

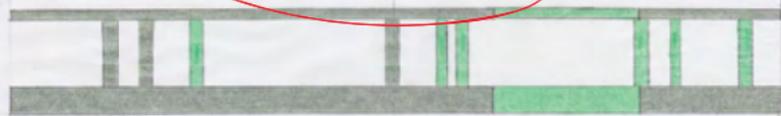
Céline
CONDORELLI

9 SEP
- 19 NOV
2017



EN

Proposals for
a Qualitative Society



(Spinning)

Céline Condorelli

Proposals for a Qualitative Society (Spinning)

Intimacy with culture is extremely important to Céline Condorelli, and a hugely political issue. She believes culture should not be something one looks at (silently) from a distance, but is part of everyday life. Condorelli's artworks therefore often allow for intimate contact usually excluded from cultural objects: her works can be used and touched. They have double or triple lives, make references to works by others, and fulfill different spatial functions, such as an entrance, a display structure, a background, seating, models or play objects.

Proposals for a Qualitative Society (Spinning) presents Stroom's exhibition space as a place for rehearsal and play. A series of carousels and spinning tops invite visitors to play and interact with them, while (historical) references of radical playground designs show what play can mean for the city and for society.

Proposals for a Qualitative Society (Spinning) draws on political theorist Hannah Arendt's concept of culture as the company one "chooses to keep, amongst people, amongst things, amongst thoughts, in the present as well as in the past". It further includes references to architects and artists such as Lina Bo Bardi, Palle



Nielsen and Aldo van Eyck. Their ideas about play and culture are present in a series of new 'wall works' developed by Condorelli with graphic designer James Langdon.

Céline Condorelli considers exhibitions as constructions through which we apprehend the world, which allow us to rehearse possibilities for making things public. In this way, after this exhibition, the carousels will be permanently relocated to the playgrounds of two local schools in The Hague, whose children have been actively involved as researchers throughout the process and development of the project. By testing the relationship between exhibition practices and public art, by pedagogical experiments from gallery to school, this exhibition investigates and outlines possible roles for children and artists in society.

Condorelli presented a first edition of the carousels in 2016 for the exhibition *Playgrounds* in the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP); a re-enactment with contemporary artists of the exhibition of the same name organised by Nelson Leirner and Lina Bo Bardi in 1969 at the opening of MASP. The spinning tops were developed during an exhibition at Kunsthalle Lissabon in 2016 and shown in the titled *Concrete Distractions*.

Céline Condorelli,
Conversation
Piece (2016)
installation MASP,
São Paulo, Brazil.

Attempts to Read the World (Differently)

"For at least 2500 years every generation thinks that the time has come when the changes taking place can no longer be overseen. The saying by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus 'Everything flows, nothing stays', is an example of this and every generation since has retained this feeling. But all this time, there have also been attempts to navigate together in this chaotic world."
- Philosopher René Gude

Proposals for a Qualitative Society (Spinning) is Céline Condorelli's contribution to *Attempts to Read the World (Differently) (ARW(D))*. With this program Stroom looks in a searching, intuitive way at our present world, the rapid developments therein and possible futures.

A first step in this program was taken in September 2014 with WeberWoche, a program focusing on the ideas of sociologist Max Weber in which artists, performers, filmmakers, composers and theorists stressed the importance of the non-rational in our contemporary secularised Western society.

ARW(D) was first developed in collaboration with Fernando Sánchez Castillo, Céline Condorelli, Dunja Herzog and Neïl Beloufa, who contributed to discussions and with presentations. Over the past two

years there were also exhibitions by Gareth Moore, Max de Waard, Monira al Kadiri and Jean Katambayi.

With these artists we take the steps in a different reading, interpretation and imagining of the world, the recalibration of a navigation system, the search for new forms of knowledge, information or communication. The focus is not on the search for an overarching truth, but rather on a polyphony of options and interpretations.



Céline Condorelli,
Conversation Piece
(2016) installation
MASP, São Paulo,
Brazil.

Conversation

Céline Condorelli & Francien van Westrenen

Francien van Westrenen (FvW, architecture curator, Stroom): Three years ago we invited you to take part in the program *Attempts to Read the World (Differently)*. And after some years of talking, traveling together, the exhibitions *Display Show* and *Another Reality. After Lina Bo Bardi*, we're now here – at *Proposals for a Qualitative Society (Spinning)*. Can we say that this is your proposal (or attempt) for a different reading of the world?

