



# Til Brugman's De Stijl Rooms:

A 'Flat in The Hague' with Designs by  
Theo van Doesburg, Vilmos Huszár, Gerrit Rietveld,  
El Lissitzky and Kurt Schwitters, 1923-26

• LUDO VAN HALEM •

It is unlikely that the writer Til Brugman (1888-1958) ever saw the exhibition 'Rietveld. Bijdrage tot vernieuwing der bouwkunst' in Utrecht's Centraal Museum in 1958. A serious illness saw her confined to bed, and she died on 24 July, more than two months after the exhibition opened.<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that she would have wanted to go to Utrecht to see it, for she had a special bond with Gerrit Rietveld (1888-1964). In the early nineteen-twenties she, the architect Piet Elling and the doctor Arie Hartog were among the first people to buy his modern furniture. Brugman and her then partner Sienna Masthoff (1892-1959) commissioned from him, among other pieces, the white slat chair that is now in the Rijksmuseum's collection, and asked him to make new designs for their flat in Ligusterstraat in The Hague (figs. 1-2). Brugman used Rietveld's furniture every day until her death, and even gave the architect a place in her literary work. In her 1953 novel *Spanningen* he appears as the ambitious architect Dirk Belders, who in the dying days of the Second World War dreams of the breathtakingly large scope for the reconstruction of the Netherlands that lay ahead. Belders is one of the principal characters in the book, and many aspects of his personality can be traced back to Rietveld's biography.

< Fig. 1  
GERRIT RIETVELD,  
*Armchair for Til Brugman*, Utrecht,  
1919 (design),  
execution 1923.  
Wood and paint,  
87 x 65.5 x 84 cm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. BK-2010-1;  
purchased with  
the support of the  
BankGiro Lottery.  
© Heirs Gerrit  
Rietveld/Pictoright,  
Amsterdam 2017.

Gerrit Rietveld was not the only person in De Stijl circles with whom Brugman was friendly. She had already met the painter Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) at dance classes in his Amsterdam years (1892-1912),<sup>2</sup> and she was able to count the artists Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) and Vilmos Huszár (1884-1960), the architects J.J.P. Oud (1890-1963) and Cornelis van Eesteren (1897-1988), and Van Doesburg's successive wives Lena Milius (1889-1968) and Nelly van Moorsel (1899-1975) among her close

Fig. 2  
ANONYMOUS,  
*Sienna Masthoff (left)  
and Til Brugman  
on the Beach in  
Scheveningen*, 1925.  
Berlin, Berlinische  
Galerie, Hannah  
Höch Archive.  
Photo: Anja Elisabeth  
Witte.



friends and acquaintances at various times.<sup>3</sup> She was also friendly with some of the foreign artists involved with *De Stijl*, among them Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), El Lissitzky (1890-1941) and the Hungarian Lajos d'Ébneth (1902-1982), who lived in Kijkduin.<sup>4</sup>

Although there have been numerous art-historical publications about *De Stijl* over the years, Brugman's role in this avant-garde movement has never been the subject of a study. Until now, the focus has been on her position as a lesbian author in the nineteen-twenties and thirties from the perspective of gender studies, while in art-historical publications she figures chiefly as the partner of the German artist Hannah Höch (1889-1978), with whom she was in an intimate relationship from 1926

to 1936.<sup>5</sup> The only comprehensive art-related article deals with her correspondence with Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky.<sup>6</sup>

### Til Brugman and *De Stijl*

Brugman was always happy to lend a helping hand to her artist friends. She acted as middleman for Mondrian in selling his pictures, while for Van Doesburg she translated his own writings and articles for *De Stijl* magazine. In 1923 Brugman also assisted in managing the subscriptions to *De Stijl* and the allied Dada magazines *Mécano* and *Merz*. Sienna Masthoff did the same for the magazine *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*.<sup>7</sup> Brugman's own work appeared in *De Stijl* just once. When Van Doesburg, writing under the pen name I.K. Bonset, published an overview of the new sound poetry, he chose Brugman's poem *R* as a good example of it. It was Til Brugman's literary debut (fig. 3). Years later, at Nelly van Doesburg's request, she made translations for the commemorative issue of *De Stijl* published after Theo van Doesburg's death.<sup>8</sup>

After the Second World War Brugman made an important contribution to the early art historiography of *De Stijl*. In 1946 she published her recollections of Mondrian's Amsterdam years in the catalogue of the memorial exhibition staged by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In the style of the 'grotesque' literary genre she espoused, these memories were somewhat distorted,<sup>9</sup> but she set about her task with much greater accuracy when Hans Jaffé, a curator and deputy director at the Stedelijk, asked her to help him prepare his dissertation on *De Stijl*. When Jaffé had completed his typescript and circulated it among his 'peer reviewers' for them to look at, she sent back thirteen closely-written sheets of reused paper – she was so poor that she had to economize like this – with page-by-page incisive

Fig. 3  
TIL BRUGMAN,  
*R*, published in  
*De Stijl, Maandblad  
voor nieuwe kunst,  
wetenschap en  
kultuur* 6 (1923),  
nos. 3/4, p. 54.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum  
Research Library,  
no. 1918/0185e.



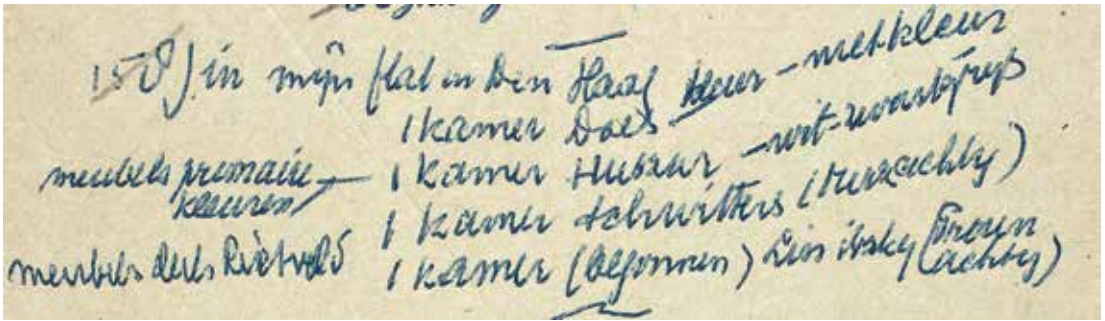


Fig. 4  
Note written  
by Til Brugman,  
c. 1955-56.  
The Hague, RKD,  
Hans Jaffé Archive.

comments, and encouraged him to put people and events in the right perspective.<sup>10</sup> She also made available Mondrian's then unpublished essay *L'art nouveau – La vie nouvelle*, which she had carefully kept. It was attached in Brugman's English translation as an appendix to the dissertation, which appeared in 1956.<sup>11</sup>

After Brugman's death, Leo Braat (1908-1982), senior editor of *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur*, went so far as to write in that magazine that 'she was an enthusiastic member of the *Stijl* movement, who knew everything about the theory and practice of its members [but] not many people may know that'.<sup>12</sup> But in the nineteen-twenties the 'members' of *De Stijl* themselves had never regarded Brugman as their peer. After the publication of her sound poem *R* in 1923, her name was never mentioned in the magazine again.

### 'In my flat in The Hague'

From the following intriguing, but never investigated note, which she made in regard to Hans Jaffé's typescript, it emerges that Brugman's home was a crucial factor in her involvement in *De Stijl*:

Jaffé incorporated this note in his dissertation as follows:

In 1922 Van Doesburg, Huszar and Schwitters, each painted a room in the apartment of Til Brugman in the Hague – the fourth room was left white – it housed a painting by Mondriaan.

He did not mention the fact that El Lissitzky had 'started' on a room, but he added the date 1922 and the information about Mondrian.<sup>14</sup>

Brugman's 'flat in The Hague' was on the second floor of number 20 Ligusterstraat and she and Sienna Masthoff had moved in together in 1919.<sup>15</sup> The flat was in a recently built complex in the Heesterbuurt district and comprised a front and back room with connecting doors, and three small rooms around a large hall (figs. 5-6; appendix pp. 168-69). Brugman's brief summary is of spectacular importance, for such an interior, to which five or six of the most eminent artists of the nineteen-twenties were said to have contributed, is unprecedented in the history of the international avant-garde. The description of the flat reads like an avant-garde pantheon – an impressive showcase for new ideas

158) in my flat in The Hague

furniture primary colours	1 room Does – colour – with colour
furniture partly Rietveld	1 room Huszar – white –black-grey
	1 room Schwitters (Merz-like)
	1 room (started) Lissitzky (Prounlike) (fig. 4) <sup>13</sup>



*Fig. 5*  
 ANONYMOUS,  
*Ligusterstraat in*  
*The Hague, c. 1919.*  
 Brugman and  
 Masthoff's flat at  
 number 20 is on  
 the top floor on  
 the left-hand side,  
 above the first  
 entrance to the  
 block.  
 Photo: The Hague,  
 Haags Gemeente-  
 archief.

*Fig. 6*  
 J.M. GROENEWEGEN,  
*Plan for the*  
*Construction of a*  
*Block of 36 Flats with*  
*an Entrance Hall in*  
*Ligusterstraat, The*  
*Hague, Scale 1:100*  
*Cad Section AM No*  
*3952 Partial and 3955,*  
*detail of floor plan of*  
*flats on the second*  
*floor, 1917.*  
 The Hague, Haags  
 Gemeentearchief.  
 The bay windows  
 were only built into  
 the corner avant-  
 corps. Brugman and  
 Masthoff lived in the  
 flat type on the right  
 without a bay window.

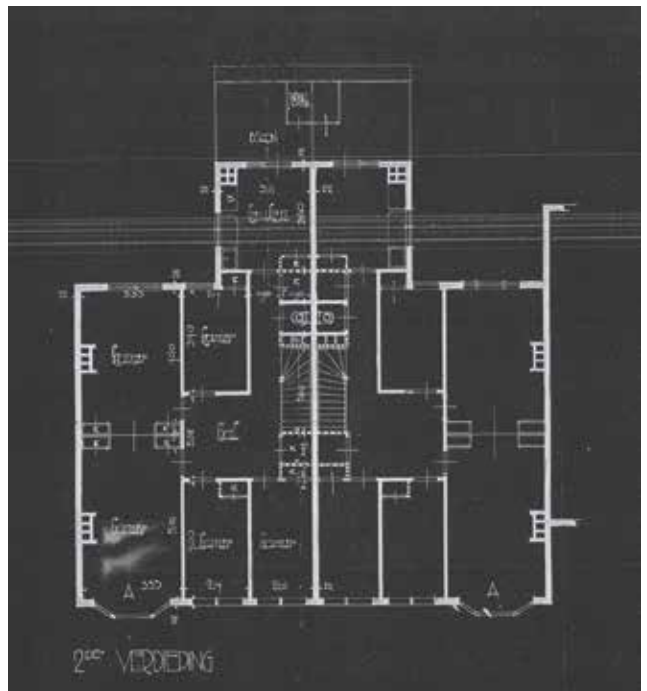




Fig. 7

ANONYMOUS,  
*Back Room in*  
*20 Ligusterstraat*  
*in The Hague with*  
*a Spatial Colour*  
*Composition to a*  
*Design by Vilmos*  
*Huszár and Furniture*  
*by Gerrit Rietveld,*  
 1923.  
 Photographic  
 reproduction.  
 Amsterdam,  
 Stedelijk Museum.  
 Whereabouts of the  
 original photograph  
 unknown.

about the relation between colour and space and one of the most exciting experiments with the design of the modern interior in Europe in the first half of the twenties. Regrettably, neither Jaffé nor Brugman support this information, merely mentioned in passing, with documentation or illustrations, and we know of no contemporary publications of the interior. This may be why little or no attention has been paid to the significance of Brugman's comment in the endless flood of studies that have been published since Jaffé's dissertation on *De Stijl* appeared.

While most of the other experiments with space and colour in the nineteen-twenties were reasonably well to fully documented, or were simply still being used when Jaffé's dissertation came out – such as Rietveld's Schröder House (1924) and his bedroom for the Harrenstein family (1926) – at that

moment this extraordinary interior only existed in Brugman's head. Yet it had been reality, at least in part, in any event. In 1983, for the first time in almost thirty years, art historian Nancy J. Troy addressed the interior. In her study *The De Stijl Environment* she discussed the room for which Huszár had made the design. With the aid of a photograph in the Stedelijk Museum archives, she was able to form a picture of the situation at the time. This photograph has been reproduced again and again in countless later publications, but of course it gives no impression of the whole of the interior as Brugman described it (fig. 7).<sup>16</sup>

On stylistic grounds Troy dated the room to 1924 – two years later than Jaffé. This date was accepted in most publications, but later proved to be incorrect.<sup>17</sup> When Carel Blotkamp published the letters from Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky to Til Brugman in Jaffé's archives in 1997, it was established beyond question that work had already been done on a room in 'colour – with colour' to a design by Theo van Doesburg in the spring and early summer of 1923 and then on the room in 'white – black-grey' by Huszár.<sup>18</sup> Rietveld's furniture was also delivered in this period. Brugman bought the Mondrian painting Jaffé refers to at the end of 1922 or in 1923 (fig. 8; appendix pp. 168-69).<sup>19</sup>

By contrast, we know of little more of the rooms by Schwitters and Lissitzky than we find in Brugman's note. She became friendly with the two artists when they were staying in the Netherlands in the first half of 1923. Although they wrote to one another and stayed in touch through others, the known correspondence and records dating from 1923 to 1926 contain no mention of designs for the interior of her home.<sup>20</sup> It seems unlikely, though, that this was a figment of her imagination. After all, many of the details Brugman told Jaffé about the 'flat in The Hague'

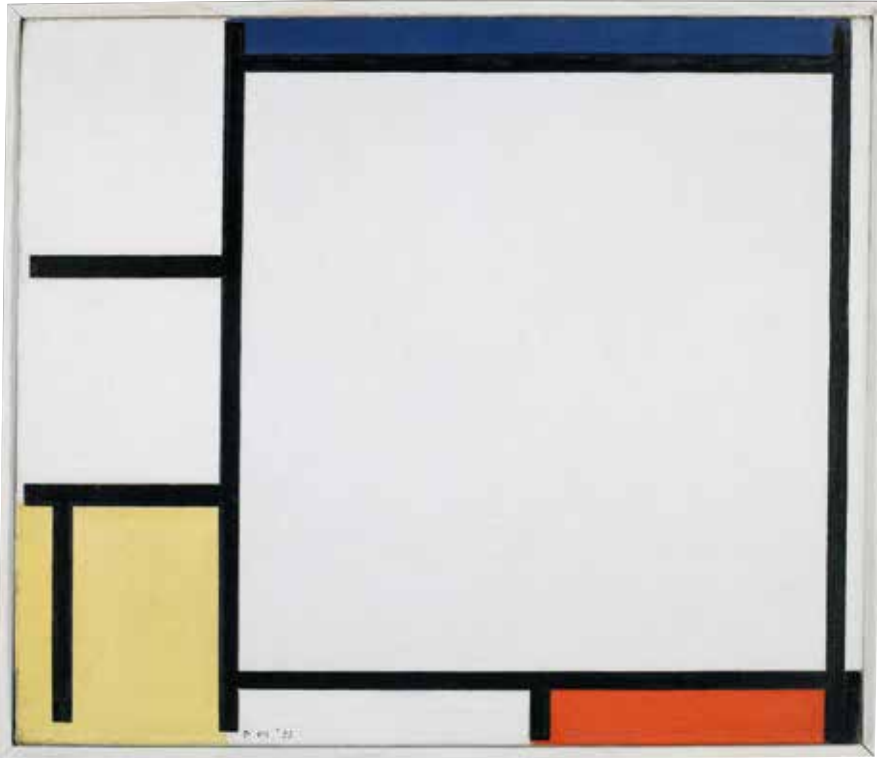


Fig. 8  
PIET MONDRIAN,  
*Composition with  
Blue, Yellow, Red  
and Black*, 1922.  
Oil on canvas,  
41.9 x 48.9 cm.  
Minneapolis,  
Minneapolis  
Institute of Art,  
inv. no. 655; gift of  
Bruce B. Dayton.

proved in time to be perfectly accurate, such as the colour schemes and the order in which Van Doesburg's and Huszár's rooms were done. The furniture still exists, too. In 2004 and 2007 respectively, the occasional table in 'primary colours' and the white slat chair were sold at auction; both can be seen in the 1923 photograph.<sup>21</sup> An upright chair that most probably belonged to her was sold at auction in 1988. It was not known at the time of the sale that the provenance could be linked with the Til Brugman interior (figs. 1, 9-10, 23; appendix pp. 168-69).<sup>22</sup>

Fig. 9  
GERRIT RIETVELD,  
*Occasional Table  
for Til Brugman*,  
Utrecht, 1923.  
Wood and paint,  
61.5 x 49 x 49 cm.

