

luc peire

**abstraction
in abundance**

mer. books mu.zee

contents	bruno verbergt	foreword	9
		Always travelling, but always coming home again	
	david vermeiren	introduction	13
		<i>Mwinda Mingi</i>	
		1935–1957	
	david vermeiren	From Post-Expressionist traditionalism to Structural Abstraction (1935–1957)	19
		1957	
	fredie floré	A shared space for the visual arts and design: the <i>Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui</i> exhibition in Knokke, 1957	61
		1957–1977	
	domitille d'orgeval	Luc Peire's involvement with geometric abstraction in Paris from the late 1950s to the early 1970s	101
	integrations		
david vermeiren	Building is and must be an art	139	
	list of works	201	
	selective bibliography	205	

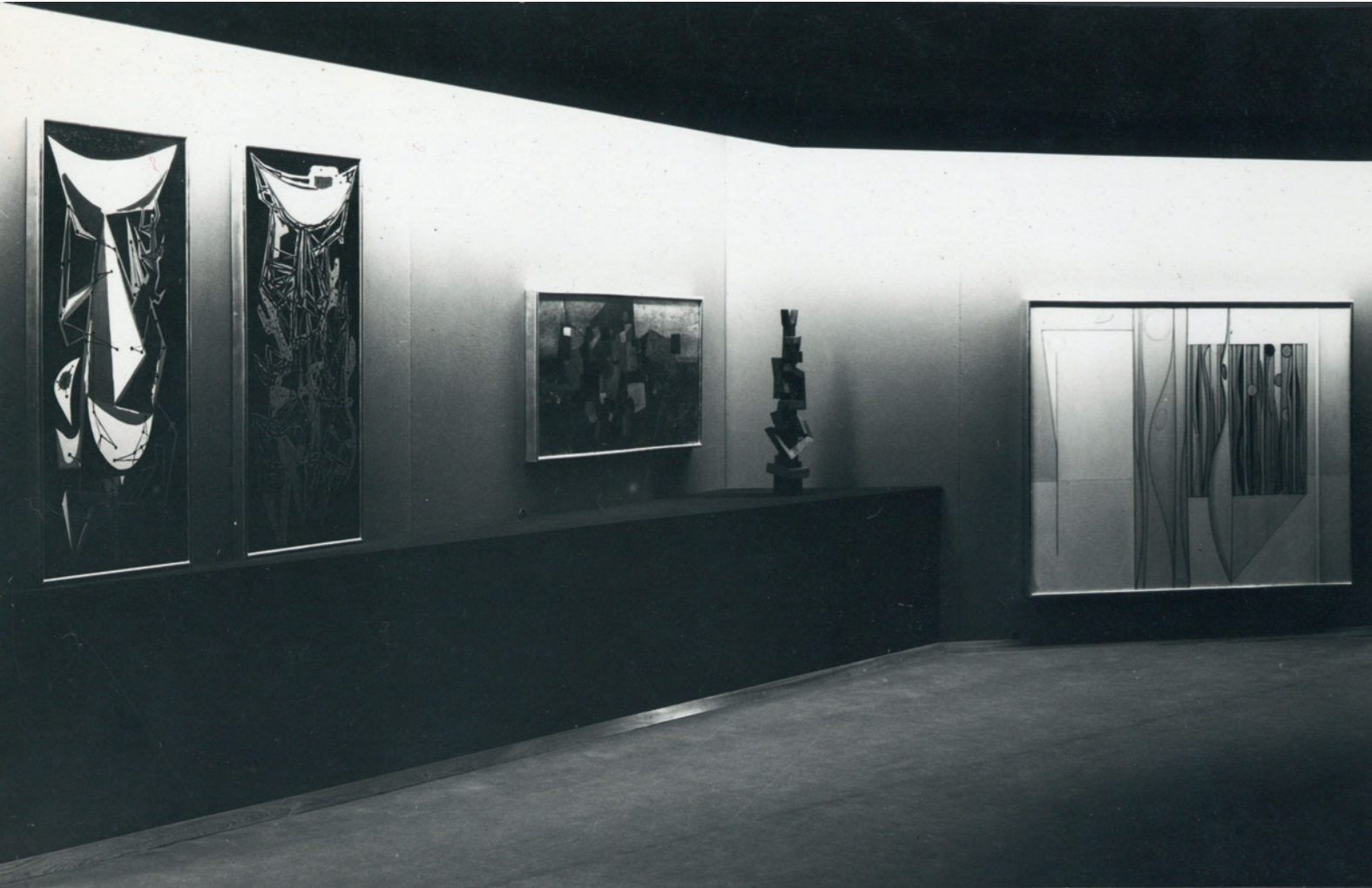
Mwinda Mingi

fig. 3
Belgian Congo and Ruanda-
Urundi section at Expo '58.
Left to right: works by André
Billen (two), unknown, Christine
Forani, and *Mwinda Mingi* (1955)
by Luc Peire, Brussels, 1958.

fig. 3

cat. 17; cat. 19

The title chosen for the exhibition and this catalogue is *Luc Peire (1916–1994). Abstraction in Abundance*, the second part of which offers a key to understanding the road that Peire took towards abstract art: 'Abstraction in Abundance' refers to the painting *Mwinda Mingi* (1955)—sadly not included here—which means an 'excess' or 'abundance' of light in the Lingala language. The canvas, which was shown in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi pavilion at Expo '58 in Brussels, can be situated in the period of Peire's transition towards abstraction. The dominant colours are bright yellow and greenish-blue, just as they are in *Lubumbashi* (1955) and *The Great Crowd* (1956). They seem to mimic the effect of when one closes one's eyes in abundant sunshine, yet the light continues to penetrate the eyelids, creating a veil through which a form of reality can still be made out. This way of perceiving light was not so much a rupture as a shift in Luc Peire's work—a tidal wave that broke across his oeuvre and carried it towards abstraction, but without diametrically opposing it to the representation of the genuinely perceptible.

In her 1971 monograph *La Jeune Peinture Belge*, Philomène Mertens stressed the importance of the *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui* exhibition that K.N. Elnó and Luc Peire organised at the Casino in Knokke in 1957. What the event—one of the offshoots of the Young Belgian Painting group—demonstrated, she wrote, was that Belgian art had laid claim to its place within the international avant-garde. At the same time, it highlighted the emergence of an artistic environment conducive to the development of innovative ideas and experiences.¹ The exhibition juxtaposed works by Belgian and international abstract painters and sculptors with contemporary design by Knoll, the American furniture manufacturer.

fig. 4

Both the exhibition and the year 1957 itself represented a turning point in Luc Peire's artistic career. Following his formative years before the Second World War, and his travels and encounters with like-minded

people in the decade that followed, he and his wife Jenny moved to Paris in 1959. Knokke-Heist nevertheless remained an important meeting place until the artist's death in 1994: the couple spent their summers at the studio on De Judestraat, to which a bungalow was added in 1963. At the same time, the mid-1950s witnessed the transition of his visual language from figuration to abstraction—all the more noteworthy given that until recently Peire had firmly rejected abstract tendencies.

