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The book you are now holding in your hand is a conclusion to *Moved Bodies. Choreographies of Modernity*, an exhibition held at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź (ms¹ at 36 Więckowskiego St.) between November 18, 2016 and March 5, 2017, and a conference entitled *How Does the Body Think? Corporeal and Movement Based Practices of Modernism* organized in partnership with Professor Małgorzata Leyko (from the Department of Theatre and Drama, Institute of Contemporary Culture, Faculty of Philology, University of Łódź) between December 3–4, 2016 (ms² at 19 Ogrodowa St.). Essays included in the volume are largely the outcome of the conference.

The collection opens with a visual essay documenting the exhibition (whose scenography was created by Karolina Fandrejewska) and performances that were an essential part of the project, as well as an essay written as an overview to the artistic (or, more broadly the cultural), social and political themes which were the focus of the exhibition. The following texts by Professor Susan Manning and Hanna Raszewska, are concerned with, respectively, the global and local (Polish) trajectories of the development of modern dance; the reception and perception contexts of dance juxtaposed with the stage practices of the Weimar Republic (Dr Kate Elswit); the kinesthetic dimension of the natural sciences and technology in the early 20th century (Prof. Inge Baxmann); the corporeal aspects of thinking which set new directions for the reflection on women's history (Prof. Felicia McCarren); the social functions of rhythm in dance theories and practices of modernism (Dr hab. Wojciech Klimczyk); dance as work from the political and philosophical perspective (Prof. Mark Franko); finally, the relations of modern dance and the early feminist movements (Julia Hoczyk). The volume concludes with two essays complementing the range of issues presented by the exhibition: a translation of the article by Prof. Nell Andrew, who treats the case of Akarova (a Belgian dancer and choreographer) as a way to discuss the relations between the visual arts, dance, theatre, architecture and music,¹ followed by Małgorzata Jędrzejczyk's essay on the contexts and relations of space and movement of the body in the sculptural theory and practice of Katarzyna Kobro.

The exhibition, the conference and this volume raise questions about the corporeal and movement based experience of modernity in the context of artistic and social practices. Hopefully, this book will help to revive the debate upon the kinesthetic conditioning of the modernist project and will introduce dance and choreographic practices into the context of a broader reflection on modern art.

¹
Published first in 2009
by *Art Journal*, see: N. Andrew,
"Living Art: Akarova and the
Belgian Avant-Garde," *Art
Journal*, vol. 68, no 2 (Summer
2009), 26–49 as well as in
this volume, 191–214.









What was moving bodies in the first half of the 20th century—what forces, energies, emotions? It was the era of revolutionary ferment out of which a new human was emerging. What kinds of bodies were being created in the process of the scientific, artistic and social experiments? How did modern female and male artists perceive the human body, its functioning and impact, and its relationship to the environment—other people, objects and space? “The relationship of a person to a space is a result of the actions of this person within the space. We get to know a space by acting within it. Human activity in space follows three directions: the verticality of the static human form and of all objects; the horizon of the surrounding environment; and the depth before us, in the direction of forward motion,”¹ wrote Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951) and Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1952), in discussion about purposeful and organised movement. The new human had to act in a rational and functional manner in order to cope with the challenges of the new era. The functional organization of the environment was to help the new human in this venture. “The plan and elevation of a building are valuable not in and of themselves but as containers that direct the motions of the people inside it, and are subject to the spatiotemporal rhythms of a person performing their daily functions. This rhythm is made more precise and exact when it is extended into a plastic spatiotemporal rhythm that accentuates the functional rhythm of human motion.”² These very ideas laid the foundations for the artistic practice of Katarzyna Kobro.³ Her *Kompozycje przestrzenne* [Spatial compositions] serve as models that enable us to think about the organisation of a well-functioning society whose needs are fulfilled harmoniously and which is not internally torn by mutually exclusive forces. A society whose purposeful organisation is guided by “emotions of planning”, to use Kobro’s words (in the “Funkcjonalizm,” text published in *Forma*, no. 4, 1936).

In Kobro’s view, the dynamism of our motor skills should be counterbalanced with a carefully measured and organised sequence of rhythms unfolding in both time and space. Sculpture was a model of the new order to be introduced in

¹ K. Kobro, W. Strzemiński, “Composing Space/Calculating Space-Time Rhythms,” [Łódź: Biblioteka a.r., 1931], transl. A. Soliman, *OCTOBER*, no. 156 (Spring 2016), 31.

² Idem, 39.