Céline Condorelli (CC): Absolutely. I have been thinking with this program so long that it was hard for me to think of a different title! Of course my entry into this reading of the world is through objects, the materiality through which we apprehend the world, that can be modulated for different approaches.

FvW: How do you read the world we live in today?

CC: I've been interested in undoing certain types of elitism of contemporary culture. For instance, a four year old knows that they're not supposed to touch anything in a museum. Only certain 'initiated' people are, and exhibitions are largely constructed for some ideal, educated adult middle class visitor, who knows certain things like the fact he or she has to be

quiet. This idea that culture should be something you look at (silently) from a distance is a strange construction, one I don't necessarily agree with. Intimacy with culture is, I think, extremely important, and what I am describing is of course a hugely political issue: the limits, exclusions and permissions in our understanding of culture and its ownership and access.

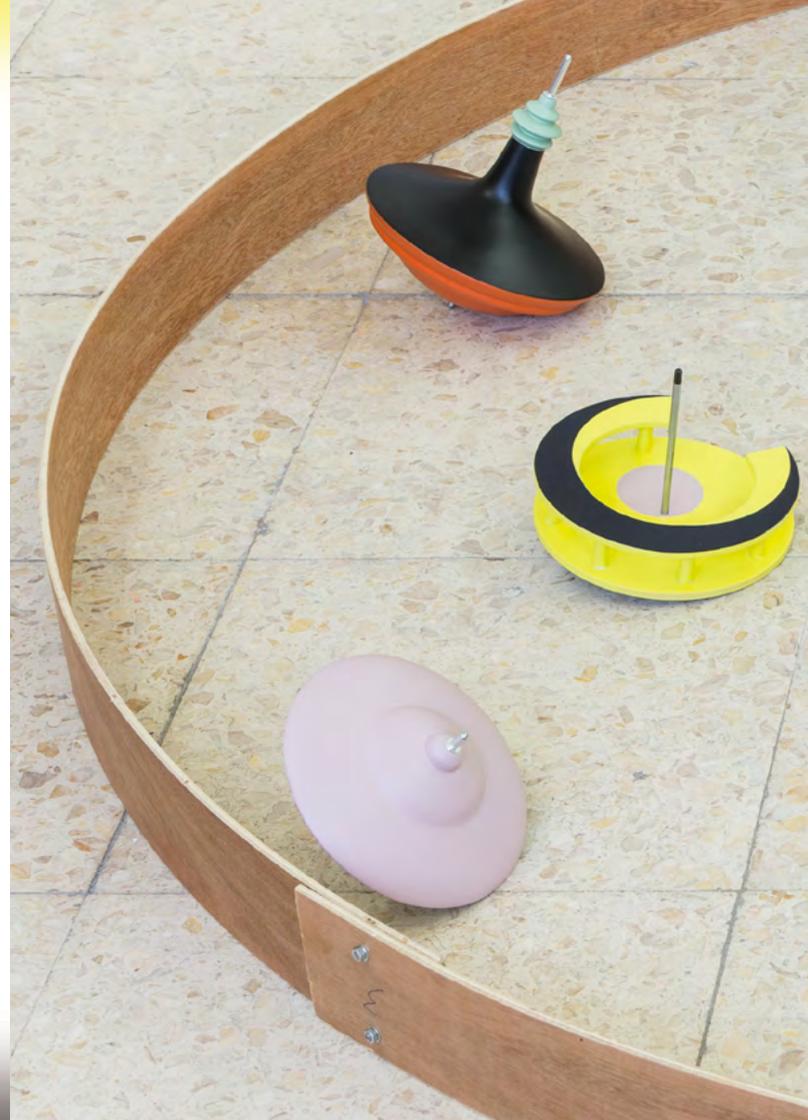
FvW: What does play and playgrounds have to do with the world? In the interview with Agnieszka Gratzka in *Metropolis M* (nr. 4, aug-sep 2017) you say: "I think that playing children change our relation with the city." Can you explain how?

CC: Playgrounds or play objects articulate certain ideas of what playing, childhood and therefore culture are. On a very direct level, the encounter with the built environment that playing describes is a physical one, grappling and measuring oneself with and against the world as it is, touching, climbing, holding, testing the possibilities of that encounter, figuring out how form can be used. I am not being romantic about some pseudo innocence that children are supposed to behold, quite the opposite, I am interested in opening up possibilities of what culture is and whom it should be for –and who is excluded from it– questioning how institutions normalise behaviours and define what is appropriate, and with this project and my practice as a whole, even in a small way "help define the means with which society can be rendered adequate to the full breadth of human potentialities."¹

FvW: It was also very important for you that the carousels are placed in public space after the show and become public art works. Why is that?

