

| 1886-1966 |

JEAN (HANS) ARP

Lived and worked
in Zurich and Paris.

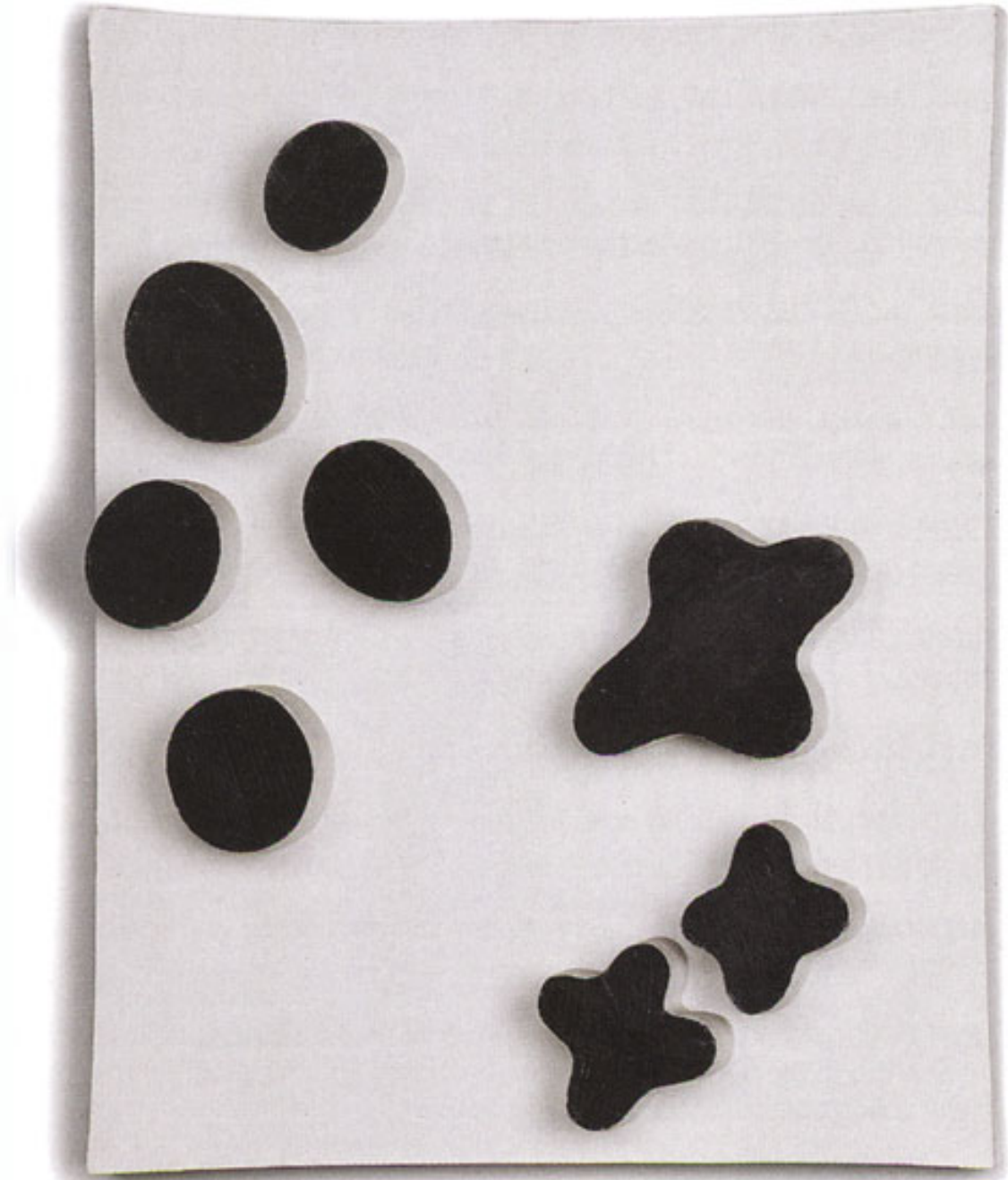
1931 | CONFIGURATION

RELIEF, PAINTED WOOD, 39 x 31 x 2,8 cm

CONFIGURATION IS AN ARRANGEMENT OF PARTS OR ELEMENTS, SUCH AS OBJECTS OR PLANETS. SOME OF JEAN ARP'S RELIEFS, MADE FROM 1917 ONWARDS, ARE TITLED *CONSTELLATION*. THE TITLE'S PURPOSE COULD BE TO COMPLEMENT THE MEANING OF THE REPRESENTATION – THE BLACK-PAINTED SOFT-SHAPE FORMS PLACED ON A WHITE BASE ARE A STELLAR CONSTELLATION. EVEN IF THIS IS NOT THE CASE AND THE PIECE IS PURELY ABSTRACT, IT REMAINS A BOLD EXPERIMENT, A STUDY OF THE POSSIBLE CONFIGURATIONS OF FORMS AND THEIR MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Similar soft forms fill other Arp reliefs. Some of them are colour compositions; most however are equally ascetic, and some are monochrome. The material is wood, but some of the compositions were made using string stuck to the background and painted. All represent an attempt to recognise the natural laws governing the emergence of organic forms. Besides reliefs (which comprise a significant part of Arp's creative output), the artist also expressed himself through sculpture, initially small ones, but after **WWII** also through monumental pieces cast in bronze and steel, similarly oblong, softly modelled surfaces. He also made collages and prints, and wrote poems and essays about art. Early