³ Cf. *Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951)*, exh. cat., eds. E. Fuchs, Z. Karnicka, J. Ładnowska, E. Kwiatkowska, Leeds: Henry Moore Institute; Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1999, as well as Małgorzata Jędrzejczyk, *When Space Becomes Form: The Concept of Katarzyna Kobro’s Sculpture in the Context of Experiments with the Body and the Perception of Art in the Early 20th Century*, in this publication, 217–233.

our immediate environment based on an optimal psychophysical coordination of human beings, which would lead to a rationalised and purposeful social behaviours. According to Kobro, “Sculpture should become an architectural issue, a laboratory experiment into methods of resolving space, into the organization of traffic, an urban planning that sees the city as a functional organism, using the possibilities offered by contemporary art, science and technology. It should reflect the desire for the supra-individual organization of society.”⁴

As an artist working with three-dimensional material, Katarzyna Kobro believed that it can be fully controlled. “The spatial composition creates emotions deriving from the victory of the active forces of the human intellect over the current state of irrationality and chaos. [...] The task of art is a co-operation in achieving the victory of higher forms in the organisation of life,”⁵ she wrote. Many practitioners of 20th century dance shared this vision, if only in regards to the need to perfect and better coordinate the mental and bodily faculties. However, the material they dealt with was the human body, which informed them of its limitations faster than the materials used by sculptors, but would, inevitably, also evoke emotions. Kobro did, in fact, sculpt the human body, both before and after the war: she created female nudes, posing for them herself or asking women who were close to her be her models. Kobro treated sculpting “from nature” as a “leisurely art.” She wrote: “Sculpting a nude produces physiological or sexual emotions. I sculpt from nature as one would go to a cinema for a better rest. I like to have fun by correcting what was not finished in any former artistic movement.”⁶ At the same time, she would display her *Nudes* as part of the first exhibition of the International Modern Art Collection of the “a.r.” group which took place in 1931 at the Julian and Kazimierz Bartoszewicz Museum of History and Art in Łódź (today’s Muzeum Sztuki). In those works, which capture the figure with a delicate and tender conventionality, one can trace the unity of the spatiotemporal rhythms of the body. The same can be said of the artist’s last extant *Spatial composition* (9) of 1933, whose biomorphic shape opens up to the space formed according to a wave rhythm.

The exhibition *Moved Bodies. Choreographies of Modernity* (Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, 18 November 2016–5 March 2017) and the conference *How Does the Body Think? Corporeal and Movement-Based Practices of Modernism*⁷ both focused on the matters of movement, dance and choreographic experimentation of the first half of the 20th century. The central issue under discussion was rationalisation and functionality of artistic practices in modernism. The main question posed within the framework of the exhibition pertained to the affective consequences of achieving an optimal psychophysical coordination of human actions leading to a rationalised and purposeful social behaviours. How did modern bodies and their movement reflect the new approach to the economics of gesture, effort, energy and organisation of labour? What were the new visions of the moving body proposed by modernism? How can Kobro’s “emotions of planning” be captured and interpreted in social and artistic practice?

⁵ K. Kobro, [Rzeźba stanowi...], *Głos Plastyków*, no. 1–7 (1937), 42, after *Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951)*, transl. J. Jarniewicz, 163.

⁴ K. Kobro, [Dla ludzi niezdolnych do myślenia...], *Forma*, 1935, no. 3, p. 14, after *Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951)*, transl. J. Jarniewicz, 153.

⁶ K. Kobro, [Replay to a questionnaire], *ABSTRACTIO-CRÉATION*, no. 2 (1933), 27, after *Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951)*, transl. S. Lefèvre, 151.

⁷ The conference was held on 3–4 December 2016 in association with Department of Theatre and Drama, Institute of Contemporary Culture, Faculty of Philology, University of Łódź, led by Professor Małgorzata Leyko.

Geometry of Dance

The second part of the exhibition featured artifacts related to the work of dancer-choreographers of the next generation, who continued to investigate the specificity of dance practice by exploring the geometry of abstract movement. Their dance would open up, like Kobra's sculptures, to limitless space, in a search for a sequence of shapes, directions and planes. The space would often be made up of geometrical planes constructed by the scenery and lightning. Connections with the visual arts were becoming more visible at that point. Painters would draw inspiration from dance practices; Futurist and Dadaist artists would foster interesting collaborations with representatives of other disciplines.

Created by Rosalia Chladek (1905–1995), *Tanz mit dem Stabe* [Dance with a stick] is the embodiment of experimental geometrisation of the moving body. The stick helped the artist to define the direction of her movement and test the tension of her body in different dynamic configurations. Chladek's method was informed by human anatomy and the laws of physics, and involved the fostering of a comprehensive awareness of the body based on the exploration of three basic aspects: the shifting of body weight, the cause of movement, and the body's behaviour depending on the different dynamics of tension and release.

