

Camille Graeser

The Making of a
Concrete Artist

Edited by Vera Hausdorff and
Roman Kurzmeyer on behalf of the
Camille Graeser Foundation, Zurich

Wienand

Contents

5/Preface

Camille Graeser Foundation, Zurich

8/Forewords

Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich; OSAS in Vasarely Múzeum, Budapest;
Musée des beaux-arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds; Espace de l'Art Concret,
Mouans-Sartoux

16/Hans Dieter Huber

Camille Graeser – Refugee or Homecomer?

74/Vera Hausdorff

**Camille Graeser and the Formation of the Zurich Concrete Artists –
The Development of a Constructive-Concrete Language of Forms**

124/Rudolf Koella

The Woman at his Side – Emmy Graeser-Rauch

188/Roman Kurzmeyer

**Time of the Allianz – On Camille Graeser's
Early Participation in Exhibitions**

242/Eugen Gomringer

1944: The New Beginning

288/Antje Krause-Wahl

Equivalence Relations

316/Exhibited Works

438/Appendix

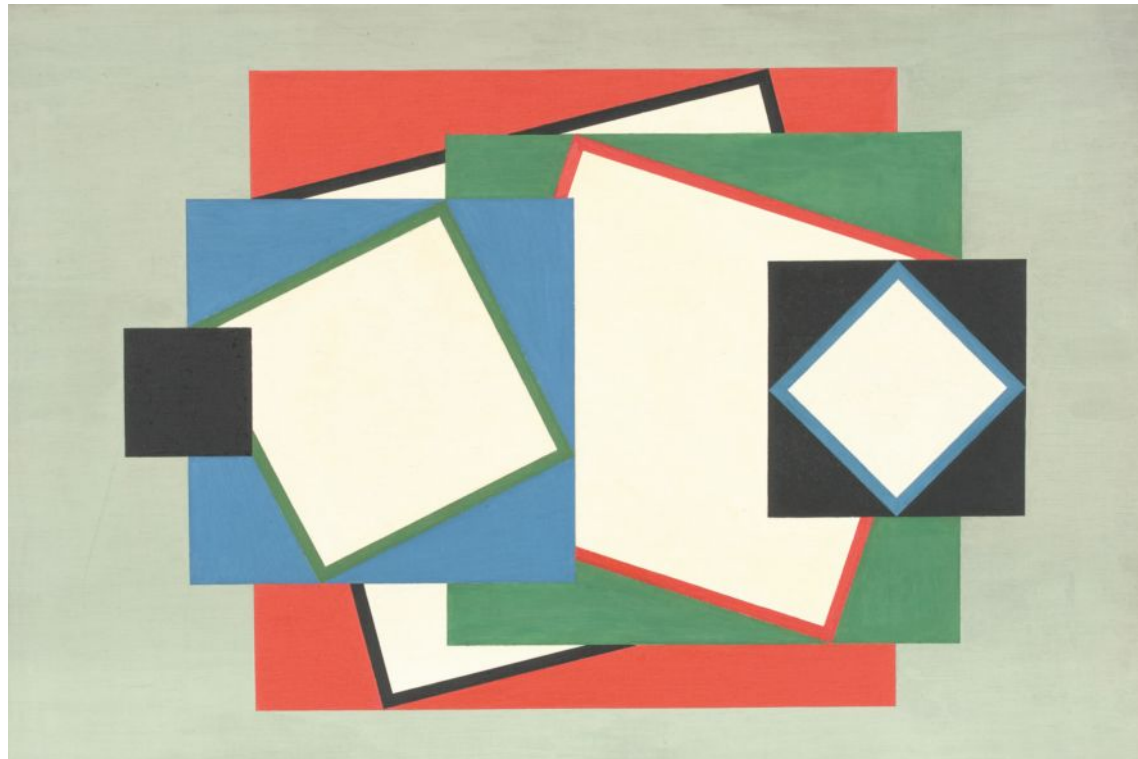
440/Biography

448/Solo Exhibitions

450/Group Exhibitions

460/Bibliography

464/The Authors



Transformed Squares, 1943, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 cm, Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection, Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch, CR no. B 1943.1

