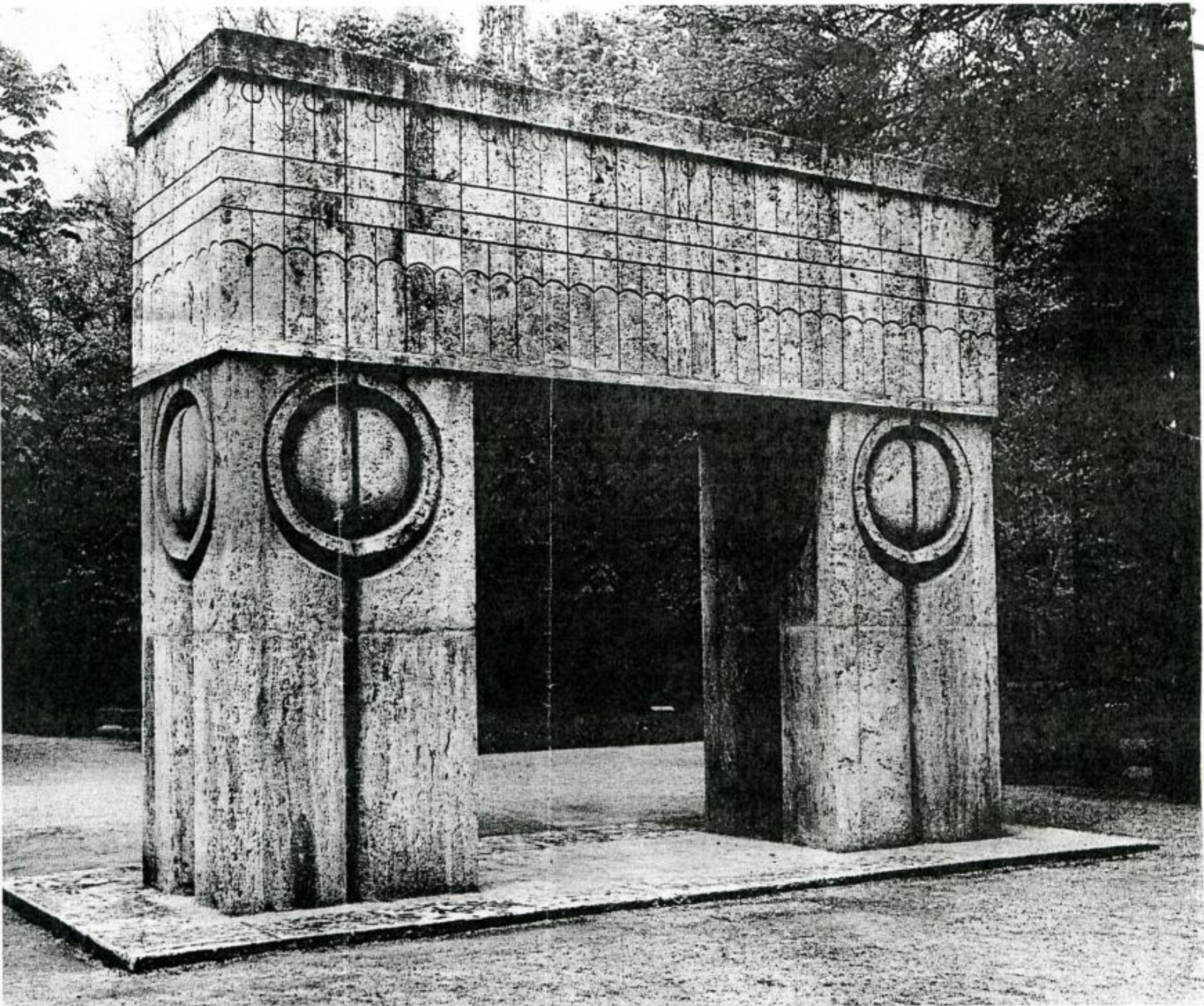


72, 73, 78

# BRANCUSI: THE CENTRALITY OF THE GATE



usi, Gate of the Kiss, Tirgu Jiu.

SIDNEY GEIST

Certain aspects of Brancusi's three-part ensemble at Tirgu Jiu, Romania, recently the subject of a sensitive reading by the sculptor William Tucker,<sup>1</sup> do not present themselves to the eye of the beholder, namely the history of the project and the development of its separate parts. My examination of the *Gate of the Kiss* will necessarily be more extended than that of the *Table of Silence* and *Endless Column*, since little concerning these has been added to the record,<sup>2</sup> whereas much has been learned concerning the *Gate*. The latter is, graphically, the most complex of the three structures, the one on which the sculptor worked the longest, and the only design, indeed, that did not exist before the project was begun.

The monument, commissioned by the Women's League of Gorj, whose president was Aretia Tătărescu, wife of the then Prime Minister, and financed by public subscription, was to be a memorial to those who had fallen in 1916 defending the town against a large German force. The commission had originally been offered to the sculptor Milita Pătrascu, designer of a monument in Craiova honoring Ekaterina Teodoroiu, a Romanian heroine, but Mrs. Pătrascu, who had studied with Brancusi in Paris from 1919-23, declined, and proposed that the task be entrusted to her friend and former teacher. Much uncertainty surrounds the date and pre-

cise nature of the commission. It is claimed that Mrs. Tătărescu specified a complex of elements from the beginning, but there is reason to doubt this. Brancusi seems to have accepted the commission early in 1935, and begun work on it at once.

Nothing is known of the evolution of the grand design, but it is likely that the *Gate* was planned early, and the *Table* conceived last. The three elements of Brancusi's design are disposed on a straight line about three-quarters of a mile long. At the western end of this axis, in the Public Park of Tirgu Jiu, on a rise beside the Jiu River, is the *Table of Silence*. Connected to it by a walk bordered by square stone seats designed by Brancusi is the *Gate of the Kiss*, near an entrance to the park. Beyond the park, in a field, rises the *Endless Column*; it is a kilometer and a quarter east of the *Gate* and oriented, as Tucker has observed, so that the axis passes through two opposite corners (rather than sides) of its section. The Church of the Holy Apostles stands between the *Gate* and the *Column* so that the one is not visible from the other. The height of the three elements and the distances between them are such that the tops of the elements all but lie on a line, as of course, their bases do.

The *Table* is surrounded by 12 stools placed about three feet from it and equidistant from each other (Fig. 1). Early photographs show the stools standing much closer to the table and grouped two-by-two; when they

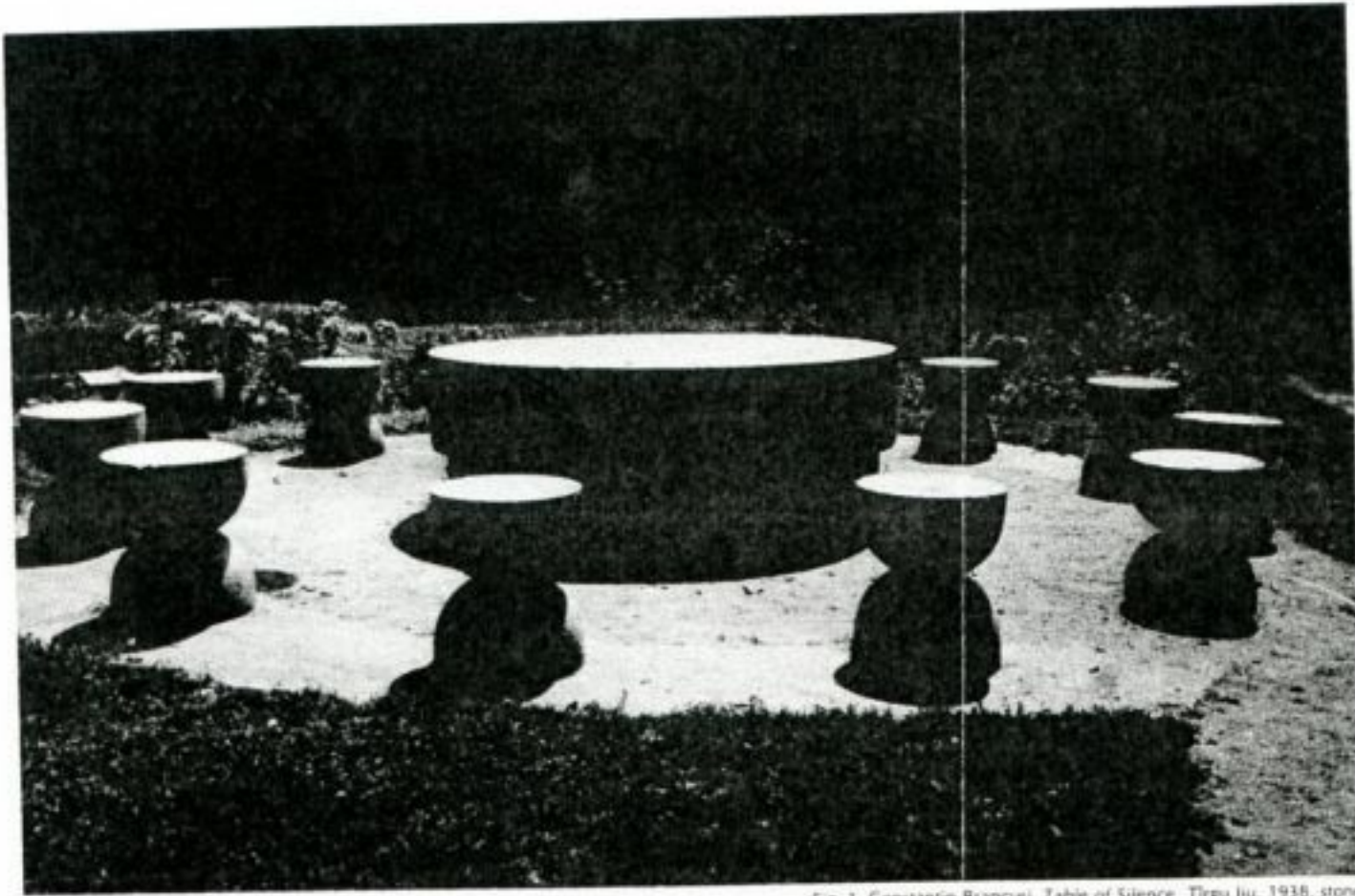


Fig. 1. Constantin Brancusi, *Table of Silence*. Tirgu Jiu, 1938, stone.

