

A large red circle is centered on the page. On the left side, a black shape overlaps the circle, extending to the edge of the frame. The text is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the red circle.

The Pseudogroups  
of Stefan Krygier

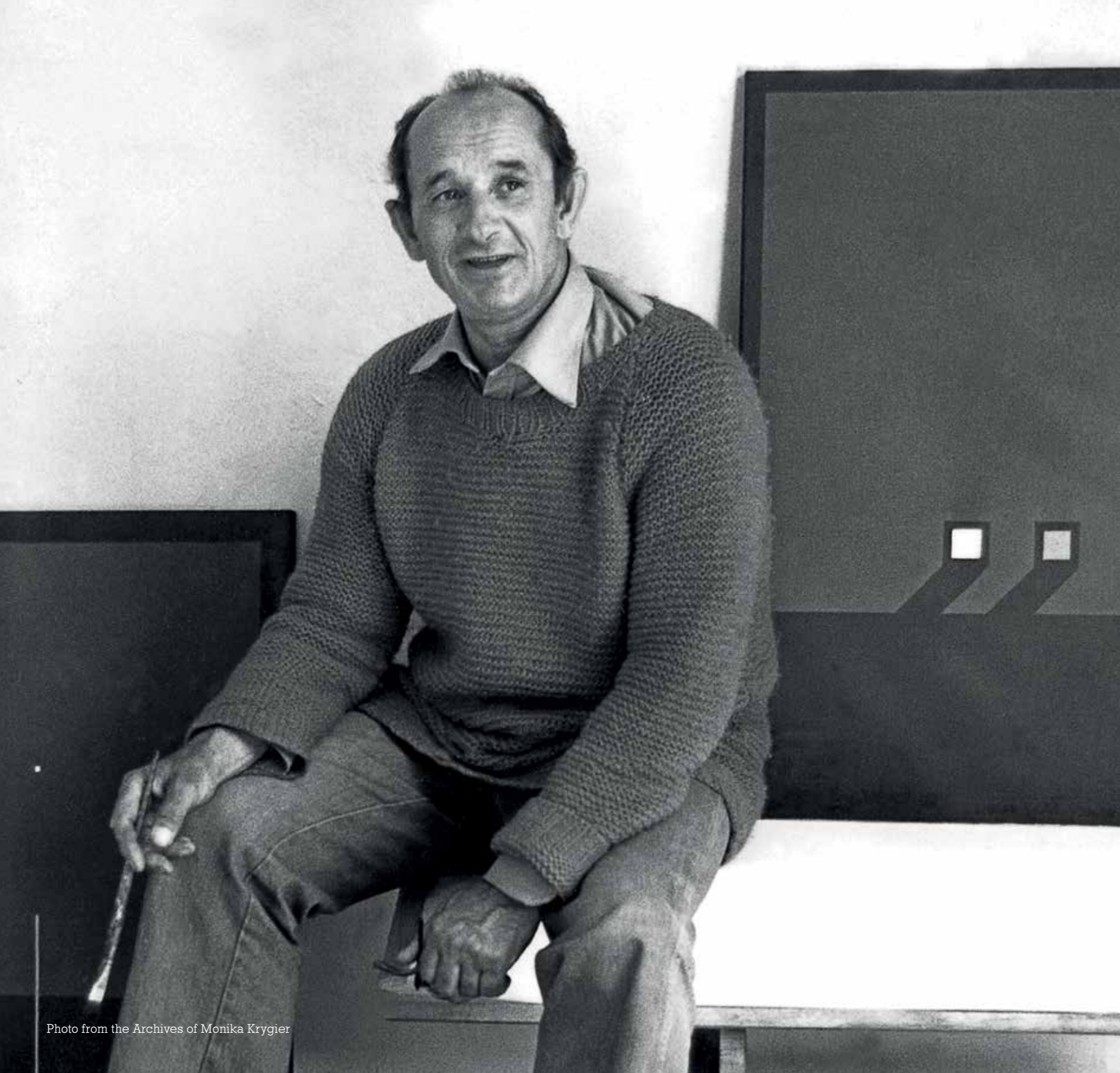


Photo from the Archives of Monika Krygier

## The Pseudogroups of Stefan Krygier

„In addition to our visual perception, which in both ancient and contemporary art constitutes a main factor of our interaction, there is another one, equally important, which is imagination”

— Stefan Krygier

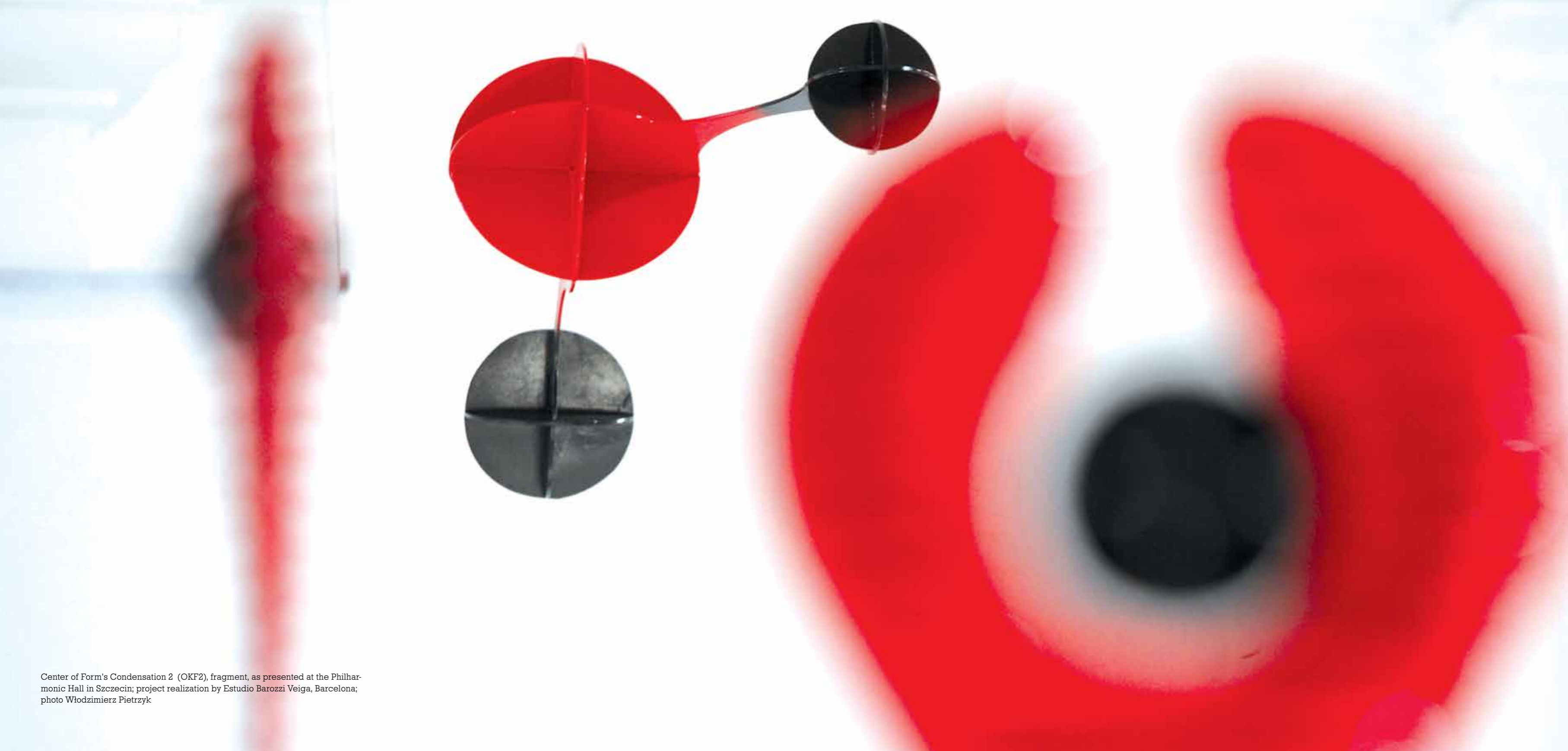
It is my great pleasure to invite you to view the exhibition of the distinguished Polish artist Stefan Krygier at the Green Point Projects throughout May and June 2018. Green Point Projects is a new cultural initiative in Brooklyn, founded in April 2017, and located in a repurposed warehouse in an industrial part of Greenpoint on the border with Williamsburg. The up-and-coming neighborhood is quickly becoming one of New York's art hot spots, while still remaining a "Polish enclave" in Brooklyn, which makes our gallery a bridge between two worlds that don't often have the opportunity to meet in an artistic setting.

Earlier exhibitions of the Green Point Projects were not only very popular with gallery-goers, but were also noted as significant art events in the local press, the ethnic Polish papers in New York, and the media in Poland. The international website [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com) included our Stanisław Fijałkowski exhibition in "7 things to

see in New York" in May 2017, while *Hyperallergic* counted our showing of works by Magdalena Abakanowicz and Eugeniusz Markowski among the fifteen best exhibitions in Brooklyn in 2017.

The current exhibition, *The Pseudogroups of Stefan Krygier*, introduces the work of this prolific artist to an American audience. It focuses on works that were created in the 1960s and 1970s. The exhibition catalogue is remarkable in that it was designed to be an "art object" in its own right, reflecting the artist's interest in three-dimensional space in art. The fully-illustrated catalogue includes an essay by the exhibition curator Marek Bartelik, which places Krygier's oeuvre in the context of a dialogue with the work of preeminent Polish Constructivist Władysław Strzemiński, and a personal reflection by the artist's daughter, Monika Krygier.

Sławek Górecki,  
Gallery Director



Center of Form's Condensation 2 (OKF2), fragment, as presented at the Philharmonic Hall in Szczecin; project realization by Estudio Barozzi Veiga, Barcelona; photo Włodzimierz Pietrzyk

## The Wandering Asymmetry in Stefan Krygier's works

Every science comes with its own pseudo-science,  
a bizarre distortion that comes from a certain kind of  
mind.

– Stanisław Lem, *Solaris*

“Pseudogroup,” as used in the title of this exhibition, may seem to be an awkward word. When used normally, “pseudo” refers to something inauthentic, forged, a sham, which ultimately, might be judged irrelevant and even untrue. Hence, “pseudogroup” can be easily read negatively—as a description of a fake totality, without a homogenous collective identity. I borrowed the word “pseudogroup” from Włodzimerz Waliszewski’s essay “The Geometric Aspects of Stefan Krygier’s Work,” in which he explains that his discussion of the mathematical term “pseudogroups” (which doesn’t have a negative connotation at all) in the context of Krygier’s work is hypothetical—pointing to the artist’s interest in the relationship between art, technology and science, rather than to any direct influence.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, my use of this word here is not negative; rather its aim is to stress the unfamiliar and “hybrid” aspects of Stefan Krygier’s works when presented in New York.

Stefan Krygier’s (1923-1997) search for a unique voice in his art began with his enrollment at the State College of the Fine Arts (PWSSP; today the Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts) in Łódź in 1946, where he attended the legendary program called “Spatial Visual Arts” run by the Polish Constructivist Władysław Strzemiński.<sup>2</sup> In his teaching Strzemiński stressed the “ability to utilize vision” as a dynamic, ac-

cumulative phenomenon that involves strong ethical and aesthetic commitments, a view that also constitutes one of the main tenants of his main theoretical work *Theory of Vision*.<sup>3</sup> In his prolific writings, he analyzed with great perceptiveness the ancient cave paintings, Egyptian art, Greek art, Gothic, Baroque, Impressionism, children’s drawings, and, of course, modern art, putting all of them in the context of their epistemological and historical transformations.<sup>4</sup> As one reads Strzemiński’s texts it is clear that he, like other members of the pre-World War II avant-garde in Soviet Russia and the West, believed in the systematic, “laboratory,” “responsible,” “necessary” and—in his case—also “unist”<sup>5</sup> function of art. However, he, like many other avant-garde artists, often contradicted himself in his artistic practice, and even compromised (voluntarily or involuntarily) his strict formal and theoretical principles, which some critics have judged as a proof of his utopian visions’ failure and fiction. But, today we increasingly treat “failure and fiction” as an intrinsic part of the artistic narratives presented by the avant-garde, rather than as a betrayal, “brutality” (to paraphrase Hal Foster’s expression<sup>6</sup>), or defeat of their ideals. It might be worth recalling here that the Polish avant-garde’s artistic program was linked first to a leftist political agenda, opposing the nationalism (both artistic and political) that was growing rapidly after Poland regained its independence in 1918, and culminated with the country’s being run by a rightwing government from the mid-1920s until the invasion by Nazi Germany in September 1939. After the Communists seized the power in 1945, and soon

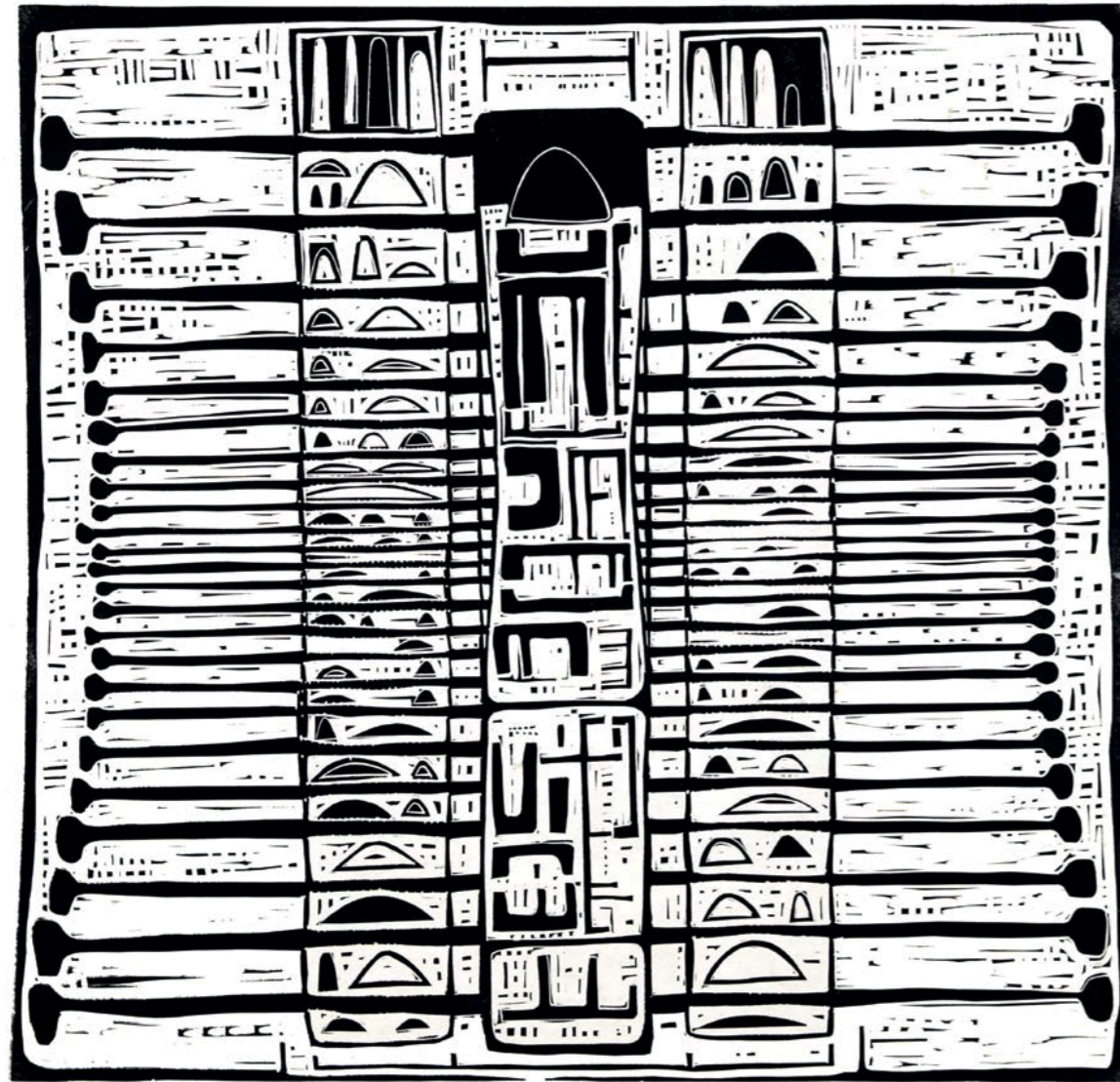


Students at the State College of the Fine Arts in Łódź in 1947. Stefan Krygier is seated first on the left. Photo from the Archives of Monika Krygier

imposed Socialist Realism as the official aesthetic in the arts, Constructivism and other avant-garde artistic formations were condemned as the unwelcome remnants of “the bourgeois culture.” Until the so-called Gomułka’s thaw of 1956,<sup>7</sup> shaping and utilizing vision in art was often a dangerous activity. Strzemiński experienced this firsthand when at the request of the Ministry of Culture and Art he was fired from teaching at the State College of the Fine Arts in Łódź in 1950, allegedly for failing to follow Socialist Realism.<sup>8</sup> In the 1960s on, the local art scene gradually became pluralistic, as it was before World War II, and some local artists turned to abstraction, benefitting from the limited (highly monitored) freedom in Poland. In Krygier’s case, that loosening of the government’s control of culture and the arts resulted in a series of works influenced by *art informel* and, later, in his innovative biomorphic and geometric works in different mediums produced in the 1970s (some fine examples of those latter works are included in this exhibition).

The development of Polish art after World War II was a dynamic phenomenon, full of small “inconsistent” turns, *blind alleys*, which—to follow the title of this show—I like to call “pseudo-events.” One of such *events* might have been produced when Strzemiński made a series of collages “To My Friends the Jews,” 1945-1947, in which he interspersed his “afterimages of light (*powidoki*)” arabesques with documentary photographs from the death camps and Jewish ghettos, hence mixing mediums and endowing his work with a potent message, which went against his earlier artistic program of “purity” in art.<sup>10</sup> Much less known

is Krygier’s series of prints, gouaches, sculptures and wooden low reliefs, produced as a result of his visits to the old Jewish cemetery in Prague in the mid-1960s, and additionally influenced by his interests in ancient Egyptian art and architecture.<sup>11</sup> The series include linoleum cuts with the suggestive titles *Forming of a Golem*, 1964, and *A Recipe for a Golem*, 1966.<sup>12</sup> A semi-circular shape dominating the works has been identified as characteristic of *matzevot* (tombstones in Hebrew).<sup>13</sup> What makes the presence of that motif unusual is that Krygier treats the *matzeva* shape as an “ingredient” to build a grid, in which fluid geometric forms, often in rows and piled on top of each other, constantly oscillate between being abstract and representational, looking as if stripped of specific identity and yet highly suggestive. In this context, it is important to stress that Krygier made those works in Łódź, a city that was not only a major center of the post-World War I avant-garde movement in Poland, particularly Polish Constructivism, but also a vital center of Jewish life, culture and arts. The Young Yiddish group was created in this city in 1919, becoming a vital part of the Polish avant-garde after World War I.<sup>14</sup> It is highly probable that Krygier knew about the Young Yiddish group’s activities and art, but it is rather unlikely that any of works by its members served him as a source of direct inspiration for his series from the mid-1960s. I find it curious that Krygier chose to incorporate “Jewish motifs” in his works only after visiting an old Jewish cemetery in Prague, when there was an equally important one in his native city. Clearly the answer was not simple. It is possible, though,



*J. Hoffmann*

Forming of a Golem, 1964, linoleum cut, 50 x 52 cm

181  
Rembrandt  
Powrót syna  
marnotrawnego  
XVII w.



● Page from Władysław Strzemiński's *Theory of Vision*.



that his decision had something to do with the painful closeness and literalness of the tombstones in Łódź, whereas he could have treated those in the Czech capital as distant, “asymmetrical” referents, and, therefore, viewed them as sort of *equivalents* of the ancient pyramids of Egypt. But, it is just a hypothesis.