The traditional art-historical take on the emergence of Western abstract painting in the twentieth century is that the transition from figuration to abstraction was antithetical, with abstract art viewed as a radical break with the representation of observable reality. More recent studies have played down the sharpness of the rupture, placing greater emphasis on the notion of 'representation' than on the more problematic concept of 'abstraction'. According to the art historian Pepe Karmel, representation in European art was long determined by perspective and a fixed viewpoint, which created a realistic illusion of space, as if the depiction were unfolding on a stage. Modern artists, such as the Impressionists and Cubists, resisted these rules by abandoning perspective and creating new pictorial spaces. What characterised abstract art, which emerged from this evolution, was not so much that it represented 'nothing' but rather the fact that a fixed viewpoint was no longer required—something that afforded greater freedom to artist and viewer alike.²



fig. 4
Luc Peire in his studio,
Knokke, 1957.

Given his apparent reluctance, how did Luc Peire end up turning to abstract art and even playing a leading role in it? The exhibition *Luc Peire (1916–1994). Abstraction in Abundance*, accompanied by this catalogue, set out to answer these questions. Moving from 'medieval' Bruges to 'modernist' Knokke in 1947, and the extensive travel and encounters in the decade that followed, would prove to be highly significant in this regard. The first essay in this publication explores that period in greater depth. The year 1957—and more specifically *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui*—serves as a key reference point. Fredie Floré examines that exhibition's role and significance for the visual and applied arts in Knokke-Heist and, by extension, in Belgium and beyond. Domitille d'Orgeval then outlines the way Peire integrated himself in Parisian art circles, having previously expressed his firm reservations towards what was then the capital of contemporary art. The catalogue concludes with an essay on Luc Peire's art integrations, focusing on his relationship with architecture, his *graphie* technique, and his experimental films.

What unfolds across these various essays, therefore, is not an account of an abrupt break, but one of gradual intensification: a movement in which light, in all its abundance, opens up and reorients the gaze, guiding Luc Peire's artistic practice in the process.

1. Philomène Mertens, *La Jeune Peinture Belge. 1945–1948*, Brussels: Laconti, 1975, p. 173.
2. Pepe Karmel, *Abstracte kunst. Een wereldgeschiedenis*, Zwolle: WBooks, 2020, p. 31.

1935–1957



fig. 5
Constant Permeke and
Luc Peire, Bruges-Damme
canal, 1937.

From Post-Expressionist traditionalism to Structural Abstraction (1935–1957)

Luc Peire's work was at a key turning point in the summer of 1957 when he and the art critic K.N. Elnó organised *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui* at the Casino in Knokke. The exhibition presented abstract painting alongside contemporary design, reflecting Peire's growing conviction over the past two decades that trends within contemporary art were increasingly focusing on structure, rhythm, and a rational ordering of form.

The road that brought him to that position had, however, been long and complex. Between the mid-1930s and late 1950s, Peire evolved from a painter firmly rooted in the Flemish Expressionist tradition to an artist who, step by step, had developed a progressively more precise and abstract visual language. Rather than a linear development, it was fuelled by encounters, disputes within the art scene, and, above all, by a series of journeys that fundamentally broadened his view of art and of the world.

Permekean Expressionism

In an article for the newspaper *Het Handelsblad* in August 1955, marking Luc Peire's exhibition at the Museum of the Belgian Congo in Tervuren, K.N. Elnó described the evolution of the artist's work as a process of gradually increasing rigour. Peire, he wrote, had set off as a 'Post-Expressionist traditionalist', but had returned from his journey with work 'that has evolved substantially yet logically'. According to Elnó, when viewed chronologically, a clear line of development became apparent in Peire's work: a steady tightening of forms, an increasing emphasis on rhythm in the compositions, a simplification of means and a more rational solution to the problem of plasticity, and, lastly, a triumph over the physically perceptible object, all without becoming entirely non-figurative.¹

We need to return to Peire's earliest development if we are to make sense of this evolution. The artist was born in Bruges in 1916 and attended evening classes at the local art academy from 1930 to 1935. In 1932, he also began a course at the Sint-Lukas art school in Ghent, before going on to study at the Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp between 1935 and 1940. The latter was headed at the time by Isidoor Opsomer (1878–1967), but Peire was drawn in particular to the workshops run by Gustave Van de Woestijne, a central figure of Flemish Expressionism. More important still, however, was getting to know Constant Permeke, the master from Jabbeke, in 1935. The powerful, sculptural design and monumental character of Permeke's painting made a deep impression on the young artist, whose early work shows clear traces of this 'Permekean' Expressionism: sturdy figures, dark tones, and a marked volumetric emphasis.

fig. 5

Consequently, in his 1946 study *La Jeune Peinture Belge*, the art historian Robert L. Delevoy (1914–1982) placed Peire within *la tradition flamande*, along with painters like Jack Godderis and Rik Slabbinck.² Later commentators also saw an attempt in Peire's work from this period to reformulate Expressionist heritage. For his part, Marcel Duchateau described the years 1935–45 in Peire's oeuvre as highly varied and little known, in which he pursued the 'refinement of Permekean Expressionism'. According to Duchateau, Peire translated Permeke's deeply felt romanticism into a more balanced and classical formulation.³

Peire's first exhibitions were still firmly situated in that context; his solo debut in 1938 was held in the Concertzaal in Bruges and featured, among other works, *Cowsbed* (1936) and *Portrait of Mrs S. Vande Calseyde* (1937). Exhibitions in Bruges, Antwerp, and Ghent followed a year later. In each case, subject matter and pictorial treatment were still closely linked to the Expressionist repertoire of rural life and portraiture.

cat. 1; cat. 2

War years and institutional recognition

While studying in Antwerp, Peire was called up to do his military service and he was still in uniform when Belgium was invaded by Nazi Germany in May 1940. Despite the turbulent circumstances, he continued to paint and his work already gained a degree of recognition during the war. In 1942, he was awarded the Godecharle Prize for painting for his three entries: *Portrait of Mrs S. Vande Calseyde* (1937), *Cowsbed* (1938), and *Portrait of the M Children* (1941). The ongoing conflict meant he could not immediately benefit from the prestigious three-yearly award,

fig. 6
Some of the exhibitors
at *Apport '43*. Left to right:
Willy Anthoons, Gaston
Bertrand, Jules Lismonde,
Renée Petit, René Barbaix,
Jan Vaerten (squatting), Louis
Van Lint, Emile Mahy, Paul
Van Essche, and Luc Peire,
Brussels, c. 1943.

which allowed young artists to travel abroad, primarily to study the legacy of antiquity and the Renaissance in Italy.⁴

It was during this same period that Luc Peire met his future wife Jenny Verbruggen and sought entry to artistic circles in Brussels. In the summer of 1942, he took part in the group exhibition *Art Jeune* at l'Atelier, followed by a series of salons held under the same name the following year. Peire was then granted a solo exhibition in January 1943 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and it was in this context that he first came into contact with Robert L. Delevoy. The art historian and impresario included Peire in the *Apport '43* art fair and also involved him in the activities of his Galerie Apollo. An attempt was even made during the war to organise a group exhibition at Galerie Drouant-David in Paris.⁵

fig. 6

Recognition was not limited to exhibitions and prizes: the Belgian state purchased Peire's *Cowsbed* (1938) even as the war continued. The acquisitions policy of the Fine Arts Council, which was headed during the occupation by Jozef Muls (1882–1961)—art historian and curator of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp from 1925 to 1940—focused not only on established names like Alice Frey and Henri-Victor Wolvens, but also on a new generation of painters such as Gaston Bertrand, Anne Bonnet, Louis Van Lint, and Marc Mendelson.⁶ Peire clearly belonged to this group of young artists who, despite the war, were beginning to carve out a place for themselves within the Belgian art scene.

