

Press Release

Sophie Taeuber-Arp. La règle des courbes (The Rule of Curves)

Hauser & Wirth Paris

17 January – 7 March 2026



This sharply focused historical exhibition, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp. La règle des courbes (The Rule of Curves)' is curated by Briony Fer and is the gallery's first solo display of Taeuber-Arp's work, featuring over 45 artworks that span a four-decade period from 1916 – 1942. Coming from the German Arp Foundation (Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie-Taeuber-Arp e.V.) and important private and public collections, the show includes paintings, drawings, gouaches, wooden reliefs and an iconic Dada head. The exhibition draws attention to the artist's formal vocabulary of the curve, which she used in innovative ways to stretch, bend and warp the language of geometric abstraction.

Sophie Taeuber-Arp is one of the most important artists of the 20th-century avant-garde. Dismantling conventional oppositions between Dada and geometric abstraction, fine art and utilitarian objects, 'La règle des courbes' shows how Taeuber-Arp boldly engaged with the cultural context of international modernism.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a bilingual publication, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp: La règle des courbes / The Rule of Curves,' from Hauser & Wirth Publishers, featuring new critical texts by Briony Fer and Jenny Nachtigall that shed new light on Taeuber-Arp's artistic output.

About the exhibition

Taeuber-Arp's training in the applied arts, with an emphasis on textiles rather than painting and sculpture, meant that multiple interests came together and were enmeshed with other visual and cultural forms prevalent at the time. Her work moved between art and design, the diagrammatic and the decorative, destruction and construction, positive and negative fields, parts and wholes. She amalgamated languages of decoration and

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technology, as well as those of Dada and Constructivism, and ignored the stricter protocols being laid down by others. This resulted in a body of work that was both playful and speculative, where curves and circles offered an alternative measure to calibrate the space between work and world. Taeuber-Arp set curves and circles against the structure of the modernist grid, a dominant trope of abstract painting in the first decades of the 20th Century. The exhibition reveals the radical possibilities of Taeuber-Arp's earliest experiments, such as 'Composition à forme "U"' (1918), right through to the broken circles of her so-called 'last' drawings such as 'Construction géométrique (Geometric Construction)' (1942).

At the height of interest in the Constructivist movement, characterised by its rigorous geometry at the time, she was making some of her most curvilinear work, translating decorative scrolls and arabesques into simple shapes. The distinctive methods she developed are arguably a continuation of a model of Dadaist abstraction, an always incomplete project, even when the component parts look as if they belong to a Constructivist tool kit. The reasons for this have much to do with the techniques she used, rooted in her formation as a designer and dominated by drafting tools of all kinds.

The title of the exhibition refers both to a rule as an organising principle and to an instrument used to measure lengths and distances like a ruler. Taeuber-Arp used a wide range of drawing tools as an extension of the hand, including French curves and other templates, as well as flexible and straight rulers. Works on display from the 1930s show her work becoming increasingly organic, containing curved shapes that suggest—as in the Coquille series—a preoccupation with natural forms and structures. This gives rise to a central paradox of the work: the more it becomes organic, the more she employs drawing templates to plot out her drawing.



One of the most compelling series that exemplifies Taeuber-Arp's language of curvature is the small subset within the Curve paintings called Echelonnements (Gradations), which she began in 1934. These works champion both curved edges and straight lines, revealing the cumulative effects of the toppling stack of irregular forms. The 'shapes' in 'Echelonnement' (1934) are white, suggesting they have been cut out of the blue ground, as negatives rather than positives.

Also on display are what came to be some of Taeuber-Arp's final works made in 1942, which are generally termed 'geometric constructions.' This set of drawings all comprise black ink on paper, made using a ruler and compass. Taeuber-Arp would paint over small sections in white paint, as well as cutting and rotating certain sections, the cuts acting as horizontals or diagonals, so creating a circular movement out of the fragments. Although the forms she works with are always simple, her own methods of layering and amalgamation make them endlessly variable.

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About Sophie Taeuber-Arp

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889 – 1943) is one of the most important artists of the 20th-century avant-garde and is considered a pioneer of Constructivist art. Through her multi-faceted approach to media, she challenged traditional hierarchies between fine and applied art, and asserted art's urgent relevance to daily life. Taeuber-Arp defied categorization during her career through her work as a painter, sculptor, architect, performer, choreographer, teacher, writer, and designer of textiles, stage sets and interiors.

