

Muz., 2018(59): 203-210
 Rocznik, eISSN 2391-4815
 received – 08.2018
 reviewed – 08.2018
 accepted – 08.2018
 DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0012.5067

FROM ŁÓDŹ TO LEIDEN – ON INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS OF THE POLISH INTER-WAR AVANT-GARDE

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to international connections between selected representatives of the Polish and Western avant-garde in art and literature of the inter-war period. Both the nature and scale of the titular relations are exemplified by artists from the “a.r.” group – Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, Henryk Stażewski, and Jan Brzękowski, as well as their contacts with representatives of Dutch and Belgian formations, i.a. the “De Stijl” group.

The origin of those exchanges is briefly presented along with their nature, dynamics, and impact on the *oeuvre* and theories of chosen artists. The description of dependencies is based on archival documents and publications, from which there emerges a picture of direct relationships – personal or correspondence-based – between leading artists of the European avant-garde, depicted also in the form of a diagram illustrating the text.

Keywords: inter-war period, modern art, avant-garde, “a.r.” group, cultural mobility, the Netherlands, Belgium.

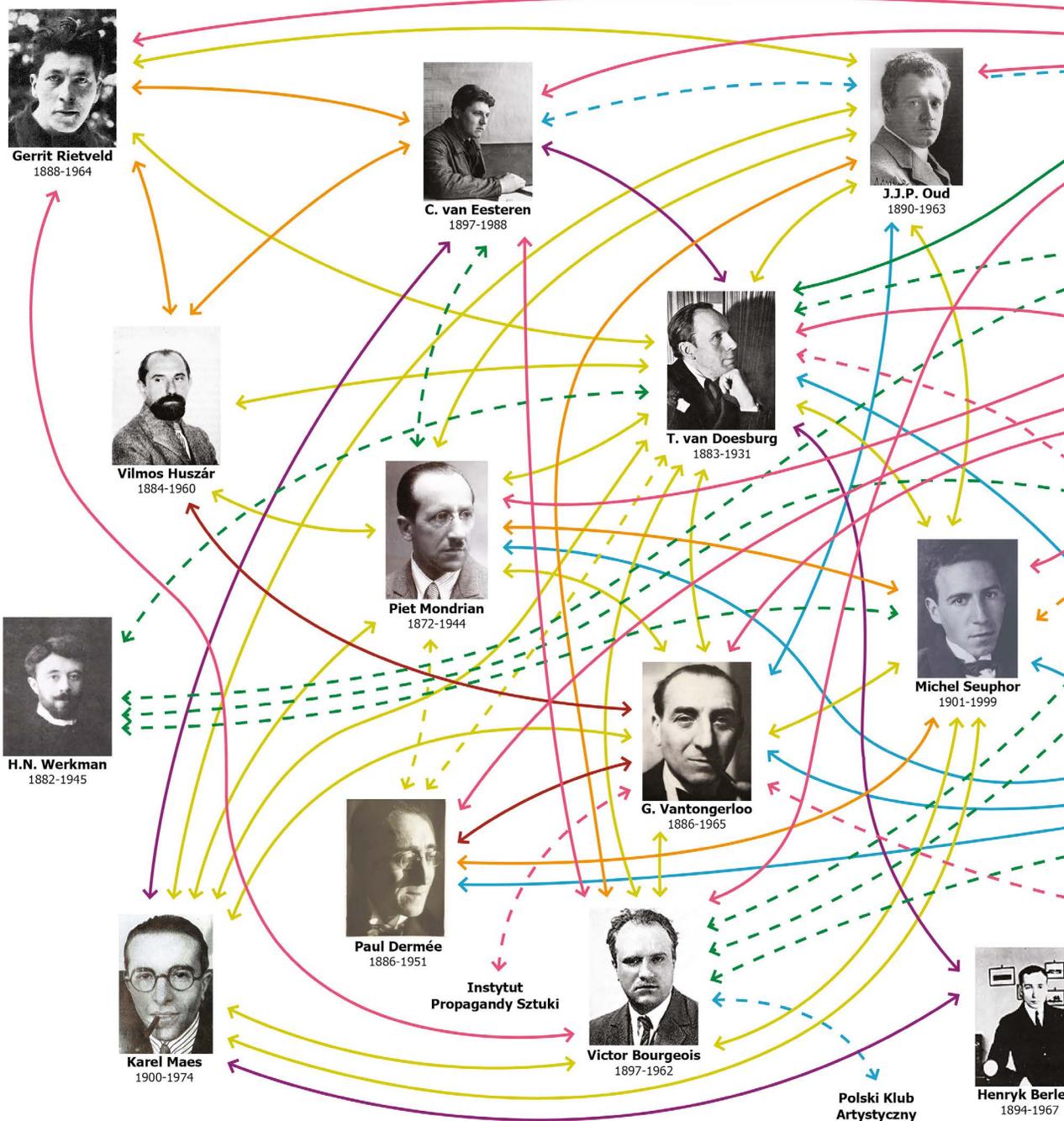
Mutual relations and connections between Polish avant-garde artists and representatives of Dutch and Belgian artistic milieus assumed shape from the early 1920s. This was a period when young Polish members of the avant-garde established their first personal and correspondence contacts with Western artists, which in time assumed an extremely intensive character and contributed to the flourishing of avant-garde thought both in and outside Poland.

