

Gallery 5

Large Print Texts



Naum Gabo

Please return this guide to the holder after use. Thank you.

How to use this guide

In this guide you will find the information panel and all artwork labels in this gallery space reproduced in large print.

The content of this guide is ordered in a pre-defined route; please follow the direction given within it.

If you experience any difficulties locating an artwork, please speak to a gallery assistant.

Gallery 5

Information panel on Wall

Naum Gabo

‘Constructions for Real Life’

The Russian-born visionary Naum Gabo (1890 –1977) believed in the power of art to communicate across social and cultural boundaries.

A pioneer of international Constructivism, he created work responding to the ideas, materials and technologies of the 20th century.

On the 100th anniversary of his influential declaration 'The Realistic Manifesto', Tate St Ives presents an extensive selection of Gabo's ground-breaking sculptures, models, designs and prints that brought time, space and industrial materials into art for modern life.

In 1920, amid the political fervour of post-revolutionary Russia, Gabo and his brother Antoine Pevsner posted 'The Realistic Manifesto' across the official hoardings of Moscow.

The poster broadcast their radical artistic principles and intent to make new forms of art for a developing modern society.

In an age of scientific and technological advancement and social and political upheaval, Gabo asserted that the dimensions of space and time were essential to new ideas in art as the

‘only forms on which Life is built and hence art must be constructed’.

These ‘constructive’ ideals evolved with Gabo as he moved through Europe in pursuit of freedom to forge his artistic vision.

He moved to St Ives in 1939 and became central to the growing community of international artists who relocated to the town during the Second World War.

A truly trans-national artist Gabo studied in Germany, worked in Norway, and contributed to developments in modernism on location in Moscow, Berlin, Paris, London and St Ives before settling in the United States. His career saw him achieve major international commissions and recognised as an accomplished writer and theorist through his teaching, lectures and publications.

This exhibition celebrates Naum Gabo's expansive body of work and his innovative approach and thinking that has influenced international artists, designers and architects for over a century.

Curated by Anne Barlow, Director Tate St Ives, Sara Matson, Exhibition and Displays Curator, Tate St Ives, and Natalia Sidlina, Curator, International Art, Tate Modern with Giles Jackson, Assistant Curator, Tate St Ives, Helen Bent, Registrar and Sally Noall, Interpretation Curator

With thanks to Nina and Graham Williams;
Berlinischer Galerie, Berlin;
the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art,
Edinburgh; i-DAT at the University
of Plymouth

Photograph of Gabo in his studio
in Carbis Bay, c1943, photograph
by Studio St Ives

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Turn left past corridor to artwork on wall.

‘The Realistic Manifesto’

1920

Print on paper

For Gabo, this proclamation defined a new way for living and approaching the modern industrial world. Using the form of a manifesto – prevalent in political and artistic circles of the era – and by calling it ‘Realistic’, Gabo managed to issue the poster through Government printers and distributors despite its radical modern stance.

The manifesto issued five principles for making art built on the foundation of time and space as the 'laws of real Life'.

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin.

Donated by Nina and Graham Williams,
Biddenden, Kent, United Kingdom, 1988

Below on reading panel.

Noton (Antoine) Pevsner 1884–1962 Naum

Gabo 1890–1977

‘The Realistic Manifesto’

English translation

1920 Reproduction, print on paper

Collection of Nina and Graham Williams

Left to right

‘Realistic Manifesto’ translations in English,
German and French.

Large Print translations available.

Top right of reading panel.

Archival film footage of events in
Red Square, Moscow 1922–7

Film shown as digital, no sound.

Leon Trotsky inspecting troops in Red
Square, 1922

Leon Trotsky addressing students at Sverdlov
University, 1924

Kliment Voroshilov at Lenin's Mausoleum in
Red Square, 1927

Tate Archive

Turn left and move forward to plinth.

Model for 'Constructed Torso'

1917, reassembled 1981

Cardboard

The 'stereometric' method remained central to Gabo's sculptural constructions. It also allowed him to flat-pack his works and to transport them by box and suitcase during civil unrest and war.

The constructed technique changes this figurative sculpture when seen from different viewpoints, combining several postures into one three-dimensional form.

Presumed lost until 1977, this model was discovered disassembled in Gabo's studio and reconstructed in 1981.

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1995

Move left to information panel on wall.

