 1912, in *František Kupka, 1871–1957*, 97; and Michael R. Taylor, "Francis Picabia: Abstraction and Sincerity," 110–12.

11. See, for instance, Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters* (1913) in Chipp, 228; Michael Seuphor was born Fernand Berchevaliers, adopting the name "Seuphor," an anagram of Orpheus.

12. Such well-respected scientists as Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, and Camille Flammarion—each mentioned in Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*—were also interested in the possibility of psychic phenomena and their role in physics. Crookes argued that "either vibrations have powers and attributes equal to any demand—even to the transmission of thought."

13. "Address by Sir William Crookes, President," *Report of the Sixty-Eighth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (1899) (London: John Murray, 1899), 31. See Linda D. Henderson, "Victory over Modernism: Boccioni, Kupka, and the Ether of Space," in *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science and Technology, Art, and Literature*, ed. Henderson and Bruce Clarke (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 131–52 and 142.

14. Kandinsky demonstrated great interest in a wide array of sources, including the spiritual and occult, scientific texts, psychology, philosophy and art theory, synthesizing a wealth of material impossible to address here. See, for instance, Rose-Carol Washburn

Long, *Kandinsky: The Development of an Abstract Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Long's "Occultism, Anarchy, and Abstraction: Kandinsky's Art of the Future," *Art Journal* 46, no. 1 (March 1987): 39–45; and her seminar "Kandinsky and Abstraction: The Role of the Hidden Image" (first in *At Forum*, June 1972), in *Major European Art Movements 1900–1945*, ed. Patricia Kaplan and Susan Maeno (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977); Sharon Rungboon, *Sounding Cosmos: A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Art* (Abo, Finland: Abo Akademi, 1970); Jelena Hah-Koch, *Kandinsky* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993); Magdalena Dabrowska, *Kandinsky Compositions* (New York: Abrams, 1985); Vivian Endicott Barnett and Helmut Friedel, *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life. The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1986); Vivian Endicott Barnett et al., *Kandinsky*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009); Peter Vergo, "Music and Abstract Painting: Kandinsky, Coelste and Schoenberg," in *Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art, 1910–20* (London: Tate Gallery, 1980); Edna Garte, "Kandinsky's Ideas on Changes in Modern Physics and their Implications for his Development," in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, 110 (October 1987), 137–44; and Veli Isen, *Okultismus und Abstraktion: Kandinsky's Mondrian 1900–1915*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt: Schm-Kunsthalle, 1989); as sources on Kandinsky I have found particularly helpful, see Arnold Schoenberg, *Wessly Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures, and Documents*, ed. Jelena Hah-Koch, trans. John C. Crawford (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1983).

14. Gabrielle Munier Archive, Lenbachhaus and State Gallery, Munich. Reproduced in Barnett and Friedel, 505 and 641.

15. Nikolai Kulbin, "Free Music," in *The Blue Rider Almanac*, ed. Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 141–46.

16. Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noises* (1916; repr. and trans. Barclay Brown, New York: Pendragon Press, 1986).

connections to his art theories and goals in this new, possibly dissonant, atonal music, and it was an important source for such major works as *Composition VII* (1913), his most radical break from representation to that point. In a note accompanying a related study from the same year, he describes a series of concentric circles, stating that the "inner dissonance equals an outer consonance," calling it "a hidden core force."¹⁴ In the finished painting, the same concentric circles form its central element, from which resound the rest of its colors and forms. For Kandinsky, the circle embodied, among other things, a vibrational model of artistic transmission and reception that would form the core of his artistic theories.

Edited by Kandinsky and Franz Marc, *The Blue Rider Almanac*, published in early 1912, contains theoretical essays on art and theater, art the editors saw as particularly spiritual, reproductions of atonal scores by Schoenberg and his pupils Anton Webern and Alban Berg, an essay by Schoenberg, and an essay entitled "Free Music" by the Russian composer, artist, and theorist Nikolai Kulbin.¹⁵ Like Schoenberg, Kulbin argued for atonality in music, but where Schoenberg's theory was based on the expansion of musical materials to all twelve tones of the Western scale, Kulbin advocated including quartertones, musical intervals closer together than the half and whole steps we are accustomed to hearing. Kulbin stressed the "newness" of quartertones and suggested that they would promote an expansion of consciousness in the listener. Kandinsky saw much in Kulbin's theories that resonated with his own. Kulbin was also a key source for the Italian Futurist artist and composer Luigi Russolo, who performed his atonal "free music" at the opening of the 1930 Cercle et Carré exhibition. Russolo applied Kulbin's ideas even more radically, composing calculated noise in assaults of complex tones and rhythms. In *The Art of Noises* (1913/16), he writes of an expanded consciousness in terms similar to Kandinsky and Malevich: new and challenging stimuli allow the development of elevated reception.¹⁶

Theories of abstract art were also developing in Russia during this time, where Malevich would prove especially influential. Rooted in Cubist and Futurist idioms, Malevich first exhibited the style he dubbed Suprematism, consisting of pure form and abstraction, in *The last Futurist exhibition of paintings: 0, 10*, in Petrograd (now Saint Petersburg), in December 1915. For Malevich, the square and other basic geometric forms, in paintings like *Black Square* and *Color Masses in the Fourth Dimension*, embodied a host of ideas

and sources—the spatial fourth dimension, notions of an expansion of consciousness, Russian icons, and even aerial photography—but more than anything else, were intended to create a meaningful response in the viewer through purely formal relationships. As he later wrote, "the square = feeling" and "the Suprematist square and the forms proceeding out of it . . . [are] not ornament but a feeling of rhythm."¹⁷

Musical underpinnings are less apparent in Malevich's work, but he acknowledged that the seeds of his Suprematist style were planted during work on sets and costumes for the Futurist avant-garde opera *Victory Over the Sun*, with the poets Aleksei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov and the composer Mikhail Matyushin.¹⁸ Khlebnikov's zaum poetry, an atypical meta-language divorced from fixed meaning but far from meaningless, and Matyushin's atonal score and its underlying theories no doubt proved valuable sources. Matyushin's music relies on small shifts to create very noticeable dissonance, something that can also be said of Malevich's *Black Square*, where the angles are purposefully not those of a square. In its initial listing in the handbill for the exhibition *0, 10*, it is called *Quadrilateral* but quickly became known as *Black Square*. Malevich's formal development of his Suprematist style can be described as a reduction of the elements of his earlier Cubo-Futurist works to their most basic forms, a notion the artist himself promulgated. Kandinsky's path to abstraction between 1909 and 1913 was similar, and he employed a similar process in planning his individual paintings, but neither artist relied solely on reduction. The problem they faced was not what to represent, but how to work in a totally abstract manner that would still affect the viewer and convey meaning. Artists sought to learn from music as a model, used it to justify their forays into abstraction, and might make reference to its various methods and forms, but, as Kandinsky stated in 1914, "I do not want to paint music."¹⁹

Being "decorative" was a positive trait for Post-Impressionists and Fauves, but for artists on the verge of abstraction, it was their greatest fear. They were not just making art for art's sake and, in fact, broader cultural changes would prove at least as important as stylistic ones. Picasso and other Cubists looked to sources outside of the Western tradition, so-called "primitive" art such as African carving, as a model for a more abstracted, more geometrized art. They also owed much to late-nineteenth-century scientific discoveries like X-rays, the identification of the electron, the discovery of radioactive matter, and

17. Italics in original. Although typically translated as "feeling," Malevich's word choice suggests sensation more than emotion. See, for instance, Esther Levinger, "Kazimir Malevich on Vision and Sensation," *Word & Image* 21, no. 1 (January/March 2005): 79–89. For more on Malevich, see also Kazimir Malevich, *The Artist, Itinerary, Suprematism* (Unpublished Writings 1913–34; trans. Xavier Hoffmann, ed. Troels Andersen [Copenhagen: Bergen, 1978]; Alexandra Shatskikh, *Black Square: Malevich and the Origin of Suprematism* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012]); Charlotte Douglas, *Swans of Other Worlds: Kazimir Malevich and the Origins of Abstraction in Russia* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); John Mithun, *Kazimir Malevich and the Art of Geometry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); and Evgenia Petrova, Joop M. Joosten, et al., *Malevich: Artiste et Théoricien* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980). For more on Malevich and the spatial fourth dimension, see Linda Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 227. If Malevich referred to his paintings as "nonobjective," stressing that they did not represent nor were they in any way based upon objects from the visible world.

18. See Charlotte Douglas, "Birth of a Royal Icon: Malevich and *Victory over the Sun*," *Art in America* 62 (March 1974): 49–51; and Charlotte Douglas, "Mikhail Matyushin and Kazimir Malevich," *Experiment* 6 (2000): 12–15. For more on Matyushin's theories, see the essay "La Culture Organique," trans. Olga Makhotko, in *Art et Poésie Russes: 1900–1930 Textes Choisis* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1979), 243–53; and Isabel Vinschle, *Kunst und Leben: Mikhail Matyushin und die Russische Avantgarde in St. Petersburg* (Köln: Böhler Verlag, 2012). On Futurist poetry, see Gerald Janeschek, *Zeam: The Transrational Poetry of Russian Futurism* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State Press, 1986).

19. Kandinsky, *Complete Writings*, 400.

20. See Linda Henderson, "Vibratory Modernism." See also Linda Henderson, "X-Ray and the Quest for Invisible Reality in the Art of Fyupa Duchamp and the Cubists," *Art Journal* 41 (Winter 1989): 322–40.

21. See Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Jean Cocteau, *Le rapet à l'ordre* (Paris: Stock, 1926).

22. See Carol Elzel, *Francisque Ducros and Ray Gronberg, L'Esprit nouveau: Purism in Paris, 1919–1925*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2001); and Pierre Gendreau and Margaret Guedégan, *Amédée Ozenfant, 1886–1966. Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint* (Paris: Larivière/Lacda, 2012).

23. With beliefs deeply rooted in spiritual writings, especially of the Theosophical movement, Mondrian expressed some interest in scientific discoveries but not nearly to the extent of Kandinsky and others. See Piet Mondrian, *The New Art—The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Morris S. James (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986). Similarly, he used musical analogies and was somewhat informed by new music but here, too, expresses less interest than earlier abstractionists. Van Doesburg demonstrated keen interest in science, technology, and the spatial fourth dimension, even after the latter had fallen out of favor, supplanted by Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity after 1919.

See Henderson, *Fourth Dimension*, 236 ff. On other physics, see Donald R. Benson, "Facts and Fiction in Scientific Discourse: The Case of the Ether," *Georgia Review* 38 (Winter 1984): 828–37; and Bruce Hunt, "Lines of Force, Swirls of Ether," in *From Energy to Information*, 99–113. It should also be noted that, while classicism's influence was evident throughout Europe at this time, Dada and Futurist provocations continued.

wireless telegraphy, all of which signaled a new impetus for artists to break down traditional forms and to seek out the unseen and the immaterial.²⁰ With new knowledge of the invisible realities around them, the Cubists and Futurists and then the abstractionists were compelled to respond.

Scientific, spiritual, philosophical, and artistic ideas all contributed to abstract art theory in the 1910s. Shaped by radical changes, theories of abstract art before World War I often emphasized anarchic destruction in advance of a great rebirth of society. These ideas were especially prevalent among the Italian Futurists and the Russian Futurists, as well as in Dada, but these groups were by no means alone; apocalyptic visions from Revelation were frequent themes in Kandinsky's work leading up to 1914.

The devastation of the war, however, changed everything in Europe, including art theory. Although notions of spiritual transcendence and an evolving consciousness remained, chaos and destruction viewed in a positive light were largely replaced by calls for order, clarity, and stability; in France, the poet Jean Cocteau expressed these ideas as "le rappel à l'ordre" ("return to order") in a book of essays published in 1926. The resulting broad movement in art replaced the shocking avant-gardism of the pre-war years with a return to the virtues of harmony, often referencing classical culture while remaining distinctly modern.²¹

Abstraction in the 1920s

In postwar France, classicizing tendencies toward order and clarity appear especially in the work of the Purist movement to which Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant belonged.²² Similarly, in the Netherlands, Piet Mondrian and Theo Van Doesburg's De Stijl movement called for harmony created by a universality of expression. Reducing his palette by the 1920s to red, yellow, blue, black, gray, and white, Mondrian used only vertical and horizontal lines in an effort to remove nature from his work as much as possible. For him, the meeting of the horizontal and vertical line represented the reconciliation of all binaries—male/female, static/dynamic, spirit/matter, etc.—in the ultimate expression of universality and a marked difference from the chaos and anarchy of prewar abstraction.²³ To encourage universal harmony further, De Stijl artists sought to introduce their aesthetic into daily life through design.

Many of these trends and ideas were also evident at the Bauhaus, the innovative German art school founded in 1919

by the architect Walter Gropius and with an array of prominent artists on faculty, including Kandinsky, who taught painting and art theory. Dedicated to the unification of the arts through architecture, the Bauhaus emphasized a program of art in service to humanity largely through design, from lamps to fonts, set design to weaving. In Russia, shortly after its revolution, Vladimir Tatlin and his followers adopted Malevich's rigid geometry but with a new interest in utilitarianism and calls for "art into life."²⁴ Dada and Futurist performance also moved the programs of those groups beyond galleries. For Russolo, expansion of consciousness was both motivated by "fervent, rapid, intense modern life" and extended back into it: "This lyrical and artistic coordination of the chaos noise in life constitutes our new acoustical pleasure, capable of truly stirring our nerves, of deeply moving our soul, and of multiplying a hundred-fold the rhythm of our life."²⁵

Cercle et Carré evidences all these trends and represents all of these movements in some respect. Fernand Léger, one of the group's most prominent members, was one of the Orphic Cubists. He had previously been associated with Cubism and was part of the Section d'Or group in Paris. In the 1920s and 1930s, Léger was also working in various related styles, such as Purism (closely related to late Cubism) and total abstraction in a vein very similar to Neo-plasticism, with large blocks of unmodulated color, such as his two paintings titled *Mural Painting* (color plates, pp. 204–5), both of which appeared in the Cercle et Carré exhibition. Purism was also represented by its founders, Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, as well as by such less established Cercle et Carré participants as Marcelle Cahn, Francisca Clausen, and Erik Olson.²⁶ Nadia Léger, née Wanda Khodasevich, then known as Khodasevich-Crabbowska, studied with Malevich in Russia, then in the circle of Léger before becoming his wife in 1952. Neo-plasticism and De Stijl were strongly represented in the Cercle et Carré exhibition by Mondrian, Georges Vantongerloo, Vilmos Huszár, and Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart. Also ranked among the German Constructivists, Vordemberge-Gildewart was the last addition to the original De Stijl group. Other German Constructivists included Willi Baumeister and Carl Buchheister and, of course, Kandinsky, who taught at the Bauhaus from 1922 to 1933. German Constructivists such as Baumeister, Buchheister, and Vordemberge-Gildewart were indebted to the strong Constructivist trends in Dada, itself represented by Schwitters, Ayr, and Otto and Adya van Rees.²⁷ All of these groups were well aligned during this period. Futurist and

24. Picasso's sculptures of 1914, assembled from nontraditional materials, were also an important source for Tatlin.

25. Russolo, 86–87. On the contemporary production of Russolo's work, see Mark Beasley, "A Fantastic World Superimposed on Reality" in Rosalée Goldberg ed., *Periform03: Back to Futurism* (New York: Periform Publications, 2009), chapter 5. On Russolo's immortality, the basis for his Russophone, see Rosalée Goldberg, "Music for 16 Futurist Noise Invenors" and "Lanciano Chessa in Conversation with David Wansman," *Periform03: Back to Futurism*, ed. Rosalée Goldberg (New York: Periform Publications, 2009), 72–83. See also Chessa, Luigi Russolo, *Futurist Noise, Visual Art, and the Occult* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

26. See Marie Louise Spring and Ileván Schlägl, *Marcelle Cahn: vom Purismus zur puristischen Abstraktion*, exh. cat. (Zürich: Galerie & Edition Schlägl, 1983); *Marcelle Cahn*, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre national d'art contemporain, 1972); Yvanka Bosson, *Légers alleje Léger, Ozenfant, Adrian-Nilson, Craatsend Clausen, Lorenzen, Erik Olson, Christian Burg samt Halmstadgruppen före Halmstadgruppen* (Halmstad: Halmstadgruppen, 1994); Erik Olson: *en sörskars drömmar och visioner* (Stockholm: Pinos Eugens Waldensstrände, 2011); Sissel Maria Søndergaard, *Absolutt Avantgarde: Francisca Clausen 1887–1931*, exh. cat. (Hellerup, Denmark: Østgaard Museum, 2011); and Neil Kent, *The Triumph of Light and Nature: Mondrian, Art 1740–1940* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987). The circle of Purist artists was centered on the Académie Moderne, founded by Fernand Léger and Ozenfant in 1924, where Cahn, Clausen, and Olson studied.