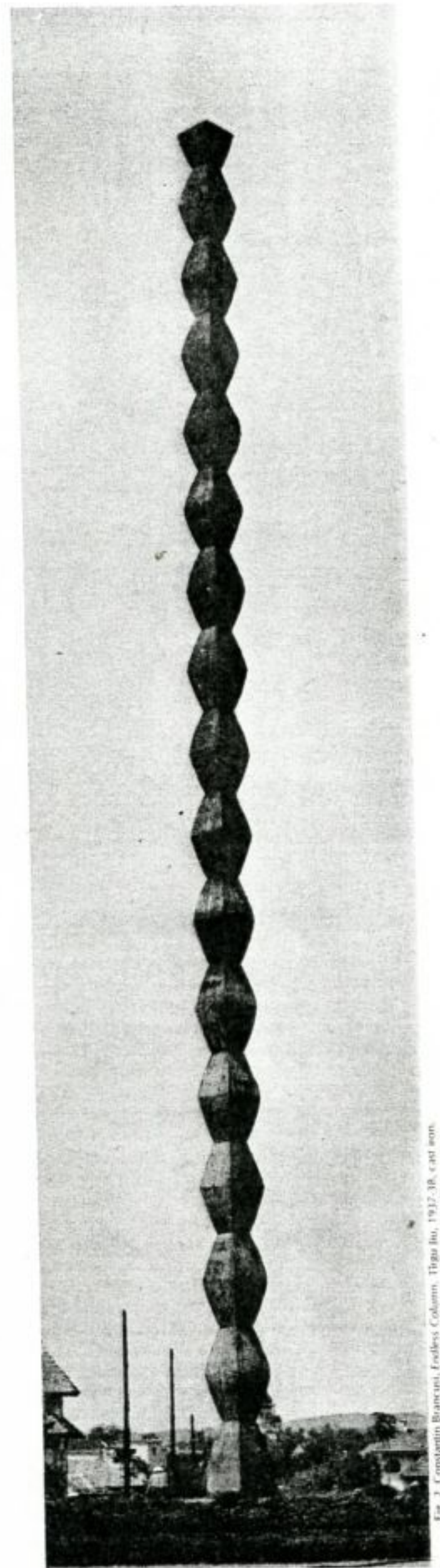


Fig. 2. Constantin Brancusi, *Endless Column*. Tirgu Jiu, 1937-38, cast iron.

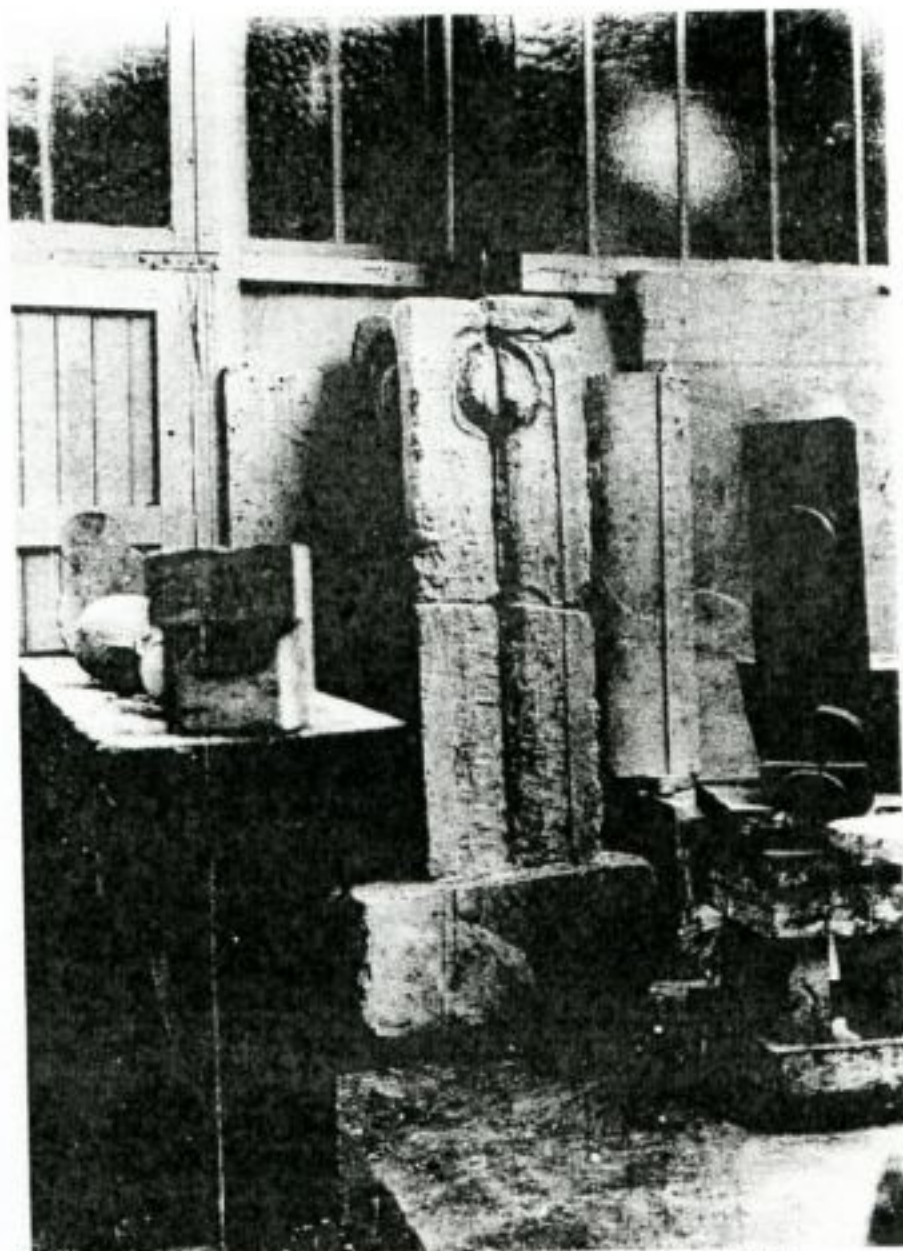
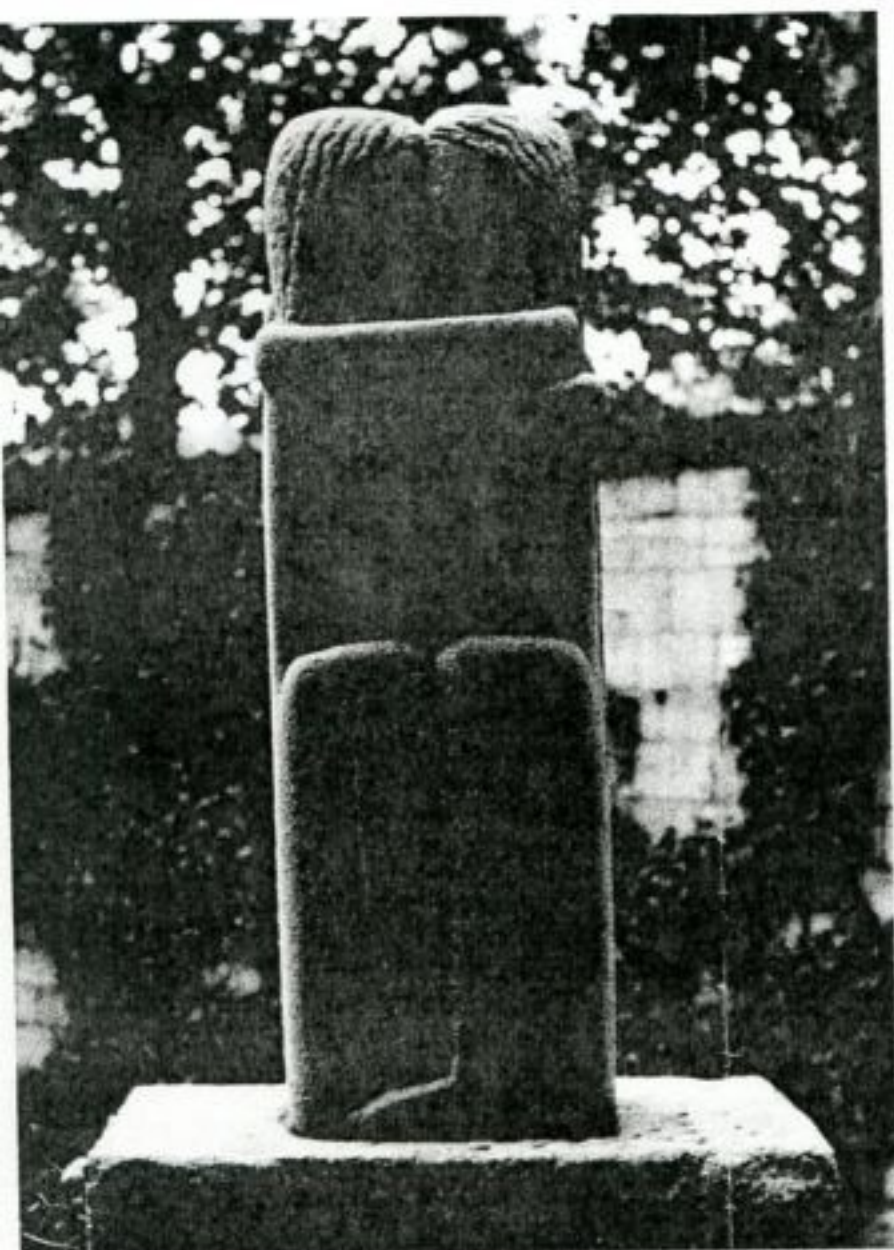