Krygier's focus on geometry peaked in two remarkable bodies of work from the 1970s: his spatial compositions, called *Center of Form's Condensation* (abbreviated in Polish to OKF), and his abstract paintings with geometric shapes. The art critic Bożena Kowalska described a work from the former group produced during an outdoor workshop in Osieki,<sup>15</sup> as a three-dimensional sculptural work made of aggressive red and black forms, which while “[d]eveloping centrifugally had the significance and meaning of aggression directed outward.”<sup>16</sup> The central element of that work consists of a freestanding, rectangular open framework with interwoven strips arranged in a grid-like construction, on which were festooned colorful shapes that resembled the body parts of a fantastic

aircraft or another machine. The art historian Maria Hussakowska observed that the structure looked like a “model” that was “demonstrative” in character.<sup>17</sup> The frame looks to me like a garden trellis used for supporting climbing plants—with nothing particularly aggressive about it, except, perhaps, its bright colors. *Center of Form's Condensation* presented in Osieki also included red circles drawn on sidewalks and fences and small red and black balls, which were scattered around the area that was the site of the workshop, where they were deposited in the grass, along the sandy lake beach nearby, and attached to the trees and the walls of the buildings hosting the workshop. The balls were also put inside garbage cans and cars in the village, as well as left on the tables in a local diner. Interestingly enough, the archival photographs of the installation that show small balls attached to the buildings in Osieki look very similar to a drawing in Strzemiński's *Theory of Vision*, in which he analyzed the focal points of attention in Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son*, ca. 1668, from the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. The overall effect of Krygi-

er's *Center of Form's Condensation* suggested impermanence and chance; at the same time, it was playful and performative, and required the interaction of the viewer (all of those effects we try to recreate in a new, site-specific work included in this show).<sup>18</sup>

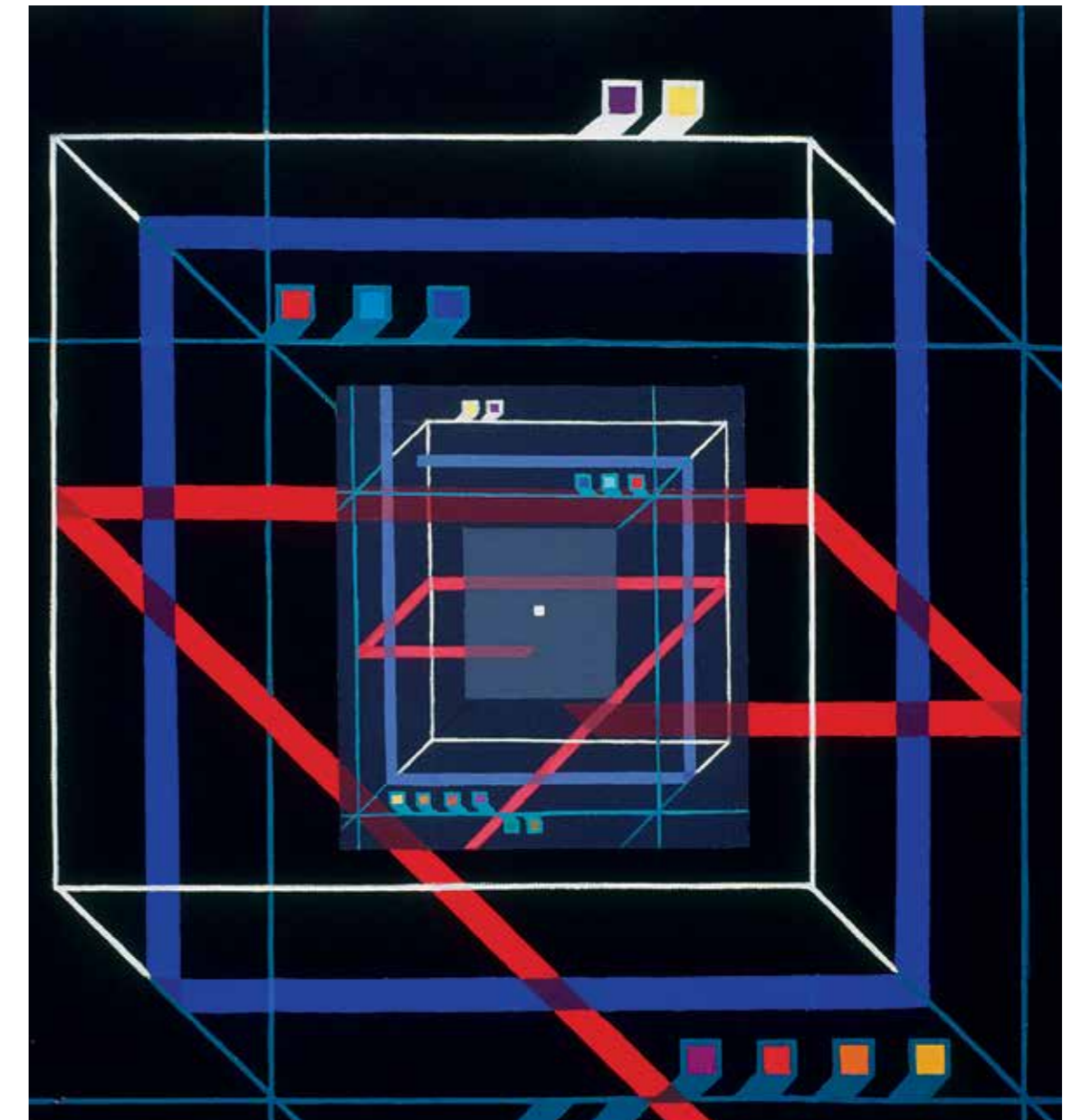
The geometric paintings produced in the 1970s included in this exhibition are among Krygier's most "minimalistic" works, overall reminiscent of *unism*—and of Concrete Art, which, as its founder Theo von Doesburg insisted, had to rely on line, color, and plane as the most "concrete" elements in painting. According to Doesburg, those formal "limits" contributed to the paintings' clarity. This type of clarity is also present in Krygier's paintings from the 1970s, but it is *updated* and enhanced—in order to respect the changes in our optical perception. In the visual arts those "updates" coincided with the emergence of Op Art and Kinetic Art in the 1960s, which derived from pre-World War II Constructivism, among other historic tendencies. Indeed, optical and kinetic effects can be detected in Krygier's paintings as well. Their purpose is not to trick the eye and brain (as in the case of Bridget Riley or Victor Vasarely) though, but to endow his works with a special dynamism without compromising their planer and integrity as flat surfaces. Furthermore, when Krygier experimented with the arrangements of geometric shapes, he didn't intend to distort the viewer's perception by endowing static artworks with the impression of movement, but, quite the opposite: he wanted to *sharpen* our vision and, at the same time, put it in "quotation marks," as if to say that it had to be connected to previous optical experiences and their interpretations. Some of the works from that series remind me of the paintings and spatial reliefs by the "second" most important Polish Constructivist, Henryk Stażewski.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, both artists highly valued precision and clarity in their works, but the sim-

ilarities aren't just strictly formal, as they also come from a shared emotional temperature conveyed in the image, which can be called optimistically lyrical. What separated Krygier's works from Stażewski's is that the former ones tend to be serious and humorous at the same time—in a way science fiction books can be, let's say like Stanisław Lem's philosophical fantasy *Solaris*, rather than George Orwell's *1984*. Krygier continued to use geometry in his "simultaneous paintings" produced toward the end of his life, in which the visual elements from his earlier works often appear side by side ("picture within picture"), as if *retrieved* from memory and treated as a personal database.

In the end, Krygier's work presented in this show must be judged according to its proper merits. What remains remarkable in his approach to art throughout his life is his commitment to the teachings of Władysław Strzemiński. To shape his own *vision*, Krygier absorbed his teacher's lessons wisely and, then, consequently *updated* them in his own work and his writings on art. Krygier paid homage to his late teacher and a close friend, in *Portrait of Władysław Strzemiński*, 1982, a work that exemplifies his simultaneous painting. This is a work of great lucidity and lyricism, in which a sculptural image of the artist is semi-camouflaged in *powidoki*, with which, according to Krygier, Strzemiński "created... his unique image of the sun."<sup>20</sup>

Endnotes:

1 Waliszewski's essay references the Polish mathematician Stanisław Gołąb's (1902-1980) article "About the Concept of the 'Pseudogroup of Transformations' (Über den Begriff der 'Pseudogruppe von Transformationen)'" from German publication *Mathematische Annalen*, published in 1939. Waliszewski's text appeared in, *Stefan Krygier, 1923-1997, malarstwo, rzeźba, grafika*, exh. cat. Muzeum Architektury in Wrocław and National Museum in Szczecin, 2001, 17-18. For more information about Gołąb's theory see, Christopher Hollings, *Mathematics Across the Iron Curtain: The History of the Algebraic Theory of Semigroups* (Providence, R.I.: American Mathematical Society, 2014). The concept of "pseudo" might be connected to the concept of "subaltern" (a term introduced



*Transformation of a Cube*, 1996, oil on canvas, 72 x 65 cm





Portrait of Władysław Strzemiński, 1982, oil on canvas, 120 x 70 cm

by Antonio Gramsci), which has often been used in critical theory dealing with colonialism and postcolonialism in the context of cultural hegemony.

2 Władysław Strzemiński (1893-1952) was a Polish painter, designer, art theoretician, and art teacher. He was one of the pioneers of Constructivism, first in Soviet Russia (where he worked closely with Kazimir Malevich), then, in Poland.

3 *Theory of Vision* is a collection of critical writings based on art history lectures given by Strzemiński, which sums up the core of his aesthetic reflection behind his artistic practice reaching back to 1919. Strzemiński put it together in the late 1940s, but the book was published only posthumously, in 1958. The opening line in the book reads: "We didn't receive our visual perception as ready and unchangeable. Our eye has been formed as a result of a long biological evolution from forms that are less developed to those that are today." The book is richly illustrated with diagrams and reproductions of artworks, from the Egyptian and Greek antiquity to Vincent van Gogh, Cézanne and Picasso. It referenced numerous philosophical works, including those of Plato, Baruch Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophical*. Quoted from Władysław Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1974 ed.).

4 In 1948, Krygier has been credited for co-authoring with his teacher the article entitled "A Vision of Gothic," one of a series of articles published in *Przegląd Artystyczny*, which also included "A Vision of the Greeks" and "A Vision of the Impressionists."

5 "Unism" was a modernist theory presented in its totality in *Unism in Painting* published by the "Praesens" Library in Warsaw in 1928. Its key concepts included the idea of the unity of art with the place of its creation, the principle of organic quality of artwork, and the ability of artworks to organize life.

6 As mentioned in the summary of Foster's forthcoming lecture; see, <https://www.nga.gov/press/2017/mellon2018.html>.

7 This term refers to a transitional moment in Polish history, which brought a brief political liberalization after the major social unrests that weakened the position of the hardline Stalinists within the Polish government.

8 For a discussion of the development of the Polish avant-garde after World War II see, Piotr Piotrowski *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (London, Reaktion Books, 2011).

9 *Powidok* is a Polish word for an image left on the retina after looking at an object reflecting sunlight or directly at the source of light. Strzemiński used this motif in his "solar paintings" produced from the early 1940s until his death in 1953.

10 For a discussion of Strzemiński's series "To My Friends the Jews" see, Luiza Nader "Guilt and Shame: Władysław Strzemiński's 'To My Friends the Jews,'" in *Władysław Strzemiński: Readability of Images*, eds. Paweł Polit and Jarosław Suchan (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 2012), 108-126.

11 Many modern artists were inspired by ancient Egyptian art and civilization because of its emphasis on what exists *beyond* the obvious appearance with the use of timeless geometry. The meaning in ancient Egyptian art preoccupied many art historians, including Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Wilhelm Worringer.

12 In the Jewish folklore Golem is an anthropomorphized being entirely made of clay or other unanimated substances, but it also stands for an amorphous material used in the Psalms. Indeed, some of Krygier's works from the series look like music notations.

13 See, Stefan Szydłowski, "O twórczości graficznej Stefana Krygiera," in *Stefan Krygier: Grafiki/rzeźby/szkice z lat 60. i 70. XX w.*, exh. cat, Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych in Kielce (March 9 - March 30, 2018).

14 The group included, among others, the artists Jankel Adler, Henekh Bartchinsky, Ida Brauner, Itzhak (Vincent) Brauner, Pola Lindenberg, Dina Matus (Matusowa), and Marek Szwarc, as well as the writers and poets Moshe Broderzon and Itzhak Katzenelson. It dissolved around 1921, and the artists and poets moved on to pursue their individual careers. In their writings and art, the members of the Young Yiddish often linked their artistic heritage to Egypt. For example, when Marek Szwarc wrote about Jewish art in Paris in an article titled "Jewish Art in Paris (from the Artist's Recollections)," *Nasz Przegląd* (8 December 1923), he mentioned the circle of Ossip Zadkine (which included Natan Altman, Léon Indenbaum, and Hana Orlova) as the believers that Jews, as an Eastern nation, should derive inspiration from the art of Egypt and Assyria, but also embrace the less geographically restricted aesthetics of Jewish synagogues and tombstones. Szwarc continued his discussion of Jewish art in "The National Element of Jewish Art," published in *Literarysh Bleter* (3 April 1925). For a discussion of the individual members of Young Yiddish see, Jerzy Malinowski, *Malarsstwo i rzeźba Żydów polskich w XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw: PWN, 2000), and my *Early Polish Modern Art: Unity in Multiplicity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005).

15 Osieki is a village in northwest Poland, which hosted an annual outdoor workshop called the International Meeting of Artists, Scientists, and Art Theoreticians (Międzynarodowe Spotkania Artystów, Naukowców i Teoretyków Sztuki) between 1963 and 1981. For the history of the workshops see, *Awangarda w plenerze: Osieki i Łazy 1963-1981 / Avant-garde in plein air: Osieki and Łazy 1963-1981*, eds. Jerzy Kalicki, Ewa Kowalska, Walentyna Orłowska, Ryszard Ziarkiewicz (Koszalin: Muzeum in Koszalin, 2008).

16 Bożena Kowalska, *Polska awangarda malarska 1945-1980: szanse i mity* (Warsaw, PWN, 1988), 168.

17 Maria Hussakowska, untitled text, in *Stefan Krygier: 1923-1997*, exh. cat, Atlas Sztuki (52), Łódź (September 9, 2011-October 16, 2011), 5.

18 The work initiated a series of similar pieces, composed of a multitude of small wooden and metal forms painted black and red and installed inside the gallery and museum spaces, in which the artist treated public spaces as dynamic fields of action that requires the viewer's corporeal interaction.

19 Henryk Stażewski (1894-1988) was a member of the *Cercle et Carré* and *Abstraction-Création* groups, based in Paris, active before World War II. He was highly active in the 1970s.

20 Stefan Krygier, "...do solaryzmu," in *Władysław Strzemiński, 1893-1952: Materiały z sesji* (Łódź: Biblioteka Muzeum Sztuki, 1994), 106.



Center of Form's Condensation 2 (OKF2), fragment, as presented at the Philharmonic Hall in Szczecin; project realization by Estudio Barozzi Veiga, Barcelona; photo Włodzimierz Pietrzyk

**Brevity.**

It is difficult to fit my father's colorful and at times puzzling life into a brief, informal text. My father prized brevity and clarity in writing. He valued poetry and poets. He counted the poet and diplomat Julian Przyboś among his friends. Przyboś recognized my father's artistic potential, writing in an article for *Przeгляд Artystyczny*: "a new artistic phenomenon is born and its name is 'Stefan Krygier.'"

**Home/Studio.**

I know our first family home from stories and a pen-and-ink sketch. It was a large, U-shaped, wooden house, typical of the structures built by early nineteenth-century settlers in Łódź. The house no longer exists, but in a certain sense it has been rebuilt in a different form—as a modernist, concrete-and-glass structure in Wiesbaden, that my father's cousin built in an effort, he said, to bring back the *genius loci* of his childhood home.

The house and studio that I do remember – although only hazily and mostly from old photographs – was a large, cavernous space with a fireplace and stucco decorations. It was decorated with my father's large paintings, each several meters wide, painted expressively, yet with an extraordinary degree of precision. Those pictures revealed his interest in ancient art, prehistory, and vanished civilizations. Painting them, my father would ask himself: how is it possible, that so many amazing works of art were created in that

distant past, such fascinating civilizations (including some in the not so distant past), existed—only to disappear, consigning their cultures and peoples to oblivion?

Stacks of books, primarily on art and architecture, filled the house. Many were unique, numbered folios, while others were inexpensive, popular art books. There were also art magazines such as *Arkady* and *Praesens*. This family library, whose beginnings go back to the late nineteenth century, grew with the acquisitions of new and current books.

I have a better memory of our next home-cum-studio, which, in fact, was a small apartment. There was no room for large paintings in it—just for small sketches, small paintings in tempera and oils, and bas-reliefs with complex textural structures. Our home was a colorful place—visited by actors, architects, and doctors. Life in it seemed to be a never-ending party, with a bohemian atmosphere, which was perhaps less common in other Polish homes in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In addition to these homes, I remember two other places: a large neo-Gothic apartment building, where my father's family lived just before World War II; and a small modernist villa with a garden, that my father's childhood friend, the brilliant realist painter Jerzy Krawczyk, moved into after the war.

**People.**

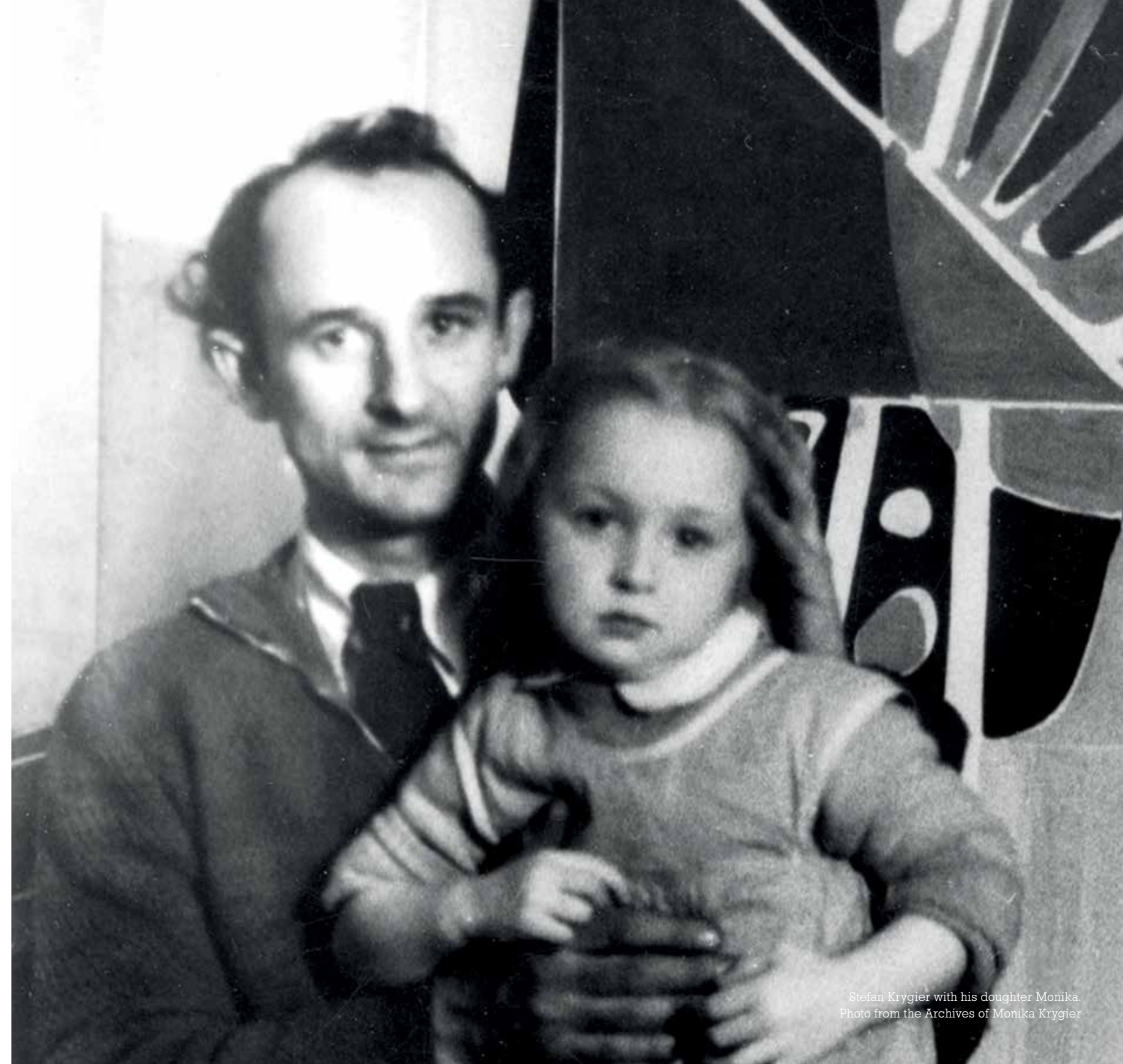
A stream of interesting and original people passed through all of these houses. The first person I remember was Nika Strzemińska – the daughter of the Polish Constructivists Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński—who was a medical student at the time. In a way, she was like a parent to me when my own parents were busy studying in Warsaw ... I still have a rag doll (which I call a “rabbit”) that Nika gave to me. It was made by her mother, a truly outstanding sculptor.

