

THE LAST ISSUE Baljeu did not take him up on this offer, preferring to express his views on the subject in his own journal. He may have been influenced by a remark which Kenneth Martin made in August 1964, after the publication of the second issue of 'Trends in Construction': 'I like the new number of *Structure* and am very pleased with the way you have presented me. Certain of the Nouvelles Tendances and also the Düsseldorf Zero group have attitudes towards nature which it might be interesting to set against your own in some future number.'¹¹⁸ Baljeu took up the suggestion in the very last issue. Under the title 'Young Constructionists', he presented four young artists on whom the exchange of views in *Structure* had had a stimulating effect. All four worked in relief and two of them, the English artists Colin Jones (1934) and Peter Lowe (1938), had already been represented in the second instalment of 'Trends in Construction'.¹¹⁹

Jones and Lowe had both studied painting at Goldsmith's School of Art in London.¹²⁰ In their third and fourth year they took Kenneth Martin's course in composition, where they were introduced to the work and writings of Klee, Vantongerloo and Bill, and studied the principles of proportion and composition formulated by Power, Hambidge and Le Corbusier.¹²¹ Martin also introduced them to *Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge* by Biederman as well as his *Letters on the New Art* and *The New Cezanne*. However, they themselves had more affinity with the Klee-inspired organic method practiced by the English Constructionists than with Biederman's spatial colour structures. In the spring of 1960, during a follow-up course in art teaching, they were also introduced to the views of Biederman by Mary Martin, who taught a course on 'Construction'.

This happened to be around the same time the Martins were preparing for a joint exhibition in the ICA, under the motto *Essays in Movement*.¹²² Both Jones and Lowe were inspired by the manner in which their teachers worked out their shared themes in reliefs and mobiles, according to their own individual interpretations. In 1962 the two agreed that for one year they, too, would focus on the same theme and then exhibit the results of their labours in a joint exhibition.¹²³ In February 1963 Jones sent Baljeu the catalogue of the exhibition and asked him whether he thought some of the reproductions of their reliefs might be suitable for *Structure*. The general theme was polarity and, because they had examined the contrast between straight and curved, Baljeu was open to the idea. He suggested including an orthogonal relief by Jones, and a work by Lowe which featured circles and squares. In *Structure* they motivated their choice of shapes in a brief dialogue, in which the influence of the Martins on their work was overly clear. They both spoke of the inner logic of their work, and the fact that the internal proportions and the arrangement of the

elements were based on 'an invented system of number and proportion.'¹²⁴ They had both strived for a dynamic equilibrium: Jones between mass and space, and Lowe within the rotating movement of three square planes with circular perforations, which were mounted on top of one another.

In the later articles written separately for the issue on 'Young Constructionists', Jones and Lowe explained that – like the Martins – they found inspiration in the notion that natural harmony could be expressed in mathematical proportions.¹²⁵ Here Lowe was critical of the attitude which some artists adopted towards science. He wrote that the fear of a dehumanizing and denaturalizing effect of modern science reflected a nineteenth-century mind-set. No doubt he was also thinking of Biederman's criticism of Hambidge. Since 1964 Lowe himself employed harmonic root relationships in his work, under the influence of Hambidge's design theory, Le Corbusier's modulator, and even the harmonic arithmetic proportions of the Dutch monk and architect Dom van der Laan.¹²⁶ 'An artist's concern with mathematics is also a concern for nature,' Lowe wrote in his piece. 'Or, to put it another way, an artist's concern with nature can involve him in actual measurement and study of numerical relationships that are in nature.'¹²⁷

The relief that was reproduced to accompany his article makes it clear that Lowe also sought inspiration in the way Baljeu visualized the process of nature, and the latter's publications presumably played a role of importance in his development. Kenneth Martin had introduced him to *Mondrian or Miro* and *Structure*, and in 1963 he also bought Baljeu's *Attempt at a Theory of Synthesist Plastic Expression*. Lowe later recalled the importance of that publication: 'Baljeu's "Towards a Synthesis of Plastic Expression" [Attempt at a Theory of Synthesist Plastic Expression] and "Mondrian or Miro" fascinated me. His arguments added strongly to the decision to look again at orthogonal relationships which were already contained by implication in my works with circular forms. [...] Because of the relative lack of contemporary material relating to our interests, *Structure* fulfilled an important need and was eagerly studied. In spite of its small circulation it was a remarkable and influential magazine and it helped to overcome the feeling of isolation I experienced.'¹²⁸ Like Baljeu and the older English Constructionists, Lowe also studied D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form*. Phrases in his contribution to *Structure* are reminiscent of that work, such as: 'Formation is determined in art and nature by a play of constant and variables forces which rotate or translate or both.' And: 'In nature translation is affected by growth which is influenced by the type of organism and the way it derives its energy. [...] When proportion regulates growth, as in the nautilus shell for instance, the result is harmonic.'¹²⁹

Jonneke Jobse

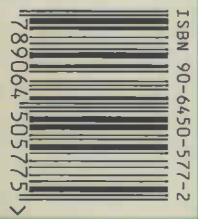
De Stijl Continued

The Journal *Structure*

(1958-1964)

An Artists' Debate

010 Publishers, Rotterdam 2005



ISBN 90-6450-577-2

From 1958 to 1964 *Structure* was a major platform for artists reconsidering the design tenets and underlying principles of the Bauhaus, Constructivism and De Stijl. In this journal familiar and less familiar artists, amongst whom Joost Baljeu, Max Bill, Eli Bornstein, Ad Dekkers, John Ernest, Karl Gerstner, Stephen Gilbert, Jean Gorin, Anthony Hill, Kenneth and Mary Martin and Carel Visser, addressed such issues as whether art should once again proceed from nature; how artists should collaborate with architects; how art should relate to science and philosophy today; and what materials and techniques were to be used. *De Stijl Continued* explores their body of ideas in meticulous detail.