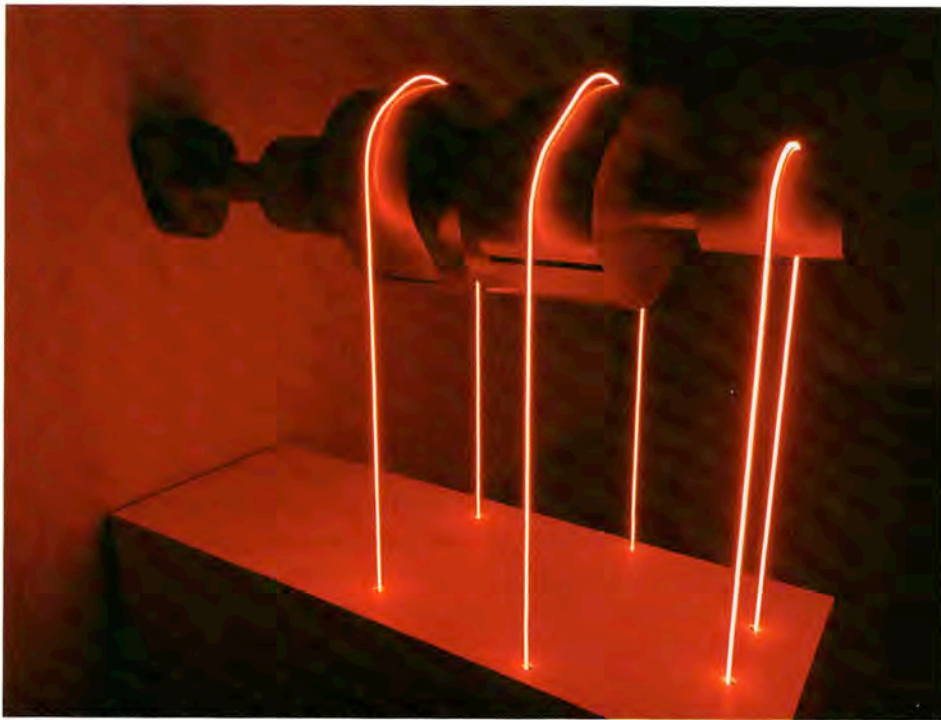


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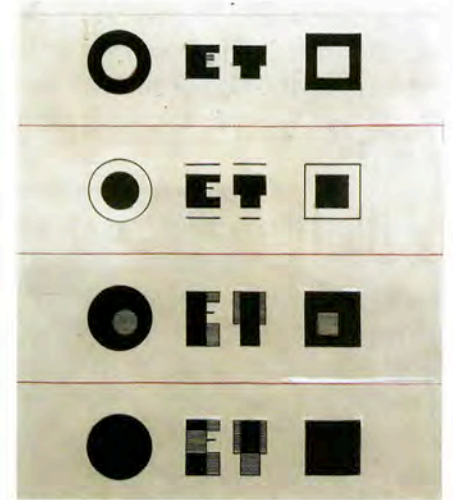
DENVER ART REVIEW
INQUIRY & ANALYSIS



Spring 2020



Camille MacRae, *They Call Me Cam Jam*, steel, glass tubing, neon, and transformer.
Image by Courtney Lindly.



Pierre Daura, *Designs for Cercle et Carré*, 1929, pen and ink on paper.
Image by DARIA.

The *She Bends: Women in Neon* show provides a variety of fresh perspectives on neon from a group of highly-skilled artists. I urge everyone to visit this specialty show before it closes in April.

About the Author:

Courtney Lindly is currently a senior at the University of Denver studying Art History—with a focus in modern and contemporary art—and Business Administration. She is fascinated by the complexities surrounding art appreciation and exchange, specifically the global art market. She enjoys making accessible opportunities for creative experiences and a strong cup of black coffee.

Camille MacRae, Leticia Maldonado, Rebecca Mason, Kamilla Mróz, Amy Palms, Meryl Paraky, Shawna Peterson, Linda Sue Price, Lily Reeves, Jessica Krichelle Rojas, Harriet Schwarzrock, Olivia Steele, and Megan Stelljes.

[3] These parts of *She Bends'* mission were not stated in the wall text one sees when entering the gallery. The exhibition text states that this collective aims to push "the boundaries of our medium beyond the confines of commercial signage" and "move this craft forward toward sustainability and diversity" while focusing "on programming that educates the public." However, for the lay viewer, it would be beneficial for *She Bends* to offer an informational "How It's Made" video, or something of the sort, which includes the processes and history of neon art.

[1] This group of benders values community over competition, a sentiment reiterated while in conversation with artist Camille MacRae.