Fig. 4. Constantin Brancusi, *The Kiss*, 1909, stone. (Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris.)

Fig. 5. Constantin Brancusi, *Column of the Kiss*, 1916-18, plaster, whereabouts unknown.

were moved to their present position is not known. It has been proposed that the two-by-two arrangement reflects the paired lovers incised on the Gate, and that the proximity of the stools to the table accorded with a practical intention of the sculptor. Both of these possibilities suggest a Brancusi more literal than we otherwise know him to be.

The table (80 × 214 cm.; 31½ × 84 5/8") is carved in a somewhat porous, pale ocher limestone from Bampton; the stools (55 × 45 cm.; 21 5/8 × 17 3/4") are in a finer, similar stone from Cîmpulung. Archival studies by Ion Mocioi have revealed the vagaries by which the table arrived at its present dimensions.<sup>3</sup> In the fall of 1937 Brancusi, probably unassisted, carved a table composed of a large plate superimposed on a plate of smaller diameter. In the summer of 1938, dissatisfied with this work for various reasons, he ordered another table of larger diameter. Again displeased with the result, he composed the table now in the park by placing the upper plate of the second table on the upper plate of the first. The two discarded plates combined to make a table which stands at some distance beyond the *Column*. This table is not properly part of the ensemble; it represents an attempt to salvage something from a suite of expensive errors.

The *Table* is, of course, a stone version of a large plaster table in Brancusi's studio, other versions of which also served as bases for *Leda*, the *Fish*, and the

*Seal*. Similarly, the *Endless Column* at Tîrgu Jiu (Fig. 2) is the last and tallest version of a theme first executed in wood in 1918 and later in works of different sizes and proportions in wood and plaster.

For the Tîrgu Jiu column Brancusi supervised the making of a rhomboidal module in wood at a foundry in Petrosani. This was cast in iron, and 15 such modules, plus a half module on the top and on the bottom, comprise the *Column*. The nether half-module is continuous with a short vertical mass bound by a low rectangular molding where the *Column* touches the ground (Fig. 3). The steel structure, on which the cast iron rhomboids were "threaded" like beads and to which they are bolted, descends into a concrete foundation imbedded in the earth. The *Column* was standing by the end of 1937; in the spring of 1938 it was sprayed with molten bronze so that it had a golden sheen.<sup>4</sup> The *Endless Column* has not always been appreciated by the citizens of Tîrgu Jiu, and when it was completed many of them waited to see what would be placed on top.

Seen from any of its faces, each rhomboid measures 45 cm. at its narrow points, 90 cm. at its widest point, and 180 cm. in height. The metal *Column* thus makes absolute the relation 1:2:4 that had only been approached in the wooden versions, since these were carved in beams not quite square in section. Mr. Georgescu-Gorjan, the engineer for the project, has



Fig. 3. Constantin Brancusi, *Base of Endless Column*, 1937-38, cast iron.

observed that five versions of *Endless Column* show 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15 full and 2 half rhomboids, and therefore that Brancusi's columns contain rhomboids that are multiples of three. This point may, I think, be refined. Since the *Column* of six full rhomboids is in the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, and since another of 12 full rhomboids exists only on an early rejected drawing (also at the Musée) executed by Mr. Georgescu-Gorjan, we note that the *Columns* of 3, 9, and 15 full rhomboids (collection Mary Sisler, Palm Beach; Musée National d'Art Moderne; Tîrgu Jiu) are the only ones Brancusi sent out into the world, and that the formula for these would be: three times an odd number.

The motifs which decorate the Gate derive from Brancusi's Kiss theme, and relate the Gate, like the other parts of the ensemble, to preoccupations of many years' duration.

The *Kiss* of 1907-8 (Muzeul de artă, Craiova) shows two half-figures. In 1909, Brancusi carved a *Kiss* showing two full figures (Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris, Fig. 4), the only such variation of this much-repeated theme, a version of which would be incised on the Gate. By 1916 Brancusi had isolated and formalized the opposed eyes of the lovers in *The Kiss*, joining them in the circular design with a vertical cleft which appears on a square plaster column in his studio (Fig. 5). Around 1917-18 the motifs of embracing lovers and circular eyes were combined in drawings done on both sides of a sheet that number among few studies Brancusi did for a future work, and not made from a finished work.

On what seems to be the first of the drawings (Fig. 6), there are eight pairs of lovers in the pose of the Montparnasse *Kiss*. But repetition of the motif and reduction to the scope of relief required a number of changes in the design. An apparent need for symmetry led to the elimination of any difference between the male and female coiffures; also breasts were bestowed on both lovers, large at first, then smaller. The hands, not visible on the broad facade of the carved *Kiss*, were made visible in the drawing, but their alternation disturbed symmetry. Placing the feet, Brancusi tried several possibilities including that of having them spring from the thigh; on the last pair of lovers Brancusi left a space where the feet should be. The lintel rests on a symmetrical capital so pierced that imagining its realization is difficult. The column below is similar to the *Column of the Kiss*, with the suggestion that the coupled eyes are repeated along its length. Brancusi studied the troublesome capital again on the other side of the sheet (Fig. 7). Two birdlike elements back-to-back in the first drawing are represented front-to-front, and a row of orderly rectangles has been introduced. Brancusi seems to have shuffled a limited number of elements to accommodate them to his conception.

From September 11 to October 7, 1922, Brancusi was in Romania with a companion, refreshing himself in Sinaia, before going to his natal village, Hobita, where he planned to erect a gate. Although he apparently left orders and a sum of money with his brother, the project never went forward. On his return to Paris, the Salon d'Automne was in progress, where he would have seen Le Corbusier's 50-foot diorama, *Une Ville contemporaine* (Fig. 8).<sup>5</sup> Most prominent in this display was an arch, one of four that served as gateways to the projected city, bestriding its two main axes. We can only speculate on the interest this may have had for Brancusi, and on his possible relationship with the

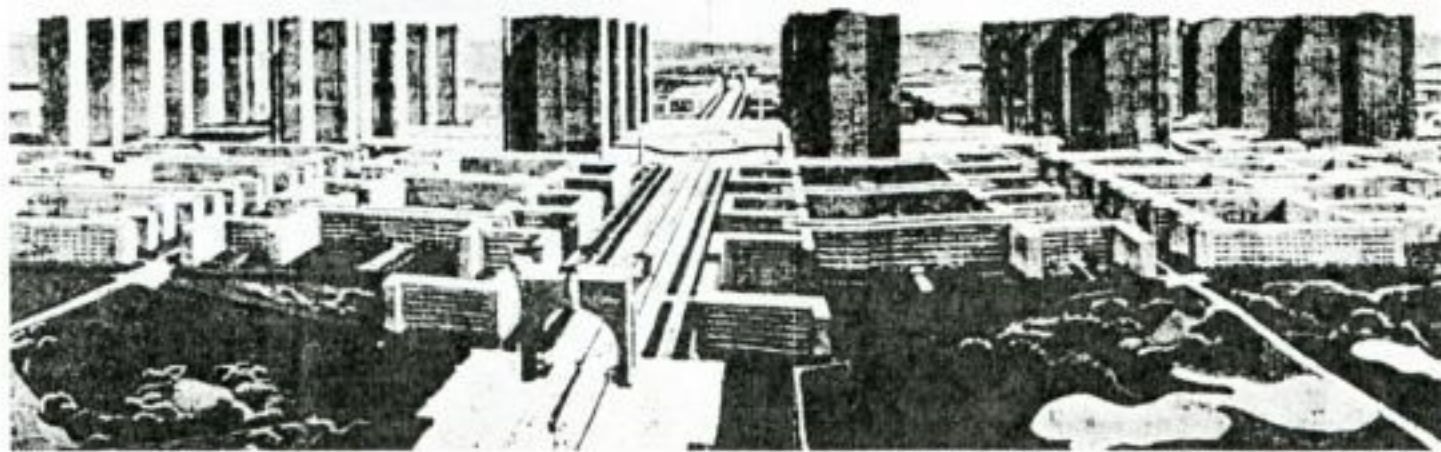


Fig. 8. Le Corbusier, *Une Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, diorama.

