

Biomorphism as Avant-Garde Deconstruction

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Although Władysław Strzemiński allowed geometry to become a constructive feature in his series of *Architectonic Compositions* (*Kompozycje architektoniczne*, 1926–1929) the geometric rigour of the picture was not, strictly speaking, his central concern. He took 'the reality of abstract painting' as the basis for every artistic manifestation, in searching for 'organic construction' as an absolute creative principle, 'incommensurable with any vision of fragmentary nature'.¹ 'Just as illusionistic painting drew on plastic elements from surrounding objects of nature', he wrote, 'so the painting of concrete abstract realism draws its elements from plastic thinking, seeking to realise the picture as an organic entity, in line with other phenomena of life and based on the strict laws of plastic construction'.² Hans Arp was also against copying nature. He wanted to create without recreating, 'to produce as a plant which produces fruit'.³ He wrote that 'nothing is less abstract than Abstract art', which is why 'Van Doesburg and Kandinsky have suggested that Abstract art should be called Concrete art', adding, in a spirit that was a long way from Strzemiński's materialism, that such works are 'constructed with lines, surfaces, shapes and colours. They reach beyond human values and attain the infinite and the eternal'.⁴

Jan Brzękowski notes that unlike most Frenchmen, Arp demonstrated a keen interest in what was happening in Poland in the fields of poetry and art. He had a good deal of respect for Strzemiński and Henryk Stażewski, and recalled 'that at one point [Arp] asked me to propose to Strzemiński on his behalf a mutual exchange of pictures, which—I believe—came to fruition...'.⁵ Strzemiński came across Arp's work in 1929. The source of his first encounter were reproductions

included in *L'Art Contemporain / Sztuka Współczesna*. Strzemiński also received other European avant-garde journals in which works by Hans Arp and Sophie Tauber-Arp could be seen. At around the same time, via Brzękowski, Arp became interested in the international collection of the group 'a.r.' being created by Strzemiński; the French artist was able to help a good deal, and gathering works for the collection became a pretext for direct correspondence and an exchange of publications between the two artists. This was also how Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro became acquainted with the work of Sophie Tauber-Arp.

Despite his fascination with Arp's linear forms, Strzemiński's thoughts on 'concrete plastic realism' and on the aims of artistic creation did not coincide with Arp's idea of art, which was formulated differently, and emerged from different artistic and philosophical traditions. While the formal aspects of their work clearly began to resemble one another over the course of the 1930s, their ideological positions on fundamental questions remained different, despite appearing similar in some respects. I am not convinced that the artists had any broader awareness of one another's theoretical deliberations, besides being aware of one another's works. Their mother tongues were different (German and French / Russian and Polish), and they had different ways of expressing problems (prose-theoretical / poetic). Of course, Strzemiński was familiar with the Polish-language translations of Arp's text included in *L'Art Contemporain / Sztuka Współczesna* in 1930, just as Arp read the two texts by Strzemiński published in French in *Abstraction-Création* in 1933.⁶ But this was not much, and was certainly insufficient to overcome the cultural differences that divided the two artists. The creators of 'concrete plastic realism' had arrived at an understanding based on an interpretation of form and its more biological-naturalistic than socio-physiological motivation, though this was never directly articulated in their pronouncements.

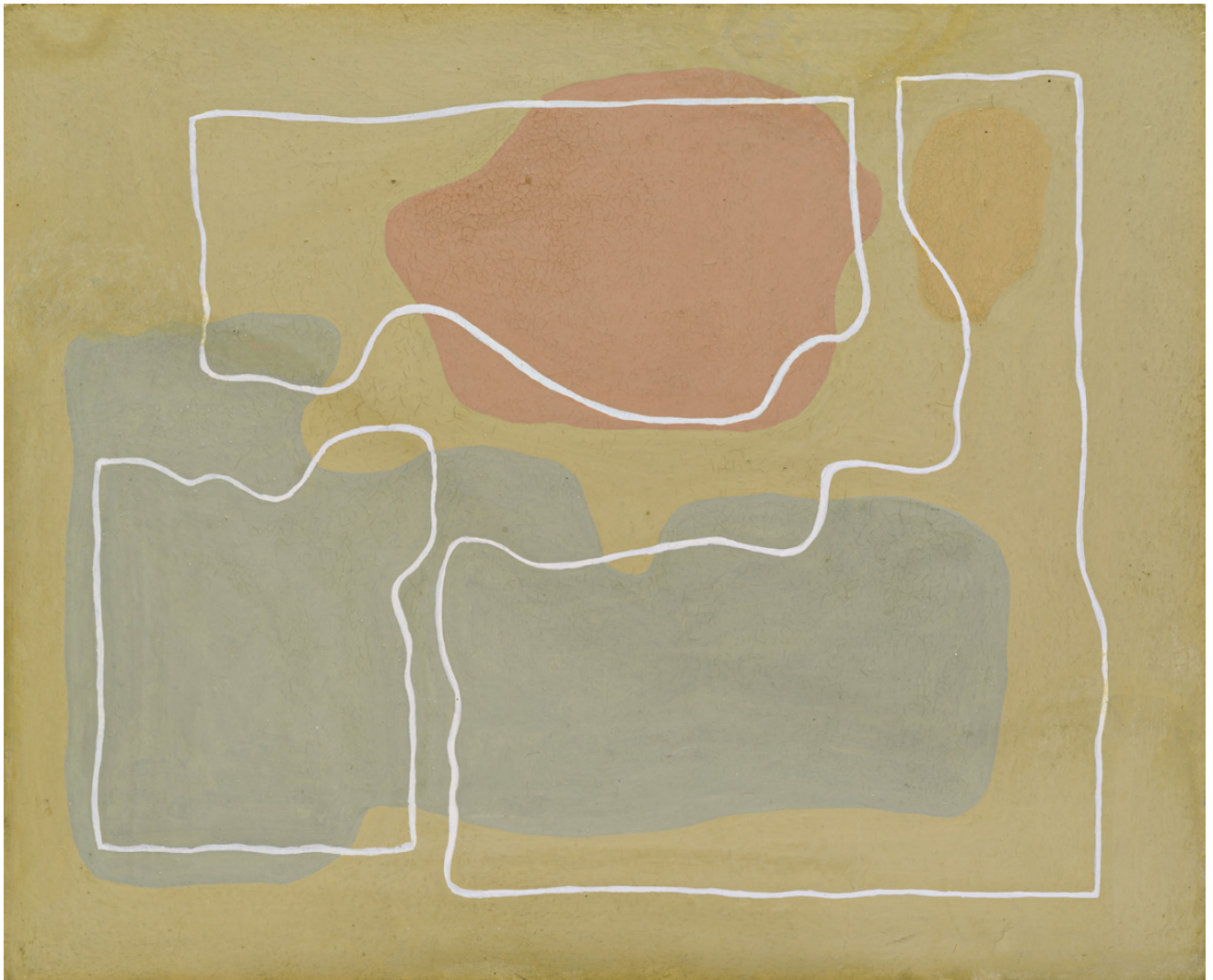
Strzemiński's artistic journey, begun in Russia, was firmly rooted in the debates around Constructivist formalism and the technical-Productivist modernisation of art in the socio-political context of the Bolshevik revolution. Like Aleksander Rodchenko, Strzemiński treated line, in material terms, as 'an element by whose exclusive means we can construct and create'.⁷ As of 1915, Arp became strongly associated with early Dada, which was why he emphasised other things. For him, line always represented chance. In producing linear 'compositions of string attached to the canvas' or by tearing paper in his *découpages*, he sought to introduce the elements of chance and play into art. Arp was particularly sensitive to the ludic, born of Dada. He wrote 'amidst merriment by way of Tzara and by way of me'.⁸ 'Dada is the mother earth of all art', he added; 'Dada is for senselessness and not for nonsense. Dada [is] without meaning, like nature and like life. Dada is for Nature and against "art" ... Dada is "moral" like nature and is for limitless meaning and limited means'.⁹ Arp's art-theoretical position assumed that contemporary art had an ethical dimension, coloured by the specific spirituality embodied in nature. This inclination had been transmitted to Dada Zürich by the German artists formerly associated with Expressionism. The Primitivism and naturalism of these circles propagated slogans concerning the return to the bosom of nature. Expressionism saw the emergence of spiritual groupings seeking a renewal of values that had been lost through the mechanisation of life and bourgeois egoism. The Dadaist and Surrealist Arp proclaimed that 'paintings, sculptures, objects should remain anonymous and form part of nature's great workshop, as leaves do, and clouds, animals and men'.¹⁰ One could also cite Strzemiński's imaginary dialogue with Arp: 'the irrationalism, biologism and primitivism which you oppose [to] the rationalisation of form and the industrialisation of art, are the expression of a general orientation towards the biologism of plants and cultivation on smallholding farms and replacing contemporary rationalised industry with products from small craft workshops'.¹¹ Speaking as though he were Arp, as part of this same, imaginary, debate, Leon Chwistek replied: 'The survival instinct relies on the discovery of a new reality, one that is as we wish it to be, one that we have a right to dream about, simply because we are certain that reality is born of imagination'.¹² If Strzemiński's *Architectonic Compositions* presented the utopia of 'art formed by life', then, according to the artist, his *Seascapes (Pejzaże morskie)*, likewise, were simply intended as 'leisure compositions', training the eye to be one with nature, in search of the physiological and social identity of man in the surrounding world. Strzemiński wrote that 'the plastic form



