

# Sophie Taeuber-Arps Fluchtlinien

Myriam Thyès, 2015, HD-Video, 10:10, Loop, stereo. Ton: Silvia Pachler.

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## Concept and sources

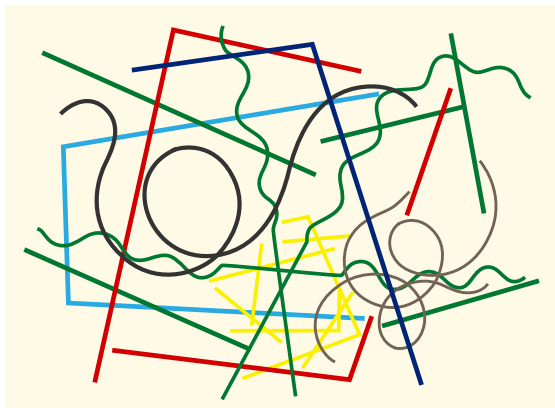
In what is, prima facie, a mesh of abstract lines, no few of the works that Sophie Taeuber-Arp completed between 1940 and 1942 in her exile in southern France manifest a symbolism of war, persecution and flight, showing six-pointed stars, hooks, and whips. The compositions of lively, curved lines have, in part, something lost, floating, broken, irrational about them, which, in all Taeuber-Arp's earlier works, would have been wholly uncharacteristic. Yet for all the horrifying events hinted at, these drawings are highly aesthetic entities. In Taeuber-Arp's cycle of works entitled 'Lignes...', an aspect of DADA re-emerges – the (meaning-denying) art of refugees from war.

The animation, which combines eight of her works from the 'Lignes' series with photographs from World War 2, shows the connection and the discrepancy between Taeuber-Arp's artistic activity and the world of war and persecution. The video thereby highlights a dilemma facing artists to this day, of making art in a time of injustice and violence.

There is good reason to animate Sophie Taeuber-Arp's compositions, as she developed a striking number of variations out of the same basic elements for her series and because dance, movement and rhythm play an important role throughout her oeuvre.

\* Only Carolyn Lanchner mentions the radical changes in Taeuber-Arp's work since 1940 ("A jumble of lines", "a gestural network of lines") in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp 1889-1943* (edited by Siegfried Gohr, published by Verlag Gerd Hatje, Stuttgart 1993, pages 26-28).

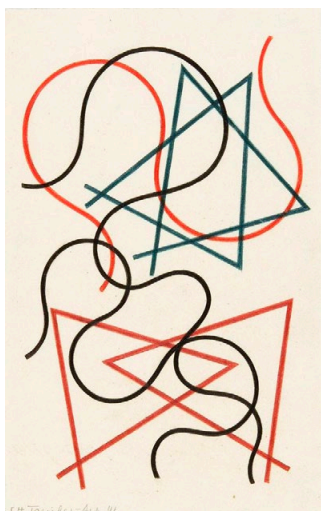
In the animation, I have quoted the following images from the *Lignes* series (**using my vector drawings after them**):



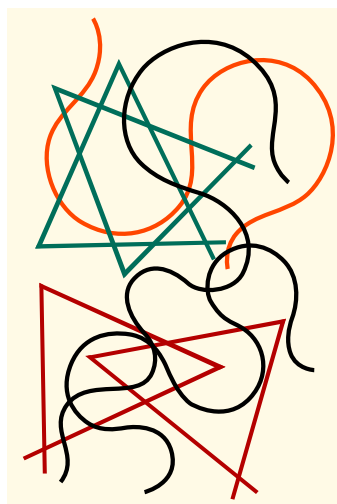
Grasse - Lignes géométriques et ondoyantes, 1940  
(original: coloured pencil on paper, 26 x 34,4 cm)



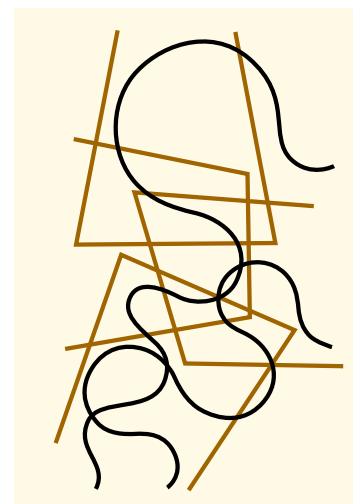
Lignes d'été, 1941  
(original: coloured pencil on paper, 49,2 x 63,5 cm)

