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| Gabo, Naum (1890-1977) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Gabo was one of the first artists to create constructed sculptures, which he built up from flat (planar) elements in space. His initial works, developed in Norway (1915-17), were figurative (see, for instance, *Head No. 1* and *2*), but in Russia (1917-22) he adopted a more abstract idiom (for example, *Column*, 1920-21) based on two intersecting vertical planes. *The Realistic Manifesto* (1920), written by Gabo, explained that his art was inspired by the ideas and forms of science and engineering and reflected the progressive political and social forces shaping the modern world. In 1920-21 he produced the first kinetic sculpture — *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)* — which consisted of a metal rod that oscillated by means of a motor to produce a virtual volume in space. In the 1920s Gabo started using plastics. In Britain, he moved away from a rectilinear geometry to develop a style based on more organic forms (*Spiral Theme,* 1941). Reflecting his desire to express the continuity and curvilinear quality of space, he developed *Spheric Theme* (1937) and employed stringing (*Linear Construction in Space No.1* and *2,* 1941 and 1949-1953), initially using nylon monofilament, but later employing more durable metal springs woven around metal armatures (*Linear Construction in Space No. 4*). |
| Gabo was one of the first artists to create constructed sculptures, which he built up from flat (planar) elements in space. His initial works, developed in Norway (1915-17), were figurative (see, for instance, *Head No. 1* and *2*), but in Russia (1917-22) he adopted a more abstract idiom (for instance, *Column*, 1920-21) based on two intersecting vertical planes. *The Realistic Manifesto* (1920), written by Gabo, explained that his art was inspired by the ideas and forms of science and engineering and reflected the progressive political and social forces shaping the modern world. In 1920-21 he produced the first kinetic sculpture — *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)* — which consisted of a metal rod that oscillated by means of a motor to produce a virtual volume in space. In the 1920s Gabo started using plastics. In Britain, he moved away from a rectilinear geometry to develop a style based on more organic forms (*Spiral Theme,* 1941). Reflecting his desire to express the continuity and curvilinear quality of space, he developed *Spheric Theme* (1937) and employed stringing (*Linear Construction in Space No.1* and *2,* 1941 and 1949-1953), initially using nylon monofilament, but later employing more durable metal springs woven around metal armatures (*Linear Construction in Space No. 4*).  Gabo came from a Russian Jewish background, and worked in Germany (1922-33), France (1933-36) and Britain (1936-46) before settling in the United States and adopting American citizenship in 1952. He began making sculptures in Norway (1915-17), without having received any artistic training; he had previously studied medicine and natural sciences at the University of Munich, where he also encountered mathematical models and acquired an understanding of engineering. While visiting his older brother Antoine Pevsner — who would become his co-author for the *Manifesto* — in Paris (1912, 1913), Gabo also discovered works by the French avant-garde.  Returning to Russia after the February Revolution of 1917, Gabo worked for the Fine Art Department within the Commissariat for Enlightenment and embraced the idea of art as a part of everyday life. None of his numerous public art projects was realised until after the Second World War (*Bijenkorf Construction*, Rotterdam, 1957; and *Revolving Torsion*, St Thomas’s Hospital, London, 1976).  In the West, Gabo became associated with International Constructivism, which expressed progressive values through geometric forms and modern materials. He contributed to the modernist journal *G: zur elementaren Gestaltung* (Berlin, No. 1, 1923), edited by Hans Richter. Unlike the Soviet Constructivists, Gabo did not reject art in favour of unalloyed utility, but extended art’s remit to include design, believing that his art had the power to transform the world. He designed the set and costumes for the ballet *La Chatte* (1927), and devised and entered a design and a structural system for the Palace of the Soviets’ Competition (1931) — a contest to determine the design of a Soviet administrative centre and a congress hall in Moscow, Russia, which was never completed. In 1937, Gabo became a leader of British Constructivism, editing the book *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art* with the architect Leslie Martin and fellow artist Ben Nicholson. While in St Ives, in 1943-44, Gabo developed a motorcar for the Jowett Car Company (through the Design Research Unit). In his final years he also produced monoprints and occasional paintings. |
| Further reading:  (Gabo)  (Nash and (eds.))  (Sanderson and Lodder)  (Hammer and Lodder)  (Hammer and Lodder, Constructing Modernity: The Art and Career of Naum Gabo) |