Frankfurt am Main,  
C. Oetker Collection.  
© Heirs Gerrit  
Rietveld/Pictoright,  
Amsterdam 2017.



Fig. 10

GERRIT RIETVELD,  
*Upright Chair*  
 for Til Brugman,  
 Utrecht, 1919 (design),  
 execution possibly  
 1923.  
 Wood, leather  
 and paint,  
 c. 92 x 64,5 x 60 cm.  
 Osaka, Osaka  
 City Museum of  
 Modern Art.



### **Til Brugman and Sienna Masthoff**

Til (Mathilda Maria Petronella) Brugman was the oldest of nine children born into the strict Catholic family of Adriana Geertruida Johanna Zoons (1859-1939) and the wine and spirits dealer Hermanus Johannes Brugman (1852-1931). Brugman inherited her talent for languages and her literary interests from her father. Conflicts with her domineering mother, who had an impressive reforming zeal, reached such a pitch that she was sent to a boarding school

for girls in Etten-Leur when she was twelve. When she returned home at sixteen, she had to do housework under her mother's supervision – an occupation that was entirely at odds with her intellectual abilities. Her rebellious nature again provoked countless rows and eventually, in 1911, she was thrown out of the house for good.

Til Brugman's literary career was slow to get started. She earned her living with business correspondence, language courses and translation work. She started writing avant-garde sound



poems in 1917, but the unpublished collection was lost in 1951.<sup>23</sup> Soon after her debut in *De Stijl*, two of her sound poems were published in the avant-garde magazines *Merz* and *Manomètre* (figs. 11a-b). It was not until 1935 that a small publishing house in Germany put out her first narrative collection with 'grotesques' under the title *Schein-gehacktes*. Her Dutch debut novel *Bodem. Marcus van Boven, Gods knaap* came out in 1946. In the twelve years before her death, however, she was extremely productive. Besides a number of – not very successful – novels, she wrote and translated many novellas, cultural history studies and children's books. She regularly wrote articles and reviews for the *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur*. She also translated books on art and architecture into Dutch, including Siegfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* and Will Grohmann's early monograph on Paul Klee.

Brugman never became an authoritative voice in the literary world in the nineteen-fifties – most probably because of her contrived and sometimes archaic use of language and her difficult and acrimonious relations with publishers and critics. After the Second World War she was no longer in the vanguard, as she had been in the nineteen-twenties with her sound poems. At the same time, however, she was too modern and controversial for a conservative public.<sup>24</sup>

We do not know how Brugman met her lover Sienna Masthoff.<sup>25</sup> They both came from large Catholic families, but more likely than a meeting in their social milieu is an encounter in artistic circles, for literature, music and art dominated their lives. It is difficult to identify Masthoff's role in the transformation of their home. The scant information about her suggests, however, that while hers was certainly

Fig. 11a

TIL BRUGMAN,  
*Weg*, published in  
*Merz* (October 1923),  
no. 6, p. 61.  
The Hague, RKD,  
no. 200562275.

Fig. 11b

TIL BRUGMAN,  
*Engin d'amour*,  
published in  
*Manomètre*  
(August 1924),  
no. 6, p. 102.  
Paris, Bibliothèque  
nationale de  
France, inv. no.  
OF-TOL-17005623.



not the moving spirit, she was a significant factor.

Sienna (Gesina Maria) Masthoff was the youngest of the ten children of Evert Barend Masthoff (1848-1930) and Maria Theodora Toorop (1857-1913), the oldest sister of the famous artist Jan Toorop (1858-1928). According to Sienna's brother Charles (1886-1959), also a painter, it was an unhappy marriage because of the immense difference between her 'Hollandish' father, who was an assistant resident in the Dutch East Indies, and her 'Indonesian' mother.<sup>26</sup> Sienna must have got her dark looks from the Toorop side. She was born in Palembang on Sumatra and came to the Netherlands as a little girl of ten. Her father retired in 1902 and returned to the Netherlands with his family, settling in The Hague. Shortly before her seventeenth birthday she went to live independently and described herself on her registration card as a 'lady companion'. Later this was changed to the rather smarter 'governess'.<sup>27</sup>

Her official occupation, though, had nothing to do with her real ambition and talent. She became a reasonably successful soprano who performed regularly with small and large companies, including the N.V. Nationale Opera run by Willem van Korlaar Jr (1890-1937).<sup>28</sup> There are also reports of solo performances in the newspapers.<sup>29</sup> In the nineteen-twenties Masthoff was associated as a singing teacher with the Muzieklyceum Willem Feltzer in Rotterdam and the Muziek-Instituut Vink en v.d. Elshoudt in The Hague.<sup>30</sup>

The new flat Brugman and Masthoff moved into in 1919 gave the couple plenty of space to work and study at home. There is a surviving photograph of the back room, where Masthoff practised her music, which gives an impression of the way the flat was originally furnished. Her piano and an upright chair stood in front of the sliding doors; beside it, in the corner, was a rather worn armchair. Above a



rug in the centre hung an electric light with a fabric lampshade (fig. 12). It is the modest interior of two young women. However, the temporary move of Theo van Doesburg and his new girlfriend Nelly van Moorsel to The Hague at the end of 1922 was the starting signal for an extraordinary change that could be called anything but modest (fig. 13).



Fig. 12  
VILMOS HUSZÁR,  
*Back room in*  
*20 Ligusterstraat in*  
*The Hague, c. 1922-23.*  
Rotterdam, Het  
Nieuwe Instituut,  
HUSZ Archive,  
inv. no. f.1.

Fig. 13  
Attributed to  
THEO AND NELLY  
VAN DOESBURG,  
*Double Portrait of*  
*Theo and Nelly van*  
*Doesburg, from*  
*Theo and Nelly van*  
*Doesburg's private*  
*album, Weimar, 1921.*  
Gelatin silver print  
on card, 11.8 x 11.8 cm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. RP-F-2003-101;  
purchased with  
the support of  
the Paul Huf Fonds/  
Rijksmuseum Fonds.



Fig. 14a

THEO VAN DOESBURG (probably), (from left to right) Cornelis van Eesteren, Nelly van Moorsel and Til Brugman in Lena Milius's Flat, 18 Klimopstraat in The Hague, 1923. The Hague, RKD, Van Doesburg Archive, inv. no. AB98008/1578.



Fig. 14b

THEO VAN DOESBURG (probably), (from left to right) Cornelis van Eesteren, Til Brugman and Nelly van Moorsel in Lena Milius's Flat, 18 Klimopstraat in The Hague, 1923. The Hague, RKD, Van Doesburg Archive, inv. no. AB98008/1578.

Fig. 15

ANONYMOUS, (from left to right) Bart de Ligt, Nelly van Moorsel, Theo van Doesburg, Kurt Schwitters, Helma Schwitters and Ina de Ligt in Lena Milius's Flat, 18 Klimopstraat in The Hague, 1923. The Hague, RKD, Van Doesburg Archive, inv. no. AB9789/1572. El Lissitzky's 1920 work *Proun 30t* can be seen in the background, rotated a quarter turn from its original horizontal position, see fig. 31.

### Til and Sienna and Theo and Nelly

Van Doesburg's wife Lena Milius moved from Leiden to The Hague in the summer of 1922, taking the records of *De Stijl* magazine with her. Loyal as she was to her 'Does', she let Theo and his new love stay in her home. Milius's flat at number 18 Klimopstraat was walking distance from Brugman's flat in Ligusterstraat. It became a lively meeting place for friends and colleagues. Brugman went to dinner there with Nelly and the young architect Cornelis van Eesteren, and Kurt and Helma Schwitters stayed there, too (figs. 14a-b-15). Their home was the base of operations for the now famous Dada Campaign of soirées Theo and Nelly, Schwitters and Huszár toured around the Netherlands in the spring of 1923.<sup>31</sup> The company performed twice in The Hague and it goes without saying that Brugman and Masthoff would have attended at least one of these performances.

It is not possible at present to establish whether Brugman had met Van Doesburg before he moved to The Hague. Her old friend Mondrian may have introduced them and recommended her to Van Doesburg as a translator in the early years of *De Stijl*. The scant surviving correspondence reveals that in 1923, in any event, they were getting on very well. Van Doesburg called her 'Dear Boy!',

for instance, and there is a delightful photograph of Nelly and Til standing by the aeroplane in which Brugman may have flown to London at the end of 1923 (fig. 16).<sup>32</sup> But relations rapidly cooled. Van Doesburg wrote to J.J.P. Oud in 1924:



In The Hague there lives a little monster, which professes to be homosexual, but is as female as a newborn dry nurse, it's called Brugman. It makes it its daily business to smear me with Crap, Shit and perfumed spermatozoa. It writes me volumes along the lines of "Baas wat is er van je eieren" – Yap. Her rubbish verses did not find a place in De Stijl ... that sort of people also ask me: what is the Stijl group nowadays?<sup>33</sup>

Lena Milius was surprised at how alike Van Doesburg and Brugman were. When Brugman was in London, Lena wrote to her in a rather mollifying manner:

That calculating about your money was priceless, it could have been by Does word for word ... Are you sure you're not a by-blow of his mother's or he of yours? Otherwise it's incomprehensible how two people could be so utterly alike in some respects. ... sometimes I think it's frightening. But you're a darling, you know, it's not that!<sup>34</sup>

As well as the remarkable resemblance in character – both were energetic, fiery, overbearing and quarrelsome – Brugman and Van Doesburg had other things in common. Both had younger, attractive partners with above-average musical talent. Although Nelly was

seven years younger than Sienna, she unreservedly appointed herself as her mentor in matters of modern music. After Sienna had stayed with them in Paris in the spring of 1923, the extremely well-informed Nelly wrote to tell her which new compositions might be interesting:

Hello Sienna! Modern song as follows: "Chant de nourtiee" D. Milhaud "Catalogue de Fleurs" D. Milhaud. Then some by Satie & Auric. I think it's all loathsome. But you might like it. There's a song, "Souvenirs d'enfance", by Honegger, which I haven't heard. Shall I order something for you??<sup>35</sup>

By then Masthoff had had more than enough opportunity to discover Nelly's modern piano repertoire. At the Dada soirées she played work by Vittorio Rieti and Eric Satie. And she presented a more extensive programme in Lili Green's Dansinstituut in Parkstraat in The Hague at a *Moderne Soirée* on 12 March and a *Moderne Klavieravond* on 4 April, when she played pieces by Arthur Honegger, Daniel Ruyneman, Francis Poulenc, Josef Hauer, Jacob van Domselaer, Arnold Schönberg, Gian Francesco Malipiero and Egon Wellesz.<sup>36</sup>

This repertoire was a good deal more avant-garde than Masthoff was



Fig. 16  
THEO VAN DOESBURG (probably), Nelly van Doesburg (left) and Til Brugman by the Handley Page W.8b Registration G-EBBG of the Airline Handley Page Transport, Possibly at Le Bourget Airfield near Paris, 1923. The Hague, RKD, Van Doesburg Archive, inv. no. AB9797|1576.

accustomed to sing. Newspaper reports tell us that she performed with the Dutch National Opera in the 1920-21 season in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and *Die toten Augen* (The Dead Eyes) by Eugen d'Albert. As a soloist she sang, among other things, *Lieder* by Brahms and Hugo Wolf.<sup>37</sup> The most modern pieces in her repertoire were songs by Willem Pijper that she had sung at a concert in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1919.<sup>38</sup> It is not possible to discover whether Masthoff ever performed in public the pieces Nelly had recommended. There would certainly not have been any demand for it in regular performances. Her encounter with this contemporary music did, though, have repercussions in her immediate surroundings.

#### 'Does room colour – with colour'

'For Tilly Brugman for her work for "De Stijl",' wrote Theo van Doesburg in a copy of the anthology *Verzamelde volzinnen* by Evert Rinsema, which was published in 1920 under the banner of *De Stijl*.<sup>39</sup> It can be deduced from the surviving correspondence that in 1923 this 'work' largely involved drumming up new subscribers and troubleshooting the administration of the magazine. In return, Van Doesburg designed a spatial colour composition for her small workroom.

In April 1923, when the Dada Campaign was over, Theo and Nelly van Doesburg went to Berlin. After they arrived, Nelly wrote to Brugman, telling her that they had 'forgotten to take all the de Stijl records' with them. Without a second thought, Brugman was set to work: 'Please would you now just send a little list of the subscribers you recorded, for mécano too!'<sup>40</sup> In the weeks that followed she tried to get the records into some sort of order again. But when they travelled on to Paris, this time they left behind the stock of *De Stijl* that was still in the Berlin studio. Like the records,

however, they also turned out to be needed after all, and Brugman received another urgent request: 'So will you sort that business out when you're in Berlin? ... See to it that you get that Stijl mess in order, otherwise it will all go wrong!'<sup>41</sup>

Brugman did not find it too much of a burden to do Van Doesburg's dirty work for him. It was actually in her interests to run round after him, because he, after all, was the person who could give her access to I.K. Bonset, whose radical modern sound poems in *De Stijl* were undoubtedly a shining example for Brugman. But Van Doesburg did not reveal to Brugman, any more than to anyone else, that he himself was hiding behind this fictitious person. 'I want to write you a separate letter about your verses, Til. I sent them to Bonset in Vienna and am awaiting his reply,' wrote Van Doesburg to Brugman around May 1923.<sup>42</sup> On 9 July, the 'reply' came: 'And now something about your verses. Bonset wrote me a letter in which he praised your work very highly. He has picked out one, which he says is the best, to ... in his [the rest is missing].'<sup>43</sup> The 'best' one was Brugman's poem *R*, which Van Doesburg alias Bonset included in his article on new trends in Dutch poetry which he ran in *De Stijl* in the summer of 1923 (fig. 3).<sup>44</sup> Brugman was definitely proud of her literary debut, as is clear from a postcard Rietveld wrote her: 'Nice for you, Til, that Bonset thinks it's important. I'd like to read some things by you, too.'<sup>45</sup>

Alongside the work she did for *De Stijl* magazine, she also tried to drum up commissions for Van Doesburg. The contact with the dentist Hugo Réthy (1875-1953), whom she may have got to know as his patient, seemed particularly promising. Réthy and Brugman became friends and continued to correspond until his death.<sup>46</sup> A specialist in dentistry and oral hygiene, he also had aspirations as

a philosopher and an interest in art.<sup>47</sup> His interest was fuelled by, among other things, courses given by the painter and art teacher H.P. Bremmer (1871-1956).<sup>48</sup>

At the end of 1922, Réthy moved from Bazarstraat to Billitonstraat in The Hague and Brugman tried to persuade him to have at least one room and, if possible, the whole house decorated and furnished by Van Doesburg and Rietveld working together again. 'You're an angel, promoting me like that, I hope that something comes of it,' Van Doesburg wrote to Brugman from Paris on 9 July:

I can certainly do with it, because living here is very expensive. I shall ask a low price, though. What do you think of 150 guilders for the whole solution? Or, if that's still too high, 125 guilders? It's a lot of work! Still, something may yet come of the other 7 rooms. As a rule a solution like that costs 200 guilders. Rietveld promised me at the time that I should also specify the colours for the furniture. Yet I don't hear from him. He's a queer fish, but certainly one of the first-class Stijl architects.<sup>49</sup>