The majority of the “a.r.” group members maintained wide contacts with European avant-garde artists. Thanks to sojourns in Paris Henryk Stażewski and Jan Brzękowski made the acquaintance of the most prominent representatives of the inter-war avant-garde with whom they spent time in local cafés and bistros, while Władysław Strzemiński corresponded with Theo van Doesburg, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Jan Tschichold, Georges Vantongerloo, Herwarth Walden, and Russian artists. Only Katarzyna Kobro remained for long in the shadow of her husband and did not establish copious international relations although, in my opinion, she was the author of artworks representing the highest world level, whose originality and pioneering character exceeded

the oeuvre of most Polish and European avant-garde artists. Numerous traces of those connections – reprints of texts, reproductions, “lists of acquaintances”, etc. – can be encountered in avant-garde periodicals, publications, preserved correspondence or chronicles of the Łódź-based International Collection of Modern Art, which came into being thanks to, i.a. abundant and intense contacts developed within a supra-national network of the international literary-artistic avant-garde.¹ The presented text brings the reader closer to, and partially reconstructs, the relations of selected Polish artists with, and dependencies upon, associates of the West European avant-garde and groups of Belgian or Dutch origin, additionally portrayed in fig. 1.²

Beginnings of mutual contacts

The famous Congress of International Progressive Artists (Kongress der Union internationaler fortschrittlicher Künstler) held in Düsseldorf in 1922 was attended by, i.a. Henryk Berlewski, Theo van Doesburg, Cornelis van Eesteren, Raoul Hausmann, Stanisław Kubicki, El Lissitzky, Hans Richter,

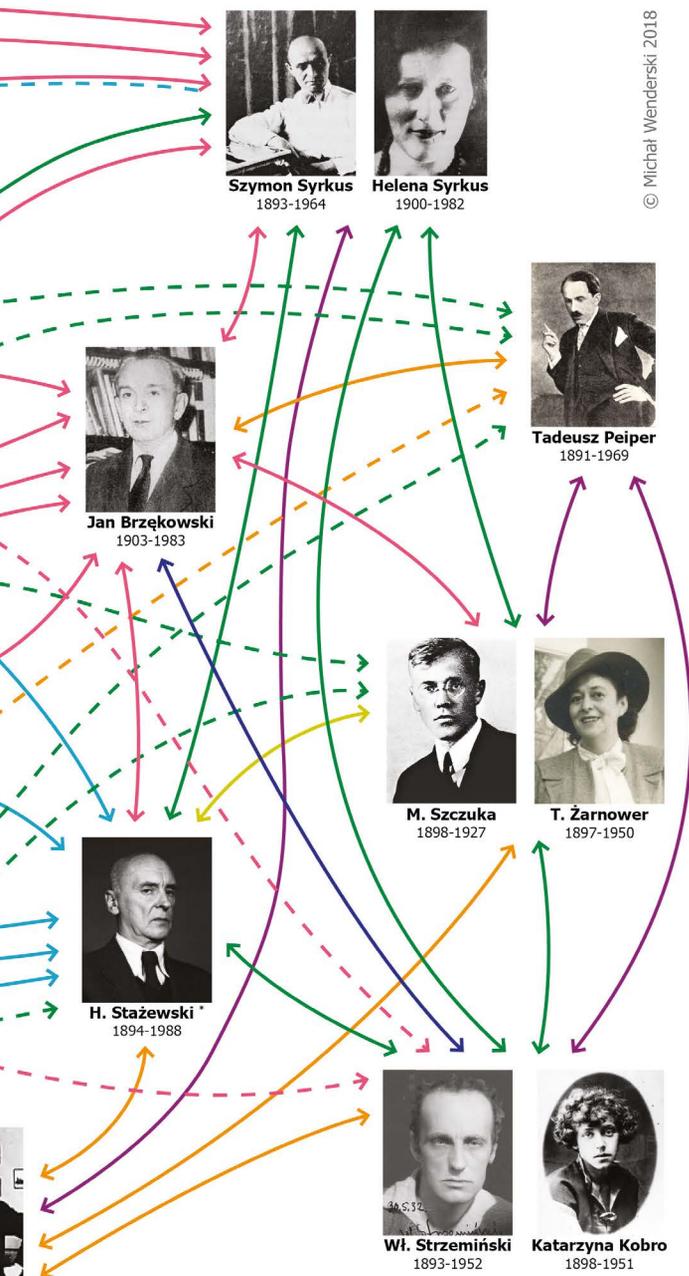


Continuous lines mark personal contacts between artists, and broken lines - correspondence-based contacts. Colors of particular lines signify the date of first documented contacts (upon the basis of archival and bibliographic sources)



1. Mutual contacts between selected representatives of the Polish, Belgian, and Dutch avant-garde

(graphic author – M. Wenderski)



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*) Historical sources unambiguously define the beginning of contacts between Henryk Stażewski and artists from Belgium and the Netherlands

and Karel Maes. Upon his return Berlewi subscribed the Dutch periodical "De Stijl", published by a group active under the same name, and thus initiated years-long correspondence between the periodical's publisher Van Doesburg and representatives of the Polish avant-garde. The outcome of those contacts became discernible both in Polish and Dutch periodicals. In 1924 Van Doesburg promptly and enthusiastically recorded in "De Stijl" the appearance of the first two issues of "Blok", which he included into a group of over twenty avant-garde titles that he regarded as worthy of particular attention.³ He also mentioned "Zwrotnica" and "Praesens" as well as books by Jalu Kurek, Tadeusz Peiper, and Julian Przyboś, and on the cover of "De Stijl" listed Warsaw as one of the centres of his group alongside Leiden, Paris or Hannover.

