

# **BAUHAUSBÜCHER**

EDITORS:

**WALTER GROPIUS**

**L. MOHOLY-NAGY**

**L. MOHOLY-NAGY:**

**PAINTING**

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

**FILM**

**L. MOHOLY-NAGY:  
PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY, FILM**

**8**

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# INTRODUCTION

This book is a defense of photography, which many people still think of as an inferior mechanical operation of recording. But its productive character as a means of expression and creation is almost unknown.

First, it is necessary to clarify the relationship of **photography** to the **painting** of today and to demonstrate that the development of technical means has contributed considerably to the emergence of new forms in **optical** creation ["Gestaltung"], and split the previously indivisible field of optical expression. Until photography was invented, painting intrinsically combined the tasks of representation and color expression. Since the division, one field embraces

pure composition of **color**, the other  
representational **composition**.

**COMPOSITION OF COLOR:** The pure relationships between colors and brightness values, similar to what we know in music composition as tonal relationships;

**REPRESENTATIONAL COMPOSITION:** Relationships between optic-figural, objective elements with associative content, as is seen in acoustical compositions, where speech exists alongside music●).

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●) Representation is not identical with nature or an extract of nature. For example, when we seek to represent a fantasy or dream, the result is representable as well.

Seen from creational points of view, as by an artist, representation becomes creation, otherwise it remains only a notation.

The introduction and spread of color photography, a new development with a short history, in no way alters these conclusions.

to anything other than a camera obscura following the laws of perspective, meant for fixing (reproducing) individual objects in their specific character as reflectors or absorbers of light. Nor were the potentialities of this combination ever consciously evaluated.

The awareness of these potentialities would have led to the making visible of organisms that cannot be perceived or grasped by our optical instrument, the eye; that is, the photographic camera can improve or even supplement our optical instrument, the eye. This principle has already been applied in a few scientific experiments, as in the study of movements (walking, jumping, galloping) and of zoological, botanical and mineral forms (enlargements) and other natural science investigations; but these experiments have remained isolated phenomena, the **interconnections** of which have not been postulated (p. 42 to 47). It must be noted that our eye supplements perceived optical phenomena with our intellectual knowledge through formal and spatial associations to create a **conceptual image**, whereas the photographic camera reproduces the purely optical image and therefore shows the optically true distortions, deformations, foreshortenings, etc. We have been enormously enriched in this respect through one hundred years of photography and two decades of film. **We can rightly say that we see the world with entirely different eyes**, to which the so-called “faulty” photographs have also contributed. (The view from above, from below, the oblique view). Hitherto we have used the capability of the camera apparatus in the secondary sense only (p. 48 to 51).

Thus photography has become in the main a visual encyclopedic achievement. That is not enough for us today. We wish to **produce**, because it is important for life that we create new relations.

# PRODUCTION REPRODUCTION

Without wishing to solve all the imponderables of human life, we can say that the structure of a man is the synthesis of all his functional mechanisms; i.e., the man of a period is most perfect when the functional mechanisms of which he is structured—from cells to the most complex organs—are being cultivated to the limits of their capacity. Art is the cause of this cultivation—and this is one of its most important tasks, because the whole system of effects depends upon the perfection of the receiving organ, insofar as art attempts to establish **new relationships** between the known and yet unknown optical, acoustical, and functional phenomena, thereby forcing the functional mechanisms to absorb these inputs.

The peculiarity of human nature accounts for the fact that the functional mechanisms are never satisfied, but instead crave further new impressions after every new input. This is one of the reasons why new creative experiments in composition are an enduring necessity. From this point of view, creations are valuable only when they produce new, previously unknown relations. It can be said that reproduction (repetition of existing relations) that lacks enriching points of view must, from the special point of view of creative art, be considered at best only a matter of virtuosity.

