

Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Alberto Magnelli, Suzi Magnelli, Nelly Van Doesburg, Sonia Delaunay, Ferdinand Springer, Francois Stahly: human and artistic relations between 1940 and 1943 in Grasse, Southern France.

Alessandro Ferraro (independent researcher)

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During my research period at the Stiftung Arp e V. in Berlin, I had the opportunity to deepen my study focused on the human and artistic relations among the artists involved in the Group de Grasse (1940-1943).

Thanks to the massive amount of unpublished material conserved at the Foundation, I was able to clarify certain aspects of my research, to direct them in a better way and to extend them following different historical approaches.

In the interest of my study I privileged a logic able to enhance not only the artistic quality of the works made in Grasse, individually and collectively, but also the human bond between the artists. In fact, albeit they were coming from different contexts and realities, and from different generations, the artists involved in the Group de Grasse (mainly Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber Arp, Alberto Magnelli, Sonia Delaunay; occasionally also Ferdinand Springer and Francois Stahly) had been able to cooperate actively in that context, full of troubles, tensions, anxieties and poverty of materials. The artistic solutions they had been able to arrange mainly against the lack of art material are a pivotal point in my research. Particular emphasis have the Magnelli's *Ardoises* and the *Collages* series, or the litographies they made together, such as *Album Grasse*. In this context, litography and printings were a concrete way to produce art, in order to avoid the problems linked to material poverty. Marked by a similar approach were also the landscapes that Sophie Taeuber Arp made.

The overview of the artistic associations in the Southern France during WWII was quite complex – due to the absence of historical sources – but, despite what is generally supposed, the contacts between the Arps and the various artistic groups were not occasional, albeit limited to neighbouring ones, such as the group of Oppède-le-Vieux (Bernard Zehrfuss, Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry, Zehlmann among the others), or the case of Villa Air-Bel, close to Marseille, composed by Varian Fry, André Breton, Wilfredo Lam, Victor Brauner, Oscar Dominguez, Peggy Guggenheim and many others, or the Swiss art association Allianz (Leo Leuppi, Vassily Kandinsky, Max Bill, Sonia Delaunay, Richard Paul Lohse, César Domela, Georges Vantongerloo) to whom the Arps and

Magnelli sent some works in order to expose them at the show Allianz in the Zurich Kunsthalle in 1942.

Despite the “exilium ban” from the Vichy Republic, and even if the artists expressed doubts and manifested fears regarding the development of the war, the artists in Grasse had the chance to make strong relations each other, which lasted also after the WWII. In my research I also highlighted the artistic and critical developments linked to the Group after the war. For these reasons and peculiarities, the Group de Grasse can be taken as a model to understand the history of artistic associations who made the cooperational idea as counterpart to productive individuality; another topic that I had the chance to focus in my study is the political account that this group had. At the moment I am writing a scientific paper concerning the history of the Group de Grasse containing all of these aspects I previously highlighted that I will submit it to a peer-review journal in order to publish it.

In addition to that, while I was consulting the documents concerning the personal relation between Hans Arp, Marguerite Hagenbach and Alberto Magnelli, I had the opportunity to highlight the bond between Hans Arp himself and the Italian context - a study research still to be analysed and focused. Despite Magnelli’s artistic culture was definitely “italian”, his artistic figure had lots of point in common with the French pre-war culture; thanks to the letters that I have consulted, I could deepen the particular relation between Arp and Italy. For this reason, I decided to dedicate a brief period of my stay at the foundation to this topic. One of the most interesting aspects that I have found is his critical reception in Italy, mainly linked to the prize and nomination he won right after the war (Biennale di Venezia, Festival dei Due Mondi mainly) which assured him a new art-market in Europe. Besides his frequent attendance at the Locarnos artists – whose artistic culture was in part comparable to the italian one – he had important relations with the painter Piero Dorazio, who had the chance to visit him in Switzerland several times in order to get critical suggestions and inspirations, Leone Minassian, an almost unknown turkish painter from Venice who had lots of contacts with Arp, who held him in high consideration, and the relation with the italian critics such as Giuseppe Marchiori. Several and evident – but still to be analysed - are the direct influences that the Arp’s last scultural period had on the italian context, just think, for example, to the biomorphic sculptural form of Alberto Viani, a clear debt to him and his way to intend sculpture.

I also thanks a lot the whole staff of the Stiftung Arp e V., very kind, friendly and helpful, and in particular Dr. Maike Steinkamp, who gave me lots of interesting suggestions concerning my research regarding the Arps.