In turn, such Polish periodicals as "Blok", "Praesens" or "L'Art Contemporain – Sztuka Współczesna" published numerous texts and reproductions of works by leading Dutch avant-garde artists associated with the "De Stijl" group – Theo van Doesburg, Cornelis van Eesteren, Piet Mondriaan, Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud or Georges Vantongerloo.⁴ It is particularly noteworthy that the "Blok" manifesto: *Co to jest kontruktywizm* by Mieczysław Szczuka and Teresa Żarnowerówna literally cited a fragment of Van Doesburg's text from the preceding issue of "Blok" focused on the synthesis of art and architecture.⁵ A translation of *Classique – Baroque – Moderne*, one of the earlier studies by this Dutch author, was reprinted in: *Almanach. Katalog. Salon modernistów as: Klasycyzm – Barok – Nowoczesność*.⁶ Moreover, it follows from correspondence between Brzękowski and Przyboś that issue no. 4 of "Linia" was to contain information about the "De Stijl" group and the Paris-based international "Abstraction-Création" group,⁷ which, however, the periodical never published.⁸

At the same time when Berlewi was expanding his contacts with Western artists in Düsseldorf, Michel Seuphor and essentially Fernand Berckelaers, co-editor of the Flemish periodical "Het Overzicht" – *a sui generis* counterpart and, at the same time, rival of "De Stijl" – turned to Witold Kajruksztis and Tadeusz Peiper with a request for information concerning the development of modern art in Poland. Consequently, in October 1923 "Het Overzicht" mentioned the Exhibition of New Art held in Wilno and half a year later printed a translation into the Dutch of Jan Brzękowski's article: *Nieuwe Kunst in Polen* (Polish original: *Nowa Sztuka w Polsce*), mentioning, i.a. Peiper, Strzemiński, and Szczuka, still under the aegis of "Zwrotnica".⁹ Without sufficient time at his disposal Peiper commissioned Brzękowski to write a text about Polish art of the period, which he then sent to Seuphor to be published in "Het Overzicht", thus initiating long-lasting friendship between Brzękowski and Seuphor. Subsequently, their relationship proved to be of immense significance for the international contacts of the Polish avant-garde and hence also for the history of the Łódź "a.r." collection, which originated primarily thanks to this camaraderie.

In the supra-national network of the avant-garde

With time contacts between avant-garde artists progressed and were augmented by successive authors and groups. In October 1924 the Belgian architect Victor Bourgeois

turned to the editors of "Blok" with a request for material to be included in his French-language periodical: "7 Arts", offering in return reproductions of Belgian works.¹⁰ As a consequence, texts by Polish artists and reproductions of their works, i.a. by Kobro, Stażewski, Strzemiński, Szczuka, and Żarnowerówna, appeared upon numerous occasions. In 1924–1926 their names and those of other Polish authors were mentioned among many prominent artists collaborating with "7 Arts".

The intensity and significance of relations between the Polish and Belgian avant-garde were evidenced also by one of the issues of the Walloon periodical: "Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège", edited by Georges Linze and almost entirely dedicated to the Polish avant-garde. In March 1925 "Anthologie" published, i.a. translations into the French of: *Co to jest konstruktywizm* – a manifesto of the "Blok" group, an article by Henryk Stażewski: *O sztuce abstrakcyjnej*, and a text by Mieczysław Szczuka: *Le mouvement artistique en Pologne* (Polish original: *Ruch artystyczny w Polsce*), whose manuscript, bearing the date: "August 1924", can be found in the archive of Theo van Doesburg (The Hague).¹¹ Works reproduced in "Anthologie" included texts by Nicz-Borowiakowa, Stażewski, Szczuka, and Żarnowerówna, while covers of several issues of the periodical mentioned, i.a. "Blok" and "Zwrotnica". Characteristically, the publication of this material in "Anthologie" took place only a few months after it was originally printed in Polish periodicals, proof of the exceptional rate of the exchange of reflections and texts between assorted European avant-garde groups.¹²

Among artists and centres of the Dutch avant-garde maintaining relations with Polish artists mention is due also to Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman, editor of the periodical "The Next Call", issued in Groningen in 1923–1926, and the Amsterdam-based periodical "Internationale Revue i10", co-edited by Arthur Müller-Lehning and the architect J. J. P. Oud. Both periodicals contained traces – albeit scarce – of contacts with the Polish avant-garde, e.g. an article by Szymon Syrkus: *L'architecture ouvrant le volume* published in "i10" in 1927 together with illustrations showing works by Henryk Stażewski and Kazimir Malevich¹³ or mention of "Blok" on the back cover of the sixth issue of "The Next Call". Documents preserved in the Werkman archive (Amsterdam) include a list of addresses of several score Dutch and foreign artists and groups, including "Blok" and "Zwrotnica" from Cracow.¹⁴