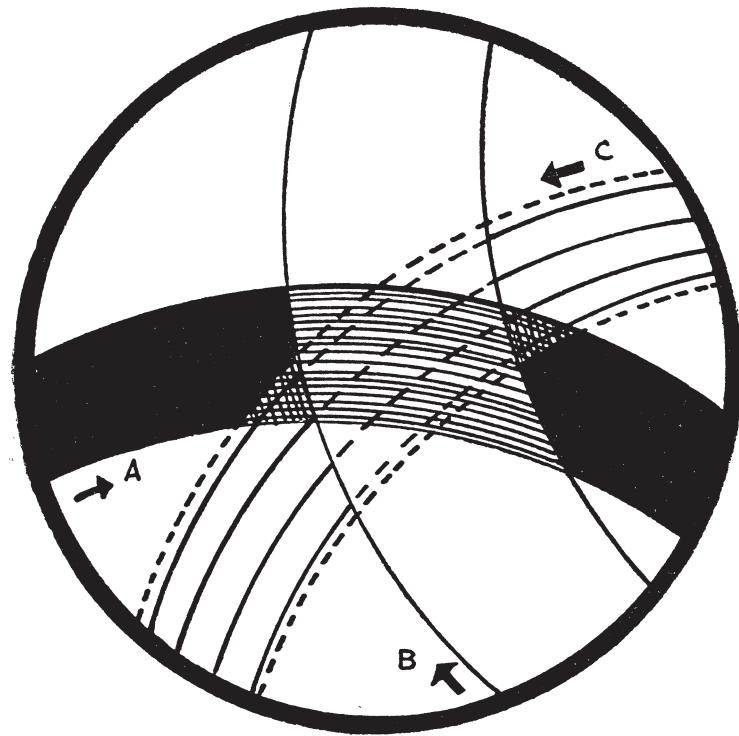
Since production (productive creation) primarily serves human development, we must endeavor to expand for productive purposes the mechanisms (means) that have so far been used only for purposes of reproduction●).

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●) I have investigated this in two areas: the gramophone and photography. Of course, one could consider the same for other means of reproduction. For the **sound film** (by Engel, Massole and Vogt), for the **television (“Telehor”)**, etc. In the case of the gramophone, one finds the following: the task of the **gramophone** to date has been to reproduce existing acoustical phenomena. The

I give a schematic **drawing** to make my meaning quite clear ●●

The film about Mr. **A** runs from left to right: birth, life story. The film about the lady **B** runs from the bottom upwards: birth, life story. The projection surfaces of the two films intersect: love, marriage, etc. The two films can then either proceed by intersecting in translucent sequences of events or can run parallel to each other, or a single new film about the two people may take the place of the original two films. Another film, the third or fourth, about Mr. **C**, could run simultaneously with the storylines **A** and **B** from the top downwards or from right to left or even in another direction, until it can logically intersect or merge with the other films, etc.



Such a **schema** will, of course, be just as appropriate, if not more so, for nonobjective light-projections in the manner of the photogram. With the use of color effects, even richer creative possibilities could emerge.

The technical solution to such projections as that of the car or the sketch described is very simple and not at all costly. **All that is needed is to attach a rotating prism in front of the lens of the film projector.**

The large projection screen also allows for the simultaneous repetition of a sequence of pictures by starting again from the beginning and projecting extra prints of the running film strip onto the screen through side-by-side projectors. In this way, the beginning of a movement can be shown over and over again and novel effects are thereby achieved.

The realization of such plans places new demands upon the capacity of our optical organ of perception, the eye, and our center of perception, the brain.

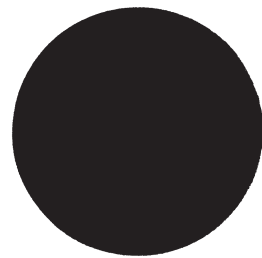
The immense development of technology and of the big cities have increased the capacity of our perceptual organs for simultaneous acoustical and optical activity. Everyday life itself affords examples of this: Berliners cross the Potsdamer Platz. They are talking, **they hear simultaneously** ●●

the horns of the motor-cars, the bells of the trams, the tooting of the omnibuses, the greeting of the coachman, the roar of the underground railway, the shouts of the newspaper sellers, the sounds of a loudspeaker, etc.,

and can keep these different acoustical impressions separate from one another. Whereas a provincial man who recently found himself here was so greatly confused by the number of impressions that he stood as though rooted to the spot—despite the feeling of imminent danger—before an oncoming tram (1924). It is obviously possible to construct an analogous situation with optical experiences.