on, he exhibited his works together with the German Expressionists. During WWI, he moved to Zurich, where he co-founded Cabaret Voltaire, the Dadaist meeting place. In 1925, he took part in the first **SURREALIST** exhibition. Despite his openness to various phenomena and trends in art, he remained a 'separate' artist, beyond all '-isms', to which he devoted his book, written in collaboration with El Lissitzky, *Die Kunstismen: 1914-1924* (Erlenbach-Zurich 1925, reprinted by Rolandseck in 1990).

ASG



A

„A.R.”

1929

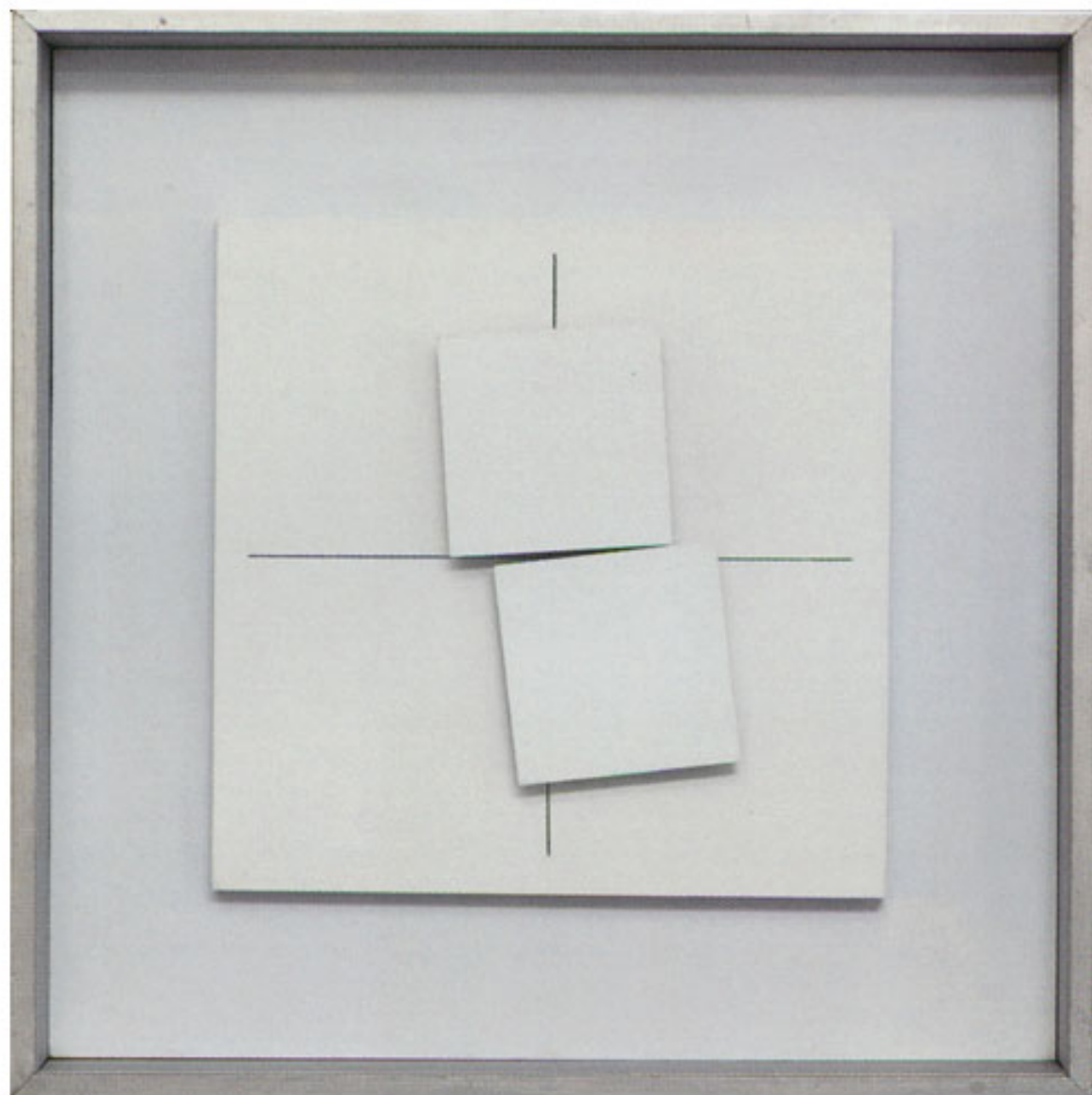
„a.r.” (‘revolutionary artists’, ‘real avant-garde’) was the most radical **AVANT-GARDE** art collective in interwar Poland. It was also the third, after Praesens and Blok, and last such grouping in interwar avant-garde. It was founded in December 1929, even before the final break-up of Praesens, which had been in existence since 1926 and brought together painters and architects interested in a new paradigm for art and design. The gradual domination of architects and utilitarian goals caused the protest and eventual ‘secession’ of three members of Praesens: Władysław **STRZEMIŃSKI**, Katarzyna **KOBRO**, and Henryk **STAŻEWSKI**, who went on to create „A.R.”, which became an alternative formation, intended to combine poetry, the visual arts and architecture. The three were soon joined by poets Julian Przyboś and Jan Brzękowski.