Such international groups as "Cercle et Carré" or "Abstraction-Création" comprised an exceptional example of supra-national co-operation and bonds between artists from different parts of the world. Their members included avant-garde artists from assorted cultural and linguistic circles, including Polish authors, as evidenced by archival photographs portraying them together.¹⁵ Periodicals issued by those groups published numerous texts and works by avant-garde artists, i.a. Brzękowski, Kobro, Stażewski or Strzemiński, thanks to which their accomplishments became known to a wider range of recipients. Polish artists residing in Paris, i.a. Brzękowski and Stażewski also played an invaluable part by functioning as a *sui generis* liaison between Polish artists and the West.¹⁶ Brzękowski, by way of example, presented Seuphor with a reproduction of works by Kobro and attempted to convince him to publish texts by Kurek, Peiper, and Przyboś in "Cercle et Carré"; he wrote to Kurek: *Presumably I shall succeed to cram*

*all of you in the next issue, although Seuphor is very erratic and today says: yes, and tomorrow: no.*¹⁷ "Cercle et Carré", however, did not feature the above-mentioned poets despite the fact that Seuphor held the Poles in high regard – it follows from his correspondence that he spoke favourably of Przyboś's poem *Krajobraz*,¹⁸ on the other hand, he did not find Strzemiński's project of the graphic outlay of *Z ponad* to his liking.¹⁹ The same volume was received also by, i.a. Enrico Prampolini, Fillia, Van Doesburg as well as Mondriaan and Tschichold, whose reactions, in turn, were highly favourable.²⁰ Interestingly, Strzemiński too declared that artistically *Z ponad* was superior to an analogous experiment conducted by Mondriaan and Seuphor: *Tableau-Poème (Textuel)*, published in "L'Art Contemporain" in 1929.²¹ "Cercle et Carré" was to include the first communiqué of the "a.r." group, but Seuphor disapproved of the open criticism of Le Corbusier expressed in it and thus resigned from publishing a translation into the French.²²

Intense contacts and reactions within the range of the supra-national network of the avant-garde resulted in numerous joint initiatives undertaken by artists from different countries and groups. By way of example, Polish artists informed Van Doesburg about the establishment of the "Praesens" group and periodical immediately after it took place, and he, in turn, proposed that he would come to Warsaw and give a series of lectures.²³ This suggestion was not realised for financial and organisational reasons, but thanks to contacts with the architectural periodical "Het Bouwbedrijf" Van Doesburg was able to publish three articles dedicated to the Polish avant-garde.²⁴ Previously, he turned to former and current members of "Blok", "Praesens" and "a.r." with a request for information and reproductions to be used in his articles. Up to this day the Van Doesburg archive at The Hague contains numerous letters, publications, and photographs by, i.a. Kobro, Nicz-Borowiakowa, Stażewski, Strzemiński, and others.²⁵

Similarly, when Strzemiński became engaged in activity pursued by the "Europa" periodical he decided to ask his artist acquaintances to fill out a survey about the state of modern art in Europe. Responses published in the periodical included texts by, i.a. Kobro, Van Doesburg, Mondriaan, and Vantongerloo.²⁶ Indubitably, it was upon the initiative of Strzemiński that "Europa" also presented a Polish version of the concrete art manifesto: *Base de la peinture concrete* from the sole issue of the periodical "Art Concret", forwarded to Strzemiński personally by Van Doesburg.²⁷

Plans of Polish representatives of the avant-garde foresaw translations of books by the most acclaimed European artists, including Van Doesburg, Gleizes, Marinetti, Mondriaan, and Oud.²⁸ The above-mentioned brief fragments of Van Doesburg's book: *Classique – Baroque – Moderne*, published in "Europa", could be connected precisely with those ambitious projects.²⁹ Protracted work on issuing Oud's book is mentioned in the correspondence of Szymon Syrkus, while letters by Mondriaan addressed to other artists demonstrate that he personally worked on the Polish edition of his breakthrough study: *Le Néo-Plasticisme*.³⁰ Not only Mondriaan but also Vantongerloo actively joined the publishing plans of the Poles – Vantongerloo executed the extant project of a cover of the book's Polish edition: *Sztuka i jej przyszłość*.³¹

Another important aspect of the functioning of the avant-garde network were exhibitions featuring the accomplishments of artists working in different centres but sharing a joint vision of new art. Here an excellent example is the Warsaw exhibition of architecture shown in 1926 and presenting works by outstanding artists from Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Russia, etc. Earlier, in December 1924, members of "Blok" were to take part in an exhibition planned by "Le Cabinet Maldoror" in Brussels, but it never took place.³² Achievements of the Polish avant-garde could be admired in the Belgium capital several years later – at the "L'Art Polonais" exhibition (the turn of 1928) and during the "L'Art Vivant en Europe" exposition (1931) showing works by, i.a. Kobro, Nicz-Borowiakowa, Pronaszko, Strzemiński, and architects from the "Praesens" group.³³

Many of the exhibitions planned during the inter-war period were never realised, as in the case of a "De Stijl" exposition in Warsaw, which during the mid-1920s was discussed enthusiastically in correspondence conducted by members of "Praesens" and Van Doesburg; another instance was an exhibition of the "Abstraction-Création" group, which was the topic of a series of letters exchanged in 1934–1936 by Vantongerloo and Strzemiński together with the directors of the Institute of Art Propaganda in Warsaw. The planned display of works by several score members of the group was to take place in Warsaw and Łódź, and issue no. 5 of "Abstraction-Création" was to fulfil the function of an exhibition catalogue. Unfortunately, both the "De Stijl" exhibition in the 1920s and the one to be held by "Abstraction-Création" a decade later were never shown for financial reasons.³⁴