Naturally, people like Julian Przyboś left their mark, but the closest circle of friends that frequented our homes were my parents' college friends—artists Antoni Starczewski, Lech Kunka, Stanisław Fijałkowski, and Jerzy Krawczyk. Years of friendship united my parents and the graphic designer, illustrator, and fashion designer Lilka (Helena) Bohle-Szacki. Nora and Jan Szczepański, the poet and sociologist, respectively, would also drop in. In later years, Nika Strzemińska visited our home with the historian Marian Turski, who was one of the co-founders of the Polin Museum in Warsaw.

Sometimes our place was transformed into an architectural office and a meeting place for young, dynam-

ic architects and engineers working on projects for competitions. Engulfed in clouds of cigarette smoke they toiled away, sometimes day and night, drafting visions of utopian buildings. In addition, there were also occasional guests from all over the world, whom, as a part of the tour of Łódź, my father would take to visit the nearby Jewish cemetery.

But, as the years went by, the circle of regular visitors to our home shrank, partly due to people dying, partly due to sharp conflicts. But the people I mention here remained faithful friends. Sometimes art critics, such as Ryszard Stanisławski and Pierre Restany, would stop by when they were visiting artists' studios in Łódź. The art critic Bożena Kowalska visited often to discuss my father's art. We also socialized with artists and critics outside of our home, for example during the outdoor workshops in Osieki. It was there that my father met the literary critic Artur Sandauer, with whom he engaged in passionate discussions. He also esteemed Sandauer's wife, the surrealist painter and poet Erna Rosenstein, saying that she had a fantastic imagination and the extraordinary skill of “jumping from one subject to another.”



Stefan Krygier with his daughter Monika.  
Photo from the Archives of Monika Krygier



Photo from the Archives of Monika Krygier

### **Character.**

Preoccupied with their careers, artists began to compete with one another. What counted was how many exhibitions one had, how many of one's paintings were purchased by the state-sponsored institutions, what foreign scholarships one was able to obtain. My mother summed up my father's character in an interview as follows: "He liked the *plein air* workshops, where there was opportunity for an exchange of opinions, to learn what other artists were thinking. He valued peace and quiet, which allowed him to paint. He was not at all interested in the institutional side of art." He didn't take part in the rat race. Bit by bit he became an outsider. He was still outwardly social, but he became more and more introspective, focused on his own experiences.

My father was interested in historical reflection. In his lectures on art history at the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź he explored—no doubt influenced by his mentor Strzemiński—the associations between form and historical period. He focused on analyses of the structure of works of art, largely ignoring the artists' biographies, which he felt were less relevant. In one of her reviews of my father's work, Bożena Kowalska wrote:

"Krygier was an intellectual. He was interested in formal transformations in art, he studied the history of aesthetics; he contemplated both the theoretical and practical issues of form in painting."

My father was convinced of the end of painting, even as he painted his pictures. Sometimes he talked about it. Was he being provocative—or prophetic? I don't know. He did not paint countless variations of the same picture over and over throughout his lifetime. He changed the idiom of his art. From traditional painting, he moved on to conceptual art, photography, and photomontage. Then he returned to painting and graphic art—only to turn around and make three-dimensional works.

### **Family Postscript.**

This is a difficult and complicated subject.

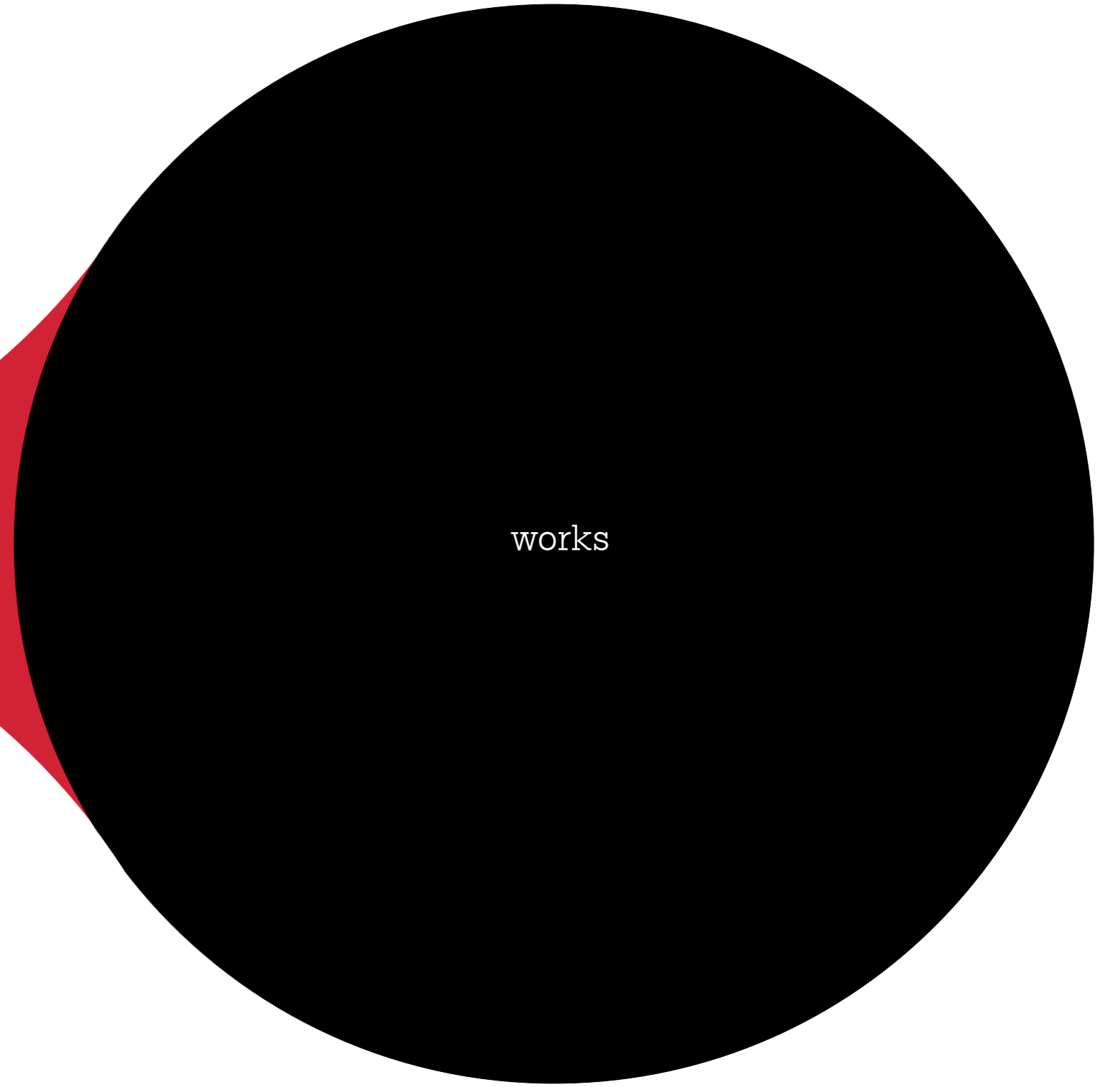
About my father's parents I know everything—and nothing. An apparent paradox. I am slowly piecing together my family's history from documents and snippets of memories. Oddly enough, I know more about the successive places that we lived in, than about the people.



Stefan Krygier's self-portrait with Center of Form Condensation 1 (OKF 1)  
Photo from the Archives of Monika Krygier



Stefan Krygier

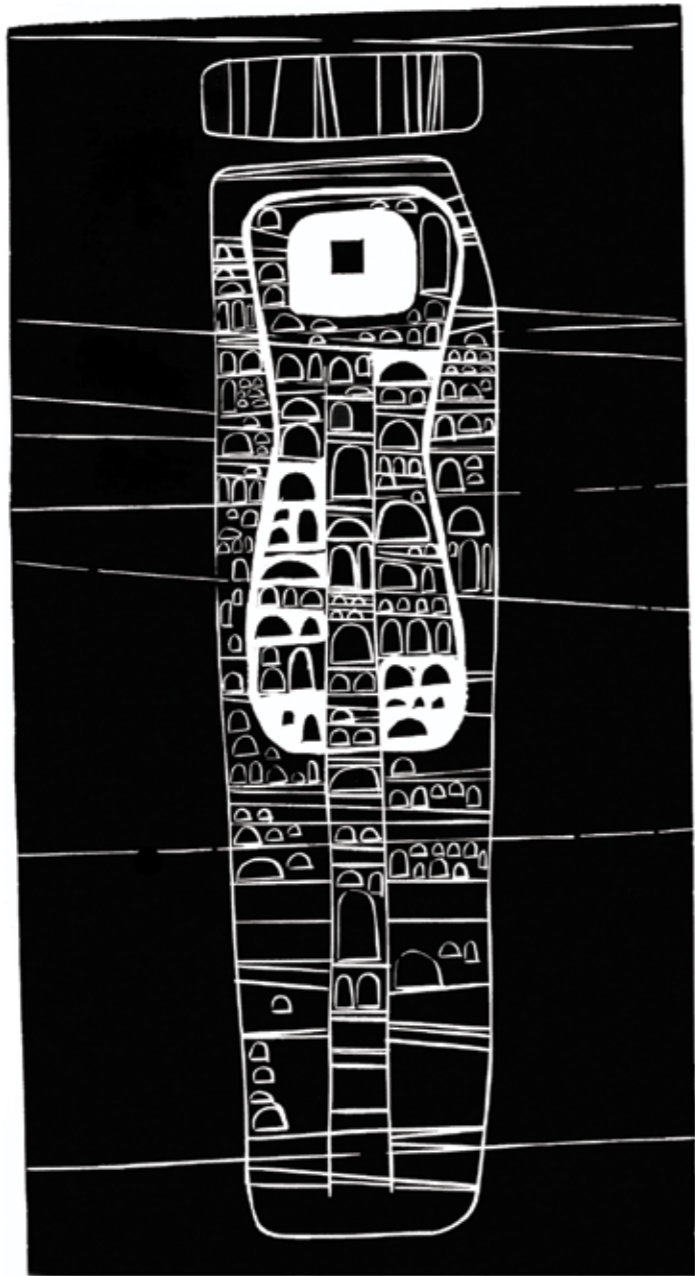


works

*Sitting Act*, 1947, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm







*Nofret*, 1964, linoleum cut, 76,5 x 40 cm



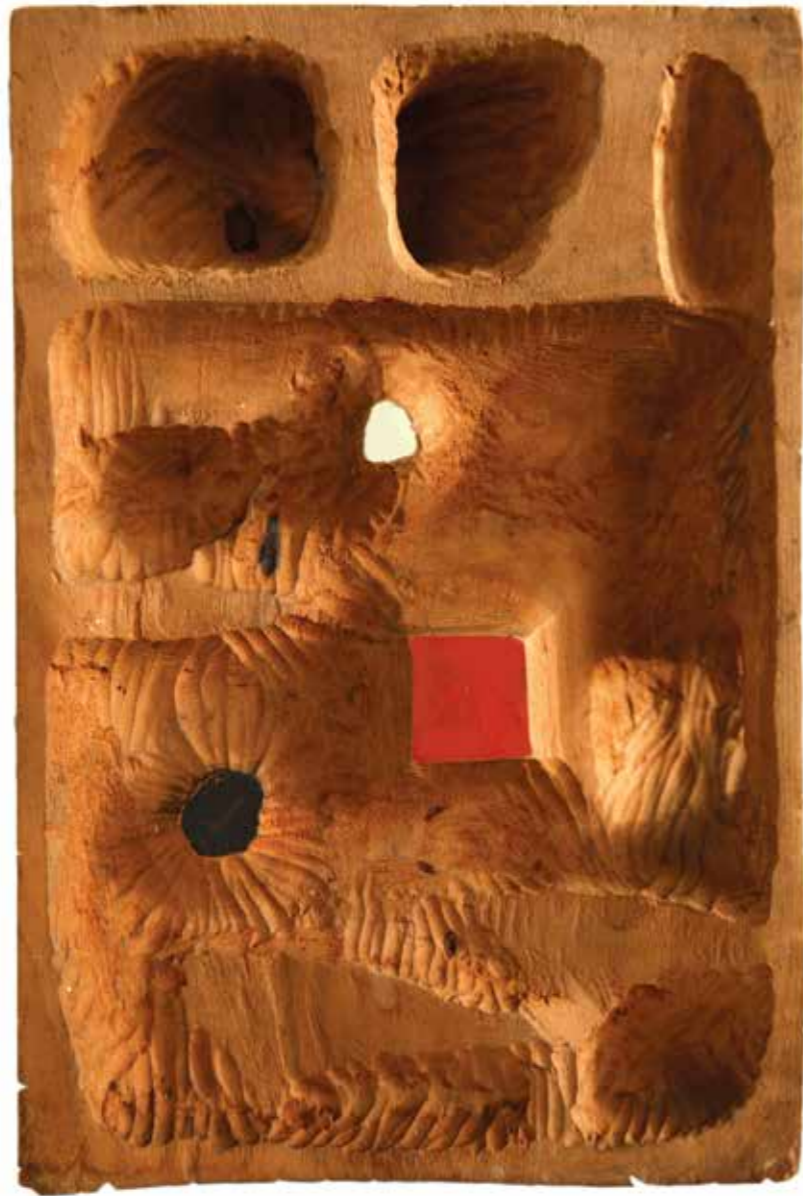
*Nofret*, 1964, linoleum cut, 76,5 x 40 cm



*Nofret I*, from the series *The Valley of the Kings*, 1964, wood, 110 x 16 x 4 cm



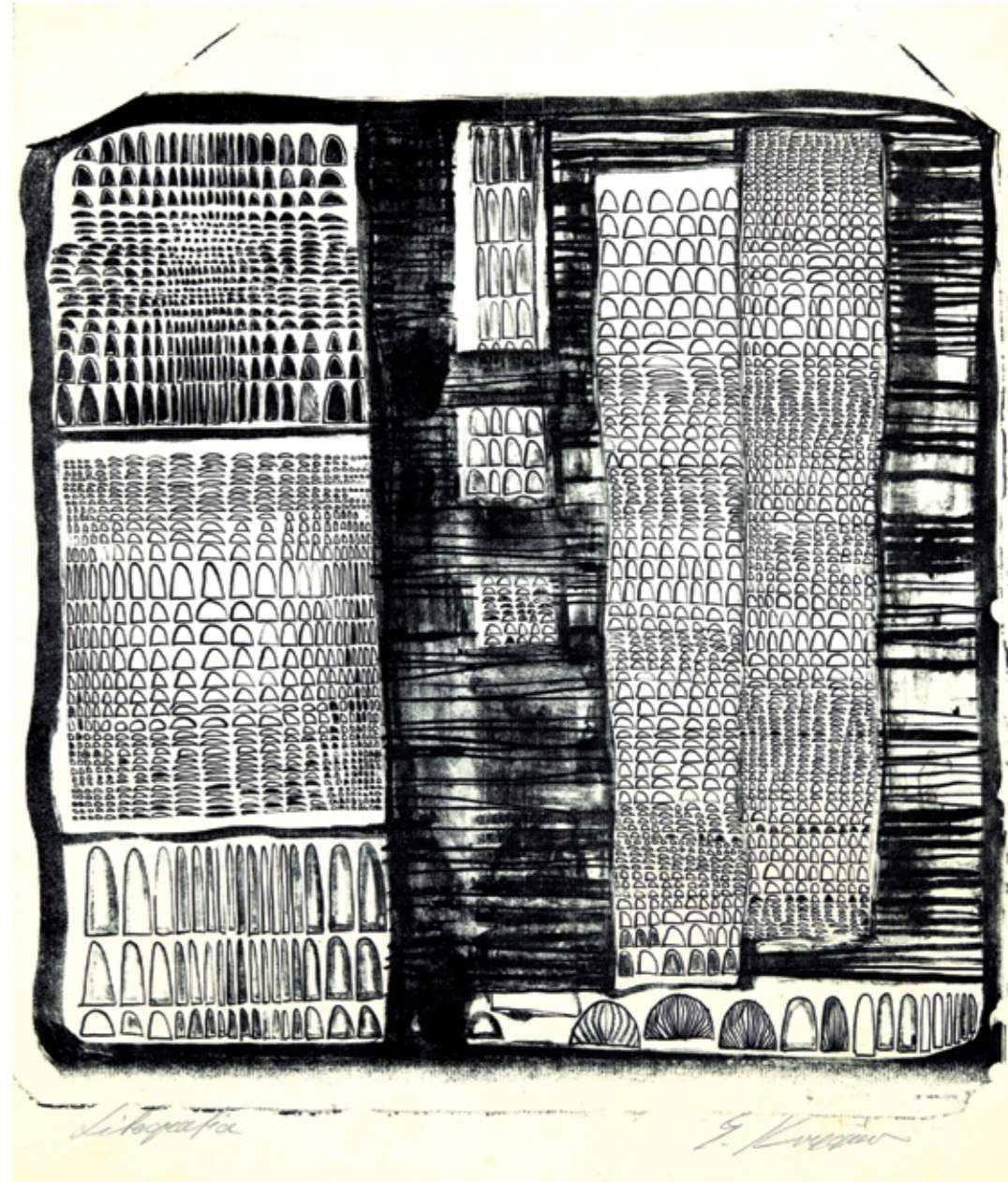
*Shadows II*, from the series *The Valley of the Kings*, 1964, wood, 84 x 17 x 3 cm



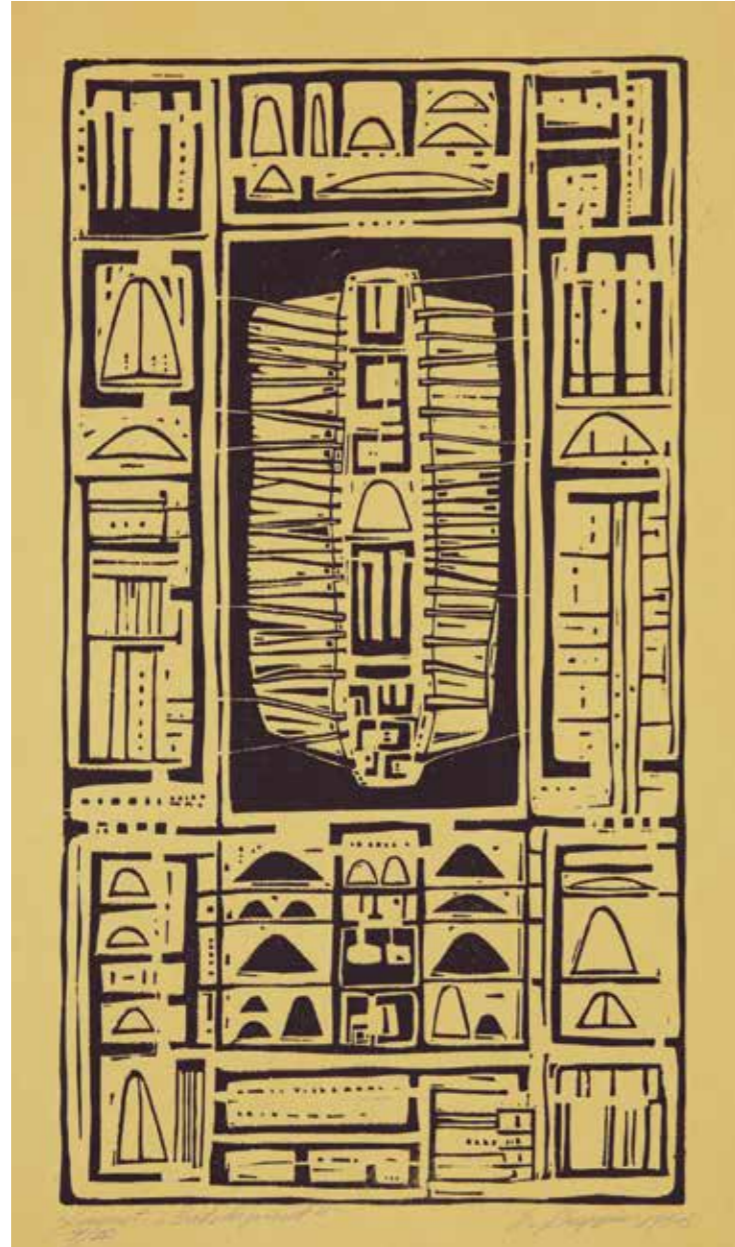
*Stress*, from the series *The Valley of the Kings*, 1963, wood, polychrome, 20 x 13 x 3 cm