27. See *Dada-Constructivism: The Junus Piece of the Twenties*, exh. cat. (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 1984); K. Schippers, *Holland Dada* (Amsterdam: E. Querido's Uitgeverij B. V., 1974); and *Otto en Adya van Rees: Leven en werk tot 1934*, exh. cat. (Wijchen, Netherlands: Kleijn, 1979).

²⁸ The same is true for Torres-García. For instance, his advice to Daura, addressed later in this essay, dismissing the spiral fourth dimension as relevant to their goals for painting.

²⁹ Despite Daura's central involvement in Cercle et Carré and brief adoption of a totally abstract style around 1928–30, in his paintings before and after, a Cézannesque manner of representational geometrization dominated his style.

Dada provocation was even present in the style of Russolo and Sempfor's performance at the opening of the Cercle et Carré exhibition. For some of the younger artists, ideas of spiritual transcendence and an evolution of consciousness were of less interest than for their progenitors. This later generation of abstractionists was at least somewhat less concerned with justifying abstraction, instead, they saw the need for a universal language and the usefulness of abstraction in fulfilling that need as a given, even if it still met with resistance among conservative critics and much of the general public. As the texts published in Cercle et Carré's journal amply illustrate, most of the earlier concerns remain, including spiritual transcendence, evolution of consciousness, analogs to atonal music, and vibrational theories of artistic transmission.

Pierre Daura

The artistic development of Pierre Daura up to 1930, like many artists of his generation, follows a similar trajectory to that of modern art in general. Once-radical ideas like the scientific discoveries that substantiated belief in an invisible world were becoming a given, but even his explicit rejection of certain sources that were important in the 1910s reveals much.³⁰ Daura studied and experimented with a diverse array of styles in the 1910s and 1920s, from his traditional academic training to various modern tendencies, making him a valuable lens through which to view the development of Cercle et Carré, despite his being one of its lesser known members.

Born Pedro Francisco Daura y García but known in his youth by the Catalan name Pere, Daura received his art education at Barcelona's Academy of Fine Arts, La Llotja. His teachers included José Ruiz Blasco (Pablo Picasso's father) and Joseph Cayo. While at La Llotja he also worked for the stage designer Joaquim Jimenez y Sola. At age fourteen, with his young friends Emilio Bosch-Roger and Vidal Salichs, he set up a studio and sold his first painting at its inaugural exhibition to the Catalan artist and collector Pascual Monturiol, who said it reminded him of Cézanne's work.³¹ Cayo urged Daura to go Paris following his graduation to pursue a career in art. The young artist arrived in the French capital in the early summer of 1914; his French identity papers were issued as Pierre, the name he kept until his death, in 1976. In Paris, Daura first apprenticed in the studio of the Post-Impressionist Émile Bernard, with

whom he was friends for many years. One of his first tasks was to organize the letters of Vincent van Gogh for publication and, under Bernard, Daura became well versed in the avant-garde art theory of the fin de siècle and the early years of the new century. Not wanting to return to Barcelona after the outbreak of World War I and unable to enlist with the French army as a minor, Daura was assigned to a Renault munitions factory. Later, he studied engraving under André Lambert.

Beginning in 1917, Daura served three years of compulsory Spanish military service on the Balearic island of Minorca in the Catalan region of Spain, the island of his birth. Beginning in 1919, Daura began exhibiting at Galeries Dalmau, where he showed regularly until 1929.³² He returned to Paris in 1920.³³ From 1925 to 1927, he and Gustavo Cochet, an Argentine artist, designed and made batik material for counturers until fire destroyed their studio. During this period, Daura frequently exhibited with the group *Agrupació d'Artistes Catalans*, usually in Barcelona. He showed at the Salon d'Automne in 1922 and 1926.

1926–1928: Daura and Torres-García

In May 1926, at the request of his friend Charles Logasa, an American painter, Daura went to Villefranche-sur-Mer on the Côte d'Azur to meet Logasa's friend the Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García and view his work. At Logasa's request, Daura had already made initial arrangements for an exhibition for Torres-García in Paris and Daura and Torres-García had been in correspondence since January.³⁴ The two artists quickly became close, and the exhibition in Paris was held at Gallery A. G. Fabre upon Daura's return. Daura selected the paintings and organized the publicity for the show, also taking Torres-García's place after illness forced the Uruguayan's return to Villefranche-sur-Mer.³⁵ A financial success, the sales from the exhibition allowed Torres-García and his family to move to Paris, first into a studio lent by the French painter Jean Hélion, then into an apartment complex on rue Marcel Sembat.³⁶ After Daura's marriage in February 1928 to Louise Héron Blair, an American he met in late 1927, the Dauras moved to the same complex.³⁷

Daura's work of this period maintained many of his earlier Cézannesque overtones, with an emphasis on structure and underlying geometry. He received frequent

³⁰ Daura's first exhibition at Galeries Dalmau was *l'Exposició de l'Agrupació d'Artistes Catalans*, February 1–15, 1919; the last, held October 31–November 15, 1929, also featured his wife Louise's work. Joseph Dalmau edited Francis Picabia's magazine 391 in 1917 and ran one of the few successful avant-garde galleries in Barcelona during this period, exhibiting international abstractionists such as Ayr, Chardoune, Gleizes, Mondrian, Torres-García, and Van Doesburg. Dalmau was also a strong supporter of Surrealism, giving important early exhibitions to Catalan artists Joan Miró and Salvador Dalí, the latter of whom had his first two solo exhibitions there in 1925 (see Elliott H. King, *Salvador Dalí: The Late Work*, cat. [Miami: High Museum of Art, 2010], 51; and Felix Fatafs, *Salvador Dalí: The Construction of the Image, 1925–1930* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007], 1–3).

³¹ In the early 1920s, Daura took part in a street fair in Montmartre with his friends the artist Pere Crétaxans and the poet Marcel Sauvage, in which he sold all of his drawings to the prominent dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler for 350 francs, an extraordinary sum for Daura at the time. Daura Archive, Memours, Page 4. See also Machà, 29.

³² Letter from Daura to Torres-García, January 30, 1926, and letter from Torres-García to Daura, March 7, 1926, imploiting him to come: "as you know the Paris art market, you will be able to make a more judicious choice." Translation from Machà, 37.

³³ Letters from Daura to Torres-García, March 3, April 27, and May 17, 1926. Pierre Daura Archive, Georgia Museum of Art, Athens. Georgia box 136, folder 4 (hereafter cited as Daura Archive; all translations mine with the assistance of Laura Mulero unless otherwise noted). The finding aid for the archive is available at <http://nmla.uga.edu/handle/10424/1004>, along with selected documents.

³⁴ Torres-García, *Historia de mi vida*, 192.

³⁵ At the wedding, Louise's sister Jean Blair and Hélion met; they married in 1932.

36. Letter from Torres-García to Daura, June 30, 1927, Daura Archive, box 136, folder 4; translation in Macià, 38.

37. On a subsequent trip the following year, in the spring of 1928, Daura showed some of his landscapes of Farrugos and of Corsica from the previous year at Sala Badrinas in Barcelona and Torres-García wrote a review of the exhibition praising his gift of painting but anticipating his move from his current naturalistic focus to less objective forms. "See Macià 39–40. Torres-García, "Pere Daura," in *La Letra de Catalunya*, Barcelona, June 22, 1928. Daura also made engravings from some of his landscapes from this trip in a Neocentist style, a classicizing response that Torres-García had also included among his styles before committing to greater abstraction. Daura's early naturalistic painting *Altavilla*, painted during the trip and now in the collection of the Museu de Montserrat (see also Macià 82), later served as the basis for his untitled painting (color plates, p. 170).

38. Letter from Torres-García to Daura, June 20, 1928, Daura Archive, box 136, folder 4.

39. Daura Archive, box 146, folder 7.

encouragement from Torres-García: "Those of us who abstract something essential from reality build a world and object in our own style. That is true creation. Sensitivity and emotion are channelled through intelligence. We are artists, architects, if you will. The others can only do something when in front of an object, they copy its real appearance and are slaves to all they have before them. They are unable to create an image. Now, I believe that they have to make this leap and put themselves on our plane. But not everyone is able to do just that. . . . I believe, dear Daura, that you are gifted enough to make that leap and launch yourself onto this plane of ours."³⁶ After a trip to Corsica in 1928, Daura confessed to Torres-García that he had been unable to resist the urge to paint the beautiful landscape naturalistically.³⁷ Torres-García responds that Daura should "not be concerned . . . do not worry" but urges a return to more Constructivist tendencies: "Now more than ever, I repeat my old advice to you: create with color and geometry, something beyond reality. We do not seek the artistic meaning in reality, but within ourselves—just as a musician does with sounds. Painting has to move in an ideal, free environment and create its own light—and we must reject the surface of the painting—not the 4th dimension, in all its breadth and height, and that's it. Purged of all sensation, pure."³⁸ Torres-García demonstrates his rejection of the spatial fourth dimension, which had largely fallen out of favor in artistic and scientific spheres by the 1920s, and draws on the longstanding analogy between music and abstraction.

In the months that followed, frequent evening discussions on art, theory, and politics among Daura, Torres-García, Hélon, and others of their circle further propelled Daura's considerations of abstraction. Daura's diaries of the period document his stylistic development as well as the general concerns and basic theoretical outline of what would become the nascent group. The first discussion of an opposition to Surrealism among this group appears in Daura's diary entry of August 1, 1928, in which he writes: "We discussed at length the need to coordinate our work with our human natures. Pitting methodical conception against surreal creation. Method and wisdom against humble abandonment to individual instinct. To create, to improvise always. They claim that nothing, no preconceived principle, must be imposed upon our temperament. The subconscious is the only thing that matters. They do not want to admit that it is a slow suicide of the artist."³⁹ Daura goes on to describe the Surrealists' aleatory techniques as

"dangerous accidents." Daura, Torres-García, and Hélon continued discussing the idea of formalizing their opposition to Surrealism, and Daura's diary records the first concrete plans for a group on August 5, 1928: "At Torres' house, big plans for the creation of a pictorial art movement of protest and struggle against the trend of which 'Art Vivant' is the mouthpiece."⁴⁰ Although Florent Fels and Georges Chateausol's periodical *Art Vivant*, published by Larousse, was not officially a part of Breton's movement, it was certainly sympathetic to Surrealism.⁴¹ Daura goes on to compare some of the Surrealists' naturalistic painting techniques to a return to "romantic cuisine" in an argument adopted from an editorial essay by the art critic Maurice Raynal.⁴² Daura writes, "[o]n Raynal and the avant-garde. Go left, frankly. In war as in war" Raynal was a friend of the Cubist Juan Gris and generally sympathetic to modern art. In his editorial, Raynal dismisses Surrealism before arguing against following nature too closely: "It is not in looking at fishes swimming that ship propellers are invented, not by questioning the flight of birds that the engineer built the plane. These inventions owe their realization to the silence of calculations and the magic of the hypothesis."⁴³

In the same diary entry, Daura sharply criticizes the opposing view presented in the adjoining article by Émile Tériade, the first line of which reads, "If man is the image of God, the work of art is in the image of man."⁴⁴ Tériade expresses support for late Post-Impressionism and even begrudgingly accepts Cubism but is clearly opposed to total abstraction. Daura seems to be taking up a call to arms on two fronts, against Surrealism and more traditional modes of representational art. In his initial record of this idea's ferment around Torres-García's table, Daura indicates a movement forming in the theoretical and ideological space between traditionalists and Surrealists. Rather than just being a protest group, Daura and his compatriots were continuing the battle for abstract and highly abstracted art that had been going on since before the war.⁴⁵

In his diary, Daura quotes Tériade's closing lines, in which the critic laments a lack of young painters of merit. Daura finds much to object to and turns to musings on where his own painting should be going. In a review of an exhibition of Jewish art in the same section of *L'Intransigeant*, Raynal compares some of the work in the exhibition with Oriental rugs, not in critique of their abstracting tendencies, but because of what he sees as a lack of facility in expression, declaring, "all architectural spirit is absent." Among the artists listed in the review is

40. Daura Archive, August 8 diary.

41. Chateausol appears without credit in René Clair and Francis Picabia's film *Entr'acte* (1924) as a man following the hearse.

42. Maurice Raynal, "Pour les vacances: 'Travaux d'été,'" *L'Intransigeant*, July 18, 1928.

43. Although conservative on the whole, the paper did give substantial coverage to modern art and included, for instance, a text by Le Corbusier on July 9, 1928, and one by Cendrars on November 5, 1927.

44. Ibid. Although Torres is vague in his *historia* of 1929, he writes in the inaugural issue of *Cercle d'Art Vivant* that his opposition to Surrealism took root after visiting an exhibition of Dali "towards the end of 1930." Paul notes that Torres was often incorrect about dates and that the exhibition occurred November 20–December 5, 1929. She argues that, at any rate, the exhibition is better seen as a "catalyst in a process already underway" (33–34). As Daura's diaries of August 1928 demonstrate, that process had been underway for some months.

45. Émile Tériade, "Hygiène Artistique: Fin de saison ou fin d'époque?" *L'Intransigeant*, July 18, 1928.

46. Daura's suggestion that their effort be joined with Raynal's and his inspiration by the essay are ironic given Raynal's unenthusiastic response to the Cercle et Carré exhibition. Cercle et Carré's members also faced a third front from non-Surrealists who nonetheless saw their efforts as regressive.

46. Galerie Maack, Paris, November 3–18, 1928.

47. Leibniz is also famous for the so-called Leibniz formula for calculating pi. On Leibniz and Freemasonry, see, for instance, "Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabalistic Root of Swedish Illuminism," in *Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion*, ed. Gordon M. Weintraub et al. (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Press, 1989), 84; and Robert Lomas, *The Secret Power of Masonic Symbols* (Newcomer: Put Winda Press, 2011), 91.