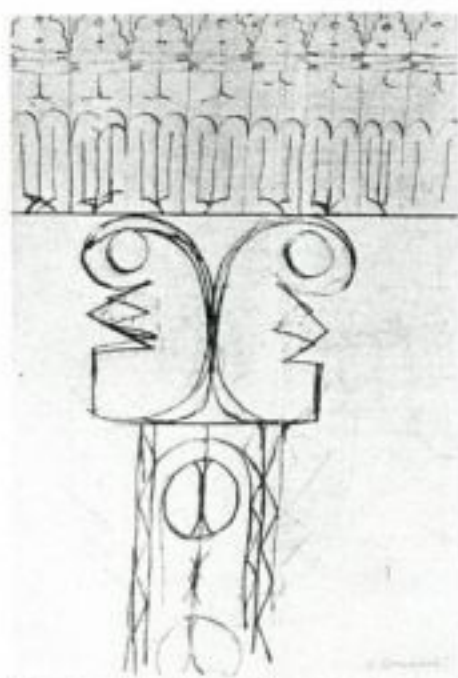


Fig. 6. Constantin Brancusi, Drawing (recto), c. 1917-18. (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris)

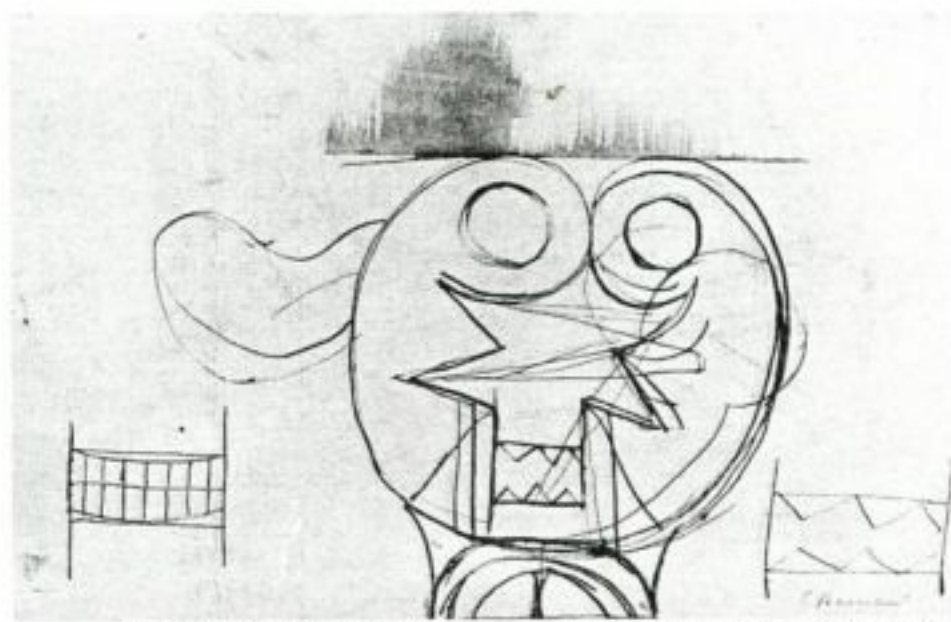


Fig. 7. Constantin Brancusi, Drawing (verso), c. 1917-18. (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris)

architect since both were friends of Fernand Léger.

The *Kiss* relief appears in its final form in a version of uncertain date, incised on two adjacent facades of a limestone base (Fig. 9) supporting a plaster cast of the second version of *Mlle. Pogany* (Musée National d'Art Moderne), the original marble of which was carved late in 1919. The hands, breasts, and feet that impeded symmetry and burdened the field in the earlier drawing are absent. The design is a triumph of lucidity, intelligibility, and perfect ambiguity. Its first datable form is a drawing on a page of an exhibition catalogue (Fig. 10) sent to two Brazilian newlyweds in October, 1926. Henceforth, it became a personal emblem for Brancusi, like Whistler's butterfly.

Brancusi moved to new quarters at no. 11 Impasse Ronsin late in 1927, where he developed a more ambitious version of the early *Column of the Kiss*, topped with a capital he had begun to study as early as 1920 (Fig. 11). The shaft, its upper limit containing the circular coupled eyes, is squatter in proportions than the similar shaft in the *Column of the Kiss* of 1916, the median groove deeper, and the modeling of the eye motif in bolder relief. Indeed, the innermost forms of this motif bulge beyond the large flat planes that bound the shaft, and suggest contained (although split) spheres. The capital, while a magisterial invention, has little relation to the eye motif; the region where they meet remains problematic.



Fig. 9. Constantin Brancusi, Base made on limestone of a cast of *Mlle. Pogany*. (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.)

# CATALOGUE

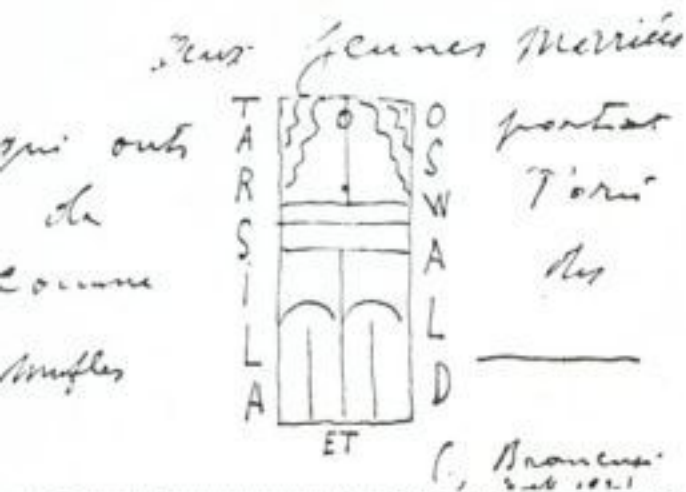


Fig. 10. Constantin Brancusi, Drawing, 1926. (Collection Tersila da Amaral, São Paulo.)

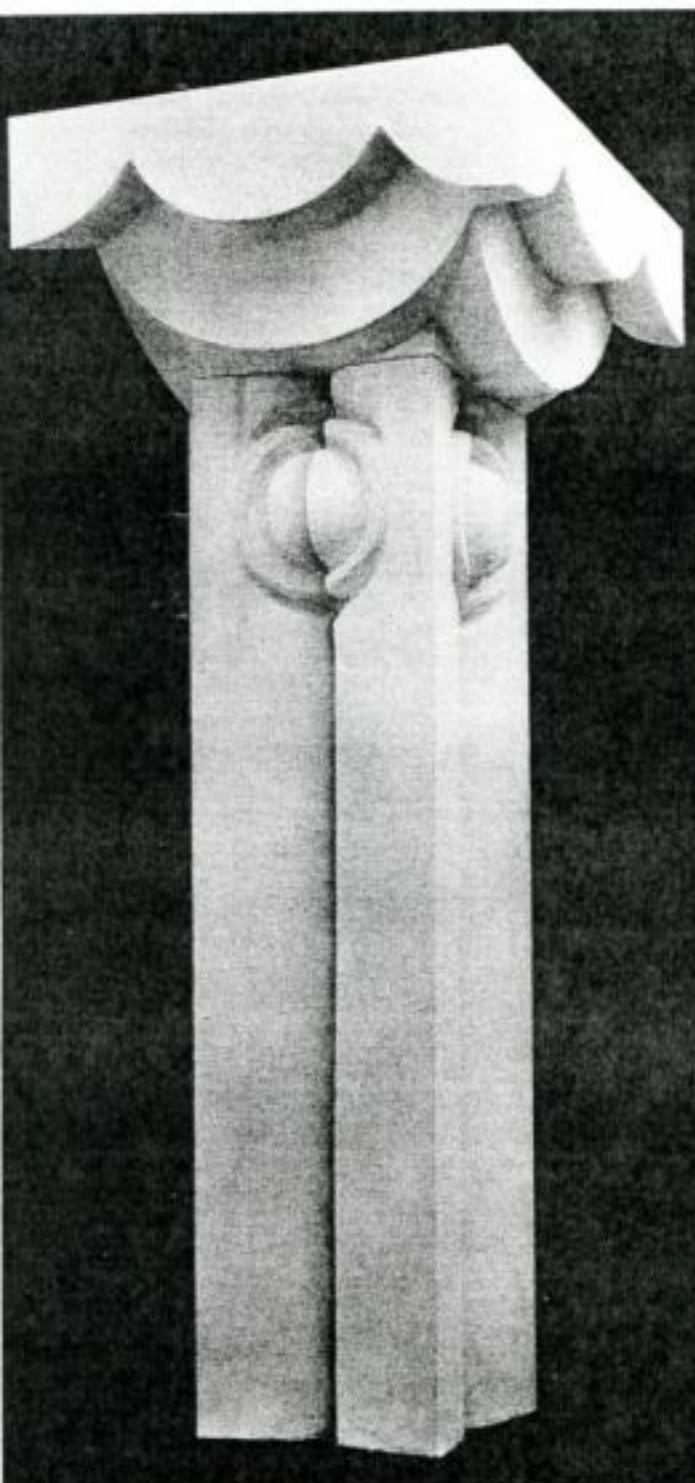


Fig. 11. Constantin Brancusi, Column of the Kiss, c. 1930, plaster. (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.)