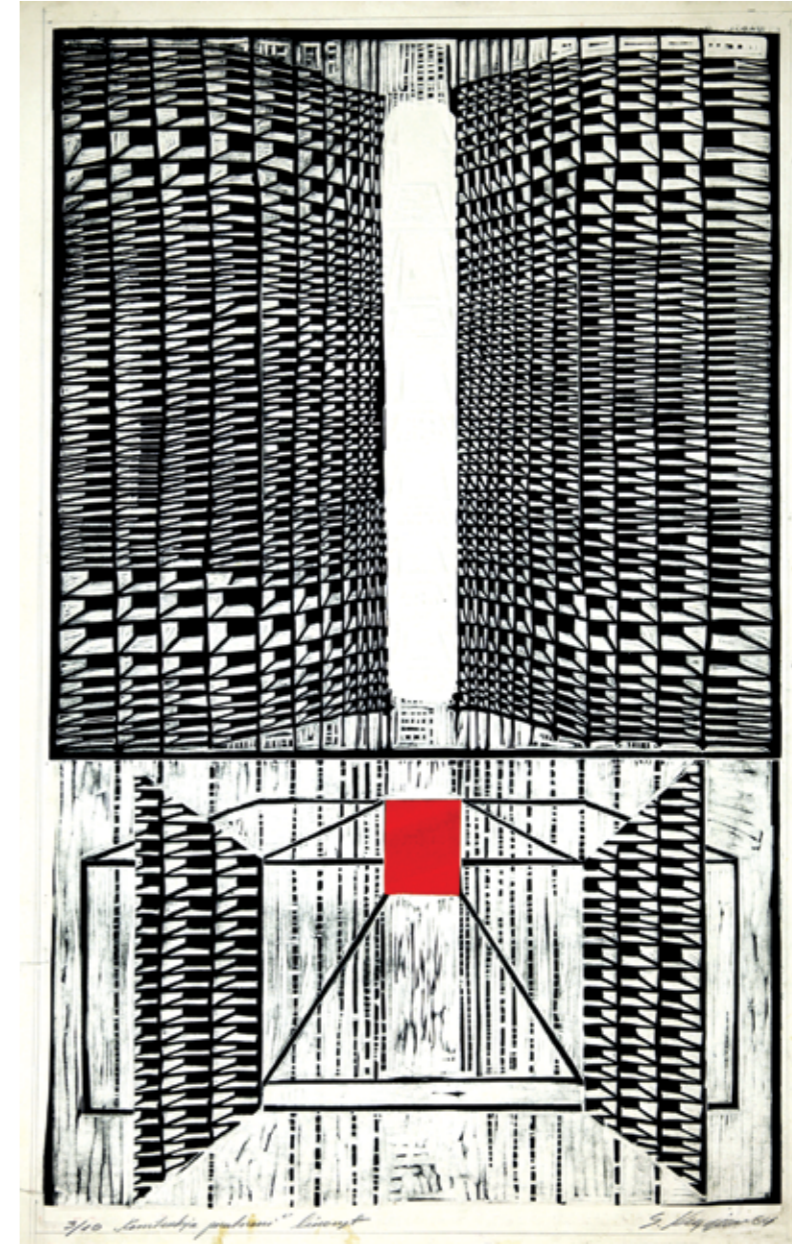
*Composition III*, from the series *The Valley of the Kings*, 1964, wood, polychrome, 26 x 12 x 3 cm



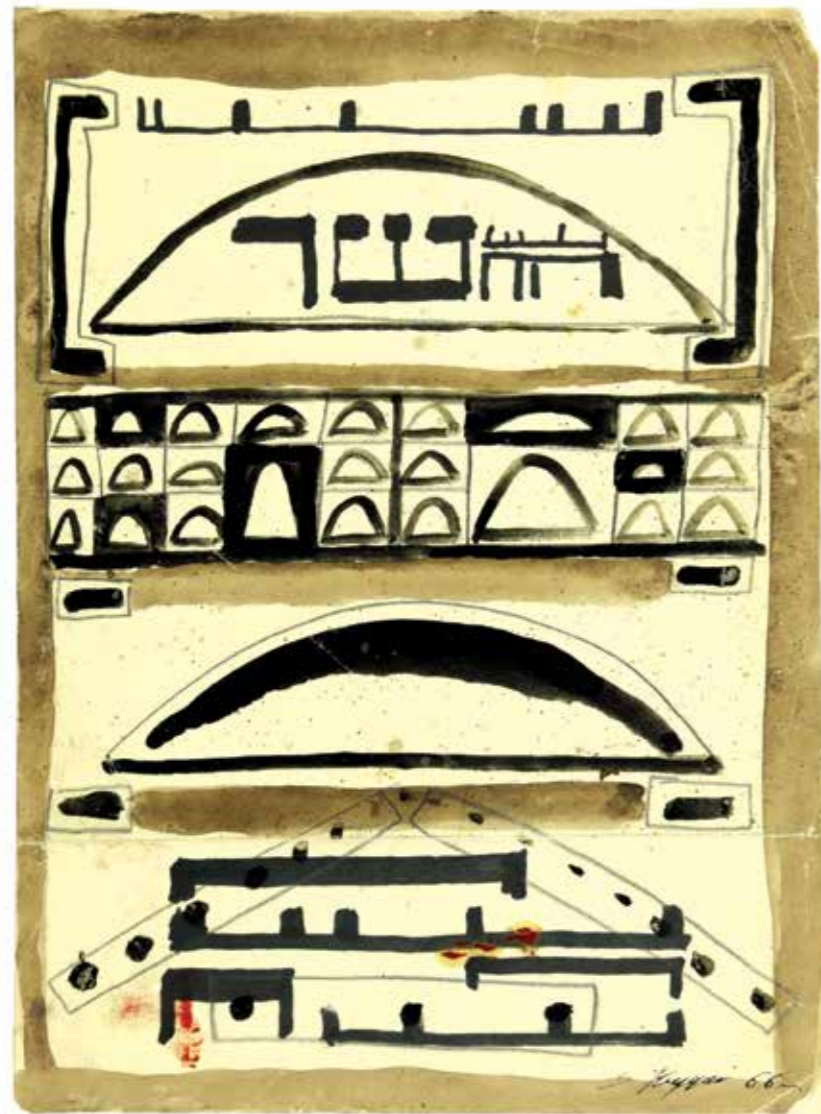
*The Valley of the Kings, (Species III)*, 1964, lithograph, 32,5 x 31,4 cm



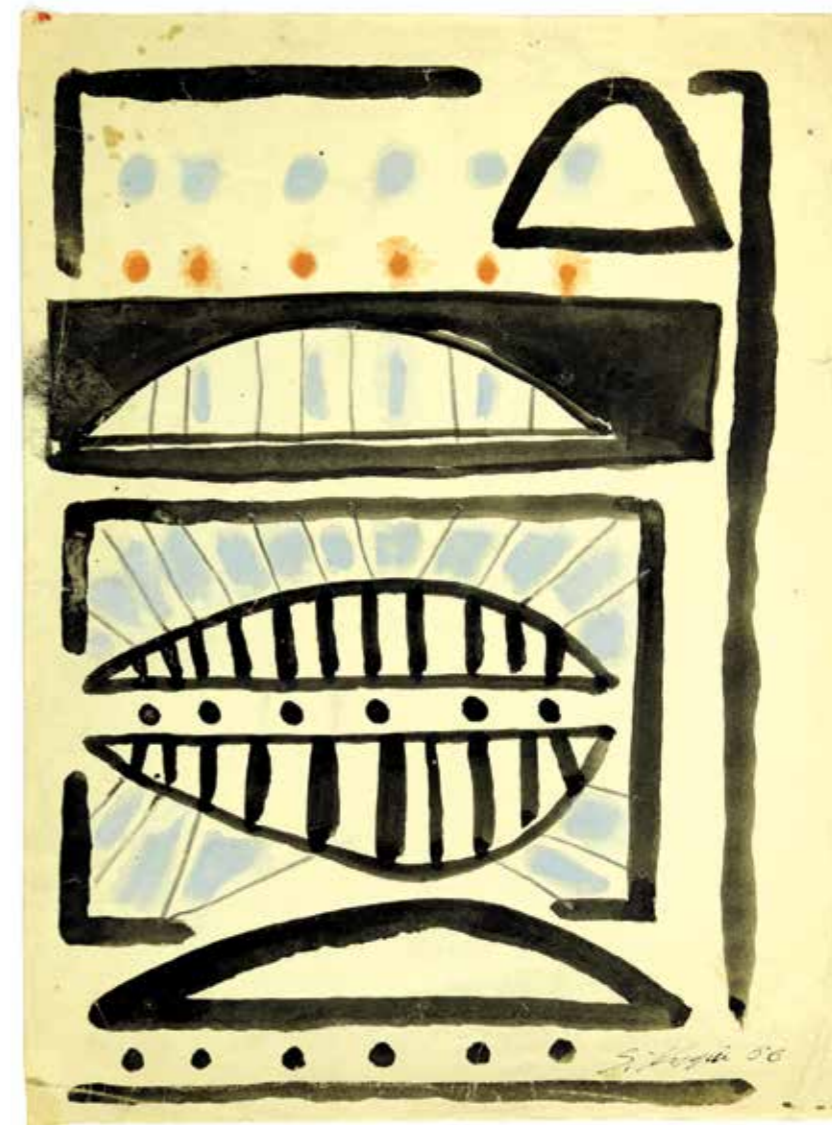
*Hatshepsout*, 1956, linocut, 45 x 24 cm



*Construction of the Space (Eo ipso)*, 1964, color linoleum cut, 72 x 44,5 cm



Untitled (sketch for the painting), 1966, tempera on paper, 28,5 x 21 cm



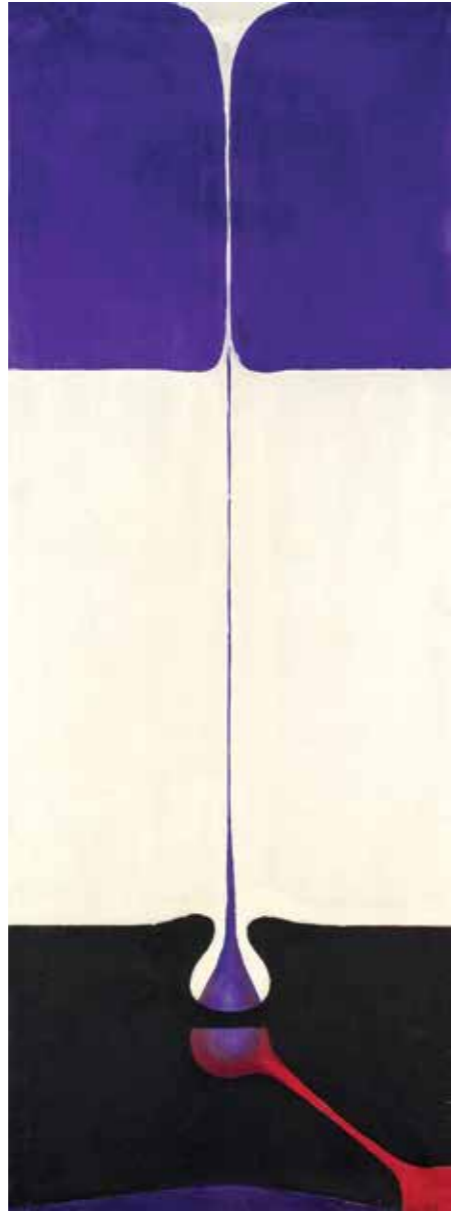
Untitled (sketch for the painting), 1966, tempera on paper, 28,5 x 21 cm



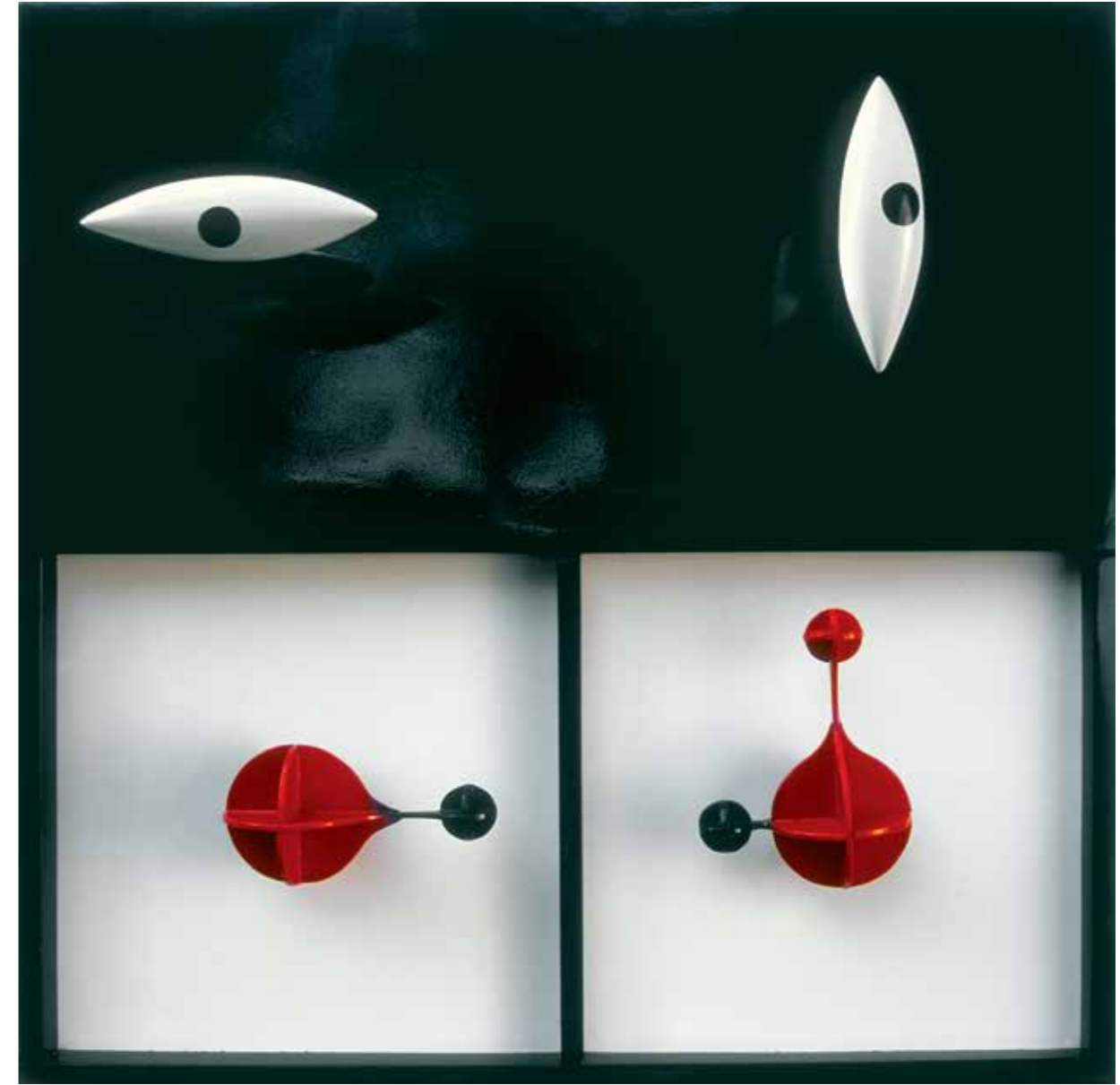
*Nofret*, 1965, wood, h. 170 cm (two views)



*Nofret*, 1965, wood, h. 170 cm (two views)



*Conflicts X*, 1968-70, oil on canvas, 105,5 x 38 cm

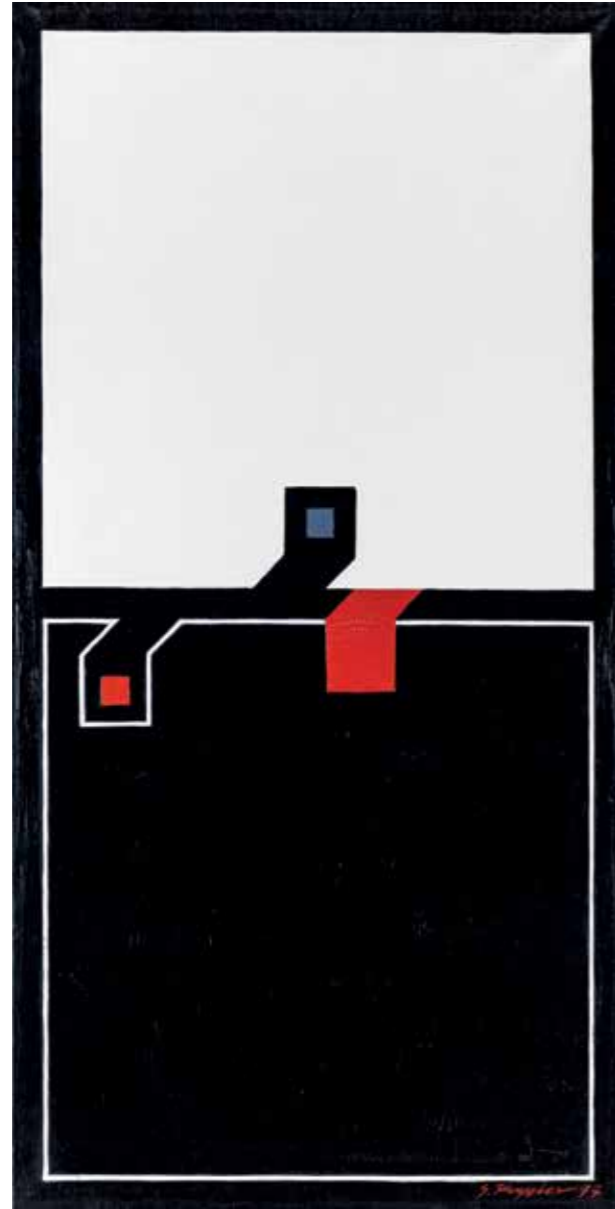


From the series *Collineations*, 1970, wood, plywood, enamel paint, 71,5 x 71,5 x 23,5 cm

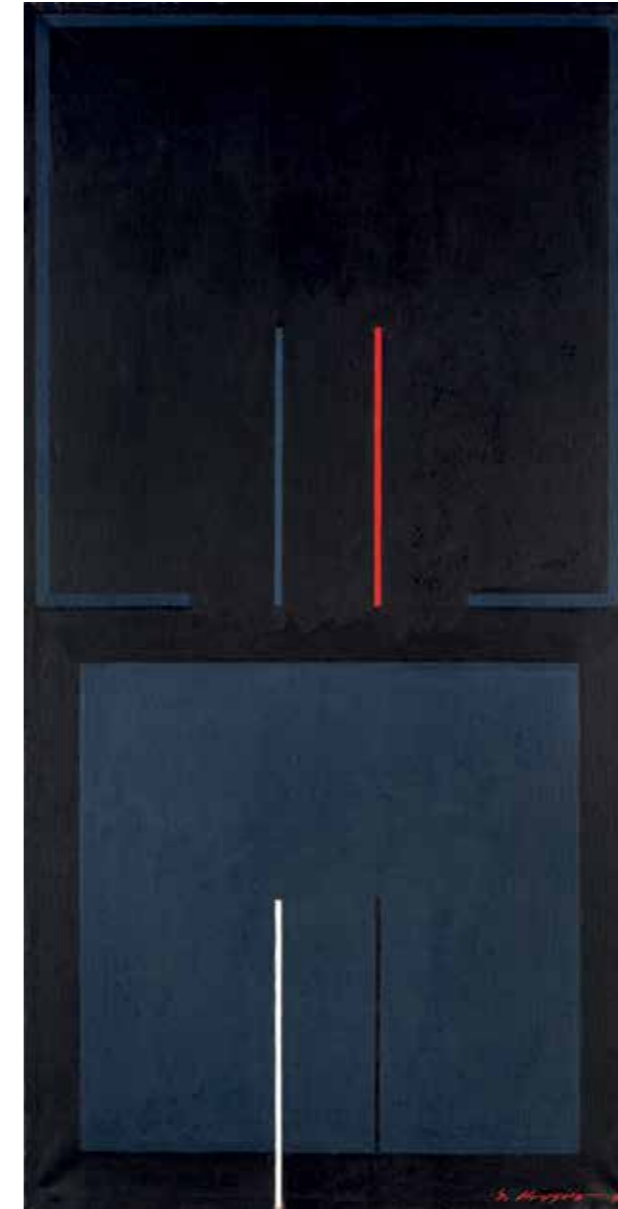




Center of Form's Condensation 2 (OKF2), fragment, as presented at the Philharmonic Hall in Szczecin; project realization by Estudio Barozzi Veiga, Barcelona; photo Włodzimierz Pietrzyk