A more complex episode in this period relates to the exhibition *Flämische Graphik der Gegenwart* (Contemporary Flemish Graphic Works), which was staged in Nuremberg by Edgard Leonard, cultural advisor of the Flemish pro-Nazi organisation DeVlag. It included four of Peire's drawings. As was the case with many artists during the period in question, his participation does not necessarily indicate



active collaboration with the Nazi regime.⁷ There was also a personal factor in Peire's case: in February 1943, he secured the release of his brother Marcel, a prisoner of war in Germany, by donating a number of paintings.⁸

Shortly after the Allied liberation of Belgium, Peire corresponded with Isidoor Opsomer in an attempt to obtain a post at the Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp, to which end he was thinking about moving to the area south of the city. He stressed in his letters that his stance during the occupation had never been unpatriotic and that he had remained cautious throughout.⁹ In the end, the appointment in Antwerp did not come his way.

Jeune Peinture Belge

The *Apport* exhibitions that Robert L. Delevoy organised during the war were a foretaste of what would develop shortly afterwards into Jeune Peinture Belge (Young Belgian Painting, JPB). In September 1944, immediately after the liberation, Delevoy staged an exhibition under that name at his Galerie Apollo, in which Luc Peire took part. The JPB group was officially founded on 3 July 1945 with the goal of promoting young Belgian artists of various types through exhibitions at home and abroad. Its structure was unique: in addition to 12 artists, its board also included several important collectors and patrons. James Ensor was appointed honorary chairman, René Lust chairman, and Robert L. Delevoy secretary.¹⁰ While Peire was not a founding member, he quickly became involved in the group's activities. Delevoy officially invited him to join in September 1945, and he also included Peire and his painting *Self-Portrait* (1944)—which belonged to the Tony Herbert Collection at the time—in his monograph *La Jeune Peinture Belge*.¹¹ Peire took part in several JPB exhibitions in Belgium and abroad, but it did not take long for tensions to emerge within the group. Originally intended to unite the different artistic movements, some members felt that it was moving increasingly towards an abstract art that wished to be aligned with the *École de Paris*. By March 1947, there was a split, with Peire quitting the association along with Jack Godderis and Rik Slabbinck.

This development, as well as a positive review of Peire's solo exhibition at Galerie Dietrich by the journalist and critic Maurits Bilcke (1913–1993) in the weekly magazine *Filter*, marked the beginning of an intensive correspondence between the two men.¹² Peire gave Bilcke

his side of the story and wrote that the group had gradually abandoned its original principle of pluralism and had pressurised artists to develop in a particular—abstract—direction.¹³ He hoped that his correspondence would enable Bilcke to draw sufficient attention in *Filter* to the split within Jeune Peinture Belge.

The magazine published Bilcke's JPB article on 25 April 1947, following which Peire wrote to thank the journalist for his piece and to set out his personal artistic convictions.¹⁴ All that mattered to him, he stated, was the work itself, and not whether it would be immediately understood or appreciated. An artist's first duty was to remain true to his own inner necessity. The focus was not on pursuing a style, but on the process of self-examination that led to an authentic artistic expression.¹⁵ Ironically, Peire's split with the JPB would eventually bring him closer to abstraction, as the dispute confronted him with international developments in modern art and encouraged him to redefine his own position.

Travel as artistic education

In 1947, Jenny Verbruggen and Luc Peire moved into Jenny's family home on De Judestraat in Knokke, where a painter's studio was built in the garden in the spring. Maurits and Suzy Bilcke paid their first visit to the Peires that summer. The artist wrote shortly afterwards that he expected the light in his new studio to make his work more colourful and that form and colour were more firmly articulated in his most recent canvases.¹⁶

Just after leaving the JPB and moving to Knokke, Peire embarked on a period of intensive travel, which would have a major influence on his artistic development, with form and colour becoming even more central. Thanks to the money from the Godecharle Prize, he was now finally able to take the originally intended study trips. So in October 1947, Jenny and Luc set off for Italy, where they would spend more than five months. Before leaving, he asked Jozef Muls which places and sights they ought not to miss. For his part, Peire indicated that he was mostly interested in frescoes, mosaics, sculpture, and architecture, and less so in traditional painting.¹⁷ The journey was a revelation to him, with Giotto's frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua and Piero della Francesca's in Arezzo making a deep impression. Peire was also fascinated by architectural monuments like the Duomo in Florence and the Basilica of San Zeno in Verona.¹⁸