Documentation of Daura's involvement is incomplete, but his diaries of 1928–30 are peppered with references to his "brothers" in the "architectural neopaganism" (for instance, December 14, 1928). Some evidence remains in Daura's artistic output, such as an undated cartoon for a mural replete with Masonic symbols (Georgia Museum of Art accession number pending) and stone carvings he made for his studio in St. Cirq. Underneath two sketches for the painting he discusses here, Daura passed a clipping announcing a meeting at the Masonic lodge, "Fraternité," in Paris. The last few pages of his 1928–30 diaries are filled with other clippings announcing lectures and meetings of the Grand Orient de France.

48. The concept appeared in Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* (*Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*) (1710). See also Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Peter Remann, and Jonathan Francis Bennett, *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 182 ff. Voltaire famously mocks this philosophy in *Candide*, or *I'Optimisme* (1759).

49. From *Samliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (Darmstadt: Reich, 1983). See Brandon C. Look, "Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy' (Spring 2013 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/leibniz/>.

Alfred Aberdam, with whom Daura, Hélion, and Torres-García would exhibit a few months later, in *Cinq Peintres Refusés par le Jury du Salon d'Automne*.⁴⁶ After considering comments by both Tériade and Raynal about "the decorative," Daura closes pondering the same question of how to create meaningful abstractions that initially vexed such earlier pioneers as Kupka, Kandinsky, and Malevich: "An Oriental rug is a rug. Colors and forms. I have much to study in that sense."

Picking up Raynal's language of mathematics and science, Daura seems to have paired it with his interest in the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716): "A painter's studio will then become a true laboratory on the easel, a great chalkboard or blackboard. . . . Reality can be plastic (The good is the law of reality [Leibniz])." Daura develops this idea at greater length in his diary entry two days later (August 7): "All morning I thought about the possibility of making a painting according to the precept of Leibniz 'The good is the law of reality.'" Daura may have known of Leibniz's works through his formal studies, but he was most likely attuned to them through their shared connection to Freemasonry.⁴⁷

Daura references Leibniz's optimistic theological argument that we live in the "best of all possible worlds."⁴⁸ In Leibniz's most ambitious work, *The Monadology*, he explains the universe in terms of a wave structure of matter, where all "substances material and immaterial" are an interconnected whole. Daura seems to focus most on Leibniz's epistemology, responding to his concept of "petites perceptions," minute perceptions of universal truth evident in each individual part of the universe. In a passage on pre-established, universal harmony, Leibniz writes that "at every moment there is in us an infinity of perceptions, unaccompanied by awareness or reflection; that is, of alterations in the soul itself, of which we are unaware because these impressions are either too minute and too numerous, or else too unvarying, so that they are not sufficiently distinctive on their own." In Daura's diary entry from August 7, 1928, he connects Leibniz's philosophies of truth and knowledge with his own quest for ever more abstracted but still meaningful forms, echoing the longstanding argument of modernism: "The form can be objective. A simple feature can help us make the point. Beware of chiaroscuro. . . . Banish reflections. . . . They break and erase forms. I tried a small still life, fruit and three yellow gowns, looks pretty good to me, although the actual tones are too set in space. Hence the result of

superimposed planes."⁴⁹ Daura declares illusionistic three-dimensionality in paintings to be a "serious mistake." He argues that effects of light and shadow create "accidents," unrepresentative of the underlying "true color" of the object, which better reflects a universal truth. After comparing these flattened forms to architecture, he writes that "The shapes and colors should be sufficient by themselves. This is the purpose of a picture. Pure painting. . . . A painting is a flat surface."⁵⁰

In November 1928, after being rejected from the Salon d'Automne, Daura, Torres-García, Hélion, Aberdam, and Ernest Engel-Rozier held the exhibition *Cinq Peintres Refusés par le Jury du Salon d'Automne* at Gallery Marck, another important moment in the development of the group. Torres-García and Daura envisioned⁵¹ Reviewed in *Le Monde*, *Volonté*, *Paris Midi*, and *Le Cri du Jour* among others in Paris, *Bianco y Negro* in Madrid, and *La Nau* in Barcelona, the exhibition was well received by critics and did much to establish Torres-García's reputation in particular.⁵² Even Tériade offers a review in *L'Intransigeant* that commends the effort if not the artistic styles displayed and comments Aberdam: "The exhibition also led to the introduction of Torres-García and Van Doesburg, which, despite their later differences, signaled an important shift in the styles of both Torres-García and Daura."⁵³

1928–1929: On the Verge of Abstraction

Daura's diary entries provide an intimate account of his struggles developing an abstract style capable of expressing "the pure qualities of art" and how to realize a social purpose for his art:

What enthusiasm, Torres enamored with his philosophical pictorial ideal says: My place is in front of the easel. My social mission: to paint. [Mathieu] Rosiannu replied, My place: life. My social mission: struggle. My activity in the meele, I am a painter, yes; but I must make art in keeping with this life that surrounds me, art that reflects this meele, this outraged class struggle. I have taken part. My painting must have a party.⁵⁴ . . . But that already goes beyond the plastic forms that interest us. And those that also pose great danger threaten us. Instead of painting, we end up making anecdotal graphics, symbols. And when we tried to incorporate these elements into painting, we sacrificed the pure

50. Daura Diaries, August 7, 1928, Daura Archive.

51. Ibid.

52. In addition to the participation of Daura and Torres-García, who would go on to form Cercle et Carré (initially with Hélion), the brochure for the exhibition emphasized the internationalism of the participants, prominently listing the different nationalities of all five participants. See Daura Archive, box 41, folder 10.

Engel-Rozier is also known as Engel-Pak and Rozier-Pak.

53. *Le Monde* and *Volonté*, November 3, 1928; *Paris Midi*, November 7, 1928; *Le Cri du Jour*, November 6, 1928; *Le Cri du Jour*, November 26, 1928; *Chicago Tribune* (first edition), November 25, 1928; *Bianco y Negro*, Madrid, December 9, 1928; *La Nau*, Barcelona, January 26, 1929. See Meira, 43.

54. Emile Tériade, "Cinq peintres refusés par le Salon d'Automne," in *L'intransigeant*, November 12, 1928. See also Daura Archive, box 41, folder 10.

55. In the end, Van Doesburg and Hélion would form Art Concret while Torres-García and Daura would form Cercle et Carré with Stephori: Aberdam and Engel-Pak do not seem to have participated in either group. At the time of Cercle et Carré, Engel-Pak was associating with the Surrealist milieu of Max Jacob, but he later joined Abstraction-Création. On Engel-Pak, see Serge Geyssens de Housch, Lara Oikarinen, and Bogner Palm, *Engel-Pak: Pioneer of Abstract Painting*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Centre Culturel de la Communauté Française, 2004).

Beneit describes Aberdam as a figurative artist. "ABERDAM, Alfred," Beneit Dictionary of Artists, Oxford Art Online, Oxford University Press, accessed May 3, 2013, www.oxfordartonline.com/article/beneit/B00000245. On the meeting of Van Doesburg and Torres-García, see Paul, 33; Torres-García, *Historia de un viaje*, 260; and Ciria, 31 and 46–48.

56. Here, Daura asserts his political aspirations, which, like many artists of the time, were efflu. The first entry in his 1928–30 diary begins with a clipping quoting Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. Despite his dedication at the time to the ideas of socialism, like most members of the avant-garde he was dismayed by and highly critical of Stalin's regime.

qualities of art... Everyone has agreed that the finished painting should give the impression of a tight, solid surface, upon which one could knock without altering it. A surface! That is the [corner]stone upon which we must build the new painting, pure painting.⁵⁷

Daura's paintings of the period resemble Torres-García's in many ways, with cityscapes and still-lives simplified and flattened within an overall grid that dictates the composition, but Daura struggled with whether these reduced and abstracted forms, essentially symbols, were the answer to the intellectual quest for meaningful abstract forms. In his reaffirmation of Denis's dictum of the inherent flatness of painting, Daura makes clear his general commitment to abstraction at this time, even if its specifics remain undetermined.

The Style
↓
Torres-Garcia

Drawing on elements of various abstract styles prevalent at the time, many of Daura's still-life paintings from 1928 and 1929 hint at Purism, with their everyday objects flattened in strong profile, suggesting a machine-like perfection. At the same time, his frequent use of very heavy contour lines might recall his time under Bernard, whose "cloisonisme" style was defined by its heavy outlines around flat areas of color. Daura's work of this period increasingly set abstracted representations of recognizable objects within a grid of lines composed of both the edges of objects and independent lines with no clear representational content. His most direct source for his emphasis of compositional grids was Torres-García, but he was also aware of his friend's source in Neo-plasticism, the influence of which is evident also in Daura's increasingly prominent inclusion of blocks of abstract color within his paintings. Although Daura did not share all the concerns of De Stijl, he was becoming increasingly committed to the idea of encouraging universal harmony through an artistic language of related abstract forms. Like many artists, he sought a rigor for his process and his paintings without sacrificing his individual expression.

Late 1929 saw Daura still searching for his path within construction and abstraction:

October 30th, 1929]
English lesson from 9:00 to 10:00. Painting. Research in proportion, construction. Unsuccessful. Hopeless. More and more I doubt. And the "need" to "create" tyrannizes me more every time....

Friday the 8th [November 1929]
Yesterday's still life no longer pleases me. It is incomplete. It lacks emotion, so I tried to redo it with the same ordination, but by creating an atmosphere in it that will replace the background and will give unity to the whole, chromatic unity, I mean. The attempt is not bad. But still lacks order and "formal" unity. Must give more brightness to everything. Maybe it is on the right track. English lesson in the evening.⁵⁸

In October and November of 1929, Daura, Torres-García, Van Doesburg, August Herbin, Engel-Kozier, and others of their circle exhibited in the first exhibition of Les Surindépendants in Paris.⁵⁹ During this period, Daura increasingly associated with the circle of first-generation abstractionists in Paris, many of whom would soon join Cercle et Carré. His wife's letters home to her family in Virginia describe some of these encounters with the wit and acuity that was her hallmark:

I rue Marcel Sembat
Paris 18, France
14 November, 1929

Dearest Family:
With all the best intentions in the world, I haven't been able to write to continue my letter of November 2nd. I am so far behind in my diary that I feel lost. Nearly every friend of ours has had an exposition in the last two weeks, and we have had to go to the "Vernissage" of each.

One of the most interesting was that of Arp, one of the band of Dadaists that centered around Picabia. When they started that movement in Zurich, their amusement was to play jokes on the public, and shock people as much as possible. I don't know whether I wrote to you ages ago that we had tea with Torres the day that the Arps came to visit him, and Arp related all of the pranks that they enjoyed so much on the subject of it. They published that they were going to give a conference on Dadaism in an important hall, with paid seats. The hall was filled, the hour arrived for the lecture, and out came four of the band, among them Picabia, seated themselves in four chairs on the stage, and four barbers came out and shaved each solemnly. Not a word was spoken until the operation was finished, and then, fresh and rosy, the four gave a serious lecture

58. Dauria, October 20, 1929, and November 8, 1929, Daura Archive.
59. October 26–November 25, Daura Archive, box 41, folder 41.

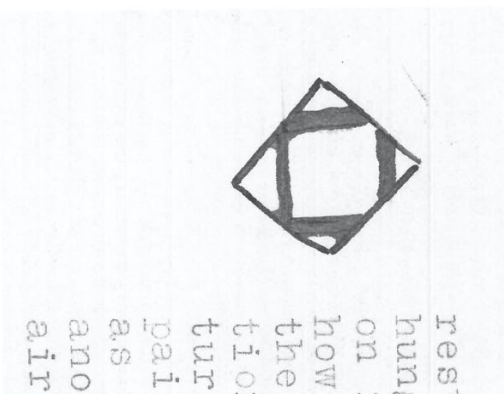
on Dadaism. We went to his exhibition, the first day called the Vernissage, when the artist holds court for all his friends. The gallery was a brand new one, very modern, the interior decorator of which was Mme. Arp. The gallery was full of friends and critics. We took a catalogue and made the rounds after having spoken to Arp. His innovation in painting and exhibition was composed entirely of pieces of flat wood, sawed into abstract shapes, about an inch and a half thick, and glued onto a slab of wood, framed with flat wood of the same thickness as the shapes. The whole was painted in one or two tones of ordinary house paint. That was all very well, but he gave names to his pictures, such as "Paolo et Francesca" to two sort of formless chunks of wood that touch each other, and "Deux Hommes Tenant par la Bride une Tête de Cheval" (Two men holding a horse's head by the bridle). In the midst of that select gathering came four or five young men, who took catalogues and went from one of the pictures to the other shrieking with loud laughter and hearty guffaws. Arp, who once delighted in such, trembled with rage, and said to Pierre: "I am going to put them out!" Pierre said he had a better idea, and dashed out to buy all day suckers to present to each of the young men. They went out with a sorry show of bravado....⁶⁰

In April 1930, Pierre and Louise visited Mondrian's studio, an experience Louise recounted in a letter to her family written the day of the Cercle et Carré exhibition's vernissage:

When I left Jean, I went to join Pierre at Mondrian's studio. Mondrian is the founder of the Constructivist movement in art, and works with the simplest of elements: red, blue, yellow, black and white, unmixed, are the only colors he uses, and squares, rectangles and black lines the only forms. He is 58, and showed us an album of photos of his paintings from the age of seventeen, clearly showing the evolution which he has undergone from Academicism, through Cubism, to his present form. He has written numerous books on the "neo-Plasticism" as he calls his art, and has paintings in the museums of Holland, Prague, and Germany. His studio is as interesting as his paintings. The walls, chairs, tables and easels are painted with white Ripolin, and all the accessories, such as boxes, victrola, etc. are painted in red, blue or yellow Ripolin, and placed so carefully that nothing must be moved out of its proper

Boland

A detail from Louise's letter showing her sketch of one of Mondrian's works.



place. The walls are decorated with different sized squares of red, blue and yellow, placed at calculated but not symmetrical distances. On the white cupboards and tables would be painted a small rectangle of color, and all so calculated that it was impossible not to admire it, though I had never seen anything like it before. The floor was very dark and highly polished, with grey rugs scattered about, and the divan was grey also. With all of those colors at their maximum intensity, the proportion of each in reference to the whole was so perfect that it was at once gay and restful. He showed us his paintings, one of which is square, and hung by one of its points, in diamond shape, with only four lines on its perfect, white surface. As we discussed it, he explained how long he had worked on it, how difficult it had been, because the slightest increase in size of the top line or change in position made the picture too "tragic." He works for weeks on one picture, to get a surface as united and perfect as if it had been painted with one stroke of a large brush dipped in Duco, and he

Inscribing a Circle

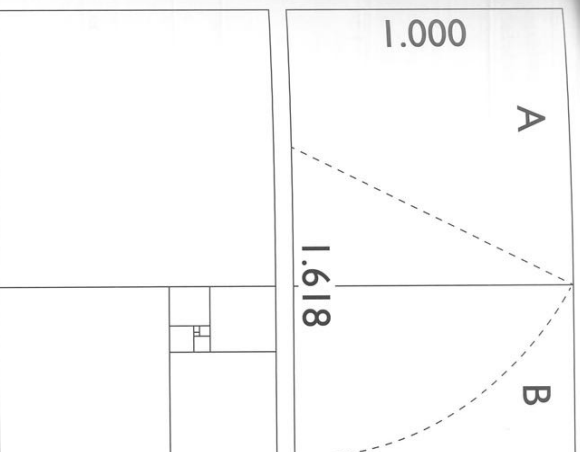
61. April 17, 1930, Daura Archive, box 80, folder 6.
 62. Scott Olsen, *The Golden Section: Nature's Greatest Secret* (New York: Walker & Company, 2006). Popular examples of the golden section found in nature include the spirals of seeds in sunflowers, the growth of each, and fingerprints. The proportion is formed from the geometries of a square and a circle, initially presented at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Museums Conference, 2011 (Greenville, South Carolina), preliminary research for this section appears in Boland, "Formula for Perfection; Pierre Daura's *Street PICTURE 3* and the Golden Section," in *Inside SPAC* (Spring 2012), 18–23.