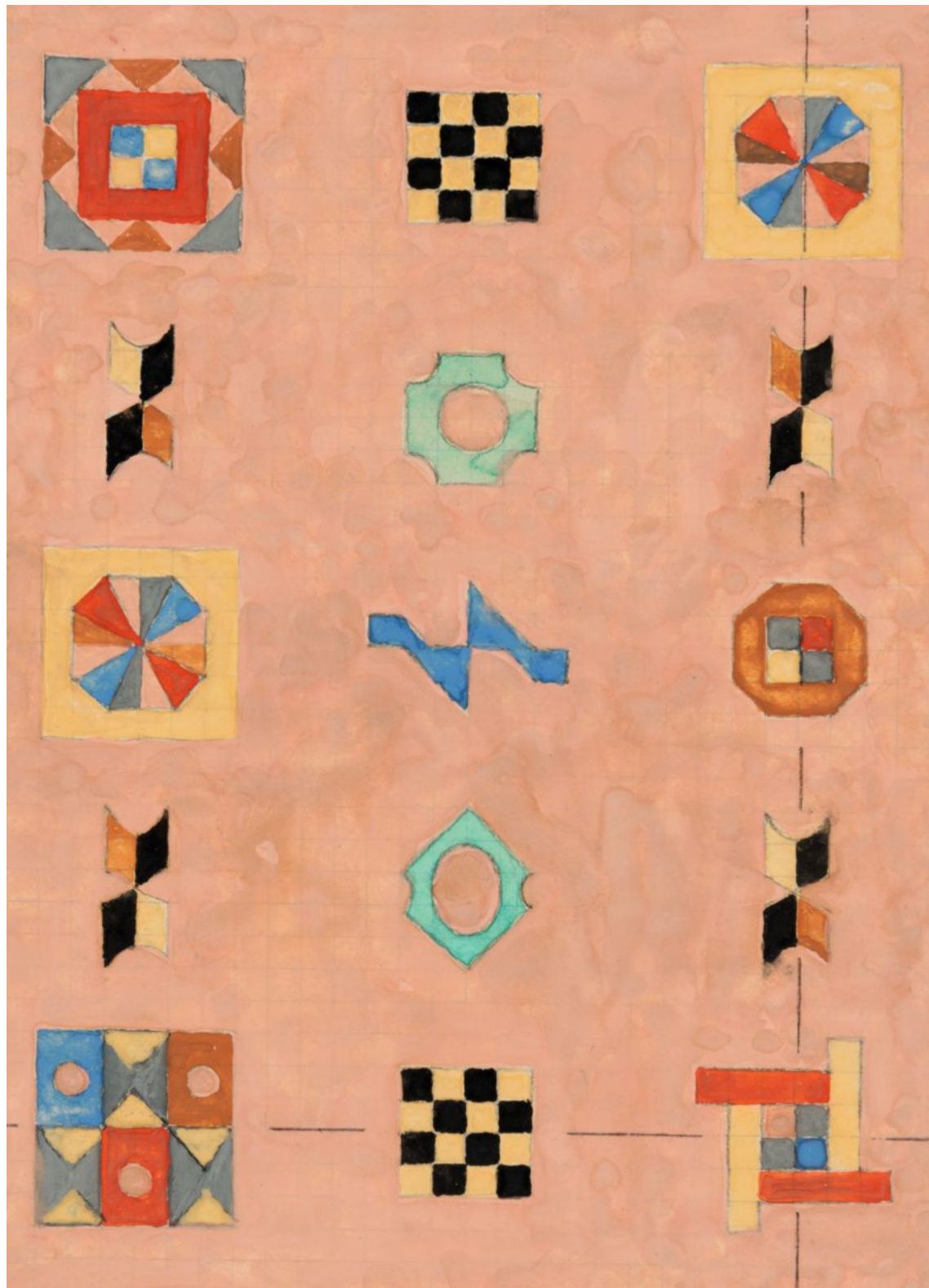
was therefore listed as the Zurich Allianz Group in the exhibition titles. The path leading to the Zurich Concrete artists had thus definitely been taken by 1944. The starting point was the exhibition *Abstrakt + Konkret* from 7 October to 7 November 1944, in which Max Bill, Hans Fischli, Camille Graeser, Diogo Graf, Hansegger, Leo Leuppi, and Richard Paul Lohse took part and for which an advance notice designed by Richard Paul Lohse was published [fig. p. 256]. Graeser himself was represented with four new works, all of which had just been painted in 1944: *Three-Part Progressive Curve* [fig. p. 121], *Construction with Two Centres* [fig. p. 385], *Centric Crossing* [fig. p. 405], and *Three Progressive Contrasts* [fig. p. 387]. Graeser developed in particular the first work, *Three-Part Progressive Curve*, which is composed entirely of circle elements in both negative and positive form, in a large number of artist's impressions, whereby his development of circular shapes is clearly derived from the work of Sophie Taeuber-Arp. As a reference in his development of circular segments he took a preview of a portfolio with the title *les derniers 9 dessins de sophie taeuber-arp*, which was published by the Allianz-Verlag to mark her early death in Zurich in 1942 [figs. pp. 120–121].