Vera Skoronel (1906–1932), who ran a dance school in Berlin together with Berthe Trümpy (1895–1983), was a student of Mary Wigman. Critics stressed her unique ability to create choreographic compositions based on geometric structures; her movement was characterised by short, broken and disturbed rhythm. For the group choreography *Tanzspiel* (1926) Skoronel wrote a detailed scenario that articulated the significance of each body part. The piece was not a narrative one, its protagonists were figures: Id, the Mirror Being, the Two Lengths, and the Dancing Stage Wings. Divided into three parts, the choreography dramatised the geometry of abstract movement.

In her choreographies, Gret Palucca (1902–1993) employed simple sequences of movements and minimalist costuming, triggering a restrained range of emotions. Her main goal was not to express emotions but explore the quality of movement. In his short text on the artist, accompanied by his analytical drawings, Wassily Kandinsky appreciated the perfection of the composition of individual moments in her dances, traces of which can now be seen on archival photographs (*Das Kunstblatt*, 1926, vol. 10, no. 3).

The paintings of Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889–1943) reveal her interest in movement practices. Her *Compositions* capture the dynamism of space, rhythm and balance, just like numerous pieces by Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979) that take dance as their subject-matter. In 1915 Taeuber-Arp enrolled in Rudolf Laban's school in Zürich; in 1917 she performed at a festival he organised in Ascona; in 1916 she could be seen on the stage of Cabaret Voltaire, yet the only existing account of her dance is a photograph made (most probably) at the first Dada exhibition the following year. In the image, Taeuber-Arp's masked figure morphs into a

geometrical composition, embodying abstract forms and at the same time playing with the absurdity of her costume's materiality.

Similar tendencies can be seen in the work of Akarova (real name: Marguerite Acarin, 1904–1999), a Belgian dancer and choreographer associated with the constructivist group La Plastique Pure.⁹ In her art she combined a search for abstract movement with the use of avant-garde stage designs that she devised herself and a new concept of music as an architectural structure. She modelled her performing spaces after the mathematic structure of music—it was music that informed her working methods. She often danced in costumes of her own design. They moved as her precise movements dictated, around the core axis of her body, counterpointed by diagonal gestures performed by her limbs. Her performing spaces were made up of geometrical planes constructed by scenery and lighting.

A Laboratory of Movement

The next part of the exhibition was a laboratory where the visitors could learn more about the work of four practitioners and theorists of rhythmisation and mathematisation of movement. All of the artists, each in their own way, tried to answer the following questions: How can one capture the spatial and temporal relations of the moving body? How to describe the quality, dynamics and intensity of movement? What tools should be used to develop coordinated, purposeful, effective and precise actions?

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950) perceived rhythm as the organisation of movement whose coordinates were time, space and muscle power. He attached importance to recognition and designation of movement functionalities, analysis of its physical and anatomical sources, as well as developing orientation in space, and—by the same token—discovering its spatiotemporal patterns. Jaques-Dalcroze called for the development of a number of psychophysical tools that would be used to train a decision making ability regarding the quality and dynamics of movement and to improve sensory and psychomotor reactions.

Rudolf Laban (1879–1958) studied the relationships between movement stimuli and the anatomical functions of the human body. He was one of the first dance practitioners to carry out multidimensional observations of the human motor system. He considered the crystal, whose closest counterpart in geometry is the icosahedron, to symbolise the union of mysticism and rationality. The visitors were invited to enter an icosahedron which was a part of the exhibition's design devised by Karolina Fandrejewska, which they could use to experiment with movement directions.

bibliography of relevant literature (including texts on the author's own work) and primary sources to study. In her *Dzieje* Wysocka openly voices her disregard for expressionist dance (although she did value Kurt Jooss, whose *The Green Table* she saw in Paris in 1932). Her overt and repeatedly expressed aversion towards Polish representatives of "German" dance seems to indicate that the genre was strongly present in the Warsaw dance scene. "I shall not discuss either—indeed, I shall not discuss in particular—choreographies drawing on German expressionism, so popular in the early 20th century. Laban, Wigman are indeed big names but they have nothing in common with academic dance, indeed they yearn to obliterate it, offering us in exchange their technical deficiencies, improvisation, and philosophising,"¹⁷ she argued. Let me stress that I do not mention the prominent artist and educator's criticism of the German approaches to accuse her of poor judgement, but as a proof that an intensive expansion of expressionism took place in Poland.