[2] The artists from the *She Bends* collective included in this exhibition are Julia Bickerstaff, Sarah Blood, Dani Bonnet, Alleson Buchanan, Eve DeHaan, Teresa Escobar, Carissa Grace, Eve Hoyt, Kate Hush, Danielle James, Sharon Keshishian, Kacie Lees, Stephanie Sara Lifshutz,

Cercle et Carré and the International Spirit of Abstract Art

Gregory Allcar Museum of Art, The Griffin Foundation Gallery

Colorado State University
1400 Remington Street, Fort Collins, CO 80524

January 21-April 11, 2020
Admission: Free

Review by Claire Simpson

A selection of works by 29 abstract artists from the historical art group Cercle et Carré are currently on view at the Gregory

Allucar Museum of Art at Colorado State University. Founded in 1929 by Pierra Daura, Joaquin Torres Garcia, and Michel Seuphor, over 80 artists came together in response to the rise of surrealism after World War I to form this alliance. [1]

The traveling exhibition, organized by the Georgia Museum of Art, captures a moment in time before many of these artists found recognition in other movements and as individual practitioners. Predominantly comprised of works on paper, their focus on abstraction is what you would expect to see as the breaking news of a century ago. However, the aesthetics of the day are not necessarily why these works are worth seeing, but rather the context of the rich, virtually unknown history of this specific grouping of artists.

Upon first entering the gallery, the viewer encounters an ink sketch

and a series of paintings by the artist Pierre Daura hanging alongside the exhibition statement. As one of the founders of Cercle et Carré (meaning “Circle and Square” in French), Daura designed the image for the group’s logo which exemplifies the power of simple shapes. His sketch of logo variations on display in the gallery shows the evolution of the design.

With his own work leaning towards purism—a movement from the late 1910s and early 1920s that emphasized form over detail and was a precursor to Cercle et Carré—Daura explores a cloisonné line that divides his recognizable vases and figures. His blocks of color and flat outlines recall the classic compositions of cubism from a decade earlier, but with more solidity and simplicity.

This purist way of thinking was not always popular with the other members of Cercle et Carré. Some

pushed for complete abstraction with a formalist approach, while others leaned toward a futurist way of thinking. Yet despite all of these various views on what true abstraction should be, the Allucar exhibition feels cohesive with the simple frames and stacked arrangements mimicking the curation of the single show Cercle et Carré held in Paris in 1930.

One particularly notable feature of Cercle et Carré was its inclusion of many female as well as male artists and members who were new artists alongside well-known figures. The Danish artist Franciska Clausen, for instance, who came to Paris as an art student in 1924, was able to join the group with her constructivist paintings influenced by her earlier studies in Germany.

A few sculptural works are on display in the exhibition as well, including *Oiseau-chute (Bird-fall)* by Jean Arp, created in 1969,



An installation view of *Cercle et Carré* at the George Allucar Museum of Art. Image by Claire Simpson.

three years after the artist's death and decades after *Cercle et Carré* ended. The exhibit, in fact, features a number of later works by members as well as works by artists who were connected to the group but not members. Arp had been one of the co-founders of the Dada movement in Zurich with his wife Sophie Taeuber, and after the dissolution of *Cercle et Carré* in 1930-31 he joined a new group called Abstraction-Création which championed more complete abstraction. Over one third of the *Cercle et Carré* group re-formed as Abstraction-Création in 1931, while artists like Luigi Russolo continued on in a more futurist vein and Le Corbusier went on to focus more exclusively on architecture. Although relatively unknown now, the impact that the short-lived *Cercle et Carré* had on the art world during its time and afterward is significant, particularly with its constructivist response to surrealism.

As co-founder Joaquín Torres-García stated: "Construction must be, above all, the creation of an order."^[2] Through the systematic approach of order over chaos these artists countered what they saw as the illogical nature of the surrealism.

About the Author:

Claire Simpson is a Fine Arts student at the Rocky Mountain College of Art & Design. She is a multidisciplinary artist and writer with an interest in human interactions with the Earth.

[1] This international group of artists included Hans Arp, Willi Baumeister, Ingibjörg H. Bjarnason, Carl Buchheister, Marcelle Cahn, Franciska Clausen, Jaime A. Colson, Germán Cueto, Serge Charchoune, Pierre Daura, Alexandra Exter, Fillia, František Foltýn, Jean Gorin, Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska, Huib Hoste, Vilmoz Huszar, Vera Idelson, Wassily Kandinsky, Luc



Franciska Clausen, *Untitled*, 1922. Image by Claire Simpson.

Lafnet, Le Corbusier, Fernand Léger, Oscar Luethy, Piet Mondrian, Stefan Moszczynski, Erik Olson, Amédée Ozenfant, Antoine Pevsner, Enrico Prampolini, Luigi Russolo, Alberto Sartoris, Kurt Schwitters, Henri Stazewski, Hechama Szmuskowicz, Joseph Stella, Hans Suschny, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Joaquin Torres-Garcia, Vordemberge-Gildewart, Adya Van Rees, Otto van Rees, Georges Vantongerloo, Hans Welti, H.N. Werkman, and Wanda Wolska.

[2] From *Cercle et Carré* journal no. 1.