

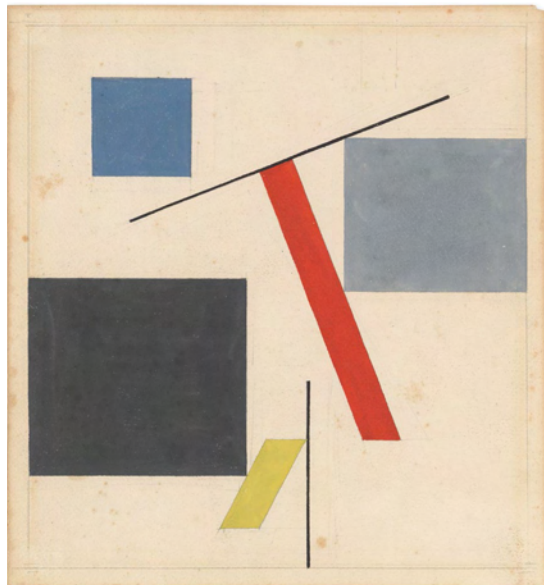
HAUSER & WIRTH

Dispatulo

Press Release

Online Exhibition

Sophie Taeuber-Arp



hauserwirth.com

Live date: 11 June 2020

Hauser & Wirth's first exhibition devoted to Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889 – 1943), one of the most important artists of the 20th-century avant-garde, launches online on 11 June. Challenging conventional boundaries, Sophie Taeuber-Arp asserted art's relevance to daily life, working across disciplines, from works on paper, painting, textiles, and sculpture, to design and architecture, as well as dance and performance. The 30 works, dating from 1916 to 1942, are presented alongside photography and material from the Arp Foundation (Stiftung Arp e.V.) archives. Her radical multidisciplinary approach was a constant thread throughout the distinct periods of her life and work, from her marionettes and iconic 'Tête Dada' (1920), to her architectural interiors and reliefs.

Born in Davos in Switzerland, Taeuber-Arp studied fine and applied arts in Munich before moving to Zurich in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. During this time, she met Hans Arp, who was to become her husband and emerged as a key protagonist of the Dada movement, performing at the legendary Cabaret Voltaire. Her circle included Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janco, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Emmy Hennings, whose shared creativity was forged as a reaction against the senselessness of the war and as a way of exploring the boundaries of the traditional concept of art.

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'In a flower, in a beetle, every line, every form, every colour has arisen from a deep necessity.'

– Sophie Taeuber-Arp

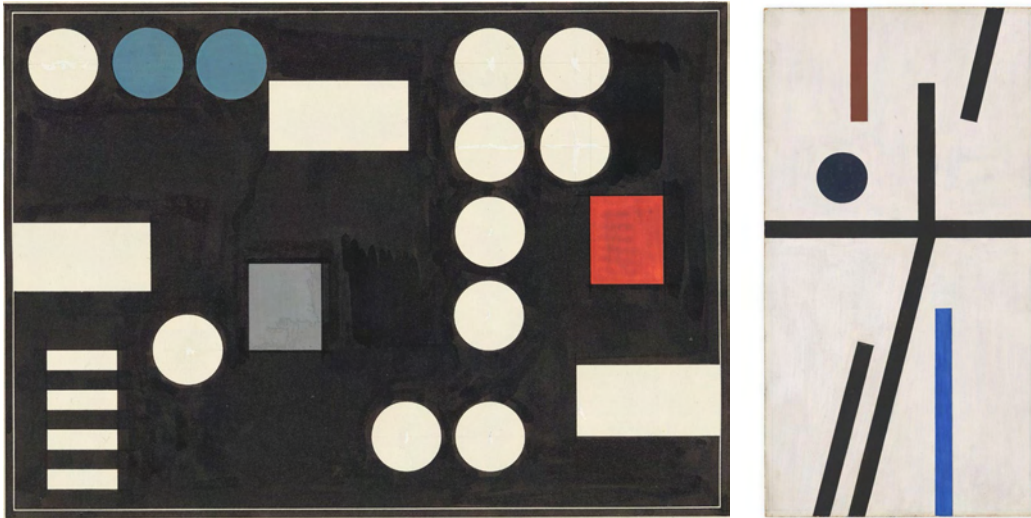
In 1915 she started to create coloured pen drawings, gouaches and tapestries known as vertical-horizontal compositions. With these works she became a pioneer of constructivist art. Many years later, Hans Arp describes her approach at this stage: 'Like music this art is tangible inner reality. She was already dividing the surface of a watercolour into squares and rectangles which she juxtaposed horizontally and perpendicularly. She constructed her painting like a work of masonry.'

From the earliest point, Taeuber-Arp explored new abstract forms in a ground-breaking manner that seems to be inspired by her art-and-crafts education. From 1916-1929 she taught textile design at the Zurich School of Applied Arts, applying the innovative methods of colour theory and abstraction she developed in her own work. In 1918 she was commissioned to design the stage sets and marionettes for a satirical version of Carlo Gozzi's commedia dell'arte play, King Stag. Constructed using a variety of geometric-turned-wood shapes and leaving the joints visible, the avant-garde marionettes reflect Taeuber-Arp's sensitivity for space and rhythm, and were likely inspired by her experience as a dancer.