Space and Motion

'The Realistic Manifesto' made a bold statement when Gabo posted it across the billboards of Moscow a century ago. At a time when social and political systems were restructuring, Gabo used this official media channel to distribute his vision for art which would nurture a progressive society. Gabo challenged conventional artistic methods and ideas declaring that modern art belonged in everyday living and so should be constructed on the 'real laws of Life'. Embodying scientific

and technological developments and contemporary philosophical thinking, the manifesto set space and time as essential materials in art for a modern life and world.

In his exploration of form and space, Gabo aimed to unlock the hidden rhythms and forces within his sculptures by opening up their volume.

He developed the 'stereometric' technique of constructing works from interlocking sheets of card, wood and steel to capture space between the assembled parts.

This method enabled Gabo to define the 'inner space' in sculpture, describing the form

and depth of his figures through the space that they occupy rather than presenting them as conventional surface and mass. Following this, he pioneered his first fully abstract work 'Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)'. Like versions of other works in this room, it was shown in an exhibition accompanying 'The Realistic Manifesto' to demonstrate Gabo's final principle of space and 'kinetic rhythms'. Casting off the static forms of traditional sculpture, a single rod creates the illusion of a form as it vibrates in space.

It is one of the first motorised sculptures in Western art.

Look upwards to artwork in top left corner above the entrance.

‘Constructed Head No.3 (Head in a Corner Niche)’

c.1917, this version 1964

Silicon bronze

Gabo developed the ‘stereometric’ technique in the years after the First World War, as he moved between Germany, Scandinavia and Russia.

The work is connected to sketches Gabo

made of a mother and child and the tradition of Russian icons displayed in the corner of a room. It is also in dialogue with Kazimir Malevich's 'Black Square' 1915 and Vladimir Tatlin's 'Corner Counter-Relief' 1914–15, both created to be displayed in a corner.

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art, Photography and Architecture, Berlin.

Acquired with funds from the DKLB Foundation, Berlin, 1988

Move left to next artwork on wall.

Study for 'Constructed Head No. 2'

1915

Blue pencil on paper

Collection of Graham Williams

Turn left to artwork on plinth.

'Constructed Head No. 2'

c.1916, enlarged version 1964

Steel

Tate. Purchased 1972

Move left around plinth.

(Please be aware there is a barrier on the floor around this artwork.)

Turn right to artwork on the wall.

Sketch for 'Kinetic Construction'

1922

Ink on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Move left to artwork in display case.

‘Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)’

1919–20, replica 1985

Metal, wood and electric motor

Tate. Presented by the artist through the

American Federation of Arts 1966

Press white button on right hand corner of
plinth to activate artwork.

Please return this guide to the holder
or to a gallery assistant after use.

Thank you.

Gallery 6

Large Print Texts

Naum Gabo

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How to use this guide

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Information about this exhibition.

Please be aware:

There is a large curved grey hanging curtain dividing the gallery down the centre of the room.

Some works have low plinths and barriers. These are noted in this Large Print.

Lowered lighting helps protect some of the fragile artworks on display. Please speak with a member of staff if you would like more information.

Information panel on wall on right of entry.

Architecture

Gabo considered art crucial to everyday modern life and artistic practice as central to building a new society. Following current ideas in science, philosophy and engineering, he created designs that reimagined the future of public buildings and redefined social spaces with the intervention of sculptural forms. Fusing art with architecture, he

asserted 'From the very beginning of the Constructive Movement it was clear to me that a constructed sculpture, by its very method and technique, brings sculpture very near to architecture.'

Constructing for a new world, Gabo devised new

types of architecture including high-rise buildings, car parks and space-age elevated airports inspired by the possibilities of civil air travel.

Working with glass, and later with

newly developed plastics, Gabo further revealed the interior space of his sculptures begun with the open construction of the 'stereometric' technique. Through his studies in engineering, he was able to design towering monuments dedicated to communication and technological progress. He envisaged an open architecture built from transparent glass and plastics, using the clear materials and reflections of light to dissolve the edges, shape and form of his structures.

The buildings would be animated by the rhythms

of occupants moving through and around his dynamic spaces and streamlined forms.

Although unrealised, Gabo's curving shell-like 1931 proposal for the Palace of Soviets competition, a new congress centre for Moscow, predicted the influence of organic forms on post-war architecture.

Turn around. Walk forward past Gallery 6 entrance.

Turn left to artwork on wall.