For the art-loving dentist-philosopher, however, it was a costly undertaking and he had to think it over carefully. 'Réthy's still mulling it over, hasn't come round, there's still a chance if the carpenter turns out cheaper than expected,' wrote Brugman to Rietveld on 14 July 1923.<sup>50</sup> In the end the plan fell through. According to Van Doesburg, it was not the only disappointment Brugman had caused him. From the tone he took it is evident that relations had already deteriorated. 'You haven't had much success with "De Stijl",' he wrote sourly in a letter of 5 January 1924. 'Most of them don't pay, or send the invoice back marked: not ordered. I'm not one of the lucky ones. The Réthy room didn't come to anything either.'<sup>51</sup>

Réthy could have seen how a renovation might have turned out in the new studio created for the photographer Henri Berssenbrugge (1873-1959). This interior, just around the corner from Réthy's old house in Bazarstraat, had been designed by architect Jan Wils (1891-1972) and Vilmos Huszár. The result received glowing reviews in the press.<sup>52</sup> Brugman may also have shown him her room, which was finished in the early summer of 1923: 'I hope that my room gives such satisfaction – that a little one comes of it,' wrote Van Doesburg to Brugman mischievously. From Van Doesburg's spiteful remarks to Oud it appears that he was not wholly convinced of Brugman's homosexuality and by 'a little one' he could have meant a child, but more likely he meant – ambiguously expressed – a *paid* commission from Réthy, for he followed this by saying, 'I really need some work!'<sup>53</sup>

The spatial colour solution Doesburg had devised for Brugman was most probably for the small room at the back of the flat, adjacent to the room where Sienna played and practised (appendix pp. 168-69).<sup>54</sup> The correspondence on the subject gives the impression that it was a workroom for Brugman. Neither the design nor pictorial records have survived, however, so that only a cursory image can be formed on the basis of a few indications. The time it was designed virtually coincides with the work on the 'colour construction' for the hall and exterior of Mrs van Zessen's house in Alblasterdam, built to a design by Cornelis van Eesteren. Van Doesburg probably began this latter design in The Hague and finished it in Paris.<sup>55</sup>

Because Brugman's room and the hall in the Van Zessen house were relatively small spaces, we can assume some similarity between the two schemes. The comparison helps explain Van Doesburg's remarks in his letter. In the Van Zessen house hall, Van Doesburg had one dominant

colour. The side of the staircase, which cuts the space diagonally, was painted yellow. To create both dynamism and balance, he had the panels of the doors around the staircase painted red, blue, black and grey at different heights (fig. 17). Van Doesburg took the same approach for Brugman's room, as we see from the instructions he sent from Paris when work started on executing the design in mid-May:

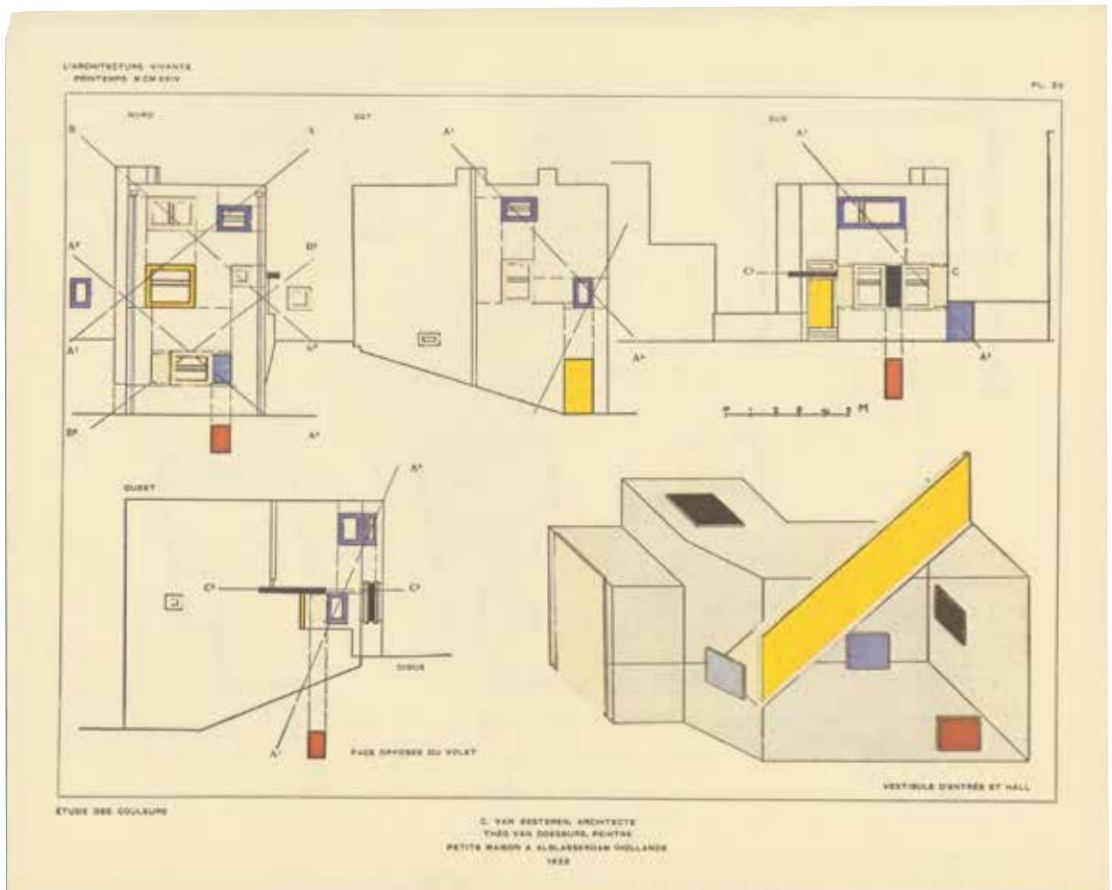
I'm glad you like the little room. I think the yellow is still a little too bright, but the red's too dark. I'm very curious to see how it's turned out. Huszár also wrote to me in passing about it. He thought the red was too much. Has the little panel on the door already been painted?<sup>56</sup>

And when Brugman sent him a 'snap of the room' two months later, he commented on the painting of the woodwork – which according to the sketch in the letter was made of panelled sections – under the window, which was directly opposite the door (fig. 18):

I see that the area under the window has not been covered with cardboard. That's a shame, because now it works as painted wood and not as a flat plane. Can it still be changed?<sup>57</sup>

In 1956 Brugman herself described the design as a room in 'colour – with colour'. This suggests that there was one dominant colour as in the hall of the Van Zessen house. In this case it

Fig. 17  
THEO VAN DOESBURG,  
*Colour Construction for Van Zessen House in Alblasterdam, 1923.*  
Colour plate 20 in *L'architecture vivante* (Spring 1924).  
Utrecht, University Library, Special Collections, UBU VWP 721.



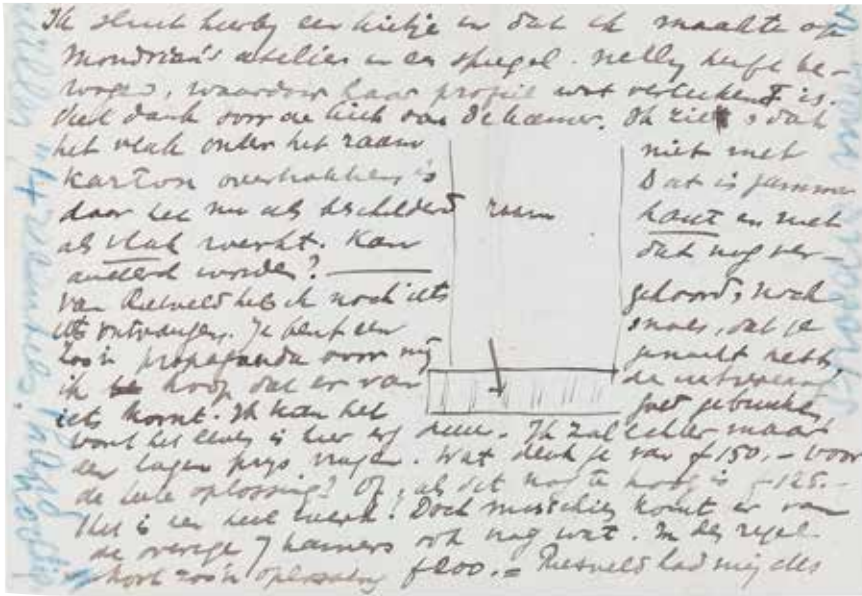


Fig. 18  
THEO VAN  
DOESBURG,  
Sketch of a Detail  
of the Spatial  
Colour Composition  
for Til Brugman's  
Workroom, 1923.  
Letter to Til Brugman,  
9 July 1923.  
The Hague, RKD,  
Jaffé Archive.

could not be an architectural element like a staircase, only a large area on the wall – possibly in the red that Huszár thought was ‘too much’ – which was kept in equilibrium by smaller areas under the window and on the door. Just such a big red plane also dominates Van Doesburg’s large painting *Contra-Composition v*, which was finished a year later (fig. 19).

Van Doesburg promised to supply an appropriate design for the lighting to complete the room: ‘I don’t like that lamp in your little room either. I’ll send you a sketch for a covering soon, for iron+glass construction.’<sup>58</sup> We do not know whether he ever made this design.

Van Doesburg’s spatial colour composition made a fitting setting for Brugman’s burgeoning writing career. As well as sound poems and ‘rabbilverzen’ – poems dedicated to friends and acquaintances in which she played with unusual words and nonsense language in an inventive way<sup>59</sup> – in the course of the nineteen-twenties she embarked on an ambitious cycle of novels. The first volume, *Bodem*, was finished in 1934 and published in 1946. ‘The second one’s

called *Plant*,’ she wrote to Leo Braat. ‘The third one “Vrucht” is finished too. They’ve all been finished for years. The next: Red, Yellow, Blue. Notes from 1928 onwards.’<sup>60</sup> The successive titles – which translate as soil, plant, fruit – culminating in the last part *Red, Yellow,*

Fig. 19  
THEO VAN  
DOESBURG,  
*Contra-Composition v*,  
1924.  
Oil on canvas,  
100 x 100 cm.  
Amsterdam,  
Stedelijk Museum,  
inv. no. A567.





*Blue* suggest that Brugman was trying to express Mondrian's neoplastic theory about the evolution from natural to abstract reality in literary form.

### Sienna Masthoff's Music Room

Brugman's efforts for *De Stijl* and Van Doesburg in general were not without self-interest. Her contact with him provided a platform for her emerging literary talent, recognition by an esteemed and respected colleague (even if he was a fiction, for nobody knew that) and undoubtedly the hope of more publications. Van Doesburg, for his part, was sincerely grateful to her for her work for *De Stijl* and promised to continue the changes to the interior of her flat. 'When we come back in November, I shall compose the front back room! Out of sheer gratitude,' he wrote in a letter to Brugman on 17 May 1923.<sup>61</sup> The idea of changing the back room as well had actually come from Masthoff, however: 'I had thought, in

the summer [?] to make that room and already discussed it with you both. Sienna asked me when I was working on the little room.'<sup>62</sup> Just as Brugman had been given an appropriate setting for her avant-garde writing, so Masthoff also seemed to have a growing need for a living and working space that reflected her changing musical interests.

Van Doesburg was surprised and not a little put out when he discovered that Huszár had meanwhile made a design for Sienna's music room. There is no evidence as to how and when the contact with Huszár came about, but it can only have been in cultural circles in The Hague. With his *Mechanical Dancing Figure*, with which he performed at the Dada soirées, he seems to have made quite an impression in any event, for in Brugman's unpublished, semi-autobiographical novel *Treesje van Boven – Gods Kind* a young man in her circle of friends whose ambition is

Fig. 20  
VILMOS HUSZÁR,  
*Spatial colour*  
*composition design*  
for Sienna Masthoff's  
music room,  
20 Ligusterstraat in  
The Hague, May 1923.  
Photographic  
reproduction.  
Rotterdam, Het  
Nieuwe Instituut,  
HUSZ Archive,  
inv. no. fi.  
Whereabouts  
of the original  
drawing unknown.



to fully automate the theatre features prominently.<sup>63</sup>

Huszár supplied a detailed drawing of a spatial colour composition for the back room in Brugman and Masthoff's flat. He sent a photograph of it to Van Doesburg, who in turn showed it to Mondrian. Van Doesburg sent his comments to Brugman by return of post:

To judge from the photograph it's a very decorative solution. I see a lot of good things in it, but Mondrian didn't like it at all. "Huszár doesn't understand any of it," he said. It's a bit, like all his solutions, following a particular trick. One movement thus, and one movement countering it. But a room isn't a merry-go-round!<sup>64</sup>

Huszár's design shows the situation from the window side, which faced southeast (fig. 20). In the drawing the room has been stripped of all its old soft furnishings and furniture. The

impression it gives is that the plaster mouldings on the ceiling and the coving on the chimney breast would also have to be removed. This would appear to have been too drastic or too expensive, however, for they were retained when the design was finally executed (figs. 7, 12, 21a-b; appendix pp. 168-69).

In a definite departure from the discrete areas of colour on the walls that characterized his earlier designs, the planes on the walls overlap and continue around the corners and over the cupboard doors. It gave the room a dynamism which prompted the critical remark about a merry-go-round. Along with these dynamic compositions on the walls, a more static form of composition was used for the structural elements of the room that could not easily be modified: the chimney, the ceiling and the alcove with the sliding doors to the front room, against which the piano was placed. For these elements of

*Figs. 21a-b*  
ANONYMOUS,  
*Back room at*  
*20 Ligusterstraat*  
*in The Hague with*  
*a spatial colour*  
*composition*  
*to a design by*  
*Vilmos Huszár*  
*and furniture by*  
*Gerrit Rietveld, 1923.*  
Rotterdam, Het  
Nieuwe Instituut,  
HUSZ Archive,  
inv. no. fi.



the room, a rectangular plane was always framed by wide horizontal and vertical strips in two shades. In terms of composition, there were indeed two principles or 'movements' working counter to one another, as Van Doesburg wrote.

Brugman's note for Jaffé's dissertation leaves it in no doubt that the room was done in shades of grey. This means that there is also a connection with Huszár's 1918 *Composition in Grey*, an important painting that Van Doesburg had reviewed at length in *De Stijl* and also illustrated in his slim volume *Barok-Klassiek-Modern* (fig. 22).<sup>65</sup> It was bought at an exhibition in Groningen in 1922 by the composer Daniel Ruyneman (1886-1963), whose piano work *Hallucination* (1914) and others Nelly van Doesburg played in concerts at Lili Green's school of dance. Ruyneman was the force behind the establishment of the Nederlandse Vereniging tot Ontwikkeling der Moderne Scheppende Toonkunst (the Dutch Society for the Development of Modern Creative Music) and in 1918 his radical *Hieroglyphs* and the choral work *The Call (Colour Range for Mixed Voices)* put him in the front line of innovative trends in music. After moving to Groningen in 1920, he became music editor of the magazine *Blad voor Kunst* published by H.N. Werkman (1882-1945).<sup>66</sup> The fact that this particular painting had been purchased recently by such a prominent representative of the musical avant-garde may in the end have influenced the decision to ask Huszár, not Van Doesburg, to use a similar palette and compositional scheme as the starting point for a music room.

### Furniture by Rietveld

Unlike Van Doesburg, who only afterwards said anything about the addition of a suitable lamp, Huszár drew a room complete with furniture and lighting for Sienna. The execution of his design was begun in June-

July 1923, when the little room by Van Doesburg was probably almost finished. Everything was done according to plan except, oddly enough, the furniture. The photographs – two of which have never been published before<sup>67</sup> – show that the simple pendant lamp made of two opal glass plates that Huszár had drawn was indeed installed, as was the divan opposite the fireplace and the little tea table beside it (figs. 7, 21a-b). An order for the other furniture was placed with Gerrit Rietveld. Here again, who took the initiative for this – Huszár, Brugman or Masthoff – and how this contact came about is unclear.<sup>68</sup>

It appears from the correspondence between Brugman, Masthoff and Rietveld in 1923 that, besides the armchair and the occasional table, conspicuous in the photographs of the interior, they also ordered an upright

Fig. 22  
VILMOS HUSZÁR,  
*Composition in Grey* (*Composition No. 10*), 1918.  
Oil on canvas in a frame painted in oils,  
60.3 x 44.9 cm  
(including frame).  
The Hague,  
Gemeentemuseum,  
inv. no. 1026334.



chair, an inkwell, a letter rack and a piano stool, as well as a lectern for Brugman's writing that had already been delivered. Taken together it was a fairly substantial commission for existing slat furniture (the armchair and the upright chair) and some newly designed furniture and accessories at special request.