Fig. 9.1. Władysław Strzemiński, *Seascape (Pejzaż morski)*, 1934). Tempera on card, 21 x 27 cm. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź.

characterising every epoch emerges from the foundation of the visual content attained in that epoch'. This may be why Arp's sincere conviction that 'concrete art wishes to transform the world. It wishes to render existence more tolerable' related to Strzemiński's faith,¹³ expressed on the margins of his painted *Seascapes*, that 'the evolution of movements occurred by way of the power of the slogan of organic and unified composition. And human desires tend towards this same organic and unified organisation of life...' (Fig. 9.1).¹⁴

The beginning of the 1930s marked a breakthrough in Strzemiński's work. This was when he ceased painting *Architectonic Compositions* (1924–1929), based on the law of contrast and the mathematical calculation of forms, and began his series of *Unist Compositions (Kompozycje unistyczne)*, (1931–1934), in which he sought to unite form with the surface. This was also the time when his first tempera *Seascapes (Pejzaże)* appeared, with architectonic forms piled up on their surface, producing an impression of spatial resolution. They combined figurative forms with abstractions, over- or underlaid with transparent colour stains assuming curved oval forms (1931). These were the earliest biomorphic forms in Strzemiński's work, their spatial construction calling into question the flat character of Unism while also pointing in the direction of the series of stereoscopically-organised *Seascapes* (1932). The painted *Unist Compositions* tended in two directions. On the one hand the artist was searching for the materiality of the picture by way of the factual application of unified, repeated, identical small forms, and by way of colours, revealing the volume of paint and the luminous texture of the surface (1931–1932). On the other hand, the artist liberated forms from the surface by employing a curved line in the monochromatic compositions, giving the fleshy reels of pasty colour linear independence and ever-greater freedom (1933–1934). Strzemiński took advantage of the loosening of the coherence of compositional rigour within the Unist framework in his series of *Abstract Compositions (Kompozycje abstrakcyjne)*, (1933–1934).



The winding, non-geometric lines and flat, asymmetric forms in the *Abstract Compositions* produce an illusion of spatiality, as though transparently applied (Fig. 9.2). These works approached landscapes, producing the impression of studies of independent abstract forms, their figurative compositions flowing into the linear shapes of the city or seascape. Though they belong to a separate group, Strzemiński's figurative (anthropomorphic) temperas took as their framework similar formal solutions. Here, the biological line delicately delineated the contours of the bodies of figures, sometimes heads or torsos, while the surfaces of stains, painted in a unified way, arranged as though in several overlapping spatial planes, shining through one another, suggested the existence of volumes (1933–1936). The result of these works were series of drawings, beginning with the lithographic portfolio of 1936, produced on technical tracing paper and then printed onto soft drawing paper by outlining the contour of shapes. Unlike the tracing paper used in the seascapes, serving to construct stereoscopic space, in the anthropomorphic drawings, the artist worked out a certain repertoire of forms, which he used in various configurations in subsequent works, giving them various meanings (1936–1945).¹⁵

The last of the works mentioned, and in particular the figurative drawings and the *Seascapes* that were close to the conception of anthropomorphic or biomorphic construction, were the result of Strzemiński's formal research. Sensing a contradiction in the practical realisation of materialist Unism, he was seeking solutions that went beyond the absurd logic of the structural doctrine reducing a picture to a picture and realising his own theory in art. In the *Seascapes*, the infinite expanse of the blue of the sky and the water, underpinned by the horizontal format of the picture, stressing the unmarked line of the horizon, brought forth a transparent play of white and navy stains, as well as soft lines reminiscent of clouds flowing in many layers and configurations,

Fig. 9.2. Władysław Strzemiński, *Abstract Composition (Kompozycja abstrakcyjna)* 1933. Tempera on card, 20 x 24.5 cm. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź.

and the waves of the sea approaching and receding in regular patterns, their crests twinkling in the sun. The introduction of the physiological spatiality of seeing in these works undermined the aesthetic of surface and reason that had been accepted unanimously to date. As a result, on the basis of theoretical considerations, the artist once again took up the problem of the organic construction of the work of art and the physiology of seeing in art. Alongside these, there emerged the aesthetic consideration of the laws governing visual consciousness and the dynamic of the biological rhythms of the eye penetrating space. The problems formulated in this way gave rise to a new theory of seeing, dependent on various aspects of reality and a new biomorphology of the image, taking into consideration the physiological and psychic conditioning of perception.