cat. 4

fig. 7

cat. 11



Indigenous Women 1952

oil on canvas 81 x 60 cm

cat. 12



The Denghese Family 1953

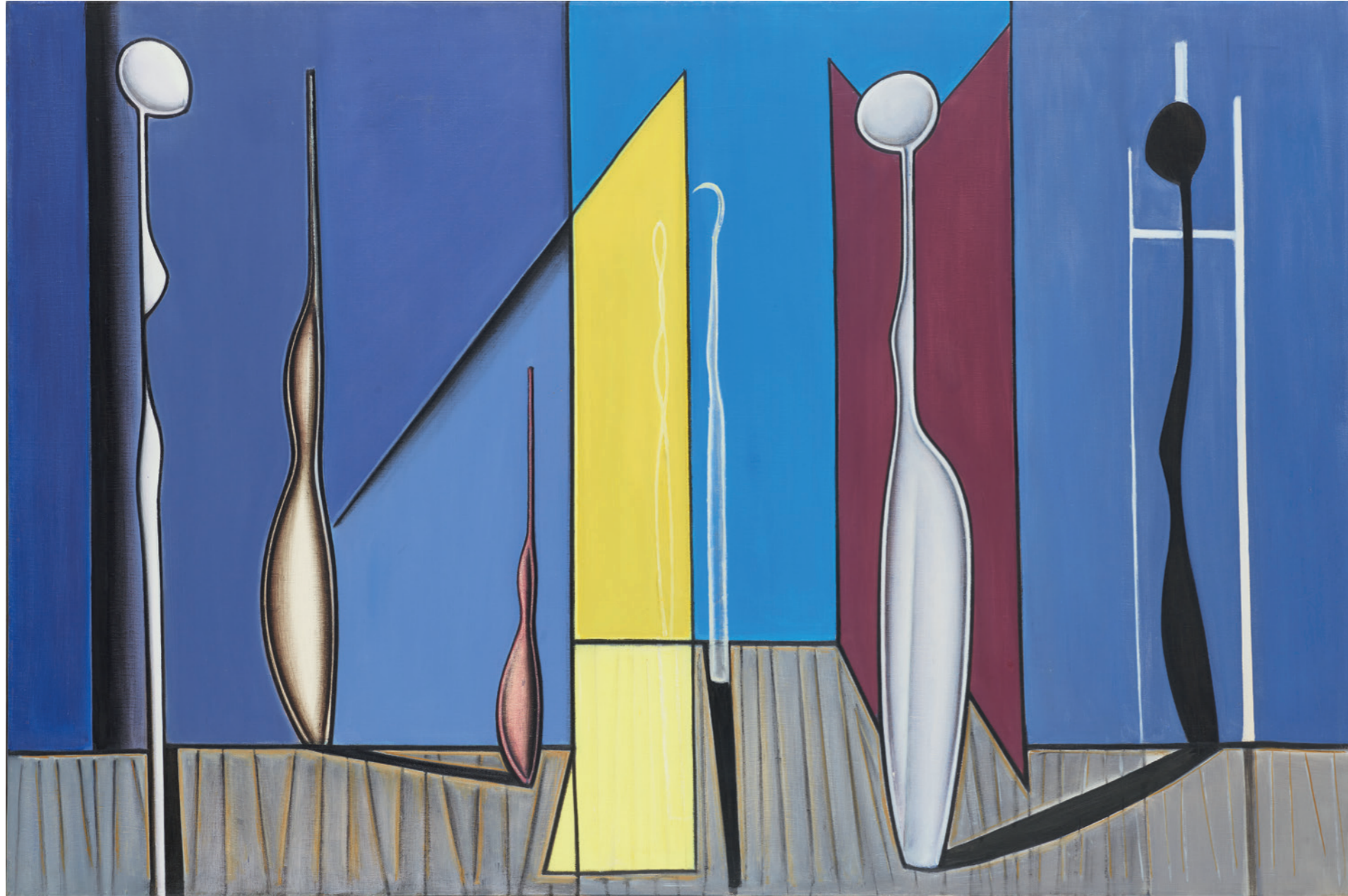
oil on canvas 100 x 130 cm

cat. 13



Yellow Easel 1953

oil on canvas 60 x 50 cm



The Open Door 1954

oil on canvas 100 x 150 cm

cat. 15



Vertical Rhythm 1954

oil on canvas 100 x 73 cm

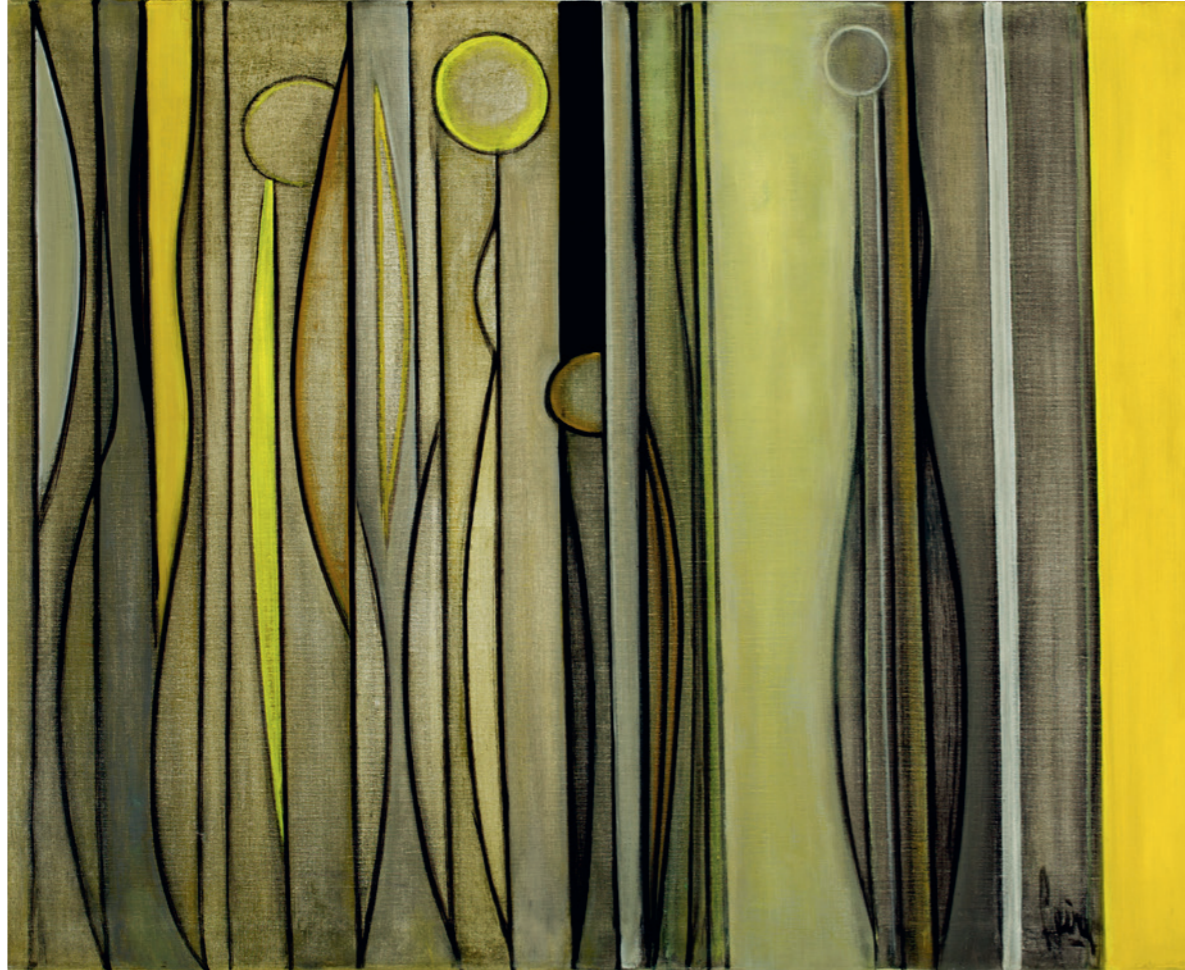
cat. 16



Rouen 1955

oil on canvas 81 x 100 cm

cat. 17



Lubumbashi 1955

oil on canvas 65 x 81 cm

cat. 18



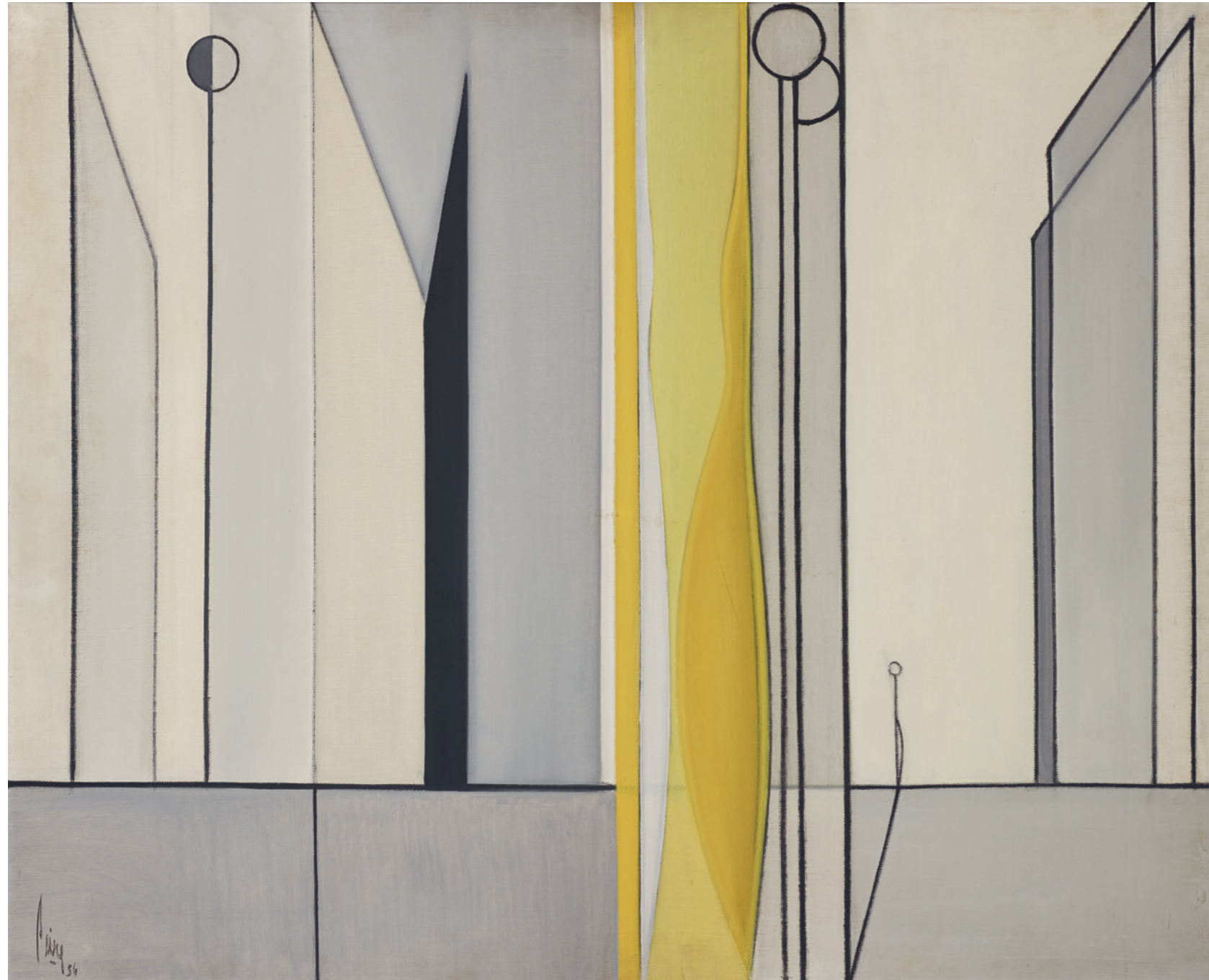
Light in Space 1955

oil on canvas 97 x 130 cm



The Great Crowd 1956

oil on canvas 114 x 162 cm



Spring Light 1956

oil on canvas 81 x 100 cm



fig. 10
K.N. Elno and Luc Peire in
front of the Casino in Knokke
during *Vormen van beden.*
Esthétique d'aujourd'hui,
summer 1957, Knokke.
Photograph: Harold Cousins.

A shared space for the visual arts and design:
the *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui*
exhibition in Knokke, 1957

Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui, which ran from 8 June to 1 July 1957 at the Municipal Casino in Knokke, serves as a remarkable historical document. The exhibition, organised by the painter Luc Peire and the art, architecture, and design critic K.N. Elno (1920–1993), brought together works by over 30 visual artists and designers of different nationalities, based on the conviction that they displayed clear affinities in terms of formal language. It chiefly featured abstract artworks by Willy Anthoons, Harry Bertoia, Gaston Bertrand, André Bloc, Jan Burssens, Pol Bury, Georges Carrey, Harold Cousins, Reinhoud D'Haese, Étienne Hajdú, Robert Jacobsen, Frans Lamberechts, Pol Mara, Michel Martens, Marc Mendelson, Luc Peire, Emilio Pettoruti, Antoine Pevsner, Jean Piaubert, Serge Poliakov, Jean Rets, Michel Seuphor, Pierre Soulages, Victor Vasarely, and Ferdinand Vonck. Furniture designed by Harry Bertoia, Florence Knoll, Eero Saarinen, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and fabrics by Eszter Haraszty, Dennis Lennon, Sven Markelius, and Angelo Testa were also shown, all of it drawn from the collection of the American furniture company Knoll.