First sketch for 'Monument for an Institute of
Physics and Mathematics'

1919

Graphite on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Move right to to artwork in display case on
plinth.

'Monument for an Airdrome (Variant of 1924)'

c.1933, this version 1948

Perspex and brass

Created in several variations, Gabo conceived this form in the mid-1920s when commercial air travel was just beginning. New types of buildings

were being designed and airports offered opportunities for innovations in modern architecture.

Designed as a public monument, the streamlined sections evoke technical innovation and the speed and weightlessness associated with flight. Gabo experimented with designs for a futuristic personal flying device in early 1930 and his designs for the 'Palace of Soviets' include a rooftop helipad.

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1995

'Words for Looking' label

'Monument for an Airport'

By Look Group members

Aerodynamic

Architectural

Flight and take off

Forward trajectory

Geometric

Lifting

Lightness

Mathematical

Modern

Monochromatic

Suspension

Transparency

Look Groups are a fun way to meet new people and talk about art. For more information visit tate.org.uk

‘Words for Looking’ label

‘Monument for an Airport’

By Jude Carroll, Anthony Gribbin,

Jude Mann and other Look Group members

Gabo envisaged this maquette enlarged to a grander scale. His use of light, modern materials and a limited range of shapes emphasises the streamlined aspects of the work.

Different viewing heights give different perspectives, and the sculpture becomes almost invisible when viewed from the front. The brass element creates a strong line and a feeling of weightlessness and direction. The black Perspex is reminiscent of an aeroplane tail and transparent parallel planes add a

sense of aeronautical modernity and dynamism.

Turn around and move forward to artwork on large low grey plinth. Please be aware of low barrier and plinth.

‘Column’

1921–2, this version 1975

Glass, Perspex, stainless steel

As Gabo moved towards purely abstract forms, he developed constructions to 'fuse the sculptural element with the architectural element into one unit'. 'Column' was designed before he left Russia, as a public monument to be lit

by projections of light during dark hours. It uses the popular form of a tower and was to serve 'as a community building to fulfil the same role as temples or churches in the past'.

It includes a podium for public speaking, bringing together art and everyday life.

National Galleries of Scotland.

Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by
HM Government from Graham Williams on
behalf of himself and his wife, Nina Williams,
and allocated to The Scottish National Gallery
of Modern Art, 2007

Turn right and move forward to artwork in
small display case on wall.

Model for 'Column'

1920–1 Cellulose nitrate

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Move left to Archive case.

Diagram of archive case layout

Contents from left to right.

1 – 3. Drawings for Gabo's submission for
'Palace of Soviets' competition

1931

Graphite on graph paper and
drawing board. Reproduction

4, 5, 7, 9 and 10. Postcards of De Bijenkorf
Rotterdam

1954–7

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

6 and 8. Drawings for the Bijenkorf project in
Rotterdam

1954–7

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

11. Postcard of De Bijenkorf, Rotterdam,
featuring a sculpture by Gabo

1957

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Move left to artworks on the wall. These three drawings are created in graphite and feature low contrast.

From right to left:

(3 items) Designs for the Palace of the Soviets

1931

Graphite on card and paper

Imagining a new architecture to build

a modern era, these designs are studies for Gabo's first fully developed blueprint for a building. They capture Gabo's ideas for a public space that is

monumental, symbolic, practical and futuristic. Gabo patented its radical roof structure that allowed for an unsupported span of the auditorium.

Although unrealised, the design predicted organic trends in post-war architecture and influenced a later generation of British architects, including Norman Foster.

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin .

Donated by Nina & Graham Williams,

Biddenden, Kent, United Kingdom, 1988 /

Acquired with funds from the DKLB

Foundation, Berlin, 1988

Follow the wall to the next artwork with small
plinth below.

Above.

Studies for support structures (curved and straight surfaces)

1931

Ink on graph paper

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin.

Donated by

Nina & Graham Williams, Biddenden, Kent,
United Kingdom, 1988

Below.

Experimental models for support structures,
patented by Gabo

1931

Plastic (cellulose derivative)

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin.

Donated by

Nina & Graham Williams, Biddenden, Kent,
United Kingdom, 1988

Turn around to artwork on large low grey
plinth. Please be aware of low barrier and
plinth.