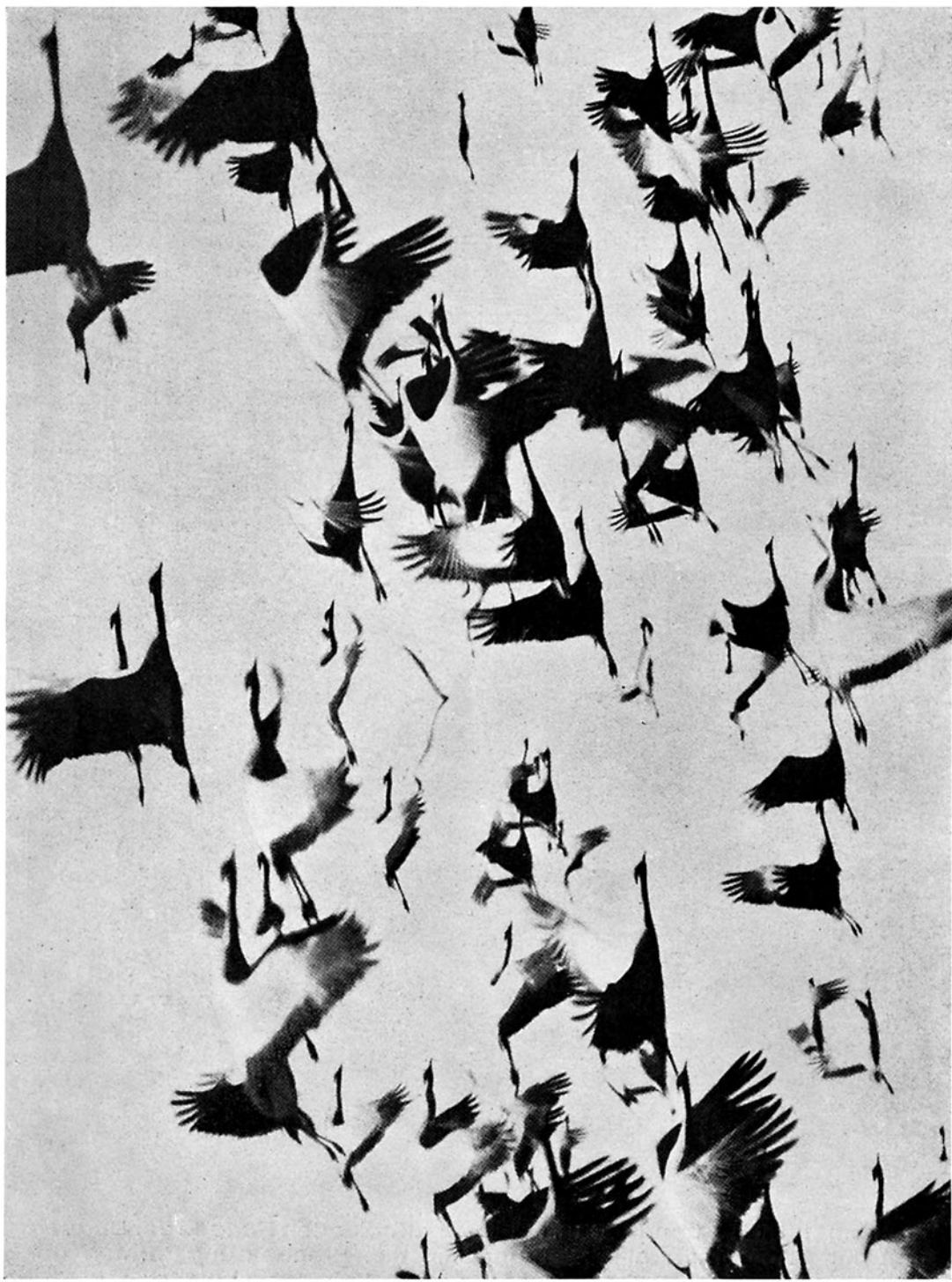
Analogous, too, that modern optics and acoustics, employed as means of artistic creation, can be accepted by and can enrich only those who are receptive to the times in which they live.

**IN ADDITION TO THE ESSENTIAL DATA, SHORT EXPLANATIONS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATIONS.**



**I have placed the illustrative material separately following the text because continuity in the illustrations will make the problems raised in the text VISUALLY clear.**





**Flock of cranes in flight.**

A fine organization of light and shade.