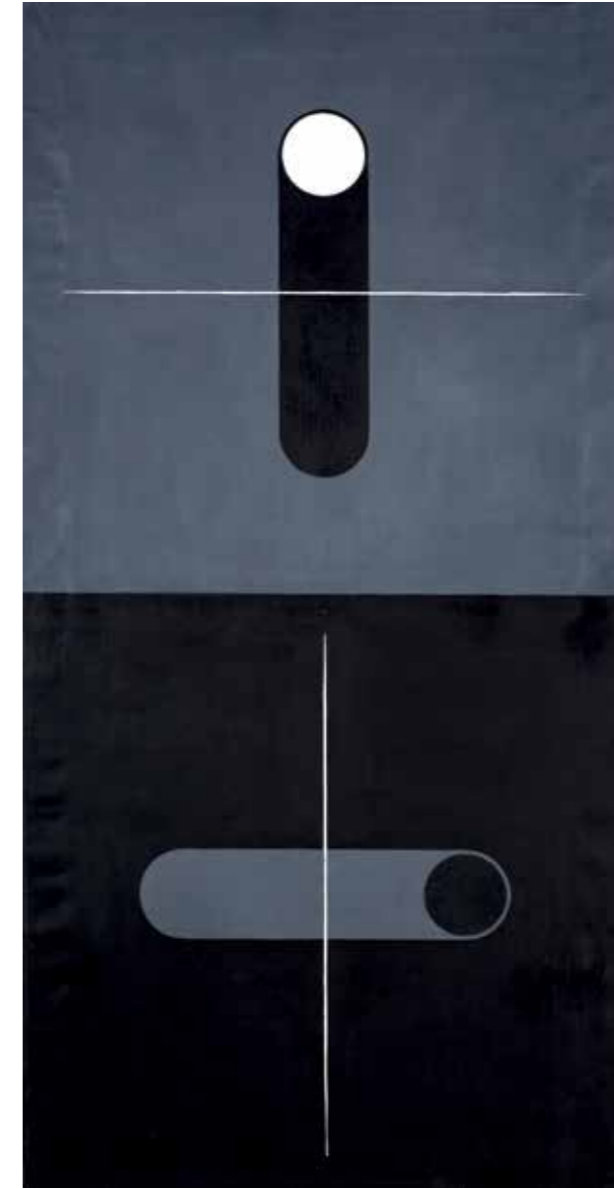
*Permeation, Into Black and White, 1977, oil on canvas, 120 x 60 cm*



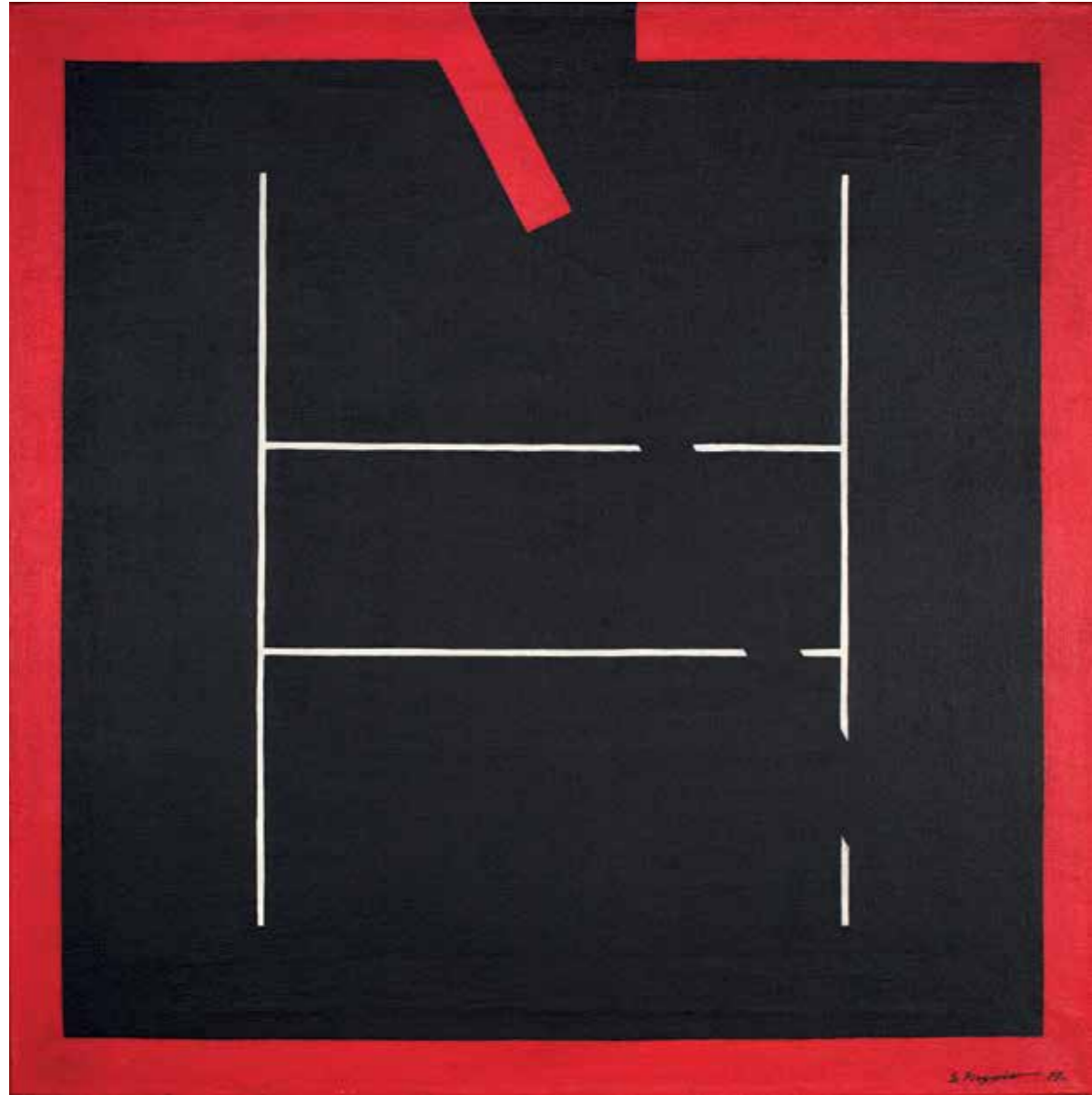
*Penetration of the Space, 1977, oil on canvas, 105 x 53 cm*



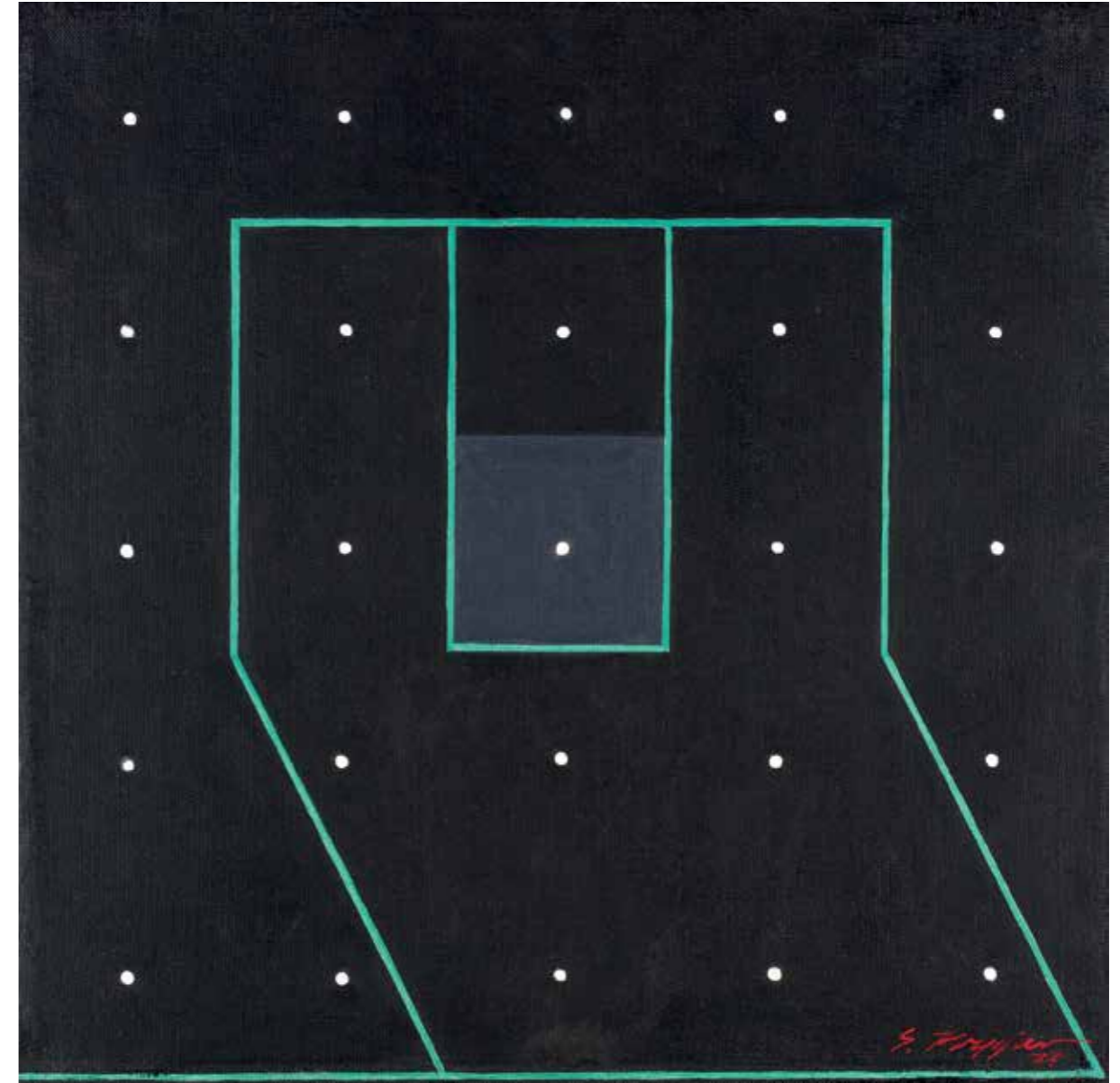
*Two Beings*, 1977, oil on canvas, 120 x 60 cm



*Penetration of Space*, 1977, oil on canvas, 119 x 60,5 cm



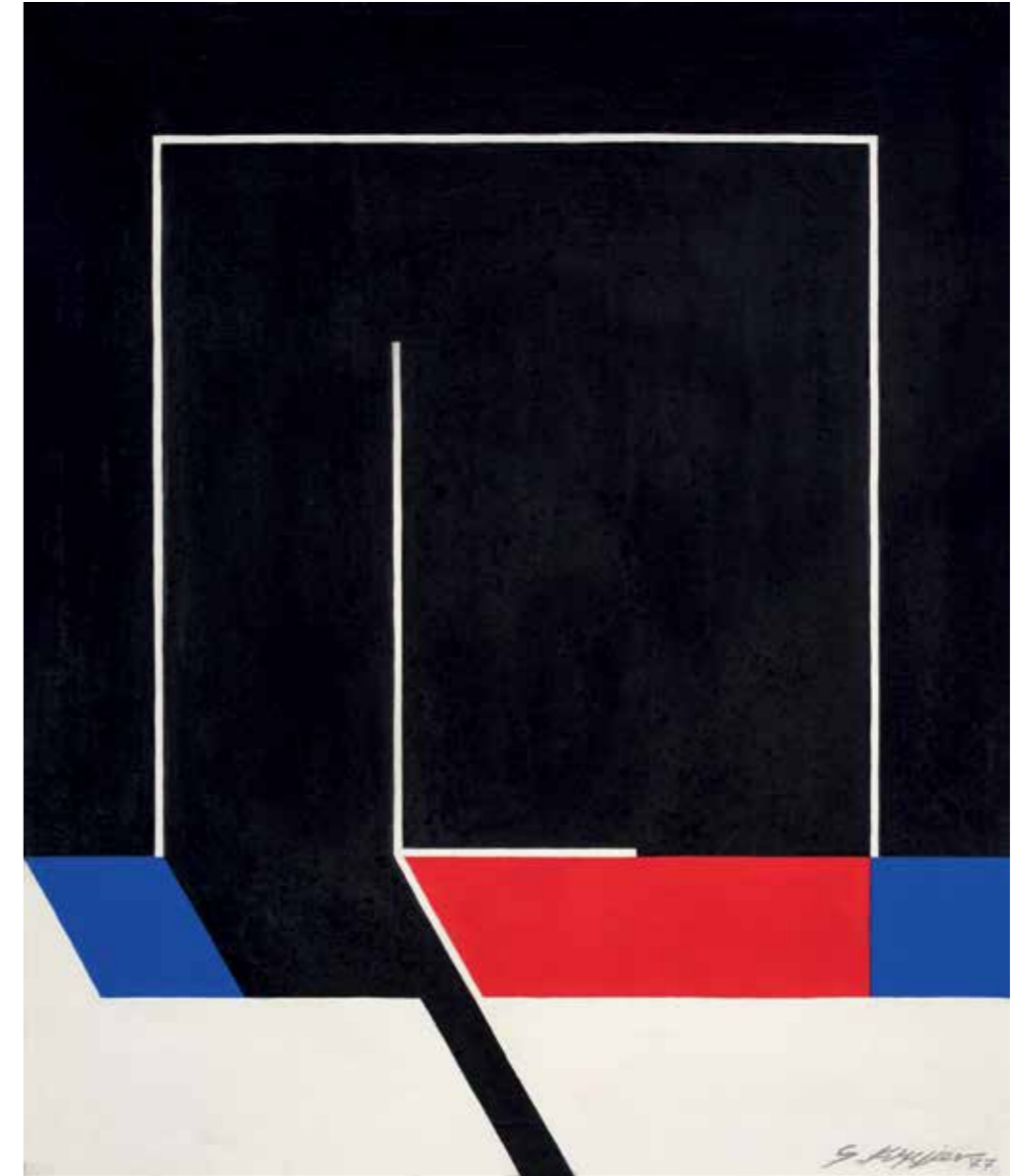
*Demarcation of Space VII*, 1977, oil on canvas, 70 x 70 cm



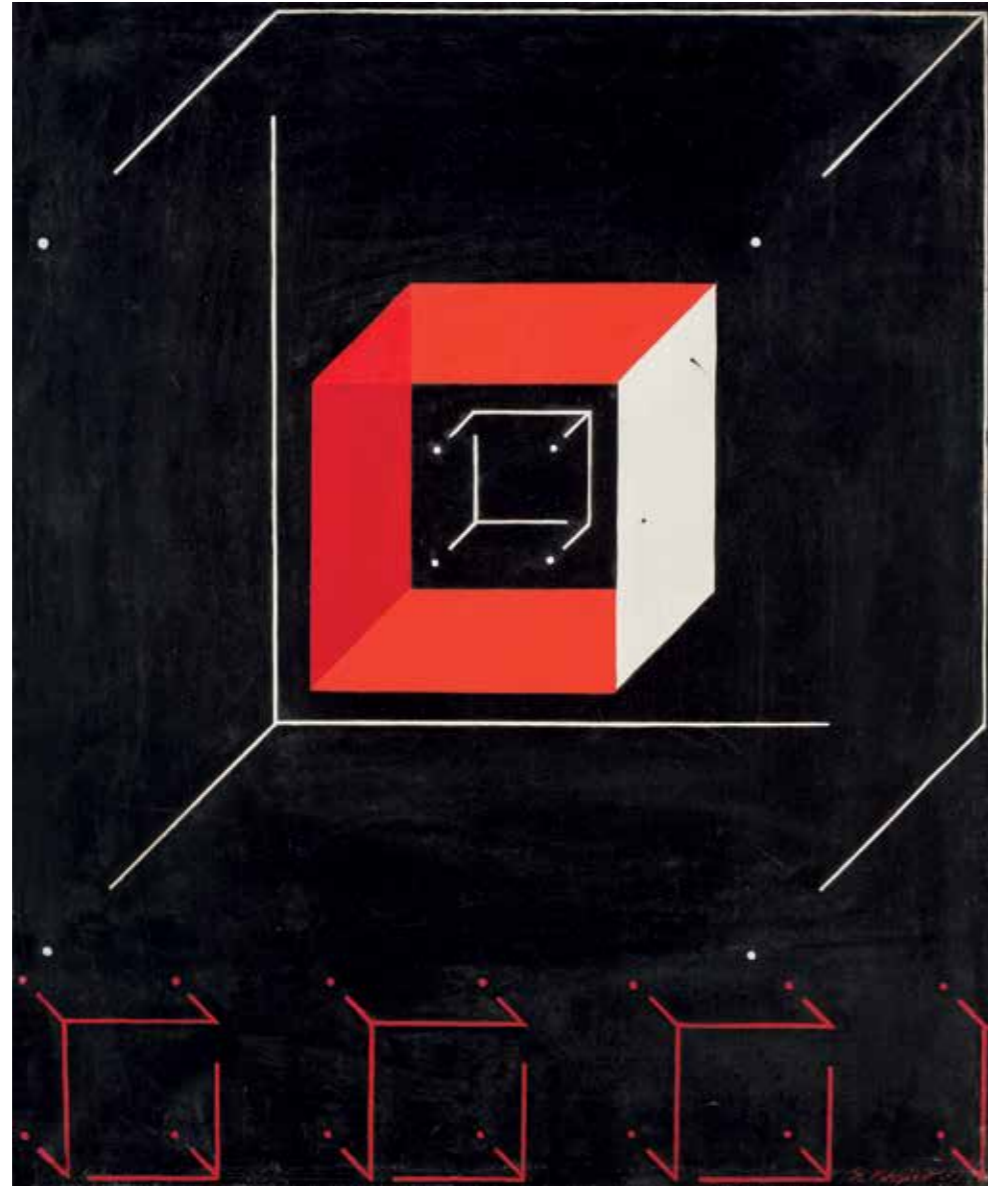
*Demarcation of Space V*, 1977, oil on canvas, 44,5 x 44,5 cm



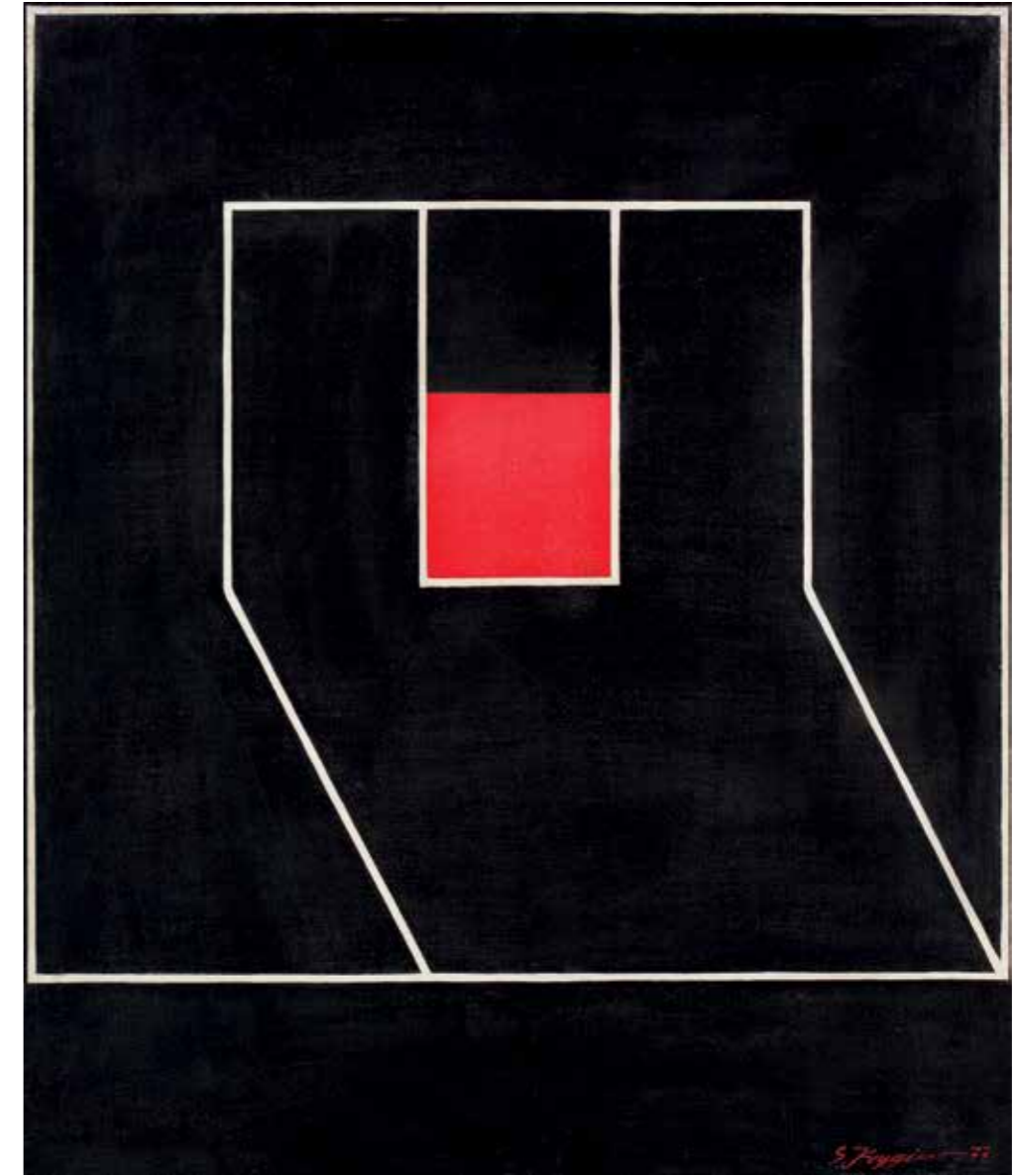
*Demarcation of Space III, 1977, oil on canvas, 69,5 x 60 cm*