Janina Mieczysłowska (1888–1981), a graduate of the Jaques-Dalcroze institutes in Geneva and Hellerau, established her Szkoła Rytmiki i Plastyki [School of Rhythmic Development and Plastique] in Warsaw already in 1912, as an accredited training centre of the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute.¹⁸ Between 1915 and 1918 the school closed temporarily, while Mieczysłowska studied at the Duncan centre in Moscow. In 1918 the school reopened. Making use of her newly acquired knowledge and skills, Mieczysłowska included dance in the curriculum, consequently changing the school's name to Szkoła Rytmiki i Tańca Artystycznego [School of Rhythmic Development and Artistic Dance]. The new curriculum meant that she had to renounce the accreditation of the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute. Thus, at the start of the interwar period, Mieczysłowska taught a combination of the ideas preached by Duncan and Jaques-Dalcroze,¹⁹ while in the 1930s she added the Wigman method to the mix, having studied it in Dresden, Munich and Berlin. In other words, first she combined free dance and eurythmics, then seasoned the concoction with expressionist dance [or *Ausdruckstanz*—ed.]. The school's curriculum also included classical dance, Polish and international folk dances, and historical and contemporary ballroom dances. Among Mieczysłowska's students were Halina Hulanicka (who co-headed the school in 1922–1925), Złota Buczyńska (medalist of the 1936 Dance Olympics in Berlin and winner of the Viennese Dance Competition in 1934, both awarded for solo performances), Pola Nireńska, and Irena Prusicka. The teaching staff included Ruth Sorel²⁰ (who subsequently opened her own school) and Georg Groke, who, as some sources point out, both moved to Warsaw from abroad or, as Maciej Różalski claims, came to Poland seeking "refuge from the rising Hitlerism in Germany."²¹ Irena Turska attended the school during the Second World War as well.²²

18

Some sources give the date as 1913; yet Mieczysłowska's accreditation request was granted before she opened the school.

19

Interestingly, *Kurier Warszawski* claimed that Mieczysłowska had known Duncan's ideas even before the war, when she worked together with Kutnerówna as a choreographic assistant for Aleksander Zelwerowicz's production of *Lysistrata*. Mieczysłowska denies possessing any knowledge of the Duncan method at the time.

20

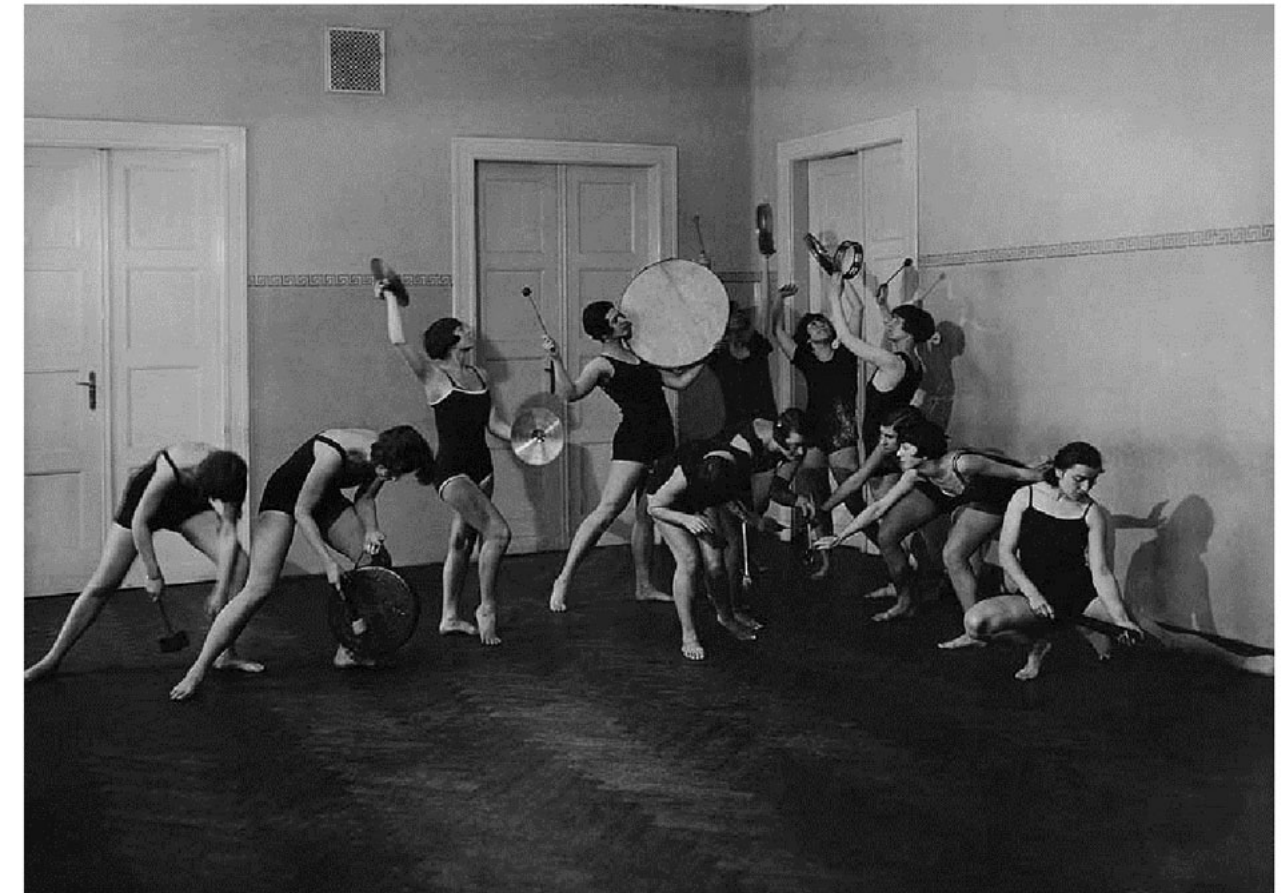
Also known as Sorel-Abramowicz, Sorel-Abramowitsch and Abramowitsch-Sorel.