is as pre-occupied with the proportions of one square in reference to another as ever. Rubens was to suspend the chariot of Victory in air above a riotous scene of battle;⁶¹

Formula for Perfection

Daura's path to abstraction was becoming clearer on the eve of 1930. With increasing success, he was abstracting his subjects more radically than ever, reducing objects to their most essential forms and, in many cases, obscuring their representational value completely for the sake of constructed relationships of form and color. He was realizing Torres-García's advice of the previous year to "create with color and geometry, something beyond reality." Daura seems to have found further confidence in his move toward greater abstraction through his use of the golden section of proportions to generate various forms and to inform their relationships within his canvases. Defined by the Pythagoreans of ancient Greece, variously described as "golden" or "divine," and expressed as a rectangle, a section, a ratio, a proportion, a mean, or a number, it refers to the same idea of perfectly harmonious proportions where $a + b$ is to a as a is to b , which may be expressed as $1.6180339887 \dots$, continuing infinitely. Simplified, it is 1.6, or a ratio of 8 to 5. The golden section rectangle can generate various spiral patterns; it is also intimately related to the Fibonacci sequence of numbers, which draws ever closer to the golden section without ever reaching it. All of these spirals and sequences are found within natural growth patterns, such as the branching of trees, and have long been adopted by artists and architects.⁶²

The golden section had a long history by 1929, and Daura could have known the concept from at least as early as his formal training in Barcelona, or from Freemasonry, where it is a central concept, but its use also found increasing resonance throughout Paris at this time, where it fit naturally with the classicizing "return to order" of modern art. Even before the war, the ratio and its forms had been of interest to the avant-garde. French mathematician Henri Poincaré is said to have introduced the proportion to Gris, who used it regularly. Gris was part of what has become known as the Puteaux Group of Cubists, active from 1912 to 1914 in the Puteaux suburb of Paris and also known as Salon Cubism. Fernand Léger was also an active member of the informal group. Led by Jean Metzinger and Albert Gleize, they named their collective and their exhibitions the Section d'Or—French for "Golden Section." Jacques Villon



Construction of the golden section; reciprocal golden section rectangles and squares

suggested the name after reading a 1910 translation of Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting*, which attaches great mystical significance to the golden section (that translation even more so than Leonardo's original text). The group's use of the term intended to suggest this mysticism coupled with an interest in mathematics, but, other than Gris, the group participants' conscious use of the proportion was occasional at best.⁶³

Le Corbusier used the golden section regularly in the 1910s, rejected it briefly, then embraced it again from around 1927.⁶⁴ His faith in the mathematical order of the universe was closely bound to the golden section ratio and the Fibonacci series, which he later described as "rhythms apparent to the eye and clear in their relations with one another. . . . They resound in man by an organic inevitability."⁶⁵ Le Corbusier's system, like Leonardo's and many others, combined an interest in the golden section ratio

63. Roger Hertz-Fischer, "Le nombre d'or en France de 1898 à 1927," *Revue de l'Art* 118 (1997): 9–18; and Roger Fischer and Etienne Fischer, "Jean Gris, Son Milieu Et Le Nombre D'or," *MACAR* 33, no. 6 (1980): 33–36.
 64. Roger Fischer, "The Early Relationship of Le Corbusier to the Golden Number," *Environment and Planning B* 6 (1979): 95–103; and Judi Leach, "Le Corbusier and the Creative Use of Mathematics," *British Journal for the History of Science* 31, no. 2, Science and the Visual (1998): 185–215. See also Le Corbusier's statement for *Cercle et Carré* issue no. 3 (p. 107).
 65. Le Corbusier, *The Modulor: A Harmonious Measure to the Human Scale Universally Applicable to Architecture and Mechanics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

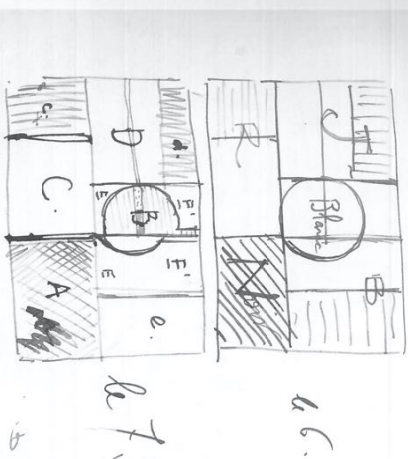
$$\frac{A}{a} = \frac{A+b}{A}$$

46. Cecilia de Torres, "The School of the South: the Asociación de Arte Constructivo 1934-1942," in *El Taller Torres-García 7*; and Torres-García, *Metáfora de la Prehistoria Indoeuropea* (Montevideo: Publicaciones de la Asociación de Arte Constructivo, 1939). On Torres-García and the golden ratio, see Cruz, 36 and 42; and Robbing, 29. Torres-García was encouraged in his use of it by the painter Luis Ferrnández around 1928, who a close friend of Daura, as well as Ozenfant and the Arp and Van Does families. Ferrnández's involvement in Freemasonry contributed greatly to his advocacy of the ratio, probably also true of Daura.

$$\begin{aligned} 67. B = A = C = D = E \\ C + c = D + d = E + e \\ C + c : D + d : E + e : \left\{ \begin{array}{l} A = 8.5 \\ B \end{array} \right. \end{aligned}$$

Diaries, December 7, 1929, Daura Archive.

with the proportions of what he considered the ideal human form and is especially evident in works of the mid-1940s and later, such as *Femme a la main levée* (color plates, p. 148). Torres-García's initial development of an abstract style was culminating on the eve of Cercle et Carré in what was to become his characteristic incorporation of symbols within a geometric grid. Unlike Mondrian's elements of humanistic values within the rational golden section grid was "the nexus between the vital (or the living) and the abstract."⁶⁸ In this reconciliation of antithetical concepts, the artist sought to further Mondrian's theories with what Torres-García later called Constructive Universalism. As with most diverse modern art movements, the artists who would become members of Cercle et Carré often disagreed about the specifics of these theories. Artists like Le Corbusier and Torres-García saw formulas like the golden section as tools to help generate the kind of universalism and perfection they sought. Other abstractionists, like Mondrian and Léger, preferred an intuitive approach to geometry and did not make deliberate use of formulas in their work. Contentions within Cercle et Carré often seemed more concerned with degrees of abstraction than with the means employed to achieve them, despite the great variation of artistic processes and theoretical underpinnings, but for Daura, the golden section proved an important strategy in his quest for meaningful abstraction. Daura's paintings of the period are replete with golden section ratios. In an untitled cityscape of 1929 known as *Street PICIRI 3* (color plates, p. 172), the painting's canvas equals two golden section rectangles, one on top of the other. Most of the interlocking rectangles in the work similarly correspond to the "divine proportions," which the artist uses to generate a grid formed in the interplay between golden section rectangles and their reciprocal rectangles and squares. Several sketches at the back of Daura's journal of 1928-30 relate to one of his total abstractions, known as *F1* (color plates, p. 173). As his notes indicate, Daura used a formula to determine the proportional equivalencies of the different sections of the painting.⁶⁹ Daura's notations also involve the relationship of the central circle to the painting's squares, an issue that was very much on his mind at the time. In a related journal entry of December 7, 1929, he writes, "The circle remaining a floating form, independent of the general structure of the painting, I tried to find the way to tie it together. It seemed



Pierre Daura, sketch for *F1*, diaries.

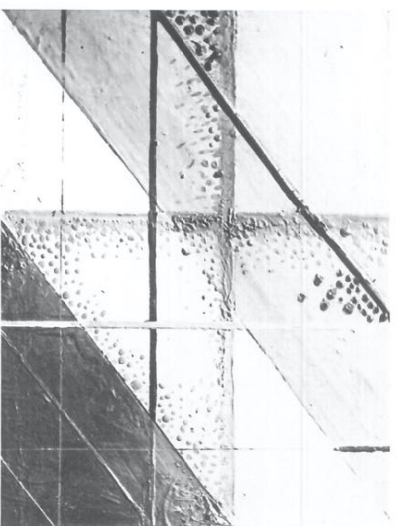
to me to be achieved by bisecting it on the proportional and asymmetrical axis and by offsetting its parts, which nevertheless remain exactly the same in their measurements."⁶⁹ In the first study for *F1*, the circle is whole; in the second sketch, it is split vertically into two unequal parts, the right one shifted down slightly, imparting a subtle dynamism to the otherwise stable picture composed largely of golden section rectangles.⁷⁰ The interplay between stability and dynamism stems from the circle, which is set within a square but not centered, surrounded by planes, and intersected by the picture's main compositional lines. Daura was never willing to divorce himself completely from at least subtle suggestions of nature in his palette, but these colors consist of shades of red, yellow, and blue, along with black, grays, and white. Most of these features clearly respond to De Stijl, and *F1* is among Daura's most successful total abstractions, embodying what Mondrian called a "dynamic equilibrium," an asymmetrical balance of forms and colors.⁷¹ Daura's *Elan Discipline*, included in the 1930 exhibition, also employs an interlocking grid of vertical and horizontal lines, many of them defining golden section

68. Diaries, December 7, 1929, Daura Archive.

69. The equation applies to the second sketch of December 7, in which the circle is split. The finished painting is generally consistent with the second sketch, but Daura made adjustments.

70. In addition to Daura's application of Neo-plastic sources, the intersection of the circle in *F1* also suggests a general Constructivist tendency. Although made by rectangles and a circle, it recalls Kandinsky's statement, "The impact of the acute angle of a triangle on a circle produces an effect no less powerful than the finger of God touching the finger of Adam in Michelangelo." See *Complete Writings*, 799. Daura's work of this period also adopts a lexicon that, quite removed from Neo-plasticism, reminds me of Franzölli's *Intervista con la materia* (Interview with Matter) (see color plates, p. 222).

71. Letter from Louise to her family, November 23 and 28, 1929, Daura Archive, Louise, although an accomplished artist, was not an abstractionist. As she explained to her mother in a letter of December 29, 1929 (Daura Archive), "Pierre's new painting is none of the 'break' sort. It is a sort of rationalization and geometrizing of painting. The Constructivists think that a painting should be pure, i.e.,... pure color, and pure form, and that having any subject matter takes away from the purity as one thinks more about the subject than the actual quality of the painting. ... Therefore they abolish the subject matter and occupy themselves with columns of color and the perfect equilibrium and construction of the picture. ... It is distinctly sober, and for me is not 'complete', as I think that an artist ought to be something more than a geometrizer. But at least it is a serious and sober step against all the lawlessness and bad painting that parades and struts under the name of modern Art!" Louise's painting, *Vue sur Calcege (Corse)* was included in the Salon d'Automne of 1928, exhibited under her maiden name, "Hélion Blah, (Louise)." See Daura Archive, box 18, folder 1; *Salon d'Automne Catalogue, Exposition de 1928* (Paris: Société du Salon d'Automne, 1928), 215.



Pierre Daura, *Plan discipliné*. This image, a photograph by Michel Seuphor, is the only visual record of any of Daura's contributions to the 1930 exhibition. The location of the work is unknown.

proportions. As Daura's derivations from his initial mathematical equation in *F1* suggest, he and others employed formulas like the golden section to help further their artistic ends, but their use was never formulaic. Daura was always willing to adjust his geometry for expressive ends.

Du groupe constructiviste

As Daura's individual abstract style matured, so did concrete ideas among Daura, Torres-García, and their circle for an artistic group to promote abstraction. In a letter to her family from November 1929, Louise Blair Daura describes the artistic climate in Paris at the time: "At present in Paris there are three tendencies, that of the reactionaries, headed by Camille Maclair, the old critic, who writes philippics against all foreign artists, and upholds any and all French artists who aren't 'Cubist', 'Fauve', or 'Sur-realist'. Then there is the Sur-realist group, which is sweeping all before it, and is the white hope of all the merchants. The third is the Elementarists, or Constructivists, or Neo-Plasticists, all that believe in abstract art that is 'constructed' no matter how it manifests itself." Already, Daura and Torres-García were positioning themselves against the growing dominance of Surrealism. November 29, 1929, marked their first steps

toward organizing what would become *Cercle et Carré*. As Daura's diary entry for the day reveals, there were already strong tensions that would create a division even before the group was formed: "Worked in the morning. At 4:00, went to Seuphor's house with the Torres-Garcías. Received very warmly. [We] tried to define the possible creation of a group, everyone who works in constructivism. Mondrian in the lead. To avoid unpleasant relations we thought it necessary that this group be divided into two sections, A and B. Torres' dislike for Engel, Hélion, and Marcel Wanz having necessitated it."⁷² Seuphor and Torres-García had met while visiting an exhibition of Vordenberges-Gildebart's work on view at an art supply store near the *École des Beaux-Arts* in the Left Bank.⁷³ In his later account of the initial meeting, Torres-García describes Seuphor as "a youngish man of keen intelligence and agile, poised, alert and of high spiritual vibration."⁷⁴ In addition to a shared commitment to Constructivist ideas, the two shared such acquaintances as Van Doesburg, although he and Hélion would both prove contentious allies.

Van Doesburg, a Dutch artist deeply inspired by Kandinsky's writings of the 1910s, encountered Mondrian's work in 1915 and saw in it an ideal. In 1917, drawing together other geometric abstractionists such as Mondrian and Vilmos Huszár, Van Doesburg founded the group *De Stijl* (Dutch for "the Style"), dedicated to Mondrian's theories of abstraction, which he called Neo-Plasticism. In 1924, Van Doesburg and Mondrian began having serious disagreements, most famously over whether or not to use diagonal lines—Van Doesburg adopted diagonal lines while Mondrian did not, seeking instead to impart a greater dynamism to some of his paintings by turning the canvases 45 degrees, creating a diamond or lozenge shape while maintaining the perfectly vertical and horizontal lines important to his theories of universalism. This divide led to a falling out between the two artists and Mondrian's resignation from *De Stijl* (they reconciled to some extent in 1929 after a chance meeting at a café in Paris).

Daura's reservations quickly began proving true and another diary entry three days later shows the divisions continuing to grow: "Hélion protested against my admission into the group of constructivists because 'Daura never understood anything, and he knows nothing.' Very good. I am accused: We will see who better understands."⁷⁵

As Daura predicted, tensions were growing and a division within the group seemed inevitable, with Hélion, Engel, Wanz, and Van Doesburg on one side and

72. Daura Diary, November 29, 1929, Daura Archive. References to Wanz are scarce, as Seuphor notes dismissively in a description of Art Concret: "The group in question consisted of Castand, Hélion, Thunigjian, van Doesburg himself, and a certain Wanz that nobody has ever heard" (Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 20). Louise Daura speaks even more candidly in a December 7, 1929, letter to her family, describing him as "the seventeen year old boy that everyone dislikes so much, and who came and insisted on spending the night with us several months ago."

73. According to Seuphor, they met at the "color-merchant Povolotsky's store at the corner of rue Bonaparte and rue des Beaux-Arts. More precisely on the mezzanine of the shop where my friend Vordenberges-Gildebart exhibited his geometric works, for which I wrote a preface [to the catalogue]. I was there on a certain day, accompanied by the exhibitor when the back of the room a gray-haired man, leaving his wife, came towards us," Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 8.