¹ The aim, Elno explained, in an article in *De Periscoop*, was to demonstrate that 'within all the diversity of trends and intentions in contemporary design, there exists a difficult to define yet clearly perceptible unity of style, as manifested in free-plastic and industrial and craft design alike, and in both the product of pure imagination and that of practical utility'.² The exhibition set out to connect the visitor—and thus a wider audience—with that modern style or design, and to convince them of its importance and authenticity. The way *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui* achieved this is both unique and illustrative of the post-war sociocultural and politico-economic climate, which served as a breeding ground for new interdisciplinary alliances and different kinds of hybrid exhibition space.

A Belgian branch followed a few years later. In December 1953, Kunstwerkstede Gebroeders De Coene in Kortrijk acquired the licences to produce and sell Knoll furniture in the Benelux region.¹² The move formed part of a larger modernisation and reorientation drive on the Flemish furniture manufacturer's part. De Coene had been a highly respected company in the interwar years, but after the Second World War, it was found guilty of economic collaboration and brought under state supervision. When it was returned to family ownership in the 1950s, its new managing director Pol Provost immediately invested in a thoroughgoing modernisation. Purchasing the Knoll licences formed an important part of this; it swiftly enabled the company to develop once more into a major player in the Belgian furniture landscape.

As also occurred in several other countries outside the United States, where Knoll International had its furniture manufactured under licence or set up direct subsidiaries, contacts were cultivated in Belgium with the cultural avant-garde of the time.¹³ A key figure in this regard was the abstract artist Jan Saverys, who worked for De Coene in the early 1950s and, due in part to his considerable enthusiasm for Knoll, was appointed by Provost as the first manager of the Knoll showroom that opened in Brussels in 1954.¹⁴ It was strategically located in Rue Royale, close to but separate from De Coene's showroom, and in the heart of