In 1930 the "Cercle et Carré", group, however, managed to arrange an exhibition in Paris presenting works by avant-garde artists from the entire Continent. A catalogue containing a list of the exhibits was published in issue no. 2 of "Cercle et Carré" and archival photographs from the exposition demonstrate that works by Mondriaan, Stażewski, and Werkman were displayed together, as was to be the case several years later in Łódź. It was precisely numerous international contacts established and developed by Polish avant-garde artists that made possible a free-of-charge acquisition of works by the above-mentioned artists for the International Collection of Modern Art in Łódź. Some were secured by Brzękowski and Stażewski (i.a. works by Prampolini, Seuphor, Hans Arp, and Joaquín Torres-García), others were mentioned in requests made by Strzemiński in his correspondence with foreign artists (e.g. with Van Doesburg) or presented to him as gifts (e.g. Peiper donated to the collection a work by Schwitters, and Seuphor – *Schoorsten 2*, a lithograph by Werkman, the first work by this artist to become part of a permanent museum collection).³⁵

Similarities, impacts, disputes

The above-cited periodicals of the avant-garde movement and other publications by its leading representatives indicate also numerous similarities and program-like impacts discernible in the theoretical reflections of some of the authors. By way of example, Stażewski and Brzękowski shared unambiguous inspiration sought in Neoplasticism, for instance in the terminology used by Dutch and Polish artists

alike. Joanna Kleiverda-Kajetanowicz indicated that Henryk Stażewski borrowed Mondriaan's terms: *nieuwe beelding and nieuwe geest*, which he applied in his writings as equivalents of *new plastic expression and new spirit*.³⁶ The same holds true for Jan Brzękowski, whose famous tri-partite *Kilometraż* publicised in "L'Art Contemporain" appears to be partly based on theoretical premises formulated by Mondriaan, discernible already in the Polish translation of the text by the Dutch author published in "Europa".³⁷

Theoretical affiliations with Dutch artists are visible also in the case of Kobro and Strzemiński, e.g. in texts dealing with the *organic nature* of avant-garde artworks. Organic nature was a motif extremely frequent in Strzemiński's works and occurred, for example, in the oeuvre of Van Doesburg and Oud³⁸. In their *Kompozycja przestrzeni* Kobro and Strzemiński reproduced works by numerous European artists (e.g. Boccioni, Le Corbusier, Van Doesburg, Moholy-Nagy, Malevich, Vantongerloo)³⁹ and did not shy from writing critically about the accomplishments of some of them, for instance, while using one of the *Counter-compositions* by Van Doesburg to illustrate an incorrect construction of an image based on an inaccurate, in their opinion, perception of the question of rhythm.⁴⁰ This appears to somewhat confirm the view expressed by Stażewski, who claimed that *Polish abstractionists are not imitators of van Doesburgh [sic!] and Mondriaan – they are their continuators and partly oppose their predecessors*.⁴¹

Interestingly, the architectural undertakings of Van Doesburg too were not always favourably regarded by Polish artists – by way of example, Katarzyna Kobro argued that *in his scarce painting-architectural experiments Van Doesburg announced spatial solutions in the construction of sculpture by means of solids and planes, but that, which he forecast was neither painting, sculpture nor architecture*.⁴² Almost all attempts at creating a total work of art (the so-called *Gesamtkunstwerk*) based on the harmony of architecture, sculpture, and painting, and undertaken by avant-garde artists, failed. Take the example of the co-operation of Van Doesburg with the "De Stijl" architects, which without exception ended in fierce conflicts and, at best, in quasi-architectural models. The same situation occurred in Poland – the "Praesens" architects and artists parted ways already after a first attempt at co-operation upon the occasion of the General National Exhibition held in Poznań in 1929. On the other hand, architectural efforts made by Kobro or Strzemiński were far from the possibility of being actually realised, a fact that could have been at the basis of those conflicts.⁴³

Special place in relations maintained by Kobro and Strzemiński with artists from the "De Stijl" circle belonged to contacts with the Belgian sculptor Georges Vantongerloo. The latter remained rather loosely connected with the Van Doesburg group, although his works are an important example of the implementation of neo-plastic premises both in sculpture and painting.⁴⁴ Strzemiński conducted correspondence with Vantongerloo, who sent him material for publication, e.g. reproductions of his sculptures, of which four were included in *Kompozycja przestrzeni*, and then once again as illustrations in an article by Katarzyna Kobro printed in the periodical "Forma".⁴⁵ Material received by Strzemiński included also a text by Vantongerloo, which was supposed to be published in an "a.r." communiqué; at

the turn of August 1930 Strzemiński mentioned in his letters to Przyboś that the planned text by the Belgian author was critical of the undertakings of Le Corbusier, whom Strzemiński also unanimously condemned. Ultimately, the text did not appear in the *communiqué* probably under the impact of Brzękowski, who was to translate it into the Polish but who, contrary to Strzemiński, found Vantongerloo's theses not to his liking. Moreover, in one of his letters Strzemiński wrote: *Vantongerloo indignant about Praesens* – it is not clear whether the Belgian artist criticised the activity of the members of “Praesens” or reacted to the second issue of the periodical published only several months earlier; nonetheless, his opinion must have appealed to Strzemiński, who after unsuccessful co-operation with the group's architects upon the occasion of the 1929 exhibition criticised their efforts upon every step of the way.⁴⁶