At the same time as the exhibition *Abstrakt + Konkret* the first issue of twelve editions of the newsletter of the Galerie des Eaux Vives was published with the title *abstrakt konkret*. It contained the art-theoretical contributions of Max Bill ("ein standpunkt"), Richard Paul Lohse ("Die Fläche"), and Camille Graeser ("Abstrakt + Konkret"). Graeser's text contribution consisted of his very first definition of Concrete Art [figs. pp. 258–259]. The newsletter, consisting of stapled hectographed DIN-

A4 sheets, was very important for the discussion of the avant-garde, because artists were able to publish not only their texts but also graphical works, in order to introduce their creative work to a broader public. Even the dust jackets, made of coloured thick card, were designed by the artists in turn – the cover of issue no. 7 was the work of Camille Graeser [fig. p. 246 bottom]. Texts by non-members were also accepted. Leo Leuppi, Richard Paul Lohse, Camille Graeser, Max Bill, Hansegger, and his wife Rose Schindler formed the members of the first editorial team. At virtually no other time did the Zurich Concrete artists Max Bill, Camille Graeser, Richard Paul Lohse, and Verena Loewensberg work together as actively as they did on the *abstrakt konkret* newsletter, so that we can already speak here of the formation of an artists' group, even though the label Zurich Concrete Art was not first used until 1949 on the occasion of a travelling exhibition through West Germany. At that time, apart from the core group consisting of Max Bill, Camille Graeser, Verena Loewensberg, and Richard Paul Lohse, who are mostly listed together today under this term, the group included three further artists: the painters Hans Fischli and Heinrich Eichmann, who both lived in Zurich, and the Italian architect and painter Lanfranco Bombelli Tiravanti, a friend of Max Bill who had escaped to Zurich in 1944 and was very close to the Allianz before he returned to Italy in 1947 [figs. pp. 228–233]. There he played a considerable part in the preparations for the exhibition *Arte astratta e concreta* in Palazzo Ex Reale in Milan in 1947, in which many Allianz artists participated [figs. pp. 208–211], so that his participation in the West German travelling exhibition could also be seen as a gesture of thanks for his activities on behalf of the Zurich Allianz artists in Italy.