The key text introducing Strzemiński's new concepts bore the symptomatic title 'Aspects of Reality' and was published in the Łódź journal *Forma* (*Form*) in 1936. It had been preceded, the year before, by a short commentary on a *Seascape* of 1934, as regards which the artist wrote that:

form is the result of the stratification and mutual deformation of the individual elements of nature. The whiteness of waves and the curving line of the shore, merging with the shift of the gaze from one to the other, create lines with a rhythm common to the whole. My goal was the rhythm resulting from the mutual interaction of all the elements of the landscape, produced by the emergence of interdependences and influences, produced by every element of nature on all the others, the rhythm of the whole as a fluid continuum of irregular symmetry.¹⁶

In his discussion with Chwistek in May 1935 (published in the same journal), Strzemiński tried to defend his position, proscribing the elimination of time from painting, arguing that the existence of time in the form of the rhythm of shapes superseding one another resulted in a 'weakening of the degree of the organicity of the picture'.¹⁷ A year later, in August 1936, perhaps under the concealed influence of Chwistek's idea of the 'multiplicity of realities in art' and his idea of 'Stratificationism' (*Stratyzm*), Strzemiński radically changed his mind and waxed eloquent about the various 'aspects of reality' in art and the changing 'visual content' associated with these as a result of the movement of the observer's eye, linking fragments of the reality in question into various wholes. Strzemiński wrote:

The movement of the eye, the character of the line drawn by the moving gaze becomes one of the main components in new visual content ... Every formal component visible in nature influences every other, transforming it. The movement of the eye, the trace of the gliding gaze, the biological life of the contracting and expanding muscles are connected with the shape of elements of form seen in nature, creating a common rhythm of form. This rhythm is to a great extent the rhythm of autonomous movements resulting from the muscular and nervous system. It is the rhythm of physiology, linking the contents of individual gazes. This rhythm of the rising and falling line of the vibrating pulse and the movement resulting from the individual and biological reaction of the muscles submits to itself the visual content of individual gazes—it transforms it, producing an ever-changing rhythm of irregular symmetry.¹⁸

It is hard to say to what extent Strzemiński's formulation of new problems, which clearly entered into the field of considerations relating to biomorphic and anthropomorphic compositions, was the result of his interest in Arp's art. The 'Aspects of Reality' article was illustrated with a reproduction of the Polish artist's own lithographic work *The Unemployed* (*Bezrobotni*) from the portfolio *Łódź without Functionalism* (*Łódź bez funkcjonalizmu*), representing the anthropomorphically-outlined forms of three figures, besides which Strzemiński positioned two drawings from 1932 by Arp scattered on a chance basis with biomorphic forms, as well as a photograph of a sculpture, whose reproduction was captioned *Human* (*Ludzkie*).¹⁹ I am inclined to assume that, like Brzękowski, Strzemiński saw in Arp an unorthodox Surrealist, whose abstract work, breaking out of geometrism's contrasts, cleared a pathway to emotional art, building a poetics that had nothing to do with Expressionistic expression or Surrealist symbolism. Strzemiński saw in Surrealism the connection of emotions with the unconscious, which was the basis, as he stressed in the commentary accompanying *Seascape* cited above,

of the 'association of distant imaginings' that was so important in art. He explained this by way of the psychic connection, so important to Surrealism, between the feeling of human estrangement in the world and biological forms in art expressing the 'internal impulses of man' through 'the physical rhythms of the eye and the body'.²⁰

It is hardly surprising then that, despite his sharp criticism of the ethics of Surrealism, as expressing the 'pulse and sound of blood' leading man to the 'depths of blind instincts and aggressive reactions, controlled, though not diminished, by the development of culture', Strzemiński's analysis of this tendency was surprisingly apposite for a Constructivist (or a former Constructivist) and of fundamental importance for the psychophysiological interpretation of the most recent art and for a biological perception of the world.²¹ In light of this, it seems that, although he never said so directly, Strzemiński would have been happy to affiliate his series of *Seascapes* with the circle of associations to the biomorphic stylistics of the sea amoeba and the imagination approaching the Surrealist unconscious. He could not do so, however, while perceiving in Surrealism an existential tension which his physiological *Seascapes* were supposed to eliminate. Their biologism of form could be a 'desire to identify with nature', as in the work of Arp, but not one that 'dragged along grey sacks full of sombre sighs'.²² Strzemiński would have agreed with Arp, who stressed: 'I showed with the suprealists because I liked their revolutionary attitude to "art" and direct approach to life but not the condemnation [of] a "tragic existence"'.²³

In this sense, too, Strzemiński's organic conceptualisation of art, expressing a direct approach to life, was the source of his approval for Surrealist naturalism, whose essence he saw in the biological evolution of form and in the physiology of visual sensations. Like Arp, he was resistant to the 'tragic existence' expressed by Surrealism. Strzemiński wrote:

Surrealism's experiential complex is the reality of man. Man stands before the world and recognises himself, listening in to his hidden reactions and undulations. This uncontrolled flow of associations connected with other associations—the flow of associations being interwoven with the undulation of physiological reactions and jolts—fills out the whole reality of sensations ... The world of Surrealism is the reality of man, listening in to himself, so as to know his essence, the truth about himself, as he is, in spite of that which has been created by centuries under the social yoke, the reactions of other people, adopted conventions, concealed injuries and self-denial. The liberation of one's impulses, stifled by society, and yet still there ... This is why almost the only form used by the Surrealists is the biological line, sketching out a hunched-up shapeless mass—an amoeba tossed out of the sea, a Galatea pulsating on the lonely coast beneath the sun and feeling uncoordinated sensations. Everything emerged from the sea. Organic being came into existence in the sea; it was there that the first organic cell came into existence and thence that the whole animal and plant world emerged, taking on its current forms by way of evolution. The sea is the source of existence and the amoeba is the starting point for all further variations of the one and indivisible being.²⁴

Strzemiński's expression of approval for Surrealist emotion and for biological and, at the same time, sensual form did not fundamentally change his views on art and society, however. The similarity between his shapes and those present in the art of Arp, whose work Strzemiński perceived in his own manner as a physiological rhythm of the eye encompassing the natural world surrounding it in contemplative forms, was not sufficient to definitively abandon 'the productive utilitarianism of functional art in the service of a society organised into a system of unified purposefulness...'.²⁵ But he was no longer a Constructivist. Strzemiński's works of the second half of the 1930s, of the war period, the post-war series of photomontages devoted *To My Friends the Jews (Moim przyjaciółom Żydom)*, and, finally, his series of paintings of afterimages of the sun, offer clear evidence of this.