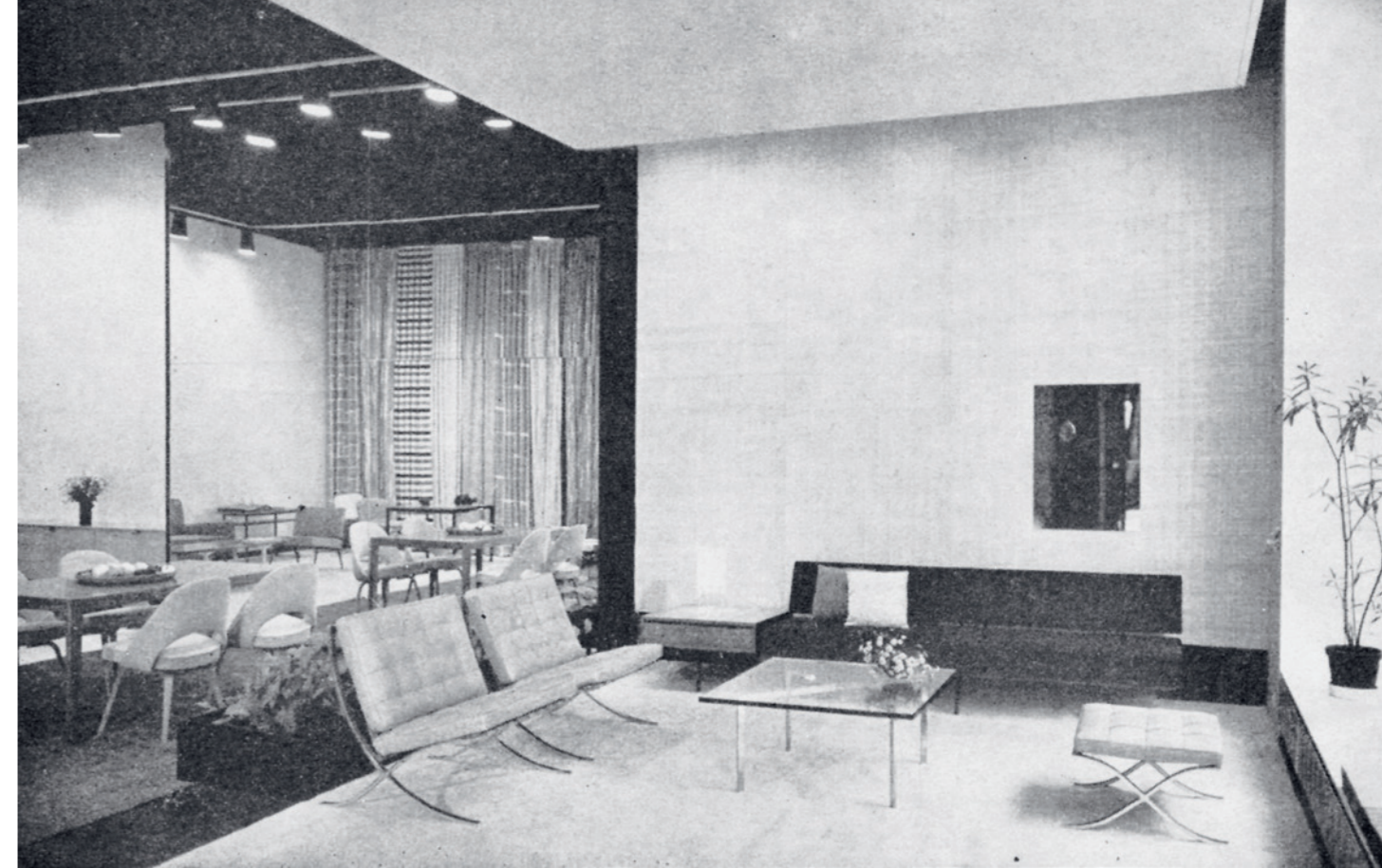


fig. 11
Harry Bertoia, sculpture and Diamond chair from the Knoll collection, *Vormen van heden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui*, Knokke, 1957.

fig. 12
Florence Knoll, Knoll Planning Unit, architects Constantin Brodzki and De Coene, Knoll International Brussels showroom, Brussels, 1953–54. The photograph hanging above the bench is by Serge Vandercam.

fig. 12 a district of the city that was undergoing rapid development. Saverys was directly advised by Quill Monroe, Hans Knoll's private secretary, and was well placed to help build a network of potential clients. He was familiar with cultural and artistic circles and remained active as a visual artist himself. He recalled being encouraged by Monroe to collect the names and addresses of architects in the Benelux who subscribed to the American architectural magazines *Progressive Architecture* and *Architectural Forum*.¹⁵ He was able in this way to swiftly assemble a strong and targeted database of addresses for Knoll International Brussels.

The latter's participation in *Vormen van heden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui* contributed directly to the furniture label's visibility within local cultural and artistic circles.¹⁶ The cover of the exhibition catalogue depicted chairs from the Knoll collection designed by Harry Bertoia, while a good deal of attention was also paid inside the publication to exhibits from the same collection. Part of the press release was specifically devoted to Knoll International Brussels as one of the 14 companies outside the United States that produced Knoll furniture under special licence. It was stressed that the parent company owed its special character in part



fig. 14
Sens de l'espace et couleur,
 Knoll International exhibition
 at the Grands Magasins du
 Printemps, Paris, February 1955.
 Exhibition designer Roger
 Legrand. Photograph: Jean
 Collas. Fonds Jean Collas,
 Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

fig. 15
 Harry Bertoia bench and
 Florence Knoll table with
 a Robert Jacobsen sculpture
 and Victor Vasarely tapestry,
*Vormen van heden. Esthétique
 d'aujourd'hui*, Knokke, 1957.

Initiating and facilitating transnational artistic and cultural interactions of this kind was one of the strengths of Knoll International's expansion policy.²⁴ In the course of the 1950s, the company sold multiple licences to local partners all over the world, frequently accompanied by deft adaptation to local cultural environments, which were allowed some leeway within the boundaries of the label. This was translated in Brussels in several ways, including how the Knoll showroom was managed; Saverys combined the display of Knoll products with a distinctive cultural and artistic programme. An exhibition was held in 1961, for instance, of art created by the novelist and poet Hugo Claus.²⁵ And works by other Belgian artists, including Bram Bogart and Pierre Caille, were also exhibited.²⁶ The interior designer Jacques Vernest, who worked with Saverys at the time, recalled that artists who exhibited at the showroom often came to install their work in person. And differing cultural and artistic disciplines seemed to come together there

fredie floré

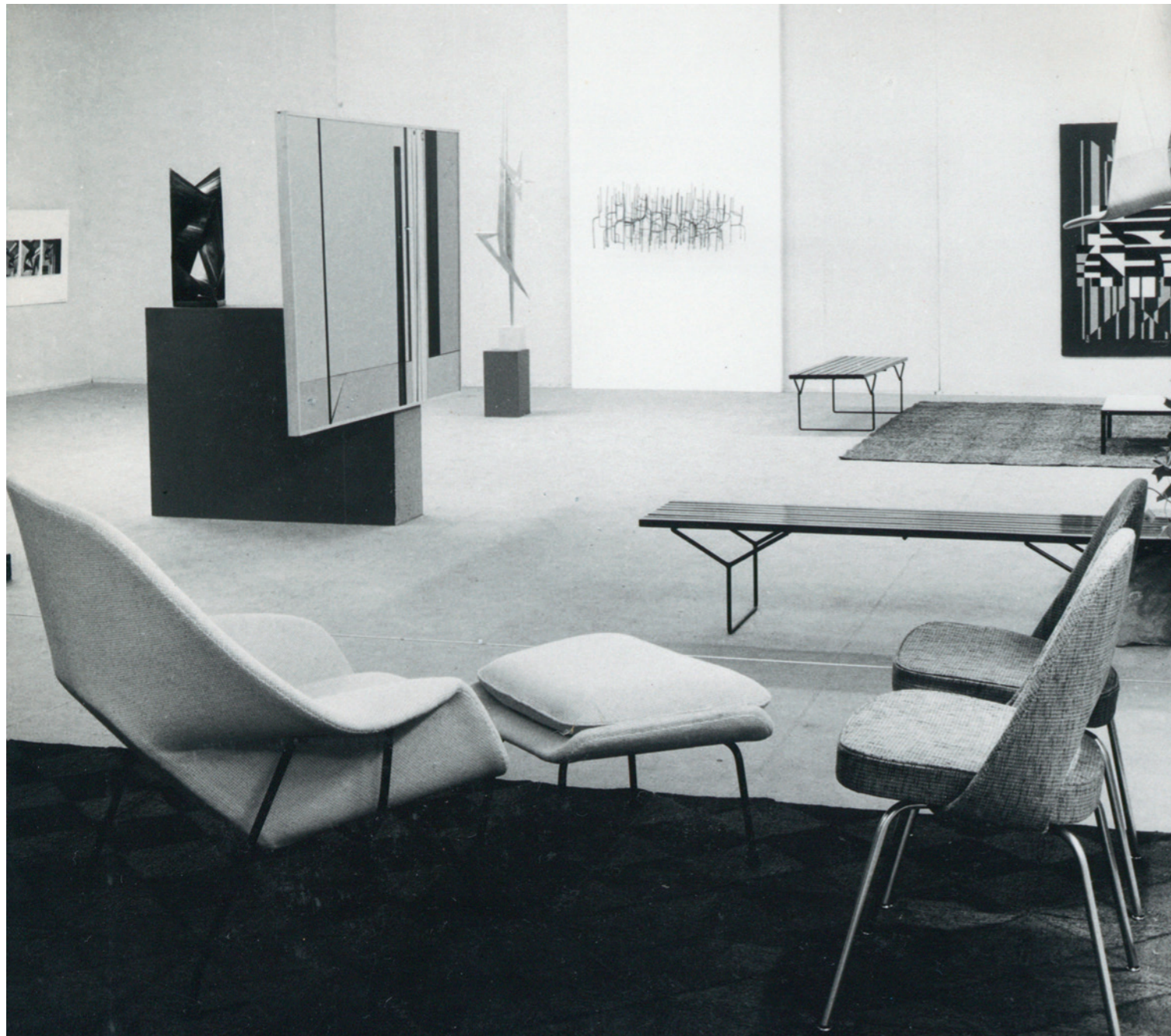
quite naturally.²⁷ Vernest arranged for one opening to be accompanied by experimental electronic music by the Belgian composers Louis de Meester and Lucien Goethals. Before long, the showroom found itself frequented by many prominent figures from the Belgian cultural scene, including the architects René Stapels, Roger Bastin, Henri Montois, and Robert Courtois; the interior designers Jules Wabbes, Stéphane Jasinski, and Emiel Veranneman; and artists including Vic Gentils, Roger Raveel, and Pol Mara.²⁸ In this way, the essentially commercial space functioned—seemingly without too much effort—as a site of higher culture, local artistic experimentation, and encounters.