The ten-foot *Column of the Kiss* (Musée National d'Art Moderne) executed in plaster in 1930 was exhibited in New York in 1933–34. The catalogue entry included the notation: "Part of project for the Temple of Love." Brancusi may have been referring to a temple he had been commissioned to design for the Maharajah of Indore in 1930, although he had been contemplating a temple of some kind for about a decade.<sup>6</sup>

Presumably Brancusi worked on the *Model of the Gate* from 1935 to 1937 because a photograph is so dated, apparently after an inscription by the sculptor.<sup>7</sup> However, a drawing on a letter of January 3, 1934, showing the Kiss motif in a series of 16, the same number incised on the broad facade of the *Model*, seems to indicate Brancusi was at least thinking about the Tirgu Jiu commission early in 1934 — even if he had not yet accepted it.<sup>8</sup>

In the *Model*, Brancusi's ideas on the architectural adaptation of the Kiss theme come to splendid resolution (Fig. 12). If his hesitations concerning the Kiss design were settled by eliminating its worrisome features, he solved the difficulties of the capital by eliminating it entirely. The lintel and its population of lovers rest directly on the columns, and on the simplified eye motif; the intricate, unsatisfactory region between the capital and the eye motif on the plaster *Column* of 1930 has been removed. The columns of the *Model* are squatter than in any previous version; the coupled eyes do not bulge beyond the planes of these columns in keeping with the economy of the new project.

The *Model* has long been dispersed, but its parts exist. The columns were cast in plaster from a carving in limestone (Musée National d'Art Moderne); the lintel, in plaster, is in a somewhat abraded state (collection, Victoria Rosianu, Bucharest, Fig. 13). On both this lintel and Brancusi's photographs of the *Model* (Fig. 14), we can see that the lintel, with its 16 pairs of lovers on the broad facade, was made by twice casting a form incised with eight Kiss couples. Idiosyncrasies in the design on the left side are repeated in the same region on the right, the joining of the two halves marked by a jog in the drawing. If a stone original of the lintel design exists, it has not been found. In any case, Brancusi seems to have assembled a plaster rather than a stone *Model* to facilitate shipment to Romania and later handling because plaster weighs less than half the equal volume of limestone.

English measure has long obscured a special relationship between the *Model* and the *Gate*. (Continentalists do not seem to have engaged the problem.) If, for example, we state that the *Model* was 20 7/8" high and the *Gate* 17' 3 1/2" high, the significance of these figures is not clear. The situation changes when they are translated into metric measure. I have taken the measurements of the Rosianu lintel from Barbu Brezianu's catalogue of the Brancusi exhibition, Bucharest, June, 1970, and incorporated them below, showing comparable dimensions.

MODEL OF THE GATE		GATE OF THE KISS
53.0 cm.	height	5.27 m.
65.4 cm.	width	6.58 m.
19.5 cm.	lintel ht.	1.95 m.
18.4 cm.	lintel depth	1.84 m.
33.5 cm.	column ht.	3.32 m.
16.5 x 16.8 cm.	column w.	1.68 m. sq.

It is at once apparent that the measurements of the *Gate* are so close to being ten times those of the *Model* as to leave no doubt concerning the scale of the *Model*. Three of these dimensions are exactly ten times those

of the *Model* — and it should be understood that the *Model* is measured in millimeters. The width of the *Model* shows it to be four millimeters less than the scale 1:10 would lead us to expect; but we note that the coping plate is abraded at the ends, which may well account for a loss of two millimeters on each side. The columns of the *Model* are three millimeters taller than they should be in the scale of 1:10; this small variation (c. 1%) may be due either to change in design or slight error at the quarry. (Mocioi has given us an account of error in the cutting of the *Table*.) The 3.0 cm. loss of height in the *Gate* vis-à-vis the *Model* is possibly due to a settling of the structure.

In any event, making a model one-tenth the size of the projected work was a brilliant idea for a country using the metric system. Quarrymen, masons, carvers, and the designer himself had only to measure the model and move the decimal point one place to get the enlarged size. Probably there is no more beautiful example in Brancusi's oeuvre of his economy and rationality than the scale of the model of the *Gate of the Kiss*.

The *Gate*, a structure in pale ocher travertine from Bampotoc, was standing in the early summer of 1938 when Brancusi went to Tirgu Jiu to direct the carving. The occasion is recounted in a charming and instructive memoir by Ion Alexandrescu, the one carver who remained on the job from beginning to end.<sup>9</sup>

Three snapshots show the *Gate* in an early state: in June when the carving had only begun (Figs. 15, 16); by July 2 the work on the columns was well along, the lintel as yet uncarved (Fig. 17). The three large masses are not monoliths, but composite in each case. The lintel is faced with sheets of stone, each the width of a pair of lovers, except at the four corners; the plate on top and the thin layer below the lovers are also composed of slabs. The columns show a joint where their upper and lower halves meet, but it is not certain that each column is made of only two blocks of stone. Possibly eight pieces were used in each case. The snapshots make it difficult to decide the matter; as for the work itself, the four vertical grooves on each completed column are so deep that it is impossible to determine whether the stone is integral at those points, or whether the depth of the groove hides a seam. The latter seems likely based on the example of the lintel, where the many deeply carved vertical grooves obscure the seams between the pairs of lovers. Remarkably, Brancusi has managed to hide many seams while insisting on them, achieving an impression of unity and massiveness. The original hard orthogonal blank is mitigated by the natural gravity of the lively porous surface, and by the variety of the relief surface, in depth and form.

In the June snapshots (Figs. 15, 16) a narrow molding drawn on the corners of both columns from the ground to the lintel can be seen as on the *Model* and even the *Column* of 1930. In the later snapshot (Fig. 17) this feature has been changed to the simpler design we know. The molding in each case does not continue vertical, but curves to meet the one on the other side, setting up a new situation.

The American sculptor Malvina Hoffman recorded the following discussion of the *Gate* when she visited Brancusi the day before he went to Romania to attend the inauguration of the *Gate* (the dots are hers):

"Here are the plaster models of the supporting columns; what do you see in them?" I thought a few moments. "I see the forms of two cells that meet and create

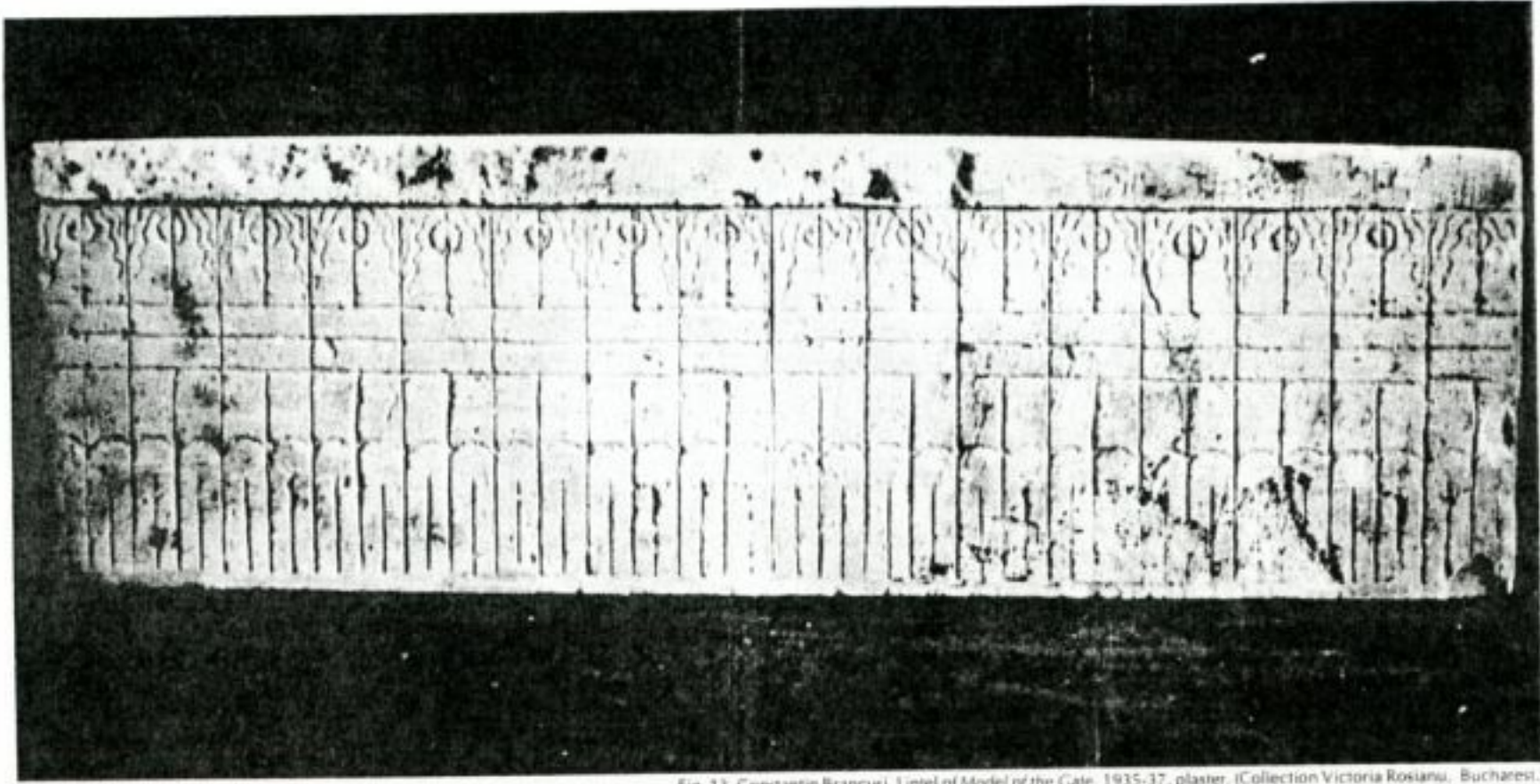


Fig. 13. Constantin Brancusi, Lintel of Model of the Gate, 1935-37, plaster. (Collection Victoria Rosanu, Bucharest.)