Final model for 'Bijenkorf Construction',
Rotterdam

1955

Painted brass, copper, steel on
a bronze base

In 1954, Gabo began a public sculpture commission for a new department store in Rotterdam, designed by architect Marcel Breuer. The project was part of the regeneration of the city after the devastating destruction of the Second World War. Gabo

developed several wall-relief designs before completing this final model of free-standing construction.

Inspired by nature, he evolved his stringing technique into a framework of steel ribs around a central form. The final work took three years to complete and was unveiled in 1957.

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1995

Turn right and move forward to artwork on large grey plinth. Please be aware of low barrier and plinth.

‘Construction in Space with Balance on Two Points’

1924–5, this version c.1960

Plexiglass

Gabo believed art was essential to modern society, declaring 'We make art not for the individual, but for the collective'. He associated the stripped-back, graphic images of the machine-age with the communal spirit of the working population. Produced in several versions, this work uses transparent curves to suspend a central form, as if defying gravity. The work suggests notions of vertical lift and explores Gabo's interest in flight. Gabo came to regard this work as one of his masterpieces.

Private Collection

Turn around and move forward to four artworks on wall.

Top left.

Sketch for a 'Flying Machine

(Whiz-starter)'

1920

Graphite on graph paper

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin

Bottom left.

Study for a construction

1929

Graphite on graph paper

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin

Top right.

Study for a construction

1929

Graphite on graph paper

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin

Bottom right.

Sketch for a 'Tower with Airplane Landing
Pad'

1924

Graphite and ink on drawing board

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin.

Donated by

Nina & Graham Williams, Biddenden, Kent,
United Kingdom, 1988

Move left to large grey plinth.

‘Construction in Space: Diagonal’

1921–5, reassembled 1986

Glass, metal and celluloid

Most of the components of this work were discovered in Gabo's attic in 1977 and later reassembled by Charles Wilson, Gabo's former studio assistant.

The vertical elements were originally more transparent, allowing the viewer to see the various layers within the sculpture.

The construction reflects Gabo's interest in architectural structures, industrial machinery and

scientific apparatus.

He envisaged it as a model for monuments to science and technology.

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1995

Turn around and move forward to artwork on large grey plinth.

'Construction in Space: Suspended'

1957–65

Perspex, nylon thread, gold-plated phosphor
bronze on aluminium base

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin.

Donated by

Nina & Graham Williams, Biddenden, Kent,
United Kingdom, 1988

Turn right and move forward to artwork on large grey plinth. Please be aware of low barrier and plinth.

‘Construction in Space: Vertical’

1923–5, reassembled 1986

Glass, painted brass and plastic on black painted wooden base

Berlinische Galerie – Museum for Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture, Berlin

Turn right and move around plinth to artwork
on wall to your right.

Project for Film

c.1927

Graphite on graph paper

These designs were housed in a folder titled 'Plans for a Ballet and Film'.

How far Gabo progressed in realising this project is difficult to establish and

no evidence of the film has been found in his archive. The drawings depict a series of numbered circles, perhaps suggesting a sequence of film shots.

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about Gabo's idea, and the drawings do not obviously relate to any known constructions although elements recall specific works. For example, the curved lines are reminiscent of

curvilinear elements in works like ‘Circular Relief’ (1925–8), which is circular in format, consisting of transparent plastic against a black background and evokes sensations of movement.

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Move left to projection on wall.

Hans Richter 1888–1976

‘Rhythmus ‘21’

1921

16mm black and white silent film shown as digital, black and white, silent, 3 mins 22 secs

Like his friend Gabo, Richter believed that rhythm was universal in human life. In this abstract film, one of the earliest of its type, Richter animates geometric shapes with movement and tempo.

The work began a genre of experiments with the

filmic qualities of light, time and the frame of the screen, later termed 'absolute film'.

Richter explained

'The absolute film opens your eyes for the first time to what the camera is, can be, and wants!'

© Hans Richter Archive

Courtesy of RE:VOIR

Turn left to next wall.

Text panel on wall.

Stage and Film

Gabo took his experiments in light and movement onto the stage with his radical designs for Sergei Diaghilev's 1927 production of the ballet *La Chatte*. Working with foremost contemporary choreographers, Gabo created an immersive environment brought to life through the rhythms of dance,

music and light. Extending his sculptural ideas, he draped the entire stage in glossy black fabric on which he placed a futuristic transparent set.

Gabo also designed costumes with reflective elements that cast rhythms of light as dancers performed the stylised movements of George Balanchine's 'mathematical choreography'.