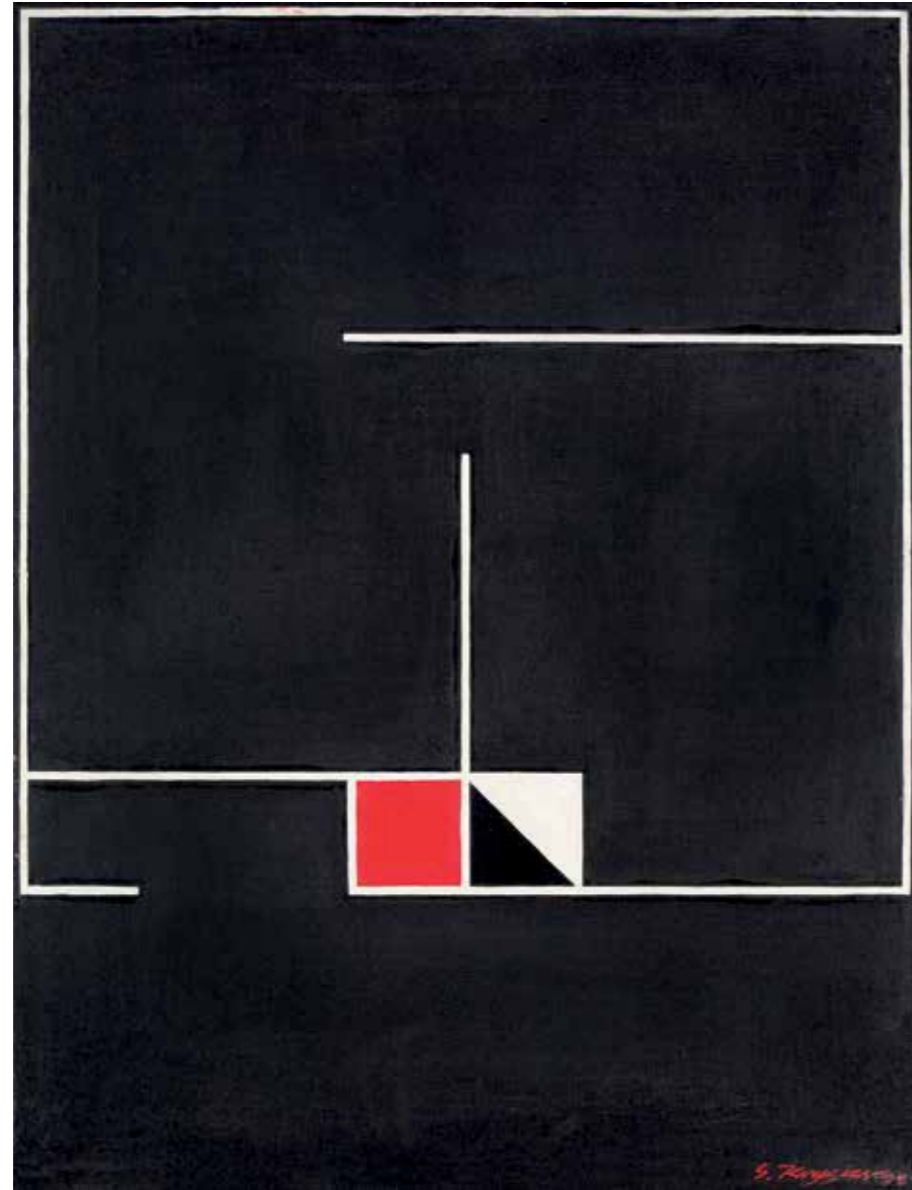
*Demarcation of Space II, 1977, oil on canvas, 70 x 59,5 cm*



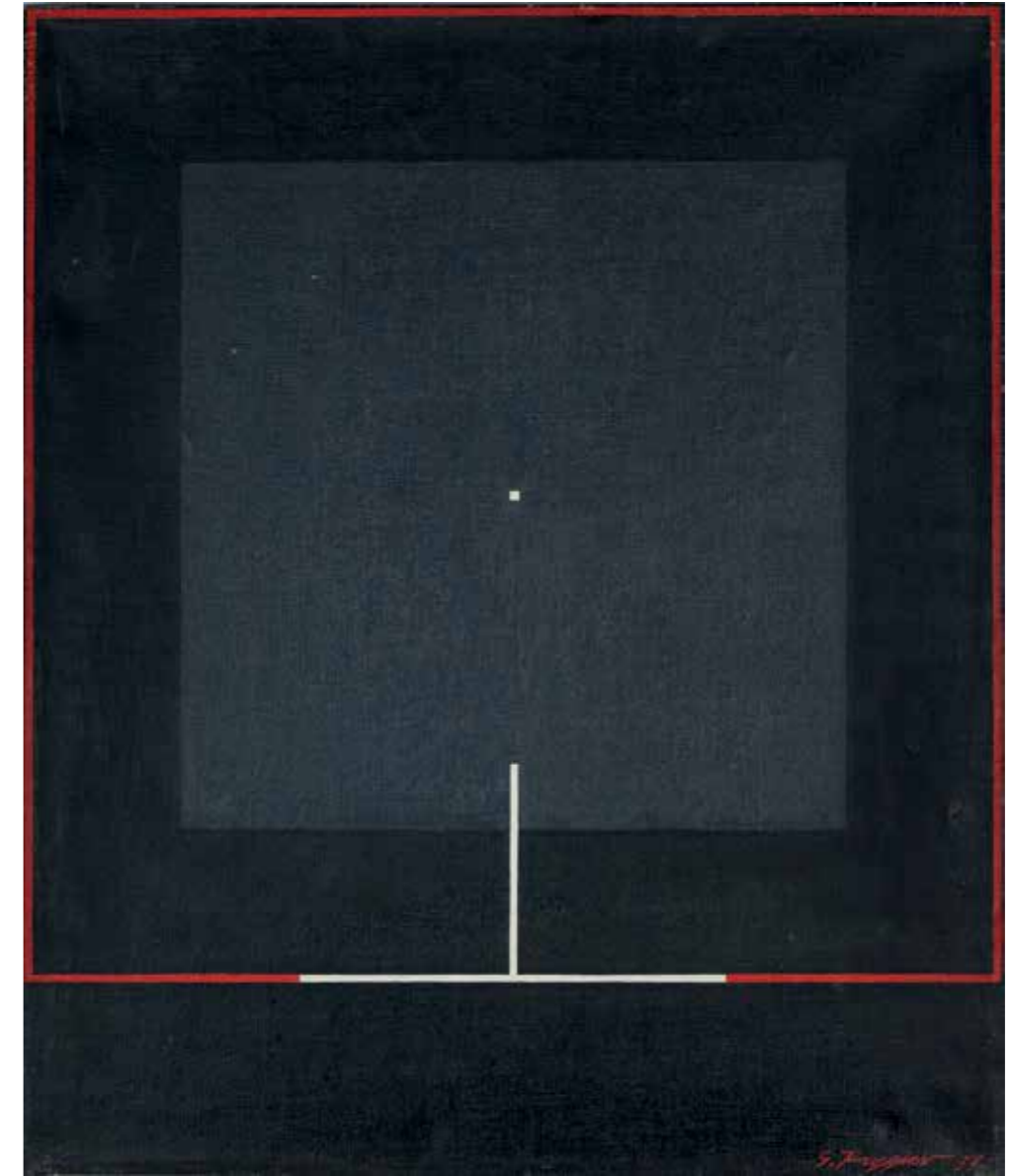
*Demarcation of Space I, 1977, oil on canvas, 72 x 60 cm*



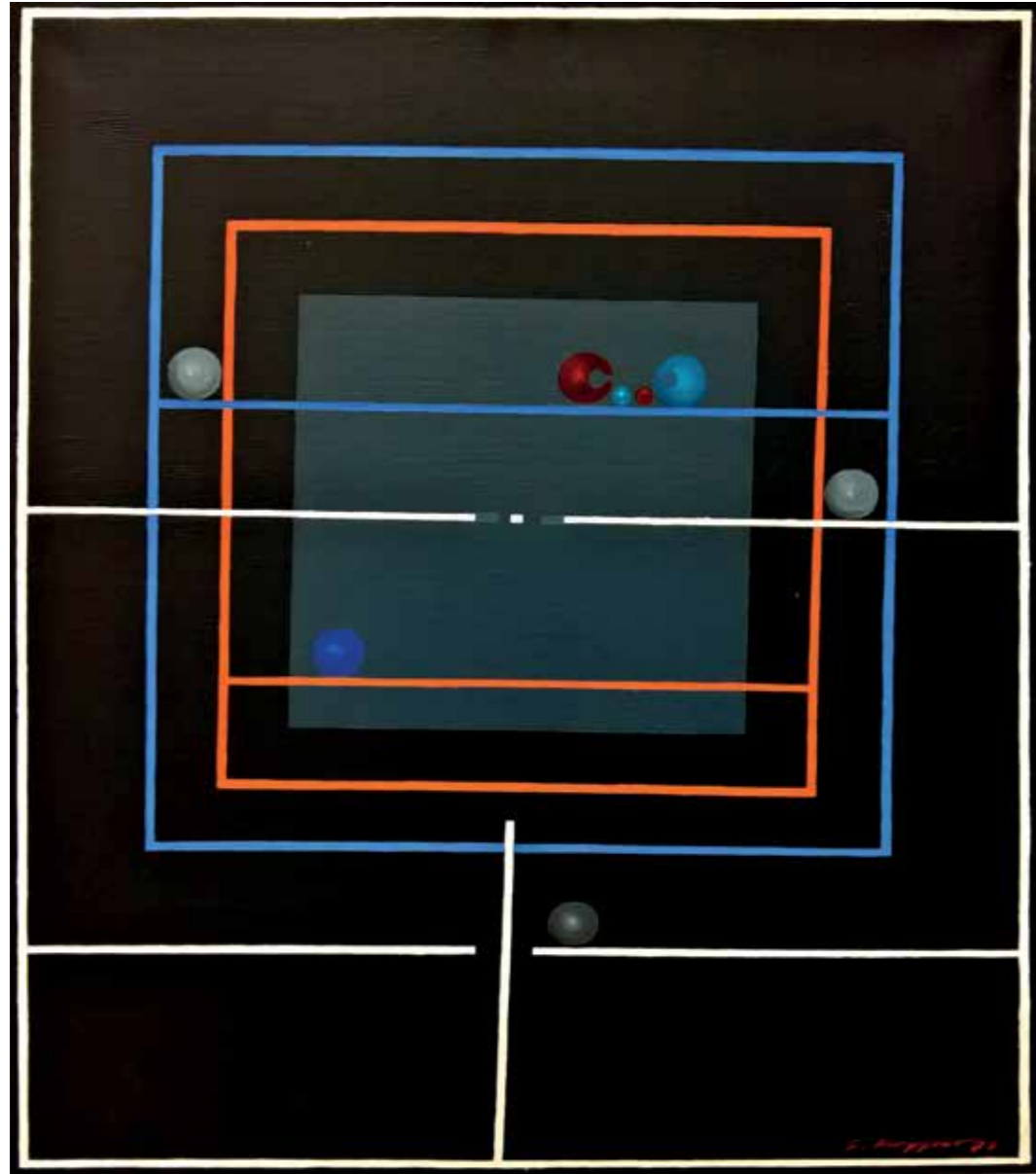
*Penetration of the Space I, 1977, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm*



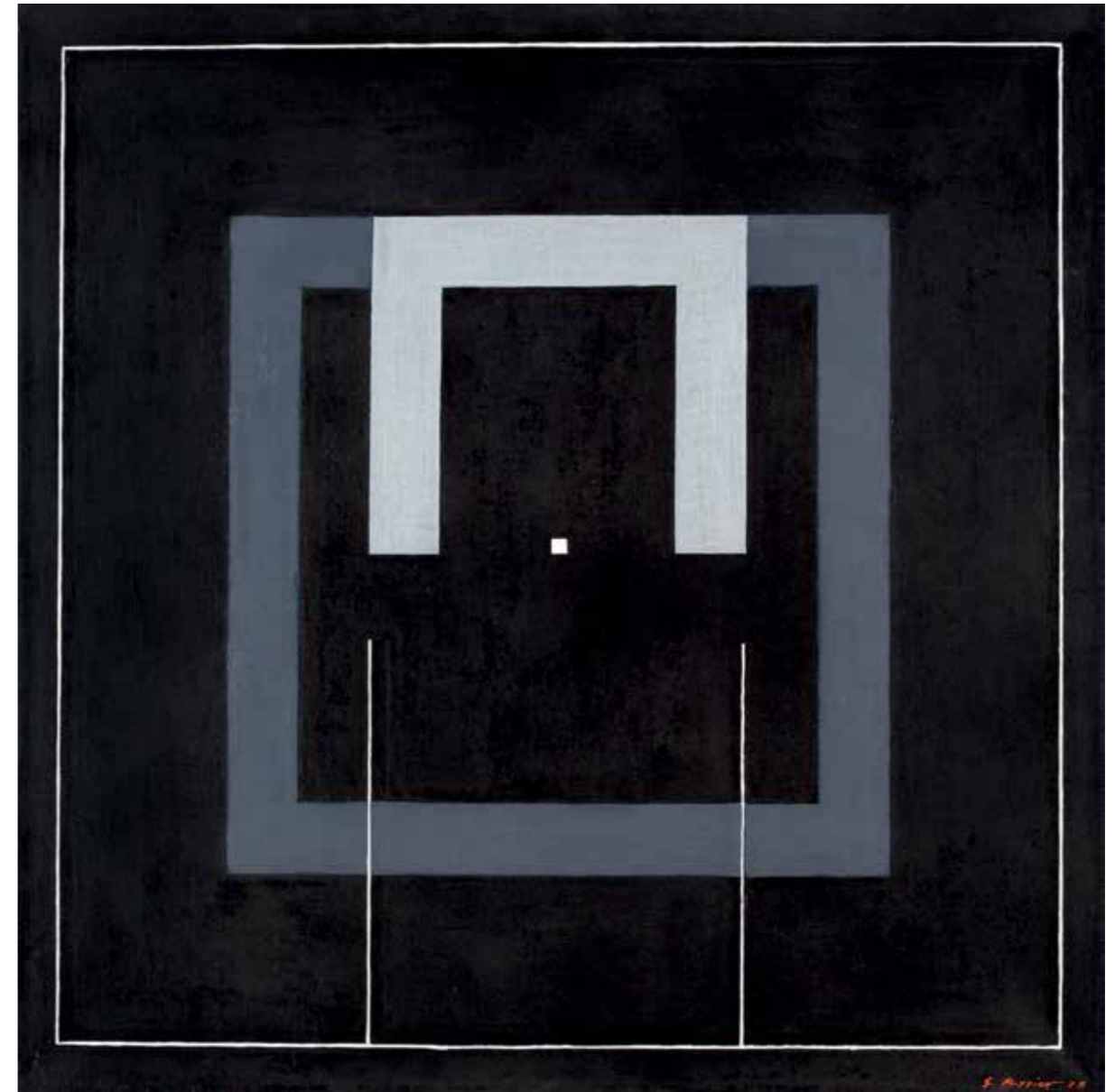
*Demarcation of Space IV*, 1977, oil on canvas, 61 x 46 cm



*Penetration of Space II*, 1977, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm



*Untitled*, 1977, oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm

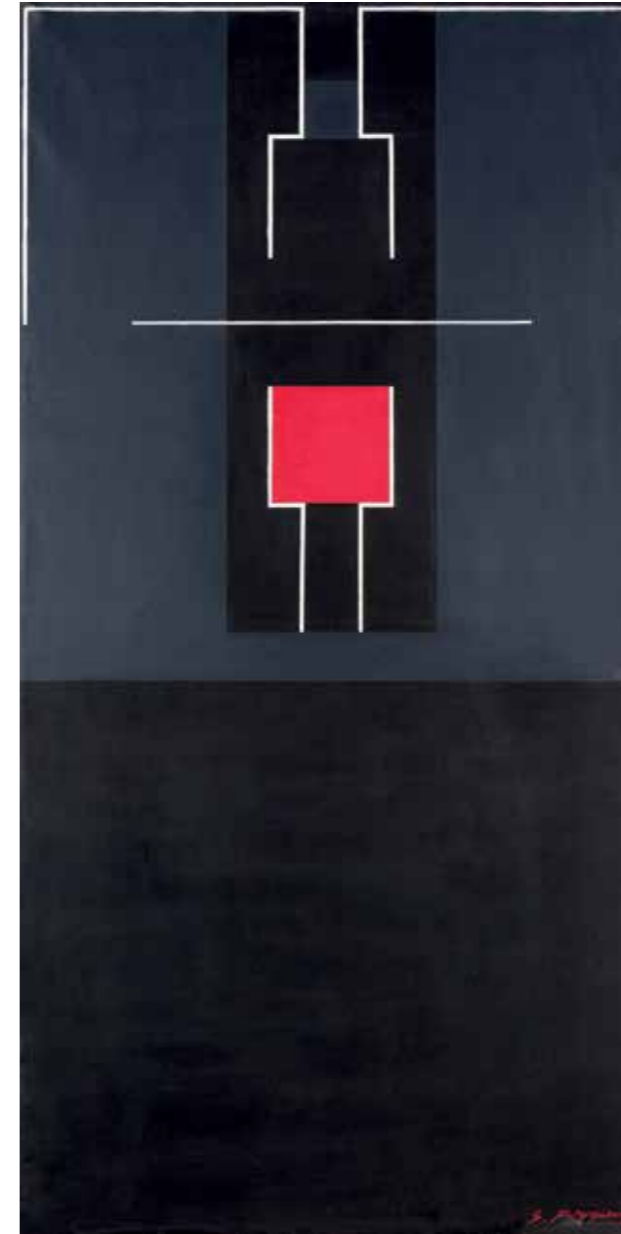


*Demarcation of Space VII*, 1978, oil on canvas, 70 x 70 cm

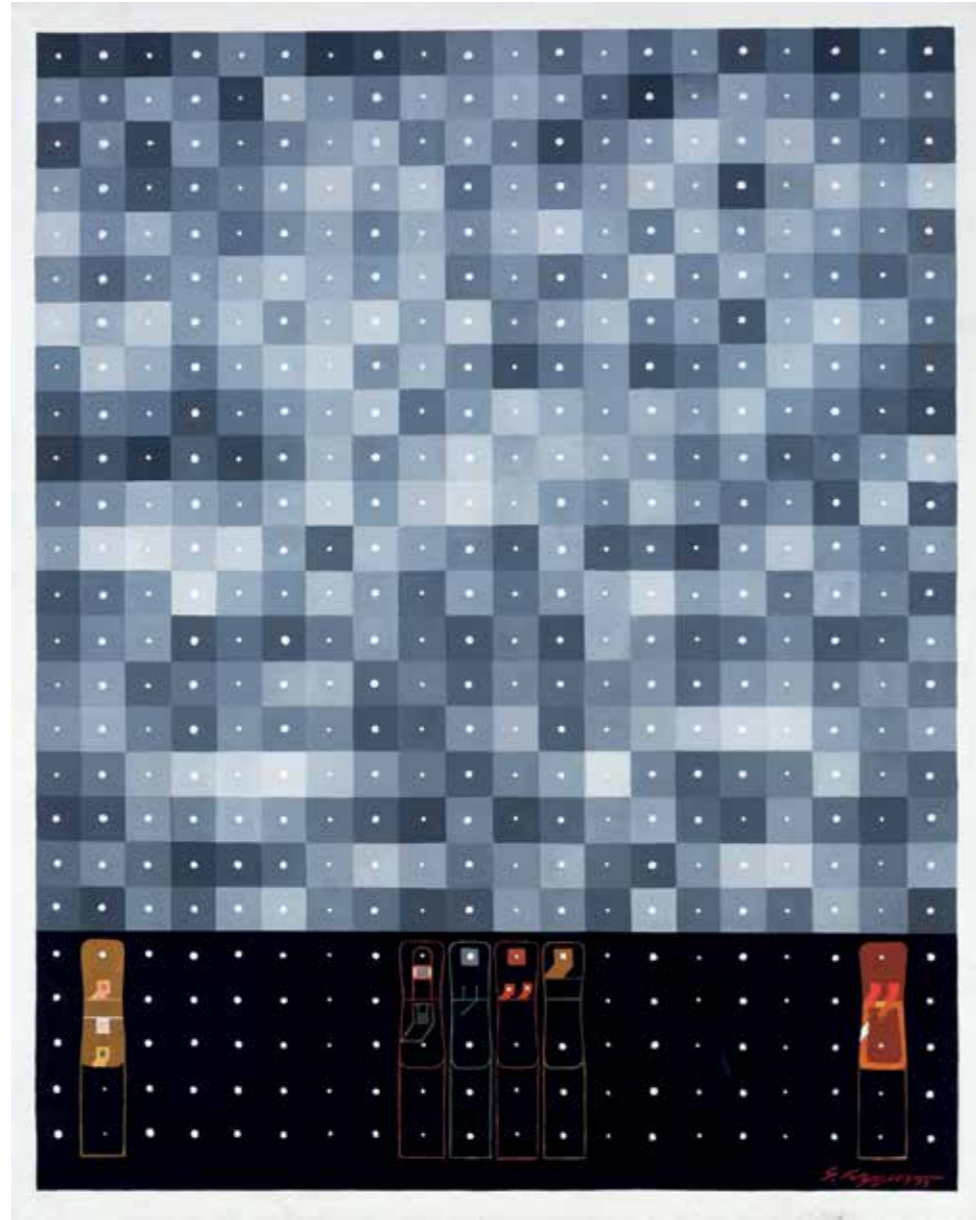




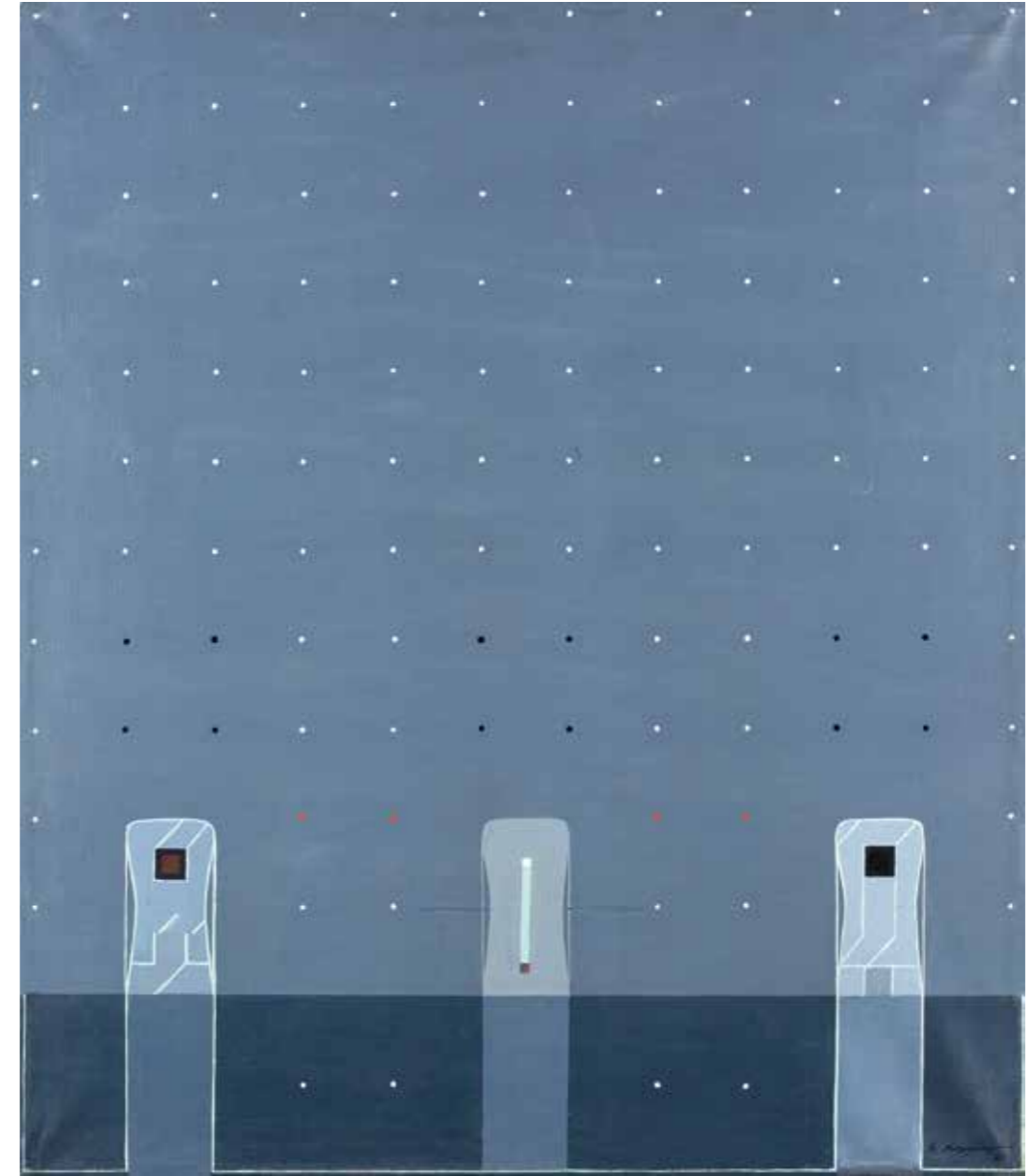
*The Egyptian Dancer*, 1978, oil on canvas, 120 x 60 cm



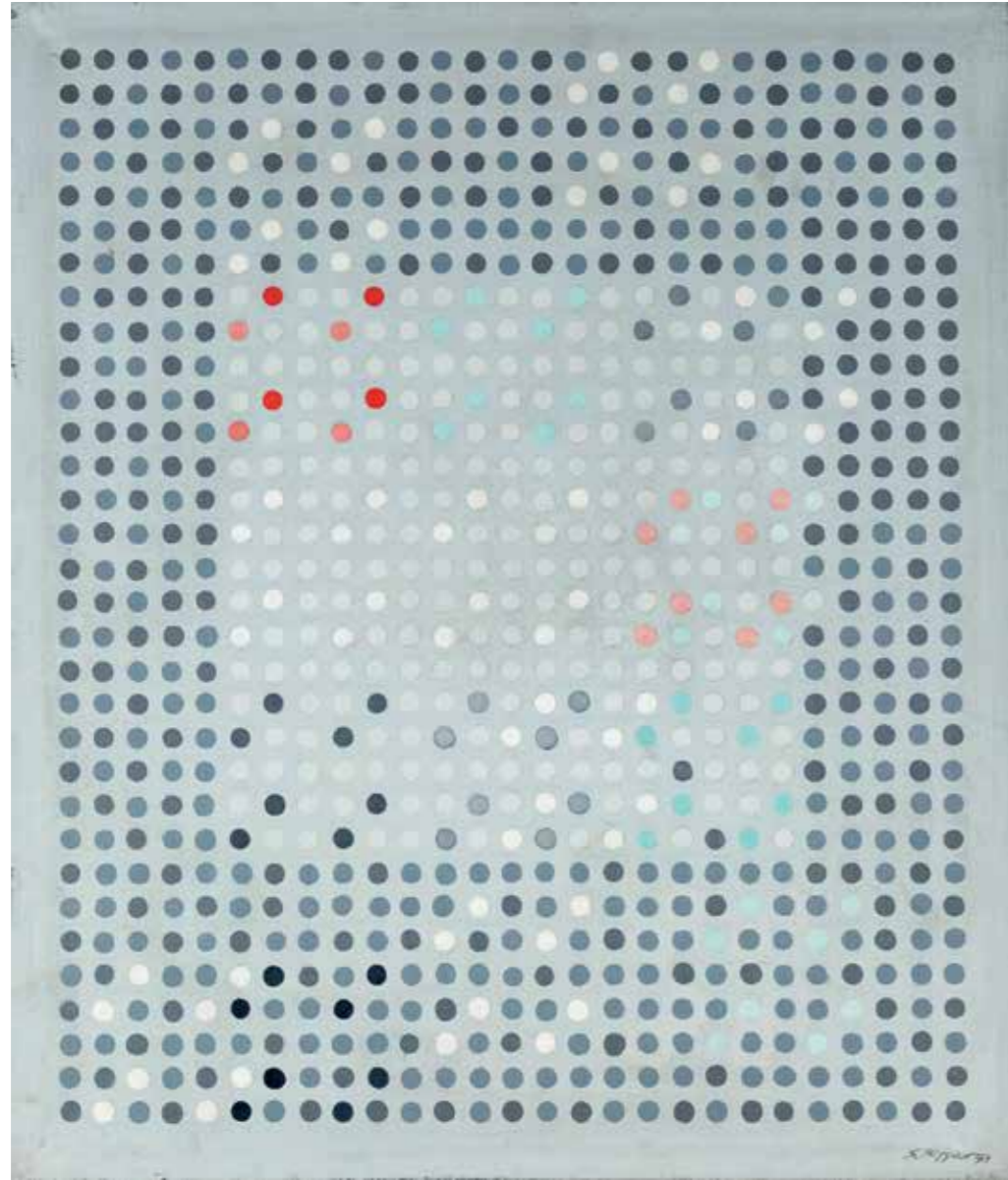
*Construction of the Space II*, 1979, oil on canvas, 120 x 60 cm



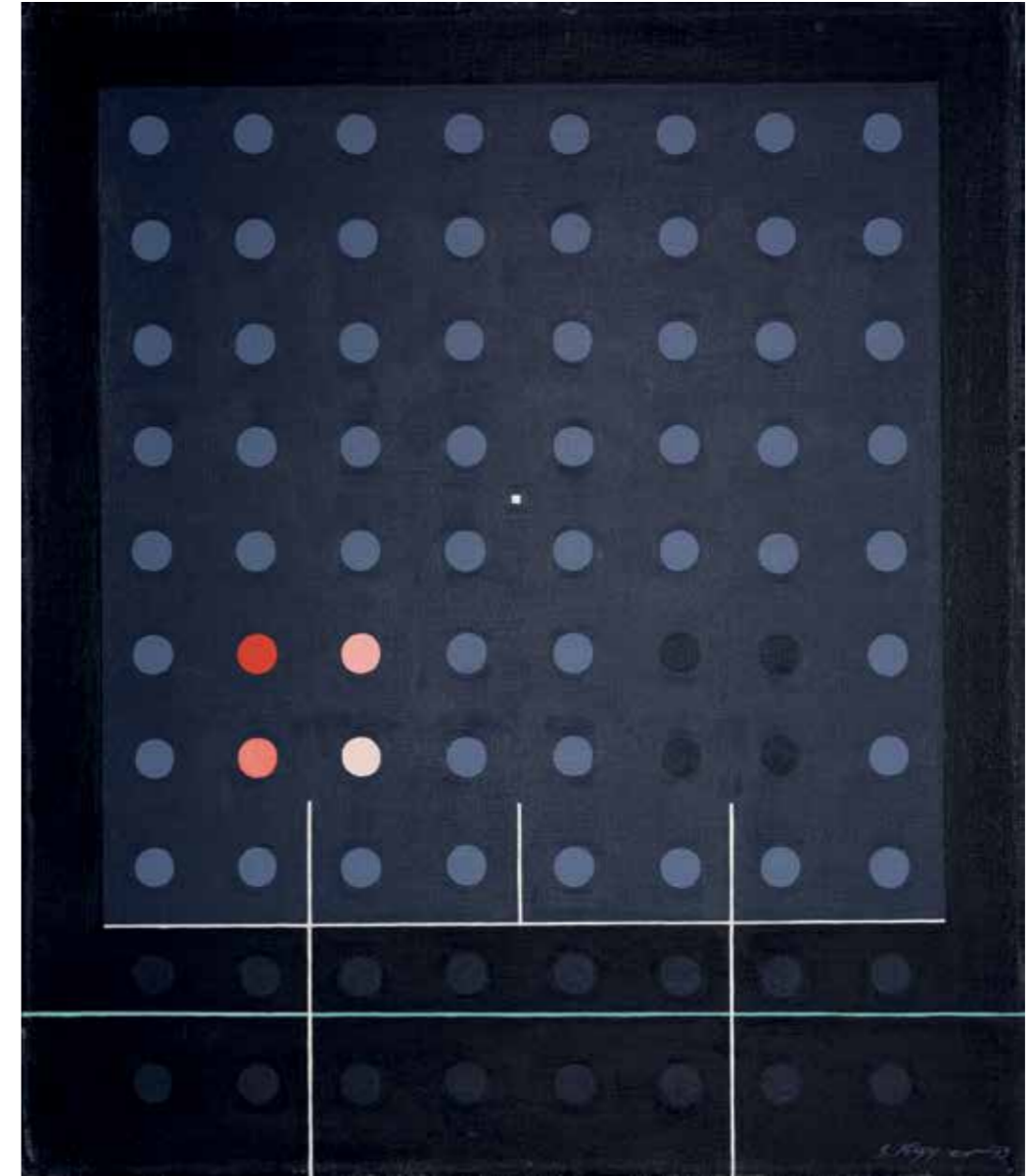
*Penetration of Space II*, 1978, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm



*Three Ladies*, 1979, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm

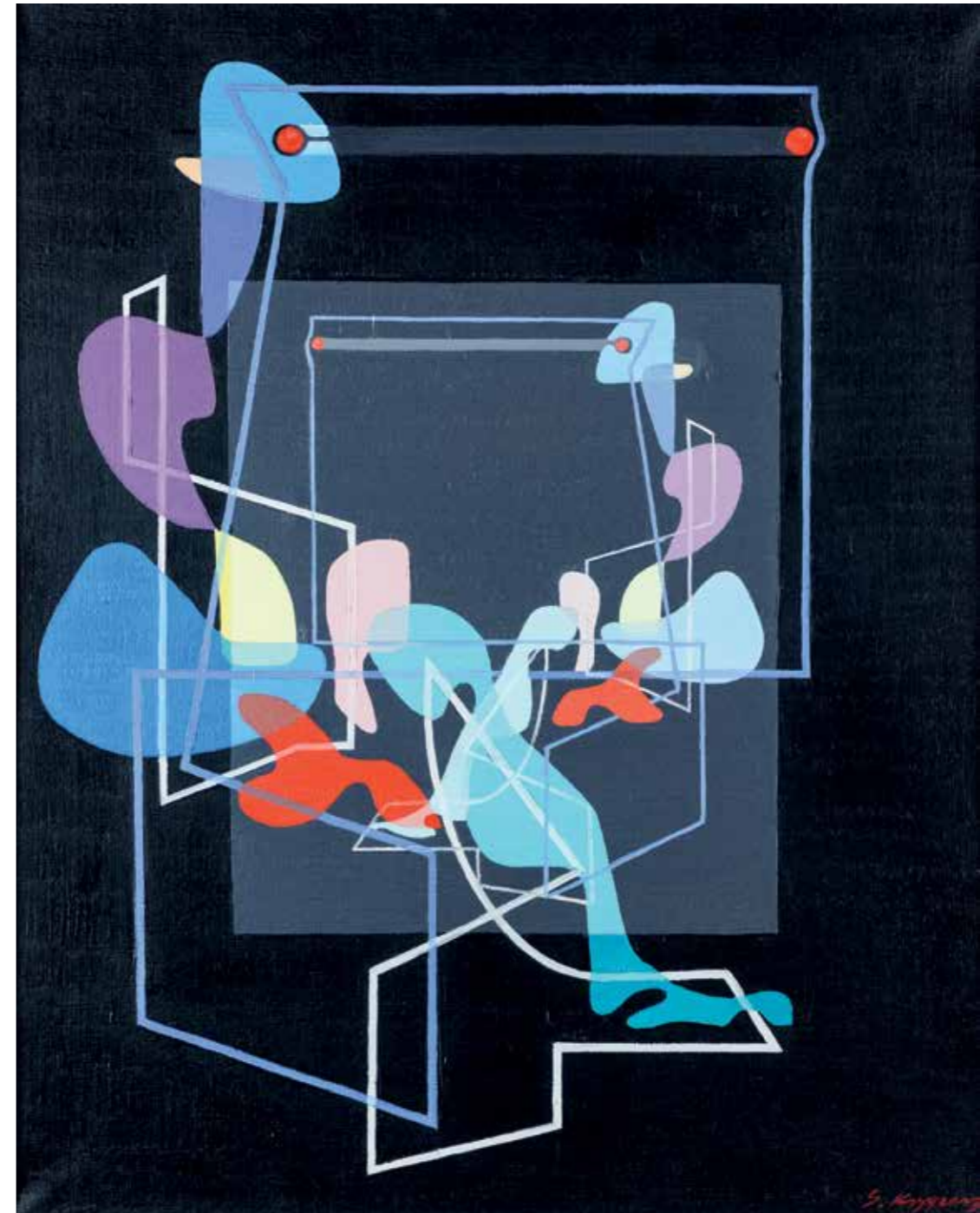


*Emanation of Space II, Transformation of Cubes*, 1979, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm



*Illusion*, 1979, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm

*Construction of the Sitter*, 1993, oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm



# Stefan Krygier

biographical note

STEFAN KRYGIER was a painter, sculptor, graphic designer, architect, and art educator. He was born in Łódź in 1923 and died in that city in 1997. His father, Władysław, was a real estate broker; his mother Maria (called Marianna) managed a grocery store. Krygier was married to the artist and architect Krystyna née Burzanka, and the couple had a daughter, Monika.

Between 1946 and 1951, Krygier studied at the State College of the Fine Arts (PWSSP; today Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts) in Łódź, where he attended the legendary studio of the Polish Constructivist Władysław Strzemiński. After finishing his studies in Łódź, Krygier enrolled at the Architecture and Urban Planning Department of the Warsaw University of Technology. As an architect, he worked at the Municipal Architecture Office in Łódź, and designed, among others, a dormitory for the Łódź University of Technology and several residential buildings. Krygier taught art practice and art theory at his alma mater in Łódź between 1957-1997.

In the late 1940s, Krygier joined the Club of Young Artists and Scholars in Warsaw, and participated with its members in several exhibitions. In 1953, he became a member of the artistic group St-53 in Katowice (then Stalinogród).  
(The name of the group is

a combination  
of the first letters of the name  
of its *spiritus movens*, Strzemiński, as well  
as of study and “Stalinogród,” and the group’s founding  
year, 1953.) In the 1960s and 1970s he participated in important  
outdoor summer residencies and workshops in Poland, including the  
Third Exhibition and Symposium “Złote Grono” and several International  
Meetings of Visual Artists and Art Scholars “Osieki.” One of his works produced  
in Osieki, *Center of Form Condensation 1* (Ośrodek Kondensacji Formy 1), has been  
included in the collection of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.

In 1965 and 1966, Krygier traveled to Egypt, the country whose ancient art and civilization  
inspired him greatly from early on. During his life, he also made trips to Greece,  
Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium and Holland. The trip to Prague resulted  
in a series of works inspired by the old Jewish cemetery in that city. In Belgium he met  
the designer Emiel Veranneman, who would be instrumental in organizing Krygier’s  
posthumous exhibition in that country in 2001.

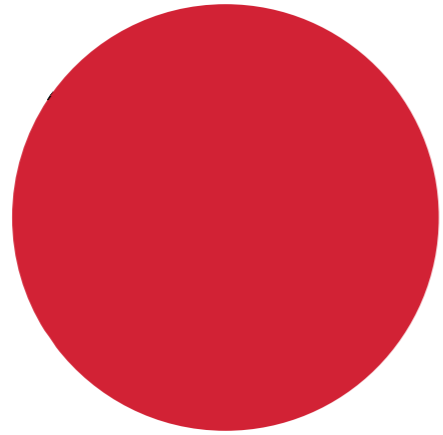
Throughout his career Krygier’s work evolved stylistically, from the early works inspired  
by cubism, constructivism and Strzemiński’s “solarism” to informel paintings, to his  
mature kinetic special compositions (loosely inspired by constructivism) and his  
late “simultaneous” paintings.

Krygier’s works are in the collections of, among other museums,  
the National Museum in Warsaw, the National Museum in  
Szczecin, and the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.