The relationship was reversed at *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui*. Contrary to what the word 'casino' now suggests, the Municipal Casino in Knokke was a cultural location and the Knoll items were hosted there as part of an exhibition in which the majority of the pieces on show were abstract artworks. The venue was far removed from the concept of a commercial showroom, yet it was not a neutral exhibition space either: thanks to the presence of the Knoll furniture, the carpet beneath Robert Jacobsen's sculpture, and a variety of plants, the overall effect can best be described as a carefully curated artistic interior.



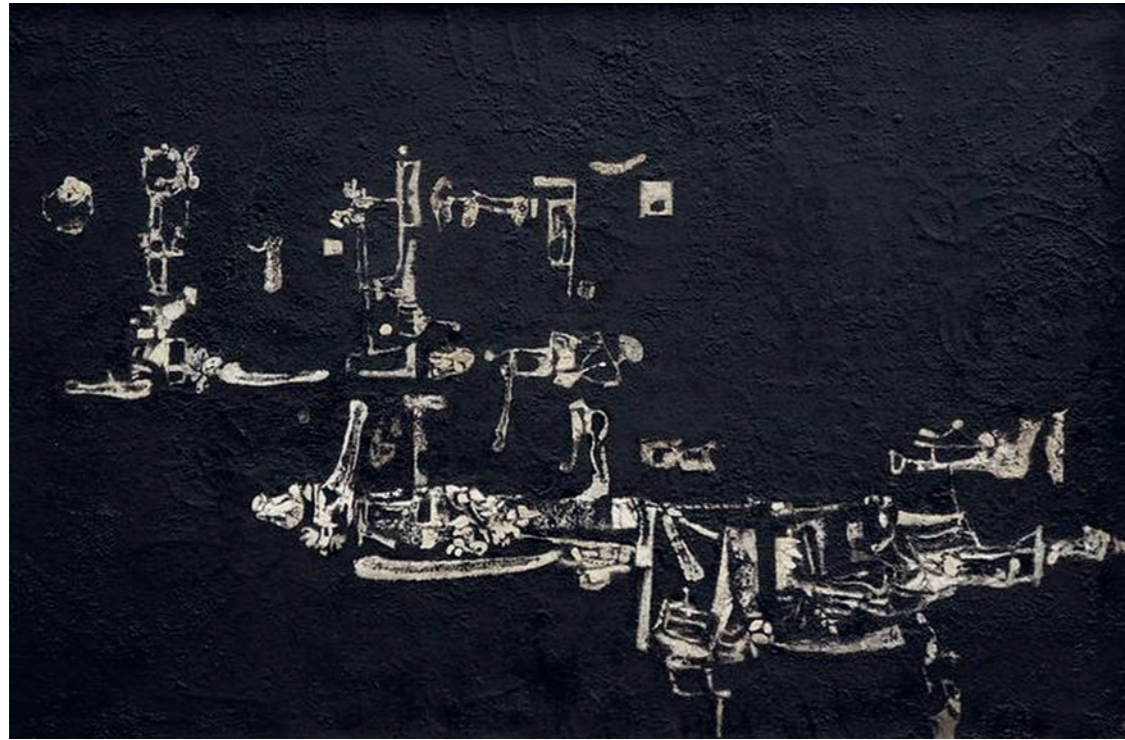
1. Luc Peire and K.N. Elnó, *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui*, exhibition catalogue, 1957. Biographical information on the textile designers can be found in Earl Martin (ed.), *Knoll Textiles 1945–2010*, New York/New Haven: Bard Graduate Center/Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 334–338, 351–352, 385–386.
2. '[...] in alle verscheidenheid van tendensen en intenties in de hedendaagse vormgeving een moeilijk te omschrijven maar zuiver waarneembare eenheid van stijl leeft, welke zich doorzet zowel in de vrij-plastische als in de industriële en ambachtelijke vormgeving, zowel in het pure verbeeldingsproduct als in het nuchtere nutsobject'. K.N. Elnó, 'In het Casino te Knokke. Vormen van heden', *De Periscoop*, 1 July 1957.
3. Marc Peire, 'Luc Peire, kunstenaar-curator van de tentoonstelling "Vormen van heden. Esthétique d'Aujourd'hui" (Knokke, 1957)', *Eigenbouwer*, no. 12 (2020), pp. 70–81 (71).
4. Jenny Peire-Verbruggen and Marc Peire, *De Ateliers van Luc Peire*, Ghent: Ludion, 2001, p. 58.
5. Ibid.
6. Fredie Floré, 'Elnó, K.N., pseudoniem van Karel Horemans, architectuur-, design- en kunstcriticus', *Nationaal biografisch woordenboek*, Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 2011, pp. 316–323.
7. Fredie Floré, 'Stimulerende uitdagingen: de professionalisering van design in naoorlogs België', in: Katarina Serulus and Javier Gimeno-Martinez (eds.), *Panorama. Een geschiedenis van modern design in België*, Brussels: CFC-Editions, 2017, pp. 121–150.
8. Katarina Serulus, *Design and Politics. The Public Promotion of Industrial Design in Postwar Belgium (1950–1986)*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018.
9. Fredie Floré, 'Design criticism and social responsibility: the Flemish design critic K.N. Elnó (1920–1993)', in: Grace Lees-Maffei (ed.), *Writing Design. Words and Objects*, London: Bloomsbury, 2012, pp. 33–45.
10. Lutz Brian, *Knoll: A Modernist Universe*, New York: Rizzoli, 2010.
11. Fredie Floré and Cammie McAtee, 'Introduction', in: Fredie Floré and Cammie McAtee (eds.), *The Politics of Furniture: Identity, Diplomacy and Persuasion in Post-War Interiors*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 1–11.
12. Rika Devos and Fredie Floré, 'Modern met De Coene. De productie na 1952', in: Frank Herman and Ruben Mayeur (eds.), *Kortrijkse Kunstwerkstede Gebroeders De Coene*, Kortrijk: Uitgeverij Groeninghe, 2006, pp. 182–207.
13. Knoll in Paris is discussed by Cammie McAtee and Fredie Floré, 'Knolling Paris: From the "New Look" to Knoll au Louvre', in: Fredie Floré and Cammie McAtee (eds.), *The Politics of Furniture: Identity, Diplomacy and Persuasion in Post-War Interiors*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 98–118.
14. Saverys recalled that Provost was initially dubious about his appointment because of his rather limited administrative experience. He ran the showroom alongside Regine Chemay. Jan Saverys, unpublished notes on Knoll International and De Coene, private archive of Jan Saverys, undated, consulted by the author in 2000.
15. Jan Saverys, unpublished notes on Knoll International and De Coene, private archive of Jan Saverys, undated, consulted by the author in 2000.
16. 'Mr Jan Saverys of Knoll International Brussels' is thanked in the *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui* catalogue. Saverys and Elnó were already acquainted by the time the exhibition came about. Saverys had shown his own work, for instance, at Kunstkabinet K.N. Horemans.
17. 'Knoll International Brussels', press release for the *Vormen van beden. Esthétique d'aujourd'hui* exhibition 1957, Mu.ZEE Collection – Peiremuzee Archive, Knokke-Heist – Donation of the Atelier Luc Peire – Jenny and Luc Peire Foundation.
18. Pol Vanneste and Gonda Callaert, 'Casino Knokke', see <https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/58579>.
19. Fredie Floré, 'Sociaal modernisme. De designkritiek van K.-N. Elnó (1920–1993)', *De Witte Raaf*, no. 89 (2001), pp. 6–8.
20. McAtee and Floré, 'Knolling Paris' in: Floré and McAtee (eds.), *The Politics of Furniture*, 2017, pp. 98–118.
21. 'Elles composent autour de ceux-ci une sorte de ronde d'honneur où l'esthétique de l'abstraction se déploie avec allégresse, selon cette infinie diversité qui s'exprime son épanouissement.' Léon-Louis Sosset, 'Au Casino de Knokke, jusqu'au 1er juillet. « Esthétique d'aujourd'hui. » Une exposition heureuse et efficace,' *Les Beaux-Arts*, n.p., 14 June 1957.
22. 'Het aantonen van de gelijklopendheid van de voortdurend vernieuwde proefneming van de abstract kunst en van de harmonische ontluiking van de industriële schepping, die haar oorsprong vindt in dezelfde plastische opvattingen, is beslist een van de grootste verdiensten van deze tentoonstelling.' 'Verrassende hedendaagse kunstschepingen. Vormen van heden te Knokke', *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, Brussels, 12 June 1957.
23. Urbain Van de Voorde, 'In het Gemeentelijk Casino te Knokke. Tentoonstelling "Vormen van heden". Dwaling en drama der abstracte kunst: vorm te zijn zonder inhoud', *De Standaard*, 22 June 1957; 'Betekenisvolle manifestatie te Knokke. Vormen van heden', *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 18 June 1957.
24. Fredie Floré and Cammie McAtee (eds.), 'Decentred Histories and Transnational Furniture Companies', *Journal of Design History*, special issue [due for publication in 2026].
25. Knoll International Brussels invitation designed by Corneille Hannoset, March 1961, Jan Ceuleers Archive.
26. Author's interview with Jacques Vernest, Sint-Martens-Latem, 9 October 2019.
27. Fredie Floré, 'Entangled Histories of Buildings and Furniture: Knoll International and the Production and Mediation of Modern Architecture in Post-war Belgium', in Charlotte Ashby and Mark Crinson (eds.), *Building/Object. Shared and Contested Territories of Design and Architecture*, London: Bloomsbury, 2022, pp. 161–178.
28. Author's interview with Jacques Vernest, Sint-Martens-Latem, 9 October 2019.