The dramatisation of pictorial space, along with subjectively experienced corporeality, that Strzemiński had eradicated in Unism, returned in the tempera city- and seascapes as well as in the silhouette outline figures of the 1930s and 1940s. Its return undermined the whole order of Constructivist practice and, above all, the purist imagination, to which the artist would not return.

Fig. 9.3. Katarzyna Kobro, *Spatial Composition 9* (*Kompozycja przestrzenna 9*), 1933. Metal, oil paint, 15.5 x 35 x 19 cm. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź.



Fig. 9.4. Katarzyna Kobro, *Seascape* (*Pejzaż morski*, 1934). Plaster, bas-relief, 22.5 x 40.5 x 8 cm. Private Collection, France.



From Biomechanics to Biomorphism

Nowadays it has become customary to interpret Katarzyna Kobro's sculpture within the categories of corporeality and sexuality.²⁶ The contemporary approach to Kobro's sculpture, however, seems unable to grasp the aesthetic principle of form (formalism) that was the foundation of all her work. The introduction of the concept of biomorphism to deliberations on the artist's work makes it possible to revise, once more, the state of research and to return to the question of the role of biological naturalism and biomorphic formalism (or neo-formalism) in the avant-garde art of the mid-1930s. To be more specific: it will not so much enable us to pose the question of Kobro's Constructivist formalism, as of neo-formalism being, in this case, a deconstruction of the Constructivist and biomechanical category of form conceived of in terms of the mathematical law of spatial rhythms, the logic of abstract space and the social aim of shaping man's surroundings (design). Neo-formalism accepted that which was hidden and incomplete in form, that which was hard to grasp clearly or to calculate precisely; it prioritised the curved line over the straight line, and the biological form over the mechanical. Kobro's biomorphism, characteristic of her gypsum nudes and, above all, her metal *Spatial Composition 9* (*Kompozycja przestrzenna 9*, Fig. 9.3) and sculptural *Seascape* (Fig. 9.4) of the years 1934 to 1935, fundamentally critical of geometrical and technical forms, played precisely this role.

The formal transformation occurred around 1933 to 1934, when Kobra made the startling oval-shaped metal sculpture, known today, probably incorrectly, as *Spatial Composition 9* and so unlike any of her work to date.²⁷ Its form was close to another sculpture, hitherto thought to be lost or destroyed but recently rediscovered, which was known from the artist's catalogues and monographs under the title *Nude 5 (Akt 5)*. Its existence was known from a reproduction in the Paris journal *Abstraction-Création: Art Non-Figuratif*.²⁸ The reproduction was not supplied with a title, though Kobra's surname was given. There has not been much written about this bas-relief. The only study devoted to it to date has been one by Agnieszka Skalska. In her deliberations, the author sought deep connections between the Constructivist compositions and the Cubistic nudes, perceiving in *Nude 5* 'the essence of "organic" structure so characteristic for the sculptor's work'.²⁹ She wrote:

I think that there is a link between the two types of Kobra's creative activity, an organic connection, relating to the principle of constructing the spatial—in the case of the abstract sculptures, and the bodily—in the case of the nudes. Kobra's nudes are abstract organic creations. They reduce the bodily to abstract identity. Their existence is particularly significant in the context of the arguments [advanced in] the *Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm* and its sculptural manifestations.³⁰

However, it soon transpired that it was not possible to clothe the body in pure form, while reducing the body to a spatial algorithm. The bioforms in both the works by Kobra in question did not smooth over cracks but rather illuminated them critically, revealing the profound change in attitude and conceptualisation of the world that had taken place in the circle of avant-garde artists in the 1930s.

Let us return to Katarzyna Kobra and her biomorphic modelling. The plaster bas-relief representing a *Seascape*, re-discovered in 2014, is of the utmost significance here.³¹ In view of the original being unknown, its treatment as a nude, to date, has been based on free associations suggested by the shape reproduced on a relatively poor-quality slide. In the photograph, it seems as though it may be a vertically-positioned anthropomorphic form. Such a judgement was suggested by the human figure in Kobra's work referring to a series of figures from Arp's *Human Concretion (Concrétion humaine, 1935)* as well as to those in her own work. On the basis of this one reproduction, it was hard to determine whether the sculpture (or perhaps the bas-relief featured in the catalogue of one of her shows) was made of clay and then cast in plaster or cement. The possibility that it may have been cement was suggested by comparing it with sculptures by Arp, who cast his works (unusually, the larger ones) in this material. We know of the existence of one cement *Nude* by Kobra, from an exhibition catalogue.³²

The bas-relief, the original of which is now known, is unique in the artist's oeuvre as a whole. It is characterised by a varied, yet rich, treatment of the profiled surface of the plaster, the subtle play of a soft and wavy line surrounding the whole form, and the fluid, slightly oval modelling of the flattened, convex form. It marks a departure from geometric and rationally-organised works, its non-geometric form belonging to organic, biomorphic abstraction.³³ Reference to the representation of the natural world lies at the very foundations of landscape art, while here, non-figurative deformation makes the abstract form of the bas-relief seem to emerge from nature, taking on biological forms. It was produced at a time when Kobra abandoned 'the mathematical composition of rhythms' and 'the functional straight line', and began, like Strzemiński, to construct forms in accordance with the 'physiological rhythms of the eye' observing the landscape.³⁴ The bas-relief is doubtless the last work Kobra made before the war and has no parallel in the artist's earlier work. It belongs to a series of seascapes that was begun but not continued, of which only two versions, painted in gouache on paper, are known.³⁵ We do not know of other sculpted bas-reliefs and can assume that there were none.

Kobra began working on plaster sculptures around 1925. She showed two *Sculptures in Plaster (Rzeźby w gipsie)* at the Modernist Salon (Salon Modernistów) in March 1928 in Warsaw.³⁶ The plaster nudes were not shown again until 1934.³⁷ Forms with curved lines, as though organic, appeared in the artist's work in the first abstract sculptures of the years 1921 to 1924.

We encounter them again in the 'cubistic' plaster nudes of 1925 to 1927 mentioned above and solely known from the reproduction of the 1933 work, and, finally, in *Spatial Composition 9* of the same year. Despite the fact that all the sculptures listed here reveal various formal similarities to the plaster *Seascape*, it is *Spatial Composition 9* that is closest to it in terms of style and subject matter. Despite its title, and, as opposed to the 'architectonic' spatial compositions, it was, for the first time, called a 'biomorphic sculpture' in the catalogue of Kobro's work by Zenobia Karnicka. Of *Spatial Composition 9*, Karnicka wrote: 'Its contour refers to the form of sea foam, synthetised is a continual wavy movement in Strzemiński's *Seascapes* and [Kobro's] analogous *Seascape (Pejzaż)*. It is also similar to the only bas-relief form known from this period ... like the architectonic compositions, open to space on all sides and unified with it by its own biomorphic rhythm'.³⁸ I entirely agree with Karnicka's remarks, stressing still more firmly the formal and constructive associations between the bas-relief plaster, the plastic lightness of the seascape painted by the sculptor and the spatial openness of the metal composition, and, thereby, closely associating the aforementioned works, and viewing them as a significant (biomorphic) stylistic turning point, as well as an attempt to break out of the existing model of formal biomechanics.