Despite discernible friendly terms between Strzemiński and Vantongerloo the former remained disapproving of the oeuvre of the Belgian sculptor, whose works he perceived as massive solids based exclusively upon the principle of extracting particular elements out of the original mass without any sort of relations with surrounding space, in contrast to Kbro's pioneering spatial compositions. After receiving reproductions of works by the Belgian artist Strzemiński wrote to Przyboś: *I don't know whether I mentioned that Vantongerloo sent photographs of his sculptures for the purpose of this book and that in 1929 he is doing that, what my wife did in 1926.*⁴⁷ Earlier, he mentioned this in *Bilans modernizmu*, an article issued in

“Europa”. More, several years later Strzemiński argued in the essay: *Sztuka nowoczesna w Polsce* that Kbro's pioneering compositions exerted a significant impact on, i.a. works by Vantongerloo, which actually evolved towards more spatial constructions connected with the surrounding.⁴⁸ At this stage it is worth stressing that Vantongerloo was undoubtedly familiar with the accomplishments of the Polish sculptor. In his reminiscences Brzękowski wrote about interest in her works, and the Vantongerloo private archive contains a manuscript of an unpublished text: *Plastique sculptural* (1930), in which he expressed admiration for Kbro's achievements.⁴⁹

Polish artists connected for years with such groups and periodicals as “Zwrotnica”, “Blok”, “Praesens” or “a.r.” were linked in numerous ways with West European authors. This was not only a question of a willingness to conduct a radical revival of art and to propagate avant-garde ideas, or of a certain shared artistic identity, but also – as the above-cited examples illustrate – of direct, personal, and often outright friendly relations maintained also via correspondence. Thanks to those contacts and bonds the supra-national network of the avant-garde functioned so effectively and generated assorted artistic accomplishments in the form of joint publications and exhibitions or, finally, the creation of that, which no one else was capable of attaining at the time – a pioneering collection of modern art under the aegis of the “a.r.” group.⁵⁰

Przypisy

- ¹ The fascinating history of the origin of the Łódź collection was presented in, i.a.: *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Monografia*, A. Jach et al. (ed.), Museum of Art in Łódź, Łódź 2015; J. Ładnawska, *Sala neoplastyczna – z dziejów kolekcji sztuki nowoczesnej Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*, in: *Miejsce Sztuki: Museum – Theatrum Sapientiae, Theatrum Animabile*, Society of Friends of the Museum of Art in Łódź, Łódź 1991, pp. 71–80; *Grupa „a.r.”. 40-lecie Międzynarodowej Kolekcji Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Łodzi*, R. Stanisławski (ed.), Museum of Art in Łódź, Łódź 1971.
- ² This text presents briefly the outcome of my studies on cultural mobility between avant-garde groups from Poland, Belgium, and the Netherlands, conducted as part of a National Science Centre research project (no. 2014/13/N/HS2/02757). The studies were presented more extensively in, i.a. the monograph: M. Wenderski, *Cultural Mobility in the Interwar Avant-Garde Art Network: Poland, Belgium and the Netherlands*, Routledge, New York 2018; here also a complete survey of pertinent literature.
- ³ *Alphabetische informatie: tijdschriften – boeken – artikelen enz.*, “De Stijl” 1924, 6, no. 8, pp. 107–117.
- ⁴ T. van Doesburg, *Odnowienie architektury*, “Blok” 1924, no. 5, pp. 12–13; *idem*, *Ku sztuce elementów*, “Praesens” 1926, no. 1, p. 3; C. van Eesteren, *Funkcja-Przestrzeń-Forma*, “Praesens” 1930, no. 2, pp. 94–95; P. Mondriaan, *Neo-plastyzm*, “Praesens” 1930, no. 2, pp. 122–123; J. J. P. Oud, *Wychowanie przez architekturę*, “Praesens” 1926, no. 1, pp. 4–5 and *idem*, *Mysli*, “Praesens” 1926, no. 2, pp. 87–89.
- ⁵ Cf. *Co to jest konstruktywizm*, M. Szczuka and T. Żarnowerówna (ed.), “Blok” 1924, no. 6/7, no. p. and T. van Doesburg, *Odnowienie architektury...*
- ⁶ T. van Doesburg, *Wyjatek z książki: Classique – Baroque – Moderne*, in: *Almanach. Katalog. Salon modernistów*, Drukarnia Robotnik, Warszawa 1928, pp. 4–6.
- ⁷ Letter from Brzękowski to Przyboś of 26 January 1932, in: T. Kłak, *Źródła do historii awangardy*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1981, pp. 95–96.
- ⁸ See: letters from Peiper to Seuphor of 15 December 1923 and 12 December 1924, archive of Michel Seuphor, Letterenhuis in Antwerp, inv. no. 186877/1–2.
- ⁹ J. Brzękowski, *De nieuwe kunst in Polen*, “Het Overzicht” 1924, no. 21, p. 155.
- ¹⁰ See: letter from Bourgeois to the editors of “Blok” of 5 October 1924, Fonds Victor Bourgeois, Archief voor Hedendaagse Kunst in België in Brussels, inv. no. 12887/1.
- ¹¹ Text reprinted also in the Romanian periodical: “Contimporanul” and in the Czechoslovak “Pásmo”.
- ¹² In certain cases a foreign publication preceded a presentation in a Polish periodical. This took place in the case of, i.a. three reproductions of architectural projects by Szczuka, Koziański, Karczewski, and Żarnowerówna, published in “7 Arts” in February 1926, i.e. a month before the appearance of issue no. 11 of “Blok” (March 1926).
- ¹³ S. Syrkus, *L'Architecture ouvrant le volume*, “Internationale Revue i10” 1927, no. 5, pp. 163–165.
- ¹⁴ Werkmanm Archive, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, inv. no. 110.
- ¹⁵ In photographs from 1928 Polish artists Brzękowski, Rafałowski, and Stażewski are shown in the company of, i.a. Dermé, Mondriaan, Seuphor, and Vantongerloo – see: i.a. M. Wenderski, *Cultural Mobility...*, p. 42.
- ¹⁶ Stażewski was supposed to have, i.a. persuaded Polish artists to publish texts in “Cercle et Carré”; see: letter from Strzemiński to Przyboś of 3 February 1930, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego do Juliana Przybosia z lat 1929–1933*, “Rocznik Historii Sztuki” 1973, no. 9, pp. 232–233.