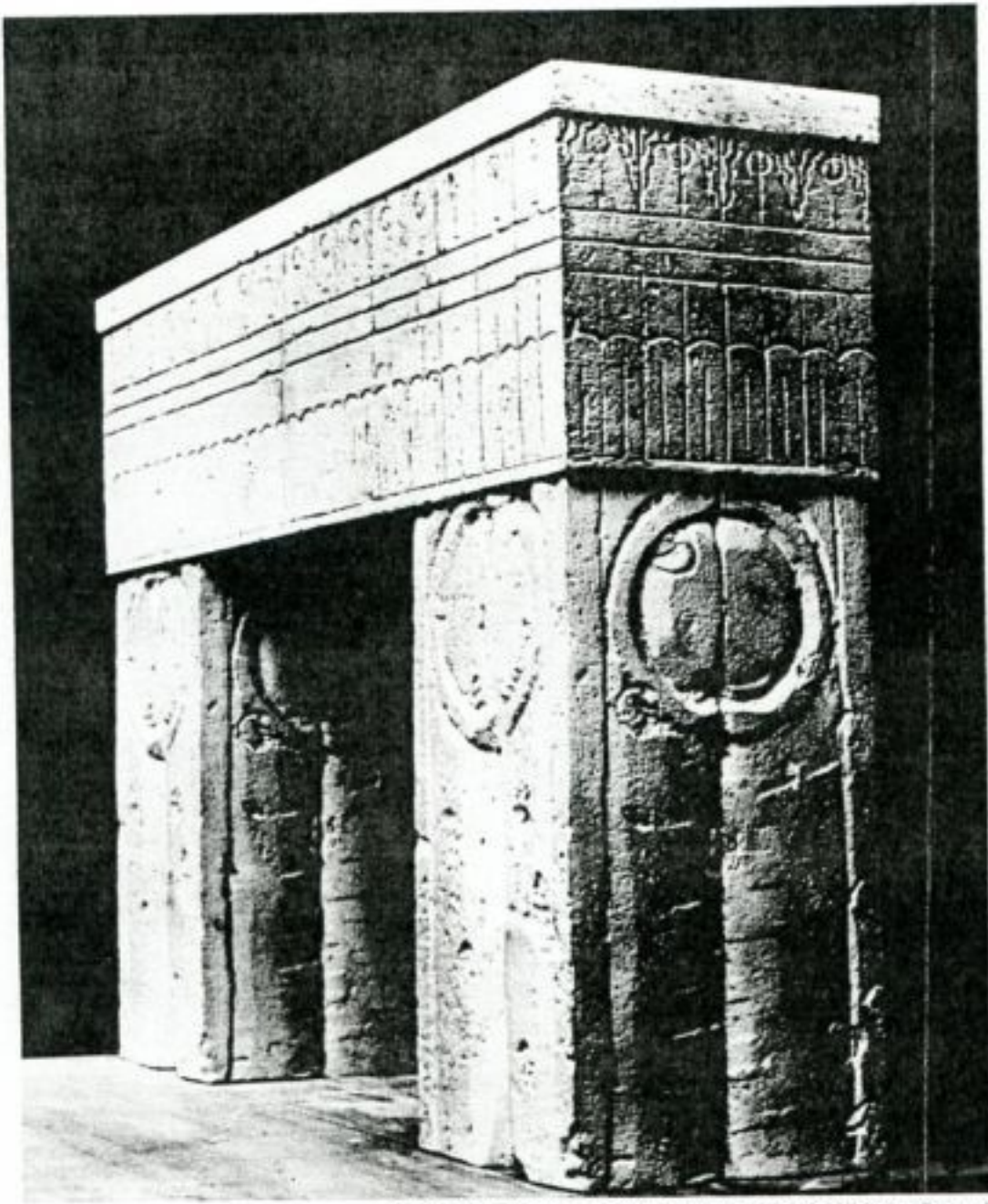


Fig. 12. Constantin Brancusi, Model of the Gate, 1935-37, plaster, dispersed.

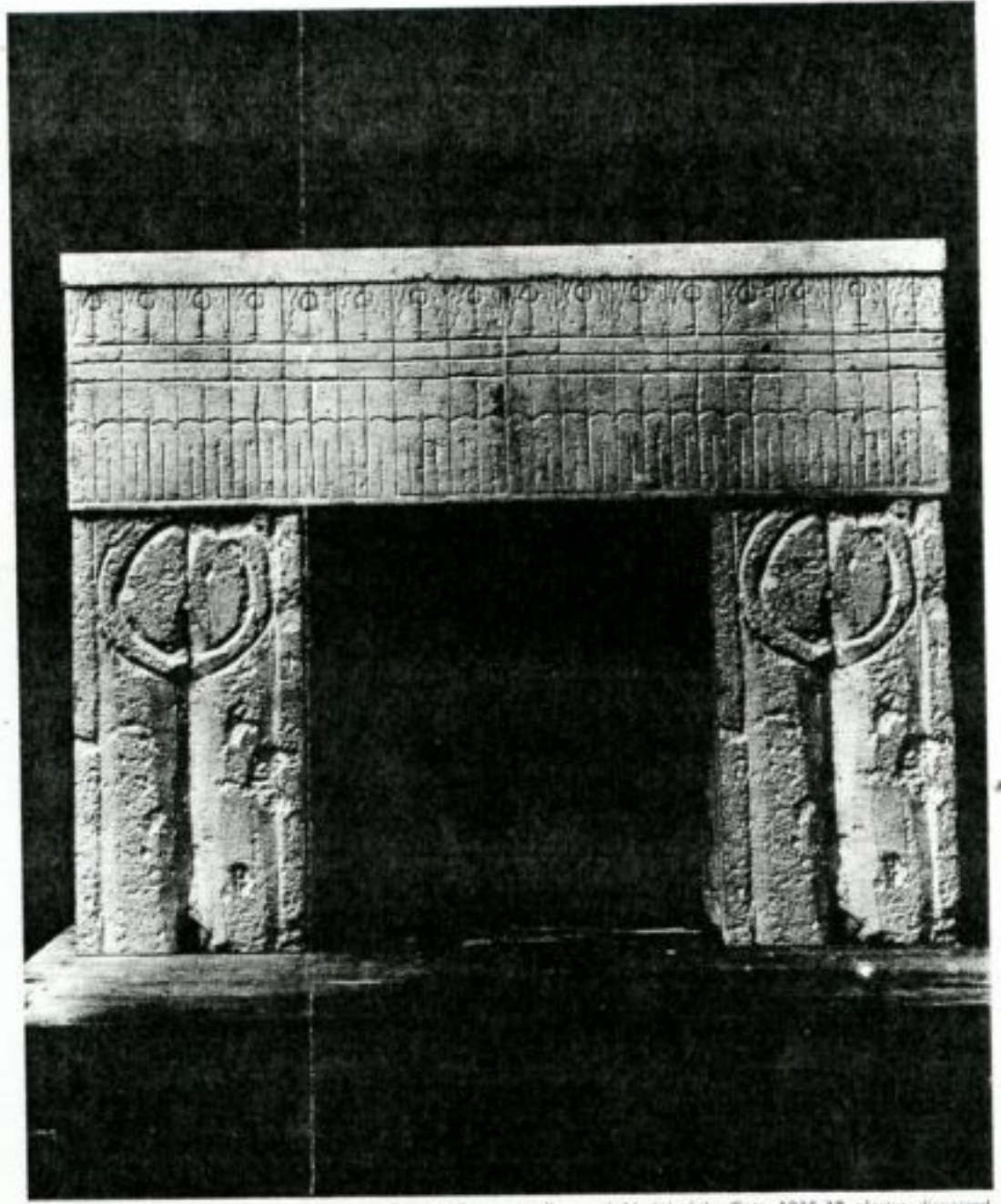


Fig. 14. Constantin Brancusi, Model of the Gate, 1935-37, plaster, dispersed.

life . . . like the revelation I once saw through a microscope when I studied embryology. The beginning of life . . . through love. Am I right?" "Yes, you are," he answered.<sup>10</sup>

On the columns of the Gate (Fig. 18) the design is more strongly suggestive of the combined male and female genitals. The design, going in on the lower part of the columns, and out on the upper, may be thought of as a counterpart to the rhythm of the sexual act. When we consider that the lintel, with its 40 pairs of lovers, rests on this motif, repeated eight times, we have an image of social community as founded on individual sexuality. The poetry of the new design typifies the increasing significance that Brancusi was able to achieve by making small changes from a meditation extended over many years. The only other deviation from the design as set out on the *Model* is the elimination, on each figure, of the line between the upper and lower leg, a move toward greater limpidity.