As Strzemiński wrote in a letter to Przyboś, commenting on his joining „a.r.”: ‘We must bring art out of the state of atrophy that it has been in for the last 3–4 years’. Advancing modern art and supporting avant-garde practices was the collective’s primary goal. One of the main instruments in fighting for the victory of modernity was promoting its principles and formulas so that they could be implemented first in art and then, through it, in real life.

Hence the group’s publishing activity, the main medium of which were the *Communiqués* [Komunikaty], of which two were published, in 1930 and 1932, promoting the ideals of the new art. In 1930, the „a.r.” Library was launched with the publication of Julian Przyboś’s poetry volume *From Above*, with graphic design by Strzemiński. The small book, with a characteristic cover comprised exclusively of typographic elements – highly geometrised and simplified letters in the ‘neo-plastic’ colours (blue, yellow and red) – is regarded today as a masterpiece of Polish avant-garde commercial design, a classic example of ‘functional printing’. Among the total of seven volumes published by the „a.r.” Library, there were also poetry books by Jan Brzękowski (vol. 4, *In the Second Person*, illustrated by Hans **ARP**, and vol. 7, *Clenched around the Mouth*, illustrated by Max **ERNST**) and theoretical works: W. Strzemiński and K. Kobra’s *Composition of Space. Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm* (vol. 2, 1931) and Strzemiński’s *Functional Printing* (vol. 6, 1935). The final, seventh, volume, published in 1936, is the last known trace of the group’s activity.

„A.r.”’s single most spectacular achievement was the gathering of an international collection of modern art. The idea of creating a ‘museum of **MODERN ART**’ was first put forward by Władysław Strzemiński who, having become familiar with **CONSTRUCTIVISM** in Soviet Russia, had decided already in the early 1920s that the museum was the place where the reforms aimed at changing people’s views on art had to start. Paris-based Jan Brzękowski and Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, editors of *L’Art Contemporain – Sztuka Współczesna*, and Henryk Stażewski, as-