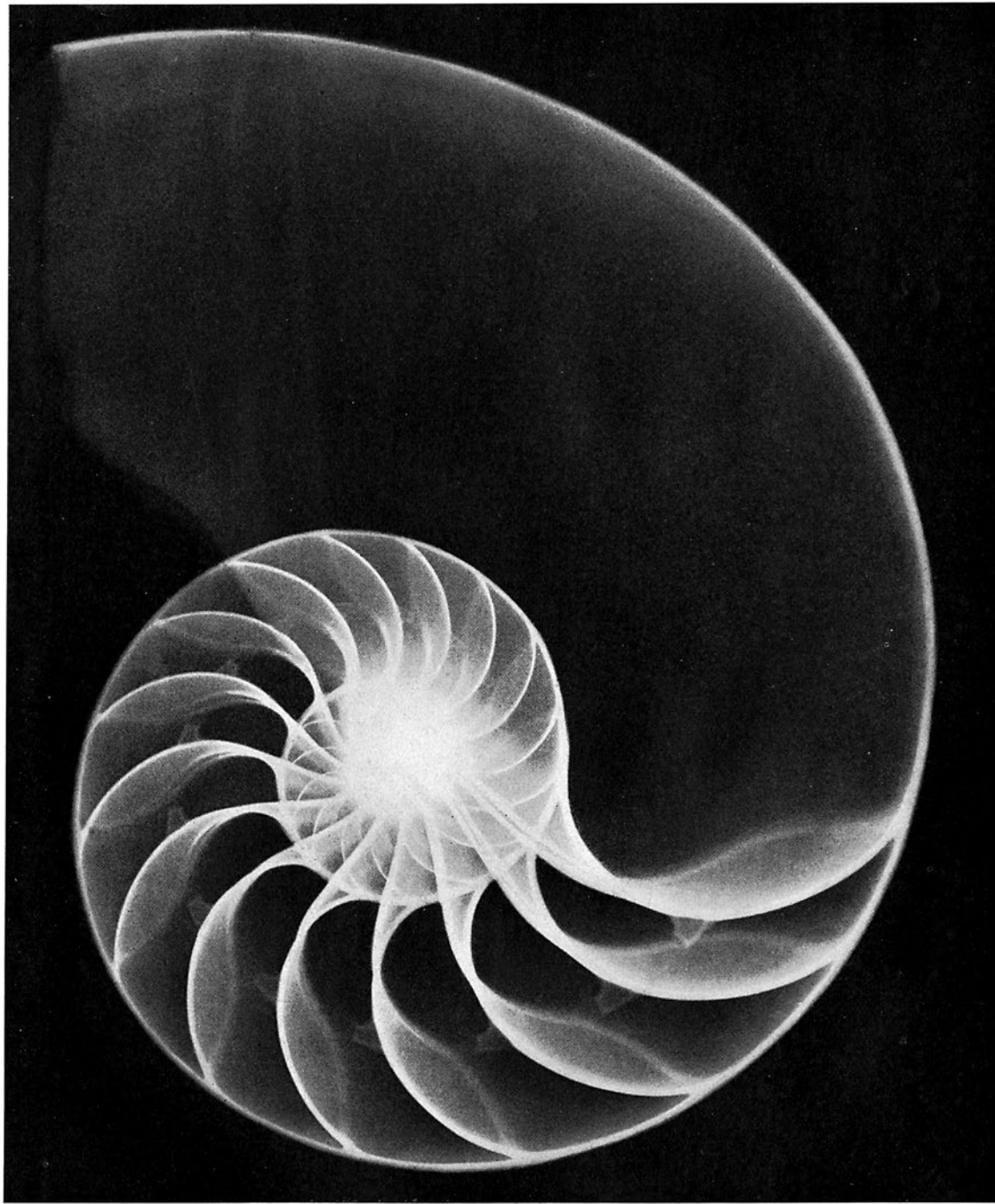


**Echelon over the Arctic Sea.**

Photo: **ATLANTIC.**

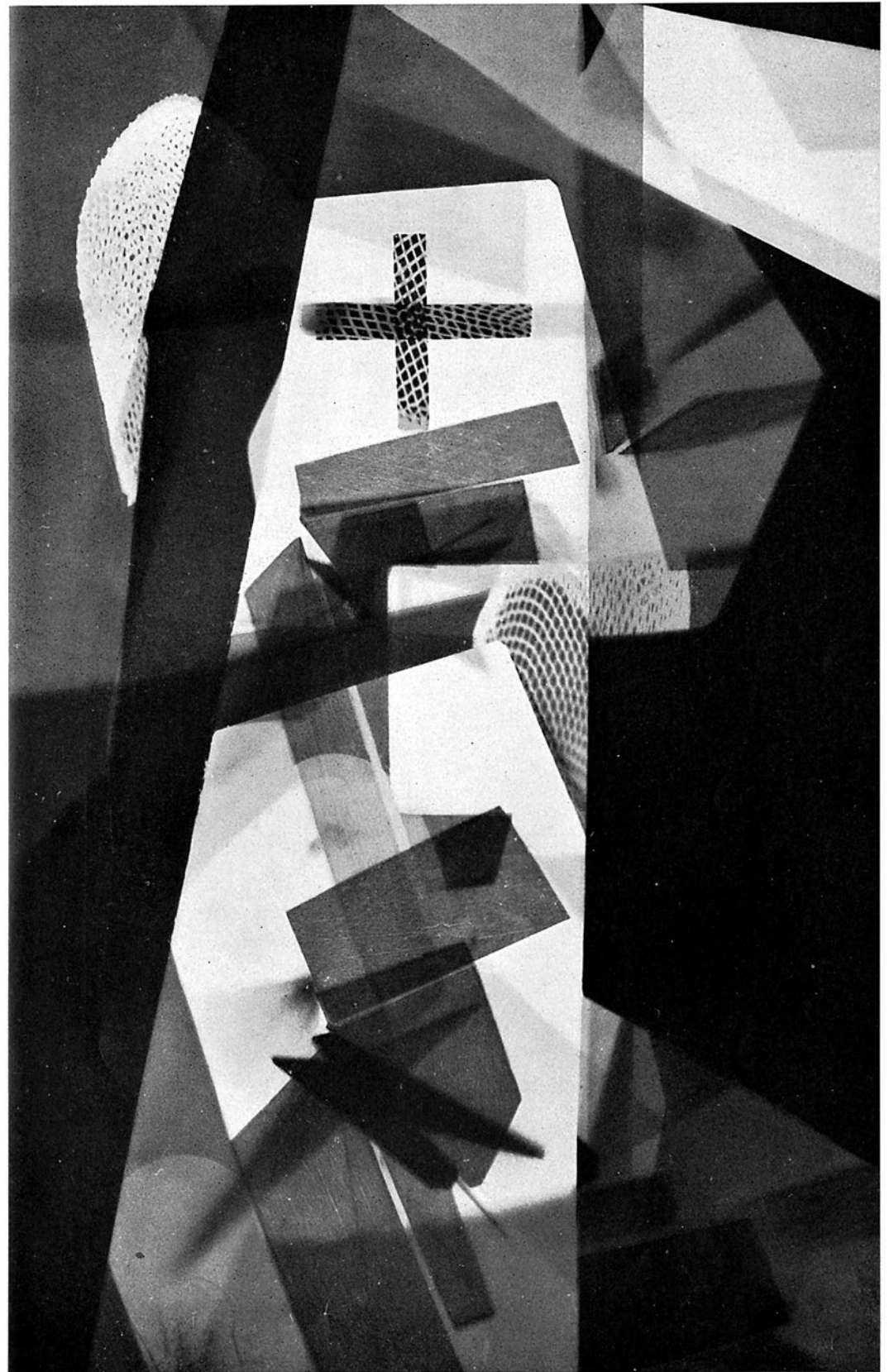
Repetition as a space-time motif of organization, which could only emerge in our era of technical, industrialized reproduction.