Like Strzemiński's landscapes and drawings of the 1930s, Kobro's biomorphic works, having as their formal basis their own earlier work, also clearly demonstrate stylistic similarities with the art of Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Hans Arp. I have already mentioned their artistic connections and mutual interest in one another's work, mediated by Brzękowski.³⁹ One must also remember that the mutual familiarity of works by way of publications, or slides sent for publication, may have been reasonably effective.

The compositions with spherical forms that were popular in Sophie Taeuber-Arp's work around 1933 may have captured Kobro's imagination when planning her last *Spatial Composition 9* and, vice-versa, Arp and Taeuber-Arp's drawings from the end of the 1930s and the 1940s may have owed a good deal to the soft lines of the seascapes of the Polish artists. These, in turn, may have evolved in Strzemiński's work in the direction of his post-war series of *Afterimages (Powidoki)* thanks to Arp. Likewise, despite fundamental categorical differences and differences in scale and materials, Kobro's bas-relief undoubtedly demonstrated stylistic connections with Arp's sculptures. The distribution of proportions resulting from the relationship of concave and convex forms is similar, as are the outlining of the sculpture as though with a soft contour, flowing seamlessly over the form; the distribution of light on the receding surfaces, which appear open to space; and, finally, the general disposition of form, permitting the sculpture to maintain its equilibrium by way of the definition of just a few supporting points, as though independent of the plinth.

Of course, Arp's works were mostly sculptures rather than bas-reliefs. Kobro's bas-relief, intended to be mounted on a wall, was an attempt to separate three-dimensional form from its supporting base. By installing the work spatially in such a way as to deprive the three-dimensional form of weight, she went further than Arp. *Spatial Composition 9* was in the process of dispensing with the relationship between the surface (and the three-dimensional form) and the base that Arp maintained.⁴⁰ The *Seascape*, sculpted in bas-relief, now suspended on the wall without a support, seemed to materialise form, seemingly in spite of the spatial abstraction of the transparent compositions.⁴¹

In her *Spatial Compositions*, Kobro conceptualised sculpture. She defined the geometric proportions of surfaces, straight and curved lines, horizontal and vertical forms, by way of precise mathematical calculations and in accordance with numerical sequences and relations resulting from the Fibonacci sequence (though, in practice, corrected by eye). She constructed maquettes out of cardboard. She worked like an architect inscribing forms into space. She chose materials that were readily available and entrusted the production of the sculpture to a local tinsmith. It was the tinsmith who cut the metal sheets, bent the curves where necessary, joined the surfaces, cleaned the joins, and, in accordance with the plan, sought to realise the project as faithfully as possible. Kobro polished the sculpture and covered it in paint. How very different this was from the technique used for the plaster works. Here, Kobro produced the sculpture. There was more sensuality in the kneading of the soft, water-saturated clay, and more sensual imagination, as,

at any given moment, she could alter the form, whether handmade or made with a simple tool (a spatula or knife). This was a particular kind of physical experience of the material, either manual or with a simple tool, and not a mental calculation of relations.

Like the *Nudes*, the bas-relief-sculpted *Seascape* was modelled in clay, from which a plaster cast was made. Her daughter recalled how Kbro soaked and kneaded clay in order to give it the right consistency. Then the foundryman would come, she wrote, who 'prepared a plaster mould for the clay figure, removed it in pieces, joined it, and then filled with liquid plaster. After the interior had solidified, he removed the mould in pieces, revealing the plaster figure'.⁴² Nika Strzemińska went on to recall that 'the sculpture was coarse, with rough parts at the joins. Then my mother set about smoothing and polishing the nude. She spent a long time doing this, very carefully. From time to time she would turn the sculpture around in the light, to check the results of her work, first by eye, then by touch'.⁴³

Over the course of the whole sensual process of its creation, the sculpture would become ever more like a body. Agnieszka Skalska read the form of *Nude 5*, which is to say the *Seascape*, modelled in this way, as a primary ('embryonic') model for the artist's work as a whole. Skalska wrote:

Let us accept that *Nude 5* is a specific matrix of the bodily, in the same way as the abstract compositions represent a unit of measure for the space surrounding them. This identification occurs at the deepest level, in physical terms: that of the cell, of tissue. Repeated "n" times, multiplied, it would create a soft concave-convex construct of corporeality ... The lost *Nude 5* is a specific module, a code, in which the body is recorded, a cell, a model, describing the principle of the organism.⁴⁴

I would put it differently. Agreeing with Skalska's biological interpretation of the sculpture, resulting from the perception of the sensory materialisation of the form with its soft concave-convex construction and its almost physically-perceptible corporeality, I do not see in this sculpture the tendency to generalise, to synthesise corporeality and spatiality, this module or code of the body and space. On the contrary, I think it represents a break with codifying rhythm and modular unity. Physiological seeing, making it possible to link fragments into the unity of a biomechanical structure at a glance, has given way to biological modelling, shattering a whole that has been petrified in its final form. The bas-relief gives the impression of an organism constantly transforming itself in its evolutionary perfectibility. It is reminiscent of the on-going process of the creation of life and of wasting away, birth and the uncertainty of survival. On the undulating surface we see traces of unfinished polishing (like shells smoothed by water); in the plasticity of the substance a susceptibility towards deformation (like the body beneath the touch of the finger); in the flowing of the oval form we see changeability (like the shape of a jellyfish); the purity of the plaster emerging from the material seems as though it has been sullied by oakum and reeds, producing an unnerving skeleton of a form (like that of a fragile mud-hut). There is no Dada chance in its form (as there is in Arp) but there is also no certainty as to the final form of the material, which is still alive, like an organism. The bas-relief is concerned with shattering the Constructivist whole, which could already be sensed in the analytical nudes, the concretisation of the process of lining fragments, the biological deformation of the organism, which is never the same: the organism which the module is incapable of grasping.