The influences of Constructivism and De Stijl on Graeser's work from the mid-1940s

Graeser took part in the Christmas exhibition at the end of 1944/beginning of 1945 and in 1945 in the presentation *Allianz, Gruppe Zürich* in the Galerie des Eaux Vives for the first time with a group of almost entirely rectangular works: the *Progression Red-Yellow-Blue (Upward Progression)* from 1944 [fig. p. 395], as well as the *Sideways Concentration* (B 1945.1), the *Flowing Rhythm* [figs. pp. 93, 113, 393], and the *Rhythmical Connection I* [fig. p. 398] from 1945. In the paintings, but especially in his autonomous drawings produced at the same time, the pictorial elements still mostly seem to hover in space against a monochrome background. In his picture



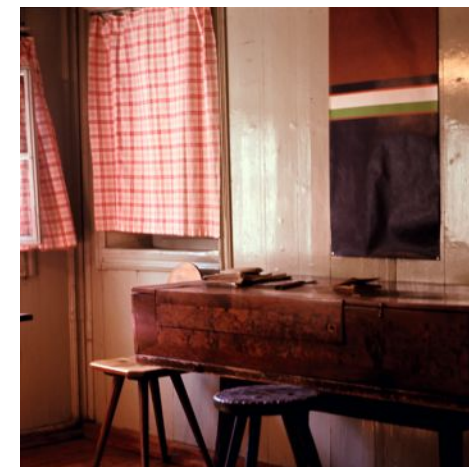
Design for a knotted carpet, ca. 1933, pencil and opaque colour on stiff squared paper, mounted on stiff cardboard, sheet: 18 x 14.3 cm, mounting: 20 x 15.3 cm, CGS Inv. no. K 49.5, Archives CGS.



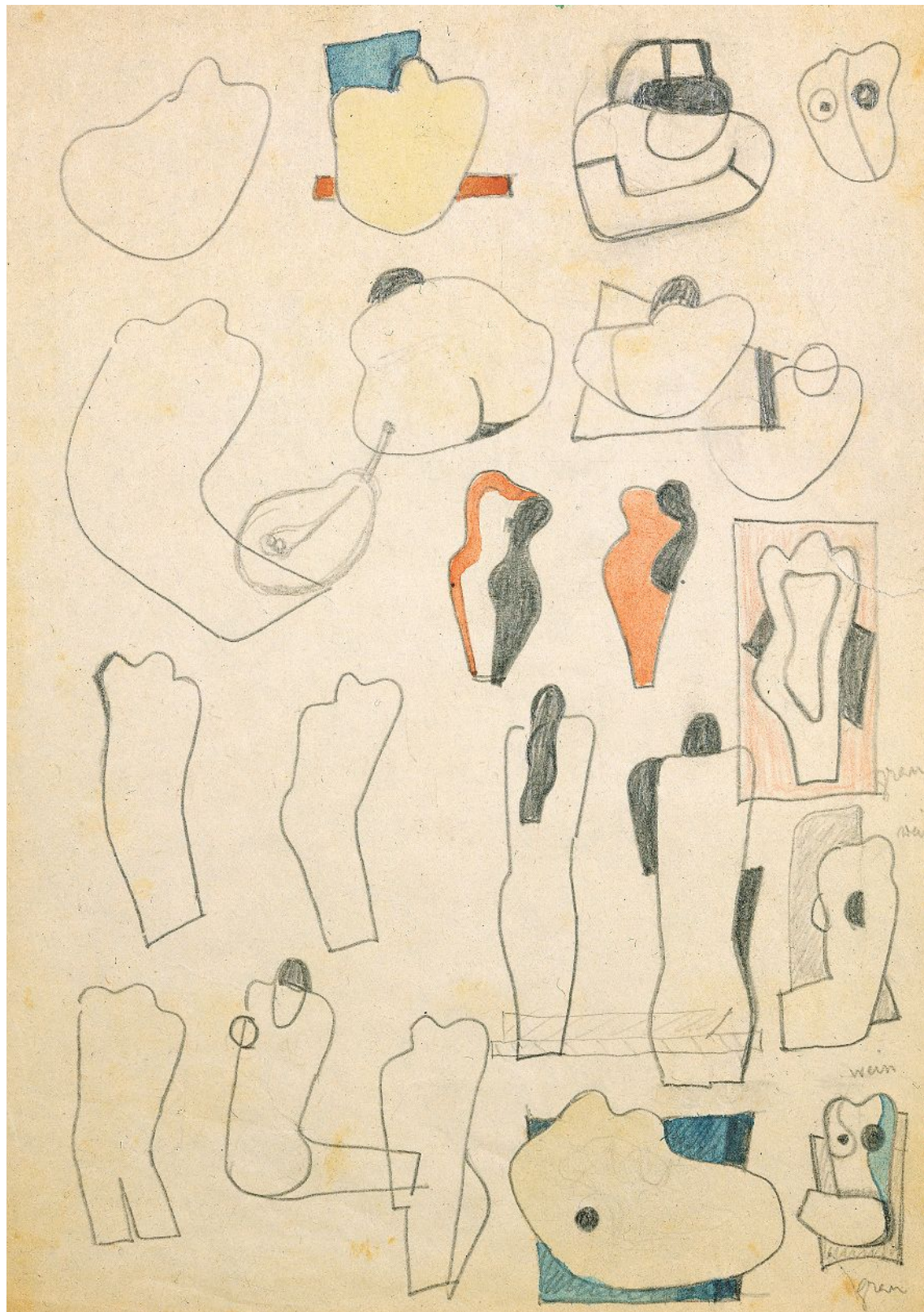
Emmy and Camille Graeser in front of the pump room in Tarasp, photograph, 1937, Archives CGS.