Władysław Strzemiński (seated on the right) with his students in 1946, Stefan Krygier in the white coat, Photo from the Archives of Monika Krygier



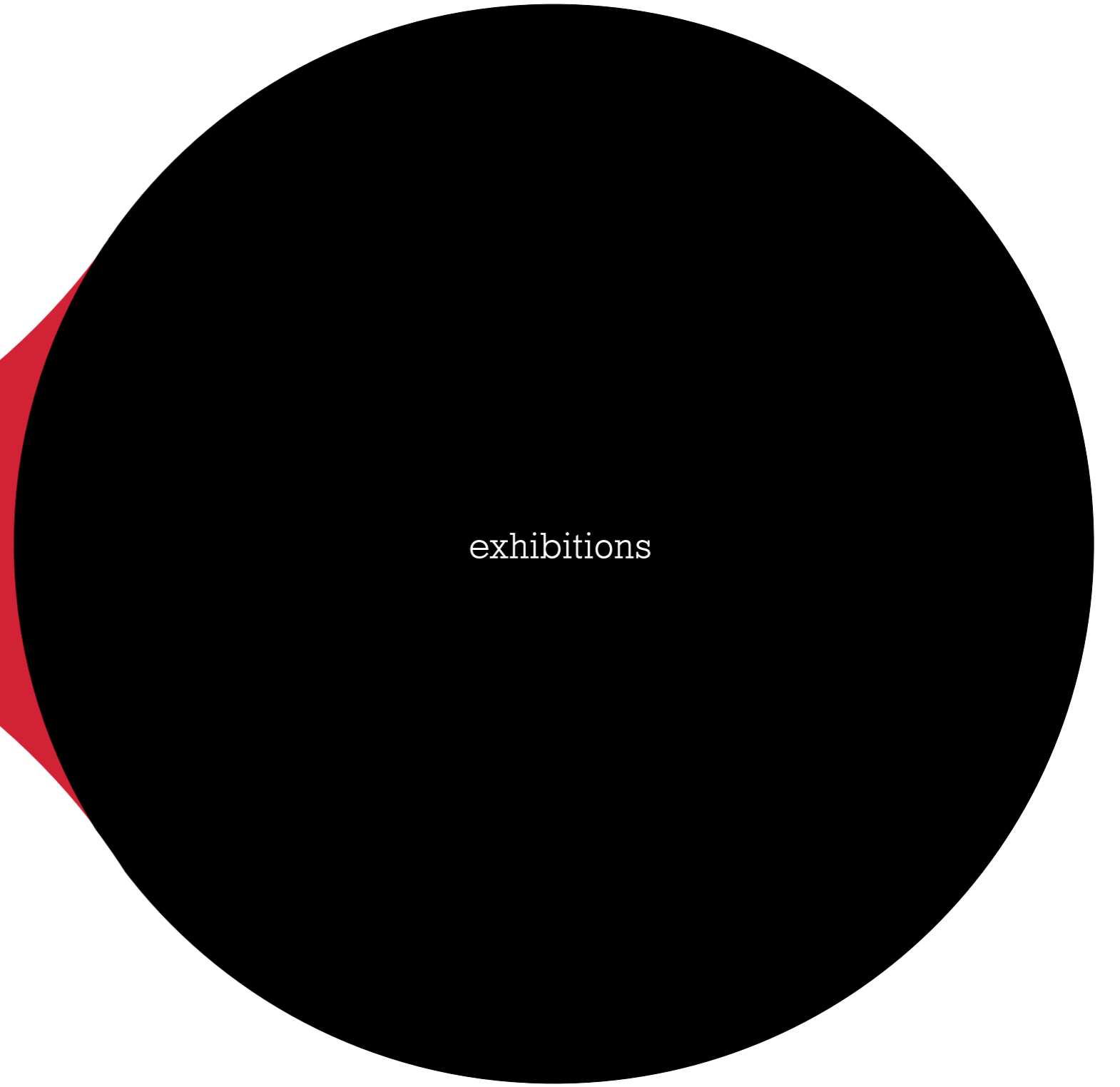
Center of Form's Condensation 2 (OKF2), fragment, as presented at the Philharmonic Hall in Szczecin; project realization by Estudio Barozzi Veiga, Barcelona; photo Włodzimierz Pietrzyk







Stefan Krygier



exhibitions



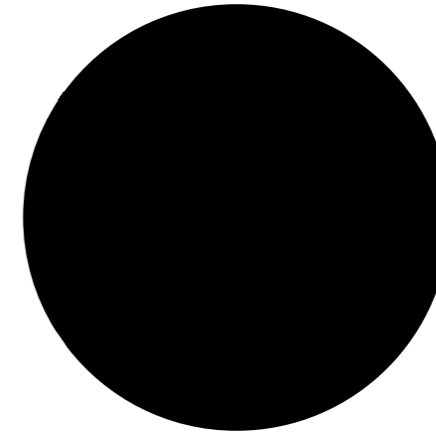
*Composition*, 1957, oil on canvas, 43,5 x 55 cm  
*A Town*, 1957, oil on canvas, 29,5 x 41 cm



- 1957 - Stefan Krygier - malarstwo. Salon „Poprostu”, Warszawa
- 1965 - Plastyka Stefana Krygiera. Salon BWA, Łódź
- 1971 - Stefan Krygier. Galeria BWA, Lublin
- 1972 - Stefan Krygier. Galeria Współczesna, Warszawa
- 1973 - Stefan Krygier. OKF II. Zamek, Świdwin, Salon BWA, Koszalin
- 1975 - Stefan Krygier. Galeria 72 (Muzeum Okręgowe), Chełm
- 1980 - Stefan Krygier, Henryk Stażewski. Malarstwo. Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej, Sandomierz / Kraków
- 1988 - Stefan Krygier - malarstwo, grafika, rzeźba. Ośrodek Propagandy Sztuki, BWA, Łódź
- 1990 - Stefan Krygier's Symultane Malerei. Galeria KIK, Berlin
- 1992 - Stefan Krygier. Oel. Galerie „ART 90”, Nebikon (Szwajcaria)
- 1993 - Stefan Krygier. Malarstwo, grafika. W setną rocznicę urodzin Władysława Strzemińskiego. Galeria PWSSP, Łódź
- 1999 - Stefan Krygier 1923 - 1997. Muzeum Historii Miasta Łodzi, Łódź
- 2000 - Stefan Krygier 1923 - 1997. Muzeum im. Xawerego Dunikowskiego, oddział Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie
- 2001 - Stefan Krygier - malarstwo, grafika, rzeźba. Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu
- Stefan Krygier - malarstwo, grafika, rzeźba. Muzeum Narodowe w Szczecinie
- Stefan Krygier, Jesus Rafael Soto, Fundaeja Verrannemana, Belgia, ramach festiwalu "EUROPALIA 2001"
- 2003 - W kręgu Władysława Strzemińskiego - Fijałkowski, Krygier, Kunka, Stażewski. Miejska Galeria Sztuki. Galeria Willa, Łódź
- 2007 - Stefan Krygier - Defragmentacja c.d. Galeria Stefan Szydłowski, Warszawa
- 2009 - Stefan Krygier - Otwartość formy. Ośrodek Propagandy Sztuki, Łódź
- 2010 - Przestrzenie Stefana Krygiera. Galeria Browarna, Łowicz
- 2011 - Stefan Krygier - Atlas Sztuki, Łódź
- 2011 - Fangor, Krygier, Galeria Stefan Szydłowski, Warszawa
- 2012 - Stefan Krygier - Galeria XX1, Warszawa
- Stefan Krygier. Kondensacja formy. Centrum Rzeźby Polskiej, Orońsko
- 2013 - Collage + obiekt, Galeria Stefan Szydłowski, Warszawa
- 2014 - Stefan Krygier - grafika, rzeźba lat 60. XXw. Galeria Stefan Szydłowski, Warszawa
- Axis - oś, Stefan Krygier - obiekty, Włodzimierz Pietrzyk - fotografia, Galeria Stefan Szydłowski, Warszawa
- 2017 - Stefan Krygier. Galeria Poziom 4, Filharmonia in. Mieczysława Karłowicza w Szczecinie.
- Stefan Krygier, Symultanizm form - „Współczesność. Artyści awangardowi w kręgu Władysława Strzemińskiego”. Galeria Re:Medium, Łódź



Center of Form's Condensation 2 (OKF2), fragment, as presented at the Philharmonic Hall in Szczecin; project realization by Estudio Barozzi Veiga, Barcelona; photo Włodzimierz Pietrzyk





*The Sitter*, 1954, tempera on board, 41,5 x 29 cm

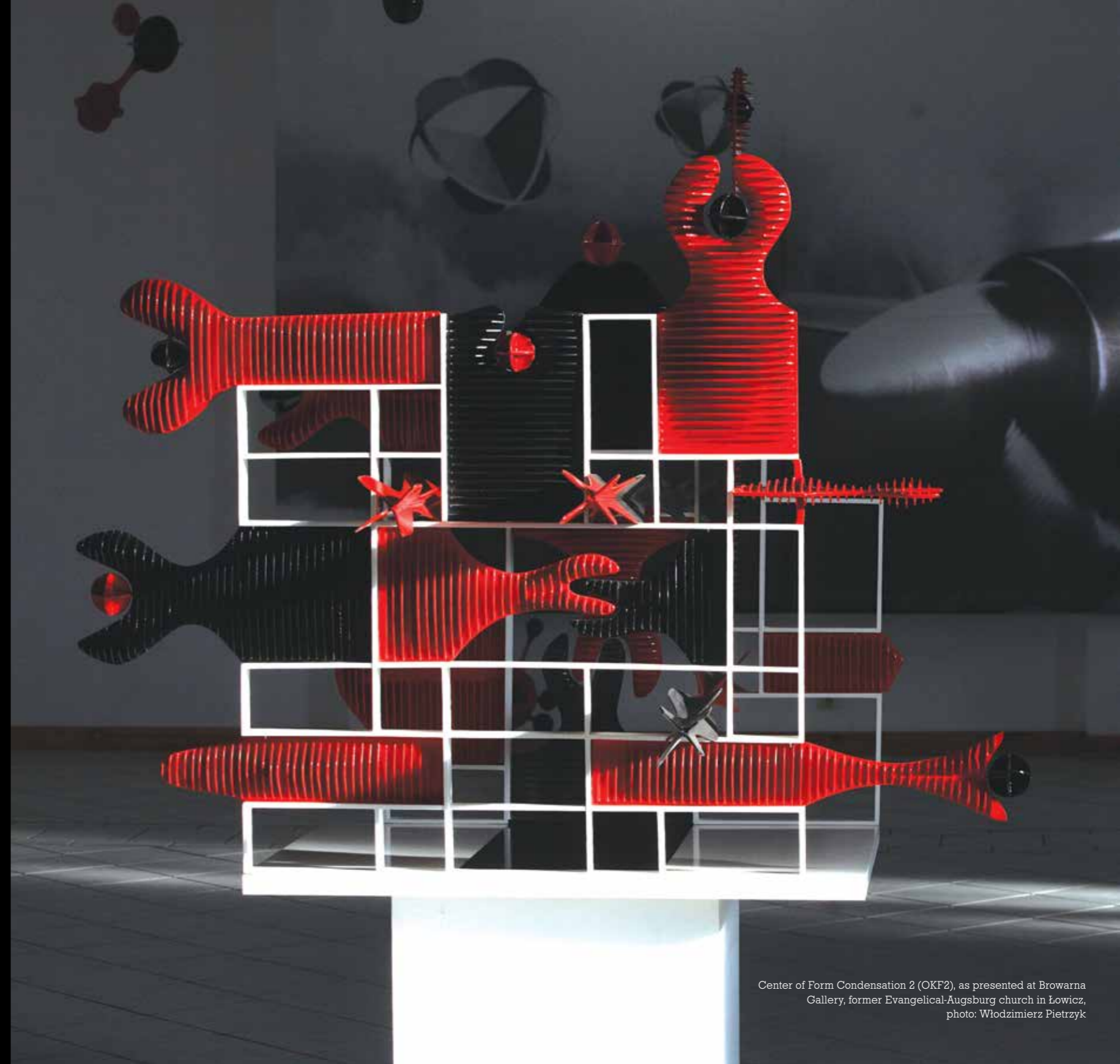
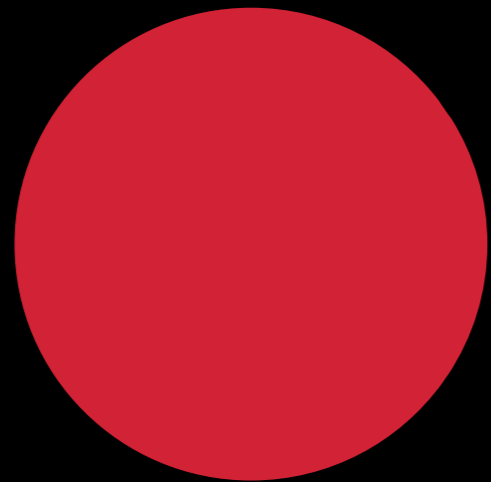
*Two Profiles*, 1954, tempera on cardboard, 41,5 x 29,5 cm

- 1947 - Wystawa członków sekcji malarstwa, Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców, Warszawa
- 1948 - Od baroku do kubizmu. Wystawa Klux Plastyków, YMCA, Łódź
- 1949 - Malarstwo impresjonizmu. Wystawa Klubu Plastyków, YMCA, Łódź
- 1956 - ST-53. Klub Pracy Twórczej, Katowice
  - ST-53. Pałac Sztuki, Kraków
- 1959 - III Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej. CBWA „Zachęta”, Warszawa
- 1965 - Fijałkowski, Krygier, Kunka, Pierzgalski, Tyszkiewiczowa, Wegner, Galeria Sztuki Nowoczesnej (d. „Krzywe Koło”), Warszawa
- 1966 - III Festiwal Malarstwa Współczesnego. Zamek Książąt Pomorskich, Szczecin
- 1967 - III Wystawa i Sympozjum Plastyki ZŁOTE GRONO 1967.
  - Przestrzeń i wyraz. Muzeum Okręgowe, Zielona Góra
- 1968 - Międzynarodowa Wystawa „Grafika - rysunek - collage”, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
  - Przestrzeń - Rush - Światło. Muzeum Sztuki Aktualnej, Wrocław
  - VI Międzynarodowe Spotkania Twórców i Teoretyków Sztuki OSIEKI
- 1970 - 5 Salon Marcowy, BWA, Zakopane
- 1971 - Painters from Lodz. Teesside Museum, Middlesbrough, Wlk. Brytania
  - Wystawa sztuki polskiej. Dusseldorf, Niemcy
- 1972 - X Spotkania Artystów Naukowców i Teoretyków Sztuki - OSIEKI 72
- 1973 - Współczesna sztuka polska. Charlottenborg, Kopenhaga
  - Współczesna sztuka polska. Duisburg, Niemcy
- 1977- XV Spotkania Artystów Naukowców i Teoretyków Sztuki OSIEKI 77
  - Wizja - idea - percepcja. BWA, Koszalin
- 1978 - Plener plastyczny „Przestrzeń miasta” Wystawa modeli i projektów, Galeria 72, Muzeum Okręgowe. Chełm
  - XVI Spotkania Artystów Naukowców i Teoretyków Sztuki OSIEKI 78
- 1979 - XXXII Festival Sztuk Plastycznych „Porównania 8”. Logika - Zmysły”. Galeria Sztuki BWA, Sopot
- 1980 - W kręgu konstruktywizmu. Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej DESA, Łódź
- 1981 - Twórcy 45 - 80, Galleria Sztuki, BWA, Łódź
- 1984 - 40 dzieł artystów ze zbiorów Muzeum Sztuki W Łodzi, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
- 1986 - Wystawa Z okazji jubileuszu 20-lecia pracy Dyrektora Ryszarda Stanisławskiego. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
- 1991 - Kolekcja sztuki XX w. w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Sześćdziesiąta rocznica Międzynarodowej Kolekcji Sztuki Nowoczesnej ZACHĘTA, Warszawa
- 1993 - Documenta. Osieki 63 - 81. Międzynarodowe spotkania artystów, naukowców i teoretyków sztuki, Muzeum Okręgowe, Koszalin
- 1995 - W Kręgu konstrukcji, 1945 - 1995. Wystawa pedagogów ASP w Łodzi, Ośrodek Propagandy Sztuki, Łódź

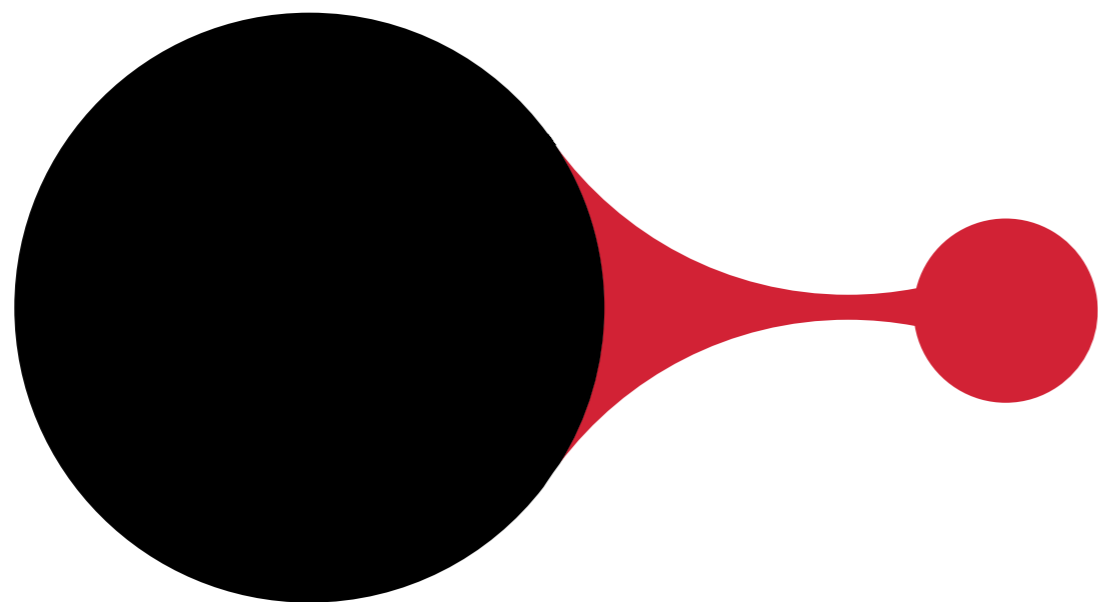


- 1996 - Współczesna grafika łódzka. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
- 2000 - Forma i rygor - Łódzkie środowisko artystyczne XX w. Galeria r, Poznań
  - Zwisctwen Schwarz und Weiss. Galerie KIK Berlin
- 2003 - St 53 -Twórcy, postawy, ślady. Muzeum Historii Katowic
  - Katowicki underground artystyczny po 1953 roku. BWA Katowice
  - Władysław Strzemiński - rysunki, szkice, projekty. Galeria Program, Warszawa
- 2004 - Czarnobiałe, Galeria Fibak & Program, Warszawa
  - Nowocześni 1955 - 1965 - 100% abstrakcji. Galeria 86, Łódź
- 2005 - Powidoki /After Images. Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi
- 2006 - Wytrzymałem jeden akt i uciekłem - studenckie lata Jerzego Grzegorzewskiego. Akademia Teatralna im. A. Zelwerowicza, Warszawa
- 2007 - W tradycji konstrukttywizmu. Galeria Ga-Ga, Warszawa
  - Siła formalizmu. Szkic 2. Kolekcja sztuki XX i XXI w. Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi
- 2008 - Nabytki Miejskiej Galerii Sztuki w Łodzi, Galeria Willa, Łódź
- 2011 - Ground Art Festival, DAP Warszawa
  - Kolekcja dzieł sztuki Bożeny Kowalskiej, Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej, BWA Katowice
  - Łódź - miasto grafiki, Ośrodek Propagandy Sztuki, Łódź
- 2012 - Dekonstrukcja utopii, Ośrodek Propaganda Sztuki, Łódź
  - Artyści galerii, Galeria Stefan Szydlowski, Warszawa
- 2014 - A propos malarstwo, Galeria Stefan Szydlowski, Warszawa
- 2016 - Utopia, dystopia, atopia, - 70 lat sztuki w ASP w Łodzi, Galeria Kobro, Łódź
  - Salon odrzuconych, Państwowa Galeria Sztuki, Sopot
  - Szkolne lata. Początki ASP w Łodzi. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
- 2017 - Powidoki awangardy - Strzemiński i uczniowie - Fijałkowski, Krygier, Kunka, Starczewski, Sobel. Piękna Gallery, Warszawa
  - Awangarda i awangardy, Galeria Kobro, Łódź
  - Źródła tożsamości. Ośrodek Propagandy Sztuki, Łódź
  - Szczeliny wolności. Sztuka polska w latach 1945-1948/1949, Muzeum Narodowe, Poznań

*Krystyna in a Renaissance Space*, 1996, oil on canvas, 73 x 73 cm  
*The Abduction of Europa*, 1995, oil on canvas, 81,5 x 65 cm



Center of Form Condensation 2 (OKF2), as presented at Browarna Gallery, former Evangelical-Augsburg church in Łowicz, photo: Włodzimierz Pietrzyk



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***The Pseudogroups of Stefan Krygier***

**Curator:** Marek Bartelik

May – June 2018

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