In my opinion, Kbro treated *Seascape* as a rupture and a critique of the biomechanical conceptualisation of the body, the utopia of the body as a spatial abstraction, as a departure from the physicality of 'pure form'. The bas-relief deconstructs the structural order contained in space. In the aforementioned article, Skalska wrote: 'If one can speak of abstraction here, then this sculpture is an abstract taken from the organic. Here is a scrap, a fragment, a part of universal anti-geometry, a shade of the lack of symmetry, a betrayal of the mathematically calculated world of Kbro's creative work'.⁴⁵

The materiality of biological form, its aesthetic ambivalence and typological multiplicity, so hard to grasp speculatively, took the place of the transparent precision and physiological perfection of the biomechanical model in Kbro's creative work. The solidity of the dead structure

was replaced by the frailty of living material, its fragility, temporariness, frailty, susceptibility to change and disintegration, anticipation of death. It is not a matter of the formlessness of material (inform) but of the extraordinary form that emerges from chaos and undermines order (neo-form): a form whose existence calls into question the mechanical norm; form experienced as an inexpressible sublimity; form sublimated in abstract concretisation (as in Arp). In her response to an *Abstraction-Création* survey in 1933, Kobra wrote: 'Copying the machine is as harmful as copying the animal world. Both interfere in the development of pure art and abstract form'.⁴⁶

At the same time as the *Seascape*, Kobra was sculpting a series of plaster nudes, whose forms she modelled according to a Cubist schema, with reference to her earlier work. These small works in plaster dominated the artist's exhibitions after 1934. It is difficult to say whether the nudes from this period carried on from or co-produced the biomechanical rhythms of her spatial compositions. The solid figure, surrounded by crooked lines and concave-convex surfaces, played an important role in these. Despite strong deformation and a degree of generalisation, the figurative corporeality of the forms rather than their abstract materiality could be read and sensed. Kobra wrote in the aforementioned survey that 'the process of sculpting the naked human figure arouses physiological or sexual emotions ... I like to play at correcting that which remained unfinished in one style or other of the art of the past'.⁴⁷ Like the seascape, the nudes broke out of the stylistics of 'mathematical calculation', calling into question, by their very presence, the incorporeal utopia of Functionalist society, which was still professed, though perhaps with less conviction. The crisis was evident; the end of social utopias was approaching. The body was regaining its subjective materiality in art. With reference to Kobra's nudes, Piotr Piotrowski wrote:

Art at the time of the end of utopias would thus be characterised by a particular kind of identity politics, the search for the subject and for that which was individual and irreducible within it, namely, corporeality. Thus, one could say that the turn away from the incorporeal and universal and towards the corporeal and individual in sculpture represents a remedy for the crisis of utopias. Referring to that which is personal and singular, to the body, instead of to that which is common and universal, is like a transition from abstraction to a strategy of identity founded on the ruins of modernism, on the ruins of Logos.⁴⁸

The biomorphic *Seascapes* rendered space concrete by way of the perfect chiselling of the solid form and the elegance of interpenetrating lines and colour stains. They fragmented it, reducing it to the moments, spaces or even the spiritual state ('relaxing') in which it was experienced and seen (Strzemiński labelled his seascapes with the date each day). Their concrete and fragmentary character called into question the universal space of rhythms and the infinity calculated therein. Emerging from the curving lines covering their surfaces, the integrity of Strzemiński's last Unist canvasses was shattered both by the technique of stereoscopic seeing deployed, and by what Łukasz Kiepuszewski has referred to as the 'particular opening-disruption' of the whole pictorial form. In an interesting case study of one of Strzemiński's landscapes, Kiepuszewski notes that the picture could be

a record of a temporary and internal differentiation of the body, which would relate to a series of views from different angles. In this way, it would also be a projection of conflicting visual perspectives, simultaneously intersecting and dispersing in the hidden depths of the body. The asymmetry of the mechanisms of the body, perhaps also accentuated by Strzemiński's disabilities, bears a complex relationship to the character of the space produced by the painting.⁴⁹

The dramatisation of painterly space and of the sculptural solid, along with corporeality, physiologically sensed and biomorphically represented, which had been cast out by Strzemiński and Kobra in Unism, devoid of tensions, and in the unity of the rhythms of spatial composition, became apparent in sculpture, in the tempera cityscapes and seascapes as well as in the drawings with figures outlined in silhouette. It disrupted the entire stylistic order of Constructivism and of the artists' practice and, above all, their purist imagination. Jean-François Chevrier correctly observed, with reference to Strzemiński:

The environment and the human figure returned, but as a trembling vision, uncertain of its limits. “The calming motive” of the picture could not participate in the game without a naturalistic referent. The painterly and the social organisms both shattered at the same time. Strzemiński’s painting thus logically approached Surrealism, and so a poetics based on the subversion of reality infused with hallucinatory discovery.⁵⁰

It is certain that neither Strzemiński nor Kobra were Surrealists and their biomorphic landscapes not so much broadened the field of the Surrealist imagination as they deduced biological forms from the conceptual and historical contexts of this movement, seeking once more to locate biomorphism amidst ‘intellectual and rational impulses’, which, in Strzemiński’s case, also produced rather unexpected results in post-war painting, and in Kobra’s day-to-day and artistic circumstances led to silence.

Finally, it is worth refining the original question of the subversive character of biological forms in modern art, and asking: why was it that biomorphic form was able to resolve the critical and aesthetic crisis in which modern art was entangled? In other words: how could biomorphism, with its formal harmonies and dissonances, be a manifestation of the sublime beauty of nature while simultaneously enacting a critique of the sublimated aesthetics of reason, behind which a crisis was concealed?

The question has its roots in one of the antinomies of modern thought, indicating the contingency of human freedom upon the natural world. It relates to the dialectical entwinement of art and nature that was key to twentieth-century critical thinking. Adorno wrote that the relationship between the man-made work of art and nature was condemned to the status of ‘pure antithesis ... each refers to the other: nature to experience of a mediated and objectified world, the artwork to nature as the mediated plenipotentiary of immediacy’.⁵¹ No wonder, then, that the philosopher wrote elsewhere that ‘the task of art today is to bring chaos into order’.⁵²

The aim is to find, within artistic order, that which escapes the ‘familiar’ order of culture (the marvellous); that which resists the objectified aesthetics of the commodity world (chance, detail); the beauty liberated in nature and the sublimity of nature, independent of man. Biological forms, as natural forms, have always astonished by their shapes, prompting amazement at the unimaginable inventiveness of nature, tainting the logic of forms created by man with anxiety. It is not a matter, then, of the sort of art that recreates nature in its spatial-objective forms, but of the sort of art, Adorno would say, which by way of the aesthetic structure of abstract forms touches that which is inexpressible yet concrete, the world of sublimated forms materialised in creativity. Biomechanics sought the beauty of organic harmony. Biomorph form was sublime in its astonishing shapes. The sublimity of artistic forms grasped in this way did not rely on arousing hedonistic pleasure similar to that delivered by the stereotypes of popular and mass culture, but, on the contrary, through the desire for the unknown, lingering in avant-garde art, it led to the destabilisation of the aesthetic order and social expectations, it undermined the beauty of harmonious creativity. There was a tension between anthropocentric biomechanics and ‘inhuman’ biomorphism. It was not chronological in character, though the narratives associated with it changed with time. The biological taxonomies of the nineteenth century were a search for the homogeneity of the natural world girded by the aesthetics of the biomorphic symmetry of forms and the infinity of colours and shades in plants and insects alike. The universalism of twentieth-century modernism linked the concept of biological beauty to the geometric module of the biomechanical body and the power of man mastering nature. The biomorphic neo-formalism of radical artists broke out of this framework, casting into crisis, by way of the desired perfection of biological form, the stable divisions of space presided over by the avant-garde: above all, the political space of biomechanics.