Born in Davos, Switzerland, Sophie Taeuber-Arp began her studies at the School of Applied Arts in St. Gallen between 1906 and 1910, studying textile design and embroidery. She later moved to the experimental workshops of Hermann Obrist and Wilhelm von Debschitz in Munich, where she learned a variety of techniques in fine and applied art and architecture, before spending a year studying weaving at the School of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 forced Taeuber-Arp to return to Switzerland, where in 1915 she took lessons in *Ausdruckstanz* (expressive dance), with the choreographer Rudolf von Laban and the revolutionary dancer Mary Wigman. The same year, during a visit to the Galerie Tanner in Zurich, she met her future husband Hans Arp, whom she married in 1922.

Between 1916 and 1919, Taeuber-Arp was a key member in the Zurich Dada movement, performing in modern expressive dances at the Cabaret Voltaire and the Galerie Dada. From 1916 – 1929, Taeuber-Arp taught textile design at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts. In these years, Taeuber-Arp produced collages, watercolors, textile works and stage sets, marionettes and tapestries, utilizing a unique interplay between color and form which would later solidify her place as an early founder of Constructivist art. 1926 was a turning point in Taeuber-Arp's career, when she was commissioned to design the interior of the Aubette, a cultural center, in Strasbourg—a project she asked Hans Arp and Theo van Doesburg to collaborate with her on.

The Aubette commission gave Taeuber-Arp and her husband economic freedom that allowed them to move to Meudon, near Paris, where she conceived and designed their house and studio and some of its furniture. This marked the beginning of the most productive period in Taeuber-Arp's life. She joined various artistic collectives from *Cercle et Carré* to *Abstraction-Création* and the Swiss group *Allianz* alongside fellow artists such as Georges Vantongerloo, Piet Mondrian and Max Bill, and founded and edited the radical art magazine *Plastique*. Arp's and Taeuber-Arp's house in Meudon became a meeting place for artists, writers and other intellectuals. Their circle of friends included the artists Sonia and Robert Delaunay, Wassily Kandinsky, Joan Miró, and Marcel Duchamp. Between 1929 and 1943, Taeuber-Arp exhibited in 40 exhibitions across the globe.

Hauser & Wirth Publishers



Sophie Taeuber-Arp: The Rule of Curves

English/French

Clothbound

27 x 20 cm; 196pp

£35.00 / \$42.00 / €40.00

17 January 2026 (ROW); 10 March 2026 (US)

Text by Briony Fer and Jenny Nachtigall

Edited and introduced by Briony Fer, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp: la règle des courbes / The Rule of Curves' examines the work of leading 20th-century artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp, whose pioneering, multifaceted work challenged traditional hierarchies and conventional binary oppositions, and asserted art's urgent relevance to

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daily life. This bilingual, clothbound volume focuses on the formal logic that drove her bold and wide-ranging creative production while revealing how moving and working between mediums simultaneously expanded and crystallized her aesthetic. Alongside Fer's new critical insights into Taeuber-Arp's work, an essay by Jenny Nachtigall explores the artist's 'environments' and how notions of gravity, motion, and the cinematic offer keys to understanding the artist's kinaesthetic sensibility.

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Gallery hours:

Tuesday to Saturday
10 am – 6 pm

www.hauserwirth.com

Caption and courtesy:

Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Composition dans un cercle (à volutes)
(Composition in a circle (with volutes))
1938
Gouache with preliminary drawing in pencil on paper
34.9 x 25.9 cm / 13 3/4 x 10 1/4 in
© Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth
Courtesy Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin/Rolandswerth and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: Alex Delfanne

Sophie Taeuber with Dada Head, 1920.
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Photo: Nic Aluf

Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Composition à forme "U" (Composition with "U" Form)

1918
Gouache and pencil on cut-and-pasted paper on metallic foil on colored board
24.8 x 25.8 cm / 9 3/4 x 10 1/8 in
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Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Échelonnement (Gradation)
1934
Gouache and pencil on paper
27.1 x 20.8 cm / 10 5/8 x 8 1/4 in
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