74. Torres-García, *Historia de mi vida*, 260.

75. Daura, November 27, 1929, Daura Archive.

76. Ibid., December 1, 1929.
77. Ibid., December 2, 1929; Daura finds Van Doesburg's insistence on "purity" disagreeable, arguing that truth is to some extent relative, suggesting that even with the aim of universality in art, there must be room for some variation.
78. Ibid., December 4, 1929.

Torres-García, Daura, Seuphor, and Mondrian on the other. Daura writes, on December 1, "Seuphor crossed off Doesburg [sic], who, on the list of names joining the group, had signed up under his name and under that of Ponce! poet of the highest talent. To Torres' question, 'Do you understand that every work of art must have a moral principle as its basis?' Seuphor responded without hesitation, 'Yes. And both in life and in art . . . to struggle against nature, instincts, the personal.'⁷⁶ Even after this account of Van Doesburg's ejection, Daura's diary describes a meeting the following day in which Van Doesburg read his "manifesto on the 'Constructivists'."⁷⁷ Two days later, writing of an evening meeting in which "fifteen friends came to talk about the construction group," Daura records that "It is done. Everyone agrees. Doesburg is expelled from the group. And with him Hélión and Wantz."⁷⁸ Louise Daura described the split in a letter to her family of December 7, 1929:

Our big interest at present is the forming of the "Group of Construction." Torres spoke of forming it to one of our friends, Fernandez, and when Fernandez went to see Doesburg, he told him what Torres was going to do. To the consternation of Torres, Doesburg wrote enthusiastically that he and Torres would form it together. Which would have been all very well, but for the fact that Doesburg is so crooked and has done so many scandalous things to everyone with whom he comes in contact, that Torres didn't want him in the group. But as Doesburg has not yet done anything to Torres, he couldn't get out of it. They tried to work together. . . . Seuphor scratched off [Ponce], and Wantz, and wanted to scratch of Hélión, and so did Torres, but Pierre said not to, or Hélión would be sure to think he was the cause of it. The next day Doesburg came to see Torres, and was furious to see the "poet" and Wantz scratched off. Pierre dropped in a little later, and Doesburg said to him, "You know Hélión is against your entering the group. He says that you don't understand anything in 'Constructivism' and that he won't have you in the group. But I told him that I had full confidence in you, and that you should be in the group." Doesburg ignored the fact that Torres begun the group, and tried to manage it all himself, on entirely different lines from which Torres wanted, so in the end, Torres told him simply that Doesburg could make his own group, and that he would make another. Several days after that, Torres went to see the Van Rees,

and found Mondrian there. Mondrian, as long as Doesburg was part of the group, refused to belong, which was a great blow, he being the founder of the Elementarists. When he heard that Doesburg was no longer in, he said that he would belong, and became enthusiastic about it. Everyone there had something against Doesburg, so that we are more and more glad at the split in the party. Seuphor will be the editor of the review, which will be only a tiny sheet, to begin with, but we hope for it to grow, and to have a lot of group expositions, etc.⁷⁹

Van Doesburg's expulsion seems to have been less than absolute. In an undated letter of this period, Seuphor writes, "My friend Theo van Doesburg, officially invited January 7, 1930 to participate in the formation of our group, felt obliged to refuse. And, apparently for reasons of simple pride, clearly seeing that he could never behave among us as a dictator."⁸⁰ Seuphor later recalled inviting Van Doesburg to participate in the group and being refused, postulating that the reason was Van Doesburg's *Art Concret*.⁸¹ In this matter, the two seem to have agreed. In a letter from February 2, 1930, to Evert Rinsema, a Dutch poet and associate of De Stijl, Van Doesburg writes that "these gentlemen did not invite me because I intend to form a group myself."⁸² The question of whether or not Van Doesburg was invited to join seems resolved by letters between the two now in the Seuphor archive. A copy of a letter to Van Doesburg from Seuphor on Cercle et Carré stationery and dated January 8, 1930, invites him to join the group for the twenty-five-franc dues and to contribute to the journal. A response from Van Doesburg dated January 13 rather pointedly declines.⁸³ Over the course of early 1930, the relationship between the two varied, and Van Doesburg died March 7, 1931, but whatever temporary animosity there was between members of the two groups, it seems that participants of both understood that they were working toward a common cause, even while in competition with one another. Throughout early 1930, Seuphor, Torres-García, and Daura (Cercle et Carré) continued their planning and Van Doesburg, Hélión, et alia theirs (*Art Concret*). As Prat writes, the primacy of either Cercle et Carré or *Art Concret* has been the subject of some debate since 1930, with various arguments as to who came first, but such disagreements may be predicated more on how a group's genesis is defined than by differing accounts of the events that took place.⁸⁴ Torres-García started the group dedicated

79. December 7, 1929, letter from Louise to her family, Daura Archive, box 50, folder 4.

80. The letter appears in the third issue of the *Cercle et Carré* journal (see p. 101).

81. Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 19.

82. See Prat, 36.

83. Letterenthus, Antwerp, Archive Michel Seuphor, correspondence files (in lowercase throughout; emphasis is Van Doesburg's): "Thank you for your kind and flattering letter. If your group is interested to know my artistic tendency, it would no doubt find one or more sentences about it in one of my articles or books [in the periodical] I art nowman about my personal collaboration, as I have already said at Marinetti's soirée, I do not see the need for a review or group consisting of opposing trends. We have passed the period of a 'broad-based view' and we want to finish, never can a group not exclusively based and strictly defined, composed by opposing elements, walk 'unanimously' towards an ideal of 'construction', here is my opinion, that may be able to serve as useful advice, this fundamental contradiction in the trail of your organization and review forces me to abstain from collaborating with your journal with my very amicable and respectful greetings to madame." The finding aid is at <http://anet.ua.ac.be/record/isaeth/au:18884/N>.

84. Prat, 34.

85. Fahre, 8.
86. Prat, 37.
87. January 13, 1930, Seuphor archive, see also Prat, 37.
88. Van Doesburg's insistence that he join Art Concret to the exclusion of Cercle et Carré seems to have been a factor; see Prat, 37. Fernández seems to have avoided joining either group but later participated in Abstraction-Création.
89. See Domela's comment in his contribution to the group's first journal (page 80).
90. Daura Daries, December 6, 1929, Daura Archive.

to structure and construction and to "do something against Surrealism," working from the start with Hélion and Daura.⁸⁵ Van Doesburg joined the effort briefly before splitting off from the group along with Hélion to form a group more specifically focused on total abstraction. Cercle et Carré published its first journal in March 1930, whereas Art Concret published its in April, but it may be more useful to consider the genesis of both groups in the division of November and December 1929. Torres-García was the first to conceive of a group formed in opposition to Surrealism through the promotion of broad ideas of structure and construction, including but not exclusively devoted to total abstraction, so Art Concret is perhaps best viewed as an offshoot of Cercle et Carré, a group formed in protest of a group formed in protest.

On December 7, 1929, and again on December 14, Van Doesburg arranged a small gathering of artists, including Hélion, Wantz, Otto Carlsson, Léon Tundjijian, Luis Fernández, and Antoine Pevsner, to discuss the formation of his abstractionist group.⁸⁶ Pevsner also participated in meetings with Torres-García and Seuphor during the same period. Pevsner's brother Naum Gabo, also a Constructivist sculptor, writes in a letter to Seuphor of Antoine's visit and mentions a group led by Van Doesburg based on "constructivist principles."⁸⁷ As Prat observes, these groups were "fishing in the same waters," but Seuphor's close connection to Mondrian contributed to greater success in recruitment, due to the Dutch artist's prominence within the European avant-garde. Although Mondrian and Van Doesburg had reconciled to some extent in 1929, some tensions remained. Pevsner eventually joined Cercle et Carré, and a similar situation and outcome is documented with Vordemberge-Gildewart.⁸⁸ In addition to the appeal of prominent members of the avant-garde, the broader scope, greater inclusiveness, and more democratic nature of the group that would become Cercle et Carré contributed significantly to its larger numbers, even if those factors also led to lively discussion among members.⁸⁹

On December 6, 1929, Torres-García, Seuphor, and Daura met to begin planning in earnest, focusing on their need for a journal to broadcast their ideas and deciding that they would evenly distribute the number of lines of text among group members.⁹⁰ The journal was not realized in quite such a democratic way, although its content was relatively pluralistic. Accounts of those present at the group's meetings do not suggest that either Seuphor or Torres-García had a habit of dominating discussion, but

Laura Valent's thorough analysis later in this volume shows that Seuphor exercised significant control over the group's message through his role as editor. Although all members were invited to contribute, decisions as to length and placement as well as significant edits to the texts ensured that the theories broadcast in the group's journal conformed more to Seuphor's framework than they would have otherwise. Seuphor's adoption of the moniker "Editor" rather than "President" of the structure Abstraction-Création would employ, was especially appropriate. Seuphor exerted considerable control by directing communications, not just the journal but as spokesperson and impresario, through his torrent of letters at the time, and through his numerous histories later.

Even as plans began taking shape, many questions remained. Following a dinner meeting at Torres-García's apartment on December 13 with Seuphor, Jean Xceron, Pevsner, and others, Daura records in his diary that he asked if they wanted Hélion in the group, which opened up discussion about its general goal. According to Daura's account, the evening's debate centered largely on the group's purpose, with doubts that there was sufficient commonality among the styles and ideologies, or "philosophical identities," of the artists proposed to allow a cohesive artistic group and questions as to whether forming a group in opposition to something (Surrealism) was sufficient or whether they should instead be focused on "being pro something." Daura makes clear the uncertainty of some present at the initial meetings: "What purpose does the group pursue? Construct what? For whom? Why? etc. etc."⁹¹ The broad, if vague, rubric of "construction" provided room for all. Even Hans Arp proved a suitable fit, despite his associations with Surrealism and interest in the aleatory.⁹² Contentions remained, among them the name for the group.

Cercle et Carré

The working name for the group was "construction" in Daura's diary entry of December 4, 1929.⁹³ In Seuphor's 1971 account of the group's history, he writes that the naming of the group was "the first battle" and that "everyone had something to offer but no two ideas were in accord."⁹⁴ Mondrian suggested *Stop* for the title of the journal, an idea that seems to have gone nowhere. Seuphor suggested Cercle et Carré but says that Torres-García did not immediately accept it. The name suggests geometric abstraction

91. Daries, December 13, 1929, Daura Archive.

92. In fact, Arp had his own disagreements with Surrealism, and his relationship with Breton had cooled considerably by his time so he seemed only too happy to emphasize the Constructivist nature of his work by participating in Cercle et Carré. See Eric Robertson, *Arp: Painter, Poet, Sculptor* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 86–112. See also Prat, 69, who cites an illuminating response to a question from his friend the poet Jan Brzokowski about his views on Neo-plasticism and Surrealism, published in *L'Art contemporain*, no. 3. Arp cites his ties to Surrealism through Dada but laments the direction of the veristic Surrealists. Meanwhile, he says that Neo-plasticism is "direct but exclusively visual." See also Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 12: "A difficulty could arise from the case of Arp, who was exhibiting with the Surrealist group, but we found him quite favorable to the idea of establishing a group with 'constructive' tendencies."

The relationship of individual participants to Surrealism was not always as antagonistic as the group's statements might suggest. In a reply to a questionnaire for *L'Intransigent* (November 2, 1929), Kandinsky writes about the relationship between Surrealism and geometric abstraction: "One important post-war phenomenon is Surrealism, which is trying to create a new relationship with nature."

abstract form might appear cold to the Surrealist. It seems to me that the Surrealists give precedence to the 'romantic,' while abstract painters, on the contrary, give precedence to the 'classical.' They are, nonetheless, inextricably related, since in both one can see the two forms of expression: Classicism and Romanticism. . . . One puts alongside nature a nature that is surreal. The other considers nature and art as two worlds coexisting in parallel fashion. Both, nature and art, are the offspring of nature and create a surreal dual sound." In Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*, 741–43.

93. Daura refers to it by various variants in his diaries: "d'un groupe pour ceux qui travaillent dans le constructivisme" (November 24, 1929), "groupe des constructivistes" (November 27, 1929), and "du groupe construction" (December 4,

1929). Daura Archive, see also Louise Daura's letter from December 7, 1929, to her family, which calls it "Constructivism" (Daura Archive).

94. Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 13. Editions du Seuil, 1969, 113. Participants also did not address historical interest in these forms, although Purist art theory discussed some suggestions of the Mediterranean tradition of the perfect geometries and symmetries of the circle and the square.

95. Daura Archive, box 42, folder 8. After specifying to Torres-García the format for the logo's final modification, Seuphor adds that he "would like as Daura's on everything." See also Macia, 41. Seuphor seems to have been especially assured of his graphic abilities, recently having seen Daura's design for an Italian edition of John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* (Paris: Editions Italianes di cultura sociale, 1930), which demonstrates a sophisticated synthesis of Constructivist-oriented styles.

96. Sadly, Daura later sent the second page—with the design the group decided on—to Daniel Robbina, who was preparing a monograph on Torres-García. Robbina died shortly thereafter, and the page of Daura's design has been lost. See Daniel Robbina, correspondence to Pierre Daura, February 21, 1972–December 1974, Daura Archive, box 42, folder 8.

97. Prat (73a) gives the price of dues as twenty-five francs. Dues for the group were initially set at thirty francs, per a January 13, 1930, letter from Seuphor to Wertheim. By April, they had been reduced to twenty-five francs, as noted in a letter with accounting notes from Torres-García to Seuphor, April 2, 1930 (Seuphor archive, doc. no. 19863413; reproduced in Prat, fig. B). Dura included a subscription to the journal. Most of the members paid twenty francs, but Querleir paid one hundred to have extra copies of the journal to distribute. Gropius paid sixty francs, Torres-García, Baumeister, and Wertheim each paid fifty. Schwitters is recorded as having paid forty-five francs; Wolke is listed as having paid fifteen francs. In a July 16, 1930, card from Daura to Daura (see the facing page), she notes that dues

more than other participating styles, but it found resonance among the Purists, with their interest in perfect, underlying geometries. In a later text, Seuphor describes the pairing of the forms as the "simplest emblem to embody all things. The rational world and the sensory world." He goes on to relate them to "the ancient Chinese symbols of the earth and the sky" but says he did not admit this symbolic interpretation at the time for fear of further objections from his collaborators.⁹⁸ In the end, Daura provided the deciding factor: "But I had found an ally in the painter Daura who had the idea to do some small draft illustrations with the circle and square motif. He created one in particular, which was so attractive that suddenly all the objections fell and it became the sign of the group. I saw, once again, a simple image, without the slightest comment, could have more power than the most sensible speeches in the world."⁹⁹ Seuphor writes to Torres-García on December 21, 1929, "I will stop by your house and (or) Daura's Wednesday the 25th at 3:00 to pick up Daura's drawing," presumably referring to a finalized rendition. He includes his own copy of the design before advising that the circle should be "sufficiently spaced out from the ET, so that in no case could it be read 'OET' or even 'Oeio,' as that would be disastrous."¹⁰⁰ Preliminary sketches indicate that Daura employed golden section rectangles here again in his design for the letters "et." The image on page 152 of the color plates in this volume shows the first of two pages of sketches charting the development of Daura's idea, the "small draft illustrations" to which Seuphor later referred.¹⁰¹ In the final design, the golden section proportions are less evident but still play a role.