The nicety of Brancusi's calculations on the Gate is evident in a single detail, intimately bound up with many other features of the work: the width of each pair of lovers on the broad sides of the Gate is smaller than the width of the couples on the narrow sides. If these widths had been the same, the median groove on each column (on the broad facades) would lie on the same line as the vertical groove between the second and third pair of lovers (from each end). Brancusi avoided a situation in which the eye would be carried up and through the lintel. In the design we know, the eye is carried up the column, then across the lintel. On the ends of the Gate (Fig. 19), which are narrow and columnar, there is no need to interfere with the upward movement of the eye; here the median groove of the column is on a line with the median groove on the lintel.

Thus far we have observed the development of the motifs carved on the Gate. What of the total size and shape of the Gate? In the drawing of c. 1917-18, the supporting column is placed so that the lintel extends on both sides of it; in the *Model of the Gate* (1935-37) the columns are at the ends of the lintel. In other words, the design changed in the intervening years, if indeed we can speak of a total design in the early phase of Brancusi's thinking. Compelling reasons lead us to suppose that once Brancusi accepted the Tîrgu Jiu commission he made use of an existing monument to arrive at the size and shape of *Gate of the Kiss*.

In the center of Paris, rising alone in the middle of a large space bounded on the north and south by the long wings of the Louvre, stands the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel (Fig. 20). Designed by Fontaine and Percier, and erected between 1806 and 1809, the handsome arch commemorates the victories of Napoleon. Even before it was completed Napoleon was dissatisfied and commanded another, larger and more worthy of him — the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile. The Arc du Carrousel, with its large central arch flanked by two smaller ones, its columns standing in front of the four piers, and its marble reliefs representing memorable scenes in the career of the Emperor, is based on the Arch of Severus in Rome (Fig. 21). The Roman arch is 82 feet wide; its inner piers are pierced by arcades. The Carrousel arch is considerably smaller, but broader in its proportions; a transverse arcade passes through its four piers.

Of particular interest are the smaller arches on each side of the Arc du Carrousel, since their dimensions

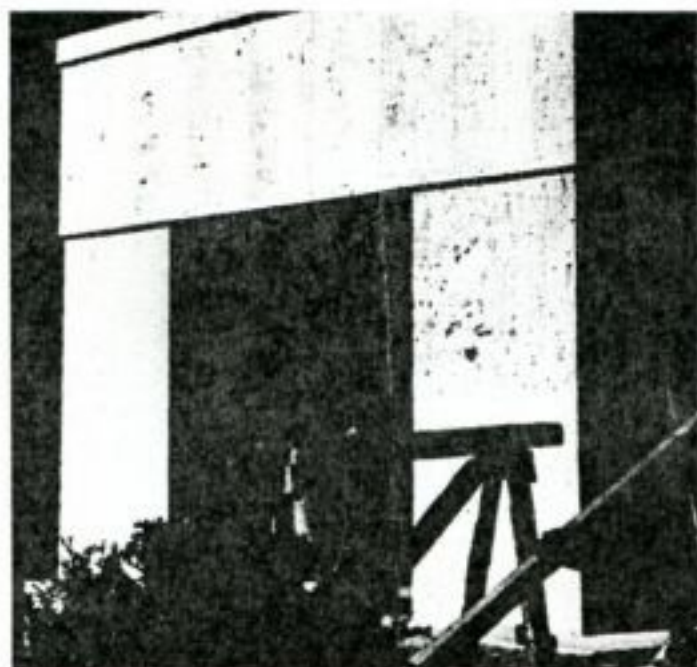


Fig. 15. Constantin Brancusi, *Gate of the Kiss*. Tîrgu Jiu, photograph taken in June, 1938.



Fig. 16. Constantin Brancusi, *Gate of the Kiss*. Tîrgu Jiu, photograph taken in June, 1938.

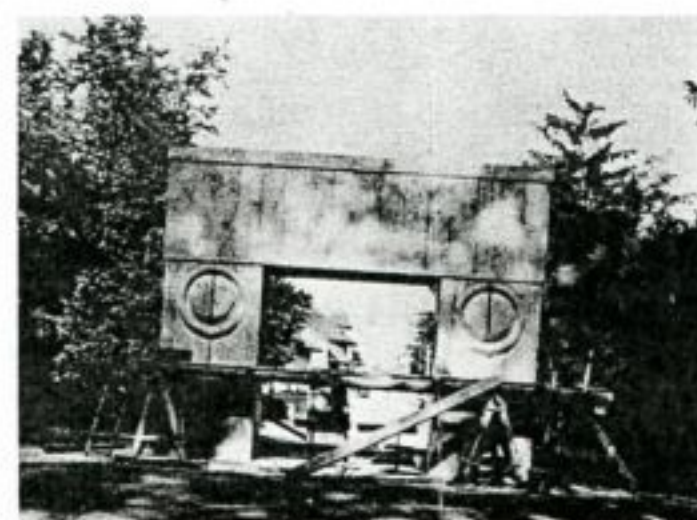


Fig. 17. Constantin Brancusi, *Gate of the Kiss*. Tîrgu Jiu, photograph taken July 2, 1938.

are remarkably close to those of the *Gate of the Kiss*. Insofar as the piers are concerned, they cannot easily be measured on their outer surfaces because of the bases of the columns which project from them. When examined from within the arcade which traverses the Arc, the piers present an all but flat surface until they reach the molding from which the arches spring. Measured in the arcade, the inner piers are 167.7 cm. wide, or three millimeters (less than  $\frac{1}{4}$ "") smaller than the width of the columns of the *Gate of the Kiss*; the outer piers are about 19 cm. ( $7\frac{1}{2}$ "") wider than the inner piers. The height of each pier to the molding which completes it is c. 3.4 m.; the similar height on the *Gate* is 3.32 m. The height of the small arches, to the top of the keystone, is 5.5 m.; the height of the *Gate* is 5.27 m. The most radical difference between the measurements of the small arches and the *Gate* occurs in the width of the opening; that of the *Gate* is 20 cm. (8") wider than those on the Carrousel arches. Since, as we have observed, the outer piers of these arches are 19 cm. wider than their inner piers, the total width of the smaller arches is almost the same as that of the *Gate of the Kiss*.

The closeness of one pair of measurements and the general correspondence of all these measurements represent a unique state of affairs; there is no other Parisian arch whose dimensions approach those of the *Gate*, nor is there an arch, Parisian or Roman, whose proportions are like those of the *Gate*. If the thesis that Brancusi worked from an existing monument is unexpected, it should not be so. It should not be surprising that Brancusi, faced with the responsibility of designing a large structure for a public place, would have examined similar structures to feel the possible masses and sizes. The task was, after all, one that he had never before undertaken. Further, it is typical of Brancusi, in varying one of his themes, to hold one of the earlier dimensions (as I propose that he did here with the width of the inner pier of the Carrousel arch) while slightly changing the rest. Interestingly, I was not seeking a source for the size of the *Gate* when in the summer of 1972. I was admiring the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel; quite spontaneously, it occurred to me that its smaller arches were the same size as the *Gate of the Kiss*.

The most radical formal difference between the smaller arches of the Arc du Carrousel and the *Gate* resides, of course, in the shape of the opening: the opening of the Carrousel is covered by an arch, and the *Gate* by a flat surface, the bottom of the orthogonal lintel. This was not the first time that Brancusi made such a change on a Roman design. In the earliest work of Brancusi that has come down to us, the *Vitellius* of 1898 (Fig. 22), a copy of a Roman bust (Fig. 23), the original turned base was changed into an orthogonal plinth.

The possibility of a significant relation between the Carrousel arch and the *Gate* seems to be supported by two further circumstances. When first erected, the Arc de Triomphe stood before the Palais des Tuileries, the residence of the Emperor and Josephine. The palace was burned during the Commune fighting in 1871, and completely razed by 1883. In later years, the area was redesigned many times with a number of arrangements of floral beds and large sculpture on pedestals. Early in the 1930s the view west from the Arc du Carrousel was unimpeded for the first time by a work of sculpture, and led through the Tuileries gardens to the Obelisk of Luxor in the Place de la Concorde.<sup>11</sup> One kilometer distant from the Arc, the Obelisk rises 27.87 meters