21

M. Różalski, "Antropologie Yanki," *Vivadańca Festival Internacional 10 anos. Yanka Rudzka. Entre traços e da história e vestígios da memória / Pomiedzy śladami historii a okrucami pamięci* [festival programme], Salvator 2016, 8.

22

J. Mieczysłowska-Lewakowska, *Fakty i ludzie z mego życia*, ed. I. Turska, Łódź: Zarząd Miasta (BiK), 1993, 109.



Students of Janina Mieczysłowska's School of Rhythmic Development and Artistic Dance during dance exercises with the instruments, 1928; collection of Polish National Digital Archives, Warsaw

il. 1, p. 90

il. 2, p. 91

17

Idem, 6.

philosophical differences, but nearly five decades of cultural policies focused on preserving the existing state-of-play and reinforcing simultaneous monologues of each of the genres rather than stimulating new developments, and fostering mutual interactions, and dialogues between them. Did the Second World War and the political attitudes that prevailed afterwards affect the development of dance to an even greater extent than we thought? Even if a return of expressive and free dance to their interwar glory is in all likelihood impossible (although a contemporary reinterpretation of these styles could be interesting), it could be extremely useful to refresh our memory of the times when collaborations between different disciplines flourished and the authorities that expressed an interest in supporting the development of the art of dance and choreography.

Translation: Monika Tacikowska



their own versions of that question about the nature of bodies and their capacities. By closely reading the accounts of commentators, with particular attention to their limit cases—specifically the moments at which they claimed to see things that never could have physically happened onstage, which highlight what could only have been visible through the translative work of watching—what I’ve found is that spectators took up this very particular invitation to use the temporary world of the stage to negotiate pressing social issues.

One such example are the fundamentally whole bodies that were seen by commentators to appear in pieces in accounts of Oskar Schlemmer and of The Tiller Girls and other kickline groups of the time. In both cases, novel physical practices were taken by audiences as a means to test the successful functioning of human-machine hybrids at a moment of increased technologization. Whereas earlier concerns about the relationship between humans and machines had been articulated in terms of one-to-one replacement or substitution, by the time of the Weimar Republic, machinic principles had been integrated into understandings of human bodies. Bodies were often considered in terms of parts that could be modified and changed to alter the personality of the individual, or as components of larger machinic assemblages altogether. As increased technologization became inevitable, the issue of how machine-like humans might become while still retaining their underlying humanity was hotly contested and often mixed with prevalent typology to manifest in debates about the exact parameters of the creatures that formed a new human-machine type.

On the one hand both *Triadic Ballet* and various kickline performances are described with exactly this language. Schlemmer’s performers were spoken of in terms of individual machinic bodies as “ghostly-uncanny hermaphroditic creatures of human and machine” and “the children of a technical age ... figures which are half human and half mechanism.”³ Likewise, there was the amalgamation of kickline performers into a singular entity like that in Krakauer’s famous description of their “girl-contraption,” in which he described watching not a troupe of sixteen girls, but “rather each girl’s leg is one thirty-second of a marvelously precise apparatus.”⁴ And there are so many examples like this. My question is: how did human dancers, who never overtly incorporated technology as medium or thematic content, come to be seen as half-machine in much of the written commentary that surrounded their performances. And what can we learn from the transformative labor of watching that becomes visible in this misapprehension?