With the name and logo decided, stationery and letterhead were printed, announcements were posted, and invitations to join were extended. Daura and Torres-García helped recruit their friends and acquaintances, but Seuphor had by far the greatest reach and sent countless letters on behalf of the group. His correspondence with Willi Baumeister is especially engaging, and suggests much of the international tenor of the group, with text in French and German, set in a Constructivist style. Dues for the group were set at twenty-five francs, roughly equivalent to one U.S. dollar at the time.¹⁰² The formal and mathematical relationship between the circle and the square was already of interest to Daura. It found further resonance with other avant-garde artists of a Constructivist bent. Many other members of the group foregrounded relationships between the two forms in their work at the time, including Sophie



Postcard from Willi Baumeister to Seuphor, January 31, 1930. Letterhead, Archive: Michel Seuphor.

Tauber-Arp and Vantongerloo. In response to the invitation Seuphor extended to participate in the group and its journal, Kandinsky writes that, although he had some initial reservations because he saw structure and construction as a means, not an end in art, he was reassured by the list of other prominent participants and by the group's logo: "I want to tell you what a joy it was for me to see so beautifully composed in black and white my beloved forms—the circle and the square—at the top of your letter. The circle is, indeed, an even richer form, it is both very precise and very flexible. I wish you great success!"¹⁰³ In a letter to Seuphor of January 31, 1930, Torres-García describes his idea of structure: "Structure in its broadest sense: the search for equilibrium, for unity, equivalent relationships between forms, planes, colors, between the simple elements that compose the work of art. Equilibrium, simplicity, deliberate rhythm are desired, not the instinctive, results of consciousness and judgment, not sensual abandon."¹⁰⁴ The group's journal and its exhibition brought together diverse trends united under the broad rubric of "structure and construction" and, for the most part, found support within the Parisian avant-garde that was not under Breton's sway.¹⁰⁵ The first issue of the journal was issued March 15, 1930, and quickly exhausted, many copies being sold in bookstores in the lively artistic district of Montparnasse.¹⁰⁶ Seuphor recounts an encounter with Robert Delaunay shortly before the exhibition in which the great pioneer of abstraction offered enthusiastic support for Cercle et Carré

were charged to ten francs per month at a group meeting of May 22, 1930 (Daura Archive, box 42, folder 9). Twenty-five francs was roughly equivalent to one U.S. dollar at the time, but each one-to-one comparison is problematic given the quickly changing rates of inflation and devaluation of currencies due to the Depression and lag in its effects between different countries. Prices in Paris rose five hundred percent between 1914 and 1930. The average wage of a Parisian house painter was 4.80 francs per hour in 1887 and 6.50 francs per hour in 1930. See Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market 1910–1930* (New York: Garland Press, 1981). I am grateful to Nancy Versari, whose unpublished text on Cercle et Carré in the Daura Archive cites this information. See also Prat (73) on the economic situation at the time.

100. Kandinsky to Seuphor, January 24, 1930, quoted in Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 16. Kandinsky's shift to a geometrical Constructivist style is perhaps best explained in his statement in the first issue of *Cercle et Carré* (see p. 83).

101. Torres-García to Seuphor, January 31, 1930, Letterhead doc. # 19863414. He ends the letter by lamenting Daura's absence from their last meeting: "I regret the absence of Daura. I hope this is not a deception. Personally I am very keen on his participation."

102. Not all proponents of abstraction saw fit to join these groups. Anna Pebody-Stewart (color plates, pp. 134–35) is an interesting case. Although many of the members of Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création were her friends and colleagues—her husband, Diogenes, was even vice president and co-founder of the latter—she joined neither.

103. Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 19. A single issue cost 3 francs.

104. *Ibid.*

105. In *Comœdia*, March 28, 1930; see Prat, 78. Seuphor suggested that the author might be Yvonne Randerson (see p. 106).

106. Leterrenhus, Seuphor archive. Seuphor also describes some of the organizational and financial aspects of the group in his *Cercle et Carré*.

107. Clipping in Seuphor scrapbook, Leterrenhus; and on the cover of the journal.

108. For instance of Daura's involvement, see letters from Torres-García and Seuphor, February 4, 1930. Leterrenhus doc no. 18653418 and 18653414. Vera Idelson later took the role of

treasurer for the group, as Laura Valeri writes in this volume.

109. The gallery owner was one "Anne Friedberger." See Prat, 74.

110. *Ibid.*

111. Prat, 75. The area is still a gallery district, but 23 rue la Boétie was a real estate office as of my visit in July 2009 (confirmed by Google Maps Street View as of this writing).

112. See Prat, 75 and 81; and Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 18.

Seuphor wrote the introduction to the catalogue for the exhibition.

113. Prat, 75. Seuphor asks Torres-García in a letter from February 15, 1930, that Jaime Colson and

Charcroux be included without payment as the latter was especially a "case of true misery." Seuphor archives.

114. Prat, 75.

and its ventures, although neither he nor his wife, Sonia Delaunay, joined the group.¹⁰⁴ Not all reactions to the journal were favorable. A review in *Comœdia* under the name "le rapping" sarcastically asks if it is not a "retrospective" publication, as "considerations of consciousness of being," "knowledge of truth," and "relativism," etc. are worn.¹⁰⁵

Letters between Seuphor and Torres-García that winter and spring tell of the continued organization of the group, its journals, and the exhibition planned for April.¹⁰⁶ In their announcements and in the journal, Seuphor described himself as "Editor" (*Rédaction*), with "Administration" by "J. Torres-García." The price for subscription was twenty francs in France and thirty francs elsewhere.¹⁰⁷ Torres-García handled most of the finances while Seuphor managed other matters. Daura also continued to assist with administrative tasks, as did Vantongetloo and Russolo, who helped make arrangements with Galerie 23.¹⁰⁸ The group paid four thousand francs for the use of the space, half on April 18 and the remainder on May 1, 1930. Vantongetloo, Russolo, Seuphor, and Torres-García signed the contract with the gallery.¹⁰⁹ They briefly considered Jacques Dvorotzky's space, where Seuphor and Torres-García met at Vordenberge-Gildewar's exhibition, but, given the number of members interested in participating, deemed it far too small for their needs.¹¹⁰ Relatively new, Galerie 23 had the advantage of being in an affluent neighborhood and close to other galleries, such as the Paul Rosenberg Gallery at 21 rue la Boétie, which during the *Cercle et Carré* exhibition featured an exhibition of paintings by Picasso, Braque, Fernand Léger, and Marie Laurencin.¹¹¹ Examples of other exhibitions held shortly before at Galerie 23 include those of Henry Cros (French, 1840–1907), an *Art Nouveau* painter; Serge Friedberger, a printmaker working in the vein of German Expressionism; and a Futurist exhibition in December 1929 in which Russolo premiered his *Russolophone* in Paris. Shortly before the *Cercle et Carré* exhibition, Torres-García also organized an exhibition of work by his children, Olympia, Auguste, and Iphigène, in the space.¹¹² Each participant contributed 125 francs toward the cost of the gallery rental, with some exceptions.¹¹³ The gallery had four rooms and a basement. Participants were for the most part constrained to one large work, two of "average size," or three if small.¹¹⁴ The dimensions given as an example of a large canvas in a letter to Alberto Sartoris were 1.5 × 2 meters, or roughly 5 × 6 ½ feet, although it is clear from the checklist and exhibition installation

photographs that allowances were made, especially for more prominent artists.¹¹⁵

The room through which one entered the gallery had work by Wojśka, Biarnason, and Baumeister on the left and Buchteister, Gorin, Daura, and Lahnet on the right (see the section of photographs and ephemera beginning on p. 268 for installation photographs).¹¹⁶ Paintings by Kandinsky hung on pillars dividing the first two rooms. Upon entering the second room, works by Vordenberge-Gildewar, Vantongetloo, and Arp were on the right wall. A second work by Vantongetloo was added at the last minute.¹¹⁷ On the left wall hung works by Henryk Szewski, Mondrian, Tæuber-Arp, and H. N. Werkman. The installation of this room led to some conflict between Vantongetloo and those who wanted a canvas by Clausen to hang across from Mondrian's work instead of Arp's relief.¹¹⁸ The left wall of the third room had paintings by František Poltýn, a grouping of two large paintings by Fernand Léger on either side of a relief sculpture by Pevsner, with a painting by Tæuber-Arp below Pevsner, and a painting by Cahn. Seuphor recalls this room as his favorite, citing Pevsner's relief and paintings by Léger and Tæuber-Arp.¹¹⁹ The right wall of the third room had large paintings by Ozenfant and Torres-García, along with a smaller work by the latter, and work by Idelson. Small works by Schwitters and Olson, and Cuelo's masks hung on small pillars in the space, and Vantongetloo's sculptures were on a table. The smallest room in the back had work by Otto and Adya van Rees and Clausen, among others. All of these rooms were fairly open to one another. The basement had architectural drawings by Sartoris, two sculptures by Gorin, and the collaborative *tableau-poème* by Mondrian and Seuphor (color plates p. 213).

Descriptions and photographs of the installation suggest that the arrangement of works was somewhat organic; rather than a system or groupings by style or nationality, the show was hung to look its best while fitting everything slated for inclusion. In addition to suggesting a certain pragmatism, the installation further demonstrated the group's democratic ideals (in many ways more than the journal), its internationalism, and its members' desire to work under the common banner of "structure and construction," with abstracted representational paintings intermingled with total abstraction. Purist paintings by Ozenfant and Cahn were in visual dialogue with large abstractions by Pevsner and Fernand Léger. Architecture also played a key role. Its representation in the exhibition through models, drawings, and plans by Le Corbusier, Sartoris, and

115. *Ibid.*, letter from Seuphor to Sartoris, March 2, 1930.

116. See also Prat, 76.

117. *Ibid.*, 81.

118. *Ibid.*, 76, according to an account by Franciska Clausen of May 5, 1978, who says "I had to go into a corner," i.e., the fourth room, which was the smallest.

119. Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 22.

120. On Satoris, see Marina Sommadossi Groati, *Alberto Satoris: L'immagine razionalista 1917-1943* (Milan: Electa, 1988); Alberto Satoris, "Metafisica dell'Architettura" (1984) in *Paragone: Architettura* 1-10 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989); and Koenig de Baranano, Antonio Bonet Correa, et al., *Alberto Satoris: La Concepción Poética de la Arquitectura 1901-1998* (Valencia: IVAM, 2000). On la Corbusier, see *La Corbusier ou la Synthèse des arts*, exh. cat. (Milan: Skira, 2006); *L'Esprit Nouveau: Le Corbusier et l'Industrie 1920-1935*, exh. cat. (Strasbourg: France Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 1987); and Tim Benton, *The Villas of Le Corbusier 1920-1930* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

121. "[The opening] witnessed a violent struggle between Vantongerloo and Van Doesburg so that he almost managed to fall backwards down the stairs leading to the basement." *Ibid.*, 22 n. 13.

122. *Ibid.*, 22.

123. Para. 77, from an interview conducted May 15, 1978.

Vantongerloo supported the theories of Seuphor and many other participants on the important connection between architecture and abstract construction in the visual arts.¹²⁰ The second edition of the group's journal was published just before the exhibition's opening, April 15, 1930, allowing it to serve as a catalogue and checklist, and sold well.

The evening of the opening vernissage, Torres-García read his essay on painting, although the history of the evening has not emphasized this event. A disagreement between Van Doesburg and Vantongerloo takes center stage in later accounts; according to Seuphor's admittedly secondhand report, it resulted in a physical confrontation.¹²¹ Seuphor recounts that "visitors were rare" during the exhibition's run, but Picasso, who lived nearby, visited twice: "[Twice, returning] to the gallery] in the morning, I found myself there alone with Picasso. At least he was attentive to everything. He could just stand in front of any given canvas for what seemed to me a very long time. We did not speak to him, and he did not speak to anyone."¹²² Marcelle Cahn recalled returning to the gallery a few days after the opening and being confronted by a visitor: "A man strongly attacked all that [was on view] and I retorted: it took courage."¹²³

A closing event for the exhibition was held on April 30 and seems to have been a success, judging from extant accounts. The activities and spirit of the evening are best described by Louise Daura in a letter to her family of May 16, 1930:

The exhibition of the group Cercle et Carré came to an end with a lecture on modern poetry by Seuphor, at 9:30 P.M. The big "Gallery 23" was crowded, everyone curious to know what the statement meant on the invitations "Lecture by Seuphor, accompanied by Russolo, Masques of [Gernán] Cueto." Pierre laughingly suggested that Seuphor would recite poetry behind a masque of Cueto's, while Russolo muttered on his Russolophone. "And sure enough it was." After a lecture on modern poetry, he read some of his own poems, in polyphonic form, the words not meaning anything, the sound being his only preoccupation. He held before him a very modern masque, made out of sheet-iron, that was very successful. But Seuphor, tall, slender, very refined, in his tuxedo, looked so incongruous behind a masque that would have taken a John the Baptist to carry it off. Each poem was accompanied by music on the Russolophone, a huge machine.



Russolo playing his Russolophone at the exhibition's closing.

constructed by Russolo himself, on the order of an upright piano, with pedals, a keyboard written on paper with the notes, and instead of playing on keys, as there weren't any, he shoved back and forth heavy wooden handles that worked horizontally, one above the other, just about where the keyboard would be. Out of that instrument came strange groans, guttural choaks [*sic*], the sound of a subway rounding a curve with a grinding shriek, that of a dentist's drill working on your teeth, gradually increasing to that of a street drill for cement, and ending with the sound of the street car pulling up 9th street, mingled with the last of the Aens of the St. Paul's choir. Seuphor's voice was almost drowned out by the snorts and convulsive gasps of a number of people who weren't sufficiently "highbrow" to appreciate such strides in the realm of music and poetry. And standing at the side, where she could view everyone, Mme. Seuphor glowered at every unfortunate who couldn't conceal his laughter. When that was over, everyone made a dash for the bar, where all who couldn't appreciate the Modern in art did honor to the Old in liquor. I was determined not to drink, so after I had passed my glass off to someone else, I got behind the bar, and washed glasses and served drinks to everyone else, and so escaped without having tasted a drop. The other impromptu bar maids, seeing my

124. Daura Archive, box 80, folder 8.
125. Seuphor, Cercle et Carré 25; and Seuphor, *Le Style et la Craie*, 150; Kandinsky was unable to attend the opening due to commitments at the Bauhaus, but arrived the following day.
126. Maurice Raynal, "On expose," *L'Intransigeant*, April 25, 1930.
127. Jacques-Louis Tournain in *La Pierre*, April 26, 1930.
128. Seuphor archive. See also Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 20 n. 14: "There were echoes of favorable press abroad, including Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia." He also writes that "cultural exchanges with Poland were particularly interesting in these years. In 1929 and 1930, Jan Brzdkowski published in Paris, in collaboration with Miron Chodasiewicz-Gabrowska (future wife of Fernand Léger), the bilingual review, *L'Art Contemporain*, where one finds, in addition to the Polish painters and poets, the names Masson, Arp, Tzara, Derrière, Mondrian, Léger, Miro, Cendrars, Demos, Torres-García, Vanongelot, myself and others" (24). Seuphor also comments on the exhibition reviews in the third issue of the group's journal (see p. 123).
129. Ibid., 21–22. Paul (78) demonstrates that Seuphor's claim of xenophobia is largely unsupported by other coverage, at least among the avant-garde art press. Instead, Prat attributes the silence to the generally fractured attitudes toward art in Paris at the time. See her Chapter 3.