From 1926, after her move with Hans Arp to Strasbourg, Taeuber-Arp designed radical architectural interiors. The exhibition features preparatory works surrounding her important commission for the Aubette, a cultural centre in Strasbourg. Emmy Hennings describes Sophie Taeuber-Arp's design: 'the walls, covered with paintings, give the illusion of almost endlessly vast rooms. Here painting makes the visitor dream, it awakens the depths in us.' In 1928, she designed the artist couple's home and studio in Meudon, near Paris, loosely based on the tenants of Bauhaus, and created fully modular furniture with minimalist forms and coloured paint. The house became a meeting place for artists, writers and intellectuals. Their circle of friends included the artists Sonia and Robert Delaunay, Alexander Calder, Wassily Kandinsky, Joan Miró, Alexander Calder and Marcel Duchamp.

This move to Meudon marked the beginning of the most productive period in the artist's life and resulted in her 'static' and 'dynamic' compositions, featured in the exhibition. Together with her husband she engaged with artistic collectives from Cercle et Carré to Abstraction-Création and the Swiss group Allianz alongside

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fellow artists such as Georges Vantongerloo, Piet Mondrian and Max Bill. Having set aside teaching, she was able to fully focus on her artistic career, and in 1937-1939 she established and edited the international art magazine, *Plastique*. Exemplary works from this period include 'Croix brisée. Composition verticale (Broken Cross. Vertical Composition)' and 'Equilibre (Equilibrium)' (both 1932) which see Taeuber Arp explore new compositional structures, carefully planned through transpositions of pencil drawing, to gouache, watercolour or oil. They are characterised by gridded planes divided into rectangular fields, delineated by angled bands and joined by circles, executed in a primary palette on monochrome backgrounds.

From 1936 onward the series 'Composition dans un cercle' can be seen in the context of circular wooden reliefs. As Wassily Kandinsky said, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp expressed herself by means of the 'coloured relief', especially in the last years of her life, using almost exclusively the simplest forms, geometric forms'. When Taeuber-Arp and Arp fled from Paris to Grasse in 1940 and then later crossing over to Zurich in 1942, her works become concentrated on the medium of drawing and exploration of the line, seen in works such as 'Lignes d'été (Lines of Summer)' (1942) which features in the exhibition. Sophie Taeuber Arp's last works, a series of pencil and ink drawings on paper called 'Construction géométrique (Geometric Construction)', were created only three weeks before her accidental death in January 1943. Rapidly drawn lines and circles resemble a sun, its rays seeming to take up every corner of the surface.

Taeuber-Arp will be the subject of a major retrospective exhibition co-organized by The Museum of Modern Art, Kunstmuseum Basel, and Tate Modern. 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Living Abstraction' opens in March 2021 at Kunstmuseum Basel in Taeuber-Arp's native Switzerland, and will subsequently be presented at Tate Modern in London, where it will be the first-ever survey of the artist's work in the United Kingdom, and at MoMA in New York, the artist's first major US exhibition in nearly 40 years.



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Under the umbrella of Hauser & Wirth's new global philanthropic and charitable initiative #artforbetter, we are donating 10% of gross profits from sales of all works in the online exhibitions to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for the World Health Organization.

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Sophie Taeuber-Arp with Dada-Head,
Zurich, 1920
Photo: Nic Aluf

Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Equilibre
(Equilibrium)
1932

Gouache and graphite on paper
27.9 x 25.8 cm / 11 x 10 1/8 in
Photo: Alex Delfanne

Sophie Taeuber-Arp
König Hirsch: König Deramo (King Stag:
King Deramo)
1918

Oil paint on turned wood, metal and
textile 58.5 x 14 x 10 cm / 23 x 5 1/2 x
3 7/8 inches © Zürcher Hochschule der
Künste / Museum für Gestaltung Zürich /
Kunstgewerbesammlung

Sophie Taeuber-Arp and her sister, Erika
Schlegel, in Hopi Native American-themed
costumes designed by the artist, c. 1920

Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Composition à rectangles et cercles
(Composition with rectangles and circles)
1931
Black ink, gouache, watercolour (red)
with graphite drawing and opaque white
corrections on drawing paper
20.5 x 27.4 cm / 8 1/8 x 10 3/4 in
Photo: Alex Delfanne

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889 - 1943) Croix
brisée. Composition verticale
(Broken Cross. Vertical Composition) 1932
Oil on board
51.5 x 27.6 cm / 20 1/4 x 10 7/8 in
Photo: Alex Delfanne

Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Personnages
(Figures)
1926
Yarn
50 x 48.5 cm / 19 5/8 x 19 1/8 in
Photo: Alex Delfanne

Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Coquilles et fleurs
(Shells & Flowers)
1938
Relief, painted wood
Diameter: 59 cm / 23 1/4 inches; depth: 8.1
cm / 3 1/4 in
Photo: Alex Delfanne