To answer, we need to look at the differences between the two examples. In the case of Schlemmer, he used various scenographic techniques of exposing and modifying the inherent mechanics of the human body as a means to enhance its capacity for metaphysical expression. Yet while his project remained focused on the human, commentators of the time regarded his work as exceeding it, as he was most often pejoratively seen by audiences to mechanize those bodies. This comes down to apparent failures of the new human type that the dance was seen to propose. Although he was drawing on a set of culturally charged impetuses toward metaphysical goals, his audiences could not always follow, among other things because of the difficulties that the dancers faced with the unwieldy costumes. Tellingly the performance sections that were meant by Schlemmer to be

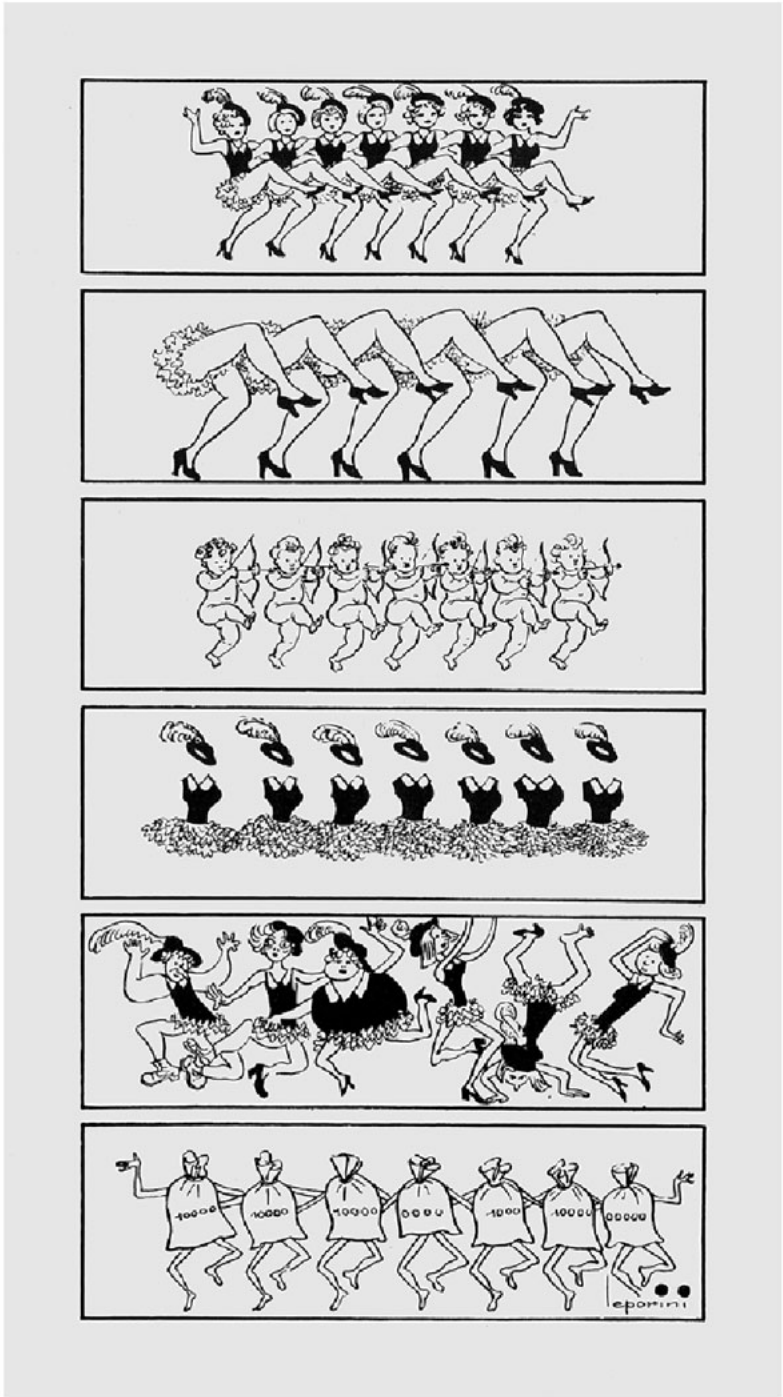
3

H. Hildebrandt, “Kleine Chronik,” (unknown, 1922); H. Hildebrandt, “Oskar Schlemmers Triadisches Ballett,” *Illustrierte Zeitung* (August 1926).