Using

a limited palette of black, white and yellow combined with matt and shiny surfaces, the edges and surfaces of the set were animated

by flickers of bright light and deep shadow mirroring the qualities of contemporary film.

For Gabo, film offered a way to energise his abstract forms as a moving image. From his experience with 'La Chatte', he went on to propose projects with stop animations using multiple drawings to capture transformations of lines and shapes. When played on a screen the forms were to move in rhythm with the accompanying music. Another proposal used the latest sound-film to run multiple photographs of sculptures that would appear to change in time

with different styles of music. Gabo's ideas for abstract films went unrealised due to the technological limitations and prohibitive costs of film-making at the time.

Move left to display case on wall.

'Circular Relief'

c.1926

Replica, plastic on wood

This work is constructed from layers of spiral and circular motifs to suggest a spinning direction and motion. Playing with the use of scale and perspective, Gabo uses reflection

and shadow to create depth viewed through the transparent layers of the relief.

With a gloss black background and plastic profiles, this work recalls the geometric stage set and costumes Gabo was developing at the same time for the scenography of the ballet 'La Chatte'.

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Move left to film projection on wall.

Reconstruction of 'La Chatte' by
Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer

2006

Digital film, colour, sound. 3 mins 5 secs

Video footage reconstruction of the finale of Sergei Diaghilev's 1927 ballet 'La Chatte', by Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer and performed at the Giuseppe Verdi Teatro Lirico, Trieste. Originally choreographed by George Balanchine and with costumes and set design by Gabo.

Directed by Carla Fracci, Rome
Opera Ballet

Conducted by Hirofumi Yoshida

Television film by Franco Tiralongo

Performers:

Female Lead: Gaia Straccamore

Male lead : Mauro Marozzi

Dancers: Damiano Mongelli,

Paolo Mongelli, Francesco Milana,

Paolo Gentile, Francesco Marzola, Giovanni
Bell

© The George Balanchine Trust and Teatro
Dell'Opera di Roma.

Courtesy of Millicent Hodson and Kenneth
Archer

Move left to display case on wall.

Noton (Antoine) Pevsner 1884–1962

Model for a statue of Aphrodite for the ballet
'La

Chatte'

1927

Plastic

Tate. Presented by Mrs Miriam Gabo, the
artist's sister-in-law 1977

Move left to archive case.

Diagram of archive case layout

Left to right, by column:

1. Sketch for 'La Chatte'

c.1926–7

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

2. Drawing for the stage design
for 'La Chatte'

1927

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

3. Costume sketch of a dancer with
headdress

c.1926–7

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

4. Costume sketch

c.1927

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

5. Photograph of 'La Chatte' costume sketch

1927

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

6. Photograph of 'La Chatte' female Costume

1927

Digital reproduction of archival photograph

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

7. Photograph of 'La Chatte' costume sketch

1927

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

8. Photographs of ballerina Alice Nikitina
in costume for 'La Chatte'

1928

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

9 and 10. Photographs of 'La Chatte' stage
and set designed by Gabo

1926–7

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

11. Photograph of Alice Nikitina and

Serge Lifar in costume for 'La Chatte'

1927

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

12. Programme of the Russian Ballet

1927

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

13. Monte-Carlo Theatre programme

1927

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Wall above. Left to right.

Costume Sketch for 'La Chatte'

1926

Graphite and pastel on paper

Private Collection

Costume Sketch for 'La Chatte'

1926–7

Graphite and pastel on paper

Private Collection

Turn around to artwork in display case on
plinth.

‘Torsion (Project for a Fountain)’

1960–64

Bronze

Gabo conceived many of his works as models to be scaled as monumental public schemes and in various materials. This work came from an earlier idea using triangular units to build the twisted rotating form. It later developed into

a large fountain sited in the grounds of St Thomas' Hospital in London.

The fountain spouted spiraling jets of water from a central rotating form and was described by Gabo as 'the realization of a dream I have been carrying with me ever since 1929 and before'.

Tate. Presented by the artist through the
American

Federation of Arts 1969

Turn around and move forward and left to
next artwork on wall.

Film of Naum Gabo's 'Constructivist Ballet'
activated by Nina Williams,

the artist's daughter

2010, remastered 2020 Digital film 3 mins 20
secs

Tate

Display case below.