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HENRYK STAŻEWSKI
RELIEF 13

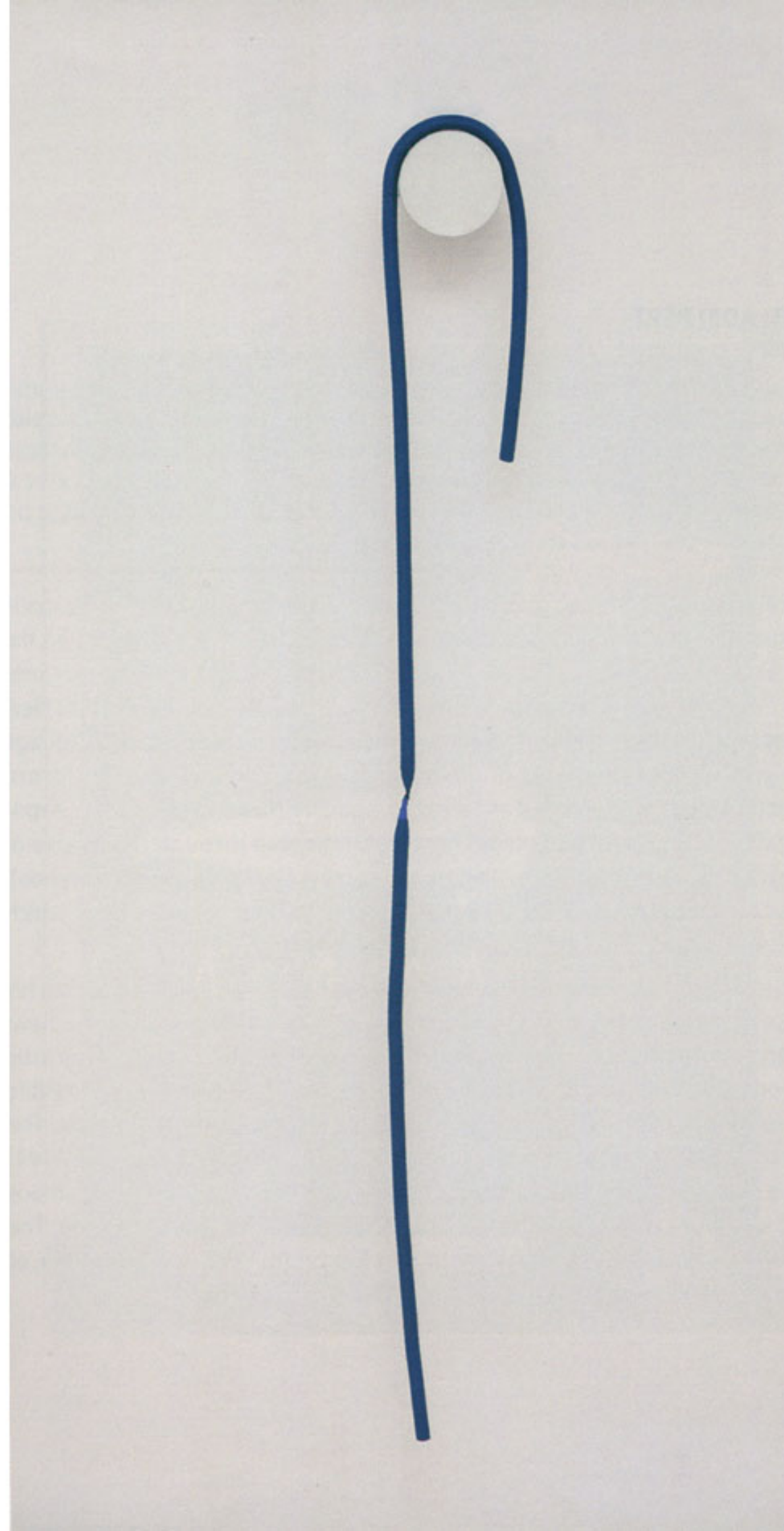
1968



EDWARD KRASIŃSKI
K5

1968

AVANT-GARDE



A

MIROSLAW BAŁKA

1987 | ST. ADALBERT

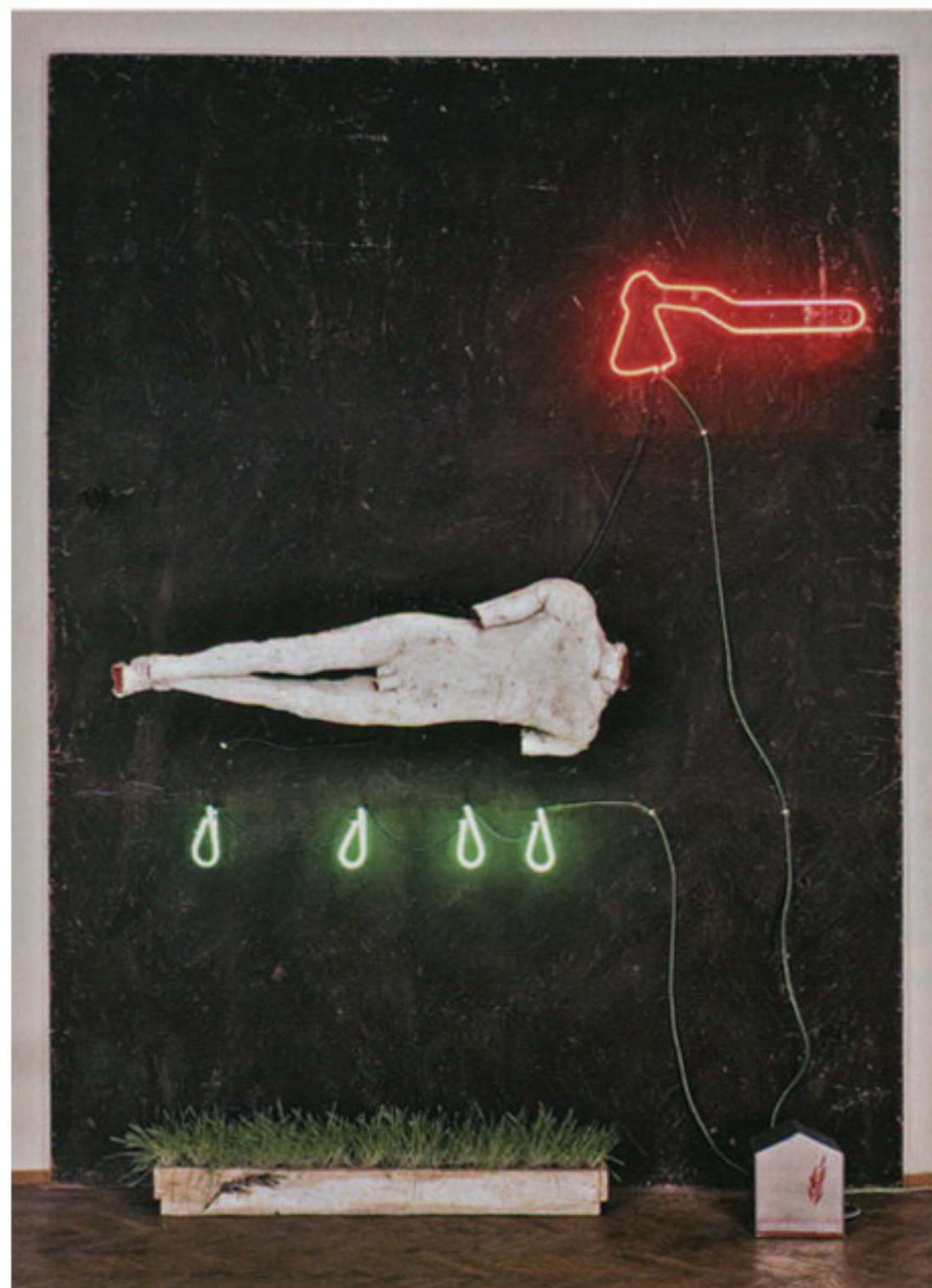
INSTALLATION: NEON, CANVAS, WOOD, OAT, TRANSFORMER, ELECTRIC WIRES, EARTH

A MUTILATED BODY SEEMS TO BE FLOATING HORIZONTALLY IN THE AIR. THE SCULPTED IMAGE OF A MARTYR HAS BEEN PLACED BETWEEN A NEON REPRESENTATION OF THE CRIME WEAPON – AN AXE – AND SPROUTING OAT, SYMBOLISING RESURRECTION. ST. ADALBERT, A 10TH-CENTURY CZECH BISHOP, IS A CATHOLIC SAINT, VENERATED PARTICULARLY IN POLAND. THE ARTIST CREATES THE IMAGE OF A MARTYR, MURDERED BY PAGANS IN THE LATE 10TH CENTURY. HIS POINT OF DEPARTURE HERE IS HIS OWN BODY.

For several years after graduating from the academy in 1985, Bałka made figurative sculptures or sculptural installations whose main motif was the male body. The opposition between the physical and the spiritual defines his early experiments, often labelled as part of the trend known as New Expression. After 1990, Bałka started developing a sculptural language in which representations of the body give way to more abstract forms, employing materials such as terrazzo, soap, linoleum, ash or salt. Corporeality is not literally depicted here but indicated through the quality of certain materials (for Bałka, salt or ash carry a strong bodily connotation), the temperature of **OBJECTS**, their aroma or dimensions, one of which often repeats the artist's own height of 190 cm.