1 As Chuck Morse says in 'Capitalism, Marxism and the Black Radical Tradition: An Interview with Cedric Robinson', *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1999).

Céline Condorelli, *Models for a Qualitative Society* (2016) installation
Kunsthalle Lisbon, Portugal
Photo: Bruno Lopes.





Céline Condorelli, *Conversation Piece* (2016) installation MASP, São Paulo, Brazil.



CC: The exhibition is constructed as a (much needed) conversation between exhibitions and public art, which is something that's really missing in contemporary art discourse. The public art category is completely separate from the museum / exhibition one– different artists, systems, places, exhibition practices – and I've always wondered why this is the case; this project in many ways tackles this problem by considering the exhibition as the first step of making art public.

FvW: You mean by allowing us to 'rehearse possibilities for making things public'?

CC: Yes, although I would not want to decide, control or predict what should or should not happen. I do not mean rehearsal towards something that is already described, towards an idea of something 'final'. The rehearsal itself can and will produce possibilities, scenarios, ideas, behaviours. The children from local schools have already been involved in the project, their narrative can take over while ours or mine is still continuing, the carousels will exist in all these parallel, simultaneous histories, in a way that I think makes them truly public.

Céline Condorelli,
Models for a Qualitative Society
(2016) installation
Kunsthalle Lisbon, Portugal
Foto: Bruno Lopes.



References

These, amongst others, are references that help me think through this idea of display (how things like play or sculpture are shown and appear in the world), on the one hand, and most importantly they have helped us work against the exclusive dimensions of culture.

- Céline Condorelli

Homo Ludens

Let us start with the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920-2005), one of the founders of Cobra in 1948. Constant foresaw the most radical consequences of industrialization and automation: the coming into being of the adventurous *homo ludens* who, freed from work, had all the time in the world to travel and play. Constant took this playful person as the starting point for a new kind of urbanism that he researched and depicted in his *New Babylon* project (1956 – 1974), by means of constructions, models, paintings, collages, maps and texts. The condition for creating a new kind of person was a living space for which function was replaced by a playing field of spatial experiences. This not only had both a physical and mental influence on the person. The change in needs and lifestyle would also be manifest in urbanism and architecture, because (in Constant's view), when people change, their environment also changes. The environment should be created by life's activities, and not the other way around, like in the Functionalist City. Hence, the environment was not fixed, but rather

Constant en Nic. Tuumers,
Proefruimte,
(1965) at exhibition Nieuwe Beelden in Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



1 Mark Wigley,
*Constant's New
Babylon. The
hyper-architecture
of desire*,
Rotterdam 1998.

accommodated the nomadic, playful lifestyle of the New Babylonians. 'New Babylonians play a game of their own designing, against a backdrop they have designed themselves.'¹ This new lifestyle was harder to achieve than Constant had imagined, but he tried in various ways to awaken the creativity that was hiding inside the New Babylonians to be. Such as with the climbers and play structures for adults, that he presented in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1965. It was the museum's visionary director Willem Sandberg who encouraged these experimental exhibitions featuring art objects that encouraged the public to become actively engaged.

The Model

Palle Nielsen,
*The Model. A
Model for a Qualitative Society*
(1968) exhibition
Moderna Museet
Stockholm,
Sweden.

In 1968 the director of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm (Sweden), Pontus Hultén, gave Danish artist Palle Nielsen carte blanche to realize his idea of an adventure playground for children. Right in the middle of what was one of the most important modern art museums in Europe, Nielsen installed a framework for children to play in and with. They could inhabit and adapt the framework to their own wishes and ideas. All kinds of tools were available: hammers, saws, nails, wood, wigs, make up, music, cameras, paint, brushes... Their playing was the exhibition. Adults were not supposed to join, but stood to the side, maybe wondering what drove their youngsters to swim in paint. But Nielsen stated: "The mere fact that they were swimming in paint is a step towards a change in the structure of society. It is a small step and it is slow, but it is part of a movement made up of wishes and actions."² He called it: *A Model for a Qualitative Society*. And with that he showed 'the meaning of social and subjective change that (the) playing (child) generates within the

2 Lars Bang
Larsen, *Palle
Nielsen. The Model.
A Model for a
Qualitative Society*
(1968), Barcelona
2010.

machinery of society'. The idea was to let children 'present their model to those who are working with or are responsible for the environment provided for children outside – in the adult world'. This was not an educational program; it was the main part of the exhibition and Nielsen really meant it as a case study for a society constructing itself.