willingness to help, abandoned the job, and Iphigénia Torres, the younger daughter of Torres-García, joined me, and we held the fort until 12:00 when the gallery closed. The wine was so strong that one man asked me: "Is this wine or whiskey? I never drank anything as knockout!" Pierre and I returned home then, but the rest continued the celebration at the Dome until far into the morning.¹²²

Seuphor's lecture on "new poetics" was reproduced in large part in the third and final issue of the journal. He later recalled being intimidated before his reading by the number of prestigious attendees at the closing event—such pioneers of abstraction as the Delaunays, Dada cofounder and poet Tristan Tzara, Cocteau, Swiss novelist and poet Blaise Cendrars, the Italian poet and founder of Futurism Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the Belgian poet and critic Paul Dermée, and the French-German poet Yvan Goll, in addition to such esteemed Cercle et Carré members as the Arps and Mondrian.¹²³

Despite this support from the avant-garde in Paris and the success of the exhibition's closing event, the immediate critical reception of the exhibition was limited and the scant acknowledgment received from the Parisian press was unfavorable. In his review in *L'intransigeant*, Maurice Raynal describes their efforts against the "depravations of Surrealism" as "difficult and thankless" and says their aim to act like a "medicine" against Surrealism can "hardly win more sympathy than can be given a drug."¹²⁴ He takes odds with what he sees as a lack of focus and expresses confusion as to whether it is a show of Purism or Neo-plasticism, failing to appreciate the common bonds between the styles. Jacques-Louis Tournain complimented Galerie 23's eclecticism in showing modern art following an exhibition of traditional paintings before criticizing Cercle et Carré for a lack of novelty: "Why continue to trample the same turf? It is all fake and outdated now."¹²⁵ Clippings Seuphor preserved reveal that the exhibition was received more favorably abroad, especially in Poland, something Seuphor's friend Brzdkowski's connections helped ensure.¹²⁶

According to Seuphor, general xenophobia and the fact that abstraction was still not completely accepted contributed to a lack of interest in the exhibition among critics they hoped would respond.¹²⁷ Waldemar George did not comment on the exhibition in *Forbes* despite his past support for exhibitions of Constructivism and Purism and a direct

appeal from Seuphor.¹²⁸ Christian Zervos, in the third issue of *Cahiers d'art*, does little more than note that the exhibition occurred, in a tone Prat describes as "bordering on contempt."¹²⁹ In Zervos's description of participants as "ex-members of other movements and students, he signals a dismissal based on what he considers a lack of novelty and innovation within the group as a whole, as well as a lack of cohesion, a common complaint of the critics and a worry some members expressed. Where in August 1928 Daura wrote in terms that positioned the group not only in opposition to Surrealism, but also in support of abstraction against traditionalist detractors, they now found themselves contending with accusations from the avant-garde of being regressive or, at best, unfocused. Their big-ten approach ran the risk of prompting such claims, but the exhibition of April 1930 represents the fullest expression of the bonds of "structure and construction" shared by these interconnected schools of abstracted and totally abstract art. Given Seuphor's control of the group's ideological message in its journal, it seems the exhibition of 1930 most realized the collaborative nature and shared message of the group as Torres-García and Daura first envisioned it.¹³⁰

As Catherine Dossin aptly demonstrates in her essay in this publication, the significance of Cercle et Carré within the history of modern art was shaped more by Seuphor's later accounts than by any attention the group received while active. Seuphor later writes that "it was difficult to speak of a success," but he finds that it was "not quite" a failure because "the group's meetings continued, as lively as before, and the journal seemed able to continue, even though the group as such should cease to be."¹³¹ Cercle et Carré would also live on, in many ways, through its role as a precursor to Abstraction-Création in Europe and *Círculo y Cuadrado* in South America.¹³²

The Dissolution of the Group

For much of the summer of 1930, Torres-García stayed with the Van Rees family in Switzerland and traveled throughout the region. In September, Seuphor and Torres-García met in Switzerland to discuss the future of Cercle et Carré.

They disagreed over its proper course, and the Uruguayan distanced himself from the group. In October 1930, during preparations for issue four of the journal, Seuphor became ill. After three months bedridden, he left Paris to convalesce in Grasse, in the South of France. During Seuphor's absence

120. Letter from Seuphor to Torres-García, April 2, 1930.

Seuphor archive. George had also written the foreword to the catalogue of an exhibition of Torres-García's work at Galerie 234, Paris, December 1–7, 1928.

121. "The group Cercle et Carré organized an exhibition at Gallery 23 of works of ex-nepotism, ex-Surrealists, ex-Dadaists, abstracts and the students of Léger grouped together, included among the exhibitors, Arp, etc." Christian Zervos, *Cahiers d'art* 5, no. 3 (1930). See also Prat, 79.

122. Some voices were still stronger than others in the exhibition's design, as can be expected; see, for instance, the episode among Vanongelot, Cendrars, and Arp described above.

123. Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 22.

124. See Seuphor, "The Equity of History," n.p.; and Barrois, "Cercle et Carré: as contribution historique," in *De Style*; Cercle et Carré, 1974 (n.p.), both of whom maintain that Abstraction-Création and Salon des Réalités owed their existence to Cercle et Carré. In the United States, the lasting legacy of the group's theories can be seen most clearly in the American Abstract Artists group, founded in 1928; see "American Abstract Artists: Editorial Statement 1930" in *Art in Theory*, 1890–2000.

As *Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (London, UK: Phaidon Publishing, 2003), 386, and *anthology editors' note*. Some indications of the growing legacy of Cercle et Carré may be seen in its references in modern art survey texts such as H. Harvard Arnason and Daniel Wheeler, *History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* (New York: H. N. Abrams), which gives two paragraphs to the group's accomplishments in the 3rd edition (1986), 322–23, and adds another reference in the chapter introduction for the 4th edition (1996).

Arnason and Maria Prohaska, 370.

135. *Ibid.*, 23, on Vantongerloo's appropriation of the list; Seuphor offers a combination of genuine praise and only slightly veiled insults in his discussion of Abstraction-Création, perhaps a necessary tact in promoting the lasting importance of his group while suggesting his displeasure at some of those involved in forming the new one. Seuphor's glaring omission of Van Doesburg's central involvement in Abstraction-Création's foundation further suggests this reading, given his earlier criticisms of the artist. On the formation of Abstraction-Création, see Fabre, 91–103.

136. For instance, Arp, Tzschner, Arp, Hédon, and Fernandéz resigned in 1934. See Fabre, 98–100, for a complete list of journals and participants.

137. *Ibid.*, 101. In its insistence on total abstraction, the program of Abstraction-Création was more closely aligned to Art Concret than Cercle et Carré.

138. See chart of journals in Fabre, 139. Abstraction-Création had only one artist of Latin American descent, the Chilean Luis Vargas Rosas, then living in Paris, but it did boast more American members than its predecessor, including Carl Helyar, Aristotle Gorky, and Alexander Calder.

140. For a particularly useful timeline, see Cecilia de Torres's *Chronology in Joaquín Torres-García: Constructing Abstraction with Wood*, 182–225.

from Paris, Vantongerloo took the membership and subscription lists of Cercle et Carré and, with the artists Auguste Herbin, Etienne Beuville, and Van Doesburg, began forming a new abstractionist group: Abstraction-Création.¹³⁵ Van Doesburg died March 7, 1931, but he was initially vice president of the new group, before Vantongerloo succeeded him, and played a major role in its formation. Abstraction-Création was formed in February 1931 and, beginning the following year, produced a journal, issuing one each year, five in total, until it disbanded in 1936.

Where Cercle et Carré's journal was predominantly text, *Abstraction-Création* was primarily images. The group held a few exhibitions in Paris during these years. Its initial membership of around forty would eventually grow to about one hundred, with additions and departures, it counted about fifty artists in its ranks at any given time.¹³⁶ Like Cercle et Carré, Abstraction-Création represented a somewhat loose affiliation of styles with strong geometrically abstract leanings, but its criteria were clearer than those of its predecessor. Its goal was "the organization, in France and abroad, of exhibitions of non-figurative art commonly called Abstract Art, this is to say works which do not either copy nor do they interpret nature."¹³⁷ Approximately one third of Cercle et Carré's members were active in Abstraction-Création. The new group's narrower mission meant that the Purist faction was excluded, but its more clearly defined focus on abstraction and other factors attracted such new artists as Kupka, Albert Gleize, Joseph Albers, László Moholy-Nagy, and the Delaunays. Seuphor contributed an essay to the second issue of *Abstraction-Création's* journal, and the group made an exception to its rule of total abstraction for Picasso, who contributed to its fourth issue in 1935.¹³⁸ Without Torres-García's involvement, Latin American participation suffered, but in its broad distribution of European nationalities along with Russians, and a few artists from the Americas, Abstraction-Création maintained the internationalism of Cercle et Carré.¹³⁹

In 1932, Torres-García left Paris to pursue a teaching position in Madrid.¹⁴⁰ Encouraged by the Uruguayan poets Armando Vasseur and Eduardo Dieste, both of whom he met in Madrid, Torres-García moved back to Montevideo in 1934. He founded *Asociación de Arte Constructivo* the following year and, in 1936, began issuing a journal for the group under the name *Círculo y Cuadrado* ("Circle and Square"), reviving Daura's Cercle et Carré logo. Torres-García's new incarnation of the group would have major

implications, not only in Latin America, but also internationally, further ensuring the lasting significance of what had begun in the evening debates around his dining room table.

Pierre Daura returned to representation in St. Cirq Lapopie, the medieval village in southwestern France where he moved in May 1930 with Louise, then pregnant with their daughter, Martha.¹⁴¹ In the fall of 1930, Daura participated in the one of many ESAC (Exposition Sélectes d'Art Contemporain) organized by Theo van Doesburg's wife, Nelly, in Amsterdam and in The Hague, exhibiting three paintings: two still lifes and another painting entitled *Variation*, probably works from early that year.¹⁴² He showed once more in Paris in 1931, but exhibited primarily in Barcelona during this period.¹⁴³ Although his style continued to be informed by his experiments with abstraction, he returned to the influence of Cézanne in his approach to compositional structure. In February 1937, he returned to his native country to fight against General Franco's armies in the Spanish Civil War, serving as a forward artillery observer.¹⁴⁴ He was seriously wounded on the Teruel Front in August 1937, but the trauma of the war produced deeper wounds. His already deep commitment to his family redoubled, but while he remained committed to his artistic practice, participating in the politics of a career exhibiting and selling his work held little interest.¹⁴⁵ The Dauras were visiting Louise's family in Virginia when World War II broke out, and Pierre took a job as chair of the art department at Lynchburg College for the 1945–46 academic year, then joined the faculty of Randolph Macon Woman's College, where he remained until 1953. Before teaching college art, Daura provided Cy Twombly's first artistic instruction in 1942–43 after being asked by Twombly's father, head of athletics at Washington and Lee University, for advice on whether to allow his teenage son to pursue art over sport.¹⁴⁶

Throughout his life, Daura's work responds, more than anything else, to the character of his surroundings. As he confessed to Torres-García in 1928 after his trip to Corsica, he simply could not resist the perfect beauty embodied by nature, nor restrain from representing the visible world. In both his representational work and his abstractions, Daura searched for an underlying truth. He seems to have maintained his allegiance to Leibniz's philosophies and the idea that the interconnection of all things means that "every simple substance has relations that express all the others and that is consequently a perpetual living mirror of the universe."¹⁴⁷ In his many landscape paintings from Virginia, Daura's style continues these underlying strategies while

141. Daura first sketched St. Cirq in 1914, and he and Louise visited the village on their honeymoon in 1929; later that year, they purchased a thirteenth-century house badly in need of restoration, a project they would continue for the rest of their lives. The property was donated to the French Region Midi-Pyrénées in 2002, and it is now used as an artists' colony. Les Maisons Daura, administered by the Maison des arts Georges Pompidou.

142. Daura Archive, box 43, folder 3. Nelly van Doesburg is listed as "Mme. Péro van Doesburg" on the exhibition brochure. Including seventy-three works by twenty-three artists, the exhibition included Arp, Calh, Charroux, Engel-Pak, Fernandéz, Freundlich, Torres-García, Mondrian, and Tzschner, among others.

143. Galerie Billiet, Paris, June 26–July 9, 1931. Daura Archive, box 43, folder 4.

144. See Biographical Note in the finding aid for the Daura Archive: <http://hmla.illinois.edu/Armla/> and Daura Archive Series 2, Spanish Civil War. See also Macia, 117–36, for Daura's involvement in the war.

145. See Heidi Gealt's forthcoming catalogue of an exhibition to be held at Indiana University Art Museum, the Daura Gallery at Lynchburg College, and the Georgia Museum of Art, *Pierre Daura, Painting Attachments*.

146. See Boland, "Martha at Thirteen," in *One Hundred American Paintings* (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 2011), 212.

147. Leibniz, *Monadology*, 56.

¹⁴⁸ Breton purchased Kandinsky's *Tension in Red* (1928) from Galerie Crédara, Paris. It entered the Guggenheim Museum's collection in 1938, as a gift of Solomon Guggenheim, but was later deaccessioned. See Hans K. Roethlis and Jean K. Benjamin, *Kandinsky: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, vol. 2 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), no. 770, 772.

¹⁴⁹ Jean-Louis Bédouin, *André Breton: poèmes d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Secker, 1980), Daura Archive, box 3, folder 4. Translation by Martha Daura.

responding to a new sort of idyllic setting with richer colors and more lyrical lines. Only in a series of paintings on artist's board, most likely examples for his students, did he return to a strict geometrically abstract style. In these compositions, the golden section ratio and its reciprocal squares and rectangles are even more evident than before, as in the example on page 173 of the color plates.

Appropriately, his return to serious studies in abstraction coincided with a renewed interest in abstraction in the United States. In very late works, Daura focuses primarily on figural groups with religious and mythological references and overtones, featuring heavy contour lines and areas of color composed independently from the lines, in a style somewhat akin to Fernand Léger's later works.

Although Daura lived in Virginia for the remainder of his life, he returned to St. Cirq with his family each summer following the conclusion of the war. In the 1950s, André Breton, as enchanted by the town as the Dauras had been, took up residence just down the street from them. The two men quickly became friends. Breton seems to have taken no offense at Daura's 1929–30 protest against his movement; he had probably welcomed it, pleased to have warranted a countermovement and grateful for the added attention it drew. In fact, the animosity expressed by the Cercle et Carré founders toward Surrealism does not seem to have been much reciprocated. Breton was always quick to include anyone he could under the auspices of Surrealism. Although he clearly preferred what has been called "veristic Surrealism," he nonetheless welcomed the abstract Surrealists and seems to have appreciated many other abstractionists' works, such as Kandinsky's *Tension in Red* (color plates, p. 185).¹⁴⁸ In 1951, Breton gave Daura a book of his poetry, inscribing a poem to his new friend:

From my window
Each morning
I rejoice at seeing
The birth of a blue smoke.
I would say to myself
There, my friend Pierre Daura is up.
This smoke
Veils and unveils
A sensitive and compassionate nature such as I like
And find so few of.
May that blue smoke
Rise again each summer!¹⁴⁹

A few years later, Daura reciprocated with a text of his own for Breton's *Formes de l'Art. I. L'Art magique*.¹⁵⁰ Breton's central thesis is that art was the "vehicle of magic in archaic societies," a trait "rediscovered" by the Surrealists. In the book, Breton includes results from a questionnaire in which he asks five questions about "magic" and "modern art." The seventy-five respondents included luminaries in diverse fields, such as Martin Heidegger, Georges Bataille, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Octavio Paz, and such Surrealist artists as René Magritte, Benjamin Péret, and Leonora Carrington. Daura answers in ways consistent with mysticism expressed in Surrealist publications and in the Cercle et Carré journals: "The magician tries to enchant the universe. The modern artist reveals the enchanted universe. . . . It is very rare that a magical object has the virtue of spreading universally. It operates only in certain conditions, and this by way of revelation and initiation."¹⁵¹

Other Trajectories

It would require another volume to chart what became of each participant in Cercle et Carré, but some examples and characterizations follow. Kandinsky stayed at the Bauhaus until 1933, when the Nazi regime forced its closing. He moved to Paris, where his style shifted from stricter geometries to more lyrical forms and a generally softer palette, although his theoretical underpinnings remained much the same. Mondrian maintained his rigorous use of horizontal and vertical lines and a restricted array of colors. His only really marked stylistic change followed his move to New York in 1940 to escape the war, when, inspired by the city's dynamism and jazz music, his canvases became populated with energetic lines made of smaller blocks of color.