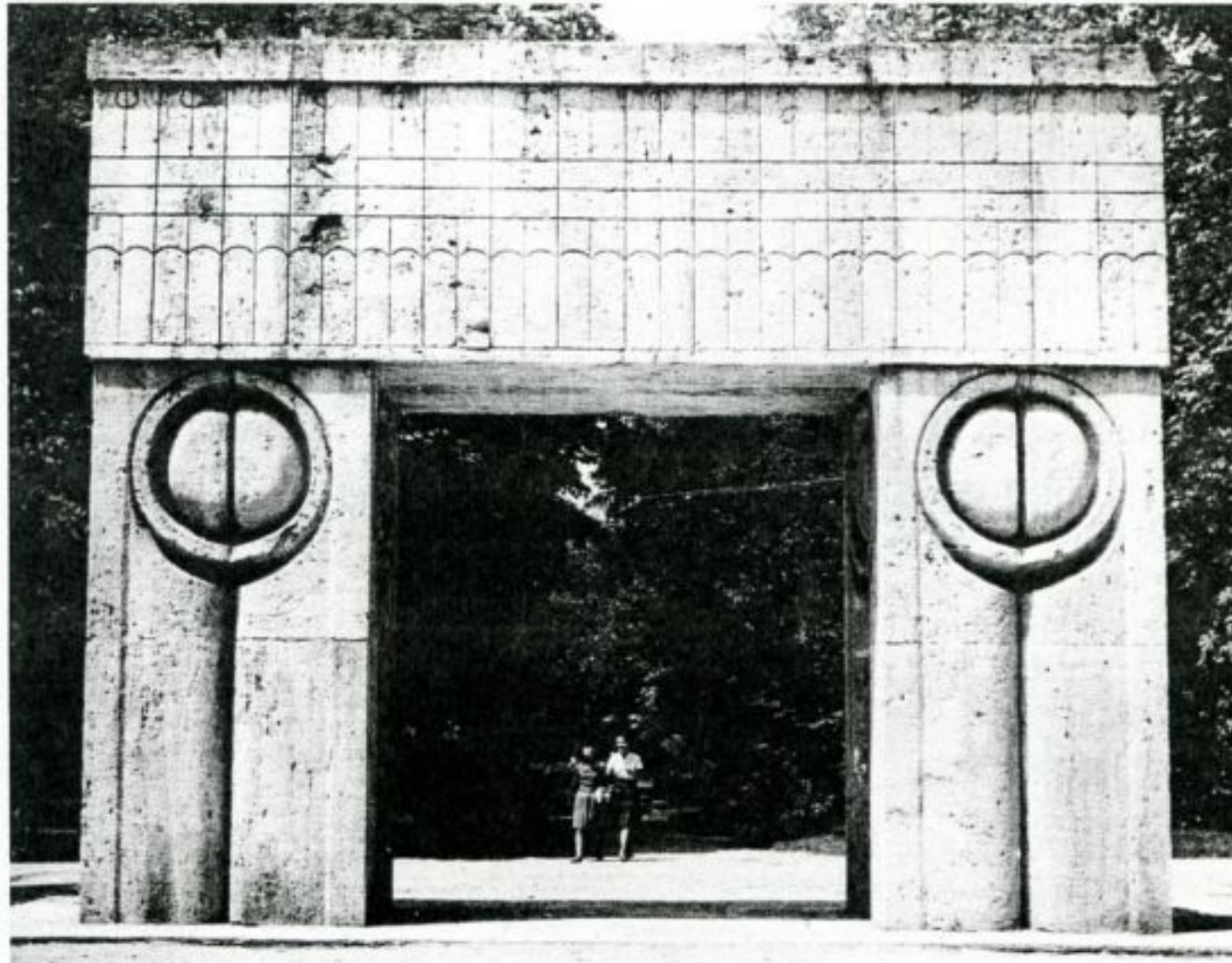
above the street.<sup>12</sup> The *Endless Column*, 29.33 meters tall, is a kilometer and a quarter from the *Gate of the Kiss*. Secondly, while there are floral beds of many shapes in the area of the Arc du Carrousel, there is a large circular one about 150 meters east of the Arc on a line with it and the Obelisk. The circular emplacement of the *Table of Silence* is about the same distance from the Gate and on a line with it and the *Endless Column*. We have been aware for some time that the ensemble at Tîrgu Jiu incorporates a number of Brancusi's earlier themes. Encompassing a river, a wooded area, a city, a field, and the sky above, it stands as his most "Romanian" expression and a testament to his love of his country. I think we may now say that it also pays homage to that other pole of his existence: Paris.

On the *Gate of the Kiss* the coupled eyes appear



Fig. 19. Constantin Brancusi, End of Gate of the Kiss, Tîrgu Jiu, 1938, stone.

Fig. 18. Constantin Brancusi, Gate of the Kiss, Tîrgu Jiu, 1938, stone.



eight times with 40 pairs of lovers. In the language of information theory, redundancy is high. Because of this repetition and in spite of the massiveness of the Gate, its design is grasped at a glance: "the greater the redundancy, the faster the flow of the experience."<sup>13</sup> The orientation of the *Table of Silence* makes its large design easily visible, while the relative thinness of *Endless Column* achieves the same effect; in both cases, total comprehension is hastened by a high degree of redundancy — 12 stools, 15 rhomboids. The experience of simplicity, intrinsic attractiveness, clarity, redundancy, and quick comprehensibility of the parts makes for easy memorability of the whole. Therefore, although the three elements of the ensemble are situated so that each is seen separately, the important relationships between them that do not strike the eye reverberate in the mind. In these relationships, the central term is the Gate, first by its position, then by its height, and pervasively at the formal and symbolic levels.

The character of the three masses and their orientation to the earth make a clear progression. The *Column* stands on end, perpendicular to the earth; the Gate is wall-like, on edge against the earth; the *Table of Silence* is low, parallel to the earth and lying on it. This spatial series is similar to that other grand temporal series: erect *Bird*; horizontal *Fish*, earth-hugging *Turtle*. The table and its stools are all circularity. The Gate is orthogonal in format, relieved by circular motifs and curving planes. The *Column* is square in section, but echoes on its surfaces, with their slight simple curves, the rotundities of the *Table*. That is to say, while roundness and flatness are mixed in equal measure on the Gate, they are present in unequal and inverse proportions on the *Table* and *Column*. By its form and closeness to the earth, the table and stool complex suggests the vegetal and organic, the *Column* the crystalline. Mediating these extremes is the Gate with its human-intellectual connotations. In its literal and symbolic imagery, it merges the female *Table* and phallic *Column*. Functionally, the *Table* suggests the practical and quotidian; this is the familial end of the ensemble. The Gate is societal, the place of passage, of worldly intercourse. *Endless Column* is sheer transcendence, a sacral link between heaven and earth. A virtual movement is implied by the three works: its path swings round the centrifugal *Table*, sweeps through the pierced Gate, and up the pulsing *Column*. Or, down the *Column*; movement in the ensemble may be understood in both directions.

The ensemble was a sum of certain preoccupations of his life, a tribute to his native land, and, as seems likely, to his adopted city. It also satisfied an ambition he had had for at least 25 years to do a public work, which had been frustrated except for a memorial to a private citizen, the Stanescu monument of 1914 in Dumbrava Cemetery, Buzău, an installation public only in a limited sense. The Tîrgu Jiu ensemble, completed in 1938, when Brancusi had passed the age of sixty, was in several respects the culminating work of his career. He seems to have thought so when he wrote to Mrs. Pătrascu on February 11, 1935, thanking her for her part in the commission. He wrote "Now all things begun long ago come to a close, and I feel like an apprentice on the eve of getting his working papers. So the proposal could not come at a better time."

It was a time when Brancusi's mind was excited by the prospect of executing a most unusual structure in India. He had just held a large and much acclaimed





Fig. 20. Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, Paris.



Fig. 21. Arch of Severus, Rome.

exhibition at the Brummer Gallery in New York. And, he himself had reached an age of confidence and full maturity that enabled him to design and dispose the three elements of Tîrgu Jiu with an unerring hand, and to imbue this suite of forms with immensities of meaning. ■

1. William Tucker, "Brancusi at Tîrgu Jiu," *Studio International*, October, 1972, pp. 117-121.
2. The record up to 1968 is summarized in my *Brancusi: A Study of the Sculpture*, New York, 1968.
3. Ion Mocioi, *Brâncuși: Ansamblul Sculptural de la Tîrgu-Jiu*, Tîrgu Jiu, 1971.
4. The engineer for the project, *Stelian Georgescu-Gorjan*, whose father was a friend of Brancusi and posed for his earliest extant portrait from life, has written a number of important articles on his relations with the sculptor and on the construction of the Column. Little, understandably, has been added to the latter accounts; *Stelian Georgescu-Gorjan*, "Mărturie despre Brâncuși," *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1965, pp. 65-74; also, "The Genesis of the 'Column without End,'" *Revue roumaine d'histoire de l'art*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1964, pp. 279-293.
5. Reproduced in Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow*, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 174-175; the volume is a translation from the original French, *Urbanisme*, Paris, Crés, 1924. Le Corbusier's Gate was brought to my attention by Richard Pommer, Vassar College.
6. "Brancusi would like to build a temple, even not very big," letter of H. P. Roché to John Quinn, dated March 29, 1922. Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.
7. David Lewis, *Constantin Brancusi*, London, 1957, pl. 34.
8. This drawing was brought to my attention by Barbu Brezianu, Bucharest.
9. Ion Alexandrescu, "Mărturiile unui cioplitor," *Ramuri* (Craiova), March 23, 1965, p. 12.
10. Malvina Hoffman, *Sculpture Inside and Out*, New York, 1939, p. 53.
11. See aerial view: Yvan Christ, *Le Louvre et les Tuileries*, Paris, Tel, 1949, pl. 136.
12. For this and other measurements beyond the reach of my arm I am indebted to the Direction de l'Architecture, Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, Paris.
13. Robert E. Ornstein, *On the experience of time*, Baltimore, 1970, p. 49.

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Fig. 23. Vitellius, plaster cast of a Roman original. (Grigorescu Institute of Art, Bucharest.)



Fig. 22. Constantin Brancusi, *Vitellius*, 1896, plaster. (Craiova Muzeul de artă.)