- ¹⁷ Letter from Brzękowski to Kurek of 9 January 1930, in: T. Klak, *Materiały do dziejów awangardy*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1975, pp. 45–47; cf. letter from Brzękowski to Przyboś of 13 May 1930, in: T. Klak, *Źródła do historii...*, pp. 62–63.
- ¹⁸ See: i.a. letter from Strzemiński to Przyboś of 9 March 1930, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, pp. 237–238.
- ¹⁹ Letter from Brzękowski to Przyboś of 2 April 1930, in: T. Klak, *Źródła do historii...*, pp. 60–61.
- ²⁰ See: letters from Strzemiński to Przyboś of 26 April 1930, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, pp. 240–241 and to Van Doesburg of 10 October 1930, archive of Theo and Nelly van Doesburg, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie at the Hague (ATNvD), inv. no. 198.
- ²¹ Letter from Strzemiński to Przyboś of 27 September 1929, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, pp. 224–225.
- ²² Letter from Brzękowski to Przyboś of 20 June 1930, in: T. Klak, *Źródła do historii...*, pp. 65–66.
- ²³ See: correspondence of Polish artists and Van Doesburg, ATNvD, inv. no. 201, 308.
- ²⁴ T. van Doesburg, *Belangrijke nieuwe uitgaven over nieuwe architectuur*, "Het Bouwbedrijf" 1930, 7, no. 20, pp. 401–403 and *Kunst – en architectuurvernieuwingen in Polen*, "Het Bouwbedrijf" 1930, 7, no. 18, pp. 358–361; 1931, 8, no. 5, pp. 87–90.
- ²⁵ See: ATNvD, inv. no. 130, 142, 160, 191, 195, 198, 201, 202, 265, 308, 1957, 2023, 2055, 2079, 2102, 2120, 2153, 2156, 2159, 2160.
- ²⁶ T. van Doesburg, *Uwagi. Ankieta Europy*, "Europa" 1929, no. 2, pp. 60–61; K. Kobro, *Rzeźba i bryła*, "Europa" 1929, no. 2, p. 60; P. Mondriaan, *Nowa Plastyka*, "Europa" 1929, no. 3, pp. 90–91; G. Vantongerloo, *Ankieta Europy*, "Europa" 1929, no. 3, p. 87.
- ²⁷ O. Carlsund et al., *Deklaracja sztuki konkretnej*, "Europa" 1930, no. 11, p. 341; see also: letter from Strzemiński to Van Doesburg of 10 August 1930.
- ²⁸ See: i.a. letter from Strzemiński to Przyboś of December 1929, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, p. 230, from Syrkus to Van Doesburg of 13 December 1926, ATNvD, inv. no. 201 and to Oud of 16 June 1926, archive of J. J. P. Oud, Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, inv. no. 31:26:108.
- ²⁹ See: J. Kleiverda-Kajetanowicz, *Henryk Stażewski. De Nieuwe Beelding in zijn werk en theorie*, "Jong Holland" 1989, 5, no. 2, p. 9.
- ³⁰ See: letters from Mondriaan to Seuphor of 8 December 1926, to Oud of 20 December 1926, to Félix del Marle of 30 December 1926, and to Albert van den Briel, undated, archive of Werkgroep Mondriaan correspondentieproject, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie at The Hague, inv. no. 20, 23, 63, 75.
- ³¹ Reproduction in: M. Wenderski, *Cultural Mobility...*, plate 3. Somewhat later the work was sold to a private buyer and its current localisation is, unfortunately, unknown.
- ³² On 6–31 December 1924 the same gallery held the "Oeuvres des peintres russes" exhibition; see: F. D'Haeseleer, *Pools Constructivisme in Belgische avant-garde tijdschriften tussen de twee wereldoorlogen*, in: "ICSAC cahier 2/3" 1984, International Centrum voor Structuuranalyse en Constructivisme, p. 117.
- ³³ Works of members of the "Praesens" group were presented also during the "Machine Age Exposition" in New York.
- ³⁴ See: correspondence between Polish artists and Van Doesburg, ATNvD, inv. no. 201, 308 and Vantongerloo, archive of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, inv. no. 70.
- ³⁵ Letters from Strzemiński to Przyboś of 24 June and 31 August 1930, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, pp. 242–247 and letters from Kobro, Strzemiński, and Stażewski to Van Doesburg of 10 October 1930, ATNvD, inv. no. 195.
- ³⁶ J. Kleiverda-Kajetanowicz, *Henryk Stażewski...*, p. 5.
- ³⁷ Cf. statements by Brzękowski and Mondriaan on the "concreteness" of abstract art: J. Brzękowski, *Kilometrą / Kilometrage*, "L'Art Contemporain – Sztuka Współczesna" 1929/1930, no. 1–3, pp. 2–6, 50–53, 82–93 and P. Mondriaan, *Nowa plastyka...*