Although Fernand Léger worked in a number of related but distinct styles, perhaps his most dramatic stylistic shift also took place during his refuge in New York City from 1940 to 1945, when the lights of the city inspired his use of independent areas of color. The styles of many of Cercle et Carré's members stayed relatively constant or developed gradually over the remainder of their careers, for instance, Arp, Tadeusz Kantor, Schwitters, Gorin, Yvonne Gildewart, Pevsner, Weikman, and Stazewski, whose compositions remained consistent with his earlier work although his palette changed considerably.¹⁵² Many of the artists fell clearly into the camps of either geometric or lyrical abstraction, but others moved more fluidly within

¹⁵⁰ André Breton, *Formes de l'Art. I. L'Art magique* (Paris: Formes et reflets, Club français de l'art [impr. de N. Perrin et fils], 1957), 151, *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁵² See, for instance, *Art Schwitters: Catalogue raisonné*, ed. Karin Oelchard and Isabel Schütz (Hannover: Sprengel Museum, 2003); *Jean Corin*, exh. cat. (Nantes, France: Nantes de Presse, 1977); Alberto Sartoris, *Jean Corin* (Venice: Alinari Edition d'Arte, 1975); Elisabeth Lebon and Pierre Brault, *Antoine Pevsner: Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre sculpté* (Paris: Association Les Arts d'Antoine Pevsner, 2002); Jan Coubiers, *George Panopoulou 1886–1965* (Zürich: Proffert, 1998); *Clifford: The Complete Works* (Mantle: Pencil, Verlag, 1990); Dietrich Hahn, ed., *Yvonne Gildewart* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Weikman: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Stazewski: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Arp: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Gorin: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Kantor: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Yvonne Gildewart: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Pevsner: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); *Lebon: Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, 1980); 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153. See *Pilla: e il Manifesto dell'Arte Sacra Futurista*, exh. cat. (Turin, Italy: Galleria Galvani D'Arte, 2000); *Pilla: Il Futurismo*, exh. cat. (Milan: Casa Editrice Sonzogno, 1932); Achille Bonito Oliva, *Prampolini, 1913–1956* (Modena: Galleria Fonti d'Abisso, 1985); and Enrico Crispolti, *Prampolini: dal Futurismo all'Informale* (Roma: Edizioni Carte segrete, 1992).
154. See Willi Baumeister, 1889–1955, exh. cat. (Frankfurt, Germany: Museum Giesch, 2009); and *Willi Baumeister et la France*, exh. cat. (Cohart, France: Musée d'Untermythen, 1999).
155. See *Uroen og bogfarer: surrealisme i Skandinavia 1930–1950*, exh. cat. (Bergen: Bergen Kunstmuseum, 2004); and K. G. Hultén, Viveca Bosson, and Hans Mörtner, *Le Groupe de Hainstadt* (Hainstadt: Hainstadtgruppen, 1978).
156. On Lahet, see *Lahet*, exh. cat. (Galerie Galerie-Lahet 94, 1989); *L'Après-midi libertine . . .*; *Bibliothèque évolutive et galante: livres illustrés et éditions originales du XVIII^e s. au XIX^e s* (Bruxelles: Galerie Simonson, 1989); *Tableaux et dessins anciens et du XIX^e siècle, sculptures et miniatures, atelier Luc Lahet* (Paris: Artcurial, 2013).
157. Peter Weibel, in *Beyond Art: A Third Culture* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2005), 67, notes that Suschny was also a poet. The journal's title suggests the Hungarian word "today," but its primary reference is the group Magyar Aktivizmus ("Hungarian Activism"), a Hungarian Constructivist group founded by Lajos Kassák that included Molnár Nagy and Peter Dobrovic. *MA* was published in Budapest from 1916 to 1918, when it was banned, then in Vienna from 1920 to 1928. In May 1928, the group staged events combining Constructivist art, atonal music such as Bartók's, modern dance, and poetry to which Suschny contributed visual art and poetry. Schemper was in attendance at one *MA* performance in Paris on June 14, 1928, and Kassák came to know Lager, Arp, and Le Corbusier at this time.
158. See Hans Cuyjck, *Oscar Liljy*, exh. cat. (Zürich: Kunstsalo Wolsberg, 1971); *Ausstellung Oscar Liljy*, exh. cat. (Zürich: Kunstmuseum Zürich, 1944); and Walter Kern, *Oscar Liljy*, exh. cat. (Zürich: Pra Verlag, 1930).

abstract currents in these years. The paintings of Prampolini and Pilla remained abstract but took on the illusion of three-dimensionality with spheres and cubes replacing circles and squares within their compositions.¹⁵³ Baumeister's later work remains highly abstracted but replaces rigid geometries with more lyrical, organic forms, as seen in *Tennispieler II* (color plates, p. 133).¹⁵⁴ Carl Buchheiser transitioned from hard-edged Constructivist painting to looser, mixed-media works, demonstrating something of a debt to Dada. Similarly, Marcelle Cahn, a Purist during her association with Cercle et Carré, first developed a style of total abstraction akin to Suprematism, then adopted what might be considered a neo-Dada style with constructions like her untitled work in this exhibition (color plates, p. 139). Nadia Khodasevich was a Purist during her participation in Cercle et Carré but returned to Suprematist origins in primmaking late in her career with works like *Suprématisme I* and *Suprématisme* (both 1970; color plates, pp. 200–201). Erik Olsson demonstrated strongly Cubist tendencies in his paintings of the mid-1920s, such as *Composition with Figures* (1924; color plates, p. 214), reaching his most abstracted phase in the period of Cercle et Carré, culminating in 1930 in Constructivist total abstractions. In the 1930s, in Sweden, Olsson founded the Hainstadt Group, for which Surrealism became an important source, with his brother Alex and others.¹⁵⁵ Luc Lahet may have made the most radical break from abstraction in his works after 1930, with erotic scenes that seem to owe a greater debt to eighteenth-century Rococo than anything else.¹⁵⁶ Most of the participants in Cercle et Carré's exhibition are well documented. Many are canonical, some of them already famous by 1930. A few have become all but lost from the history of modern art. Some are in the process of being rediscovered, such as Daura, but other untold perspectives on this history remain to be recovered, such as that of Hans Suschny, about whom almost nothing is documented beyond his contributions of "image architecture" to the *MA* Constructivist journal in Vienna and related events in the mid-1920s, through which he would likely have had contact with such other Cercle et Carré members as Baumeister.¹⁵⁷ Oscar Liljy, also little known, founded an artists' group with Hans Arp and Walter Helbig in 1910 known as Der moderne Bund ("the Modern Alliance").¹⁵⁸ Stefan Moszynski was born in Poland in 1901 but, other than a brief exhibition history that includes Cercle et Carré, information remains elusive.¹⁵⁹ Vera Idelson shares a similar fate. Like fellow Russian Alexandra Exter, with whom she

was acquainted in Moscow and worked with more closely in Paris, Idelson is documented almost exclusively for her work in the theater. In the late 1920s, along with Prampolini, she helped poet and gallery owner Ruggero Vasari's Futurist initiatives in Berlin, and she collaborated with Prampolini again in Paris shortly before participating in Cercle et Carré. She continued working in the Parisian theater after 1930, but little of her work is documented. Nechama Szmyszkowicz was also associated with the avant-garde circle in Moscow that included Exter and became associated with the Purist style in Paris, but her work remains to be recovered by future endeavors. Ingjoleig Bjarnason's artistic production is almost unknown, although she seems to have worked in a style strongly rooted in Constructivism.¹⁶⁰

On the whole, far less has been written about the female participants than the male, and work by the women in Cercle et Carré is represented far less in public collections. There are exceptions—Taeuber-Arp, for instance, or Exter, if compared to Huid Hoste or Hans Weilt—but even there, scholarship is greatly lagging in comparison to canonical male artists.¹⁶¹ Geographically, aside from Torres-García, the Latin American participants have received less attention than their European counterparts,¹⁶² Eastern European abstraction has been largely overlooked, so it is regrettably unsurprising that Wanda Wojska, a female artist of the Polish avant-garde, is essentially unrepresented in this publication or its related exhibition despite our best efforts. The same is true of Moszynski. Of the Polish participants in the 1930 exhibition, only Henryk Szczęwski finds any real note in Western European and American art historical studies, at least partially due to his highly active participation in the international avant-garde throughout the 1930s.¹⁶³ The critical exchange of Constructivist ideas among Russia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe remains an important topic deserving of more attention, something Filip Lipiński's essay in this publication begins to remedy substantively.

As mentioned, Cercle et Carré was criticized for being too traditional in not taking its abstractions beyond the innovations of Constructivism and De Stijl, movements only a decade old. With an ever-increasing rate of cultural change, the group's participants faced a unique situation. To include so many successive artistic movements in one exhibition, all represented by living artists, would have been unthinkable to artists a century earlier.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the rapidity of change probably contributed to these new styles.

159. See the Artists' Biographies section of this publication.
160. I am grateful to Peggy Hoshald, Head of Collections, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik, for much of the information we were able to obtain concerning Bjarnason. See also Bjarnason's painting *Composition*, 1930, sold at Auction Barakat (May 25, 1991, lot 34).
161. Ulf Thomas Möberg, "Ingjoleig Bjarnason," in *Myrkur* (2001, 1992) – *álteit margvegur: Úþrýtt og grafísktendurdráttur* ed. Möberg, 130–35 (Stockholm: Cernia, 1995).
162. On Hoste, see Ann Verdonsch, *Liesbeth de Witte, et al., Huid Hoste 1881–1957* (Antwerpen: Vlaams Architectuurinstituut, 2009).
163. Very little has been written on Jaime Colson. See *Marianne de Tolentino, Jaime Colson* (review of exhibition, UNESCO, Paris), in *Art News* 32 (October/December, 1989), 143–44. Cuervo, a Mexican Constructivist sculptor, has received attention in Mexico and Spain but greatly deserves an English-language monograph. See Serge Fauchereau, "The Studentists," in *Artforum International* 24 (February 1986), 84–89. *Pólya y el espacio: la escuela de Pólya en el siglo XX*, exh. cat. (Valencia: IVAM Centre Julio González, 1989); Teresa Bosch Romeu, *Cerrada Cuervo, un artista renovador* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes Dirección General de Publicaciones, 1999); Serge Fauchereau, *Germán Cuervo*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía; Barcelona: RM Verlag, 2004).
164. Agnès Malachuk and Maria Herdendak-Owsiemicka, *Henryk Szczęwski (1894–1989): changeable – consistent*, exh. cat. (Kraków: Museum Narodowe, 2008); *Central European Avant-gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002); *Henryk Szczęwski: Paintings and Reliefs*, exh. cat. (London: Artnet) *Justa Fine Art* (1983); and *Paintings by Henryk Szczęwski*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Phillips Collection, 1975).
165. For instance, the group included pioneers of abstraction like Lager, Kandinsky, and Mondrian, but also included Vordemboege-Gildewert, who may have been the first twentieth-century artist to begin his career as an abstractionist. See Hans L. C. Jaffe, *Vordemboege-Gildewert: Mensch und Werk*

(Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1971), 7; and Roman Ziegler/Ansbacher, *Nothing and Everything: The De Stijl Artist Hendrikje-Gildewert* (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2013), 43. 165. Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1997), 44. Written as a doctoral dissertation, it was first published as a book in 1908, and its popularity ensured numerous editions.

As Wilhelm Worringer argued, writing from Munich in 1906, empathetic representation is afforded by the comfort of relative stability while the "the urge to abstraction," during any historical period, stems from a need to grapple with radical cultural change: "The primal artistic impulse . . . seeks after pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion and obscurity of the world-picture, and creates out of itself, with instinctive necessity, geometric abstraction."¹⁶⁵

Under the broad rubric of "structure and construction," the group, its journal, and its exhibition represented every major trend in the modernist canon from Cubism to Surrealism. Futurism, Russian and German Constructivism, Dada, Neo-plasticism, and Purism all made strong showings. The artists included in the group's only exhibition ranged in age from Kandinsky (sixty-four) to a handful of artists in their early twenties. The group's stylistic inclusivity would come at the cost of ideological clarity, but it is as useful a reminder now as it was in 1930 that the dividing line was not always as simple as totally abstract or not. Even Constructivist and Surrealist theoretical concerns were not as opposed as Cercle et Carré's program of protest would suggest, demonstrated by the fact that some artists overlapped between the groups. The deep vein of spirituality and interest in higher realities running through the milieus of earlier abstraction remained in the 1920s and 1930s, as evident throughout the *Cercle et Carré* journals, and was largely incorporated into the Surrealists' program. For the Surrealists, the path to this higher reality was found primarily through the subconscious while for the abstractionists, it was typically a more Platonic sense of the ideal; at their core, both groups might be said to be responding to the horrors of the first world war, seeking a way to avoid the nationalism and myopia that caused it.

Over the decades since 1930, the art historical significance of Surrealism and Constructivism would be proven in the degree to which both served as central sources for the artistic movements that followed. Their commonality can be clearly seen in the synthesis of their ideas in Abstract Expressionism of the 1940s and 1950s. For a generation of Minimalists and Post-Minimalists in the 1960s and 1970s, the foundations of geometrical abstraction laid in the 1920s would prove even more critical. Seeing the later importance of the group he helped found must have been rewarding for Daura. Rekindling contact with Seuphor from Randolph-Macon College, Daura wrote of receiving a copy of *Art d'aujourd'hui* featuring an essay by Seuphor:

"This friend wrote me 'what a surprise, Pierre, to find your name associated with Suprematism and Neo Placticism.' And agreeable surprise this was for me, too . . . I am in charge of art classes here. Constantly I pronounce the names of all those in this group Cercle et Carré. Ceaselessly I show projections of their works. Often too I mentioned your name. As being the driver of the spiritual group."¹⁶⁶ Encapsulating abstraction of the 1920s and ever more prominently due to Seuphor's later histories, Cercle et Carré came to serve as one of the cornerstones of the rich history of twentieth-century modernism in the period between the wars. ■

166. Letter from Daura to Seuphor, February 18, 1951, Seuphor Archive. He goes on to note Torres-García's death and retrospective exhibition in Washington, D.C. Seuphor responded warmly with copies of the publication, "Suprematisme et Neo-plasticisme," *Art d'aujourd'hui*: revue mensuelle de synthèse des arts plastiques 7-8, on the theme "La peinture de 1900 à 1950" (March 1950), 22-24. The group photo (reproduced in the Prologues and Epilogue section of this volume, pp. 258-59) was prominent.