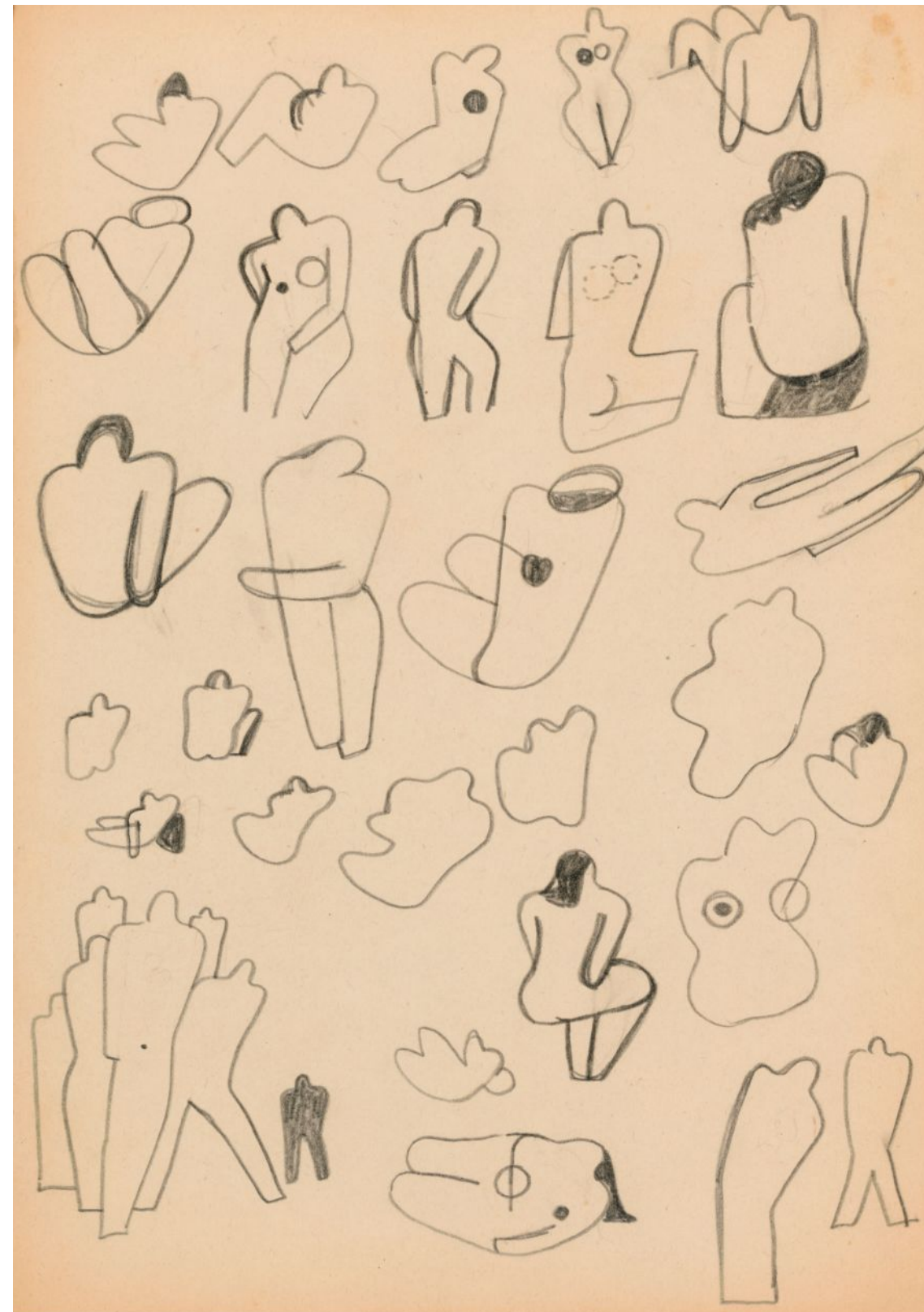
Emmy Graeser's houses in Schuls (Scuol), Plazetta 367 and 368, photograph, 1966, Archives CGS.



