

Éva Forgács, Pasadena (USA)

Shaping a Narrative of a New Internationalism in Art: Willem Sandberg and the *Stedelijk Museum*, Amsterdam 1945–1957

Resurrecting the modernist tradition in the wake of Second World War was a moral, as well as professional program of many artists and art experts. A key figure of the era in the art world is graphic designer, curator and director of the *Stedelijk Museum* in Amsterdam, Willem Sandberg (1897–1984). Examining his work takes us way beyond a monographic narrative.

As a former activist of the Dutch Resistance movement and curator of the *Stedelijk*, Sandberg became director of the museum in 1945. He immediately started to collect contemporary progressive art works (of the *CoBrA group*, among others), and organized exhibitions in an effort to restore interwar modernity. One of the landmark events was the 1951 *De Stijl exhibition*, and besides a number of other shows, Sandberg, with his deputy director Hans L. C. Jaffe, was the main force behind the *Stedelijk's* 1957 exhibition of Kazimir Malevich's works, that powerfully launched the international rediscovery of the Russian avant-garde.

In the context of Sandberg's vision, I would like to give an account of the post-Second World War sense of a new, optimistic beginning of a new era. Against the background of the interwar and post-war Dutch avant-garde art, Sandberg and Jaffe embarked on a farsighted project aimed at restoring the entire international avant-garde movement – both the material art works and the spirit – of the utopian 1920s. Their visit to architect Hugo Häring, the keeper of Malevich's paintings left behind in Germany, as early as Spring 1951, was the beginning of a long journey that led to a new art discourse about interwar modernism, including the avant-gardes in Russia and Eastern Europe as well. The 1957 exhibition and the subsequent Malevich shows, followed by the publication of Malevich's manuscripts, resonated in the international art world. Sandberg's concept and vision greatly contributed to the nascent, morally committed post-war narrative of progressive art and thus to the rethinking of European art after 1945 and throughout the 1950s.

Éva Forgács is Adjunct Professor of art history at *Art Center College of Design* in Pasadena. She taught at the *László Moholy-Nagy University* and the *Eötvös Loránd University* in her native Budapest, and was Visiting Professor at *UCLA* in Los Angeles. Her books include *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics* (CEU Press, 1995), the co-edited volume (with T. O. Benson) *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes* (The MIT Press, 2002), and *Hungarian Art* (DoppelHouse Press, 2016).