'Constructivist Ballet'

c.1945

Plastic and foils

This toy was made by Gabo for his daughter Nina during the Second World War. With a scarcity of materials Gabo used scraps of coloured plastic and foils found in his St Ives studio.

Placed in a box with a transparent lid – and later replaced with a Perspex dome – the miniature stage was activated by static electricity caused by rubbing a cloth across its surface. In the displayed video, Nina Williams, the artist's daughter, demonstrates the toy by

making the components jump, dance and perform.

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Move left to interactive projection in corner of gallery. How to interact with this artwork:

Stand at the floor spot.

Clench one fist and extend your arm.

Move your fist to control the projection.

Bronze Spheric Theme

Original work c.1960, digitised 2019–20

Digital 3D model

This projected model allows Gabo's 'Bronze Spheric Theme' to revolve in space as the artist originally intended.

As you step into the corner of the gallery, motion sensors follow your movement and direct the

digital model to rotate.

Gabo used transparent and reflective materials to harness light within his sculptures. He also developed moving sculptures and designs for projections onto buildings.

This 3D model follows Gabo's innovative use of materials and technologies. Using 3D scanning and photogrammetry the original sculpture was captured in detail. The digital model was then made interactive using game engine software.

You can see Gabo's original 'Bronze Spheric Theme' on display in Gallery 1, as part of Modern Art and St Ives.

With thanks to Nina and

Graham Williams

This project was co-produced with i-DAT at the University of Plymouth and Tate Digital

Turn around to artwork on large grey plinth.

‘Spheric Theme (Penetrated Variation)’

c.1937–40 Bronze

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Turn right to wall text.

Text panel on wall.

Forces of Nature

Gabo often drew inspiration from the organic forms and natural phenomena around him.

He carved in stone to unleash its natural dynamics and later began to experiment with photography to capture patterns in light, affirming that 'One can create a work of art out of the dirt of the earth or out of the rays of the sun'.

Gabo's childhood interest in nature intensified when he moved to Cornwall in 1939 at the

outbreak of the Second World War.

Fascinated by natural systems that determine shapes and forms,

Gabo looked to the qualities of crystals, organic growth patterns and the processes of wind and water.

He began to express these 'hidden forces of nature' using newly available transparent materials to reveal structures in natural and geometrical forms.

In St Ives, he developed the technique of winding nylon filament in progressive

mathematical patterns across inner sculptural supports fashioned from Perspex. The strung works transmit motion and light along their threads

to reveal dynamism and radiance within their interior form.

From these sculptures, Gabo evolved fountain projects and public designs using jets of water to create lines, curves and circular motion. 'Revolving Torsion, Fountain' captures the natural forces and dynamics of spouting water to make moving compositions and visual forms.

Combining natural systems with linear structures became characteristic of Gabo's later work.

Move left to artworks on wall above.

Sketch for 'Spheric Theme'

c.1937

Graphite and ink on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Sketch for 'Spheric Theme'

1935–7

Graphite on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Display case below. From left to right.

Model for 'Spheric Theme'

c.1936–51

Paper and pins

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Model for 'Spheric Theme'

c.1936–51

Card

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Model for 'Spheric Theme with Centre'

c.1937

Tin plate

Presented by the artist 1977

Move left to Archive case.

From left to right.

Photograph of 'Torsion', testing water outside
St Thomas's Hospital, London

1975

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Postcard from Miriam Gabo to
Clifford and Patricia Chieffo

1979

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Letter from John Ross of Yorke Rosenberg
Mardell to Naum Gabo

about drawings for the Fountain

1973

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Preliminary architectural drawings

1972

Tate Archive

Turn around and move forward to artwork in case.

Model for 'Rotating Fountain'

c.1925, reassembled 1986

Metal and plastic

Gabo considered fountains as a universal form that could be placed in both public and private environments. Conceived as a design

for a public monument, the final fountain would resolve Gabo's desire for kinetic movement by incorporating the force of water to animate the sculptural form. With multiple potential pivot points it is unsure which elements of this work Gabo intended to rotate, or from where the water would spout.

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1995

Turn right and move forward to artwork in display case on plinth.

'Construction in Space with Crystalline Centre'

1938–40

Perspex and celluloid

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of
tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1995

Turn right and move left past archive case to

display case on wall. Moving left along the wall:

Model for 'Torsion'

c.1928

Plastic

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Experimental series of photographs

1941

Photographs on paper

In St Ives, Gabo used photography to capture moving light reflected from surfaces. He borrowed a camera, and on returning it asked

‘I am most anxious to have the film which was in it – could you do me a favour ... and let me have it back even if it appears quite bad. I

may still find some details for myself to refresh my memory about the patterns even if they are very faint'.