4

S. Krakauer, “Girls und Krise,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, (26 May 1931).

il. 2, p. 109



1

Bernardo Leporini, *The Girls*, 1929, in *Tanz und Karikatur*, ed. U. Steiner, Weihnachten: Ulrich Steiner, 1984

1923 costume and photograph of Akarova by Baugniet as showing a Malevich-like cross in reverse. In thinking about Akarova, who worked in a body based art, it is important to remember that abstraction was always an a priori goal for Baugniet. In fact, he switched his focus to textiles, sets, and interiors in large part because abstraction was approved in design long before it would be in painting.⁴² His 1921 and 1922 exposure to Kupka and Malevich in Paris led him to even more thoughtful experimentation in cubist abstraction and the developing purism in Europe.⁴³

Akarova married Baugniet in the year following his return to Brussels and therefore was collaborating with him during his most intense and prolific interest in abstraction—a commitment that loosened into more figurative work in the years after their divorce. The poet Robert Vivier, who published a critical biography of Baugniet in 1927, wrote that the artist used abstract stylization to “cerebralize” his visual experiments.⁴⁴ Perhaps Akarova’s commitment to begin always with music as her foundation was her own similar effort to take her art out of the material and tie it instead to thought. After first experimenting in decoration for its nonrepresentational imagery, Baugniet would, by the early 1920s, disapprove of what he saw in the decorative as a false use of aesthetics to produce contrived emotion or nostalgia. He instead sought an art of unsentimental, pure aesthetics, and it was this search, Vivier contends, that led him to architecture—whose every form and relation is worked out by the brain, reason, and mathematics.⁴⁵ Architecture for the new Belgian avant-garde was not an autonomous medium, but rather a model of construction for all art. Pierre Bourgeois wrote in the pages of *7 Arts* that pure plastics meant “a decorative painting that objectively and physically obeys the process of architectural composition.”⁴⁶ Bourgeois described a postwar interest in order, which stemmed from a need to combat the brutality of war with precision, discipline, and a desire to build.⁴⁷ *Plastique Pure* would find methods of describing non-architectural arts like poetry and music in architectural terms to show how they might share the same high aims as the most “constructed” and ordered of arts.⁴⁸ We have already seen that Baugniet described dance as “music-architecture” so that an interest in Akarova’s dance among the *Plastique Pure* artists would be born from her dynamic ability to set architecture in motion.

As I have tried to describe, Akarova created a reasoned and mathematical framework of music, which she enlivened by a mix of dynamic and equilibrated gesture, to result in an image of kinetic geometric abstraction within an architectural frame. In his painting *Statisme* of 1925, Baugniet visually supports this claim by painting Akarova as the representation of such dynamic equilibrium; though her living body is apparent in the flesh-colored portions of her arm, face, breast,

44

R. Vivier, *Marcel Baugniet*, Paris: Les Écrivains réunis, 1927, 5.

45

Cf. idem, 8–9, for Baugniet’s ideas on decorativism.

46

P. Bourgeois, “Les Saisons de la jeune peinture,” *7 Arts* 13 (February 25, 1923); cited also in S. G. de Heusch, “7 Arts,” 57. *Plastique Pure*’s mission to uphold architecture as a model follows along the ideas of synthesis held by Kandinsky’s Russian Académie des sciences artistiques, and later the German Bauhaus. Van de Velde’s École des arts décoratifs in Weimar and later his Institut supérieur des arts décoratifs in Brussels also insisted on architecture as the origin of the other plastic arts.

47

See Bourgeois, preface to S. G. de Heusch, “7 Arts,” 13.

48

For more, see S. G. de Heusch, “7 Arts,” 87.

42

Baugniet’s interview in *Akarova*, 165. Images of his graphic work and textiles can be found in *Marcel-Louis Baugniet: Liège 1896-Bruxelles 1995: Dans le Tourbillon des avant-gardes*, exh. cat., Tournai: La Renaissance du livre/Dexia Banque, 2001.

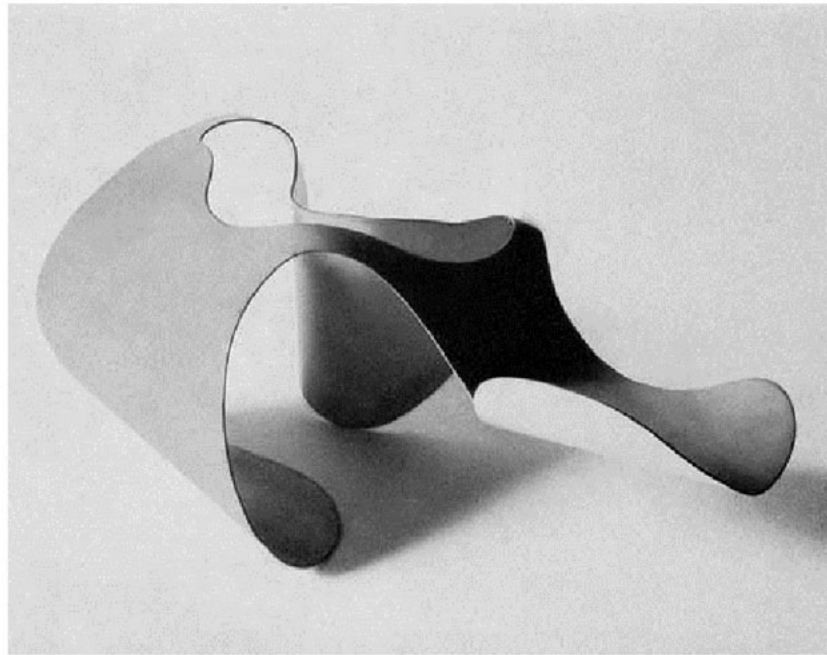
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Baugniet saw the Belgian *Plastique Pure* as a logical development of Cubism with influences from Suprematism and Constructivism. Cf. M.-L. Baugniet, *Vers une Synthèse*, 56.