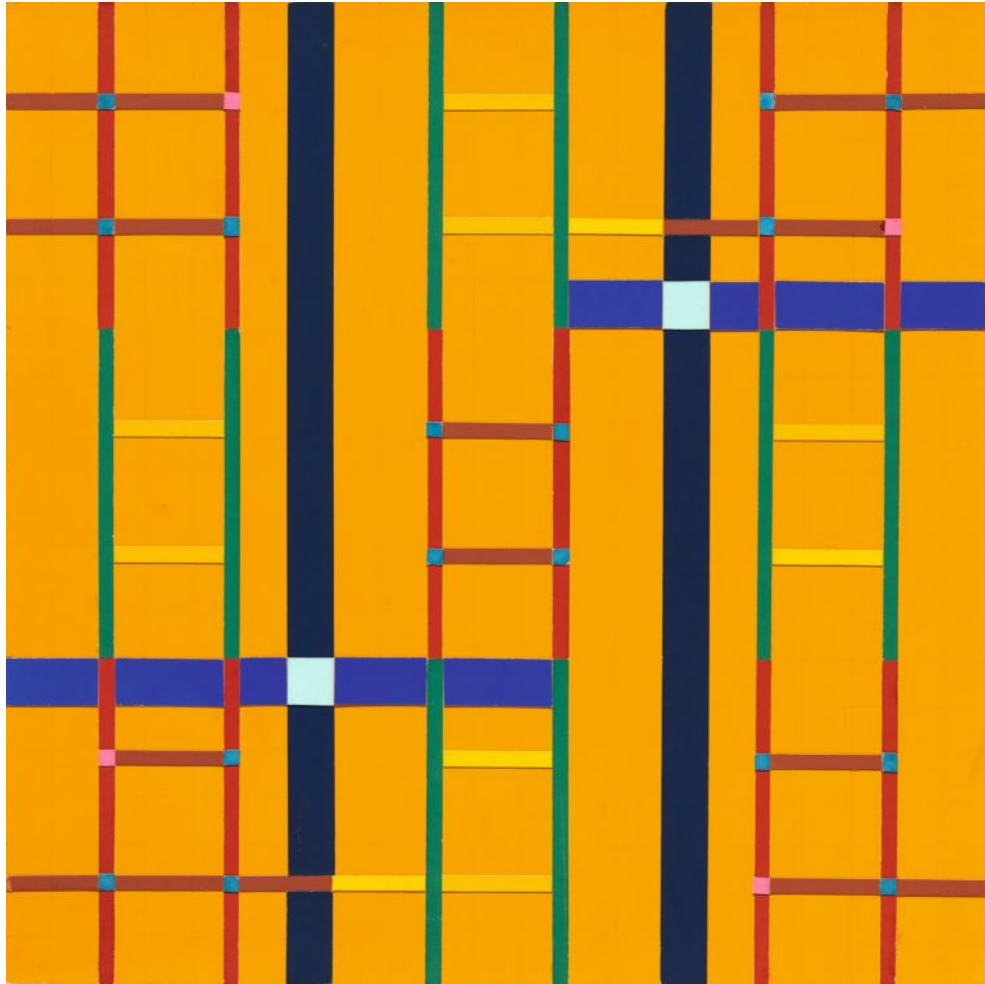
Two interior views of the holiday home in one of Emmy Graeser's houses in Schuls (Scuol), possibly at no. 369, the former Café Rauch, photographs, 1966, Archives CGS.