Tate Archive: Naum Gabo Collection

Sketch for a stone carving

1933

Graphite on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1977

Study for a fountain ('Linear Construction in
Space No. 2')

c.1950

Graphite on paper

Courtesy of Annely Juda Fine Art, London

Turn around and move forward to to artwork in display case on plinth. Please be aware of low barrier and plinth.

‘Linear Construction in Space No. 2’

c.1949–76, this version c.1976

Plastic and nylon thread

One of Gabo’s favourite works, he created twenty-six versions in standing and hanging forms. Winding

an intricate linear pattern of transparent nylon threads around two intersecting transparent planes, Gabo evolved straight lines to 'create a living surface'. Developed from an unrealised project for the lobby of the Esso Building in New York in 1949, two similar sculptures were planned to hang above the revolving entrance doors and designed to move when the doors were in use.

Tate. Presented by the artist through the American Federation of Arts 1969

Turn right and move forward.

‘Construction: Stone with a Collar’

1933, this version c.1936–7

Limestone, cellulose acetate and brass on
slate base

Under increasing threat as a Russian citizen
of Jewish descent in Nazi Germany, Gabo
relocated to Paris
in 1933 then to Britain in 1936.

This was one of few significant works Gabo produced during this turbulent period. For the first time, Gabo used direct carving into stone to

express what he saw as the hidden forces of nature. The dynamic curves signalled his departure from the primarily geometric forms of his 1920s works.

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1995

'Words for Looking' label

'Stone with Collar'

By Chris Edwards, Mary Fletcher,
Jenny Jackson, Bonita Lightfoot and other
Look Group members

As you walk around the work you see
a head lying on one side. It's essential
to keep moving to give it dynamism.

Subtle and fluid, it has no front or back. From
one view it looks like a child's head, another a

man's, resting on a safe and comfortable base.

Although small in size there is drama in the contrasts of texture and colour. White, black and scratched matt grey, the work evolved through the materials. The polished marble pedestal reflects the rough upper stone. Reflections of white on black, yin and yang, male and female, sailing on a calm water lake.

Look Groups are a fun way to meet new people and talk about art. For more information visit tate.org.uk

Turn right and move forward to wall.

Artworks moving left.

'Green Painting (Ireland)'

1944

Oil paint on silk board

Private Collection

'Strontium'

1944–5 Oil paint on paper on card

Private Collection

'Spinning'

1944

Oil paint on paper on board

Courtesy of Martin Tinney Gallery

(Please be aware of barrier on floor)

'Turquoise Kinetic Painting'

1945

Oil paint on board with motor

Gabo added motors to some of his paintings, slowly rotating them to bring every possible orientation into view across a period of time.

Created in St Ives, the rhythms of the natural

world influenced the shapes and forms of this painting. Gabo found them 'everywhere around me ... I see them in the green thicket of leaves and trees.

I can find them in the named stones on hills and roads. I may discern them in a steamy trail of smoke from a passing train or on the surface of a shabby wall'.

Private collection

Turn around and move forward.

'Kinetic Stone Carving'

1936–44

Portland stone

Tate. Presented by Nina Williams,
the artist's daughter, in memory
of her mother, Miriam Gabo 1995

Turn right and move forward. Turn right to
artwork in display case on plinth.

'Linear Construction in Space No. 2'

c.1949–76, this version c.1976

Perspex with nylon thread

Collection of Nina Williams

Move around the display case on plinth. to the wall behind.

'Opus' series

1950–73

Influenced by rhythms and structures of poetry and music, the title refers to a musical term for a sequence of related compositions. Using twelve woodblocks, Gabo printed onto fine papers, varying the density of ink to cause a play of light across and through the translucent sheets.

Introduced to the technique of

woodcut when he moved to the United States after the Second World War, he developed his own method of printing by hand to achieve a spectrum of tone, light and shade.

From left to right, top row then row below.