Something went wrong with the delivery of the armchair. On 14 July 1923, Brugman expressed her irritation with Rietveld about various shortcomings in his work:

The chairs have arrived but you've made a serious mistake. You've sent 2 armchairs instead of 1 armchair and 1 ordinary chair . . . [Sienna] was not pleased, particularly because both chairs were covered in printing that had transferred from the newspaper you packed them in. What's she supposed to do about that? Send the upright chair (for the table) straight away. I think it's a damn disgrace. We'll keep the extra armchair for the time being [?], perhaps someone else will want it. But hurry up and put it right.<sup>69</sup>

Rietveld did put it right. No trace of disfiguring ink marks could be seen on the snow-white armchair later and the upright chair was delivered (figs. 1, 7, 10, 23). Both were existing designs dating from 1919 that he had previously used in other interiors, although he had changed some details.<sup>70</sup> For instance, the upright chair was made with a leather back rather than a wooden one and the armrests of the armchair were made wider. The monochrome white finish of the armchair was doubtless geared to the colour composition of the room in consultation with Huszár.

The rest of the furniture and accessories, on the other hand, were designed specifically for Brugman and Masthoff. The occasional table is often erroneously described as a design intended for the new house of Truus



Schröder-Schräder (1889-1985) which established Rietveld's reputation as an architect. In fact, Masthoff and Brugman's was the first interior in which it was used. This version can also be regarded as the very first model or prototype; in later versions various changes were made in the proportions of the components and the thickness of the materials. In contrast to the walls and the armchair, it was painted in primary colours (figs. 9, 24; appendix pp. 168-69).<sup>71</sup>

Huszár saw straight away that the little table was a fine design. But he also unerringly put his finger on its defects: 'Huszár likes the table. He says it's a shame that the top is crooked and the support slat differs from the table top,' wrote Sienna Masthoff to Rietveld. In the same breath she asked for a piano stool to go with the table:

*Fig. 23*  
ANONYMOUS,  
*Interior of the*  
*back room at*  
*20 Ligusterstraat,*  
*c. 1926-29.*  
With armchair,  
occasional table  
and upright chair  
by Gerrit Rietveld.  
Berlin, Berlinische  
Galerie, Hannah  
Höch Archive.

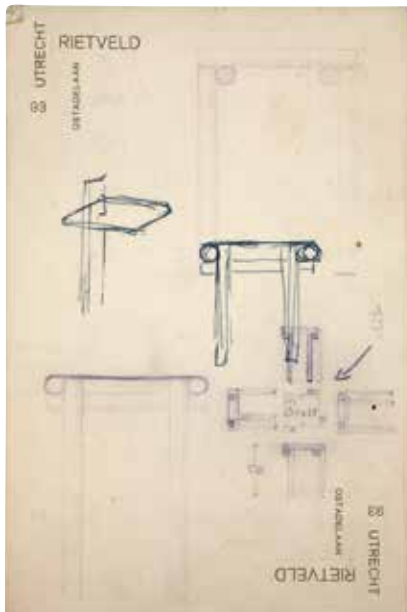


Fig. 24  
Colour Reconstruction of the Back Room at 20 Ligusterstraat in The Hague with a Spatial Colour Composition to a Design by Vilmos Huszár and Furniture by Gerrit Rietveld, 1923.

Reproduction Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (fig. 7), digital colour reconstruction by Frans Pegt, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum. Whereabouts of the original photograph unknown.

Will you send me a model for a piano stool before 20 July; high, otherwise I sit too low for the piano; then can it be finished at the beginning of September, something in the style of the little table, well, you know what I mean.<sup>72</sup>

In reply Rietveld sent a postcard with some sketches of a stool that would be made of cylindrical timber, with a leather seat. The legs – echoing the table – were placed asymmetrically: three diagonally on the outside and one on the inside. He asked whether the height of fifty centimetres was all right, otherwise ‘something could always be done about it’ (figs. 25a-b).<sup>73</sup> It is unlikely that this piano stool as such was ever made. It does not appear in the photographs and it has never surfaced anywhere.



Figs. 25a-b  
Postcard (recto and verso) from Gerrit Rietveld to Til Brugman and Sienna Masthoff, Utrecht, undated [1923]. With sketches for a piano stool made of cylindrical timber with a leather seat. The Hague, rkd, Hans Jaffé Archive.



The diagonal placement of the legs seems rather unfortunate and the whole thing looks uncomfortable and unstable. It is therefore more probable that this sketch developed into the piano stool Rietveld made several times from 1923 onwards, with a leather back and seat, legs placed conventionally in the corners to increase the stability (fig. 26).<sup>74</sup> We do not know whether Sienna Masthoff had a piano stool like this.

A previously completely unknown inkwell is an asymmetric design as successful as the occasional table. On the same postcard Til Brugman twice asked for it to be delivered soon because, she wrote, 'the thing here has overturned again'. Zooming in on the occasional table in the previously unpublished photographs of the music room shows up an object consisting of a light-coloured ball with a black spot to which two round rods are attached (fig. 27). It is a mysterious, almost spectral object, which proves, however, to correspond with an object in the collection of the Berlinische Galerie: an ivory billiard ball that has been drilled out. A black-painted rod has been attached horizontally, and a red-lacquered tube vertically (fig. 28).<sup>75</sup>



Fig. 26

GERRIT RIETVELD,  
*Piano Stool*, 1923.  
Utrecht, Centraal  
Museum, Rietveld  
Schröder Archive,  
inv. no. 068 F 012.  
Photo: © CMU/  
Pictoright,  
Amsterdam 2017.



Fig. 27

Detail of photograph  
in fig. 21a.

Fig. 28

GERRIT RIETVELD,  
attributed to  
El Lissitzky, *Inkwell  
with Pen Holder*,  
Utrecht, 1923.  
Ivory, metal and  
paint, h. 5.2 cm.  
Berlin, Berlinische  
Galerie, inv. no.  
BG-50153/76.  
© Heirs Gerrit  
Rietveld/Pictoright,  
Amsterdam 2017.

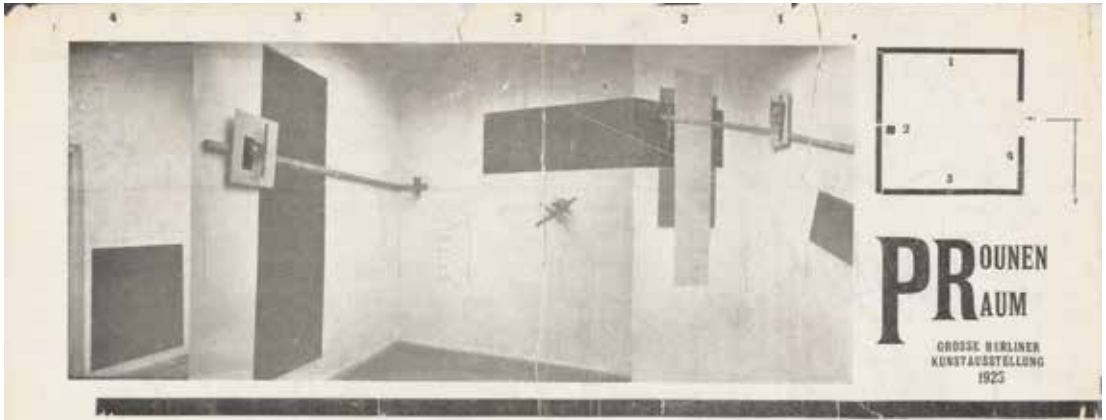


Fig. 29

EL LISSITZKY,  
*Prounenraum*, 1923.  
Photograph published  
in *G: Material  
zur elementaren  
Gestaltung* (July 1923),  
no. 1.

Berlin, Staats-  
bibliothek,  
Preußischer  
Kulturbesitz, Abtei-  
lung Historische  
Drucke, shelf mark  
Nb 647 : R.

The object comes from the estate of Hannah Höch and is attributed to El Lissitzky. This attribution is based on a superficial likeness to the construction of a ball and laths mounted on the rear wall in his 1923 *Prounenraum*, but this can safely be rejected (fig. 29).<sup>76</sup> Lissitzky's piece has three square laths rather than two round rods, the size is different and the proportions and position of the elements are not the same. Photographs, correspondence and provenance are strong indications that this is the inkwell Til Brugman commissioned from Rietveld in July 1923. There was probably an accompanying round pen, now lost, that stood in the red tube.

The design was in keeping with the occasional table, likewise combining a round shape with two straight lines at right angles. It also provided the basic shape for the table lamp Rietveld designed two years later. The ivory ball was replaced with a heavy iron tube and a fitting with a lamp, partially painted black, was mounted on the tall upright (fig. 30).<sup>77</sup>



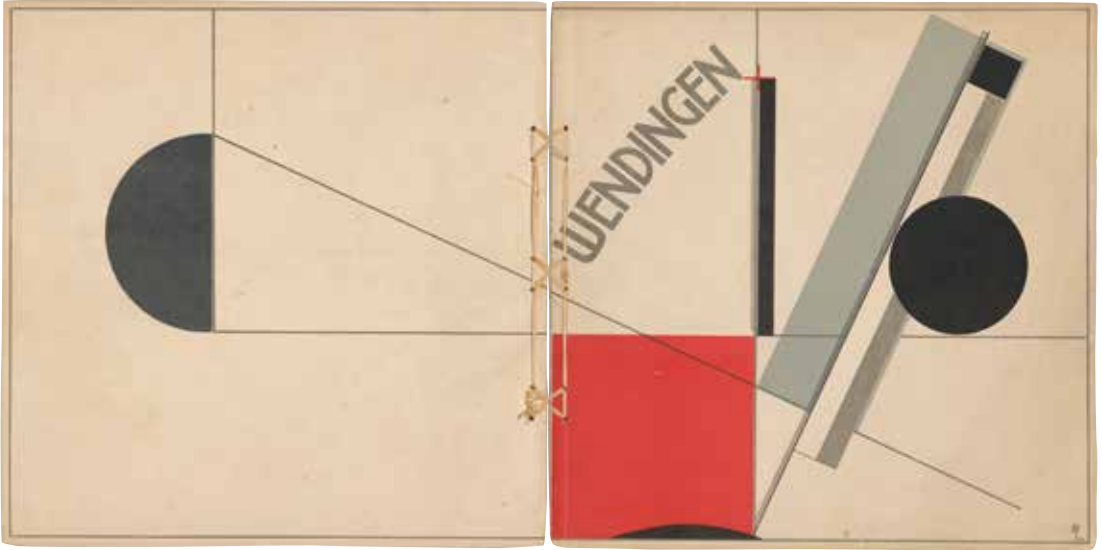


Fig. 31

EL LISSITZKY,  
Cover of  
*Wendingen* 4 (1921),  
no. 11, recto and verso,  
Amsterdam, 1922.  
Lithograph,  
330 x 660 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. RP-D-2012-3.

### A Proun-like Room?

A striking and characteristic aspect of these designs – some not previously known – is the bold combination of asymmetrically placed planes and lines with round shapes. This approach to composition was a significant departure from the structures with rails and up-rights in Rietveld's earlier furniture designs.<sup>78</sup> An outside incentive appears to have been responsible for this remarkable and sudden change.

Rietveld's new approach to a piece of furniture as a three-dimensional structure of rectangular planes and round elements coincides with the moment when El Lissitzky stayed in the Netherlands on the occasion of the 'Eerste Russische Kunsttentoonstelling' (First Exhibition of Russian

Art), which ran from 29 April to 28 May 1923 in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.<sup>79</sup> Lissitzky's fame as the herald of the Russian avant-garde had gone before him through his striking visual contributions to the Dutch magazines *Wendingen* and *De Stijl* (fig. 31).<sup>80</sup> One of his paintings may already have been brought to the Netherlands by Van Doesburg or Schwitters at the end of 1922 or early 1923 (figs. 15, 32). He gave lectures on

Fig. 32

EL LISSITZKY,  
*Proun 30t*, 1920.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm.  
Hanover,  
Sprengel Museum,  
inv. no. SH 9,1999.  
Photo: bpk / Sprengel  
Museum Hanover /  
Michael Herling /  
Benedikt Werner.

&lt; Fig. 30

GERRIT RIETVELD,  
*Table Lamp*, 1925.  
Utrecht,  
Centraal Museum,  
Rietveld Schröder  
Archive,  
inv. no. 101 F 001.  
Photo: © CMU/  
Pictoright,  
Amsterdam 2017.





the 'new Russian art' in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht and established contacts with a number of Dutch artists, architects and designers, Rietveld among them.<sup>81</sup> He most probably stayed with the painter Willem van Leusden (1886-1974) in Maarsse (near Utrecht) and with Huszár in Voorburg (near The Hague).<sup>82</sup> Several photograms he made with Huszár are evidence of this stay (figs. 33-34).<sup>83</sup> It goes without saying that formal artistic principles would also have been discussed during these visits. In fact, traces of such a discussion can be found in the correspondence with Oud. Lissitzky cast doubt on the universal significance attached by Van Doesburg in particular to the straight horizontal and vertical line, as he wrote to Oud on 30 June 1924:

The 'Universal' = Straight Line + Vertical does not correspond with the universe, where there are only curvatures and no straight lines. Hence the sphere (not the cube) is the crystal of the universe, but we cannot do anything with it (the sphere) since that

is the final state (death); that is why we concentrate on the elements of the cube, which can always be reassembled and destroyed at will (life). A modern machine must have something spherical, since the circular motion is its *advantage*, compared with the straight-line to-and-fro motion of the human hand/foot. And if our flat, our house, is an apparatus for accommodating our body (like clothing) why should it not incorporate the spherical?<sup>84</sup>

Lissitzky would not have thought very differently about this a year earlier. His views conflicted with the dogma of the straight line in De Stijl circles, and with a reference to 'the machine' he justified the functional use of the sphere and the circle in the home. Rietveld's occasional table, inkwell and later his table lamp attest to such newly acquired freedom. They could be interpreted as the spatial and practical translation of Lissitzky's abstract compositions, which he called *Prouns*. The appreciation was mutual: in his enthusiasm for Rietveld's work, Lissitzky had also

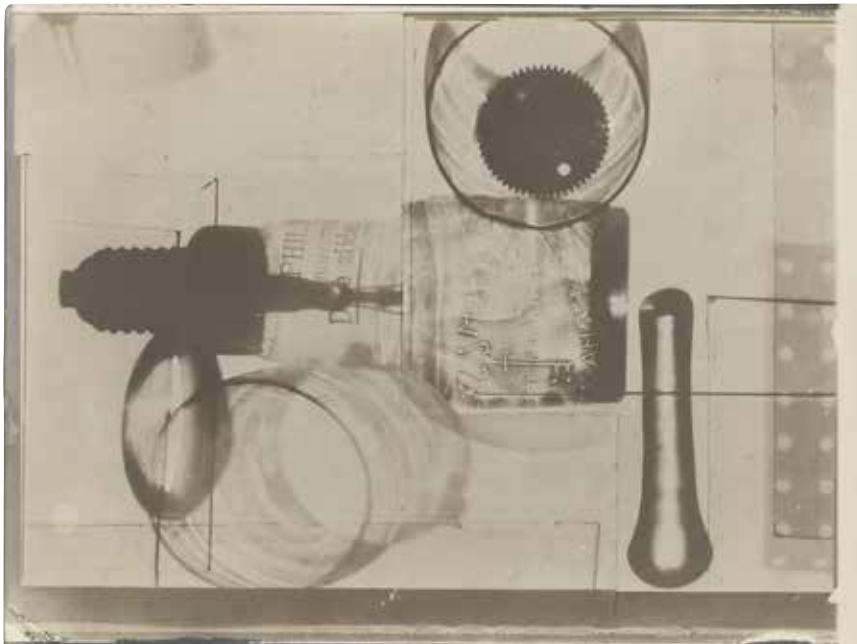
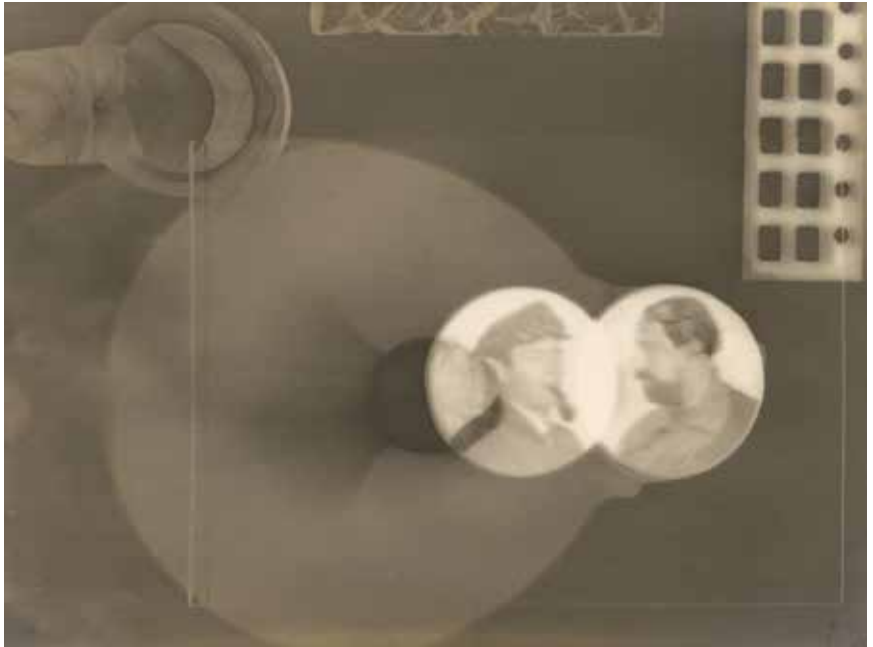


Fig. 33  
EL LISSITZKY and  
VILMOS HUSZÁR,  
4 i Lampe Helio-  
konstruktion 125 Volt,  
Voorburg, 1923.  
Gelatin silver print,  
90 x 120 mm.  
Rotterdam, Het  
Nieuwe Instituut,  
EEST Archive,  
inv. no. 10.1414;  
on loan from the  
collection of the  
Van Eesteren-Fluck &  
Van Lohuizen-  
stichting, Amsterdam.