- ³⁸ See: P. Kurc-Maj, *Stworzyć dzieło sztuki jako organiczną istotę plastyczną*, in: *Powidoki życia. Władysław Strzemiński i prawa dla sztuki*, J. Lubiak (ed.), Museum of Art in Łódź, Łódź 2012, pp. 109–154.
- ³⁹ Correspondence between Strzemiński and, i.a. Van Doesburg and Vantongerloo about those reproductions is preserved to this day (ATNvD and private collections). In a letter to Przyboś of 26 April 1930 Strzemiński recalled that he wrote about this issue to Marinetti, from whom he received reproductions of sculptures by Boccioni, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, pp. 240–241.
- ⁴⁰ This is what Kobro and Strzemiński wrote about the undertakings of Van Doesburg: *Nonetheless, it is necessary to recognise his manner of solution as totally misguided: a repetition of identical sections cannot create rhythm just as rhythm cannot be produced by bringing particular shapes down to a straight line or an arch*; see: K. Kobro and W. Strzemiński, *Kompozycja przestrzeni, Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego*, Drukarnia Polska, Łódź 1931, pp. 67–68.
- ⁴¹ H. Stażewski, „*Epigoni modernizmu*” i krytycy-rutyniści, "Wiadomości Literackie" 1933, 10, no. 32, p. 4.
- ⁴² K. Kobro, *Rzeźba i bryła...*, p. 60.
- ⁴³ At this point it is worth stressing the standpoint of Andrzej Turowski, see: i.a. *Komentarz do korespondencji Władysława Strzemińskiego*, "Rocznik Historii Sztuki" 1973, no. 9, pp. 271–272, arguing about the utopian nature of architectural projects by Strzemiński, who did not manage to exceed the strictly theoretical vision of architecture straight out of works by Malevich. Looking from the vantage point of an architect at, for instance, the villa of Julian Przyboś designed by Strzemiński, I decidedly support this point of view – even despite Strzemiński's exceptionally pragmatic approach discernible in his correspondence with Przyboś the transposition of the rigid program of an artist's vision to an actual building proved to be an impossible task.
- ⁴⁴ Turowski also noticed distinct relations between the theoretical postulates of those artists, *Komentarz do korespondencji...*, p. 273.
- ⁴⁵ K. Kobro, *Funkcjonalizm*, "Forma" 1935, no. 4, pp. 9–13.
- ⁴⁶ See: letters from Strzemiński to Przyboś of 31 August, 8 September, 21 September, and 22 October 1930, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, pp. 245–249 and a letter from Brzękowski to Przyboś of 19 February 1931, in: T. Klak, *Źródła do historii...*, pp. 62–63.
- ⁴⁷ Letter from Strzemiński to Przyboś from the beginning of 1930, in: A. Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego...*, pp. 231–232.
- ⁴⁸ W. Strzemiński, *Bilans modernizmu*, "Europa" 1929, no. 1bis, pp. 22–24 and *Sztuka nowoczesna w Polsce*, in: J. Brzękowski et al., *O sztuce nowoczesnej*, Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Bibliofilów w Łodzi, Łódź 1934, pp. 59–93.
- ⁴⁹ This document in the Max Bill Georges Vantongerloo Stiftung in Zumikon is inaccessible to researchers; see: J. Ceuleers, *Georges Vantongerloo 1886–1965*, Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, Gent 1996, pp. 130–132. I describe in detail the impact of Kobro's works on Vantongerloo in: M. Wenderski, *Cultural Mobility...* and in the article: *From "Peripheries" to "Centres", Westwards: On the Influence of Katarzyna Kobro on Georges Vantongerloo* (in print).
- ⁵⁰ I wrote more extensively on the outcome of the described contacts in: M. Wenderski, *Cultural Mobility...*

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Word count: 5 347; **Tables:** –; **Figures:** 1; **References:** 50

Received: 08.2018; **Reviewed:** 08.2018; **Accepted:** 08.2018; **Published:** 09.2018

DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0012.5067

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Competing interests: Authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Cite this article as: Wenderski M.; FROM ŁÓDŹ TO LEIDEN – ON INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS OF THE POLISH INTER-WAR AVANT-GARDE. *Muz.*, 2018(59): 203–210

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