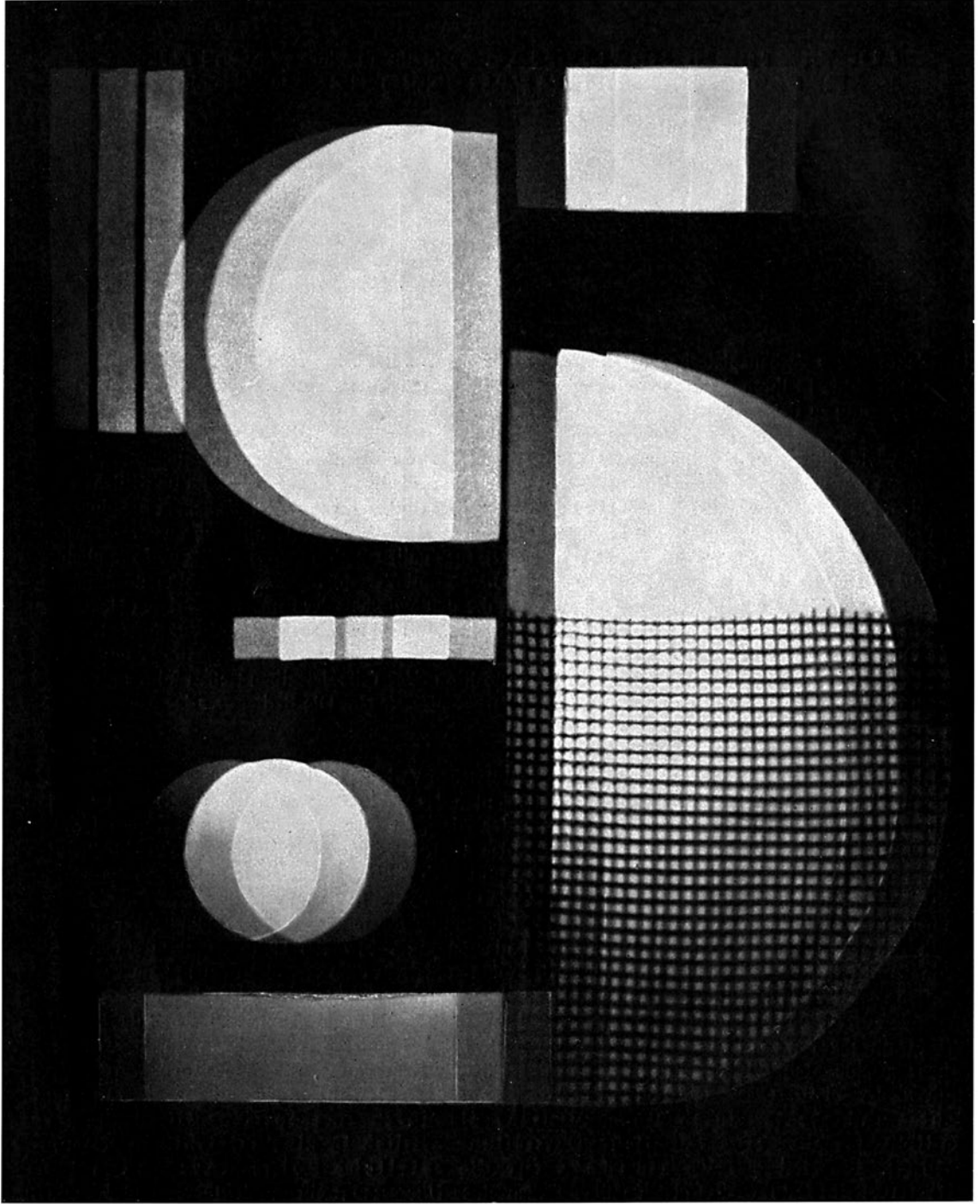
Shell. Nautilus Pompilius.

X-ray photo: J.B. POLAK.  
From "Wendingen," Amsterdam.



Photogram: MOHOLY-NAGY.





**K. Schwerdtfeger/Bauhaus: Reflected light-plays.**

Photo: **HÜTTICH & OEMLER,  
WEIMAR.**





From the national film: **"ZALAMORT."**

Portrait photograph with fracture effects.

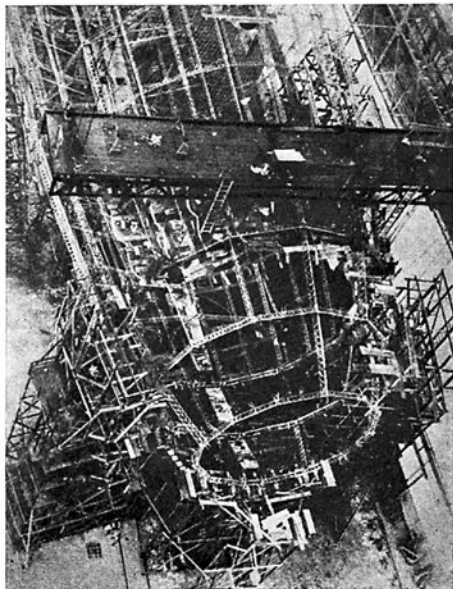


Photo: **From JAPAN.**



**L. MOHOLY-NAGY:  
DYNAMIC OF THE METROPOLIS**

**SKETCH OF A MANU-  
SCRIPT FOR A FILM**



A metal construction in the making

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Close-up.  
The movement continues with a car racing towards the left. A house, always the same one, is seen opposite the car in the center of the picture (the house is continually being brought back to the center from the right; this produces a stiff, jerky motion). Another car appears. This one travels simultaneously in the opposite direction, towards the right.