Fig. 34

EL LISSITZKY,  
*Untitled (Lissitzky  
 and Huszár)*,  
 Voorburg, 1923.  
 Gelatin silver print,  
 177 x 238 mm.  
 Chicago, The Art  
 Institute of Chicago,  
 inv. no. 1992.100;  
 Mary L. and Leigh  
 B. Block Collection.  
 Photo: Bridgeman  
 Images.



ordered an armchair – the one that was delivered to Brugman and Masthoff at the beginning of July along with their own chair. This was the ‘mistake’ which, unaware of the order, Brugman accused Rietveld of so sourly.<sup>85</sup>

Lissitzky also went to visit Til Brugman, and Van Doesburg gave her elaborate instructions as to what she had to achieve with him. Although Van Doesburg wanted nothing to do with the new Russia, he did steer her towards cooperation:

Now something about the Russians. ... Above all, when Lissitsky comes to see you don't forget to show him those houses – Papaverhof. And the houses at the Boschjes van Poot (those white concrete houses).

These Russians are a bit too big for their boots, in the belief that they can change the world with their Bolshevism, both materially and spiritually. Make sure you talk them out of it and show them what's being done in Holland.- (show them museum Kröller too)

... ask whether the Russians want to demonstrate with the Dutch in the Stijl

group in Paris. A demonstration by the constructivists would really be something here. But – tread carefully, so they don't think too much of it. Make it seem as if it's your idea.<sup>86</sup>

Van Doesburg regarded Lissitzky's *Prouns* as ‘half works’. He meant by this that the Russian's abstract compositions were stuck fast in theory and had no practical application, even if they did fill a space (fig. 29). Van Doesburg's activities, in contrast, always revolved around the possibility of being able to make something, to apply the principles of De Stijl and make them visible in people's everyday surroundings. Neoplasticism was in principle universally applicable.

The contrast between Lissitzky's theoretical models and the practice of neoplasticism also seems to underlie the explanation of his *Prounenraum*, which could be seen at the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung from 19 May 1923. In this text, which was published in the first issue of *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung* and according to the signature was

written in The Hague in May 1923, he stressed not once, but twice that the *Prounenraum* was not a 'Wohnzimmer' but a 'Demonstrationsraum' designed to show that his abstract design idiom could also be used in three dimensions.<sup>87</sup> His insistence on this point suggests that he wanted to clear up a misunderstanding; his Dutch colleagues, who concerned themselves with practical design commissions, may have been inclined to interpret the *Prounenraum* at a practical level.

The design commissions were, after all, highly topical in the Netherlands at that time. Rietveld would most probably have shown him the interior for doctor Arie Hartog in Maarssen that he had just completed in collaboration with Willem van Leusden, and Huszár must certainly have taken him to see Berssenbrugge's new photographic studio. Van Doesburg's design for the little workroom for Brugman was ready, and the idea of redesigning Masthoff's music room had been born.

It is not inconceivable that Brugman also asked Lissitzky to design a room in her flat at this time but it seems unlikely. A practical commission of this kind was, after all, diametrically opposed to the theoretical and demonstrational nature of the *Prounenraum*. They did, though, develop a long-distance friendship that endured for years, and in 1924-25 they even made plans for an edition of her sound poems in a 'Phototipo' graphic version by Lissitzky.<sup>88</sup> In September 1926 he visited the Netherlands again. He had asked Brugman and Masthoff to secure him a visa for early September through the passport office in The Hague and he hoped to be able to spend a few days with them.<sup>89</sup> Brugman's personal situation had meanwhile changed dramatically, however. Her relationship with Masthoff had ended and her new lover Hannah Höch was preparing to come from Berlin to The Hague and move in with Brugman. The music room would serve as a studio.

Before Höch could come, Brugman had to resolve a problem with the tax authorities. In a long letter to her written on 6 September 1926, the infatuated Brugman described in minute detail and with her characteristic literary twists a visit from three tax officers. This source provides a unique view of her home at that moment:

I asked them to sit down. In the middle of the sacred hall. Then I opened all the doors of the adjacent rooms (5) [fig. 7; appendix pp. 168-69] and when they sat down like Civa, Vishnu and Brahma, from there they could see everything, and reach out and grab everything with the innumerable arms. In the studio they confiscated the sun and the instreaming light. In the course room the dark and stillness (there are still too little pupils, therefore all the more tax inspection) (which I made them understand) In the bedroom stood a bed frame (which didn't belong to me, but that doesn't matter, confiscated is confiscated) and in other rooms they glued the emptiness (future SPACE). ... They looked at the paintings here with a frowned forehead and nose.<sup>90</sup>

Brugman's remark about the 'future SPACE', originally 'zukünftig RAUM', can be interpreted as an intention to execute a design by Lissitzky in one of the rooms. Of all the artists who contributed to Brugman's interior, after all, he was the only one who described his spatial designs with the German word *Raum*, as in *Prounenraum* and *Demonstrationsraum für konstruktive Kunst*. De Stijl artists usually called their interiors spatial colour composition or solution, and Schwitters described his now famous installation in his house in Hanover as *Merzbau*. The capital letters also indicate that a specific 'space' was meant and the word was not used as a synonym for 'room'.

Shortly before his trip to the Netherlands, Lissitzky had designed and made a *Demonstrationsraum für konstruktive*

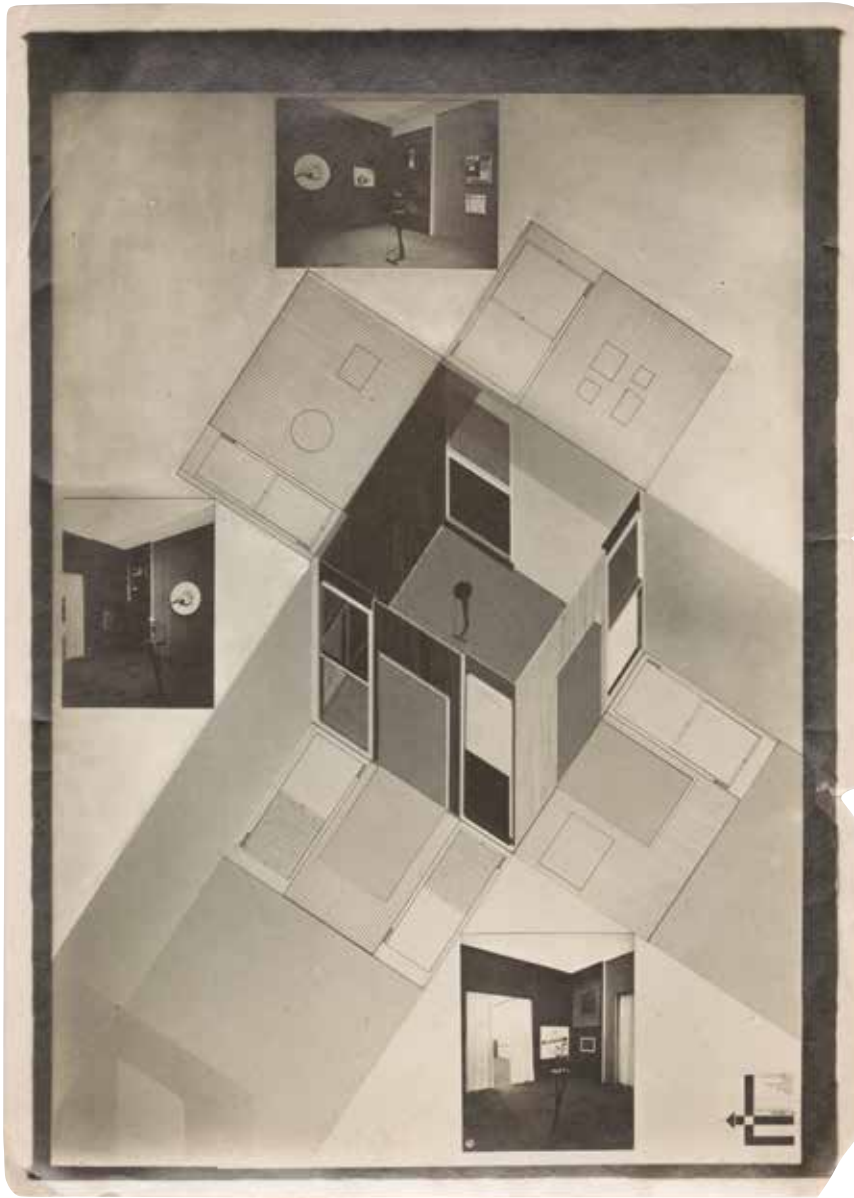


Fig. 35  
EL LISSITZKY,  
*Presentation drawing  
Demonstrationsraum  
für konstruktive  
Kunst, Internationale  
Kunstausstellung  
Dresden, 1926.*  
Photographic  
reproduction,  
gelatin silver print,  
180 x 130 mm.  
Rotterdam, Het  
Nieuwe Instituut,  
EEST Archive,  
inv. no. 10.1415;  
on loan from the  
collection of the  
Van Eesteren-  
Fluck & Van  
Lohuizenstichting,  
Amsterdam.  
Whereabouts of  
the original drawing  
unknown.

*Kunst* as a commission for the management of the Internationale Kunstausstellung in Dresden: it was a small exhibition space that had walls clad with battens placed at right angles at regular intervals. Paintings by Mondrian, Lissitzky himself and others hung from these battens. Panels with various textures and colours to provide a different background for specific works of art were left open in the corners.<sup>91</sup> Soon

after this he used the same principle for the *Kabinett der Abstrakten* in the Landesmuseum in Hanover, convinced that this could become a sort of 'standard' for exhibition spaces for 'new', in other words abstract art.<sup>92</sup>

At the end of July 1926, before his proposed visit in September, Lissitzky sent Brugman and Masthoff a photomontage of the Dresden *Demonstrationsraum* (fig. 35).<sup>93</sup> Although he was

used to promoting his own work in this way, in view of earlier plans to collaborate it could also be seen as a proposal for decorating a room in Brugman's flat. The concept could easily have been used in one of the small rooms off the hall (appendix pp. 168-69). This room could then have served as an exhibition space for Brugman's collection, which by then included abstract works by Lissitzky himself, Mondrian and Kurt Schwitters (figs. 8, 36).<sup>94</sup> But the contact between Brugman and Lissitzky petered out. As Brugman told Jaffé, no more than a start was made on carrying it out, possibly by emptying the room – hence 'the emptiness'. What remained was a pale shadow.

### Merz-like

Whereas the few indications make Lissitzky's contemplated contribution to Brugman's interior conceivable, there is as yet no trace of a 'Merz-like' room by Schwitters. This is all the more remarkable because Kurt Schwitters's Dutch travels and contacts – unlike El Lissitzky's – are well documented.<sup>95</sup> That Brugman and, with her, Jaffé mentioned such a room is sufficient reason to outline here the possible circumstances in which he, too, might have made his mark on Brugman's flat.

Schwitters first spent time in the Netherlands from January to March 1923, staying with the Van Doesburgs in Lena Milius's flat. The friendship he struck up with Brugman then endured for many years, even when she went to live with Hannah Höch in Berlin. The flat occupied by Brugman and Masthoff (and subsequently Höch) in Ligusterstraat became one of his regular places to stay.<sup>96</sup> On his return to Hanover after his first visit to the Netherlands, he wrote to Brugman on 24 April 1923: 'We would also like to make our apartment beautiful, but don't know where to start. Stucco ceiling decorations and old furniture won't work.'<sup>97</sup> In the course of that year he kept her

abreast of the progress, reporting at the beginning of 1924 that it was still not finished. He does not refer to it again in his increasingly infrequent letters. Blotkamp believes that these activities, inspired by the plans for the transformation of Brugman's flat, were the origin of *Merzbau*, the sculptural and labyrinthine structure he made out of street refuse and reclaimed timber in his house in Hanover.<sup>98</sup>

It would seem improbable that Brugman and Masthoff should have asked Schwitters to design a room in their flat during his first stay in The Hague. There is no hint of it in the correspondence and his contribution to the interior comes in third place on Brugman's list. It is more likely that a room by Schwitters was not created until later. The earliest this could have been was March-April 1924, when he again stayed with various Dutch friends and acquaintances and could have seen the rooms designed by Van Doesburg and Huszár with his own eyes. In the summer of 1926 he stayed for several weeks with Lajos d'Ébnet



Fig. 36  
KURT SCHWITTERS,  
*Für Tilly*, 1923.  
Oil and knob on  
wood, 25.8 x 15.8 cm.  
Private collection.  
Trustee: Sprengel  
Museum, Hanover.

and his wife, Nell, in Kijkduin. Besides the many convivial contacts he made at this time, it was also a productive period with which he was very pleased. Among other things he produced a series of fourteen paintings, and in the garden of their house he started work on a two-and-a-half-metre-high structure that he dubbed *Seemannsheim ohne Bubikopf* (Seaman's Home without Page Boy). He gave it to the d'Ébneths, but sadly it has been lost.<sup>99</sup>

If the *Merzbau* really did arise out of enthusiasm for the transformation of Brugman and Masthoff's interior, as Blotkamp believes, it is certainly possible that Schwitters wanted to make a sort of pendant, not just in Kijkduin, but also for them, at the source of inspiration. In the summer of 1926 Lissitzky also sent his photograph of the *Demonstrationsraum*. It is possible that this may have sparked the idea for the two artists and friends to tackle the two adjacent small 'untreated' rooms at the front of the flat, just as the rooms Van Doesburg and Huszár designed were side by side at the rear of the flat (appendix pp. 168-69).

Later, Brugman, who must have known the sculptural installation in Hanover well from a number of visits, did not describe her Schwitters room as *Merzbau*.<sup>100</sup> Instead she used the term 'Merz-like', which might suggest that the room was decorated in a collage or assemblage manner, possibly using the different works of art known to have been in her collection.