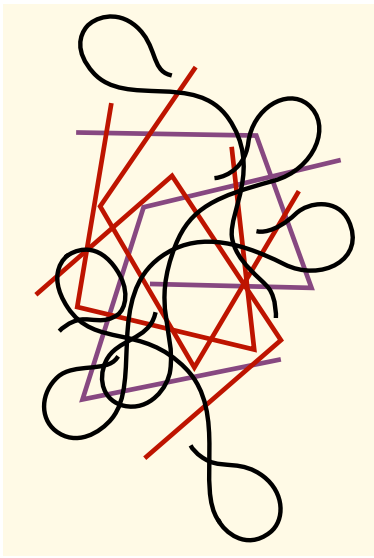


**photo of original drawing**  
Lignes géométriques et ondoyantes, 1941  
(coloured pencil on paper, 32 x 30,5 cm)

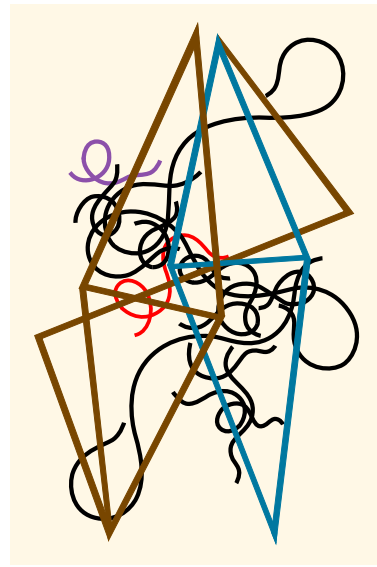


**my vector drawings after her printed edition**  
Lignes géométriques et ondoyantes, 1941  
(original: diptych, printed edition)





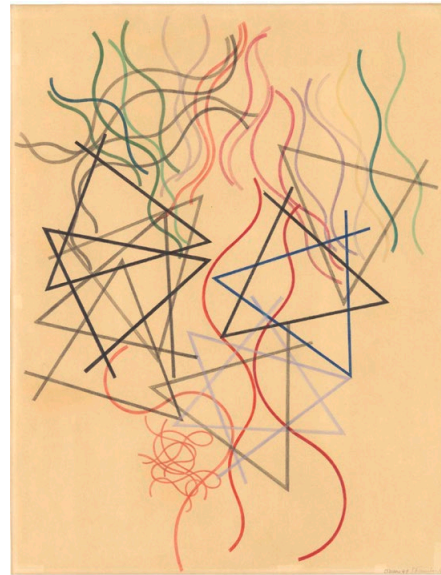
Lignes géométriques et ondoyantes, 1941  
(original: coloured pencil on paper, 21,2 x 13,3 cm)



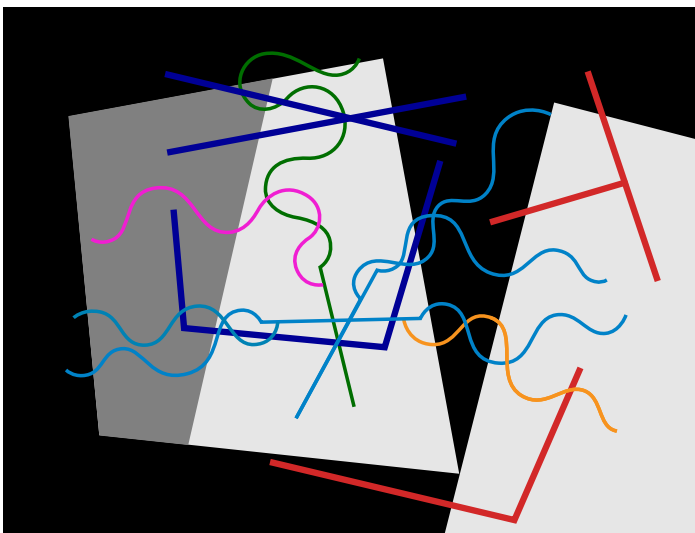
Lignes géométriques et ondoyantes, 1941  
(original: coloured pencil on paper, 21,5 x 13,4 cm)



**vector drawing after**  
Lignes géométriques et ondoyantes, 1941  
(original: coloured pencil on paper, 64 x 49,3 cm)



**photo of original drawing (old paper, yellowed)**  
Lignes géométriques et ondoyantes, 1941  
(coloured pencil on paper, 64 x 49,3 cm)



Plans, barres et lignes ondoyantes, 1942  
(original: oil on cardboard, 46 x 55,5 cm)

**SOURCES – the following photographs appear in the animation:**



German troops marching past on the Place de la Concorde  
Paris, 14 June 1940  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: 1989/1011.79



Following the bombing of a hospital in Warsaw:  
Women killed in a maternity ward  
Warsaw, September 1939  
Photographer: Julian Bryan  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: 1988/2164.14



Young man in the Lublin Ghetto, June 1941  
From spring of 1942 onwards, thousands of ghetto inhabitants from the  
Lublin district were deported to the Sobibor extermination camp  
Photographer: Max Kirnberger  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Kirn 6423



Book burning in Hamburg on Kaiser-Friedrich-Ufer  
Hamburg, 15 May 1933  
Photographer: Joseph Schorer  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: Schorer 020/4



Public burning of "un-German" writings and books on Opernplatz,  
Unter den Linden, Berlin, by students from Berlin's universities, 11 May 1933.  
Photographer: Georg Pahl.  
Licence: CC-BY-SA 3.0  
German Federal Archives, image 102-14597



France, River Cher (demarcation line). Checkpoint with barbed wire entanglement and swastika flag; sign bearing the inscription: 'Jews are forbidden to cross the demarcation line into the occupied territory of France ...' 1941

Photographer: Becker

German Federal Archives, image 1011-017-1065-44A



France. Arrest of French nationals / Operation against the Resistance. A column of arrested French nationals marching under guard by the French militia, July 1944.