The lack of the human figure in Mirosław Bałka's sculpture, just like his use of materials that due to everyday practice or historical events have come to be associated with death, are an attempt to create an artistic language that would make it possible to approach the inexpressible experience of the 20th century's greatest tragedy – the Holocaust. The artist's **VIDEO** works from recent years (from *Bambi* to *Audi HBE F144*) are also an attempt to touch upon that experience. Bałka's most famous recent work is *How It Is*, in the Tate Modern Turbine Hall in London. The artist participated in *Documenta 9* in Kassel in 1992 and a number of times in the Venice Biennale.

MM





↑
KATARZYNA KOBRO
HANGING CONSTRUCTION 2

1971-79 reconstruction 1971-79

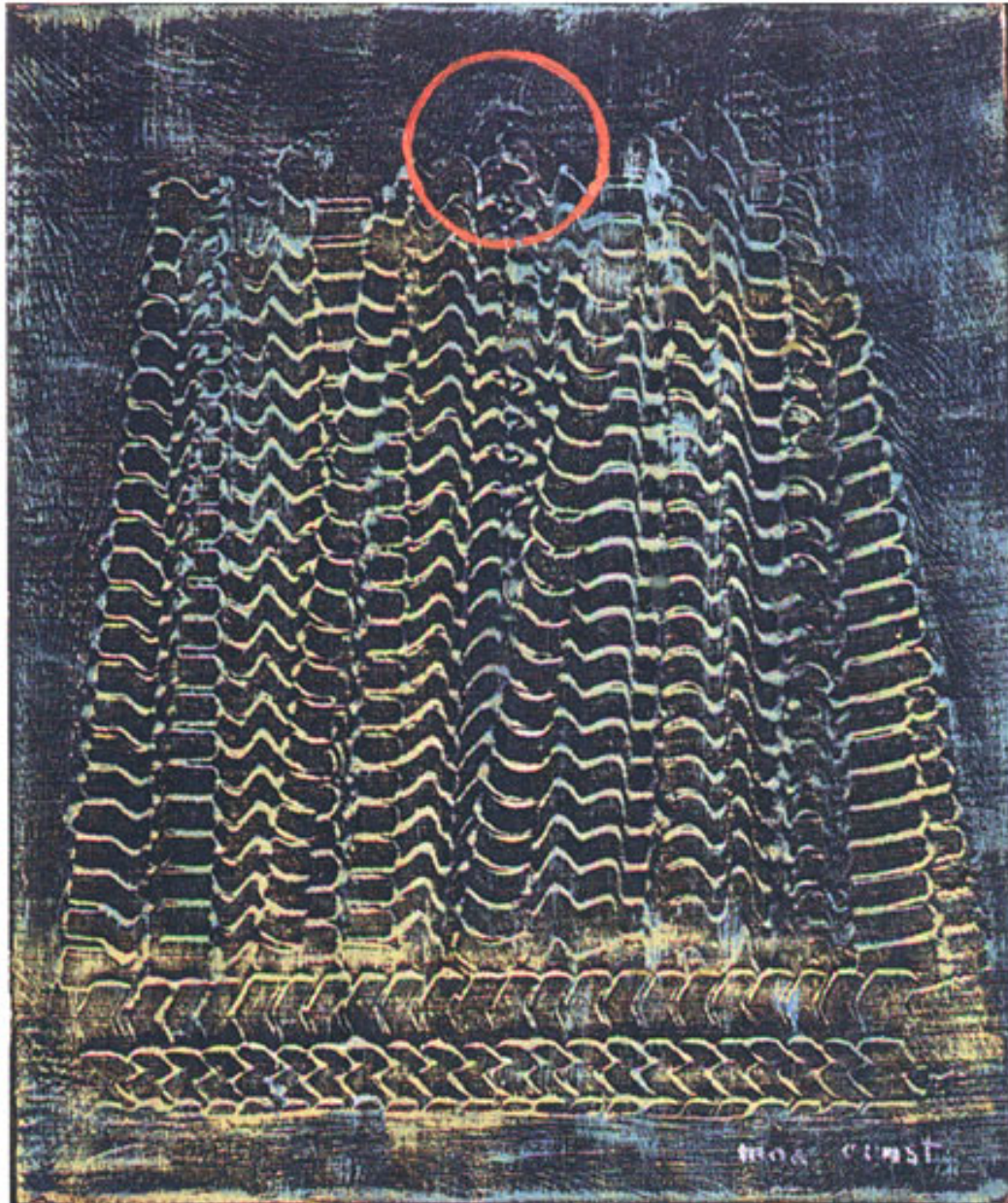
↳