Another possibility is that the room was painted with a geometric composition like the ones Schwitters made between 1923 and 1926, influenced by his friendship with Van Doesburg and Lissitzky. He may have painted this decoration on the spot, without a design, accustomed as he was to improvise. The small relief *Für Tilly* that he made for Brugman in 1923 and the painting *Bild 1926, 5*.



*Wie senkrecht-waagerecht* that he painted a few years later in Kijkduin even seem, in terms of the palette, to 'mediate' between the red that Van Doesburg seems to have used so prominently in Brugman's little room and the grey planes in Masthoff's music room (figs. 36-37).

### Growth and Expression

However much uncertainty there may be about Lissitzky's and Schwitters's contributions to Brugman and Masthoff's flat, it can be established that once the first two rooms were finished in 1923, the two women wanted to continue with the transformation of the interior. On 18 August 1924 Brugman wrote optimistically to Rietveld: 'May have money for front room.'<sup>101</sup> This seems to express her intention to get him to design the front room (appendix pp. 168-69). That money, which was so plentiful in 1923 that they could afford to decorate

Fig. 37  
KURT SCHWITTERS,  
*Bild 1926, 5*.  
*Wie senkrecht-  
waagerecht*, 1926.  
Oil on canvas,  
60.7 x 50.5 cm.  
Hanover, Sprengel  
Museum, inv. no.  
obj 06837113.T.  
Photo: bpk / Sprengel  
Museum Hanover.

and furnish two rooms and buy a painting from Mondrian, did not materialize. In the summer of 1926 the front room was fitted out as a classroom for language courses at home, but there is nothing to suggest that Rietveld actually did the design. There were never enough students.

On the same postcard Brugman also asked Rietveld for a typographic design: 'Will you make me a little sketch for letterhead and envelope. Name and place name and nothing else for large paper. Will you? And of course Ligusterstraat 20 on it.'<sup>102</sup> That request marked the start of all sorts of printed matter with which Brugman tried to promote her linguistic activities. In 1926 she even compiled her own English language course, which was published as a small book, *Travel and Language* (fig. 38). The radical modern typography of the cover, which was undoubtedly designed by an artist or architect in Brugman's close circle of friends – perhaps El Lissitzky – shows clearly how the changes Brugman and Masthoff started to make in their home in 1923 impacted on every facet

of their personal, artistic and professional lives.<sup>103</sup>

What motivated Til Brugman and Sienna Masthoff to change the environment in which they lived so comprehensively and radically is hard to determine. Although they had many friends among the artistic avant-garde, they were not 'members' of De Stijl, as Braat believed. We can, though, say that their lesbianism and artistic talents made them outsiders in the affluent middle-class background from which they came. In part because of this, they had developed personalities that were open to the far-reaching and progressive ideas that existed in international avant-garde circles. Following this line of reasoning, the transformation of their home can be seen as putting a seal on their 'otherness', an expression of the personal and artistic growth they had undergone, partly individually and partly together. It was growth that Brugman had tried to describe in her novel cycle that began with the title *Bodem* (Soil) to reach its completion by way of *Plant* and *Vrucht* (Fruit) in *Rood, Geel, Blauw* (Red, Yellow, Blue).

This significance of the interior as an expression of personal development was neatly put into words by Ida Bienert (1870-1965). In 1925 this Dresden art collector and patron went to see Til Brugman and Sienna Masthoff, as photographs taken on the beach near The Hague attest.<sup>104</sup> Bienert kept in touch with Brugman and her new love Hannah Höch and told them about the changes she was making in her own home: 'And I always need to translate everything that I experience internally, into my home,' she wrote to Höch at the beginning of 1928. 'The colour of the dining room, for example, about which I told Till [Brugman] yesterday, is simply a step towards lightness, towards simplicity, towards dancing.'<sup>105</sup> It suggests that seeing Brugman's radically transformed home had inspired her – like

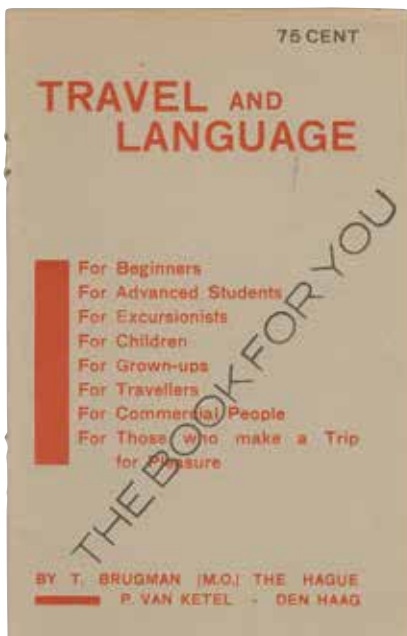


Fig. 38

TIL BRUGMAN,  
*Travel and Language*,  
The Hague 1926.  
Cover design possibly  
by El Lissitzky.  
Rotterdam, Het  
Nieuwe Instituut,  
EEST Archive,  
inv. no. 10.985;  
on loan from  
the collection of  
the Van Eesteren-  
Fluck & Van  
Lohuizenstichting,  
Amsterdam.

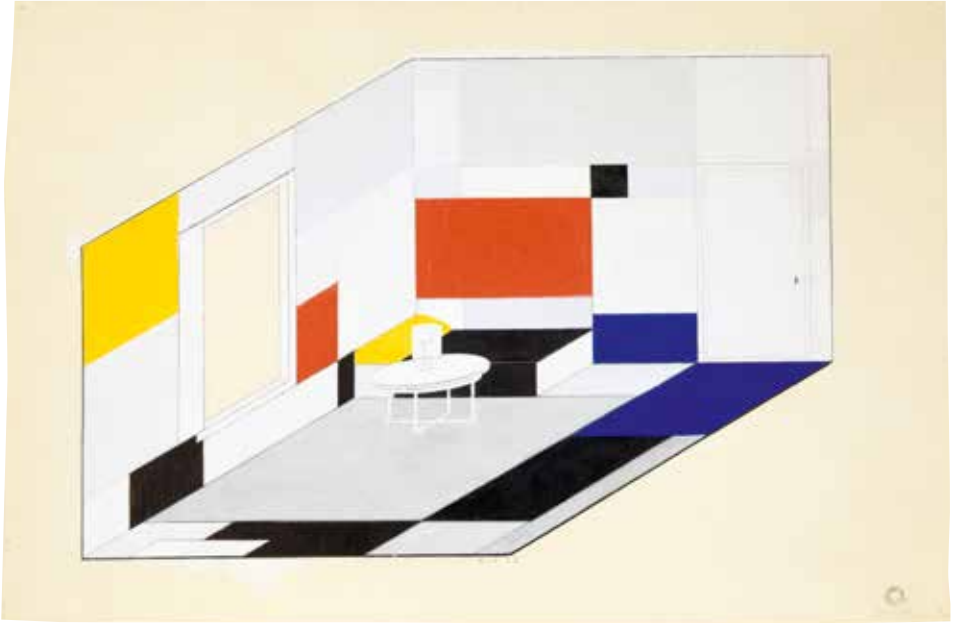


Fig. 39

PIET MONDRIAN,  
*Farbentwurf für den  
 Salon Ida Bienert*  
*(Axonometrie einer  
 Raumecke in  
 Vogelperspektive)*,  
 Paris, 1926.  
 Pencil and gouache,  
 373 x 560 mm.  
 Dresden, Staatliche  
 Kunstsammlungen,  
 Kupferstich-Kabinett,  
 inv. no. C 1982-153.  
 Photo: bpk |  
 Staatliche  
 Kunstsammlungen  
 Dresden | Hans-  
 Peter Klut.

Schwitters – to modernize her own house. The most sweeping intervention was the commission to Mondrian to make a space-colour-composition for the library and study.<sup>106</sup> The design for the *Salon de madame B... à Dresden* which Mondrian embarked on in 1925 and completed the following year was never carried out, however. And yet, like Brugman and Masthoff, Bienert's intention seems to have been to express the modern interests with which she had transcended her original conservative milieu through an avant-garde 'salon' like this (fig. 39).

#### Archives Consulted

Amsterdam City Archives (Stedelijk Museum Archive); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (documentation and photograph collection); Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (Hannah Höch Archive); The Hague City Archives; Nederlands Letterkundig Museum, The Hague (Til Brugman Archive); RKD Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague (archives of Til Brugman, Theo van Doesburg, Hans Jaffé, Jan Toorop); Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (El Lissitzky Collection); Sprengel Museum, Hanover (Kurt Schwitters Archive); Deutsches Kunstarchiv, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (Hannah Höch Estate); Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam (archives of Til Brugman, Jan Buijs, Cornelis van Eesteren, Vilmos Huszár, J.J.P. Oud, Gerrit Rietveld, Jan Wils); Centraal Museum, Utrecht (Rietveld Schröder Archive).

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## NOTES

- 1 The exhibition ran from 10 May to 10 August 1958.
- 2 Alfred Kossmann, 'Til Brugman', *Jaarboek van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij der Letterkunde te Leiden*, Leiden 1959, pp. 47-50.
- 3 Marleen Slob, "'Geestdrift is toch niet iets dat uitput?'" Til Brugman en de avant-garde', *Lust & Gratie. Driemaandelijks cultureel tijdschrift* 11 (1994-95), no. 44, pp. 23-37.
- 4 See Carel Blotkamp, 'Liebe Tilitil. Brieven van El Lissitzky en Kurt Schwitters aan Til Brugman, 1923-1926', *Jong Holland* 13 (1997), no. 1, pp. 32-46 and no. 4, pp. 27-47; Sjarel Ex, *Lajos d'Ébneeth en de avant-garde, 1923-1933. De herontdekking van een verloren gewaande bijdrage aan de moderne kunst*, Utrecht 2002. For the relationships between various avant-garde artists in The Hague in the nineteen-twenties see also Kees Broos, 'Den Haag, verblijfplaats en doorgangshuis. Zes kunstenaars in de jaren twintig en dertig', in Michiel Morel et al., *Haagsche Nieuwe. Den Haag als verblijfplaats en doorgangshuis voor beeldende kunstenaars*, exh. cat. The Hague (Artoteek) s.a., pp. 21-32; Elly Niemeijer and Marjan Reinders, *De Voorburgse connectie. Voorburg als bakermat voor vroege ideeën van 'De Stijl'*, exh. cat. Voorburg (Museum Swaensteyn) 1999.
- 5 See e.g. Myriam Everard, 'De dood is de humor van het leven', *DIVA* 6 (November 1984), pp. 24-27, 35; special issue 'Til Brugman Hannah Höch', *Lust & Gratie. Lesbisch cultureel tijdschrift* 18 (1988); Marion Brandt (ed.), *Til Brugman. Das vertippte Zebra: Lyrik und Prosa*, Berlin 1995; Chris Rehorst, 'Hannah Höch en Nederland', *Jong Holland* 4 (1988), no. 6, pp. 10-15; Heinz Ohff, 'Holland', in Ralf Burmeister and Eckhard Fürus (eds.), *Hannah Höch. Eine Lebenscollage. Archiv Edition. Band 11 1921-1945, 1. Abteilung, Ostfildern-Ruit* 1995, pp. 257-82; Cara Schweitzer, *Schrankenlose Freiheit für Hannah Höch. Das Leben einer Künstlerin 1889-1978*, Berlin 2011, pp. 106-92.
- 6 See Blotkamp 1997 (note 4).
- 7 The following text was printed in *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung* (1923), no. 2, unpagged: 'Administration und Vertrieb für Holland: Frl. Sienna Masthoff im Haag'. Reprinted in Marion von Hofacker (ed.), *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung – Herausgeber Hans Richter*, Munich 1986.
- 8 Postcard from Brugman to Höch, 15 March 1931, and letter from Brugman to Höch, 23 September 1931, Nachlass Hannah Höch, Deutsches Kunstarchiv, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, File 1091.
- 9 Til Brugman, 'Piet Mondriaan omstreeks 1910', *PM Piet Mondriaan herdenkingstentoonstelling*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1946, pp. 23-24. See also Carel Blotkamp, 'Enkele gedachten uit brieven van Piet Mondriaan', *Jong Holland* 11 (1995), no. 3, pp. 41-47, esp. p. 43.
- 10 Hans Jaffé Archive, RKD, NL-HAKKD.0390, box 47.
- 11 H.L.C. Jaffé, *De Stijl, 1917-1931: The Dutch Contribution to Modern Art*, Amsterdam 1956, pp. 209-54.
- 12 'zij een ijverig lid was [geweest] van de Stijl-beweging, die alles wist omtrent theorie en praktijk van de leden hiervan [maar] dat weten niet velen misschien.' L.P.J. Braat, 'Til Brugman', *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur* 18 (1958), no. 6, pp. 121-22, esp. p. 122. Braat and Brugman had become close friends. See Leo Braat, *Hoe wijd een nest. Memoires*, Amsterdam 1972, pp. 52-56.
- 13 Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 47. See also Marijke Kuper, *De stoel van Rietveld | Rietveld's Chair*, Rotterdam 2011, pp. 86, 97, 99.
- 14 Jaffé 1956 (note 11), p. 22.
- 15 Personal index cards for Mathilda Maria Petronella Brugman and Gesina Maria Masthoff, Bevolkingsregister The Hague 1913-39, <http://denhaag.digitalestamboom.nl> (last accessed 20 January 2012).
- 16 Nancy J. Troy, *The De Stijl Environment*, Cambridge, MA and London 1983, pp. 47-50. The photograph was also published in the same year in Ida van Zijl, *Rietveld als meubelmaker. Wonen met experimenten 1900-1924*, exh. cat. Utrecht (Centraal Museum) 1983, fig. 5.
- 17 See Sjarel Ex and Els Hoek, *Vilmos Huszár, schilder en ontwerper 1884-1960*, Utrecht 1985, p. 81, figs. 130-34, who give the date as 'end of 1924'.
- 18 Blotkamp 1997 (note 4), no. 4, p. 29 and fig. 11; Els Hoek (ed.), *Theo van Doesburg. Oeuvre-catalogus*, Utrecht and Otterlo 2000, p. 328, cat. no. 688.
- 19 Joop Joosten, *Piet Mondrian: Catalogue Raisonné of Work of 1911-1944*, Blaricum and Paris [1998], vol. 2, p. 304, cat. no. B141.
- 20 See Blotkamp 1997 (note 4).
- 21 This occasional table was shown in public for the first time in 1991, when it appeared in the exhibition *The 1920s: Age of the Metropolis* in Montreal. See Jean Clair (ed.), *The 1920s: Age of the Metropolis*, exh. cat. Montreal (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) 1991 and