fig. 16
Foreground: Eero Saarinen,
various items of furniture
from the Knoll collection.
Background (among others):
Luc Peire, *Barcelona* (1957),
*Vormen van heden. Esthétique
d'aujourd'hui*, Knokke, 1957.



Barcelona 1957

oil on canvas 130 x 195 cm



Marc Mendelson

The Tenuous Feeding on Black 1956

oil on canvas 89 x 195 cm



fig. 17
Sculpture by Robert Jacobsen
(foreground) and paintings
by Marc Mendelson (left) and
Georges Carrey (right).



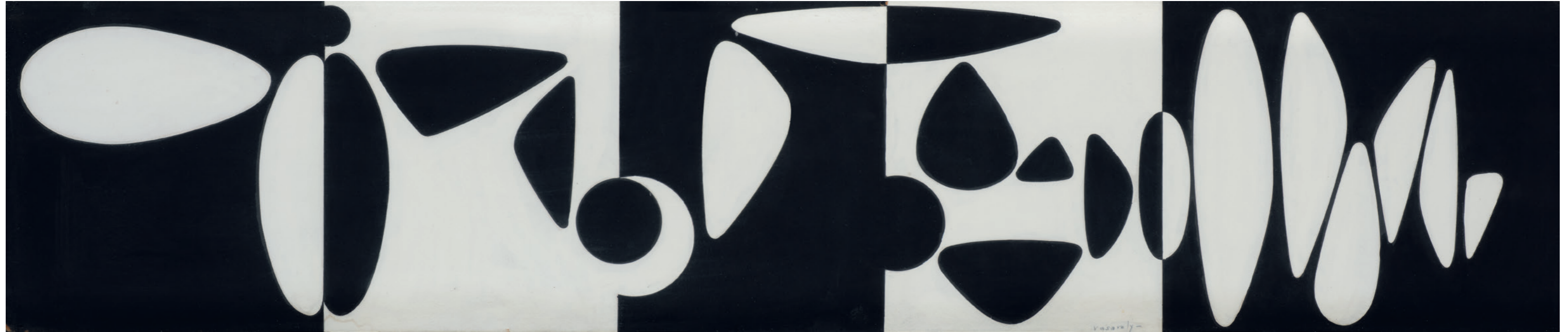
fig. 18
Centre: *White Plank* by
Jan Burssens, sculpture
by Pol Bury, painting by
Georges Carrey, and Side
Chair by Harry Bertoia,
Vormen van heden.
Esthétique d'aujourd'hui,
Knokke, 1957.



Jan Burssens

White Plank 1956

mixed media on panel 165 x 30 cm



Victor Vasarely

Untitled 1959

gouache on paper mounted on panel 22 x 103 cm



fig. 19
Harry Bertoia Side Chair
with artwork in the
background by Victor
Vasarely, Robert Jacobsen,
and Serge Poliakoff, *Vormen
van heden. Esthétique
d'aujourd'hui*, Knokke, 1957.