Photographer: Koll

German Federal Archives, image 146-1989-107-24



France during the German occupation.

A destroyed synagogue in Paris (Montmartre), 1941

Photographer: unknown. Agency: Scherl

German Federal Archives, image 183-S69265



Western Campaign, France.

A block of houses in ruins in Châlons-sur-Marne, May–June 1940.

Photographer: Böhmer

German Federal Archives, image 1011-055-1554-17



France, Beaune-la-Rolande.

Prisoners (Jews?) in a barrack with beds, 1941.

Photographer: Dieck

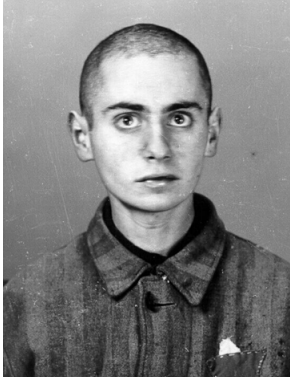
German Federal Archives, image 1011-250-0938-29



France, near Gien. Refugee convoy: a woman pulling a horse-drawn cart laden with her belongings along a country road; a loaded car on the left, 19 June 1940.

Photographer: Tritschler

German Federal Archives, image 146-1971-083-01



Alfred Fleschler, a Jewish prisoner born in 1922, died two and a half months after his deportation to Auschwitz.

Photograph from the Auschwitz concentration camp prisoner register, 2 April 1942

German Historical Museum, Berlin

Inventory No.: Ph 97/276



Maryla Schenker, a Jewish woman born in 1913, died four months after her deportation to Auschwitz.

Photograph from the Auschwitz concentration camp prisoner records, 27 April 1942

German Historical Museum, Berlin

Inventory No.: Ph 97/439



Red Army soldiers on a battlefield on the Kharkiv front 1942

German Historical Museum, Berlin

Inventory No.: Ph 2003/357



Execution of hostages in Pancevo, 22 April 1941

Photographer: Gerhard Gronefeld

German Historical Museum, Berlin

Inventory No.: GG 388/16

In retaliation for the deaths of an SS soldier and nine ethnic Germans from Pancevo, members of the Wehrmacht shot a total of 18 men in the Serbian town on 21 and 22 April 1941. On 22 April, they hanged a further 18 residents at the cemetery in Pancevo.



Prisoners at Sachsenhausen concentration camp during roll call  
Oranienburg, c. 1939  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: F 62/303



Prisoners at Sachsenhausen concentration camp returning from an external  
work detail.  
Sachsenhausen near Oranienburg, 1938–1945  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: 96/497



Opponents of the regime being sent to the Oranienburg concentration  
camp near Berlin, 1933  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: F 55/1416

On 21 March 1933, members of the SA set up the first concentration camp in Prussia in Oranienburg, near Berlin. The SA imprisoned there primarily prominent members of the KPD, but also Social Democrats and other representatives of the Weimar Republic, including numerous journalists and radio representatives such as Kurt Magnus, Hans Flesch, Heinrich Giesecke and Alfred Braun (radio), pictured in the photograph, as well as the Social Democrats Friedrich Ebert Jr. and Ernst Heilmann (from right to left).



Wehrmacht parade on 'Unter den Linden' to mark the victory over France.  
Berlin, 6 July 1940  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: F 70/125



SS parade at the Brandenburg Gate  
Berlin, 11–13 August 1933  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: BA 95/582



Occupation of Prague Castle by the Wehrmacht  
Prague, 15 March 1939  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: F 60/691



A German rifle regiment marching into Poland  
4 September 1939  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: F 55/1327



Dead soldiers near Dunkirk, June 1940  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: Schönstein 1047



An observer at a telescope  
Germany, 1940  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: Schönstein 709

Between September 1939 and May 1940, a ceasefire prevailed on the German-French border, interrupted only by occasional skirmishes. During the so-called 'Sitzkrieg', the Wehrmacht and the French army largely confined themselves to observing the enemy.



'Hitler Youth Day' at the German Stadium  
Berlin, 11 June 1933  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: BA 97/518



Destroyed houses in Bergen, 1941  
From a private photo album entitled 'Memories of Norway 1941-1943'  
German Historical Museum, Berlin  
Inventory No.: Do 71/229

German troops occupied the Norwegian port city of Bergen in 1940 with little resistance. The destruction documented here was caused by British air raids on German positions and ships.