Translated by Klara Kemp-Welch

- 1 Władysław Strzemiński, 'Integralizm malarstwa abstrakcyjnego', *Forma* 2 (1934), p. 10.
- 2 Strzemiński, 'Integralizm malarstwa', p. 10.
- 3 Hans (Jean) Arp, 'Abstract Art, Concrete Art' (c. 1942). Reproduced in Peggy Guggenheim (ed.), *Art of this Century* (New York: Art of This Century and Art Aid Corporation, 1942), p. 29.
- 4 Arp, 'Abstract Art', p. 29.
- 5 Arp, 'Abstract Art', p. 29. We know of two works by Strzemiński given to Arp, which were recorded in the catalogue of Strzemiński's 1993–94 monographic exhibition (Jaromir Jedliński (ed.), *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952. On the 100th Anniversary of his Birth* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1995)). These are: *Kompozycja architektoniczna* (1929), now in the collection of the Marguerite Arp Foundation in Locarno, and *Kompozycja unistyczna* (1932), now in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo (catalogue references I.43 and I.55, respectively). Stażewski also gave Arp one of his works via Brzękowski: *Kompozycja* (1932), now in the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo. All these works were shown in 1937 in Basel at Georg Schmidt's exhibition *Konstruktivisten: Von Doesburg, Domela, Eggeling, Gabo, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, Mondrian, Pevsner, Vantongerloo, Vordemberge, Kunsthalles Basel* (16 January–14 February 1937).
- 6 Hans (Jean) Arp, 'drogi panie, pyta mnie pan...', *L'Art Contemporain / Sztuka Współczesna* 3 (1930): p. 104; Władysław Strzemiński, 'Là, ou il y a une division...', *Abstraction Création* 1 (1932): p. 35; and Władysław Strzemiński, 'En peignant le nu...', *Abstraction Création* 2 (1933): p. 40.
- 7 Aleksander Rodchenko, 'The Line' (1920). Reproduced in *Alexander Rodchenko*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art (Oxford, 1979), p. 128.
- 8 Arp, 'drogi panie, pyta mnie pan...', p. 104.
- 9 Arp, 'drogi panie, pyta mnie pan...', p. 104.
- 10 Arp, 'Abstract Art', p. 29.
- 11 Strzemiński, 'Dyskusja L. Chwistek – W. Strzemiński', *Forma* 3 (1935): pp. 4–10.
- 12 Chwistek, 'Dyskusja L. Chwistek – W. Strzemiński', pp. 4–10.
- 13 Arp, 'Abstract Art', p. 30.
- 14 Strzemiński, 'Dyskusja L. Chwistek – W. Strzemiński', pp. 4–10.
- 15 The 1936 lithographic portfolio *Łódź bez funkcjonalizmu* contains 5 works. Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź (inventory no.: MS/SN/Gr/1085/1-5). I presented the technical principle itself at the 2010 exhibition *Poutórka z teorii widzenia* at CSW Zamek Ujazdowski in Warsaw. Janina Ładnowska has written about the 'biological' interpretation of Strzemiński's drawings: Ładnowska, 'Rysunki – realizm rytmu fizjologicznego', in Janusza Zagrodzki (ed.), *Władysław Strzemiński in memoriam* (Łódź: Sztuka Polska, 1988), pp. 127–135.
- 16 Władysław Strzemiński, 'Rozwój jednostki...', *Forma* 3 (1935): p. 17.
- 17 Strzemiński, 'Dyskusja L. Chwistek – W. Strzemiński'.
- 18 Władysław Strzemiński, 'Aspekty rzeczywistości', *Forma* 5 (1936): p. 7.
- 19 Władysław Strzemiński, *Bezrobotni 1* (1936). From the portfolio *Łódź bez funkcjonalizmu*. Lithograph, 24 x 32 cm. Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź (inventory no. MS/SN/Gr/1085/3). The ink drawings reproduced in the article belonged to a series donated by Arp to the 'a.r.' group's International Collection of Modern Art. They are currently in the collections of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź: Strzemiński, *Drawing* (1932). Ink on paper, 26 x 21 cm (inventory no. MSL/R/357); and *Drawing* (1932). Ink on paper, 26 x 21 cm (inventory no. MSL/R/359). They were similar to a well-known series of drawings reproduced under the title *L'Air est une racine* in the Surrealist journal *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* 6 (1933): p. 33. The sculpture by Arp reproduced in Strzemiński's text was one of the works defined by the artist as *Human Concretions*, perhaps the small bronze *Torso* of 1931, currently in the Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp collection of the Arp Museum, Rolandseck. There were also two further wooden polychrome reliefs by Arp in the a.r. group's International Collection of Modern Art, of which one was lost during the war. The other, entitled *Configuration* (1931), 39 x 31 cm, is currently in the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź collection (inventory no. M/365). There is also a work by Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, modelled after Arp: *Planimetric Composition* (c. 1931). Oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cm (inventory no. MSL/M/369).
- 20 Strzemiński, 'Rozwój jednostki...', *Forma* 3 (1935), p. 17.
- 21 Strzemiński, 'Aspekty rzeczywistości', p. 12.
- 22 Arp, 'drogi panie, pyta mnie pan...', p. 104.
- 23 Arp, 'drogi panie, pyta mnie pan...', p. 104.
- 24 Strzemiński, 'Aspekty rzeczywistości', p. 10.
- 25 Strzemiński, 'Aspekty rzeczywistości', p. 13.
- 26 This anthropomorphic and feminist aspect of the artist's work is well known and has been addressed in my earlier writings.
- 27 Katarzyna Kobro, *Spatial Composition 9* (c. 1933). Metal, oil, 15.5 x 35 x 19 cm. Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź (inventory no. MS/SN/R/43).
- 28 The reproduction was carried in *Abstraction-Création: art non-figuratif* 5 (1936), p. 15.
- 29 Agnieszka Skalska, 'O akcie, którego nie ma', *Rzeźba Polska* 8 (1996–1997), pp. 95–101.
- 30 Skalska, 'O akcie, którego nie ma', pp. 95–101.
- 31 The title given to the bas-relief by the artist is not known; I refer to it here as *Seascape*. The work is not dated or signed. It was produced between 1934 and 1935. White plaster with oakum and sawdust, 40.5 x 8 x 22.5 cm. Private collection, Paris. Details concerning its provenance, history, and technical aspects can be found in the expert typescript: *Andrzej Turowski, Ekspertyza płaskorzeźby gipsowej Katarzyny Kobro*, in the archives of the owner of the sculpture.
- 32 *Nude-cement (Akt-Cement)*, no. 42 in *Katalog Wystawy Związku Zawodowego Polskich Artystów Plastyków w Łodzi*, exhibition catalogue (Warsaw and Łódź: Instytut Propagandy Sztuki, 1934). There was a cement bas-relief by Kobro produced in around 1920 to 1921 in Smolensk. We know nothing about its form, and the narrative description of it by Janusz Zagrodzki seems to me to be rather general. See: Zagrodzki, *Katarzyna Kobro i Kompozycja przestrzeni* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), p. 44.
- 33 Among others, Christian Bromig, 'Biomorphismus oder Anthropozentrismus?', *Kritische Berichte* 19/2 (1991), pp. 92–107; Guitemie Maldonado, 'De la sphère au caillou (1)', 'Courbes et géométrie dans l'art européen des années 1930 (2)', *Les Cahiers du M.N.A.M* 81 (Autumn 2002).
- 34 Kobro showed her *Spatial Compositions* in the summer of 1933 in Warsaw, at the exhibition of the Group of Modern Artists at the Institut Propagandy Sztuki, and then again, for the last time (and probably the same works), at the Salon of the Union of the Polish Artists (ZZPAP) in 1936; Władysław Strzemiński began painting the *Seascapes* in the summer of 1932, during the first holidays spent with Katarzyna Kobro in Chałupy na Helu. He returned to this subject over the course of subsequent vacations in 1933 and 1934, but painted no landscapes in 1935 and 1936.
- 35 One of these landscapes is in a private collection, the other in the collection of the National Museum in Kraków (Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie). It may have been these works that were shown at the ZZPAP exhibition in January 1936 (Catalogue of the 36th exhibition IPS no. 37–40) along with one *Bas-Relief – plaster* (no. 41). The *Seascapes* were also shown at the Łódź ZZPAP in January 1936 as well as in Lwów in December that same year (exhibition of the Łódź ZZPAP artists). We know from reviews that these were four painted *Seascapes*, most probably the last ones to be made (in November Kobro gave birth to a daughter and clearly began to limit her work). Kobro first became interested in seascapes in 1933. In her response to a survey, included in issue 2 of the journal *Abstraction-Création*, she mentioned the 'restful' works, among which Strzemiński counted the seascapes. She wrote: 'I sculpt from nature, just as one goes to the cinema in order to better relax'. Katarzyna Kobro, 'Odpowiedz na ankietę', *Abstraction-Création* 2 (1933): p. 27. But I have no evidence to believe that such sculptures were already produced at this time. The aforementioned text by Kobro was illustrated with the earlier *Spatial Compositions*. One can assume that the first landscapes were produced after 1934, or the following year (the aforementioned *Seascape* from the private collection is dated 31 July 1935).
- 36 In the catalogue, *Almanach. Katalog. Salon Modernistów. Malarstwo, rzeźba, architektura, meble, wnętrza, grafika* (Warsaw: ZZPAP, 1928), they were recorded under the numbers 42 and 43. Perhaps the nudes in question were those known today as *Nudes 1–3* and dated 1925–1930. According to Nika Strzemińska they were first shown in 1930 at the Muzeum Historii i Sztuki im. J