Playgrounds

Around the same time as Palle Nielsen was in Brasil installing *The Model*, The Museu de Arte de São Paulo opened, designed by architect Lina Bo Bardi. She designed the museum as an elevated structure, creating public space underneath and around it. The inaugural presentations Lina Bo Bardi organised, also included the exhibition *Playgrounds* on the public square, with social sculptures by Nelson Leirner. In the corner of the square there stood also a carousel with animals on which children could sit while spinning around. This carousel was imagined by Lina Bo Bardi in a 1965 drawing of the public plaza as a playground, and designed in 1969 by Maria Helena Chartuni.

Bo Bardi welcomed play into the heart of the city and into the cultural heart with all its (western) masterpieces. Bo Bardi thought that the responsibility of cultural museums was that they should contain a collection, popular arts ('arte popolare', which means crafts) and a playground.

Tools for the imagination

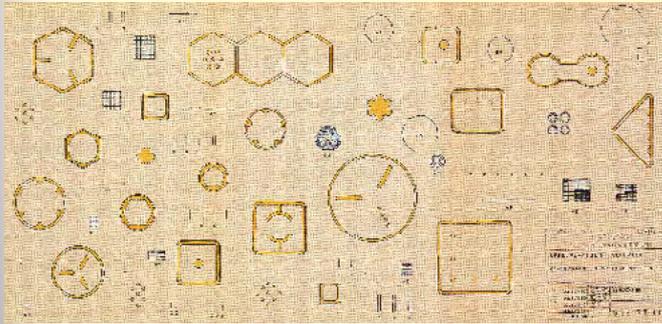
A few decades earlier Jacoba Mulder, who was working at the Urban Development Department of the city of Amsterdam, became convinced of the urgent need for public playgrounds in post-World War II Amsterdam, and she initiated an experiment for which she



Lina Bo Bardi,
carousel (1969)
executed by
Maria Helena
Chartuni for the
Playgrounds exhibition in MASP,
Brazil.



Lina Bo Bardi, *Preliminary Study for Sculptures-cum* (1965) Stage-Props o Trianon Terrace, MASP.



Aldo van Eyck,
*Sandpits and play
objects* (1960)
drawing by the
Site Preparation
Division of the
department of
Public Works.

commissioned Aldo van Eyck in 1947 -who incidentally was a huge fan of Bo Bardi's. Van Eyck developed a simple vocabulary of shapes, using concrete and metal as his main materials, starting from a rectangular sand-pit with round concrete tables, a small jungle gym and tumbling bars.

The municipality received a huge number of letters from citizens requesting playgrounds in their neighbourhood. The director of the Municipal Department of Public Works at that time – Cornelis van Eesteren – was one of the firm believers in the large-scale top-down planned Functionalist City, in which living, working and recreation were strictly separated, and playgrounds did not figure as important elements in the creation of that city. Van Eesteren radically changed his views on urbanism when he saw the effect of Jacoba Mulder and Aldo van Eyck's playground experiments.³ By the year of 1968 Van Eesteren had commissioned over 1000 playgrounds, all designed by Van Eyck and partly built on dilapidated, in-between-spaces that became public space to play in. The designs displayed some important aspects: none were fenced off, they were an integral part of the urban tissue of the city and a contribution to public life. And Van Eyck's design language of abstract forms led to a series of play elements that could be endlessly combined into new compositions; he called them 'tools for imagination'. And thirdly, playgrounds were only built when there was a request by the inhabitants of a neighbourhood.

³ Liane Lefaiivre,
*Ground-Up City:
The Place of Play*,
62

Research

From the beginning Céline Condorelli aimed for a public afterlife of the carousels in the city of The Hague. The idea was that at the end of the exhibition the works would leave the exhibition space and become public art, but also leave the exhibition to enter the city and become infrastructure at local schools, properly public objects.

We found two schools – Yunus Emre School and Nutsschool IBS Morgenstond – who enthusiastically embraced the idea of a carousel on their schoolyard. And who were willing to care for it for a long time.

Part of the agreement between the schools and Stroom was the contribution of the students to Céline Condorelli's research by doing colour experiments using spinning tops. The spinning tops are models of the carousels, and Céline used them to find interesting forms and colour combinations.

In workshops developed and guided by Krista te Brake the children made their own spinning tops and experimented with colours and patterns. The results were used in the production process of the carousels themselves.