3

Akarova, *Allegro Barbaro*, 1929,
photo: Robert de Smet; collection of Archives
d'Architecture Moderne, Brussels



4

Photography showing Gret Palucca juxtaposed with the reproduction of *Spatial Composition (9)* by Katarzyna Kobro (1933) in Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Moderne Plastik, Elemente der Wirklichkeit, Masse und Auflockerung*, Zürich: H. Girsberger, 1937

only in response to the act of perception, the possible element of which may be the viewer's movement. Kobro deals with the issue of human activity in space, of opening the artwork into space, but also on composing sculptures on the basis of a supra-individual system and principles. Unlike the practice of Ladovsky's students, however, Kobro did not make sculptures so as to carry out para-laboratory tests of the impact of specific forms on the human psyche or of mechanisms of creating a spatial experience and later translating the results of such experiments into specific large-scale projects.⁴⁶ However the principles she applied in composing her works, her strive to break up the hegemony of the central perspective and to create compositions allowing a multitude of vantage points, let us analyse her work in the context of experiments with space and perception, so popular in the first decades of the 20th century within the milieu of the Russian avant-garde. The analysis of human body movement and of how it is set in space, as well as investigating the properties of space, of how it is organised and how it is sensed by people, were not merely experiments aimed at generating new formal solutions. The progressive language of plastic forms⁴⁷ could go hand in hand with a new concept of a human life model—with all the new architecture, new life style, new labour conditions, and a new perception of the world. The topos of the new man which had shaped the intellectual and artistic foundations of the Russian avant-garde is also quite significant to this type of thinking. The rubble of the old world was to give birth to a new organisation of life and a human being who sees more, perceives differently, and proudly looks ahead. In this context, the tasks posed before Kobro's sculpture of forming space and social organisation can be seen as an attempt at a mental experiment conducted by the means of art forms. They could be seen as a sort of intellectual shift in trying to visualise new models of thinking and perceiving, the principles of which are established in connection with the basic rules of the world, and can be used for the purpose of a better organisation of life (e.g. by architectural forms). As Kobro wrote in *Funkcjonalizm* [Functionalism], "each plastic form simultaneously constitutes a norm which organizes both the human psyche and human activities."⁴⁸ In the case of Kobro, it does not necessarily have to mean that the artist aimed at translating artistic experiments into actions that directly shaped one's environment—both she and Strzemiński rejected the understanding of art as a form of utilitarian activity. Kobro's central focus in art was experimentation with form and time-space rhythm, as well as a combination of sculptural shapes with space—a relationship which could become the main principles governing all forms beyond 2D containing potential methods of utilitarian activities.⁴⁹ This abstract, inexplicit, and representative line of her work is not contradicted even by Kobro's random experiments in the field of architecture, if only to mention the tobacco

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Though in her text *Funkcjonalizm* Kobro writes about the impact of visual forms and about investigating "the influence of the utilitarian shapes on the consumer" (160), it may be assumed that these tasks were to express themselves by converting the principles governing the organisation of labour with other areas of human activity, and include them also in art and other areas of culture, instead of artists creating practical objects which have a direct impact on the user's psyche. Nature, human life, and artworks or the organisation of labour were, in Kobro's opinion, to be based on common laws which, however, were formulated in different ways depending on the area of their activity. Art offers general solutions—geometry of form, proportions as the basis of all composition, but it does not create ready and immediately applicable solutions. As Kobro wrote, "a work of art can only be the field of plastic experimentation which yields formal solutions that are useful from the point of view of the utilitarian realization of Functionalism." Cf. K. Kobro, "Funkcjonalizm," *Forma*, no. 4 (1936), 12, transl. P. Szymar, in *Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951)*, 160.

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Cf. footnote 8.

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K. Kobro, "Funkcjonalizm," 12, transl. P. Szymar, in *Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951)*, 160.

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Idem, 160.