This passage as a brutal introduction to the breathless race, the chaos of the city.

The rhythm which is stiff now, gradually slackens during the course of the play.



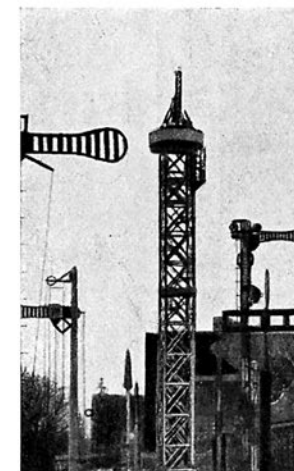
A tiger paces furiously round and round his cage.

**TEMPO TEMPO TEMPO**

First animated cartoon of moving dots, lines, which, seen as a whole, change into a zeppelin under construction (nature photograph).

**TEMPO  
TEMPO  
TEMPO  
TEMPO**

Row of houses on one side of the street, translucent, races right towards the first house. Row of houses runs off right edge and reappears from right to left. Rows of houses facing one another, translucent, rushing in opposite directions, and the cars moving ever more quickly, soon giving rise to FLICKERING.



The tiger:  
Contrast between the open, unimpeded running and the oppression, confinement. So as to accustom the audience from the outset to surprises and lack of logic.

Crane in motion during the building of a house. Photographs:  
from below  
from above

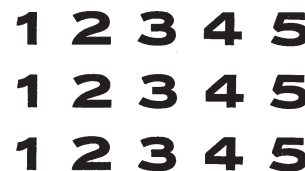
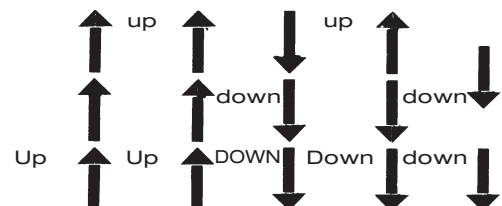


Hoisting bricks  
Crane again: in circular motion.

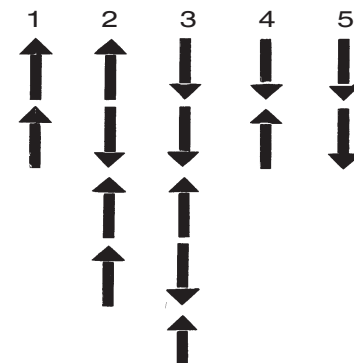
Quite clear—up at the top—railway signals:



All automatic, au-to-ma-tic in motion



Railway yard.  
Passing points.



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89	123	center
90	123	below
91	124	
92	125	above
93	125	right
94	125	below
95	126	
96	127	
97	128	left
98	128	center
99	128	right
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Building a Zeppelin (**Photo: FRANKFURTER ILLUSTRIERTE ZEITUNG**).

Detail from a photograph

Tiger (**Amateur snapshot**).

Railway signals (**Photoplastic: MOHOLY-NAGY**).

Warehouse (**Photo: K. HAUPT, HALLE**).

A young lynx (**Photo: ZEITBILDER**).

Aerial photograph of New York (**Photo: ATLANTIC**).

Wireless mast at Nauen (**Photo: ATLANTIC**).

Berlin, Friedrichstrasse (**Photo: AGFA FOTOBLEÄTER**).

New York (**Photo: LONBERG-HOLM**).

Punch and Judy show (**Photo: HAMBURGER ILLUSTRIERTE ZEITUNG**).

High jump (**Photo: ATLANTIC**).

Tiller Girls (**Photo: E. SCHNEIDER AUS DEM MAGAZIN**).

Olandia Isatschenko (**Photo: TIMES AUS DEM MAGAZIN**).

Football match (**Photo: RIEBICKE**).

From the film "Tatjana" (**Photo: UFA**).

The boxer (**Photoplastic: MOHOLY-NAGY**).

Chimney (**Photo: RENGGER, AURIGA VERLAG**).

Burning oil-well.

Diver (**Photo: DIE KORALLE**).

From "Fridericus Rex" (**UFA FILM**).

Lion (**DETAIL**).

Dressage (**Photo: ATLANTIC**).

"Miracle of the Snow Shoe" (**Photo: A. FANCK, VERLAG GEBR. ENOCH**).

Trapeze artist Leonardi Renner (**Photo: PERLITZ**).

Chicken (**X-ray photo: AGFA**).

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