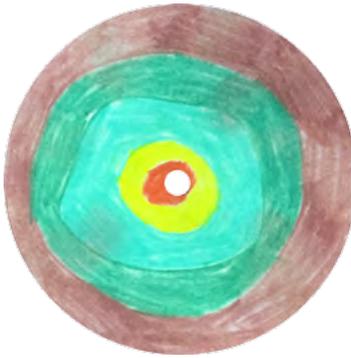
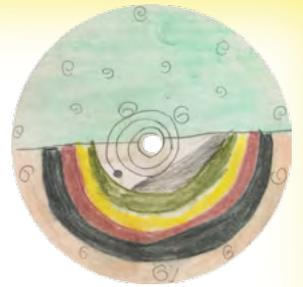
Nutsschool Morgenstond

Amina
Jack
Rabia
Aadi
Sude
Redouane
Rose-Jenn
Emine
Jolin
Sara
Zümra
Nigel
Ranisha
Martyyna
Trisha
Sheniel
Chloë
Musa
Venn
Sara
Liana
Marijn
Sophie

Ibs Yunus Emre

Suheyb
Safouane
Sara
Alishba
Salma
Bilal
Romaissa
Feyza
Sarah
Esma
Beyza
Muhammed
Youssef
Hajar
Youssef
Mohammed
Aise
Narin
Aisha
Elif
Yaren







During *Festival De Betovering* there will be special workshops (Dutch spoken) for children from 9 to 12 years old [Tue 17, Wed 18 and Thu 19 Oct].

www.stroom.nl

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Play your City Speel je stad

2 - 21 October 2017

Atrium City Hall, Spui 70, The Hague

Free admission

Krijn
Christiaanse
and Cathelijne
Montens, *Sea-
scape* (2014)
at De Opperd,
photo: © Gert Jan
van Rooij.

This autumn marks the fourth year in a row that Stroom organizes an exhibition in Atrium City Hall The Hague. *Play your city (Speel je stad)* discusses a similar theme as the exhibition at the Hogewal and zooms in on the importance of outdoor play, our physical interaction with the urban environment, a view of the city as a playground and what the contribution of art could be in this field.

For many years now Stroom has connected the world of artists to that of children through so-called art-at-school projects. The exhibition in City Hall features scale models and photographs of a selection of play objects designed by artists for schools in The Hague. In addition, the video *Voice of Children* by the British collective Assemble shows playgrounds from all over the world.

People can actively contribute to the exhibition by mailing a photograph of their favourite play area in The Hague to speeljestad@stroom.nl or by posting it on Instagram ([#speeljestad](https://www.instagram.com/speeljestad)). Furthermore, the exhibition design actively invites visitors to come and play.

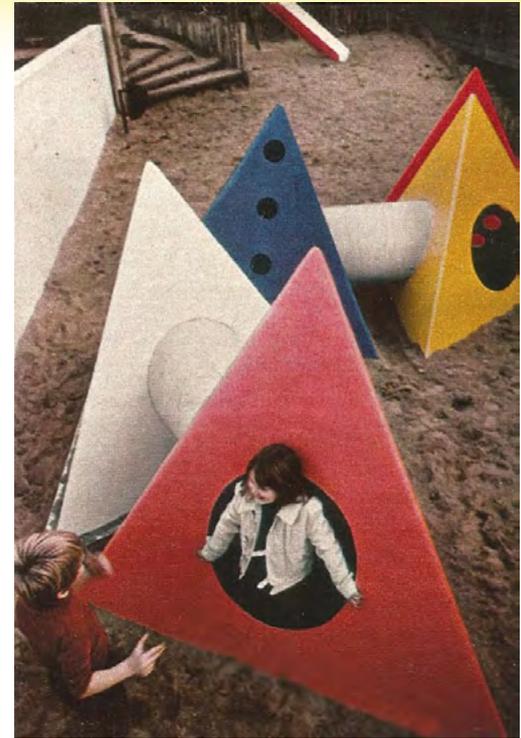
Rough and tumble playgrounds

Window display Stroom Den Haag

In 1970 De Bijenkorf celebrated its 100th anniversary. For this occasion the department store commissioned Group Ludic to design a series of outdoor playgrounds in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Eindhoven and The Hague. Group Ludic consisted of an English architect, a Polish filmmaker and a French sculptor, all united by nostalgia for play. With their colourful and spectacular playground equipment they first tried to get adults to start playing again. When that did not have the desired result, they decided to focus mainly on city children, who did not have much room to play.