KATARZYNA KOBRO
ABSTRACT SCULPTURE 3

1976 reconstruction by Bolesław Utkin – 1976

CONSTRUCTIVISM







MAX ERNST

1927 FOREST AND SUN

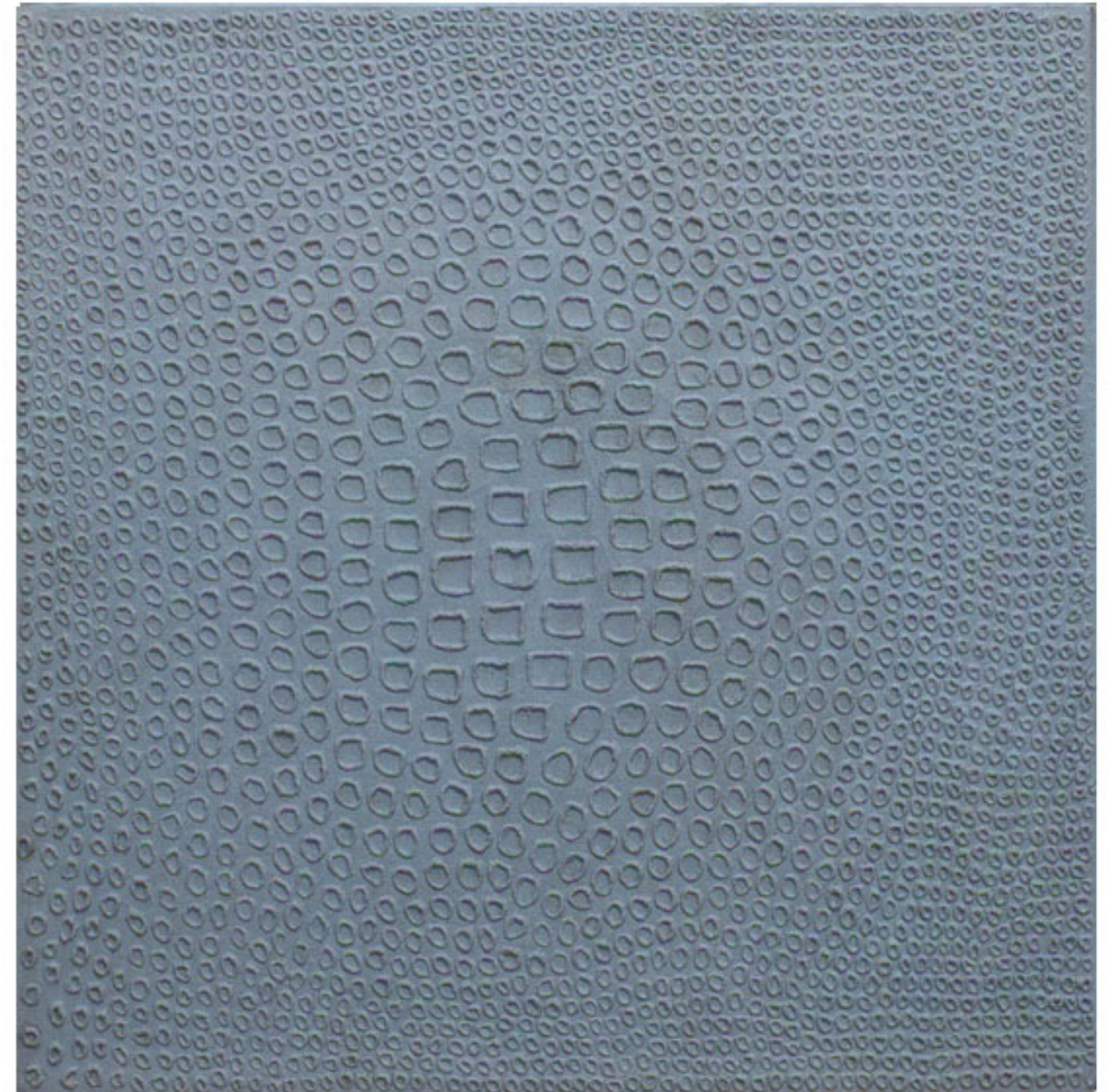
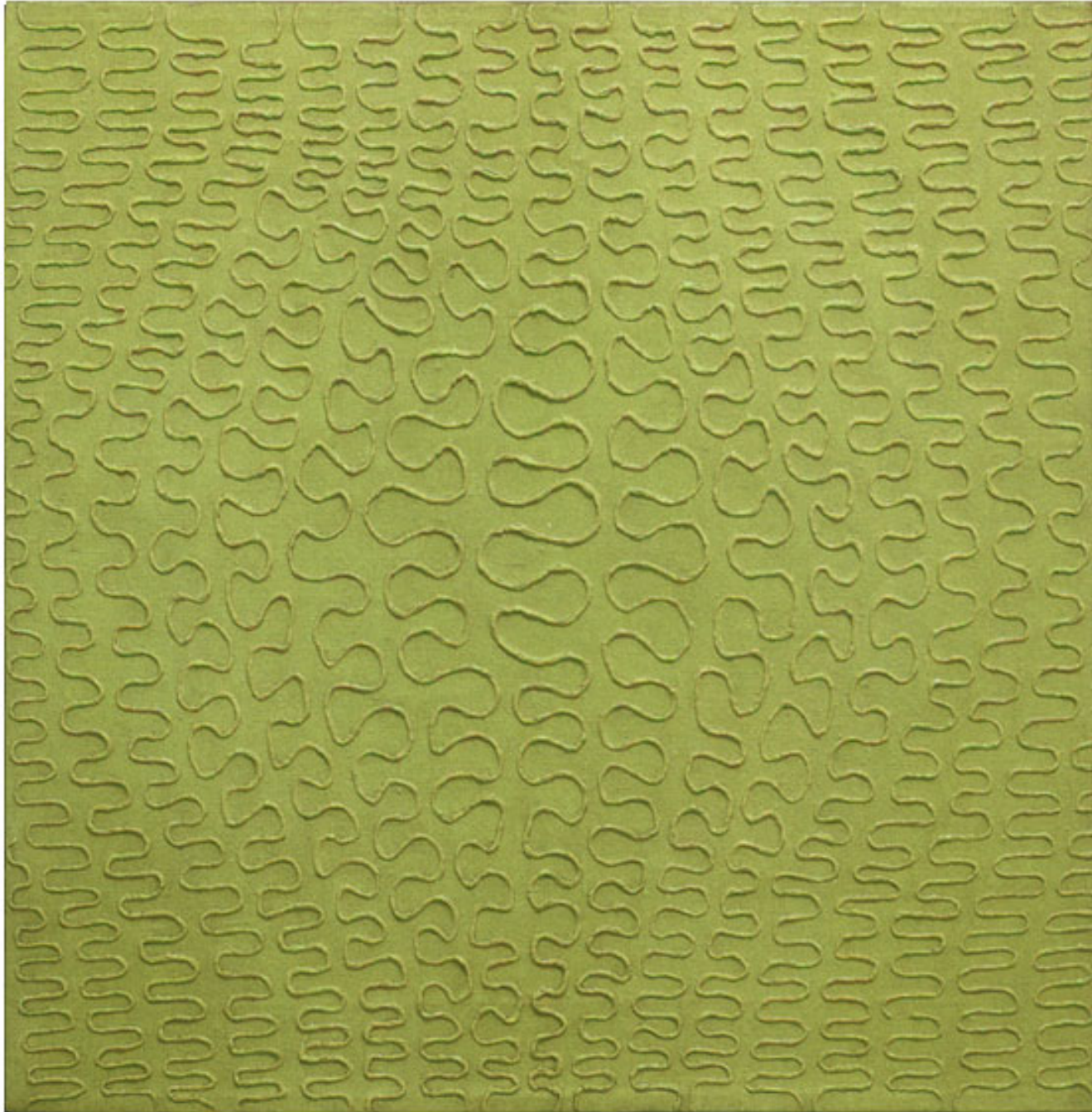


KAROL HILLER

1932-34 HELIOGRAPHIC COMPOSITON XV. MAN IN SPACE

SURREALISM





WŁADYSŁAW STRZEMIŃSKI
UNISTIC COMPOSITION 13

1934



WŁADYSŁAW STRZEMIŃSKI
UNISTIC COMPOSITION 14

1934

UNISM