- sale cat. *20th Century Decorative Arts*, Christie's (Amsterdam), 16 November 2004, pp. 100-01, no. 385. In 2006 it was offered for sale by Galerie Ulrich Fiedler in Cologne. See sale cat. *20 20: 20 Items for the 21. Year*, Cologne (Galerie Ulrich Fiedler) 2006, cat. no. 05. The table proved to have been the property of Gerrit Oorthuys, who was given it by the architect Charles Karsten after the death of Brugman's last life partner Hans Mertineit-Schnabel (as Gerrit Oorthuys told the author, Amsterdam 15 July 2011). The white armchair was also put up for sale in 2007, likewise at Christie's Amsterdam, and bought by the New York art dealer Leigh Keno, see sale cat. *20th Century Decorative Arts*, Christie's (Amsterdam), 23 May 2007, pp. 82-83, no. 302. The Rijksmuseum acquired the chair from this dealer in 2010, see Kuper 2011 (note 13), esp. the film by Lex Reitsma on the accompanying DVD.
- 22 Sale cat. *20th Century Decorative Arts*, Sotheby's (Amsterdam), 2-3 May 1988, pp. 28-29, no. 169. Barry Friedman, New York, acquired this chair, see *Gerrit Rietveld: A Centenary Exhibition. Craftsman and Visionary*, exh. cat. New York (Barry Friedman Ltd.) and elsewhere 1988-89, p. 29, cat. no. 11, and it is now in the collection of the Osaka City Museum of Modern Art. There are no other known surviving examples of this model of chair made with a leather back (information supplied by Jurjen Creman, Amsterdam). The architect Charles Karsten was given as the provenance. After Brugman's death, Karsten lived with her last life partner Hans Mertineit-Schnabel (as Gerrit Oorthuys told the author, Amsterdam 15 July 2011). At least two examples of this type of chair with a leather back did exist, as they are visible in a photograph of an exhibition room, most likely at the exhibition *De praktische huisvrouw* in Utrecht, 13 to 23 January 1923. See Kuper 2011 (note 13), pp. 102, 104, 118-19.
- 23 See Til Brugman, *5 klankgedichten*, Heemstede 1981, edited and with a commentary by W. de Graaf. Brugman lent her collection to the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam for the De Stijl exhibition in 1951. One of her poems was enlarged and displayed on the wall. After the exhibition closed, Brugman wrote to Rietveld, co-curator and designer of the exhibition: 'When am I going to get my "Klankzin" bundle back? (Poems for the Stijl exhibition.) It's dreadful that I still haven't had them back.' ('Wanneer krijg ik mijn bundel "Klankzin" terug? (Gedichten voor de Stijl tentoonstelling) Het is verschrikkelijk dat ik ze nog steeds niet terug heb.') Letter from Brugman to Rietveld, 12 April 1952, Rietveld Schröder Archive, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, RSA0624.
- 24 For Brugman's biography and literary work see Marleen Slob, 'Brugman, Mathilda Maria Petronella (1888-1958)', in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, <http://resources.huylgens.knaw.nl/bwn/BWN/lemmata/bwn5/brugman> (last accessed 29 March 2017) and Marleen Slob, 'De mensen willen niet rijpen, vandaar.' *Leven en werk van Til Brugman*, Amsterdam 1994.
- 25 Brugman's unpublished novel *Treesje van Boven. Gods Kind* gives some clues to the romantic side of their meeting. In this story of the youth and early adulthood of her alter ego Trees, Brugman describes her burgeoning love for the piano student Marina Hoppe. The pet name 'Zina' that Brugman originally thought up for Marina (and later changed to 'Rina') suggests that Sienna Masthoff was the model for this character. Through the feelings Zina unleashes, Trees comes to realize that the heterosexual relationship with her boyfriend Teun gives her no satisfaction and that her true love is homosexual in nature. See the manuscript *Treesje van Boven. Gods Kind*, Til Brugman Archive, Nederlands Letterkundig Museum, The Hague, inv. no. B.907 H.1 (also present in fair typed copy as *Gods Kind* B.907 A.1).
- 26 Charles Masthoff, *Genealogie van de familie Masthoff en aanverwante families, s.l. s.a.* (notebook with seventeen written pages), Jan Toorop Collection, RKD, The Hague, NL-HAR KD.0002, inv. no. 211.
- 27 Personal registration card Gesina Maria Masthoff 1913-39 (note 15).
- 28 See among others 'Concert- en Tooneelgids', *Het Vaderland*, 15 December 1920; 'Concert- en Tooneelgids', *Het Vaderland*, 15 April 1921; 'Kunst en Letteren', *Het Vaderland*, 3 May 1923; 'Kunst en Letteren', *Het Vaderland*, 24 January 1924.
- 29 'Letteren en Kunst. Sienna Masthoff', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 17 April 1928.
- 30 Advertisement in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 8 September 1923; 'Kunst en Letteren', *Het Vaderland*, 12 February 1930.
- 31 See Hubert van den Berg (ed.), *Theo van Doesburg | Kurt Schwitters. Holland's bankroet door dada. Documenten van een dadaïstische triomftocht door Nederland*, Amsterdam 1995; August Hans den Boef and Sjoerd van Faassen, *Dada Den Haag. Van Haagsche Kunstkring tot Haagsche Tramwegmaatschappij*, The Hague 1999; K. Schippers, *Holland Dada*, Amsterdam 2000; Niels Bokhove and Mark van Gend, *Dada Utrecht*, Utrecht 2013.

- 32 Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, 9 July 1923, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 33 'In Den Haag woont 'n klein monster, die voorgeeft homoseksueel te zijn, maar die zo vrouwelijk is als 'n pasgeboren baker, het heet Brugman. Het maakt z'n dagbezigheid daarvan, mij met Drek, Merde en geparfumeerde spermatoziën in te smeren. Het schrijft mij boekdeelen in de geest van "Baas wat is er van je eieren"-Kif. Haar prulversjes vonden geen plaats in De Stijl ... ook dat soort lui vragen mij: wat is tegenwoordig de Stijlgroep?' The phrase 'Baas wat is er van je eieren' is a variant, deliberate or otherwise, of a Dutch nursery rhyme that begins with the lines 'Boer wat zeg je van mijn kippen, boer wat zeg je van mijn haan' (Farmer, how do you like my chickens, farmer, how do you like my cock). It may have been a deliberately suggestive variation – 'Boss, what's the matter with your eggs?' The 'eieren' (eggs) could also mean 'balls', or in other words whether Van Doesburg could pull it off with De Stijl. Letter from Van Doesburg to Oud, 13 November 1924, Van Doesburg Archive, RKD, The Hague, NL-HaRKD.0408, inv. no. 151. For the relations between Van Doesburg and Brugman (and Mondrian) see also Alex Rutten, 'Steun, weerklink en vriendschap. Over sociaal kapitaal en de breuk tussen Piet Mondriaan en Theo van Doesburg', *ts Tijdschrift voor tijdschriftstudies* (December 2012), no. 32, pp. 165-80.
- 34 'Die merkenarij van je geld was kostelijk, het had woordelijk van Does kunnen ... . Ben je heusch geen buitenbeentje van zijn moeder of hij van de jouwe? Het is anders onbegrijpelijk hoe twee mensen in sommige opzichten zoo precies aan elkaar gelijk kunnen zijn. ... Ik vind het soms angstig. Maar je bent een schat hoor, daar niet van!' Letter from Milius to Brugman, undated, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 35 'Dag Sienna! Moderne zang volgende: "Chant de nourtiee" D. Milhaud "Catalogue de Fleurs" D. Milhaud Dan nog van Satie & Auric. Ik vind allemaal wachkelijk [*sic*] Maar jij vind het misschien goed. Van Honegger bestaat voor zang "Souvenirs d'enfance" wat ik niet gehoord heb Zal ik wat voor je bestellen?'" Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman with addition by Van Moorsel to Masthoff, undated [May 1923], *ibid.* She refers to *Chant de Nourrice (Poèmes juifs)*, 1916, for voice and piano (Op. 34 no. 1) and *Catalogue de fleurs*, 1923, for voice and piano (Op. 60) by Darius Milhaud (1872-1974), and *Souvenir d'Enfance (Six poésies de Jean Cocteau)*, 1920, for voices and piano (H. 51 no. 3) by Arthur Honegger (1872-1955).
- 36 For Nelly van Doesburg's music repertoire and the performances she gave see Wies van Moorsel, '*De doorsnee is mij niet genoeg.*' *Nelly van Doesburg 1899-1975*, Nijmegen 2000, pp. 70-90.
- 37 See notes 28 and 29.
- 38 H.R., 'Kunst. Nederlandsche Concertencyclus', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 September 1919; 'Kunst en Letteren', *De Telegraaf*, 28 September 1919.
- 39 'Voor Tilly Brugman voor hare arbeid voor "De Stijl"; Antiquariaat Schumacher, *Catalogus 209 Rondom De Stijl*, Amsterdam s.a., cat. no. 207B with fig.
- 40 'De heele administratie v. de Stijl vergeten [waren] mee te nemen.' 'Zou je nu s.v.p. nog even een lijstje willen sturen van de door jou opgegevene abonne's, ook voor mécano!' Postcard from Van Moorsel to Brugman, 22 April 1923, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 41 'Wil jij dat zaakje dus opknappen als je in Berlijn bent [?] ... . Zie dat je die stijlrommel even in orde maakt, anders loopt het spaak!' *Ibid.*
- 42 'Over je verzen Til wil ik je een afzonderlijke brief schrijven. Ik stuurde ze naar Bonset in Weenen en wacht ook zijn antwoord af.' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman with an addition from Van Moorsel to Masthoff, undated [May 1923], *ibid.*
- 43 'Nu nog iets over je verzen. Bonset schreef mij een brief waarin hij je werk zeer prees. Hij heeft er één, volgens hem het beste uitgehouden om in zijn [vervolg ontbreekt].' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, 9 July 1923, *ibid.*
- 44 I.K. Bonset, 'Symptomen eener réconstructie der dichtkunst in Holland', *De Stijl. Internationaal maandblad voor nieuwe kunst, wetenschap en kultuur* 6 (1923), nos. 3-4, pp. 44-56, esp. p. 54.
- 45 'Aardig voor je, Til, dat Bonset het belangrijk vindt ik wil ook graag wat van je lezen.' Postcard from Rietveld to Brugman and Masthoff, undated [1923], Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 47. See fig. 25b.
- 46 Correspondence between Brugman and Réthy is in the Til Brugman Archive, Nederlands Letterkundig Museum, The Hague.
- 47 Among other things Hugo Réthy published *Het primitieve levensproces*, s.l. 1907, *Ostwald's natuurphilosophie*, s.l. 1909, *De Ziel. Rede, uitgesproken in de 'Middaghoogte'*, The Hague 1925, and corresponded with the philosopher G.J.P.J. Bolland.
- 48 Hildelies Balk, 'De cursisten van H.P. Bremmer', appendix to *Jong Holland* 9 (1993), no. 2. Hugo Réthy took what was

- called the 'teacher's course' at a reduced rate from 1914 to 1919.
- 49 'Je bent een snoes, dat je zoo 'n propaganda voor mij gemaakt hebt, ik hoop dat er van de uitvoering iets komt,' 'Ik kan het goed gebruiken, want het leven is hier erg duur. Ik zal echter maar den lagen prijs vragen. Wat denk je van f 150,- voor de heele oplossing? Of, als dat nog te hoog is f 125,- Het is een heel werk! Doch misschien komt er van de overige 7 kamers ook nog wat. In de regel kost zoo'n oplossing f 200,= Rietveld had mij destijds beloofd, dat ik ook de kleuren voor de meubels zou aangeven. Doch ik hoor niet van hem. 't Is 'n rare snijboon, maar zeker een der eerste klas-stijl-architekten.' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, 9 July 1923, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 50 'Rethy peinst nog[,] is niet heelemaal omgeslagen, er is nog kans als de timmerman meevalt,' Postcard from Brugman and Masthoff to Rietveld, 14 July 1923, Rietveld Schröder Archive, RSA0014.
- 51 'Met "De Stijl" heb je niet veel succes gehad. De meeste betalen niet of sturen de kwitantie terug met de bemerking: niet besteld. Ik behoor niet tot de gelukkigen. Ook met de Rethy kamer werd het niets.' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, 5 January 1924, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 52 Jaap Franso et al., *De Stijl van Jan Wils. Restauratie van de Papaverhof*, The Hague 1989, pp. 52-53. For the reception see for example J.P.M.[ieras], 'Het atelier van Berssenbrugge te 's-Gravenhage', *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 43 (1922), no. 16, pp. 150-52.
- 53 'Ik hoop dat m'n kamertje zoo bevalt – dat er een kleintje van komt.' 'Ik heb hard wat werk nodig!' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman with an addition from Van Moorsel to Masthoff, undated [May 1923], Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 54 In his letter to Brugman (fig. 18) Van Doesburg drew a plain window. According to the floorplan (fig. 6) the small back room had a single window, while the small rooms on the street side had double casement windows.
- 55 See Hoek 2000 (note 18), pp. 320-29, cat. no. 689.
- 56 'Prettig, dat je het kamertje goed vindt. Ik vind het geel nog iets te hel, doch het rood te donker. Ik ben zeer benieuwd hoe het geworden is. Huszár schreef me er ook, terloops- over. Hij vond het rood te veel. Is het paneeltje op de deur al geschilderd [?]' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, with addition by Van Moorsel, 17 May 1923, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 57 'Ik zie, dat het vlak onder het raam niet met karton overtrokken is [.] Dat is jammer daar het nu als beschilderd hout en niet als vlak werkt. Kan dat nog veranderd worden?' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, 9 July 1923, *ibid.* The 'snap of the room' has not been found or identified to date.
- 58 'Dat lampje vind ik ook niet goed, in je kamertje. Ik zal je spoedig een ontwerpje voor een bekleding sturen, voor ijzer+glasconstructie.' *Ibid.*
- 59 Til Brugman, *Even anders. Vier rabbelverzen*, Woubrugge 1989, edited and with a commentary by W. de Graaf. The *rabbelverzen* were also published in Brandt (note 5).
- 60 'Het tweede heet PLANT. Ook het derde "Vrucht" al klaar. Licht allemaal al jaren klaar. De volgende: Rood, Geel, Blauw. Notities vanaf 1928.' Letter from Brugman to Braat, 30 July 1947, Til Brugman Archive (note 25), inv. no. B.907 B.I.
- 61 'Als we met november terugkomen, zal ik de ~~voor~~achterkamer componeren! Uit louter dankbaarheid.' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, with addition by Van Moorsel, 17 May 1923, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 62 'Ik had voor, van den zomer[?] die kamer te maken en had dat al met jelui besproken. Sienna vroeg het mij toen ik met het kleine kamertje bezig was.' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, undated [summer 1923], *ibid.*
- 63 See the manuscript *Treesje van Boven. Gods Kind* (note 25).
- 64 'Op de foto te zien is het zeer décoratief opgelost. Ik vind er nog wel veel goeds in, maar Mondriaan vond het heelemaal niets. "Huszár snapt er niets van" zei hij. Het is een beetje, zooals al zijn oplossingen, volgens een bepaald maniertje. Eén beweging zóó, en één beweging er tegen in. Maar een ruimte is geen draaimolen!' Letter from Doesburg to Brugman, undated [summer 1923], Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25.
- 65 Hans Janssen, 'Composition in Grey ("Composition No. 10")', *Bulletin van de Vereniging Rembrandt* 17 (2010), no. 1, pp. 34-36. Ex and Hoek 1985 (note 17), p. 50, pointed to the value Huszár attached to this painting for his later interior designs. At the time of their publication the whereabouts of this painting were unknown.
- 66 See Ton Braas, 'Nederlandse avant-garde in het interbellum', in Louis Peter Grijp (ed.), *Een muziekgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, Amsterdam 2001, pp. 568-73.
- 67 Troy 1983 (note 16) refers on p. 207, note 1, to two photographs that at the time of her