In The Hague a “rough and tumble playground with lots of objects for play” was installed in the Zuiderpark. During the inauguration alderman G.W. Hijlkema announced that the municipality would continue to go for these kinds of imaginative playgrounds when establishing new areas for outdoor play. De Bijenkorf also made sure that the initiative was embedded in a broader movement promoting outdoor play. The department store invested the proceeds of their special anniversary sale (65.000

Group Ludic
i.s.m. **Martin**
Sjardijn, Buitel-
tuin Zuiderpark
(1970) photo:
Martin Sjardijn.



Dutch guilders) in the creation of the Stichting Buitenspelen (Foundation for Outdoor Play) and supplied the foundation with a work budget. The aim of the foundation, in addition to the creation of rough and tumble playgrounds, was to promote (scientific) research into outdoor play, from the point of view of developmental psychology and social pedagogy.



Céline Condorelli, *Models for a Qualitative Society* (2016) installation Kunsthalle Lisbon, Portugal
Photo: Bruno Lopes.

Biography

Céline Condorelli (CH, IT, UK) is a London-based artist, currently professor at NABA Milan, and one of the founding directors of Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK; she was the author and editor of *Support Structures* published by Sternberg Press (2009). Condorelli developed the exhibition *Display Show* at Stroom Den Haag with James Langdon and Gavin Wade, starting at Temple Bar Gallery, then Eastside Projects, and in its final phase shown at Stroom Den Haag, where it later transformed into *Another Reality. After Lina Bo Bardi* (2016).

Recent exhibitions include *Corps á Corps*, IMA Brisbane, Australia (2017), Gwangju Biennial, Liverpool Biennial, Sydney Biennial, and *Concrete Distractions*, Kunsthalle Lissabon (2016), *bau bau* (HangarBicocca, Milan, IT, 2015), *Céline Condorelli* (Chisenhale Gallery, UK), *Positions* (Van Abbemuseum, NL), including the publication *The Company She Keeps*, with Bookworks (2014). Her first monograph, *bau bau* is published by Mousse (2017).

www.celinecondorelli.eu

Colophon

Céline Condorelli: *Proposals for a Qualitative Society (Spinning)*

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Image Lina Bo Bardi: collectie Museu de Arte de São Paulo

Image Aldo van Eyck: gemeentearchief Amsterdam

Image Palle Nielsen: collection Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Workshop schools: Krista te Brake (De volmaakte mislukking)

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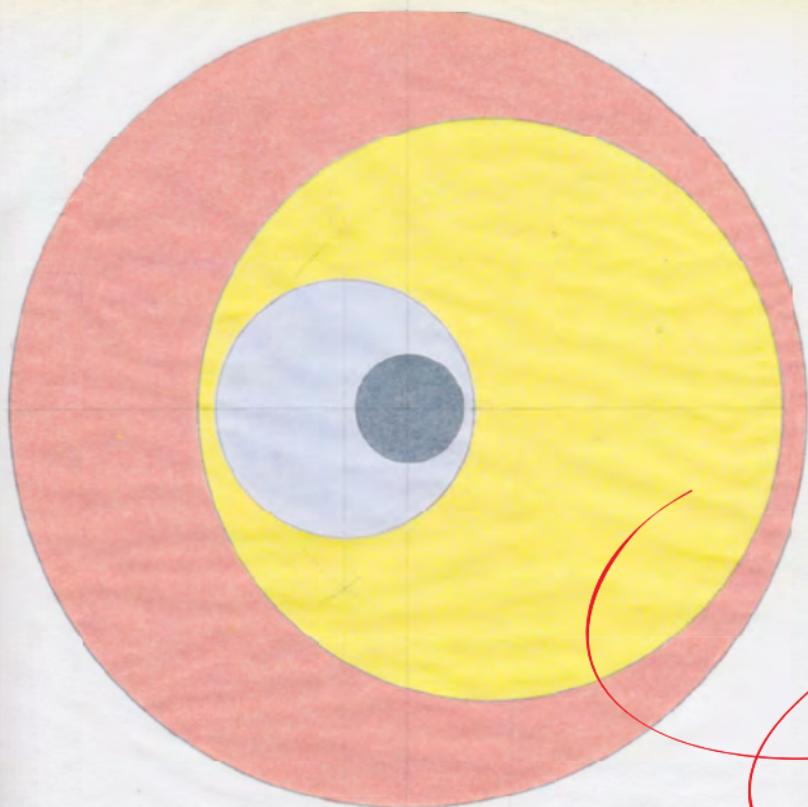
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