i K. Bartoszewiczów in Łódź (the former name of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź). Nika Strzemińska, 'Katarzyna Kobro', pp. 124, 127, 130. However, I think it was earlier.

37 In January 1934 she showed the plaster works at the Winter Salon of the IPS in Warsaw and, a few months later in Łódź at the exhibition of the ZZPAP, under catalogue numbers 39–41 and 43 (*Katalog Wystawy Związku Zawodowego Polskich Artystów Plastyków w Łodzi* (Warsaw and Łódź: Instytut Propagandy Sztuki, 1934)). The aforementioned cement nude was number 42. The only known reproduction of the plaster nude is from the same time: *Forma 2* (September 1934), p. 14.

38 Zenobia Karnicka, 'Kalendarium życia i twórczości', in Elżbieta Fuchs (ed.), *Katarzyna Kobro 1898–1951. W setną rocznicę urodzin* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 2005), p. 135.

39 An exhibition and catalogue of 1989 were devoted to these issues: Ryszard Stanisławski, Hans-Peter Kurten, Johannes Wasmuth, Gregor Laschen, Agnieszka Magdalena Lulińska, and Janina Ładnowska, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp und ihre Freunde mit der Internationalen Sammlung Moderner Kunst der Gruppe a.r. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź* (Rolandseck: Stiftung Jean Arp u. Sophie Taeuber-Arp, 1989). See also: Larie-Aline Prat, *Peinture et avant-garde au seuil des années 30* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1984).

40 Today, it has been destroyed by incompetent conservation, during which its stability was compromised. It has now, for the time being, been artificially reinforced by the addition of a base, which has inevitably changed the original conception of the artist.

41 In 1936, the sculptor signed 'The Dimensionist Manifesto', authored by Charles Sirató, in which artists demanded the 'artistic conquest of four-dimensional space', stating that 'creation consists of sensorial effects operating in a closed cosmic space' ('Manifeste Dimensioniste', *La Revue N+1*, 1936).

42 Nika Strzemińska, 'Katarzyna Kobro jako człowiek i artysta', in Fuchs (ed.), *Katarzyna Kobro 1898–1951*, p. 15.

43 Strzemińska, 'Katarzyna Kobro jako człowiek i artysta', p. 15. This description conveys well the technical process of Kobro's creation of the sculpture with clay and casts. Kobro finished the sculpture by hand and used a scalpel (or a knife). There are a few places on the reverse side of *Seascape* where one can see where the plaster has been added with a palette knife. Hidden traces of joins, careful polishing of surfaces, the reinforcement of the skeleton with oakum, and its hardening with sawdust were testament to the great care taken in execution, despite the fact that the modeling plaster used by Kobro was the sort of popular material used widely for the casting of artistic forms and also for decorative items.

44 Skalska, 'O akcie, którego nie ma', pp. 95–101.

45 Skalska, 'O akcie, którego nie ma', pp. 95–101.

46 Kobro, 'Odpowiedz na ankietę', p. 27.

47 Kobro, 'Odpowiedz na ankietę', p. 27.

48 Piotr Piotrowski, 'Sztuka w czasie końca utopii', in Piotr Piotrowski, *Sztuka według polityki. Od Melancholii do Pasji* (Kraków: Universitas, 2007), p. 73.

49 Łukasz Kiepuszewski, 'Dryf obrazu', in Paweł Polit and Jarosław Suchan (eds.), *Władysław Strzemiński. Czytelność obrazów* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 2012), p. 181.

50 Jean-François Chevrier, 'Obraz, obraz ciała, historia', in Polit and Suchan (eds.), *Władysław Strzemiński*, p. 140.

51 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (first published in German in 1970), trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 61.

52 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life* (first published in German in 1951), trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974), p. 222.