- research were supposedly in Jan Wils's archive, then in the Nederlands Documentatiecentrum voor Bouwkunst, now in Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. I did not find these photographs in the Wils archive. They were probably the photographs published here, now in the Huszár Archive in Het Nieuwe Instituut.
- 68 Sienna Masthoff reportedly already owned a table by Rietveld from the period before the modern slat furniture. Information provided in conversation between the author and Judith Hamer (step-daughter of Sienna Masthoff's later husband Frans Hamer), Amsterdam 27 June 2013.
- 69 'De stoelen zijn gekomen maar je hebt je erg vergist. Je hebt 2 leunstoelen gestuurd in plaats van 1 leunstoel en 1 gewone stoel ... [Sienna] was niet in haar schik, vooral niet omdat allebei de stoelen vol overdruksels uit krantenpapier zaten, waarin je ze verpakt had. Hoe krijgt ze dat nou weer goed? Stuur nu ten spoedigste de rechte stoel (voor aan tafel) Ik vind het verduveld jammer. We zullen de ene leunstoel zoo lang bewaren[?], misschien wil 'n ander die wel eens hebben. Maar maak 't nu gauw weer goed.' Postcard from Brugman and Masthoff to Rietveld, 14 July 1923, Rietveld Schröder Archive, RSA0014.
- 70 Marijke Küper and Ida van Zijl, *Gerrit Th. Rietveld 1888-1964. Het volledige werk*, Utrecht 1992, pp. 74-77, cat. nos. 35-36.
- 71 The colour reconstruction of Masthoff's room indicated that the original arrangement of the colours on the vertical surfaces must have been different from the present situation (cf. figs. 9 and 24). It has been established that there have been a number of overpaints, but the structure of the paint layers has not been investigated. With thanks to Frans Pegt, Rijksmuseum.
- 72 'De tafel vindt Huszar mooi. Jammer zegt hij, dat het blad krom loopt en het steun latje afwijkt van het tafelblad.' 'Wil je vóór 20 Juli een model van een pianostoel zenden hoog; omdat ik anders te laag voor de piano zit; dan kan die begin September klaar zijn, een weinig in trant tafeltje, enfin je begrijpt wel.' Postcard from Brugman and Masthoff to Rietveld, 14 July 1923 (note 69).
- 73 'altijd nog iets aan te doen.' Postcard from Rietveld to Brugman and Masthoff, undated [1923], Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 47.
- 74 Küper and Van Zijl 1992 (note 70), p. 90, cat. no. 68.
- 75 *El Lissitzky 1890-1941. Retrospektive*, exh. cat. Hanover (Sprengel Museum) 1988, pp. 188-89, cat. no. 153.
- 76 'Es ist möglich, daß der sogenannte „Bleistift-Halter“ von Lissitzky, der Hannah Höch gehörte ..., der für einen funktionellen Zweck ausgeschnittenes Rest dieses [Runder] Relief aus dem *Prounenraum* von 1923 ist,' (It is possible that the so-called 'pencil holder' by Lissitzky, which belonged to Hannah Höch ..., is the remainder of this [round] relief from the *Prounenraum* from 1923, cut out for a functional purpose). Peter Nisbet, 'El Lissitzky's Prounen-Verzeichnis: Eine kommentierte Abschrift', in *El Lissitzky 1890-1941* (note 75), pp. 270-80, esp. p. 278, cat. no. 80.
- 77 Küper and Van Zijl 1992 (note 70), p. 106, cat. no. 101.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- 79 *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung*, exh. cat. Berlin (Galerie van Diemen und Co.) 1922 and the Dutch appendix *Eerste Russische Kunsttentoonstelling*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1923.
- 80 *Wendingen* 4 (1921), no. 11 was published in 1922, see Martijn Le Coultre, *Wendingen 1918-1932. Architectuur en vormgeving*, Blaricum 2001, pp. 122-23, and Martijn F. Le Coultre, 'Een toegepaste Proun. El Lissitzky en het tijdschrift *Wendingen*', *Eigenbouwer. Tijdschrift voor de goede smaak* (February 2017), no. 6, pp. 32-43. El Lissitzky, 'Suprematisch worden van twee kwadraten in 6 konstrukties', *De Stijl* 5 (1922), nos. 10-11 was a Dutch edition of El Lissitzky, *Suprematicheskii skaz pro dva kvadrata v shesti postroikakh*, Berlin 1922. Lissitzky worked on the Berlin publication when he was staying with Theo and Nelly van Doesburg in Weimar in October 1922, see Alied Ottevanger, 'De Stijl overal absolute leiding'. *De briefwisseling tussen Theo van Doesburg en Antony Kok*, Bussum 2008, pp. 410-11, note 6 and pp. 411-14, note 6. The translation must have been done via German, see Van Eesteren's copy of *Pro Dva Kvadrata*, which has a German translation in pencil of the printed Russian text, Van Eesteren Archive and Library, Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam. Preceding the special issue, Van Doesburg ran El Lissitzky's article 'Proun' in *De Stijl* 5 (1922), no. 6, pp. 81-85.
- 81 Küper and Van Zijl 1992 (note 70), p. 356. At the moment, the only known correspondence and the implicit confirmation of Lissitzky's visit to Utrecht is a postscript on a postcard from Schwitters to Rietveld, 17 June 1923, Rietveld Schröder Archive, RSA0009: 'Lieber Rietveld[,] ich fahre nur je[tzt] nach Berlin. Es wäre sehr schön wenn Sie in juli nach Hannover. Ich/ werde

- den ganzen/ Monat arbeiten/ ein Album meiner Teater/Lithographien/ Grüsse ihre Frau und Kinder/ grus die van Leusden/ E. Lissit[zy]. (Dear Rietveld [,] I'm only travelling to Berlin now. It would be really nice if you could [travel to] Hanover in July. I will be working the whole month. [on] an album for my theatre/lithographs. Greetings to your wife and children, greetings from Leusden. E. Lissit[zy].) Transcript with thanks to Jaap Oosterhoff, Rietveld Schröder Archive, Utrecht.
- 82 An entry in El Lissitzky's notebook reads: 'V. Leusden Maarssen kann man schlafen essen usw' (V. Leusden Maarssen where you can sleep, eat, and so forth), El Lissitzky letters and photographs, 1911-41, Getty Research Institute, Research Library, Accession no. 950076 (series II, personal notes and documents), reference with thanks to Martijn Le Coultre; Dick Adelaar, 'Het zoeken naar nieuwe ruimtelijke mogelijkheden. Van Leusdens bijdrage aan De Stijl' and 'Constructivistische tendensen', in Dick Adelaar et al., *Willem van Leusden. Essays over een verhard romanticus*, Utrecht 1990, pp. 75-111; Hans Redeker, *Willem van Leusden*, Utrecht and Antwerp 1974, pp. 33-35; Yvonne Brentjens, *Piet Zwart 1885-1977. Vormingieur*, The Hague and Zwolle 2008, pp. 127-35. The dates El Lissitzky stayed at various addresses are unknown. At the opening of the exhibition on 28 April 1923 he was still in Berlin, from where he wrote to J.J.P. Oud asking for his help to obtain an entry visa for the Netherlands, see postcard from Lissitzky to Oud, 28 April 1923, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, inv. no. 1582.
- 83 Until recently the photogram *4 i Lampe Heliokonstruktion 125 Volt* (fig. 33) was known only from a reproduction in *Merz* (1923), no. 6, p. 62, where it was published under the names El Huszar and Vilmos Lissitzky. During the research for this article a print was found in the Van Eesteren Archive, Het Nieuwe Instituut. There are loose prints of the portraits of Lissitzky and Huszar that are incorporated in the photogram *Untitled (Lissitzky and Huszár)* (fig. 34) in the Van Eesteren Archive in Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, inv. no. 4.2001(601).
- 84 'Das Universelle = Gerade + Senkrechte, entspricht nicht dem Universum, das nur Krümmungen, keine Geraden kennt. So ist die Kugel (nicht der Kubus) das Kristall des Universums, aber wir können damit (Kugel) nichts anfangen, denn das ist der vollendete Zustand (Tod), darum konzentrieren wir uns an den Elementen des Kubus, die sich immer neu zusammen legen und zerstören lassen (Leben). Die moderne Maschine muß Rundes haben, denn die Kreisbewegung ist ihr Vorteil gegenüber der geradlinigen hin und her Bewegung der menschlichen Hand/ Fuß. Und wenn die Wohnung, das Haus, ein Apparat zum Unterbringen von unserem Körper ist (so wie Kleidung) dann warum soll er nicht das Runde haben?' Letter from Lissitzky to Oud, 30 June 1924, published in *El Lissitzky*, exh. cat. Cologne (Galerie Gmurzynska) 1976, p. 73. Lissitzky was responding here to a problem that Oud evidently had with the theoretical underpinning of the use of round and curved forms in his housing project in the Hook of Holland, see Ed Taverne et al., *J.J.P. Oud 1890-1963. Poëtisch functionalist. Compleet werk*, Rotterdam 2001, p. 263.
- 85 See note 69 and the letter from Lissitzky to Brugman, 12 July 1923, in *Blotkamp* 1997, no. 1 (note 4), p. 39.
- 86 'Nu iets over de russen. ... Vergeet vooral niet, als Lissitzky bij je komt om hem die huizen – Papaverhof te laten zien. En ook de huizen bij de Boschjes van Poot (die witte betonhuizen). // Die russen maken een beetje te veel praats, in de meening dat ze met hun bolsjewisme de wereld vernieuwen kunnen, zoowel materieel als geestelijk. Praat maar goed van je af en laat ze maar 'ns zien wat in holland gerealiseerd wordt. – (laat ze ook museum Krölller zien) ... Vraag eens de Russen met de hollanders van de stijlgroep in Parijs willen demonstreeren. Een demonstratie van de constructivisten zou wel wat zijn hier. Maar – doe het voorzichtig aan, dat ze niet te veel ervan denken. Doe het zóó alsof het een idee van jou is. –' Letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman, with addition by Van Moorsel, 17 May 1923, Hans Jaffé Archive (note 10), box 25. Lissitzky's notebook contains the address of the 'Dames Sienna Masthoff & Tilly Brugman'. The 'Sammlung H. Krölller Voorhout' is recorded as worth seeing (note 82).
- 87 El Lissitzky, 'Prounenraum Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung 1923', *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung* (1923), no. 1, unpagued, reprinted in Von Hofacker 1986 (note 7), reprinted and translated into English in full in Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923-1926*, Los Angeles, CA 2010, p. 100.
- 88 *Blotkamp* 1997, no. 4 (note 4), pp. 30-36.
- 89 Letter from Lissitzky to Brugman and Masthoff, 30 July 1926, in *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

- 90 'Ich bat sie sich zu setzen. In der Mitte der heiligen Halle. Dann öffnete ich alle Türen der darauffstossenden Zimmer (5) [afb. 7] und wenn sie sich so setzten wie Civa, Vishnu und Brahma konnten sie von dort aus alles sehen und mit den zahllosen Armen alles erreichen und bekleben. Im Atelier haben sie die Sonne und das hereinströmende Licht beschlagnahmt. Im Kursuszimmer das dunkel und die Stille (es kommen noch immer zu wenig Schüler, daher eben Steuerbesuch) (was ich ihnen klar machte) Im Schlafzimmer stand ein Bettgerippe (was mir nicht gehört, aber das macht ja nichts, beschlagnahmt ist beschlagnahmt) und im anderen Zimmer beklebten sie die Leere (zukünftig RAUM). ... Den Malereien hier haben sie sich mit gerunzelter Stirn und Nase angesehen.' Letter from Brugman to Höch, 6 September 1926, Hannah Höch Estate (note 8).
- 91 Beatrix Nobis, 'Das Abstrakte Kabinett in Hannover und andere Demonstrationsräume El Lissitzkys', in *El Lissitzky 1890-1941* (note 75), pp. 220-23; Maria Gough, 'Constructivism Disoriented: El Lissitzky's Dresden and Hannover Demonstrationsräume', in Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed (eds.), *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow, Los Angeles*, CA 2003, pp. 76-125.
- 92 'Er sollte einen Standard darstellen für Räume, in denen der Allgemeinheit neue Kunst gezeigt wird', El Lissitzky, 'Demonstrationsräume', in El Lissitzky, *Rußland: Architektur für eine Weltrevolution*, Berlin 1965, pp. 129-34; Gough 2003 (note 91), p. 91.
- 93 Blotkamp 1997, no. 4 (note 4), pp. 46-47.
- 94 For Brugman's collection see Blotkamp 1997, no. 4 (note 4), pp. 27-29.
- 95 See note 31 and Meta Knol, 'Kurt Schwitters in Nederland', in *Kurt Schwitters in Nederland. Merz, De Stijl & Holland Dada*, exh. cat. Heerlen (Stadsgalerij)/Zwolle 1997.
- 96 'As for Schwitters ... I've known him well for a very long time, he stayed with me many times.' ('Wat Schwitters betreft ... Ik heb hem heel lang en goed gekend, hij heeft vele malen bij mij gelogeed'), letter from Brugman to Braat, 9 March 1958, Til Brugman Archive (note 25), inv. no. B.907 B.1.
- 97 'Wir möchten auch gern unsere Wohnung schön machen, wissen aber nicht wo wir anfangen sollen. Mit Stuck und alten Möbel geht das nicht.' Letter from Schwitters to Brugman and Masthoff, 24 April, 1 May and 16 May 1923, in Blotkamp 1997, no. 1 (note 4), pp. 36-37.
- 98 Ibid., p. 42. In the second revised edition of Dietmar Elger, *Der Merzbau. Eine Werkmonographie*, Cologne 1999, there is no reference to the correspondence with Brugman in Blotkamp's publication.
- 99 Knol 1997 (note 95), pp. 30-31; Sjarel Ex, 'Kurt Schwitters en Nederland', in Karin Orchard et al., *Kurt Schwitters en de avant-garde*, exh. cat. Rotterdam (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen) 2007, pp. 58-81, esp. p. 70.
- 100 For Brugman's recollections of the Hanover art world see Til Brugman, 'Een huis vol kunstenaars', *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur* 15 (1955), no. 9, pp. 208-10.
- 101 'Heb misschien geld voor kamer voor.' Postcard from Brugman to Rietveld, 18 August 1924, Rietveld Schröder Archive, RSA0032.
- 102 'Wil je voor mij een schetsje maken voor brief en enveloppe. Naam en plaatsnaam verder niets voor groot formaat papier. Wil je? En natuurlijk Ligusterstraat 20 er op.' Ibid.
- 103 The date of the undated *Travel and Language* (fig. 38) can be deduced from the letter from Lissitzky to Brugman and Masthoff, 30 July 1926, in Blotkamp 1997, no. 4 (note 4), p. 47: 'It's good that you can publish your language and travel course book.' ('Es ist gut das du dein Lehrbuch sprechenredenreisen herausgeben kannst.') The fact that Brugman corresponded about it with Lissitzky may indicate that she asked him to make a simple and cheap to produce design for the cover during his visit to the Netherlands.
- 104 Burmeister and Furlus 1995 (note 5), p. 266. The photograph in fig. 2 was taken during this visit.
- 105 'Und immer muß ich alles, was ich innerlich erlebe, in meinem Haus umsetzen,' 'So ist die Farbe im Eßzimmer, von der ich gestern Till [Brugman] berichtete, einfach ein Schritt zur Leichtigkeit, zur Vereinfachung, zum Schwingen.' Letter and postcard from Bienert to Höch, 3 January 1928, in Ralf Burmeister and Eckhard Furlus (eds.), *Hannah Höch. Eine Lebenscollage. Archiv Edition. Band 11 1921-1945, 2. Abteilung*, Ostfildern-Ruit 1995, p. 308.
- 106 See Nancy J. Troy, 'Mondrian's Designs for the Salon de Madame B. ... à Dresden', *The Art Bulletin* 62 (1980), no. 4, pp. 640-47.







Digital reconstruction  
of the Flat.  
Illustration by Thomas  
Bennen, Amsterdam.

## APPENDIX

### A Reconstruction of Til Brugman's De Stijl Rooms

**O**pposite is a digital reconstruction of Til Brugman and Sienna Masthoff's flat in 1923-26. It is based on historical image material and records that were used as sources for the research into the alterations to the interior of 20 Ligusterstraat in The Hague.

1. Til Brugman's **Workroom**, created between April and July 1923 to a design by Theo van Doesburg. The yellow panel on the door was intended to give an impression of the possible design, analogous to the 'colour construction' for the Van Zessen house (fig. 17). The location is an assumption based on a sketch in a letter from Van Doesburg to Brugman (fig. 18).
2. Sienna Masthoff's **Music Room** to a design by Vilmos Huszár with furniture by Gerrit Rietveld, created between May and July 1923. The location can be established from photographs of this room (figs. 7, 12, 21a-b).
3. In 1924 Til Brugman contemplated having the **Front Room** furnished by Gerrit Rietveld. There are no signs that this ever happened. In any event the painting by Mondrian and Rietveld's straight-backed chair were owned by Brugman and Masthoff in 1923. The location indicated only gives an impression. In 1926 the front room was used as a classroom. This is shown on a floor plan that Hannah Höch drew in a letter to her sister Grete König dated 20 November of that year (reproduced in M. Brandt (ed.), *Til Brugman. Das vertippte Zebra: Lyrik und Prosa*, Berlin 1995, p. 184).
- 4-5. Location possibly envisaged for the **Merz-like Room** by Kurt Schwitters and the **Proun-like Room** by El Lissitzky, Summer/Autumn 1926. Til Brugman's recollection of these rooms cannot be verified from visual or documented sources.
6. The 'sacred hall' where Brugman received three tax inspectors in early September 1926 (p. 154, n. 90). Five open doors gave a view of all the rooms, one of which was a 'future SPACE', probably the Proun-like Room by El Lissitzky.
7. Kitchen with adjoining balcony (not on the drawing).