Sheet of sketches with various artist's impressions, n.d., for the painted wood relief *Untitled* from 1936/38, pencil, crayon and watercolour on paper, 29.6 x 20.8 cm, CGS Inv. no. Sk04.R1938.1.



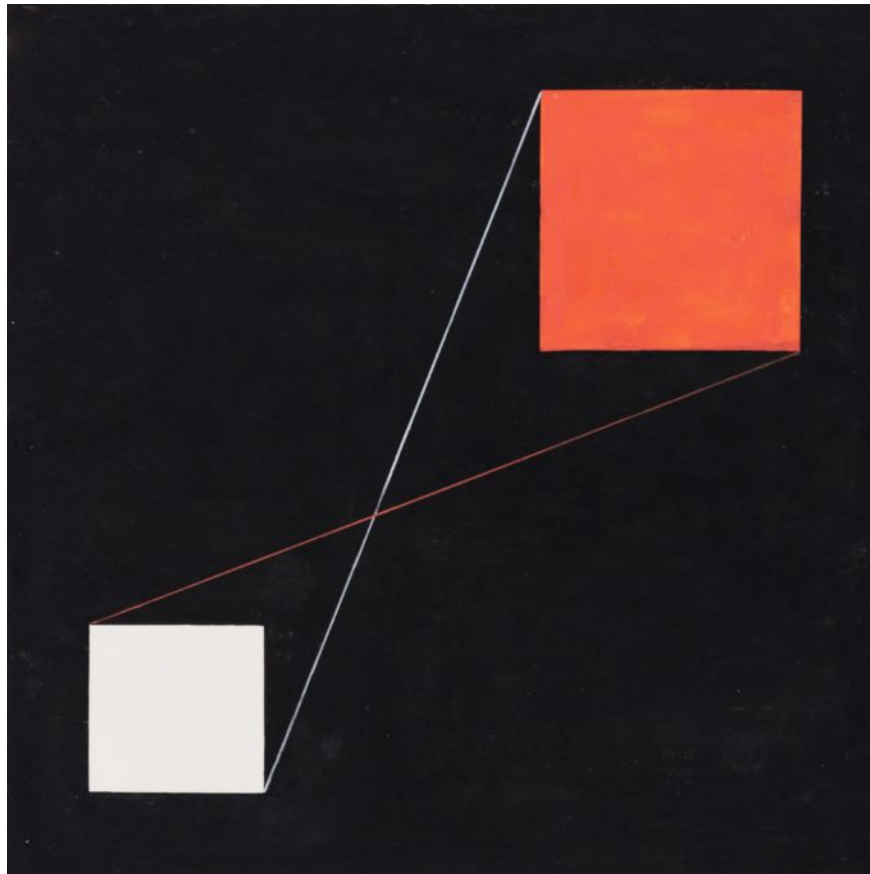
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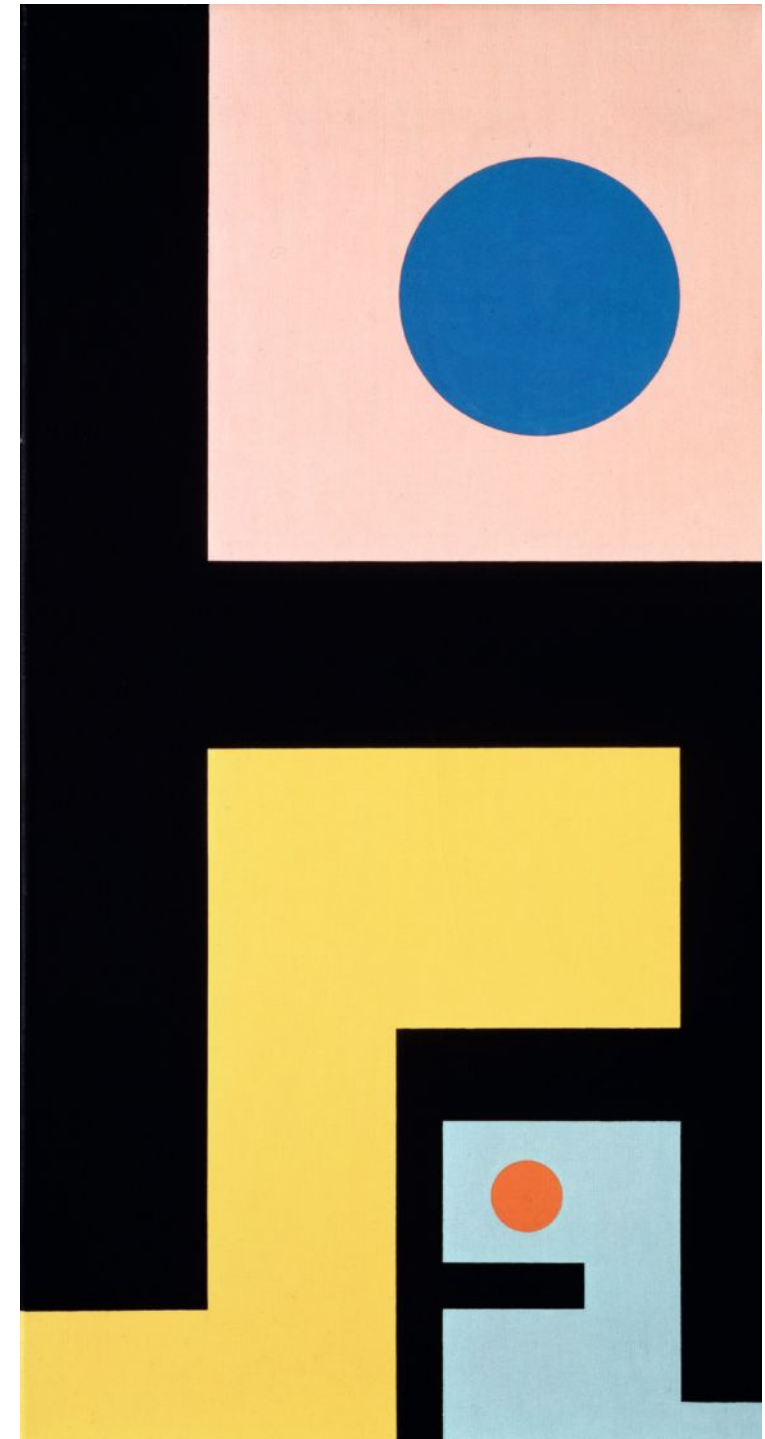
Heinrich Eichmann, Untitled, 1951, collage on cardboard, 63 x 63 cm, P. Schaufelberger, Zollikon,
© Estate of Heinrich Eichmann: P. Schaufelberger, Zollikon



Adolf Fleischmann, Opus 30, 1954, New York, oil on canvas, 75 x 63 cm,
private collection, Switzerland, © Estate of Adolf Fleischmann



Emmy Graeser, Untitled, 7 February 1938, watercolour and opaque colour on watercolour paper (red and white China ink), 25 x 24.5 cm, CGS Inv. no. EG.B1938.03.01



Construction T with Two Complementary Ex-Centres (Construction T with Complementary Ex-Centres), 1953, oil on canvas, 93 x 48 cm, CR no. B 1953.8