'Opus 1'

1950

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Bequeathed by Miriam Gabo,
the artist's widow 1995

'Opus 2'

1950

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1967

'Opus 8'

1968–70

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1971

'Opus 8'

c.1969

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Bequeathed by Miriam Gabo,
the artist's widow 1995

'Opus 3'

1950

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1967

'Opus 9'

1973

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Bequeathed by Miriam Gabo,
the artist's widow 1995

'Opus 4'

1950

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1967

'Opus 5'

1950

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by the artist 1967

'Opus 10'

c.1969

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by Miriam and

Nina Gabo, the artist's widow and daughter
1979

'Opus 10'

c.1969

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Bequeathed by Miriam Gabo,
the artist's widow 1995

'Opus 6'

c.1955–6

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by Miriam and
Nina Gabo, the artist's widow and daughter
1979

'Opus 11'

c.1955 Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by Miriam and Nina Gabo,
the artist's widow and daughter 1979

'Opus 7'

1956–73

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by Miriam and Nina Gabo,
the artist's widow and daughter 1979

'Opus 7'

1956–73

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Bequeathed by Miriam Gabo,

the artist's widow 1995

'Opus 12'

c.1950

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by Miriam and Nina Gabo,
the artist's widow and daughter 1979

Turn left and move forward.

Information panel on wall.

Rhythm and Music

Gabo's experiments in painting and print allowed him to envisage more complex structures than could be created in sculptural form. Introducing a limited palette of colour, he began to explore gradations of tone and light to effect depth, direction and rhythm across the surface. He also motorised some

of his paintings, rotating them to induce rhythmic movement within the painted forms and flowing together all the potential aspects of the same image

over time. Gabo regarded music as 'the highest and the most pure form

of abstract art' and as the ultimate universal language of communication. He understood music as constructed upon a repeated motif and a 'guiding rhythm', on which harmonies of changing notes and phrases are built over time. The recurring patterns that hold together individual sounds and notes in music spoke to Gabo's interest in rhythm, tempo and time.

His 'Opus' print series takes the name of a musical term for a sequence of compositions numbered in order of creation.

Based on rhythms in poetry and music, Gabo altered the orientation of multiple woodcut impressions to produce variations of a repeated

core design.

Living through revolutions, civil unrest and wars of the 20th century, Gabo retained an optimism and idealism in his belief of art to nurture a wounded society towards a progressive and modern future. He later said of his work 'I have chosen the absoluteness and exactitude of my lines, shapes and forms in the conviction that they are the most immediate medium for my communication to others of the rhythms and the state of mind I would wish the world to be in. This is not only in the material world surrounding us, but also in the mental and spiritual world we carry within us'.

Music, on low audio.

Symphony No. 7 'Leningrad'

composed by Dmitri Shostakovich

2008, released 2010

Audio, stereo. 1 hour 11 mins 41 sec

Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich

completed this work during the first months of
the Siege of Leningrad,

in 1941. Over one million people are
estimated to have died under siege

by German and Finnish forces. Shostakovich dedicated the work to the city and it was adopted by the Soviet regime as a symbol of resistance.

Before the Leningrad premiere performance in 1942, the Soviet military launched an offensive to subdue the German positions and then broadcast the Symphony to the enemy lines.

Gabo dedicated his first 'Linear Construction in Space No. 1' to Leningrad, on its freedom from siege in 1944.

Performed by the St Petersburg Philharmonic
Orchestra and conducted by Yuri Temirkanov
at Victoria Hall, Geneva, Switzerland

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Turn left and move forward to artwork in
display

case on plinth.

'Linear Construction in Space No. 1
(Variation)'

1942–3

Perspex and nylon

Tate. Presented by Miss Madge Pulsford
1958

Turn around and move forward to archive
case.

From left to right.

Woodblock for 'Opus 1'

1950–73

Mahogany woodblock on
a plasticine base

Tate Archive: Manuscript collection

Woodblock for 'Opus 2 (The Pillow)'

1950–73

Florida holly woodblock

Tate Archive: Manuscript collection

Woodblock for 'Opus 3'

1950–73

Cherry woodblock

Tate Archive: Manuscript collection

Woodblock for 'Opus 4 (The Lyre Bird)'

1950–73

Cherry woodblock

Tate Archive: Manuscript collection

On wall above.

'Opus 6'

c.1955–6

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by Miriam and
Nina Gabo, the artist's widow and daughter
1979

'Opus 6'

c.1955–6

Monoprint on paper

Tate. Presented by Miriam and

Nina Gabo, the artist's widow and daughter

1979

Please return this guide to the holder
or to a gallery assistant after use.

Thank you.